The Life and Works of Robert Woodcock, 1690-1728

David Lasocki and Helen Neate

The twelve woodwind concertos of Robert Woodcock—three for sixth flute (soprano recorder in D), three for two sixth flutes, three for transverse flute, and three for oboe—were published in London around 1727. They are of historical importance as the first flute concertos and second recorder concertos ever published, and the first oboe concertos published by an English composer. The authorship of these concertos has been controversial since 1954, when Brian Priestman alleged that at least two of them were probably written by one of the Loellets (on stylistic grounds, he attributed them to Jacques) and stolen by Woodcock. Because music scholars have known little about Woodcock, it has been difficult to come to firm conclusions about his role in the composition and publication of these concertos.

Three years ago, Douglas MacMillan made public Carl Dolmetsch’s suggestion that “Robert Woodcock was not the musician alluded to by both Burney and Hawkins, but Robert Woodcock the celebrated marine painter...[who] was a noted amateur musician.” MacMillan apparently rejected this notion, going on to argue on musical grounds that the composer of the concertos was “the recorder player Robert Woodcock” rather than “Woodcock the painter” or Jacques Loellet.

Part of John Rocque’s map of London (1747), showing Meard’s Court, where Robert Woodcock lived 1723–26. Many of the surrounding streets still bear the same names (Leicester Fields is now Leicester Square).
The purposes of our article are: first, to demonstrate that there was only one Robert Woodcock, a marine painter, amateur woodwind player, and composer; second, to present new biographical information about him; and finally, to discuss the concertos in the light of this information as well as musical evidence, concluding that the sole Robert Woodcock probably did compose the concertos published under his name.

Woodcock's life
The life of Robert Woodcock the marine painter is described in two brief accounts by the engraver George Vertue (1684–1756) among the forty volumes of notes he made between 1713 and 1731 for a projected general history of art in England in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Vertue's notes have served as source material for several entries in biographical dictionaries from the eighteenth century to the present; they are always summarized and sometimes misinterpreted. He was a contemporary of Woodcock and seems to have known him, or at least his friends. These accounts are therefore worth quoting in full. The first, evidently written around 1725, is as follows:

An ingenious gentleman lover of the arts of painting and music, and professor. In his youthful days he had a mighty inclination to drawing, particularly sea pieces, in which by continual practices he made great improvement. But by his often viewing of ships and taking great pleasure to see ships, was comparing their shapes and forms, and studying the use and beauty of each part, in so much that he arrived to so much skill in them as to form and cut models of ships with all the parts—decks, cabins, cables, ropes, masts, sails—in proportion justly admirable perfection. Besides this, his great genius to music which [he] studied at times so as to compose pieces of music of many parts for several instruments, that are well approved of by masters of music, playing a part himself. Still, painting had the greatest share of his affection, and about 1723 he took to practice in oil colors. Having some little instructions from painters his friends, he set himself to copying little pieces after Van de Velde, bigger and small, by which he so happily imitated even at first that greatly encouraged him to pursue that way, and surprised everyone that see his daily improvement. In about two years has copied near 40 pieces of Van de Velde, bigger and small, by which means he was lately able to complete a piece for which the Duke of Chandos paid him 30 guineas. He had till lately a place or clerkship in the Government which he has left and now professes himself painter. A man of genteel mien, well shape and good features. His picture lately painted by Mr. Gibson. He is much affected by the gout.

After Woodcock's death, Vertue added his second account:

Mr. Robert Woodcock, whose genius led him to the study of painting sea pieces of ships, became much esteemed for the little time that he practiced and gave great hopes by his improvement daily, though much afflicted by the gout which, increasing mightily, flew up in head and stomach, [and] after many returns put an end to his life in the prime of his age (about 37), 10th April 1728, and buried at Chelsea.

He was very skilful in music, had judgment and performed on the hautboy in a masterly manner, there being many pieces, some published, and much approved by skilful masters in that science. Vertue thus gives us several important pieces of information about Woodcock's life in general and his musical activities in particular. First and foremost, he reports that Woodcock the marine painter studied music, played the oboe, wrote music (some of which was apparently published between 1725 and 1728), performed his own compositions, and was admired by his contemporaries for his performing and composing. Since Vertue was in close contact with Woodcock, we have no reason to doubt that the painter is to be identified with the named composer of the twelve concertos. We see, too, that his contemporaries took it for granted that he had the compositional skill to write his published works. (The only compositions he is known to have published, incidentally, are the concertos; the unpublished works do not seem to have survived.)

To confirm this identification, it remains to deal with the references to Woodcock by Dr. Charles Burney and Sir John Hawkins cited by MacMillan and mentioned above. Burney, as it happens, merely quotes an advertisement for a concert at which a concerto "composed by Woodcock" (no first name given) was performed: "[blank: no first name given] Woodcock, a celebrated performer on this instrument [the recorder]" and "Robert Woodcock, a famous performer on the flute [i.e., recorder]." Hawkins offers no other biographical information, except for a story about Robert's alleged brother Thomas Woodcock, who does not in fact seem to have been related to Robert. Whether Woodcock really was a famous recorder player, rather than a good amateur, is open to question. Neither Hawkins (b. 1719) nor Burney (b. 1726) could have known Woodcock's playing personality. Hawkins also seems to have been unfamiliar with Woodcock's concertos, since he describes them as if they were all for recorder ("twelve concertos, so contrived, as that flutes of various sizes, having the parts transposed, might play in concert with the other instruments"). When all is said and done, then, the only reliable information we have about Woodcock comes from Vertue and archival sources.

To return to Vertue, he tells us that Woodcock was a "professor," or teacher, perhaps of art or music—this is not clear. He gives us some details of Woodcock's artistic development, including the year when he began to copy paintings by Wil-
lem Van de Velde the younger (1633–1707), the greatest marine painter of his era (and one of the most important of all time). We should point out that there was nothing shameful about copying the works of an established master: it was a recognized method of acquiring technique. These paintings, like his music, were admired, and he sold one to no less a patron than the Duke of Chandos, known for his extravagant visual tastes as well as his musical patronage of Handel and Pepusch. We might add that the “painter friends” referred to by Vertue could well have been other well-known followers of Van de Velde, such as Johann van der Hagen and Peter Monamy.

