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Burney's *Cecilia* and The Problems of Textual Sonority

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The year 1782 marked the appearance of two highly anticipated volumes from members of the Burney family: on May 29, Charles Burney published the second instalment of his *General History of Music*; within two weeks, on June 12, his daughter Frances published her second novel, *Cecilia*. Although many recent scholars have noted this dual publication, the account that Frances was to offer in the 1832 *Memoirs of Doctor Burney* denied any connection. Constructing a timeline in which her novel appeared as an afterthought to, rather than as the companion of, the *General History*, Frances suggested that it was only after Charles had completely finished the second volume that he found time to goad her into producing another work of fiction.[1] In this account, *Cecilia* is only marginally associated with, and rendered separately from, the *General History of Music.*

There is a good deal of evidence, however, that suggests the contrary. Besides the proximity of the original publication dates, many private family documents exist which indicate that Charles

Burney was "greatly attracted by the prospect of the simultaneous appearance of the two works" and pressured Frances to complete her novel by his self-prescribed deadline for finishing the *History*.[2] In addition, the joint nature of the publications was hardly a family secret. Most notably, the *Critical Review* recognized the Burney family's "double achievement" by juxtaposing articles on both texts (Lonsdale 270). Yet despite the existence of such evidence, Frances's testimony of the events surrounding the 1782 Burney publications seems to have had a decided impact upon commentaries about the two works—not just in the field of literature, but in the field of musicology as well. For example, in the first substantial twentieth-century study of Charles, the biographer Percy A. Scholes, while devoting an entire chapter to Frances's publication of *Cecilia*, failed to mention its initial release alongside the *General History*.[3] It is more than likely that scholars such as Scholes were slow to perceive connections between the literary activities of father and daughter during this period, partly (or perhaps, precisely) because of the account which appears in the *Memoirs* (Lonsdale 262).[4]

In more recent literary criticism, even as it has become customary to think of *Cecilia* and the *General History* as part of a united effort, there has been little work done to examine just how much of a correspondence actually exists. If scholars allude to connections between the two works at all, it is often merely to provide an example of the ill-treatment that Frances suffered under her father's care. The pressure he exerted during this period—as suggested by the *Memoirs*—was severe. In a letter dated early in 1781, Frances anxiously remarks to her sister Susanna that their father "will expect me to have just done, when I am so behind hand as not even to see Land!"[5] Her anxiety eventually reached such a pitch that she became too ill to write. After her recovery, Charles finally relented, and Frances was permitted to work at her own pace.[6] Margaret Anne Doody attributes Charles's encouragement to rather selfish motives: "His urging on the completion [of *Cecilia*] was fired by his love of favorable publicity" (Doody 99). The episode thus offers yet another example of his shameless efforts at self-aggrandizement and his manipulation of his daughter's talents.

While Doody's analysis of this episode deftly captures the vexed nature of Charles's and Frances's relationship, it has led those who have followed to pass over the intellectual exchange, however forced it may have been, that father and daughter shared in this collaboration. Reducing the nature of the 1782 Burney publications to a publicity stunt has allowed scholars to avoid considering the salient connections that join these works. On the simplest level, even though Frances herself was later to alter the novel's relationship to her father's study, *Cecilia* still bears traces of its ties to the *General History* through its many references, both oblique and direct, to music. Given the nature of her family, it is hardly surprising that she gravitated to musical description in her prose. The Burneys were at the forefront of the music scene in the final decades of the eighteenth century, frequenting the most fashionable musical sites, and making intimate acquaintance with the leading performers of the day. They also hosted their own recitals. Frances's sisters Hetty and Susan were accomplished performers on the harpsichord, and before their father established himself as a man of letters, he was first and foremost a musician, teaching, composing for the theatre, and performing as a soloist on a variety of keyboard instruments.[7] Although Frances was unquestionably the least musically talented of the Burney children, she nevertheless took great delight in their endeavors, and gradually established herself as a keen listener.[8] Indeed, for members of this family, there was much to listen to: "Frances grew up in a house that revolved around music, and where books were read aloud, ideas discussed... [there was always] the sound of someone practicing the violin or harpsichord" (Chisholm 13). The musical spaces and entertainments of *Cecilia*, often drawn from personal experience, figure as the most immediate references that bind the novel to Charles's work.

