



Joshua Collinge: an Eighteenth-Century Mancunian Woodwind Maker

JOHN TURNER

ONE OF THE GREAT ENTHUSIASMS of my childhood was collecting ships' names, and ticking them off in the Ian Allan series of booklets (Ocean Liners, Ocean Freighters, Tankers, Coastal Ships, etc.), and in my very early teens weekends were often spent zipping up and down the Liverpool Overhead Railway, sadly demolished in 1957. An



alternative vantage route for ship-spotting was the zigzagging roadway through the docks from Birkenhead to Seacombe on the Wirral side of the Mersey, where the Clan Line and Blue Funnel Line ships used to berth, and after the demise of 'the dockers' umbrella' that tended to be the preferred weekend drive with my parents, even after the collecting mania had somewhat diminished. (It has never really vanished completely but corporeal things such as books and music manuscripts took its place!)

We usually finished the drive by wandering up the main road parallel to the river to New Brighton, and on this road there were numerous antique and junk shops. It was then not the most salubrious

of areas. This activity survived throughout my university days, during which I got to know well, and frequently played with, David Munrow. The touch-paper of David's interest in musical instruments had been well and truly lit by his British Council VSO trip teaching English in Peru before his arrival at Cambridge, and this extended from folk instruments collected in South America (which sadly ended up in a cafe in California) to medieval and renaissance instruments and a few original early instruments. When he and Gill set up home in Stratford-upon-Avon, one wall was peg-boarded and completely covered with instruments affixed to it. His enthusiasm was infectious, and I started to comb second-hand and antique shops to see what I could find.

On one trip down the New Brighton road in 1970 I thought I spotted in the window of a junk shop, protruding from a pile of bric-a-brac, a baroque oboe. A negotiation ensued – not an easy one as the elderly proprietor did not really like to sell anything from the shop, but preferred to proceed by way of barter. Eventually I got the instrument for thirty shillings in old money, but not until I had convinced him that the very obvious cracks and splits made the instrument of limited use. In due course it was Jeremy Soulsby who kindly glued up the cracks and mended two broken keys for me. As I was leaving the shop I thought I noticed a short piece of ivory tubing under another pile, and thought this might be a baroque flute, but did not chance my luck again then! As I had a broadcast coming up in Edinburgh, I asked my parents to see if they could acquire it for me. On their first visit he point blank refused to sell it for cash, but on a return visit, I think the following day, they did manage to exchange it for a Victorian coffee pot, a pewter muffin dish, and the princely sum of £5. The flute, then lacking only its head joint cap and part of its one silver key, is by Vincent of Paris, and was, when the key was repaired, in perfect playing condition.

The oboe, unusually, has an inscription, apparently in Indian ink inside the bell – 'Nº 15 – 1771' (which I take to refer to the numbering of the instrument rather than the month of November), and there is a maker's mark on all three joints: 'Joshua Collinge' the two names on separate lines with an eight-pointed star below.

An interesting correspondence ensued with the delightful and helpful Lyndesay G. Langwill, the third edition of whose *Index of Musical Wind-Instrument Makers* (published in 1972 but in the press at the time of our correspondence) makes no mention of Joshua Collinge, but does have the following entry: 'Coigne (?), Joshua:

3-key fagottino, F. Rendell. This unique instrument in Britain came into the possession of the well-known London bassoon-player and teacher, Mr. Frank Rendell. The name appears to be that of the maker but is otherwise unknown.’ The fourth edition of 1974 does however refer to my instrument with a cross reference to the ‘Coigne’ entry ‘which may have been misread’. The edition also refers to the ivory flute by Denis Vincent (*fl.* 1752–69).

It may be that the two instruments came from the same source. I always regret failing to buy a large (four-foot or so) pitchpipe that I also spotted in the window, and it may be that all the instruments came from a church band, though the superb quality of the flute (clearly an expensive professional instrument) might suggest otherwise. Perhaps Collinge had to sell them himself to buy a ticket for his trip (from the port of Liverpool?) to America ...



Joshua Collins: an Eighteenth-Century American Woodwind Maker (perhaps) from Manchester

DAVID LASOCKI

I GREW UP IN MANCHESTER and, like John Turner, had a childhood mania for collecting that soon metamorphosed into a passion for things related to music. In my teens, postage stamps, cheese labels, matchbox labels, butterflies, train numbers and car numbers disappeared from my life, only to be replaced by music of the flute and the recorder – the instruments I had started to learn. As an undergraduate in London and a graduate student in the United States, I began editing early woodwind music. In order to understand what surviving music there was that remained to be edited, I had to devote myself to compiling catalogues. Thus began a passion for the bibliography of music that has lasted to this day, and perhaps it was inevitable that, after draining my brain permanently to the United States, I should in time become a music librarian. At the age of 40, I found the job I still have at Indiana University, where my research on the history and bibliography of woodwind instruments is very much encouraged and supported.