David Cordingly writes that Woodcock “remained a faithful follower of the younger Van de Velde’s style throughout his life.”13 This opinion can be documented by surviving paintings, most of them now in the National Maritime Museum, Greenwich, London. In several cases Woodcock copied a Van de Velde painting faithfully; in other cases, he retained the composition, but substituted one ship for another. Eventually he painted originals that owe a great deal to Van de Velde in style.16

MacMillan erroneously reports that art historian Michael Bryan wrote of a visit Woodcock made to the Low Countries in 1723 to copy Van de Velde’s paintings. Bryan, in fact, merely summarizes Vertue, who, as we have seen, said only that Woodcock copied paintings by Van de Velde.17 Since Van de Velde lived in England from 1672 until his death in 1707, working for the Crown, a great many of his paintings must have been viewable in the London area—at Court and through private collectors, pupils, assistants, and followers. Therefore Woodcock would not have had to travel to the Netherlands to view them. There is nothing in any extant biographical document about Woodcock to suggest that he ever travelled abroad.

Finally, Vertue tells us that Woodcock was born in 1690–91,18 had a clerkship in the Government that he left, apparently around 1725,19 and died of the gout at Chelsea on 10 April 1728. Vertue’s biographical data can be confirmed and extended from parish registers and wills. Robert was the second child and only son20 of Robert Woodcock senior and his second wife, Deborah. Robert senior had been born on 30 September 1642 in Upton St. Leonard, a village a few miles from Gloucester, at the foot of the Cotswolds.21 According to family wills, his ancestors were husbandmen or yeomen in Upton for several generations.22 By the age of forty, Robert senior had made his way to London, where on 28 May 1683 at Allhallows the Great, he married Deborah Littleton, then said to be a spinster, aged about twenty-eight, of St. John, Hackney.23 He is described as both gentleman—signifying an improvement in his station in life above that of his family—and a widower of St. Mary, Islington. During the next few years, Robert senior and Deborah moved to Chelsea (then a fashionable village just outside London), where Robert junior was baptized at Chelsea Old Church on 9 October 1690,24 probably within a few weeks of his birth.

Robert junior grew up in Shrewsbury House, Chelsea, where his father and mother ran a girls’ school from about 1695 onwards. The house was built in the early sixteenth century as a residence for the Earls of Shrewsbury and is said to have been occupied for a time by Sir Thomas More. (It was demolished in 1813, the site now being occupied by 43–45 Cheyne Walk.)

Robert senior and his wife seem to have been in comfortable circumstances. When he died on 4 April 1710,25 he left to his daughter, Deborah, £1,000, and to Robert junior £500 due from land in Sawbridgeworth, Hertfordshire, an annuity of £14, “my rings I now wear, my watch, my swords and all my books, together with my family coat of arms and my six family pictures and a piece of gold of six and thirty shillings value.”26 He left to his wife a house in Church Lane, Chelsea, then rented to someone else, and the residue of his property. His sons-in-law, Robert Lynch and John Freak, and their wives (i.e., his daughters, unnamed, from his first marriage) received £5 apiece for mourning. Finally he left his maidservant £20.27

Another indication of the family’s position and wealth is that the gallery of Chelsea Old Church was donated by Robert senior. The coat of arms mentioned in the will is that of the Woodcocks of Newport, Shropshire;28 it can be seen on the seal of the will of Robert junior.

In 1714, his mother moved the school from Shrewsbury House to the Manor House, Chelsea, built in the early sixteenth century by Henry VIII and later owned by Sir Hans Sloane; she remained there until her retirement in 1728. (The site is now occupied by 19–26 Cheyne Walk.) She survived both Robert senior and Robert junior and was buried on 17 June 1730 at Chelsea Old Church.29

Robert junior’s lifelong interest in shipping was no doubt aroused and stimulated by the constant passing of smaller boats of every type on the busy Thames immediately in front of his home at Chelsea. Since his parents were teachers, he would presumably have been given a good education himself—enough to enable him to enter the civil service, in any case. Presumably they also saw to it that he was given a good musical education, although there was a stigma attached to a “gentleman” becoming too proficient in that art.

The moving of his mother’s school happened around the same time as his marriage—on 18 May 1714 at the church of

Third Rate Getting Under Way (The National Maritime Museum, London; reproduced with permission). One of Woodcock’s original paintings in the Van de Velde style.
St. Benet and St. Peter, Paul's Wharf, to Ayliffe Stooks of St. Giles-in-the-Fields, spinster. (The choice of church for the wedding suggests that Robert had already moved out of the family residence to that parish.) The couple had five or six children: Eleanor, Leonard (probably the same person), Dianah, Deborah, Anne, and Robert. From the baptismal records of their children, it seems that Robert and Ayliffe were living in the parish of St. Giles-in-the-Fields (between the Cities of London and Westminster) around 1717 - perhaps with her parents - and had moved to St. Martin-in-the-Fields, Westminster by 1721. From around midsummer 1723 to the end of 1726, they lived in the parish of St. Anne, Westminster, at 7 Meards Court, which ran between Old Soho/Wardour Street and Dean Street in Soho. They paid a rent of £20 per year, and the house was one of four in the Court to receive the highest rating of 9s for the poor rate (they also paid a scavengers rate of 5s 6d, a paving rate of 2s, and a land tax of £2 per year). They seem to have moved away at the beginning of 1727. Perhaps they had to move to cheaper premises because Robert's gout was inhibiting his ability to work. In any case, they may have stayed within the same parish, since Ayliffe was still living there in 1737.

Robert Woodcock junior died on 10 April 1728 and was buried on 15 April at Chelsea Old Church, "as near to my dear father there as may be," as he requested in his will. He bequeathed his estate to his wife. His early death left her and the children in reduced circumstances. When she died in 1738, the entry of her burial in the St. Anne's register was marked by the letter F, signifying pauper.

Woodcock's concertos

Robert Woodcock's concertos were published by Walsh and Hare in London around 1727 under the title: XII CONCERTOS / in Eight Parts / The first three for VIOLINS and one Small FLUTE / The second three for VIOLINS and two small FLUTES / The third three for VIOLINS & one GERMAN FLUTE / and the last three for VIOLINS & one HOBBOY / The proper Flute being named to each Concerto. The "violins" are in fact accompanied by basso continuo (with separate parts for violoncello and figured bass), and three of the concertos include viola parts. Details of the keys and instrumentation are given in the table on the right.