Yet on a more fundamental level, the novel's preoccupation with music and questions of voice also suggests that Frances was engaging with the question of textual sonority that appears in her father's ground-breaking study. The novel's intensely sonorous aesthetic—evinced in part by her characters' ventures into musical

spaces and the heroine's connection to the patron saint of music—cannot fully be accounted for by a consideration of her musical family life. After all, Frances was more than just a listener in the Burney household. For years she served as her father's principal amanuensis, making fair copies of his various travel books for publication.[9] This position solidified her intimate acquaintance, for better or for worse, with all of his ideas and writings about music. And nowhere does she demonstrate her familiarity with his most famous work more overtly than in her translation of its musical concerns onto the pages of *Cecilia*. From this perspective, Frances's novel emerges as more than a work that simply includes musical allusions and vignettes. Instead, it is one of the first (and I would argue, finest) novels in the eighteenth century to engage seriously with the concept of writing about music.

Before moving to a discussion of *Cecilia*, however, it is first necessary to say something more about the *General History of Music*. Lauded in its own time as a monumental achievement, Charles Burney's massive work, published in four volumes between 1776 to 1789, is still regarded as one of the foundational and most critically influential texts in the history of musicology. Although there were many other tracts on music written throughout the eighteenth century—notably Addison's essays on opera and Avison's work on musical expression—there was no established method in England for writing about this particular art form. Burney's *General History* did much to establish a discourse of music and helped to ensure musicology's position as a serious, scientific, and historically based field of inquiry. While his work was an immediate success, Burney's anxiety about the content of the *General History* surfaced as he communicated the troubles he faced when determining what should be included in a history of music. He was initially reluctant to fill the inaugural volume with a detailed account of ancient Greek and Roman music, for the topic presented a number of difficulties: materials were scare, sources were obscure, and the technical dimension was prohibitively complex. Addressing this concern in the preface to the first volume, he establishes the problem of constructing a history when so much evidence is lacking:

"What the ancient music really was, it is not easy to determine; the whole is now become a matter of faith; but of this we are certain, that it was something with which mankind was extremely delighted[.] ... But as to the superior or inferior degree of excellence in the ancient music, compared with the modern, it is now as impossible to determine, as it is *to hear both sides*."[10] In this passage, Burney acknowledges the inevitable failure that accompanies any assessment of Greek or Roman music—it is as "impossible" to hear as it is to judge. Calling attention to music's transient nature, his discussion ultimately points to a much larger issue: how can one produce a history of music when its subject is always suffering from perpetual "acoustic decay"?[11]

The critical problems arising from the ephemeral quality of music are further complicated when Burney considers the difficulty of describing music through language. After noting that the study of ancient music is "as unprofitable as learning a dead language, in which there are no books" (16), he goes on to criticize the manner in which authors have written about this "lost" music:

> This study has given rise to so much pedantry, and to such an ambition in modern musical authors, to be thought well versed in the writings of the ancients upon music, that their treatises are rendered both disgusting and unintelligible by it. *Words* only are come down to us without *things*. We have so few remains of ancient Music by which to illustrate its rules, that we cannot, as in Painting, Poetry, Sculpture, or Architecture, judge of it, or profit by examples; and to several of these terms which are crammed into our books, we are utterly unable to affix any precise or useful meaning. (16)

Here, Burney establishes an important comparison between music and the other arts. For even if only fragments of a painting, a sculpture, or a building remain, they nevertheless continue to exist as tangible, visible, and therefore knowable "things," maintaining at least a vestige of their original form. In the era before the advent of

recording technology, however, there was no available method to render music "permanent." Like a "dead language in which there are no books," music's extinction is always imminent, and can only be interceded by means of textual records. Yet as Burney suggests, using a medium as volatile as language to capture an entity as evanescent as sound ultimately leads to a collapse of meaning, with words failing to render accessible the "thing" which they attempt to describe.[12] It is music's very inability to exist as "thing" which makes it so challenging to render through language.

