

Hearing History



WRITING THE SOUNDS OF ERDDIG



THEODORE LANGDALE
GURULEEN KAHLO

How it Works

The augmented reality (AR) Hearing History experience works with this printed interactive brochure. Using the Hearing History app on your phone or device, specially selected photographs in the brochure connect to the app to reveal AR features – such as audio, video, picture galleries and pop-up text boxes – when your device is held up to the page.

This icon throughout the brochure signals an AR feature:



1. Download the App

Hold your phone or device over the QR code below to download the free Hearing History app from the App Store or Google Play.



2. Point at the Page

Open the app and hover your camera over any image with the AR icon. Sound on!



3. Watch It Come Alive

Enjoy videos, audio clips and interactive content that bring the sights and sounds of Erddig to life.



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Erddig is a place where old memories are found and new memories are made. Among the National Trust's most fascinating houses, it is richly layered with sights, sounds, and stories. Servants and Yorke family members alike engaged in artistic and expressive pursuits. Musical instruments, music books, and sheet music are abundant at Erddig, and life at the house was often noisy with sounds of work and play.





Stories *in Sound*

The creative works gathered here invite you to listen more closely to the house, its histories and the lives lived within. THEODORE LANGDALE captures how sound, memory and emotion reverberate through Erddig's rooms, both above and below stairs, and out into the gardens. The artist, sculptor and lady's maid Elizabeth Ratcliffe (c1735-c1810) overhears the harpsichord of teenage Anne Jemima Yorke (1754-1770). The playing of Philip Yorke II (1849-1922) infuses the house with the sounds of the organ, while the violin of Head Housemaid Matilda Boulter (1878-1966) duets with visiting guests and drifts from her bedroom in the Clock Attic.

GURULEEN KAHLO gives voice to Erddig's historic images of people of colour. Many European households of the 18th century included free or enslaved Black servants, and an older painting of a Black servant in livery was added to a collection of servant portraits commissioned by Erddig's owner Philip Yorke (1743–1804). Yorke inserted a poem that evokes a servant in the earlier household of John Meller (1665–1733), but the sitter may have been some other person: in the top corner, 'John Hanby, aged 25' has been overpainted. There is some evidence that Meller employed one or more Black servants at Erddig, though no documentation of their names or occupations. If the portrait claims to represent a real person, the Soho tapestries Meller commissioned for Erddig c.1720 instead represent an Eastern fantasy land. Black servants appear in every panel, some providing musical entertainment. Kahlo asks what these figures might have thought or felt, in a quiet but insistent call to look again and to listen.

Theodore *Langdale*

Encore

Before you were music was.
listen,
chaffinches chattering
high in the Irish yews,
wood pigeons braiding
their beds with juniper
& wind
whisking the leaves
with sunlight.
how many melodies nest
on the back of earth's neck
unwritten, unsung
waiting only for ears
to hear them?
listen—





behind these doors
 this ancient music entering
 bellows breathing in tandem
 like life's heartbeat, a thrumming
 chorus of warm metal & live oak
 Philip & his lungs
 whose shadow-hands pumped open
 & shut
 for the dirty work of love inhaling
 to remember bodies are but instruments
 for the natural state of harmony,
 this dancing & exchanging of heat
 between you to exhale this music
 this full & liquid starlight

