



# Preface, Sources and Critical Commentary

## Preface

This edition of the ‘Hautboi Solo’ and the Sonata in B flat major, Part 2, No.10, by William Babell (1688-1723) has had a lengthy gestation. I came across the ‘Hautboi Solo’ while a student at the Royal Academy of Music (RAM). At that time I was researching music by Pepusch, specifically some of his anthems written for the Duke of Chandos at Cannons, along with the organ Voluntary in C, the motet *Beatus vir* and some solo cantatas. In parallel with that, I was also exploring early oboe repertoire, in part for my sister Elaine (1954-2015) who was about to study with Terence MacDonagh (1908-1986) at the Royal College of Music.

Blinkered by my Pepusch enthusiasms, I rashly believed this might be an oboe sonata by Dr. P himself. As such, my first unpublished edition received a BBC broadcast on 28 February 1971 by the oboist Derek Bell (later of the Chieftains) with Havelock Nelson, piano. The *Radio Times* listing was ‘Pepusch, arr. Byers, Sonata for oboe and piano’. A public performance, also crediting Pepusch, was given in Belfast Central Library on 29 December 1970 by Ian Frost, oboe, with David Byers (DB), harpsichord, and Catherine Bunting, cello.

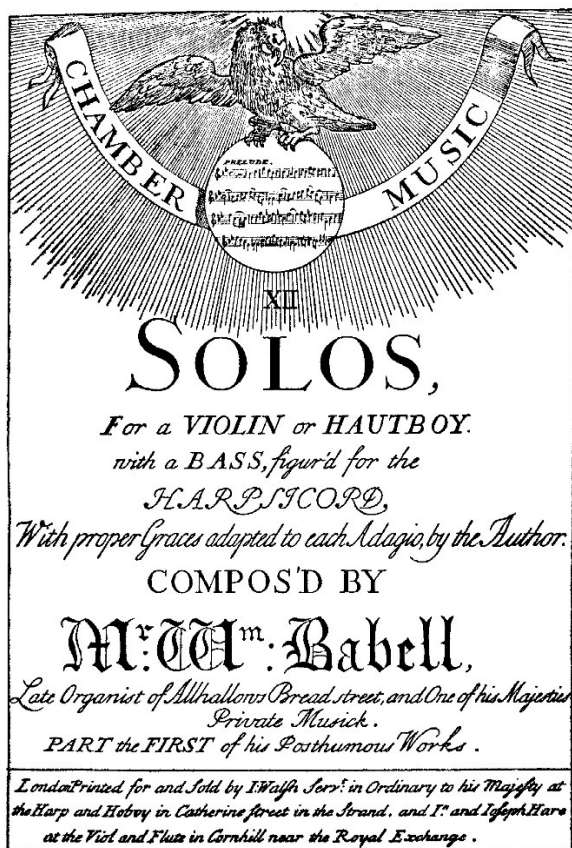
In London I used more discretion and historical correctness for performances at Royal Holloway College (18 November 1970) and St Ninian’s Church, Golders Green (10 January 1971), crediting the composer as ‘Anon’. The performers were Sandra Mackay, oboe, DB, organ, and Christopher May, cello. Similar discretion continued for a Pepusch concert in the Duke’s Hall, RAM, on 14 July 1971 when the sonata by ‘Anon’ was again played by Sandra Mackay, with DB, harpsichord, and Michael Edwards, cello (later of ELO, the Electric Light Orchestra; he died in a tragic accident in 2010).

Around this time, I acquired photocopies of the two volumes or ‘parts’ of William Babell’s posthumously published 24 *Solos* (Walsh & Hare, London c.1725) from the British Museum Library. Nowadays the *Solos* are readily available to purchase in facsimile editions and are also easily accessible online through the IMSLP website.