A few years ago, in collecting information on American woodwind makers of the eighteenth century, I came across the following advertisement in the *Maryland Gazette* for 25 February 1773:

Annapolis, February 15, 1773. JOSHUA COLLINS, Musical Instrument-maker and Turner from Manchester, Begs leave to acquaint the Publick, that he has commenced the said branches of business, at Messrs Shaw and Chisholm's Cabinet Shop; where all Sorts of Turner's Work is executed in the compleatest Manner; also German and common Flutes, Hautboys, Fifes, &c. of all Sorts and Sizes; all Sorts of Musical Instruments repaired, Harpsicords, Forte Pianos, or any Stringed Instruments put in tune. He has opened an Evening School for Musick, at MR. John Hepburn's, where he teaches the most modern and approved Methods of playing the German Flute, Hautboy, Clarinet, Bassoon, &c. Having been educated in that Science, under the care of some of the greatest Masters in England. Those whom it may please to encourage the Subscriber may depend on being served on the most reasonable Terms; and such Gentlemen as cannot attend his Evening School may be waited on in the Day Time at their Own apartments, By their very humble servant, JOSHUA COLLINS.¹

In eighteenth-century terms, the German flute was what we today call simply the flute, the common flute was the recorder, and the hautboy the oboe.² Woodwind makers could generally make all the kinds of instruments played at the time. The flute was the major woodwind instrument for amateurs, but the recorder remained strong among American amateurs until the end of the eighteenth century. The oboe, clarinet and bassoon were restricted largely to professionals, because of the difficulty of managing the reeds; reed-making for the oboe and bassoon was also difficult, but advertisements by other makers show that reeds could be bought in shops. In any case, it is unlikely that Collins would have found much custom for his reed instruments. The fife was almost entirely a military instrument.

Collins' advertisement appeared ten times up to and including 24 June that year. Instrument makers took out such adverts when they arrived in a town, but rarely thereafter, once their business was established. Note that Collins sets out the priorities for his customers: he was a turner first, a woodwind maker, an instrument repairer and tuner, and finally a teacher. David Hildebrand has observed: 'The most significant part of this advertisement is the single use of the word "Gentlemen" near the end. Collins would not have been so specific if he had perceived a wider market'.³ From other teachers we know it was common to teach pupils – almost always gentleman amateurs in the case of woodwind instruments – in their homes during the day, and hold an evening school of two of three hours for groups of pupils a few times a week. In time Collins would have expected to take on apprentices and assistants to help with the turning work while he was teaching.

The latest edition of Langwill's index, William Waterhouse's *The New Langwill Index* (1993), still mentions the same two instruments as the earlier editions reported by John Turner: a mark 'Joseph Collings' on an oboe and an octave bassoon, about which Waterhouse comments: 'The name has also been read as "Joshua Collinge",

¹ Transcribed in *The Performing Arts in Colonial American Newspapers, 1690–1783* [PACAN], compiled by Mary Jane Corry, Kate Van Winkle Keller, and Robert M. Keller (New York, 1997).

² The information in this paragraph is based on David Lasocki, 'New Light on Eighteenth-Century English Woodwind Makers from Newspaper Advertisements', *Galpin Society Journal*, 63 (2010), 73–142; and Lasocki, 'New Light on the Recorder and Flageolet in Colonial North America and the United States, 1700–1840, from Newspaper Advertisements', *Journal of the American Musical Instrument Society* 35, (2010), 5–80.

³ David K. Hildebrand, 'Musical Life in and around Annapolis, Maryland (1649–1776)' (Ph.D. thesis, Catholic University of America, 1992), 68.

“Coigne”. The oboe ... bears a dating (manuscript) of “November 1771””.⁴

Because there was no standard spelling in England at the time, surnames were rendered however the writer heard them. Thus there is no doubt that the Joshua Collings/Collinge of the surviving instruments is the same man as the Joshua Collins of the Annapolis advertisements of 1773. A check of the *International Genealogical Index* reveals three men of this name, allowing for differences in spelling, in the vicinity of Manchester in the first half of the eighteenth century: (1) Joshua Colling baptized in Padiham, Lancashire on 18 October 1725; (2) Joshua Collins born ‘about 1736’ in Holme in Cliviger, Lancashire; and (3) Joshua Collinge baptized on 30 December 1750 in Padiham.⁵ Cliviger is a civil parish of Burnley, and Padiham is a small town about four miles from Burnley. Joshua Collins, presumably (1), married Elizabeth Welsh at Whalley, about five miles from Padiham, on 27 October 1746. Joshua (3) is almost certainly their son. If he was born around 1750, then he would have been about 23 in 1773, having probably just finished an apprenticeship. Burnley is twenty-six miles north of Manchester, at that time already the centre for textiles in north-west England, so Collins may well have chosen the name Manchester for the ears of Maryland’s inhabitants, believing it would be more familiar than Burnley.

