

The Insurance of Musical London and the Sun Fire Office 1710–1779

EDITORIAL METHOD

Assessments of musical life in London during the eighteenth century often focus on its individual components: concerts; musical instruments; publishing; the music trade. The risk of fire was pertinent to all venues, homes and businesses, and a significant number of concert promoters, musicians and musical instrument makers chose to insure their property with the Sun Fire Office, the first fully organized fire insurance company. The firm's own copies of the insurance policies – on deposit at the City of London Corporation, London Metropolitan Archives, from the Royal & SunAlliance Insurance Group (RSA)¹ – provide the names, addresses and occupations of the policy holder, and, since property is mostly valued, we have a means of calculating the financial status of individuals and the possible size of production units. Moreover, the policies encompass some minority groups absent from more traditional sources, including women, foreigners and tenants; disenfranchised sections of eighteenth-century society largely absent from poll books and rate books. Our study, consisting of a transcription and initial analysis of all policies relating to music for the period 1710–79, the first 70 years of this insurance company, sheds new light on musical life in the capital, especially during the growth years of the 1760s and 1770s.

The process of production, by numerous individuals working over many years, means that the policies exhibit disparate handwriting and spelling. A variety of shorthand versions of words have also been used, including 'Ind', 'Ind^l' 'End' and 'End^l' (endorsement), exceed^s (exceeding), P^{ds} (pounds) and Dwell^s (dwelling). Our transcriptions retain the spellings and abbreviations as they appear in the documents in order to preserve some resemblance of the originals. Later additions, including references to endorsements, are contained within {}, the ends of lines are indicated by a \ and all editorial matter is presented within [].

The policy dates, which occur in the original documents either in full or in an abbreviated form at the top of each page, with subsequent entries on a page dated by reference to this header using the word ditto (or D^o), have been standardised and inserted as part of the heading of each policy. For all policies dated January, February or March for the years 1710–52 we have used a hybrid of the Old and New Style for recording the year; the policy of the harpsichord maker Benjamin Slade, for instance, is recorded as 24 January 1715/16.

¹ The Sun Fire Office collection encompasses a wide variety of documents, such as General Committee Minute Books 1709/10–1896 (CLC/B/192/B/001/Ms 11931), a volume of ground plan sketches of business premises insured with the company during the years 1802–6 (CLC/B/192/F/019/Ms 11936D) and some 500 claims papers for the period 1770–88 (CLC/B/192/F/037/Ms 31688). The core collection consists of 672 volumes of policy registers covering the years 1710–1862 (full reference CLC/B/192/F/001/Ms 11936, hereafter Ms 11936), a separate series of 509 country department registers for the years 1793–1863 (CLC/B/192/F/003/Ms 11937), together with 132 endorsement books for the period 1728–1865 (full reference CLC/B/192/F/004/Ms 12160, hereafter Ms 12160). For further information on insurance records held at the LMA, see 'Fire Insurance Records', London Metropolitan Archives Information Leaflet Number 48 (2010).

If the policy holder is directly involved in music then the policies appear under their name, arranged in alphabetical order by surname. When a musician or musical instrument maker is named in the policy of another person in the music business, the policy appears under the name of the holder but is cross-referenced under the name of the mentioned second person. When the name of a person in the music business appears in the policy of an individual outside of music, the policy is recorded not under the name of the policy holder but under the named member of the music business. All policies referring to premises such as Carlisle House, Tottenham Street Rooms and Drury Lane Theatre are listed under venues. It should also be noted that while policies referring to Robert Bremner's property in Edinburgh are listed alongside his London policies, they have not been counted in the statistics for London.

EDITORIAL CONVENTIONS

The following editorial conventions and abbreviations have been used throughout:

<>	Deleted in original
{ }	Inserted in original
[]	Editorial
\	New line
BIOS	The British Institute of Organ Studies
CCA	Clothworkers' Company Archive
CLC	City of London Corporation
CLRO	Corporation of London Record Office
DBOB	The Freeman-Edmonds Directory of British Organ Builders
GL	Guildhall Library
LMA	London Metropolitan Archives
mf	Microfilm
RSM	Royal Society of Musicians
TNA: PRO	The National Archives: Public Record Office
WCA	Westminster City Archives

In addition, two genealogy websites have been accessed to determine various births, deaths and marriages:

< http://familysearch.org >	Free family history and genealogy records website provided by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints
< http://Ancestry.com >	Accessed at LMA

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HOW TO REFERENCE THIS MATERIAL

If using this material for publication purposes the City of London Corporation, London Metropolitan Archives should be given as the place of deposit. The full reference for the policy registers is: CLC/B/192/F/001/Ms 11936; and the full reference for the books of endorsements is: CLC/B/192/F/004/Ms 12160. Credit should also be made to The Galpin Society website, and to Lance Whitehead and Jenny Nex for the transcriptions.