At least one of the concertos was written several years before the publication date. A "new" concerto by Woodcock for the "little flute" was performed by the well-known recorder player John Baston in a concert at the Drury Lane Theatre, London, on 14 March 1722. It seems that Baston had private access to a manuscript of at least one of Woodcock's sixth-flute concertos four or five years before their publication.

Woodcock's concertos entered the repertory of other professional recorder players of his day, and even of the next. A concerto "of the late Mr. Woodcock's on the little flute" was performed at the Goodman's Fields Theatre, London, on 8 May 1734, perhaps by Jacob Price, who had performed a recorder concerto at that theater four years previously. The published set of concertos was ordered from Walsh by Bartholomew Mosse, promoter of the Dublin charity concerts, in September 1754, presumably for performance in those concerts by local and imported musicians.

But did Woodcock write the concertos? In 1954, Brian Priestman, who had made a study of the life and work of the members of the Loeillet family, pointed out that:

In the Brussels Conservatoire library there are two manuscripts in a late 19th century hand of two concertos, one for flute and another for oboe, copied, it would appear, from another manuscript in Rostock. The copyist of the Brussels MS. has seen fit to proclaim their authorship as that of J. B. Loeillet. [The musicologist and librarian Paul] Bergmans has added in pencil in the card-index catalog "Jacques Loeillet." The curious part about all this is that they are in fact duplicates of [two of] the con-
certi hitherto known as Woodcock’s. The prob-
able solution of this apparent mystery is that
Woodcock, when travelling abroad, came
across these concerti, brought them back to
London and had them printed under his own
name. We must, by stylistic analysis, lay them
at the feet of Jacques, if we presume them to
be by one of the three Loeillets. John is not the
author, for Woodcock could not have printed
them in London, where John was living[,] un-
der his own name. If Woodcock did indeed
perform this near act of piracy, can the other
four concerti in his set of six [recte ten in his
set of twelve] also be ascribed to the Loeillets?
This is a problem which time will have to
resolve: a thief’s sack may obviously contain
items of value from several burgled premises.47

Earlier in the article, Priestman stated,
without source, that Woodcock “was pri-
marily an executant instrumentalist, and
... he travelled abroad.”48 But incorrect
biographical information may lead scholars
to unfounded speculation. As we have
mentioned above, there is no evidence that
Woodcock ever travelled abroad, and he
seems to have been a schooled amateur
performer and composer, whose concertos
were acknowledged and respected by his
contemporaries; moreover, performances
of individual concertos by Woodcock were
advertised before and after their publica-
tion. If some or all of these concerti are
to be taken away from Woodcock, we must
have good evidence for it.

Priestman’s argument is weak. He
chooses to favor the attribution to Loeillet
in a nineteenth-century copy of an eigh-
teenth-century copyist’s manuscript of
unknown date and provenance over the at-
dition to Woodcock in a print published
during the composer’s lifetime in the city
where he lived. Such evidence would be
more persuasive if we knew that the manus-
script came from the circle of one of the
Loeillets. But so far, no one has published
anything about the date and provenance
of the manuscript. Jacques Loeillet worked
in Munich, which is a long way from
Rostock. The sole reason for Priestman’s
supposition that the probable composer
was a Loeillet seems to be that the
Loeillets were better-known composers
than Woodcock. That in itself is hardly
compelling. There are, in fact, countless
examples of works by a minor eighteenth-
century composer being attributed to a
well-known composer in one or more
sources. As evidence against Priestman’s
opinion, no other concertos by any of the
Loeillet family have survived—only sono-
tas and suites. Moreover, as Edgar Hunt
has written, “Would not [John] Loeillet of
London have heard and possibly recog-
nized his brother’s works? Is it not equally
possible that the [manuscript] ascriptions
are mistaken, and that these concerti are
in fact Woodcock’s?”49

Before we leave Priestman, we should
mention that the Rostock manuscript of
Concerto No. 3 actually describes it as for
“Flauto solo,” or in other words, for
recorder, not transverse flute. The record-
er part is notated at pitch in the same key
as the orchestra. These features, together
with the range of the part (d’ to d’’), also
seem to have confused Hugo Ruf, who
edited the work in 1959 as a flute concer-
to by Jacques Loeillet.50 Perhaps he could
not conceive of a recorder with that range,
although the part is perfect for the sixth
flute.

The question of authorship has been
taken up recently by MacMillan, who
claims that the concertos have “a number of
features which suggest... that [they are]
of English origin.”51 These features are:
1. the style, “very similar... melodically,
harmonically, and orchestrally to the
small flute concerti of Babell and Bas-
ton”;52 2. the use of the solo violin, “very
characteristic of the English small flute
concertos”; and 3. the lack of viola parts
in nine of the concertos (a practice found
also in Babell’s concertos). MacMillan
notes that “Woodcock’s harmony (like Bas-
ton’s) is simple and unadventurous”—
something that one might expect from an
amateur composer. He finds “of greater in-
terest than harmony...the curious ac-
companiment of the central slow move-
ments of all three solo recorder concerti
by unison violins alone [his italics].” But
this feature is not as curious as MacMillan
supposes. Vivaldi often dropped out bass
instruments and sometimes also violas in
sections of his fast movements, and he
casionally did so in slow movements as
well. See, for example, the middle (solo)
section of the Largo of his C minor recor-
danto, RV 441; two movements scored
entirely in this fashion are in the violin
concerto RV 333 and the oboe con-
certo RV 455. The practice even has
a name: Quantz (1752) called it Das Basset-
chen or la petite basse (literally “little bass”);
his translator, Edward R. Reilly, renders
it as “high bass part”).53 Woodcock may
have copied the idea directly from Vivaldi
or indirectly from Babell (in whose fourth
concerto it also occurs).