Much to my surprise, I discovered that the first three of the RAM ‘Hautboi Solo’ movements corresponded closely with the first three of Babell’s Sonata X in ‘Part the Second’. The RAM fourth movement was closely replicated as the finale of Sonata XII in the same Part. It was a rewarding moment when the RAM’s library card index for its MS 90 was then updated accordingly. And at least Babell had been a pupil of Dr Pepusch!

For my first unpublished edition of the ‘Hautboi Solo’, pre-Babell as it was, I provided a suggested ornamented version of the third movement (retained here for old time’s sake), though, as with continuo realisations, freely improvised versions are usually preferable. Babell’s published *Solos* are particularly noted for their additional ‘proper Graces adapted to

each Adagio by the Author'. As others have pointed out, these are perhaps more suited to the violin than the oboe (Babell, most famous as a virtuoso harpsichordist, was also a violinist), however, they illustrate contemporary performance practice, echoing the elaborations of Corelli as published by Walsh in 1707 and Roger in Amsterdam c.1710 (pirated by Walsh in London the following year), and surviving in manuscript by the likes of Geminiani or J.H. Roman or those of Babell's friend and Geminiani pupil, Matthew Dubourg.



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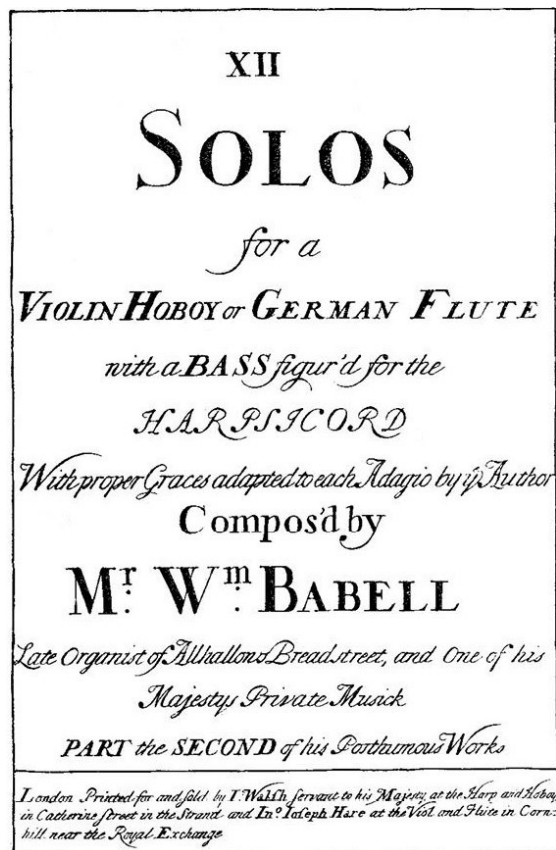
XI

**SOLOS,**  
For a VIOLIN or HAUTOBOY.  
with a BASS, figur'd for the  
HARPSICORD,  
With proper Graces adapted to each Adagio, by the Author.

COMPOS'D BY  
**M. W. Babell,**  
Late Organist of Allhallows Bread street, and One of his Majesty's  
Private Musick.

PART the FIRST of his Posthumous Works.

London Printed for and Sold by T. Walsh, Servant to his Majesty at the Harp and Hoboy in Catherine street in the Strand, and J. and J. Baskin at the Viol and Flute in Cornhill near the Royal Exchange.



XII

**SOLOS**  
for a  
VIOLIN HOBOY or GERMAN FLUTE  
with a BASS figur'd for the  
HARPSICORD  
With proper Graces adapted to each Adagio by the Author

Compos'd by  
**M. W. BABELL**  
Late Organist of Allhallows Bread street, and One of his  
Majesty's Private Musick

PART the SECOND of his Posthumous Works

London Printed for and sold by T. Walsh, servant to his Majesty at the Harp and Hoboy in Catherine street in the Strand, and In J. Joseph Hare at the Viol and Flute in Cornhill near the Royal Exchange.