This problem becomes even more marked as Burney progresses, for eventually he goes on to suggest that the root of the trouble lies not with the intricacies of linguistic translation, but with the act of "translating" music into language. In the preface, he approaches this concern when complaining about the lack of good musical criticism:

> I have long since found it necessary to read with caution the splendid assertions of writers concerning music, till I was convinced of their knowledge of the subject; for I have frequently detected ancients as well as moderns, whose fame sets them almost above censure, of utter ignorance in this particular, while they have thought it necessary to *talk about it*. Apuleius, Pausanias, and Athenaeus, among the ancients, were certainly musicians, but it is not so evident that Cicero, Horace, and others, who have interspersed many passages concerning Music in their works, understood the subject any more than our Addison, Pope, and Swift. Among these, the two first have written odes on St. Cecilia's day, in which they manifest the *entire separation* of Music and Poetry, and shew the possibility of writing well on what is neither felt nor understood. (17)

At this point, Burney argues that the difficulty of writing about music extends beyond those modern texts which struggle to represent the lost works of the ancients. Instead, the problem proves

to be endemic among ancient and modern writers alike: both Cicero and Pope are taken to task for their lack of musical understanding. Even more striking is Burney's claim about the St. Cecilia odes. On the simplest level, he scoffs at the failure of poetry about music to convey any sense of music. Yet at the same time, there emerges a more general anxiety about the inability of words to represent this art form: does the "*entire separation*" of music and language only apply to a select group of writers, or does it affect all writings of this sort? Ultimately, what emerges from the preface is Burney's tacit acknowledgment that even his own language in the *General History* will have difficulty surmounting the rift between music and words.

Ironically, musicology today continues to scrutinize Burney's history from this same critical vantage. As Kerry S. Grant has put it, "the greatest obstacle to the effective use of Burney's criticism is his use of descriptive, rather than technical language. When he says a composition is full of fire ... we perceive that he is favorably impressed, but have no firm idea of just what musical substance or quality is referred to by these epithets.[13]" The difficulty that emerges, however, is not merely a problematic component of Burney's works. It affects musical discourse in general and has been addressed by a range of contemporary theorists. For example, Roland Barthes begins his essay "The Grain of the Voice" by questioning how language attempts to "interpret music":

> [How] does language manage when it has to interpret music? Alas, it seems, very badly. If one looks at the normal practice of music criticism (or, which is often the same thing, of conversations 'on' music), it can readily be seen that a work (or its performance) is only ever translated into the poorest of linguistic categories: the adjective. Music, by natural bent, is that which at once receives an adjective. The adjective is inevitable: this music is *this*, this execution is *that*. No doubt the moment we turn an art into a subject (for an article, for a conversation) there is nothing left but to give it predicates; in the case of music, however, such

> predication unfailingly takes the most facile and trivial form, that of the epithet.[14]

While Barthes assigns responsibility for the bulk of the problem to the adjective, the difficulty may also in large part be attributed to the qualities possessed by music. Along these lines, musicologist Richard Leppert has elliptically suggested that music "is not of that which is; it is the account of the real that itself is both real and not real. In no other human practice does agency depend so specifically on being and not being."[15] For Leppert, music's slippage into states of being and not being, its equivocal status, and finally its inability to exist as "thing"—its eluding of the adjective—is what makes it so challenging to render through language.

To further complicate matters, Leppert also posits that music itself, as a form of "cultural discourse,"[16]

> necessarily both precedes and exceeds the semantic quotient of any particular musical text. Musical discourse operates, in other words, even in silence, a fact brilliantly articulated years ago by John Cage, who made specific use of human sight as the problematizing agent of "musical" silence – you had to "be" there to "see" the silence to know that what was happening was nonmusically musical. If musical discourse functions even in silence, can the meaning of this "silent precedent" be demonstrated? How? (17)

