

**James William Davison and His Pen:
A Study of 19th Century Music Criticism**

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ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

James William Davison and His Pen: A Study of 19th Century Music Criticism

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This thesis is an extended study of 19th century music criticism and the prose of its most notorious music critic of the time, James William Davison. This particular study will focus on the rhetorical choices made by J.W. Davison and why he is still considered a controversial writer to this day. This research dismantles the notion that music criticism is solely beholden to the discipline of musicology and further proves that it must be examined outside the parameters of music history. Music criticism is deserving to be analyzed with the lens of rhetoric and writing choices, as the music critic by occupation, is a writer. James William Davison's rhetorical choices further prove that 19th century music criticism is soundly based on the rhetoric of the critic and thusly demonstrates that the performance criticized is not necessarily objective but intended to persuade public discourse and opinion. J.W. Davison is intentional with his prose as he advocates for native English composers and the preservation of traditional music with his criticisms in both the *The Times of London* and *The Musical Examiner* later becoming *Musical World*. The study of his writings will show that with Davison's rhetorical choices, he is motivated to preserve the English identity and persuade his audience against the vogue consumerism of foreign-born composers. As a patriot of England, his writing choices in his music criticisms further prove his penchant for nativism and the desire for its sustainment.

Signature of Investigator _____ Date _____

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Dedication

I would like to dedicate this tremendous work to my family who have seen me go through the rigors of graduate study in this current life season. To my husband, Jay. You are the source of all my laughter. I thank you for your support, patience, and being my “help meet” when I needed you the most. Your continual drive and creative spirit as a performing artist inspire me. To my sons, Brendan and Jake – may you find that in the various movie marathons, and random ice cream trips to ease my mom guilt that you see the value in this work. I love you both so much. To my parents, I’d like to think that you are peaking through the clouds seeing me accomplish my dreams which you both so ardently encouraged. Your words of advice from years past stay with me. I am grateful to my Heavenly Father for providing me this opportunity, and the writing talent to do so.

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Overview

The work of this thesis is to view music criticism through a different lens of study. In academia, the research of music criticism has for many years been absorbed by music historians within the field of musicology. While that is a sensible option because music criticism does preserve performances in their time and place with the composers therein, what is often overlooked are the rhetorical choices of the music critic who view these performances. This area of research that studies music criticism from a rhetorical lens is quite new and certainly underdeveloped. In fact, in most conversations I have with fellow scholars - I am one of the few to explore it.

It is my hope and goal that this specific study of music criticism will open more opportunities for fellow scholars to look at music criticisms through a rhetorical lens. In an effort to begin that process, I chose one of the most notorious music critics of the 19th century, James William Davison. This thesis will explain his writing choices and give insight into his favoritism for native English sounds. His tendency to lambast foreign composers of his era have labelled him the “Music Monster” generations later. What will be observed here, is why.

There was a J.W.D
Who thought a composer to be
But his muse wouldn't budge
So he set up as judge
Of better composers than he.

Chapter I.

Introduction

Music criticism by its own merit has always been a contentious area of discourse in society due to its foundation in opinions and oftentimes, subjectivity. Composers and writers alike throughout the various eras of publication and printed journalism have sparred with one another leading to rebuttals, newer compositions, or the critic backtracking on earlier criticisms. It is important to understand the history and context of music criticism holistically as a journalistic entity. While musicologists such as Christopher Dingle and Mark Evans Bonds have often occupied the territory when it comes to music criticism as a scholarly pursuit, rhetoricians such as Mishtooni Bose and Patrick McCreless (music theorist) have recently claimed ownership due to the nature of the profession. Music critics by their own distinction, create a dialogue to their audience by writing reviews to persuade to promote specific music and/or composers. It would be judicious to explore the historical beginnings of music criticism in print journalism at its beginnings of popularity – 19th century England, and thusly, what made it become such a pariah in today's post- modern society.

Chapter I (a): British 19th Century Music Criticism

To give context, it is important to understand the emergence of journalism and its social influence for its respective society. While there are so many areas to explore this exigency, the one focused in this study is the turning point for music criticism both in place and time: 19th century England. This era was climacteric for the British Empire, especially for those within the Isles. This was large in part due to the political laxation in commerce and trade thus resulting in mass consumption of products – not limited to print media (Reed 3). Therefore, the newspaper press became accessible to the expanding middle class in 19th century Great Britain. “The

striking success of the newspaper press in reaching the masses despite the tremendous handicaps of oppressive taxation and severe legal restraints, is not without its importance in English history. The multiplication of newspaper readers gradually produced a revolution in ~~our~~ government by increasing the number of those who exercised some sort of judgement of public affairs” duplicates the social public temerity of the time (Aspinall 43). The dissension and public outcry of high taxation led to the 1855 repeal of the Stamp Act which in turn, allowed access for the literate working class. “For the British working man, the newspaper became what reformers in 1830s had predicted ‘the readiest, commonest, the chief vehicle of knowledge’” (Bloy 1). This means that accessibility to print media during this period expanded the public discourse and created a new form of engagement – which in turn, provided a revolving stream of income for those with opinions about the local music scene.