MacMillan goes on to point out that,
although Priestman claimed that Wood-
cock’s Concerto No. 3 in D major is iden-
tical to one of the “Loeillet” concertos (for
recorder) in Rostock/Brussels, the slow
movements of the two concertos are in
fact different: the print has a Siciliana in
12/8 meter with the accompaniment of
unison violins, and the manuscript a Grave
in C meter with the accompaniment of
unison violins doubled by basses an octave
lower. He remarks that “the style of the
concerto is so similar in melody, harmony,
and orchestration to the other English
small flute concerti that I believe there is
no need to speculate further on the au-
thorship of these works. The differences
in the slow movements have not hitherto
been noticed, and I suspect that this is the
vital piece of evidence to indicate that the
recorder player Robert Woodcock wrote

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these charming concerti.” Of course a difference in a slow movement does not in itself prove that a piece is by one composer rather than another. MacMillan does not say, but perhaps took into account, that the chromatic bass of the “Loeillet” Grave is more sophisticated than the Woodcock Siciliana or any of the other slow movements in the set. The composer of this Grave remains to be determined.

Hunt, unconvinced by MacMillan’s scenario, has written an alternative: “Jacques Loeillet, the oboist, knew and played the oboe concertos—presumably he had a copy of the Walsh edition of the 12 concertos. He probably also tried out the other concertos in the set and liked No. 3—apart from the slow movement—and so substituted a movement of his own. If Loeillet played this concerto and the oboe concerto a lot, his name would become attached to it.”

Two pieces of internal evidence suggest that the print of No. 3 is earlier than the Rostock manuscript. First, the print sometimes notates syncopated quarter-notes as two tied eighth-notes (see Example 1, mm. 2–3, 8–11); the manuscript omits many of the ties, as if a copyist had been careless. Second, the bass is figured in the print but unfigured in the manuscript (whereas the Rostock copy of Concerto No. 12 for oboe in E♭ does have the figures).

As recently discussed elsewhere, another piece of evidence that MacMillan does not mention also tends to discount Loeillet’s authorship. The second concerto at Rostock (No. 12) survives in European libraries in no fewer than three further manuscripts in which it is attributed to George Frideric Handel, under whose name it has even been published in a modern edition. Although the style of this concerto is reminiscent of Handel’s, Handel scholars do not now claim it as authentic, and it is not included in the new thematic index (HWV). Anthony Hicks in his Handel work-list for The New Grove accepts the composer as Woodcock.

One of the difficulties in deciding the question of authorship is that we lack any confirmed examples of Woodcock’s style. We can, therefore, only look for internal consistencies and inconsistencies among the twelve concertos. MacMillan, as we have seen, claims that the style of the Woodcock concertos is similar to that of the other concertos for small recorders by Baston and Babell. But the situation is more complex than he allows.

Nos. 1–4 and 6–8 of the Woodcock concertos are essentially Venetian in conception, having the fast-slow-fast sequence of movements, the first of which is based—strictly or loosely—on the ritornello principle. The keys visited in these opening movements are the standard sequence of $I \frac{V}{v} i (\text{Nos. 1, 2, 3, and 8})$ or $i \frac{IV}{v} i (\text{No. 7})$, modified slightly in two cases: $i \frac{III}{IV} v I (\text{No. 4})$, and $I \frac{V}{i} v I (\text{No. 6})$. Both the construction of the ritornellos and the form of the movements are superficially Vivaldian, although on closer examination they seem to owe at least as much to Albinoni. The probable main influences are Vivaldi’s Opus 3 and Opus 4 concertos (published in 1711 and c. 1712–15, respectively), and Albinoni’s Opus 7, which includes solo and double oboe concertos (1715). Vivaldi’s ritornellos generally establish or confirm a key as well as bring back some or all of the phrases from the opening section (thus the name “ritornello”). His episodes, which feature the soloist, sometimes with interruptions by the orchestra, generally move to a new key; the material may be based on the ritornello or freely introduced. Albinoni, on the other hand, relied more on the motto, a single phrase from the opening section that opens all subsequent sections. Sometimes he used a technique known as the Devise: after the opening orchestral section, the soloist enters with a new phrase; the orchestra then returns with its preceding phrase; finally, the soloist enters again with his own phrase and continues normally.

The Woodcock concertos have examples of all three types of opening movement. First, Nos. 2, 3, 6, and 8 are all based on the ritornello principle tonally. The ritornellos generally comprise several phrases, well contrasted and balanced. (See Example 1, which consists of six phrases, labeled $abef$.) The amount of melodic material that returns, and the distribution of the episodes among soloist and orchestra, vary a great deal from movement to movement.

In No. 2, for example, the first ritornello comprises five phrases ($abcdef$), of which $d$ is a violin solo. In the first episode, the soloist plays passagework based on $e$, then introduces a new phrase ($f$). The middle section of the movement is difficult to separate into ritornello and episode because the orchestration is so varied, including another new phrase ($g$) introduced by the solo violin. The final ritornello begins conventionally enough with $a$ and $b$, then gives to the solo violin a phrase originally played by the soloist ($f$), ending with the solo violin phrase from the first ritornello ($d$) now played by soloist and orchestra together. The most unusual first movement is that of No. 3 (one of the “Loeillet” concertos), which includes an unaccompanied cadenza for the recorder at the beginning of the first episode and a quasi-cadenza partly over a pedal-point at the beginning of the final episode.

Second, No. 7 makes use of the motto technique. The opening orchestral section introduces two phrases ($ab$); after a cadence on the mediant, variants of $a$ lead to a cadence on the tonic. The remainder of the movement is based completely on $a$: the soloist’s passagework and two brief (two-measure) interruptions by the or-
The final section is almost identical to the first, except that b is omitted.

In No. 1, for instance (see Example 2), the soloist and orchestra together open with three phrases: a, b, and c (which is itself a varied extension of a). After the cadence on the tonic, the soloist opens with a new phrase (d). This is interrupted by the return of the orchestra with a variant of c (c'). Finally, the soloist reintroduces his opening phrase (d), then continues with passagework (e).

The episodes in the concertos tend to be less interesting than the ritornellos. They consist largely of passagework restricted to scales and small intervals (see Example 2, mm. 14-18)—perhaps because their composer and/or dedicatee had limited ability to play large intervals.

