

Hebrew Melodies

Music and the Bible in Nineteenth-Century Europe

25-26 June 2015, King's College London

The idea that nineteenth-century composers and performers drew inspiration from the Bible is uncontroversial. Yet insufficient attention has been paid to the relationship between the contemporary transformations in religion, music, history, archaeology and biblical scholarship in nineteenth-century Europe. While new historical sciences called into question the historicity of the Bible, controversies raged over the performance, publication and censorship of new and old musical forms. From oratorio to opera, from parlour song to pantomime, and from hymn to broadside, nineteenth-century Europeans encountered elements of the biblical past in musical form. Music, both elite and popular, played an important role in the formation, regulation and contestation of religious and cultural identity and became a way of addressing questions of class, nation and race. At the same time, new intellectual formations, including the beginnings of ethnomusicology, were often underpinned by a sense of biblical and musical history. This conference will initiate an interdisciplinary discussion between scholars of music, cultural history, literature, theology and biblical scholarship, with the aim of revealing points of intersection and exchange between these disciplines and activities in the long nineteenth century.

Proposals are invited for papers on any issue related to the theme. Topics may include but are not limited to:

- Musicology and biblical criticism
- Hymns and sacred music
- Biblical opera and oratorio
- Music aesthetics and the sacred
- Psalms
- Education and worship
- Study of ancient music
- Poems, ballads and Lieder
- Religion and popular music
- Choirs and choral societies
- Religious music and the emotions
- Performers and performance spaces
- Biblical musicians/composers (David, Solomon, Moses, Miriam &c.)



The conference will be in a workshop format and consist of a series of roundtable discussions of pre-circulated papers. Proposals (300 words max.) for 3,000-5,000 word papers should be sent to Brian Murray (bhm26@cam.ac.uk) and James Grande (james.grande@kcl.ac.uk) by Friday 16 January 2015. Participants will then be expected to submit a draft of their paper by Monday 1 June 2015.

This event is a collaboration between the ERC-funded research projects 'The Bible and Antiquity in Nineteenth-Century Culture' at the University of Cambridge and 'Music in London, 1800-1851' at King's College London.