Therefore, it is incontrovertible that this development and result of social interaction between print media and its public has carried over into later generations encompassing all areas of written thought. The partnership of the writer in the newspaper column and the reader of the newspaper column become more frequent thus allowing for new subject matter to be written. This did not exclude the budding music critic, which became a novelty profession for 19th century composers and music teachers alike. “Most writers found their way in by chance or necessity, as an additional income stream to, say, piano teaching, playwriting, translating or other kinds of journalism. For those already professionally active as music teachers, performers, or composers – just over half the total identified group, 51 percent – critical writing opened the door to enhanced status and intellectual stimulation” (Langley 157). This shift in earning multiple streams of income for the composer led to the copious amount of music criticism in the print media production becoming a voice for public discourse.

The reason behind the aforementioned need for composers to set themselves into the realms of writing and criticism was consumer based. “Consumers needed critics, and critics needed platforms; musicians needed all three” (Langley 148). It is important to understand the financial need of composers in the 19th century, to understand why they made this choice. Up until the late 18th century, many composers were skilled servants to families of high renown. They were more or less “taken care of” by their patron, and as an exchange would provide forms of entertainment for their listening pleasure (Miller 67). As the revolutions both of war and industry became a reality to many in Western Europe, it tampered down the pathway for musicians working in aristocratic circles. While Great Britain did not necessarily rid her monarch per se, she did rid the patronage of her musicians. “The system of court patronage would finish with the democratic revolutions underway in the late 18th century” (Wayte 4). This then paved the way for new roads where the rise of capitalism allowed for composers to benefit from other streams of income to meet their financial needs.

Due to the journalistic platform and consumption therein, the creation of public discourse for the potential audience member and the musicians of that time became a symbiotic relationship. “Commerce, personal ambition and social networks all played a part in the spread of serious music criticism as public discourse” (Langley 157). This standard issue of music criticism and its discourse has shifted creating a new area of scholarship. To begin, many musicologists with specialization of the Victorian Era, have long leaned upon academic articles and journals of eras past to define the zeitgeist. However, the need to explore from a rhetorical standpoint is indicative to the purpose of the music critic. There is value in seeking to understand the primary texts of the music critic because it gives insight into their opinions, perspectives, and ultimately – the reason as to why they wish to persuade their audience with their writing.

Through my own research and understanding of music criticism, there has been a neglect of studying the rhetorical choices of the music critic. It is important to note that up until the 18th century, viewing with this lens was a non-issue because most music critics at the time did not find it necessary. The only purpose for the music critic was to keep record, not opinion-ate. As history plunged into the 19th century, music critics were then tasked with persuasive writing to influence a particular theatre or composer. It was their duty to record and communicate the new music being played thusly continuing advocacy in the arts by way of prose.

“For at least two centuries, most people have received the majority of their knowledge about practical music-making, performers, current trends, new developments and significant new works not from the long-considered arguments posited in books and scholarly articles, but from the almost instantaneous response of music critics in newspapers” (Dingle 2). Therefore, the influence of newspaper columns and journals in an effort to persuade the public, caused music critics to be opprobrium in their public discourse carrying over into our modern day.

Consequently, my thesis will make a case for the standard-bearer of rhetoric in music criticism – the fore-bearer of an industry so contested, James William Davison.

Chapter I (b): British 19th Century Music Scene

To explain James William Davison and his criticisms, it is important to understand the 19th century music scene in Great Britain. At the time, there was what scholars would identify as a chasm between the early and late 19th century. Much of England’s native music scene was in decline due to the Industrial Revolution. The mass expansion of the working middle class shifted the music scene as the opera houses once occupying the *bourgeoisie* were going bankrupt. There was a preference for folk music with the British public. The influences of the early Italian opera,

French madrigals, and instrumental chamber music were going to the wayside – paving the way for constructed music halls and new talent to occupy them (Miller 135).