Collins could have learned the turner’s trade in north-west England, but according to Waterhouse, no other woodwind makers from Manchester are known before Michael Cowlan in 1835.⁶ Moreover, ‘the greatest Masters’ of music ‘in England’ were located in London. So it is highly likely that Collins went there to apprentice as a turner/woodwind maker and take music lessons on the side.⁷ Afterwards, perhaps because London was well supplied with turners, not to mention woodwind makers, he decided to try his luck in the American colonies.

⁴ William Waterhouse, *The New Langwill Index: A Dictionary of Musical Wind-Instrument Makers and Inventors* (London, 1993), 69.

⁵ <http://www.familysearch.org/eng/default.asp> (accessed 27 September 2010). I would like to acknowledge the kind help of Caroline Densham with the genealogical information relating to Collins.

⁶ Waterhouse, *New Langwill Index*, 468.

⁷ A forthcoming study by Maurice Byrne and myself of woodwind makers in the Turners Company of London, 1604–1750, shows that about five per cent of apprentices in the company came from the north of England.

Annapolis, although the capital of the state of Maryland, is today a modest city of some 36,000 people at the mouth of the Severn River on the Chesapeake Bay. In the third quarter of the eighteenth century, it was a small town of no more than two thousand inhabitants, described by a correspondent in 1769 as having ‘more the appearance of an agreeable village than the metropolis of an opulent province’.⁸ Nevertheless, it was the largest town in Maryland until after the Revolutionary War, and served as the seat of government as well as a legal centre and a commercial centre for the export of grain, lumber and tobacco as well as the import of English-made goods.⁹ It had a wealthy and cultivated society, dominated by the tobacco planters of the surrounding area who built town houses on the circles radiating from the State House and the Anglican church of St Anne as well as on the eastern and western fringes of the town. Its citizens aped cultural practices in England, as the same correspondent wrote in 1771: ‘very little difference is, in reality, observable in the manners of the wealthy colonist and the wealthy Briton’.¹⁰ In 1783–4, the city was even chosen as the temporary capital of the United States. Its commercial importance declined rapidly, however, after 1780, when Baltimore, twenty-six miles away, was made a port of entry because of its deeper harbour.

There is considerable evidence of a market for woodwind instruments (particularly the flute) in Annapolis and its environs. A decade before Collins’ arrival, in 1762, flutes imported from England were advertised in Baltimore, and in 1764–5 recorders imported from England were advertised in Elk Ridge Landing, between Annapolis and Baltimore.¹¹ The merchant Alexander Ogg in Huntingtown, about thirty miles south of Annapolis, sold ‘flutes’ (probably the transverse variety) in 1771–2.¹² Even more pertinently, the Annapolis import company Wallace, Davidson and Johnson, founded in 1771, ordered

⁸ William Eddis, *Letters from America*, ed. Aubrey C. Land, The John Harvard Library (Cambridge, MA, 1969), 13.

⁹ William Voss Elder III and Lu Bartlett, *John Shaw; Cabinetmaker of Annapolis* (Baltimore, Baltimore Museum of Art, 1983) (exhibition catalogue with essays).

¹⁰ Eddis, *Letters from America*, 58.

¹¹ ‘Flutes’, *Maryland Gazette*, 29 July 1762; ‘common flutes’, *ibid.*, 14 June 1764, 8 Aug 1765 (all in PACAN). See also David Lasocki, *A Listing of Inventories, Sales, and Advertisements Relating to Flutes, Recorders, and Flageolets, 1631–1800* (Bloomington, IN, 2010; e-book available from <http://www.instantharmony.net>).

¹² Advertisement in *Maryland Gazette*, 19 December 1771 (PACAN).

music, musical instruments, and tutors from England that year and the next, including ‘6 German flutes, some neat and good’, eight ‘neat German flutes’ priced from six shillings to twenty-one shillings, eleven editions of flute music, and tutors for the German flute, common flute, hautboy, and bassoon.¹³ A man named George Isenberg visited Annapolis in October 1765, ‘intending to spend a few months in this city’ and offering gentlemen ‘quick and proficient instruction on the German flute’ at the White Horse tavern.¹⁴ The Rev. Thomas Bacon, a member of a social organization in Annapolis called the Tuesday Club, ‘carried a flute in his saddle bag while making pastoral calls’ for his parish of Frederick, Maryland, seventy-five miles to the north-west.¹⁵ The John Wade manuscript, dated 1764 (later owned by silversmith William Faris), included ‘the gamut, a scale, and lessons for the German flute, and ... exercises for the violin’.¹⁶ Finally, a study found that during the colonial period, the inventories of citizens of Annapolis and its county show they owned a total of sixty-nine violins (more usually called ‘fiddles’), clearly the preponderant musical instrument, but also nineteen recorders or flutes and two oboes.¹⁷ So, even though Annapolis would have afforded far more limited opportunities for a skilled craftsman like Collins than the metropolitan areas such as Philadelphia, New York, or Boston, he may well have been able to make a living, especially because his general turning work should have kept him going when the music side of his business was slow.