Leppert's synthesis helps to identify the qualities of music that make any prose attempting to describe it so disconcerting. For unlike the purely visual experience of looking at a painting, music can be experienced visually, aurally, and through notation. His positioning of music as a discourse whose meaning always extends beyond the (musical) text that seeks to represent it has bearing on one's ability to render music knowable through literary discourse. For if "musical discourse" has the potential to "function even in silence," how can the already "silent" written text hope to make this facet intelligible

through words? How can a discourse which can never be adequately notated in its own form of written transcription hope to be made comprehensible when translated into yet another "language"? Or, how can the "silent" page convey a medium which is not only visual and textual, but aural and performative? Also important to consider is the way that this "silent precedent" functioned for writers living before the age of sound recording. In Burney's time, when you really did have to "be there to see music," the notion of the "silent precedent"—and its innate connection to human sight—was undoubtedly perceived more acutely than it is today.

Although Charles was compelled to wrestle with these issues at the outset of the *General History*, by the second volume's appearance he was far less apprehensive about such concerns—the commercial success of his endeavor seems to have rendered the need for questioning the viability of "musical history" unnecessary. Frances, however, continued to engage with these problems in her own work, incorporating them into a different medium, and selecting fiction as the most suitable forum for addressing the split between music and language. *Cecilia* may thus be thought of as her most extensive effort to translate the concerns of the emerging discourse of musicology into fiction. As a fiction of musical letters Burney's novel engages with her father's first two volumes of the *General History* by vigorously interrogating the notion of musical letters, considering just what kind of a fiction this emerging genre encompasses, and what it might in fact become when brought to bear on the novel.

In *Cecilia*, the relationship that Frances constructs between music and textual body depends upon—and is ultimately aligned with—her representations of the interaction between voice and physical body. Such a preoccupation with voice and music may initially come across as an anomaly in an age usually thought to cherish the supremacy of the eye. In order to contextualize this aspect of Burney's novel properly, it is first necessary to recognize that the aural and ocular often figure as equally important—yet competing—sensory mechanisms throughout the eighteenth

century.[17] This alternative vantage makes it possible to examine *Cecilia* as a work that consistently provokes the instabilities governing the relationship between body and voice, challenging preconceived notions of what the eye and the ear have the potential to process. At the masquerade, voice is the thing which reveals the body obscured. When Miss Larolles disguised as Minerva squeaks out a hackneyed "Do you know me?" Cecilia remarks, "not ... by your *appearance*, I own! But by your *voice*."[18] Later, the voice of Harlequin "betrays" young Morrice (111). Notably in this scene, Mr. Monkton remains disguised as a devil only by virtue of the fact that he is silent throughout the entire episode, excepting some ferocious snarls. Hearing rather than seeing finally registers as the most reliable epistemological faculty: amidst a sea of disguised bodies, voice serves as the mark of identity.

However, if the masquerade functions as a space that is both aurally and visually spectacular, it may also be read as the phantasmagoric perversion of the musical space that had previously been defined by the opera rehearsal. There, the relationship between body and voice registers quite differently: instead of voice standing in to realize a body that has been masked, voice is rendered incompatible with a body that can never be acknowledged. For this episode, Burney paid tribute to her dear friend, the singer Gasparo Pacchierotti.[19] The delight that Cecilia initially receives from the rehearsal shifts to ecstatic reverence when this celebrated castrato finally takes the stage:

> But both the surprise and the pleasure which she received from the performance in general, were faint, cold, and languid, compared to the strength of those emotions when excited by Signore Pacchierotti in particular; and though not half the excellencies of that superior singer were necessary either to amaze or charm her unaccustomed ears, though the refinement of his taste and masterly originality of his genius, to be praised as they deserved, called for the judgment and knowledge of professors, yet a natural love of music in some measure

> supplied the place of cultivation, and what she could neither explain nor understand, she could feel and enjoy.
>
> The opera was Artaserse; and the pleasure she received from the music was much augmented by her previous acquaintance with that interesting drama; yet, as to all novitiates in science, whatever is least complicated is most pleasing, she found herself by nothing so deeply impressed as by the plaintive and beautiful simplicity with which Pacchierotti uttered the affecting repetition of *sono innocente!* his voice, always either sweet or impassioned, delivered those words in a tone of softness, pathos, and sensibility, that struck her with a sensation not more new than delightful. (64-65)