The Woodcock concertos for two recorders have even simpler melodic material for the soloists than the solo concertos do. See, for instance, the opening of No. 4 (Example 3), in which the tempestuous string ritornello is answered by an episode consisting of simple trumpet figures over a static accompaniment in the violins. Such differentiation of material is commonly found in contemporaneous double oboe concertos, in which the simpler material is indeed derived from earlier trumpet style.

The slow movements of these seven concertos fall into two groups. The first group are dances, or dance-like if not so called; sicilianas (Nos. 1 and 3), and sarabandas (Nos. 4 and 6). The second group consists of adagios, two rather Vivaldian (Nos. 2 and 7), one more Handelian (No. 8).

The finales of the same seven concertos are more varied, although two pairs of movements are similar. Those of Nos. 1 and 3 are both binary movements in 3/8 meter, constructed largely of regular phrases echoed as variations (Examples 4 and 5; the variations begin in each case at m. 9). Those of Nos. 4 and 6 are both gaavottas, fairly similar in melodic content, although No. 6 has the added interest of threefold repetition with different orchestration (first time, recorders; second time, recorders in unison with violins; third time, variation in triplets for Violin I). No. 2 has a minuet and trio, No. 7 a curious monothematic affettuoso, and No. 8 a passacied.

The melodic style of these concertos is fairly unified. Particularly striking are some parallels between movements. For instance, a phrase in the first movement of No. 1 (Example 6) is repeated almost literally in that of No. 7 (Example 7). The ritornellos of the first movements of Nos. 6 and 8 contain similar leaping figures (more Albanonian than Vivaldian). When both formal and melodic characteristics are taken into consideration, there is sufficient evidence to show that these seven concertos could be the work of a single composer.

Nos. 5 and 9–12 in the Woodcock set are quite different from the other seven. Three of them (Nos. 10–12) have four movements (slow-fast-slow-fast). Three of them, too, have violas in the orchestra (Nos. 5, 10–11). Although four of the fast movements are based on the ritornello principle (5/1, 9/1, 10/II, 11/II), this is difficult to discern, as the melodic material is so unlike Vivaldi’s. The construction and melodic material of all five concertos are in fact far more Handelian than Venetian, and it is not surprising that No. 12 was mistaken for a work by Handel. (Another possible influence is Pepusch, who composed a flageolet concerto that was performed in 1717.) Moreover, they vary considerably among themselves in approach. No. 11, for example, is hardly a solo concerto at all—it is more like a concerto grosso with occasional solo passages for the oboe; the oboe doubles the violins almost throughout in the first (a grand overture) and third movements and the first section of the fourth. In the third movement (Andante) of No. 10, the violins play throughout and are doubled by the oboe in the "solo" sections; the melodic material is similar to that of the first movement (Allegro) of No. 5. The opening slow movements of Nos. 10 and 12 are similar (Examples 8 and 9). Apart from fleeting resemblances (for example, mm. 29–36 of the third movement of No. 5 are similar to mm. 14–17 of the first movement of No. 6), there is little indication that they were written by the same composer as the other seven concertos of the set.

Thus we have Venetian Woodcock and Handelian Woodcock. Such a stylistic split should perhaps not disturb us, since it is also displayed by Babell’s concertos. For
both Woodcock and Babell we may explain this split in three ways. First, we could say that a single composer felt comfortable writing in two different styles during the same period of time; second, that a single composer changed his style over a number of years, perhaps beginning with imitation of Venetian methods when the concertos of Vivaldi and Albinoni were first imported in the 1710s, then assuming more Handelian traits as the influence of that composer became increasingly felt in English musical life in the 1720s; or third, that some of the concertos are not by the composer named on the title page. The publisher, John Walsh, evidently had no scruples about rounding out a set of works to the traditional numbers six or twelve if necessary with works by other composers, the most celebrated case being the four doubtful violin sonatas he added to two different editions of Handel’s solo sonatas.65 Handel apparently took no action, or did not care to take any action, against Walsh on those occasions. Babell’s concertos were published after his death, when he could not protest what Walsh might have done. (The last two concertos of his set are of considerably poorer quality than the first four; perhaps they are not authentic.) Woodcock was still alive when his works were published, although he was suffering from gout and died of it a year later. If we suppose that two (or more) composers were involved in the Woodcock set, we are no nearer a solution of the problem of authorship, since our supposition does not answer the question of which of them, if any, was Woodcock. Neither, however, does it help us to give any of the concertos to a Loeillet, since one of the two so attributed belongs to the Venetian group and the other to the Handelian group.

It is clear from our analysis, however, that the mixture of styles within and among these concertos could only have been arrived at by a composer working in England. That would eliminate Jacques Loeillet from consideration. John Loeillet, who worked in London, is a candidate, although the style is unlike that of his solo and trio sonatas. In any case, one would expect him to have developed a more unified and original concerto style.

Let us sum up our discussion of the evidence relating to the authorship of the concertos published under Woodcock’s name. Stylistically, seven of the concertos are Venetian in conception; the remaining five concertos are more Handelian. The composer or composers almost certainly worked in England. Our analysis does not enable us to ascribe the twelve concertos to any particular composer; rather, it raises questions of how the differences in style arose. One of the two concertos attributed to a member of the Loeillet family in a Rostock manuscript (for recorder) belongs to the first group, the other (for oboe) to the second. We have no evidence of the date or provenance of this manuscript. The copy of the recorder concerto seems to be later than the print, and three other surviving manuscript copies of the oboe concerto attribute it to Handel, who almost certainly did not compose it. Vertue reported that Woodcock’s contemporaries praised him for his compositions, some of which—evidently these concertos—were published. Performances of two of his recorder concertos were advertised before and after his death. None of the Loeillots is known to have written any other concertos. The style of these twelve is unlike that of John, the Loeillet who worked in London. On balance, therefore, the evidence strongly points towards Woodcock having written most or all of the concertos.66

It remains for us to look at two other matters connected with Woodcock’s concertos: Hawkins’ claim that Woodcock and Babell invented the practice of transposing recorders other than the alto as transposing instruments, and the circumstances in which the concertos were performed.

