

The Academy of Ancient Music at the Close of the 18th Century: A Study into the Background of Samuel Arnold's Appointment as Conductor at the Academy

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The Academy of Ancient Music, which was founded in 1726 and aimed to revive the sacred music and madrigals of the 16th and 17th Century, entered upon an era of reform in the 1780s. At that time, the Academy commenced to give public concerts, whose diverse programmes consisted of modern works, such as compositions of Joseph Haydn (1732-1809), as well as those of George Frederic Handel (1685-1759). Meanwhile it was beset with financial problems and internal conflict between its younger directors and older ones. At the end of 1789 Samuel Arnold (1740-1802) was appointed to the conductor at the Academy after Benjamin Cooke (1734-93) resigned the post. However, the circumstances within the Academy have not been fully researched.

The author of this paper intends to elucidate the reasons behind this conflict by researching further the managers of the Academy since the 1780s. In the course of his study the author confirms that some of the members of the Glee Club, especially Robert Smith (1740/1-1810) - the founder of the club -, took up important posts at the Academy before and after Arnold's appointment as the conductor. Hence, it is concluded that the members must have played a key role in Arnold's appointment.

In his paper the author also focuses on the reasons why Arnold was appointed through a study of the changes of the concert programmes at the Academy. These reasons include the new taste for music in which Cooke could not demonstrate his leadership, and the young managers' lack of interest in the original notion of 'ancient music'. From this point of view, the author intends to develop his assumption that the conflict was caused not simply by a personnel problem, but by the transition of their musical preferences, which was influenced by contemporary concerts in London.