The title pages of Parts the First and Second of Babell's 24 Solos, published c.1725

Babell's Sonata Part 2, No.10, has none of the rich demi-semi-quavered flourishes with irrational numbers of small note heads found throughout a number of the slow movements in Babell's Solos. Not that there was sufficient performance space for flourishes in this case anyway, given the Sonata's constant quaver tread of its bass lines. Nonetheless, its first and third movements are enriched with effective embellishments which will guide today's interpreter towards an historically informed, or even historically inspired, performance of the 'Hautboi Solo'. Hence this edition of both B flat sonatas.

Then there's that title with the word 'Hautboi'. The first decades of the 18th century saw the widespread acceptance of the French hautbois across Europe, including England where it was termed the hautboy – see Part the First above. Other spellings existed – as in the publisher John Walsh's trade sign, the 'Harp and Hoboy' and in the title of Part the Second.

Had our RAM manuscript copyist assumed 'hautbois' was a plural word and reckoned 'hautboi' to be its singular form?!

Solo sonatas for the oboe are not common across these years – in Handel’s output, only three authentic ones are known. Nor would they have been a commercially viable proposition for a publisher. The tessitura of Babell’s *Solos* and their limited tonalities confirm the oboe as the most likely solo instrument, but the alternative violin on the first title page, and the addition of the German Flute (the transverse flute as distinct from the recorder) on the second, must surely have increased sales.

Babell, or the oboist he was writing for, clearly enjoyed the key of B flat major – six of the 24 sonatas are in that key; there are five each in C minor and E flat major, four in G minor, two in F major, one each in F minor and G major. So, who were the oboists for whom Babell may have been writing?

In the first few years of the 18th century, London was a magnet for attracting European musicians seeking greater opportunities or escaping from political strife. Before Handel’s arrival from Hanover in 1710, the list includes Pepusch and three important wind players, noted as oboists, but well able to play flute (meaning primarily recorders) and bassoon: the Flemish Jean Baptiste Loeillet (‘John Loeillet of London’, also a composer and harpsichordist), Jean Christian Kytch from the Netherlands, and German-born Johann Ernst Galliard who had studied at Hanover and was also a composer.

Any one of them may have given performances with William Babell during the last decade of Babell’s short life. Indeed, all these musicians knew each other through theatre orchestras (Drury Lane, Queen’s Theatre, Haymarket, Lincoln Inn’s Fields, etc) where they would also have known French-born, British-naturalised (1699) Charles Babel (c.1636-1716).

He was an oboist and bassoonist who had played in the court orchestra in Hanover (where William was most likely born – his mother was a Parisian). The family settled in The Hague in 1693, converting from Catholicism to French Calvinism in 1696. They arrived in Britain in 1699, Charles having played bassoon in William III’s army in The Hague in 1697-98<sup>1</sup>.

Charles Babel<sup>2</sup> was said to be still playing in the Drury Lane Theatre at the age of 80. Babel – with a singular ‘l’ – was also an important music copyist, not least of music by Lully. Charles was the first teacher of his son William Babell – eventually with that double ‘l’ – virtuoso harpsichordist, violinist, composer and himself also a music copyist. Andrew Woolley has written<sup>3</sup> that ‘William signed his name ‘Babel’, but the Anglicized spelling ‘Babell’, which was used by [the publisher] Walsh, helps to distinguish him from his French-born, Francophile father, whose name was always spelt with one ‘l’.’

References in the press<sup>4</sup> mention William; the *Daily Courant* for 25 March 1717 advertises ‘an Entertainment on the Harpsichord by Mr Babel, intirely new ... and a Solo on the

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<sup>1</sup> Ahrendt, Rebekah. *The Babel[l]s between Hanover and London*, 17th Biennial International Conference on Baroque Music, 2016, Canterbury Christ Church University and RMA, programme, p.30.

