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'Eighteenth-century Arts Education Research Network' (EAERN)

The Royal Society of Edinburgh funded project the 'Eighteenth-century Arts Education Research Network' (EAERN), established by Professor John Butt (Principal Investigator), Dr Brianna Robertson-Kirkland and Dr Elizabeth Ford, launched its activities in January 2017. EAERN is a ground-breaking enterprise that brings together practitioners and scholars to investigate new approaches in using eighteenth-century arts educational materials. Eighteenth-century authors concerned with arts education attempted to provide a legacy for their work in the form of education treatises and manuals and these have played a huge role in establishing the environments in which modern arts education currently resides, such as music conservatories, schools of art, dance academies and higher education centers in literature and history. This has resulted in a separation of the artistic disciplines within the modern educational context, which can be problematic for both students and scholars when developing clear methodological practices and a common terminology when working with historic materials.

This was one of the main concerns discussed at the popular 'Women and Education in the long 18th century' (WELEC) workshop held at the Glasgow Women's Library in September 2016. Though the aim of the workshop was to discuss women's roles in education throughout the eighteenth century, topics of conversation tended to concentrate on arts subjects such as music, dance, literature and needlework. The co-organizers, Robertson-Kirkland and Ford realized that this workshop was a rare opportunity for eighteenth-century arts scholars to come together and discuss their methodologies as well as common concerns surrounding the wider contextualization of arts education within the period, the effect of arts education in a modern context, and

authenticity within practice, recreation and restoration. The concluding roundtable discussion at WELEC highlighted ongoing work within the field of eighteenth-century arts education and called for more opportunities for arts scholars as well as practitioners to come together for further colloquia, seminars and workshops that could provide opportunities for collaboration. With this in mind a research network provided an ideal framework within which to pursue these goals.

The aim of EAERN is to bring national and international interdisciplinary scholars of music, dance, art history, literature, education and heritage together to collaborate for two years on the development of new approaches to the study of eighteenth-century arts education, focusing on methodological issues of engaging with historic materials within artistic practice. During this time EAERN aims to investigate how eighteenth-century arts education has impacted on the development of Western society and the development of artisan institutions such as music conservatories, schools of art, academies of dance and the university institution; to establish a dialogue between interdisciplinary researchers about their current methodological practice when analysing, deconstructing and using eighteenth-century education materials in practice; and establish new standardized methodologies that utilize cross-disciplinary explorations.

EAERN is actively providing forums for such discussions through the establishment of a practice-base workshop series held at the University of Glasgow, social media activities including a blog series and hosting three colloquia, the first of which took place at the University of Glasgow Library in May 2017. Librarian, Robert MacLean provided a fascinating insight into the eighteenth-century educational materials held within Archives and Special Collections including treatises on music,

dance and drawing as well as ephemera advertising schools, institutes and private teaching services. The wealth of material emphasized the important role of arts education and this was continually accentuated in the speaker presentations. Karol Mullaney-Dignam (University of Limerick) provided an in depth discussion on the significant role arts scholarship has to play in enhancing accounts of history and demonstrated that account records can reveal a hidden history of music practice taking place in elite Irish households throughout the period. Nel Whiting (University of Dundee) continued this conversation, posing that hidden histories could be found by examining the construction and layout of eighteenth-century family portraits, as these were a vehicle in promoting, values in a given society. Jennifer Thorp (New College Oxford) outlined the present state of eighteenth-century dance research in the UK, its scope, resources and opportunities, which neatly led us into a workshop provided by Concerto Caledonia on eighteenth-century Scottish ceilidh dancing. A series of unfamiliar steps were patiently taught to the attendees by violinist, Aaron MacGregor who also played the dance tunes alongside cellist, Alison McGillivray. The workshop was an excellent example of research and practice coming together, a unique aspect, which EAERN will cultivate in the upcoming workshop series. Details regarding EAERNs future activities are available from their website: <https://eaern.wordpress.com/>.

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