Hawkins described recorder transposition as follows:

The true concert flute [i.e., alto recorder] is that above described; but there are also others introduced into concertos in versions of a less size, in which case the method was to write the flute part in a key correspondent to its pitch; this practice was introduced by one [blank: first name missing] Woodcock, a celebrated performer on this instrument, and by an ingenious young man, William Babell, organist of the church of Allhallows, Bread-Street, London, about the year 1710, both of whom published concertos for this instrument, in which the principal part was for a sixth flute, in which case the lowest note, though nominally F, was in power D, and consequently required transposition of the flute-part a sixth higher, viz., into the key of D.67

But it sounds as if Hawkins had heard of the prints of the collections of Woodcock and Babell, estimated the publication dates to be around 1710 (they were in fact around 1726–27), and reasoned that, since theirs were the first published concertos for small recorders, they must have invented the practice of transposing the recorder parts. Recall from our discussion above that Hawkins does not seem to have been familiar with Woodcock the man, either.

To shed light on the transposition question and on the circumstances of performance of Woodcock’s concertos, let us look at the early history of woodwind concertos in England. Recorder concertos

Example 7. Concerto No. 7 in B minor for flute, violins, and basso continuo, I, mm. 26–28.

Example 8. Concerto No. 10 in E minor for oboe, strings, and basso continuo, I, mm. 1–4.

Example 9. Concerto No. 12 in E♭ major for oboe, violins, and basso continuo, I, mm. 1–4.
may date back to 1709, when John Baston, a recorder player and violinist, was advertised as playing a "concerto grosso" with his brother Thomas, a violinist and perhaps recorder player, only a year after they had made their debut on the London musical scene.66 The instrumentation of this concerto is unfortunately not specified. As Baston later wrote recorder concertos with a concertato violin part for his brother, it is tempting to assume that this concerto grosso was such a piece.66 It could also, however, have been one in which violin and cello took the concertino parts.

Concertos for the "little flute"—apparently always the fifth flute or sixth flute—are first specified in an advertisement for an intermission entertainment at the Drury Lane Theatre by James Paisible in 1716.70 He had begun to play for such occasions the previous year, at the same time that John Baston fulfilled the same role at the newly opened, rival Lincoln's Inn Fields Theatre. The works Baston played in 1716-17 include recorder concertos (e.g., "a new concerto for the flute"); "a concerto for the violin and flute, composed by John Baston and to be performed on the stage by him and his brother"), although the first advertisement to specify his performance on a small recorder dates from 1719 ("a concerto for violin and little flute"), and the size of recorder is not mentioned until 1720 ("a concerto on the fifth flute").71 From this date onwards, a large part of Baston’s advertised repertory consisted of concertos for small recorders, sometimes said to have been composed by himself. Thomas Baston was often advertised as playing with John until around 1710, apparently taking the solo violin parts in Babell’s concertos as well as, perhaps, the second recorder parts in concertos for two recorders.

The composers of Paisible’s concertos are unfortunately never named. As Babell is associated twice with Paisible in concerts—first, accompanying him on the harpsichord in 1713;72 second, playing with him in a concert in 1718 that included concertos by Babell (instrumentation unspecified) and "a piece for the echo flute" by Paisible73—Babell may have been one of these composers. Babell does not seem to have been associated with the Lincoln’s Inn Fields Theatre until 1718, at the time that Baston was performing there.74 If Babell’s recorder concertos had not already been written for Paisible, they were presumably written for Baston, and in any case would certainly have been played by him, at that time. If Paisible himself composed recorder concertos, none has survived. The only date we have to pin on Woodcock’s concertos is 1722, when one of them was performed by Baston.

Thus the evidence is inconclusive. If Baston was the first composer of recorder concertos, he would have been the man responsible for the introduction of transposition for the recorder. If not, perhaps Paisible or Babell did so. As for Woodcock, he is the least likely candidate of the four, especially as he was an amateur who imitated the practices of professionals.

Recorder concertos seem to have been performed in England a few years before their counterparts for flute and oboe. This circumstance is not surprising, since the recorder was a popular instrument among professionals and amateurs alike. Performances of oboe concertos began to be advertised in 1716 by Jean Christian Kytch, one of the leading woodwind players of the day.75 It may be no coincidence that Albinoni’s oboe concertos had been published only the previous year;76 except that Kytch played a bassoon concerto the same month, and that was presumably by Vivaldi (from a manuscript copy) or a local composer. The first performance of a flute concerto was advertised two years later, by a "master...who never performed before in public."77 Within a year or two such concertos were being performed by several wind players (Francis Dahuron, John Granom, Kytch, Richard Neale).78 Unfortunately, the composers are never named in the advertisements, leaving us to speculate whether the flutists modified oboe or recorder concertos, had access to manuscripts of German or Italian concertos, or had concertos written for them by local composers.

So far we have discussed professional performance of woodwind concertos. Hearing these pieces in concerts and at the theater was probably the inspiration for Woodcock to write his own. Moreover, professionals—like Baston in 1722—must have been happy to have Woodcock’s concertos, before and after publication. Perhaps he even wrote some of the concertos for professionals, although their relatively modest technique suggests amateur performance, presumably by himself.79 Apart from unusual events,80 amateurs did not play on the public stage. Rather they took part in series such as the "Castle Concert," run by professionals who admitted gentleman auditors and performers by subscription and hired some other professional performers.81 The most successful of such series in the 1710s and 20s was that run
by John Loeillet in his own home. Unfortunately, we know little about the repertory of his concerts since, unlike events on the public stage, they were never advertised. Woodcock's own performances, then, are likely to have been restricted to such venues. This raises an interesting possibility: if Woodcock was one of the gentleman participants in Loeillet's concerts, that would explain why copies of two of Woodcock's concertos ended up with the name Loeillet name on them.

Conclusions
We hope to have demonstrated that Robert Woodcock the marine painter, amateur oboist, and composer (1690-1728) is to be identified with the recorder player of that name mentioned by Sir John Hawkins. His talent in art and music was respected by his fellows and at least one influential patron. In the five years left to him after he made his decision to abandon the civil service and concentrate on painting, he created plausible copies of Van de Velde's compositions and began to be more original. The early nineteenth-century art historian Horace Walpole regretted that Woodcock's name in 1727, we conclude that he probably composed most or all of them. As a composer, Woodcock has a place in the history books as one of the first to write such concertos. As in his painting, his style was borrowed—from Vivaldi, Albinoni, and Handel—and his early death prevented him from developing more originality. It would be going too far to say, as Vertue originally did, that Woodcock had a "great genius to music"; but Vertue's later opinion that he was "very skillful in music" holds up to scrutiny. Woodcock's twelve concertos are attractive examples of the genre, better crafted than similar examples by Baston, a professional, and deserving of modern performance, especially by amateurs, for one of whom (the composer himself) they were probably written.