<sup>2</sup> Lasocki, David. *Charles Babel's Manuscripts for the Recorder: Light on Repertoire and the Art of Preluding (c.1700)*. Access: [instantharmony.net/Music/babel-recorder-manuscripts.pdf](http://instantharmony.net/Music/babel-recorder-manuscripts.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> Woolley, Andrew. ‘William Babell as a performer-composer and music copyist’, *Eighteenth-Century Music*, Volume 17, Issue 1, pp.87-99, Cambridge University Press 2020

<sup>4</sup> Tilmouth, Michael. *A Calendar of References to Music in Newspapers published in London and the Provinces (1660-1719)*, Royal Musical Association Research Chronicle I (1960)

Hautboy by Mr Kitch [sic]'. David Lasocki<sup>5</sup> believes that some of the oboe sonatas played by Kytch at his several concerts in Hickford's Concert Rooms between 1719 and 1723 'probably included the 24 of William Babell, harpsichordist at Lincoln Inn's Fields Theatre, published two years after the composer's death in 1723 but presumably written during the previous decade.'

In the period from 1717 onwards, several press references for hautboy solos mention Keitch or Kitch or Kytch. He was also associated with Handel across many years and with both Handel and Pepusch at Cannons for the Duke of Chandos. On 18 March 1719<sup>6</sup> for a benefit concert for the bass singer George Vanbrughe (employed at Cannons) in 'Coignand's Great Room in Cross Street, near the Globe Tavern in Hatton Garden', Dr Pepusch accompanied the singers and likely the 'hautboy solo played by Keitch'. Perhaps the 'Hautboi Solo'?!

Kytch died in poverty in 1738 and it was the plight of his two sons which caused a group of musicians, including Handel and Pepusch, to raise money for them and initiate 'The Fund for Decay'd Musicians', Britain's oldest musical charity. It was granted a Royal charter in 1790, becoming the Royal Society of Musicians.

Another possible performer of the *Solos* for consideration might be the Swedish oboist and composer Johan Helmich Roman (1694-1758) who lived in London around 1715-1721 and, like Babell, was a pupil of Pepusch and moved in the same circles as Handel and Geminiani.

Bruce Haynes, writing in his bibliography of *Music for oboe*,<sup>7</sup> suggested that the 'Hautboi Solo', was likely written for John Loeillet, though there's little available information about his concert activities across the second decade of the 18th century. He seems to have retired from the Queen's Theatre band in 1711 and given lessons and private concerts in his house in Hart Street, Covent Garden<sup>8</sup>. It was there, probably in January 1715, hot off the press, that Corelli's influential 12 *Concerti grossi*, Op.6, were given their first English performance<sup>9</sup>.

When William Babell, of the parish of St Andrew Holborn in the county of Middlesex, signed his last will and testament on 30 December 1720, he left everything (after the payment of all or any debts) to 'my dear loving wife Alice Babel to and for her own absolute use and disposal'. She was his sole executrix. They had married on 18 February 1718 – she was Alice Green of St Paul, Covent Garden. That same year he was appointed organist of All Hallows, Bread Street and on 26 April 1718 he had a benefit concert at the Lincoln's Inn Fields Theatre<sup>10</sup>.

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<sup>5</sup> Lasocki, David. *The French Hautboy in England, 1673-1730*. *Early Music*, Aug.1988, Vol.16, No.3, pp. 339-357, Oxford University Press.

<sup>6</sup> Talbot, Michael. *Calendar*, Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Haynes, Bruce. *Music for oboe, 1650-1800: a bibliography*. Berkeley, CA, 2/1992, p.22

<sup>8</sup> Lasocki, David. *A New Look at the Life of John Loeillet (1680-1730)* (Portland, Oregon, 1983)  
Access: [instantharmony.net/Music/RaMM-6-1984.pdf](http://instantharmony.net/Music/RaMM-6-1984.pdf)

<sup>9</sup> Corelli's Op.6 concertos were advertised in the *Post Man* by Estienne Roger's London agent, Henry Ribboteau, on 1 January 1715.