Here, visual spectacle is completely subdued as Burney phonocentrically concentrates on the powers of Pacchierotti's voice and her heroine's pleasure in listening. "Amazed" by his vocal excellencies, Cecilia's "unaccustomed ears" become the prime object of all sensory reception. Yet in the following paragraph, the rapt aural attention of the scene is broken when Cecilia begins to direct her visual focus towards another figure:

> But though she was, perhaps, the only person thus astonished, she was by no means the only one enraptured; for notwithstanding she was too earnestly engaged to remark the company in general, she could not avoid taking notice of an old gentleman who stood by one of the side scenes, against which he lent his head in a manner that concealed his face, with an evident design to be wholly absorbed in listening: and during the songs of Pacchierotti he sighed so deeply that Cecilia, struck by his uncommon sensibility to the power of music, involuntarily watched him, whenever her mind was sufficiently at liberty to attend to any emotions but its own. (65)

As Cecilia divides her sensory attention between Pacchierotti and the mysterious philanthropist Albany, the sensory thrust of the passage abruptly shifts from the aural to the visual, an inexplicable transition that further serves to unsettle the voice-body relationship.

In order to untangle Burney's complicated aesthetic manoeuvres within these passages, Richard Leppert's work, which bridges the fields of musicology and art history, will once again be helpful. Considering the importance of visual experience to musical production, he suggests that "the slippage between the physical activity to produce musical sound and the abstract nature of what is produced creates a semiotic contradiction that is ultimately 'resolved' to a significant degree via the agency of human sight" (xxi). Adopting this position makes it possible to read the purposeful misdirection of the heroine's vision in Burney's text as the resolution of Leppert's "semiotic contradiction." Rather than focus her visual attention on the site of musical production, Cecilia chooses to watch another spectator, effectively splitting her concentration between her desire to listen to the castrato and her desire to look at the old man. The rift that develops between the eye's engagement with Albany and the ear's fascination with Pacchierotti highlights the failure of the scene to provide a visual account of the castrato. Instead, the description of an auditor's visceral responses to Pacchierotti's performance becomes necessary in order to achieve any sense of the castrato's voice.

Yet the erasure of Pacchierotti's body is all the more striking when his well-known deformity and inescapably grotesque physique are taken into account.[20] At the time of *Cecilia*'s publication, Italian castrati had enjoyed a celebrated, if controversial, reputation on the English stage for about seventy-five years, largely due to the vexed status of their bodies. Prized for the hauntingly beautiful quality of their voices—made possible only by a violent act of disfigurement—they were frequently the subject of ridicule and scorn. The "freakishness" identified with these singers was related not only to the (hidden) site of their mutilation, but also to the physical ailments that resulted from castration: symptoms

included fat deposits localized to the hips, buttocks, and breast areas, skin that was pale and swollen, and disproportionately long arms and legs relative to the size of the torso.[21] Burney's representation of the castrato and the deliberate rending of visual and aural stimulation that ensues provides an extreme model for the voice's alienation from the body and highlights the simultaneous reliance upon and avoidance of that body in attempts to capture its music.

Although Pacchierotti's physical presence is absent from the rehearsal scene, his vocal performance generates a noticeable response from the body of Cecilia. His utterances have the power to "impress" and "strike" her with sensations that—while ostensibly sympathetic, emotional, and therefore intangible—take on a corporeal dimension, even as his own voice is rendered more palpable through its effects. Eventually, her "avidity of attention" becomes so physically intense that it is "almost painful from its own eagerness." The unbridled pleasure she receives from his music subsequently registers as an experience for the body. Through similar means, the loud sighs released by Albany are made accessible only when Cecilia chooses to absorb them. Mediating all aural stimulation, her body processes both visual and auditory sensation, translating sonorous performance and making it knowable.