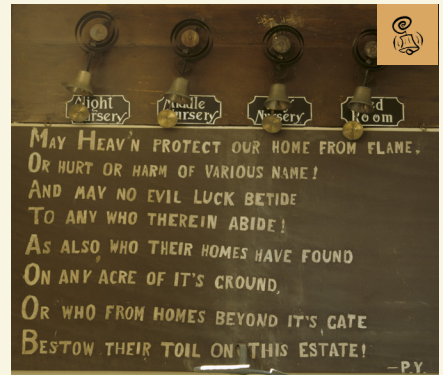


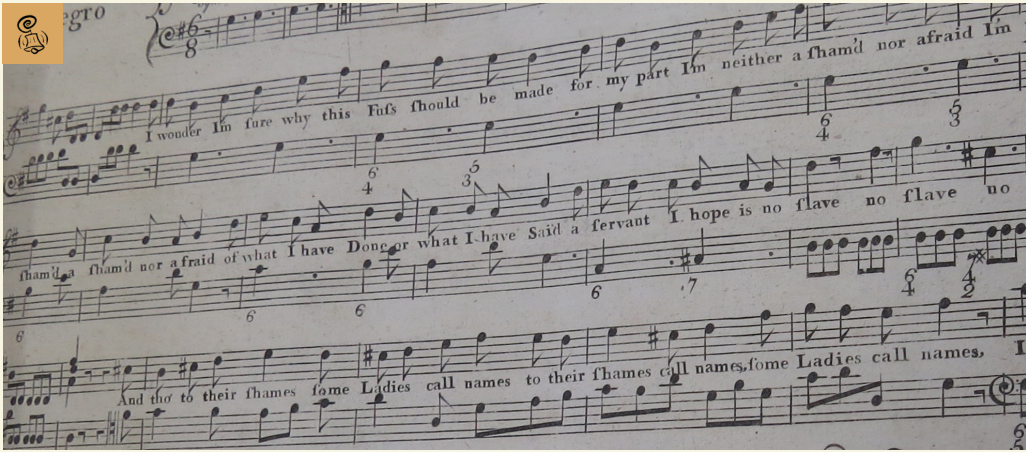
ENCORE

or the scent of star-anise
& hands wrestling fragrant dough,
crackle of oil in a copper pot
under 'Waste Not, Want Not'
& laughter rising like leaven
centuries of gossip seeping
deep in each cast-iron vessel
& scrubbed scrupulously clean
before the children wake

*(did you hear ... in her presence, no less ...
truth be told ... it was like burning)*

bells clanging & clamour of many voices
through walls, the muffled sound
of *neithiwr mi glywais lais angel fel hyn*,
Dafydd, tyrd adref a chwarae trwy'r glyn
& Tillie's melancholic strings
a memory of every woe
halved by the saying of it
as the cleaver's steel tongue
kisses the cutting board





& how beautiful, Betty the little
conjuring places
she will never get to see
from vellum, pearl
mica's sheen & a dream
of Anne's silk soprano:

*on my part I'm neither
ashamed nor afraid (ashamed nor afraid)*

for you to see
the love that lived here
like the soft of stitched peonies
flowering the room in splendour

of what I have done or what I have said

nacreous & true
her father's clock
ticking in tempo
with Anne's secret strings

a servant I hope is no slave

lamp rattle & fingers working
in the dead of night
a monument to girls who dream
that Heaven is a white pagoda
& bedsheets rumpled & cold

(a servant I hope is no slave)





Sunday morning quiets
 broken in the solemn of *holy Mary mother of God*—
 the organ like Lazarus raised
 suspending its breath in air
 while all living things join hands
 in prayer & even the ghosts
 take their seat amongst the choir
 singing *one there is above all others*
o how he loves!
 while echoes of forgotten grief
 men & women weeping
 like something almost animal
 reverberates *God*
why hast thou forsaken me?
(o how he loves)
 & Christmas
 memories of mirth filling the pews
 with its own merry parish
 & salacious whispers hidden
 beneath the howl of the witch dust extractor
(it's true ... his uncle ...
God help them if ... & nothing betwixt ...)
 footsteps hurried & busy brushes
 dust & polish
 moonlight dyed amber & seafoam
 & sapphire through the windows
 watching the congregation wane
(o how he loves)



& life, as it does, goes on
goes out, where peacock shriek
in the deodar cedar
& mock orange blossoms
are sweet on the breeze
children laughing amidst
the squeak of bicycle wheels
whirling & this is pleasure
listen—
still waters & lilypads
beginning to show their faces
as the snow turns slowly
into rain, three hundred apples
swelling somewhere under their
blankets of leaf & the faint echoes
of music trickling between bricks,
men & women made & lost & made
again, each one an instrument,
each instrument itself a soul
& this, the symphony

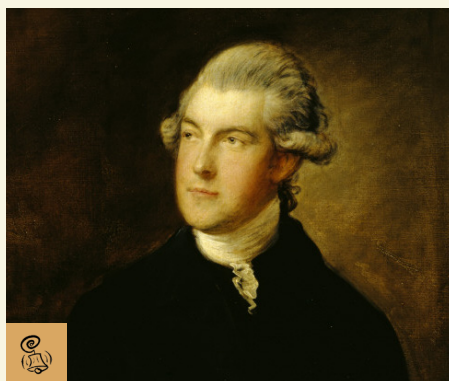


Calling

“All I ask is for
someone to tell
me who I was.”



Guruleen
Kahlo



I passed before the Yorkes ever came to this house. But I'm told Master Yorke wrote a verse for me, a man he never met.

*Of the Condition of this Negre
Our information is but megre;
However here, he was a dweller,
And blew the horn for Master Meller.
Here, too he dy'd, but when or how,
Can scarcely be remember'd now,*

Who was I? How did I live? What was my real name? Why am I not remembered in the way all the others were? Please, all I ask is for someone to tell me who I was.

*Here also liv'd a dingy brother,
Who play'd together with the other,
But, of him, yet longer rotten,
Every particular's forgotten,*

A brother. If not by blood, by life. An equal. And yet his record is even fainter than mine. Were we kin? Was he ever really here? Was I?