<sup>10</sup> Highfill, Philip H.; Burnim, Kalman A.; Langhans, Edward A. *A Biographical Dictionary of Actors, Actresses, Musicians, Dancers, Managers & Other Stage Personnel in London, 1660-1800*. Vol. 1, Southern Illinois University Press, 1973

Presumably it was Alice who provided to John Walsh the manuscript scores which would make up Babell's 24 Solos. Walsh, in turn, in the Preface to Part the First, asked others to seek out more works by 'his late lov'd friend':

## PREFACE.

*The Occasion of this Preface, was to congratulate the Harmonious on the Publication of this Work, Compos'd by my late lov'd Friend, M<sup>r</sup>. William Babell.*

*The following Pieces being obtain'd from the Executors of a particular Friend of the Author's, I hope will prove an Example to induce all Persons, who have any other of his Compositions, to oblige the Public with them.*

*When the World is so unfortunate to lose an esteem'd Author, the only Consolation we have, is the enjoyment of his Works: therefore 'tis to be hop'd, that notwithstanding, the too common Vanity of making Manuscripts scarce, by confining them to the Closets of Particulars; it will in this case be avoided.*

*HARMONY is so Universally esteem'd, that to conceal any of his Performances, would be in some measure doing an Injustice to the Public: Burying a Treasure that might be enjoy'd by others without loss: to the Donor: and denying him that Beautifull and lasting Monument which his Genius rais'd to him in his Works.*

*In fine, Our Author may justly be Recorded, an Inexhaustible Treasure of Harmony: And, had he liv'd in Shakespear's time; we might justly have concluded him the Occasion of the following Lines.*

*If Music be the Food of Love, play on:  
That Strain again: It had a dying Fall:  
Oh! it came o're my Ear like a sweet Sound  
That breathes upon a Bank of Violets  
Stealing and giving Odours.*

*Shak.*

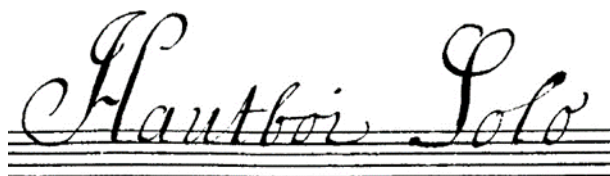
My approach in preparing this edition has been a ‘light touch’ one. The two sonatas differ in many details. One approach might have been to add the relevant figured bass and ornamentation for shared common bars to the ‘Hautboi Solo’ from the Walsh-published movements. However, in the interest of allowing performers their own independence (with the hypocritical exception of the retained 1972 editorial ornamentation for the *Largo*), I have presented the ‘Hautboi Solo’ as it appears in the RAM manuscript, followed separately by Babell’s complete Sonata, Part 2, No.10 and then the fourth movement of Part 2 No.12, which corresponds to the fourth movement of the ‘Hautboi Solo’.

To date, the manuscript sources for Walsh’s publication of the *Solos* have not been traced. Charles Gower Price has suggested that the RAM score was ‘copied from a lost source, and that Babell’s missing manuscript prepared for the Walsh publication was a revision of the same or a similar source’<sup>11</sup>.

My interpretation would reverse that suggestion. Yes, a common source perhaps, but I believe most of the RAM score is more likely a revision or rewriting of the Walsh material or its source. Overall, the ‘Hautboi Solo’ has an easy-going inevitability in its assured direction of travel. Significant differences between the two sonatas are listed below in the Critical Commentary.

## Sources for this edition

The copy-text (hereafter A01) for the ‘Hautboi Solo’ is in the manuscript GB-Lam MS 90, ff.107-110 (labelled pp.287-290). The four unascribed movements, each on a new page, are written on two staves, treble and unfigured bass, with the Italian tempo markings *Adagio*, *Allegro*, *Largo* and *Siciliana*.