David Lasocki is a music librarian at Indiana University. He writes about the history, repertory, and performance practices of woodwind instruments.

Music autography by Wendy Keaton.

MODERN EDITIONS
No. 4. Air and gavotte from Concerto for two descant recorders with strings (no viola) and continuo (pianoforte or harpsichord), ed. Edgar H. Hunt (London: Schott, 1940).
No. 5. Concertino No. 5 in C major for two descant recorders and strings, ed. Freda Dinn (London: Schott, 1957). Transposed down a tone from D major. Score and parts.

RECORDINGS
No. 3. Performed by Myriam Eichberger, soprano recorder, with Münchener Jugendorchester, cond. Jaroslav Opela. EMI 037-030 754 (LP), 237-030 754 (cassette) (197-?).
No. 8. Performed by William Bennett, flute, with Thames Chamber Orchestra.

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No. 12. Performed by Neil Black, oboe, with Telemann Society Orchestra, Grammophon 413 420-1 (1984); 419 365-1GX2 (LP), 419 365-4GX2 (cassette) (1987), and other issues.


NOTES

1 Note by David Lasocki: This article is dedicated to the memory of Walter Bergmann (1902–1988): mentor, colleague, and friend. The late Helen Neate did the initial research for the biographical portion. Her draft article and research notes were inherited by Dr. Bergmann, who kindly passed them on to me and encouraged me to prepare them for publication. I have checked Ms. Neate’s sources and in many cases supplied references. I have also added further biographical material, rewritten the prose, and appended the discussion of the music. In a draft letter found among her notes, Ms. Neate wrote: “I originally became interested in researching Woodcock’s life because my maiden name was Woodcock and certain things written by Brian Priestman and repeated by Carl Dolmetsch stung my family pride (though no equivalent of something like Woodcock in English).” The “things” in question are the allegation that Woodcock probably stole concertos by one of the “things” written by Brian Priestman and repeated by Carl Dolmetsch stung my family pride (though no equivalent of something like Woodcock in English). “The things” in question are the allegation that Woodcock probably stole concertos by one of the things written by Brian Priestman and repeated by Carl Dolmetsch stung my family pride (though no equivalent of something like Woodcock in English). I would like to acknowledge the help given to me in the preparation of this article by A. Peter Brown, Carl Dolmetsch, Peter Holman, Edgar Hunt, Catherine Lasocki, Michael Lynn, Scott Ress, Benito Rivera; the staffs of the Greater London Council Record Office, the City of Westminster Public Libraries, the Guildhall Library, the church of St. Giles-in-the-Fields, and the Cardiff Public Library; and my colleagues in the Indiana University Music Library, especially David Pesnek and Kathryn Talalay. On six flute pieces see Dale Higbee, “On Playing Recorders in D: Being a Short History of the Old-Sized Recorders and Concerning the Revival of the Voice Flute & Sixth Flute,” The American Recorder 26, no. 1 (February 1985): 16–21.

2Vivaldi’s six solo flute concertos, Opus 10, which both Marc Pincherle (Vivaldi: Genius of the Baroque, trans. Christopher Hatch [New York: WW. Norton, 1957], 123) and A. J. B. Hutchings (The Baroque Concertos [London: Faber & Faber, 1959], 155) claim as the first such set, appeared c. 1728. A concerto grosso by Dall’Abaco with parts for two flutes was published c. 1719 (Opus 5, no. 3). The first recorder concertos—solo and double—published were those of Babell (c. 1726) discussed below. Oboe concertos by Italian and Dutch composers had been published previously: Albinoni (Opus 7, 1715; Opus 9, 1722), Alessandro Marcello, Predieri, Ramgen, Tempore, Sammartini, Giuseppe Valentini, and Veracini (Concerti a cinque, c. 1717), De Fesch (c. 1718), and Vivaldi (Opus 7, c. 1719; Opus 8, 1725).


4“A New Concerto, Composed by Mr. Woodcock,” The Recorder and Music Magazine 8, no. 6 (June 1985): 90–81.

5In the former British system of coinage, a guinea was one pound one shilling.

6Walpole Society 22 (1933–34): 23. Vertue’s spelling and punctuation have been modernized for this article.

7The eccentric punctuation in Vertue’s original (a period between “returns” and “put”) led Ellis Waterhouse to suggest that Woodcock committed suicide (Painting in Britain 1530–1790, 3rd ed., Pelican History of Art [Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1969], 104). Professor Waterhouse admitted in a letter to Ms. Neate dated 10 September 1965 that “it looks as if I have slandered the memory of poor Robert Woodcock.” He had read Vertue’s sentence as meaning “He put an end to his life;” but he saw now that “it is equally natural and more charitable to interpret it as saying ‘The gout put an end to his life.’” In the fourth edition of Waterhouse’s book (1978, 153), the statement has been amended to read “died of the gout.”

8Walpole Society 22 (1933–34): 34.

9Unless the quintet discussed in footnote 66 is by him.


12See footnote 20.

13A General History of the Science and Practice of Music, 826.


15The suggestion made by Carl Dolmetsch that an early eighteenth-century portrait of a recorder player in his collection at Haslemere, Surrey, was probably
painted by Woodcock (reported in David Lasocki, "Johann Christian Schickhardt (c. 1682–1762): A Contribution to his Biography and a Catalogue of his Works," Tijdschrift van de Vereniging voor Nederlandsche Muziekgeschiedenis 27, no. 1 [1977]: 36) seems to have been founded only on the knowledge that Woodcock was both a painter and a recorder player. There is, however, no evidence that Woodcock ever painted anything but marine scenes.

Bryant's Dictionary of Painters and Engravers, new ed. rev. and enlarged under the supervision of George C. Williamson (London: George Bell & Sons, 1900–10), 5:393.