*Save that like Tweedle-Tum & dee,
These but in notes, could [n]e'er agree,
In all things else, as they do tell ye,
We're just like Handel and Corelli.
O had it been in their life's course
T'have met with Massa Wilberforce,
They wou'd in this alone, have join'd,
And been together of a mind,
Have rais'd their Horns to one high tune,
And blown his Merits, to the Moon.*

His flattery for a man he has never heard play, never met, knows nothing about. How much of this verse is for me, for the other servants? How much of this is for Master Yorke's collection, to be shown off? When will I be seen as a man, with a past, with hopes and fears?

Please, all I ask is for someone to tell me who I was.



“A brother. If not
by blood by life.”

Weaving



I

am between two girls who have been taught by the very best. I am able to hold my own. A small crowd of families and friends watch on. I see the women among them and think of how I wish I would have known my mother. I could have played for her, seen the pride shine brightly in her eyes. I do not even know what my mother looks like, let alone where she is.

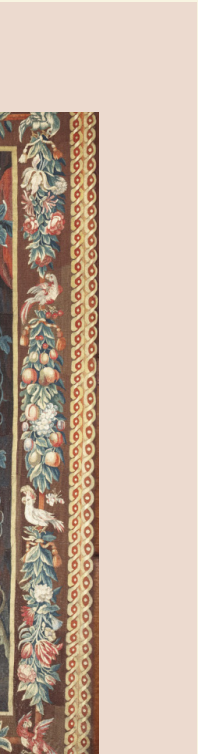
I follow the gaze of the girl sat below me. She looks across to a beaming lady, who signals for her to play on. The woman has the same nose, the same curly locks as the girl. Encouraged, the girl's back straightens slightly, her strings strummed louder. I lock eyes with the woman and, for a moment, I feel what the girl does. I lift my book, ready to sing with a renewed confidence, when her smile drops, turning into a polite nod. I go back to being the girl without the mother, sat on the cold marble steps.



II



I have been standing in the summer heat with creatures for so long I feel that time has stopped altogether. They had arrived to take the bird, shipped over as a wedding present from a rich uncle, and their dog, old and tired, back up the short path to their home when the lady decided that she was not in fact done with her daily stroll. She informed the gentleman, who then told me to stay put just a short while longer. I wish I could protest, demand a seat at least, but I cannot risk losing this job. So, I do as I was trained, nod politely and murmur, "Yes, sir."





Did you see us dotted among the trees, performing as we were told? Did you see us walking the pets, caring for them while their owners took their third walk of the day? Did you find us in the Tapestry Room? Did you see us woven into the lives of the men, women, children, masters, servants, guests of this place?

Because that is what we are. We are woven in. We cannot be so easily removed. To be rid of us they must unpick thread after thread. Stitch after stitch. And even then, what is left behind will be warped, wrong. Because we are important too.

I am important too. Did you see me in the corner of the Servants' Hall? I may be painted over, but I am not that easy to erase. Traces of me are still here, below the layers, in the records. Whether I was at this home or not, I am a part of this story.

We are not the only ones.

There are others like us everywhere you go. Every museum, house or manor.

You may not see us right away. We could be hidden in a corner. Or buried under layers of paint, centuries of neglect.



Embedded

We may not even be visible at all.

But we are there.

We are there in the music, the sound, the instruments.

The art on the walls, the textiles of the dresses and shawls. The cuts of the dress shirt.

The money. How do you think the old stately home landlords made their money?

They might not write about us on the walls, or at the front door –

Yet. They are trying to. Trying to look under the layers, between the stitches and draw out our pasts.

Look for us.

If you look for us.

If you look for us.

You are showing that we matter. We are not only parts of the story. We are the story too.

Look for us wherever you go.



THEODORE LANGDALE was born in Southern California and now lives in Manchester, England. His poetry engages with language and its limitations, queer identity, and theology. His work is featured in *ORIGIN* at Dunham Massey, Young Identity's *Creation Through Form*, *SCAB Magazine*, *Arcturus*, and others.

GURULEEN KAHLO (she/her) is a prose and scriptwriter with experience working in historical places and with archives. She has worked with various Manchester archives alongside The Writing Squad and has recently completed a residency at Elizabeth Gaskell House.

The Hearing History app and brochure use research from the project *Music, Home, and Heritage*. Visit our free online sound library, *Sounding Erddig*, featuring 18th–20th century music made using Erddig's instruments, alongside recreated sounds of daily life: sound-heritage.ac.uk/sounding-erddig

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Project support: Sarah Cleave, Jessica Davies, Eshwari Gaddam

National Trust contributors: Susanne Gronnow, Lizzie Champion, Dominic Chennell, Hawys Dafis, Anne Kurdock

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