MS 90 is an oblong folio volume, at one time bound together with MS 12. MS 90 comprises a collection of arias and cantatas in Italian and English by Bononcini, Handel, Ariosti, Pepusch, Steffani and Orlandini, with a Concerto in A major by Pepusch and Vivaldi’s Concerto in D minor, Op.3, No.5. The arias from Handel’s *Scipione* (1726) and *Admeto* (1727) seem to be the latest date represented. A note at the front of the volume states ‘Dr Boyce’s handwriting’, but this is not the case.

The volume was one of several donated to the RAM by R.J.S. Stevens (1757-1837), organist of the Charterhouse from 1796 to his death. The original owner was Stevens’ teacher, William Savage (c.1720-1789), Master of the Children at St Paul’s, a pupil of Pepusch and a fellow member of the Academy of Ancient Music. It is likely that this and other volumes in the RAM’s Savage-Stevens collection belonged to Pepusch himself and were obtained by Savage after Pepusch’s death in 1752.

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<sup>11</sup> Price, Charles Gower. ‘Free ornamentation in the solo sonatas of William Babell: defining a personal style of improvised embellishment’ *Early Music*, Feb. 2001, Vol.29, No.1, pp.29-54, OUP

One as yet unidentified – and neat – copyist, labelled ‘Scribe D’ by D.F. Cook, seems to have been responsible for much of this volume<sup>12</sup>. Cook describes him as ‘evidently associated with Pepusch, either at Cannons, or the theatre, or both’.

In the same MS 90 volume are seven untitled pieces of two-stave music, two of which are F major transpositions of the first and fourth movements of the ‘Hautboi Solo’. The first of these (A02), the *Adagio*, is on f.60 (p.172) and occurs before an aria from Bononcini’s *Camilla*, also in F; the second, the *Siciliana* (A03), is on f.15 (p.54) and precedes an aria from Handel’s *Scipione* in A major.

The only source, (B01), for the Sonata Part 2, No.10, and for the *Presto* fourth movement version from Sonata Part 2, No.12, is Part the Second of the Walsh & Hare *Solos* publication of c.1725. Both Parts were posthumous publications, so unless they (or the first one) were already in preparation, how likely is it that they reflect Babell’s final considered wishes?

They are however a remarkable gather-up, mostly in four movements, but one in each Part is in just two movements, one is in six movements (Part 2, No.8 in E flat major) and there’s also a move towards something more locally flavoured with the appearance in Part Two of an Air, a Hornpipe and a Round O.

## Editorial Notes

In A01 and A03, repeats in binary movements are indicated by the usual double bar lines with dots, but the Walsh editions only use double bar lines without dots, though repeats may be assumed as a matter of course.

Obvious errors have been corrected without comment, but editorial suggestions (usually ornaments) are given in square brackets. The modern convention, in which each accidental applies for the rest of the bar has been used.

In B01, all original trills are indicated by two oblique strokes. Those have been replaced in this edition with the modern equivalent.

The continuo realisation is completely editorial and may be adjusted, reduced or replaced at will. First and second time ‘repeat’ bars in the third movement of each sonata are editorial additions to facilitate different keyboard continuo lead-ins to each ‘half’.

Original note values, clefs and time signatures have been retained. Bar numbers have been added and any additional editorial slurs are distinguished by a vertical line.

Trills should begin on the upper note. Peter Prelleur’s 1731 *The Art of the Hautboy* helpfully offers the following recommendations for the ‘Graces’ – the trills and slurs:

A shake is mark’d thus (tr) or thus (//) and denotes wheresoever it is plac’d that such a finger must be shook off, always remembering to sound the note next above it, before you begin to shake and let the proper note be distinctly heard at last ...

A slur is known by this mark (—) and is often drawn under two, three or more notes, to signifie that all those notes are to be sounded with one Breath.

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<sup>12</sup> Cook, Donald Frederick. *The life and works of Johann Christoph Pepusch (1667-1752), with special reference to his dramatic works and cantatas*. Ph.D. diss., (King’s College, University of London, 1982)