A few scholars have worked out the equation "1728 – 37 = 1692."

Corderyt (loc. cit.) says that the clerkship was in the Admiralty, but this is probably an educated guess.

Hawkins believed that Robert junior "had a brother named Thomas, who kept a coffee house at Hereford, an excellent performer on the violin, and played the solos of Corelli with exquisite neatness and elegance. In that country his merits were not known, for his employment was playing country dances and his recreation angling. He died about the year 1720."

It is not known for certain whether the angles and elegance. He died about the year 1720."

Williamson (London: George Bell & Sons, 1909–10), 5:393. The editors of these memoirs have been founded only on the knowledge that Woodcock was both a painter and a recorder player. There is, however, no evidence that Woodcock ever painted anything but marine scenes.

This material is, of course, tangential to our current discussion on the connection between Robert senior's father, Thomas, and Thurston.

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The expression "the proper flute being named to each concerto" on Walsh's title page makes little sense. In the first place, it would apply only to the recorder concertos (and perhaps, to stretch a point, to those for German flute). Second, the only recorder used in the collection is the sixth flute. Identical expressions occur on the title pages of the Babell and Baston concertos (published c. 1726 and 1729, respectively), where they are appropriate, since these collections consist of concertos for different sizes of recorders only. This reasoning confirms that the Babell concertos were published before Woodcock's (cf. Edwards' statement in The New Grove that Woodcock's were earlier).


London Stage 3, no. 1: 67.


"An Introduction to the Locillet," 25.


A New Concerto.

Wilson, William's Concertos in 7 Parts: The first four for Violins and one small Flute and the last for Violins and two Flutes. The proper Flute being named to each Concerto (London: Walsh & Hare, c. 1726); Nos. 1–4 are for sixth flute, Nos. 5 for two sixth flutes, and No. 6 for two alto recorders. John Baston, Six Concertos in Six Parts for Violins and Flutes etc. a Fifth, Sixth and Seventh Flute Flauto continuo being named to each Concerto (London: Walsh & Hare, 1729); Nos. 1 and 3 are for alto recorder, Nos. 2, 4, and 5 for sixth flute, and No. 6 for fifth flute.


"There must be no bass in the accompaniment to an aria. To keep the singer from straying he should be accompanied by violins in unison; in such a case a few bass notes might be given to the violins but this is ad libitum." See "Il teatro alla moda by Benedetto Marcello," trans. Reinhard G. Pauly, The Musical Quarterly 34, no. 3 (July 1948): 383.


Note by David Lasocki: I said that "no Handel scholar has ever claimed it as authentic." It may be, however, that as a result of the modern edition, some of them have believed it authentic.


The New Grove 8:130; see also The New Grove Handel (New York: W.W. Norton, 1983), 152.


Baston's concertos, in contrast, are far cruder in tonal design, scarcely moving from the tonal; but the passagework is bolder and more virtuosic, if more stereotyped (No. 5, however, is Vivaldian in its design and its violistic passagework.) The passagework in Babell's first four concertos is the most satisfying of the three composers', it is well directed and paced, and mixes scales and small and large intervals.


Michael Tilmouth, "A Calendar of References to Manuscript Concertos from Germany to England," Musicologie et bibliothèque 1 (1961): 96. The concerto is unfortunately not extant. Hutchings supposed that the "Vivaldian three-movement and ritornello style" of Babell's concertos was influenced by "the German solo concertos with which he may have become acquainted through Pusquets" (The Baroque Concerto, 330). Since Hutchings was himself unacquainted with Pusquets's concertos, he must have imagined that Pusquets acted as a conduit for the transmission of manuscript concertos from Germany to England.


"As a corollary to Priestman's attempt to give Woodcock's concertos to Locillet, Walter Helmleman has suggested that we might reverse that strategy and attribute to Woodcock the quintet sonata in B minor for two voice flutes, two transverse flutes, and basso continuo found in Rostock under the name of Locillet. (See John Baptist LeOeillet, Quinet h-moll für zwei Querflöten, zwei Blockflöten und Basso continuo, ed. Rolf Ermer, Hortus Musicus 133 [Kassel: Barenreiter, 1955].) The work seems to be of English provenance for two reasons: the use of the term "flauto di voce," and the treatment of the recorders as transposing instruments relative to the alto, both practices known only in England. Curiously, the work is stylistically unlike the Woodcock concertos or John Locillet's sonatas.


Baston's concertos, as we have mentioned, are generally pre-Vivaldian in construction. He could, therefore, have written a recorder concerto prior to the publication of Vivaldi's first set of concertos in 1711.

London Stage 2, no. 1: 406; see also 397, 405.


At Hickford's Room on 25 March 1713; see Tilmouth, "A Calendar," 84.

At the Tennis Court in the Haymarket on 12 March 1718, Tilmouth, "A Calendar," 101.

London Stage 2, no. 2: 490, 492, 493.

London Stage 2, no. 1: 402.

See also footnote 27.


London Stage 2, no. 2: 527, 539, 572; Burney, A General History of Music 2:994; Daily Courant, 20 February, 3 March 1720.

We know from Verute that Woodcock played the obbligato bassoon at least some of his own works (the concertos were, of course, written for recorder, flute, and oboe), and Hawkins claimed that he played the recorder. Woodcock could quite easily also have played the flute—several contemporaneous professional musicians resident in England played all three instruments (Barnati, Kytch, La Tour, Loeillet, Sammartini, and Schickhardt).

One such event was the curious concert in The Long Room next to the King's Theatre, 4 December 1718, advertised as follows: "an assembly of the best masters of vocal and instrument music, who never performed before in public. All the performers will appear in masks; the order of performance will be as follows... a new concerto for the little flute... a concerto for German flute solo... All the solos will be played on a throne built for that purpose; and after the concert is performed, any gentleman or ladies may, appearing in a mask, if they please, ascend the throne, and call for any instrument and play a solo, etc., the auditors only excepted." See Tilmouth, "A Calendar," 103.


Anecdotes of Painting in England... collected by the late Mr. George Vertue; digested and published from his original mss. by... Horace Walpole, 5 vols. (London, 1826–28), 4:59–60.

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