

The Vauxhall Band
The Eighteenth-Century London Flautist
Concert Project - July 2024

Laura Piras - Flute
Anna Brigham - Violin
Carina Drury - Cello
David Wright - Harpsichord

Thank you to the Trustees of Angel Early Music for supporting The Vauxhall Band's recent concert project "The Eighteenth-Century London Flautist".

The Vauxhall Band (registered charity no.1199436) is a period instrument orchestra which was formed in 2021. The ensemble is a revival of the name which the group of musicians who played at Vauxhall Gardens were referred to historically.

The Eighteenth-Century London Flautist project was initiated following an invitation from St Cecilia's Hall, Edinburgh to create a chamber concert based around the historical flutes in their collection for the 2024 Sir Nicholas Shackleton Memorial Concert as part of the Edinburgh Fringe Festival.

The opportunity arose to add two London performances to the project and it is for these two concerts that Angel Early Music awarded a grant and a guarantee against loss relating to ticket sales. The overall project was also supported by Continuo Foundation and The Shackleton Fund, and facilitated by Canary Wharf, The Space Theatre, Mc & Sons, Vauxhall, St Cecilia's Hall, the Friends of St Cecilia's Hall and the Edinburgh Fringe Festival.

Project Concept

A small pocket of creative activity by specialist instrument makers such as the Stanesby, Potter and Urquhart families, led to a vast output of finely-crafted, unique flutes in London, examples of which are housed at St Cecilia's Hall. The concert project grew from the stories of these flute makers, their flutes, the composers who wrote music for the instrument and the flautists who performed it.

Music curated for the concert programme featured composers from eighteenth-century London's pleasure gardens and West End theatres, including: Lewis Granom, renowned English flautist and composer; Carl Weiss, principal flautist at the court of King George III, who was also a flautist; James Oswald, chamber composer to George III, and Vauxhall Gardens composers Thomas Arne, Handel and William Boyce. At our Vauxhall concert we also performed traditional Irish music adapted by Samuel Arnold and William Shield to be featured in plays by John O'Keefe in eighteenth-century London's theatres.

For the London concerts Laura Piras performed selected music on a copy of a flute by London flute maker Thomas Stanesby Jnr (1692–1754). The copy was made by Robert Bigio and is based on an original flute which is housed in St Cecilia's Hall.



9th July 2024 - Crossrail Place Roof Garden, Canary Wharf

The Vauxhall Band performed in the amphitheatre at Crossrail Place Roof Garden, an amazing glass-covered space at Canary Wharf, which is home to many exotic plants and flowers. This performance was the opportunity for us to recreate the experience which thousands of people would have had in public gardens in London in the eighteenth century. It was such a fantastic experience for us to perform in this modern-day pleasure garden.

The concert was facilitated by Canary Wharf and The Space Theatre, who allocated (free) online tickets, provided pre-event administration, and a duty manager and security for the event.

Our performance attracted listeners from a wide demographic, including families, international tourists and those who work at Canary Wharf. During our afternoon rehearsal (which was in the public space) many visitors to the garden stopped to listen, including young children who danced to our music. We also had the opportunity to chat to passersby and let them know about The Vauxhall Band and our concert.

For the evening concert there were c.50 audience members sitting in the amphitheatre, made up of people who knew about the concert in advance and those who had happened to walk by earlier in the day. During the concert many other people visiting local restaurants stopped to stand and listen, creating a total estimated audience for the day of c.150 people.



28th July 2024 - Mc & Sons, Vauxhall

Our second concert was an atmospheric Sunday afternoon soirée at Mc & Sons, a historic pub in the heart of Vauxhall. As a gesture of thanks to our hosts we also performed some traditional Irish music adapted for use in plays in London theatres by John O’Keeffe by Vauxhall Gardens composers Samuel Arnold and William Shield, which was a fascinating additional research journey in itself.

This concert was a great opportunity to bring local history back to life. Our audience was made up of Vauxhall residents plus those who had travelled from further afield, including several people from East Sussex.

Impact of the Angel Early Music Grant Award

The Angel Early Music grant award, with the added support of the guarantee against loss, enabled our project to go ahead in full. Without these additional finances we simply wouldn’t have been able to put on both of the London concerts. The grant contributed to our musicians’ fees, portorage, harpsichord hire and tuning, parking, mileage and administration for both the rehearsal day and two concert days in London.

We were really pleased that so many people from such a wide demographic attended the Crossrail Place Roof Garden concert. We estimate the audience to be c.50, plus additional passersby of c.100 during the day. Audience members said they especially enjoyed experiencing classical music in a new environment and discovering historical musical instruments which they hadn’t heard or seen before. The free tickets meant there were no financial barriers to anyone wishing to attend our performance.

As a result of this concert we have gained new audience members and followers on social media, and new business connections with Canary Wharf and The Space Theatre.

For our Mc & Sons concert we based our ticket sales estimate on the average number of tickets we'd sold at other small venues in Vauxhall. We advertised widely via our social media (with the help of Mc & Sons), through word of mouth and sent the information to our mailing list, but didn't sell as many tickets as we'd hoped, so we were very grateful for the guarantee against loss offered by Angel Early Music as back up.

The audience, management and staff at Mc & Sons were very enthusiastic about our performance. They said they especially enjoyed the musical connections to local history and we had some really interesting conversations, during the concert about the music, and afterwards about future performance opportunities for The Vauxhall Band in Vauxhall.

At both concerts the musicians took the opportunity to talk to the audience about the music being performed, the lives of the composers and the instruments being played.

We're delighted that this project aligned with and met so many of The Vauxhall Band's aims and objectives, including:

- ❖ Bringing our music to a diverse audience.
- ❖ Connecting with new audience members.
- ❖ Making our music available to a wider audience demographic by performing in more unusual and accessible locations.
- ❖ Performing in a garden.
- ❖ Performing in the community at Vauxhall.
- ❖ Telling the stories of musicians and composers from history.
- ❖ Highlighting the importance of musical instrument conservation work.
- ❖ Creating photo and video footage from the events so our work can reach a wider audience online.

This project has been a wonderful opportunity and an important step in the development of The Vauxhall Band. Thank you so much to Angel Early Music for your support, we're very grateful.

Laura Piras

Artistic Director and Founder

The Vauxhall Band

www.thevauxhallband.com

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