According to his advertisement, Collins set up business at Shaw and Chisholm’s Cabinet shop in Annapolis. John Shaw (1745–1829) was the leading cabinetmaker in the city in the latter part of the eighteenth century.¹⁸ Born and presumably trained in Scotland, he is believed to have arrived in Annapolis around 1763, during the same period as the Scottish factors who were gaining some control of the tobacco trade.¹⁹ By 1772 Shaw had formed a partnership with Archibald Chisholm (d. 1810), a fellow Scottish-born cabinetmaker.

¹³ Hildebrand, ‘Musical Life’, 66, 281–2, 284–5, 289, 292, 296, 299–300.

¹⁴ Advertisement in *Maryland Gazette*, 31 October 1765, quoted in Hildebrand, ‘Musical Life’, 67, 308.

¹⁵ Hildebrand, ‘Musical Life’, 208.

¹⁶ Hildebrand, ‘Musical Life’, 264–5.

¹⁷ A study by Nancy Baker cited in David Kenneth Hildebrand, ‘Musical Instruments: Their Implications concerning Musical Life in Colonial Annapolis’ (MA thesis, George Washington University, 1987), 83.

¹⁸ Elder & Bartlett, *John Shaw*.

¹⁹ Lu Bartlett, ‘John Shaw: Cabinetmaker of Annapolis’, in Elder & Bartlett, *John Shaw*, 13–14.

The partnership was dissolved upon the outbreak of the Revolution in 1776, but resumed briefly in 1783 after a fire destroyed Shaw's shop. Chisholm, in announcing his newly separate business in 1776, advertised that 'he continues to carry on the cabinet, chair-making and turning business: He likewise makes sword scabbards, fifes, and billiard tacks, in the neatest manner'.²⁰ Perhaps he had learned how to make fifes from Collins. At an auction in 1779, Shaw sold off the contents of a gentleman's house, including a 'German flute', perhaps made by Collins.²¹ Among Shaw's distinguished customers was Thomas Jefferson, and a desk dated 1797 is found at the White House today. Shaw also had the distinction of creating the first design for the American flag in 1783.²² His work is highly prized: an inlaid mahogany desk and bookcase realized no less than \$441,600 at Christie's in 2006.²³ Collins worked in the Shaw-Chisholm shop during the period when it produced the tall case for the William Faris clock, purchased for \$86,000 by the Historic Annapolis Foundation and now found in the St Clair Wright History Center.²⁴

Nothing certain is known about the rest of Collins's life. He may have still been associated with Shaw and Chisholm on 13 April 1775, when the shop advertised 'They likewise do various kinds of turner's work'.²⁵ A man of his name is found in the Maryland Colonial Census for 1776, not in Annapolis but in Frederick County;²⁶ and on 15 May 1779 'Joshua Collins' married Mary Barrance in Montgomery County, adjoining Frederick County to the south.²⁷ In 1771 Eddis called Fredericktown 'The third place of importance in the province of Maryland ... and ... the capital of a most extensive, fertile, and populous county'.²⁸

²⁰ *Maryland Gazette*, 26 December 1776 (PACAN).

²¹ Advertisement in *Maryland Gazette*, 17 September 1779 (PACAN).

²² See <http://www.crwflags.com/fotw/flags/us-shaw.html> (accessed 27 September 2010).

²³ See http://www.christies.com/Lotfinder/lot_details.aspx?intObjectID=4639362 (accessed 27 September 2010).

²⁴ See <http://www.annapolis.org/uploads/newsletters/annualreport.pdf> (accessed 27 September 2010).

²⁵ *Maryland Gazette*, quoted in Bartlett, 'John Shaw', 14.

²⁶ Maryland Colonial Census, 1776;

<http://search.ancestry.com/search/db.aspx?dbid=4247> (accessed 27 September 2010).

²⁷ Maryland Marriages, 1655–1850;

<http://search.ancestry.ca/search/db.aspx?dbid=7846&enc=1> (accessed 27 September 2010).

²⁸ Eddis, *Letters from America*, 50.