While Burney situates mediation as an indispensable tool for recording music in the novel, her writing in this passage also betrays the limitations that frustrate any attempt to transcribe music into text. For it is not only Pacchierotti's body, but more importantly his voice, which continues to elude description. The narrator's claim that "what [Cecilia] could neither explain nor understand, she could feel and enjoy," signals that, although her physical responses to the castrato's performance may be realized, the voice that stimulates these emotions continues to defy linguistic modes of representation. Caught in the Barthian trap of the adjective, Burney cannot give a sense of his voice that will truly capture its sound. Instead, besides referring to his tone as "soft" and acclaiming the "plaintive and

beautiful simplicity" of his utterances, she must rely on inarticulate platitudes that praise the "refinement of his taste" and the "masterly originality of his genius." Such empty phrases merely enhance the indefinable nature of his performance. Yet the limitations that emerge from the shortcomings of Pacchierotti's description ultimately give Burney an avenue through which to critique her father's *General History of Music.* For while Cecilia Beverly's conspicuous lack of the "judgment and knowledge of professors"—skills celebrated by Charles Burney—prevents her from praising the castrato's talents "as they deserv[e]," her "natural love of music," while void of a technically descriptive vocabulary, nevertheless allows her to capture the castrato's voice more faithfully through the language of sensibility.

Within the soundscapes of the novel, Burney's heroine serves as the principal organ of reception for a range of disparate sensations: a voyeuristic listener, Cecilia constantly observes bodies and voices. Through her mediating figure, voices are able to take on a particularly "embodied," at times almost visual, presence. Yet these voices also vanish, dissipating into nothingness and betraying their eternal separation from the bodies that created and received them. In turn, Cecilia's own "body" is always at the point of vanishing, is always in retreat. Indeed, the novel begins with only her voice. Unclaimed, obscured, and without a bodily referent, her prayer for the souls of her departed parents is itself an unstable, phantasmagoric utterance:

> "Peace to the spirits of my honoured parents, respected be their remains, and immortalized their virtues! may time, while it moulders their frail relicks to dust, commit to tradition the record of their goodness; and Oh may their orphan-descendant be influenced through life by the remembrance of their purity, and be solaced in death, that by her it was unsullied!"

> Such was the secret prayer with which the only survivor of the Beverly family quitted the abode of her youth [.] (5)

Constantly in danger of escaping from its (con)textual grounding, Cecilia's voice needs to be mediated by the narrator in order to join its body and resonate within the novel. Yet even in this example, there is no clear sense of what has actually been recorded—has Cecilia spoken these words out loud, or have they been voiced internally? By maintaining such uncertainties, Burney positions her heroine as the very essence of music, "the is not of that which is."

Burney's representation of the voice and its alienation from the physical and narrative body finally signals a larger concern with the rift between sonority and textuality. The marriage of these opposing forces, not unlike the dissonant union of Cecilia and Delvile, is an uneasy reconciliation, one that demands a loss of property in order to achieve consummation. The text, by resisting the union both of voice/body and music/text, and by instead suggesting the impossibilities of attempting to capture what cannot be recorded in discourse, launches a troubling compromise that further exposes the limits of musical discourse. Embracing the failure that a history of musical letters cannot acknowledge, Burney uses *Cecilia* to reconfigure the parameters of musical discourse, claiming it for the woman novelist. clai

Notes

[1] See Frances Burney (Madame d'Arblay), *Memoirs of Doctor Burney*, Vol. II (New York: AMS Press, 1975) 214-16.

[2] Roger Lonsdale, *Dr. Charles Burney: A Literary Biography* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965) 262, 268. Subsequent references will appear in the text.

[3] Percy Alfred Scholes, *The Great Dr. Burney: his life, his travels, his works, his family and his friends* (London: Oxford UP, 1948).

[4] Lonsdale credits Joyce Hemlow with uncovering information concerning the 1782 publications.

[5] Frances Burney to Susanna Elizabeth Burney, *c.*7 January 1781, from *The Early Journals and Letters of Fanny Burney: Vol. IV, The Streatham Years, Part II, 1780-1781*, ed. Betty Rizzo (Montreal: McGill-Queen's UP, 2003.

[6] Margaret Anne Doody, *Frances Burney: The Life in the Works* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers UP, 1988) 99. Subsequent references will appear in the text.

[7] Charles's compositions for the theatre include the comic opera *Robin Hood* (1750), the pantomime *Queen Mab* (1750), *The Masque of Alfred* (1751), a musical version of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (1763), and a setting of Thorton's burlesque of *Ode on St. Cecilia's Day* (c. 1760 or 1763). While *A Midsummer Night's Dream* was a spectacular failure, *Queen Mab* was immensely popular.

[8] Kate Chisolm, *Fanny Burney: Her Life* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1998) 13. Subsequent references will appear in the text. Chisholm argues that Frances's extraordinary "ability to memorise—perhaps born of her extreme shyness and poor eyesight, which meant that she concentrated on *listening*—came to fruition when she grew up, for it is the accuracy of her dialogue that gives zest to both the diaries and the novels" (13-14, my italics). Charles was also described by his friend Thomas Twining as having his "ear in [his] eye" (Twining, *The Country Clergyman*, 105; quoted in Kerry S. Grant, 125).

[9] See Doody, 39; *Memoirs*, Vol. II, 126-27. In a letter to Frances, Samuel Crisp wrote, "You have learned from that R[ogue] your father (by so long serving as his amanuensis I suppose) to make your descriptions alive" (quoted from Percy M. Young, "Gossip in the Music-Room," *Music and Letters*, 23 [1942] 50).

[10] Charles Burney, *A General History of Music*, Vol. I (rpt. New York: Dover, 1957) 15. Subsequent references will appear in the text.

[11] I am borrowing the term "acoustic decay" from Richard Leppert.

[12] The preface was not the only section of the *General History* in which Burney dealt with the inadequacies of language. Towards the end of volume I, he notes that words "are vague and fallacious" and refers to "the fallacy of verbal description" (378).

[13] Kerry S. Grant, *Dr. Burney as Critic and Historian of Music* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1983) 19. Subsequent references will appear in the text.

[14] Roland Barthes, "The Grain of the Voice," *Image—Music—Text*, trans. Stephen Heath (New York: Hill and Wang, 1977) 179.

[15] Richard Leppert, *The Sight of Sound: Music, Representation, and the History of the Body* (Berkeley: U of California P, 1993) 22. Subsequent references will appear in the text.

[16] Leppert uses the term "musical discourse" when suggesting that music is a form of discourse. The term is not used to refer to discourse *about* music—although when read in this context, his passage is equally compelling. To clarify Leppert's use of the phrase, I have turned to Susan McClary's description of music as a form of "cultural discourse" in *Feminine Endings: Music, Gender, and Sexuality.*

[17] The first chapter of Leigh Eric Schmidt's *Hearing Things: Religion, Illusion, and the American Enlightenment* (Cambridge, MA.: Harvard UP, 2000) provides an account of the ear's importance during the eighteenth century. See 22-26.

[18] Frances Burney, *Cecilia, or Memoirs of an Heiress,* ed. Peter Sabor and Margaret Anne Doody (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1999) 110. Subsequent references will appear in the text.

[19] Pacchierotti was a good friend of the Burney family. While Susan and Charlotte were both reportedly in love with him, Kate Chisholm notes that "it has long been suggested that [Pacchierotti] ... was in love with Fanny, and possibly Susan too" (116). (See Frances Burney's letter to Susan, 7 April 1780.) Frances's correspondence with the castrato spanned more than three decades. For a detailed account, refer to Beth Kowaleski-Wallace, "Shunning the Bearded Kiss: Castrati and the Definition of Female Sexuality," *Prose Studies* 15.2 (1992): 153-70.

[20] Charles Lorraine Smith's drawing *A Sunday Concert* (1782) provides a caricature of Pacchierotti. The castrato's body is presented as elongated, gangly, and distorted (Chisolm, illustrations, section 1, p. 4). Among a company of other grotesque bodies—including a stooped, sycophantic Charles Burney—Pacchierotti stands out as exotic and deformed.

[21] Enid Rhodes Peschel and Richard E. Peschel, "Medicine and Music: The Castrati in Opera," *Opera Quarterly* 4: 4 (Winter 1986/1987) 27.