Observing this from a historical perspective, the music scene in 19th century England which scholars refer to as the Romantic Era today was not mirroring the zeitgeist of that label. In music education, we are tasked with labeling eras with the various composers, and musical styles within them. The Romantic Era was labelled as such due to its “emotional expression, personal feeling, and sentimentality” (Miller 136). It also had represented individualism and “nationalism in music becomes one of its marked characteristics when countries consciously fostered their own style” (Miller 136). If anything, England was bereft of the stereotypical sounds of Romantic music which were normally expressive with lush orchestration, dramatic harmonies, and virtuosic singing. “But musically England had nothing new to contribute to European development till the end of the 19th century” (Milner 2). The English music scene from the native perspective was essentially tethered to parlor ballads and bawdy bar songs. This flummoxed many prolific and aspiring composers of this period – some of whom wanted to go back further into the past where English music had its “glory days” in the Regency Era of English operas and plays (Reid 4).

The rise of the middle class along with the new monarch paved the way for newfangled sounds. Thus, the invitation of new music from continental Europe to the British Isles was inevitable due to the courtly influence of England’s German blooded queen, who in turn, married a Saxe-Coburg and Gotha prince (Albert) which provided a new music scene within the establishment. Prince Albert’s continued friendship with foreign born composers and advocacy for them created dissonance with many traditional English musicians (Scott 2). It was not that conservative music in the sense of composition was going to the wayside, it was more-so that the

names on top of the music composition were no longer penned with English surnames. It could be argued that this famine of native English music composition prompted English composers to make a public case for their fellow man. There was now a new platform of support through the printed newspaper, and this was the music critic's way of advocacy. It is this research that will dissect the prose of James William Davison. His writings are identifiably persuasive and obligatory to his peers. His music criticisms contribute to the cause of the moral obligation to promote his esteemed colleagues for public consumption. "At such moments a critic functions as the musical conscience of society, just as a newspaper's editorials do on political and social issues and a minister's sermons on moral ones" (Schick 29). Therefore, the music critic is a self-proclaimed doyen of noble profession, one with morality and just truths in their observances of musicians.

Hence, while scholars study music in the Romantic Era today, as an "era filled with luxuriant foreign sounds and personal feeling" there was one Englishman who rallied against it in his music criticisms (Miller 136). James William Davison "ridiculed and flailed those whom he hated inordinately: the pre-eminent musical geniuses of his day and hour" (Reid 3). He did everything in his power to stall the inevitable – progressive music. This curmudgeon music critic of *The Musical Examiner/Musical World* and *The Times* will be examined throughout this thesis by his writings. I will argue that his rhetorical choices as a music critic were shaped by his upbringing, his friendships, and his will to maintain English tradition.

Chapter I (c): Biography of James William Davison

James William Davison, also commonly known as J.W. Davison was a prominent music critic in 19th century England. He was the only music critic for *The Times* of London writing reviews for thirty-two years. Which by default, made him the sole voice for music criticism in

the better part of the 19th century. Having this monopoly on music criticism was not just with *The Times*. Davison was also the founder and main editor of *The Musical Examiner* later becoming the long obsolete *Musical World* where he occupied as the head editor for the publication from 1844 up until his death in 1885. “As editor, Davison naturally occupied the main section of the main editorial page – the position traditionally allotted to the ‘leader’ or editorial article” (Reid i). In this capacity, Davison was the leading voice of his time in the world of music criticism. His prose either uplifted or eviscerated musicians and composers of his generation. His reputation for harsh critique proceeded him. “Davison was the music monster, nothing less... in these capacities he ridiculed and flailed those he hated inordinately: the pre-eminent musical geniuses of his day and hour” (Reid 3).

James William Davison was born October 5, 1813, in central London in the area known as Fitzroy Square. He was the son of James Davison whose patriarchal parentage was of the military sort, while his mother, Maria Rebecca Davison née Duncan was a notable Regency Era actress with heralded performances at the Drury Lane, Covent Garden, and Haymarket Theatre. He was the oldest of two boys. His little brother was William Duncan Davison. Their family had an atypical household for the Victorian Era. Davison’s mother was the main provider of the household income due to her fame as a remarkably successful actor. She was also one to create public chatter due to “the fact that she put on male impersonation acts of a piquant and, according to notions current under George IV, distinctly unrespectable sort” (Reid 4). His mother carried her theatrics into the home life, influencing her oldest son to appreciate the art form of song and dance.

As the reliable first-born son, J.W. was an excellent student in prose, biology, and music. “From his mother, James Davison learnt singing and the pianoforte, at a time when his bent that

way was not yet very decided. He had a nice boy's voice that used to be exercised in such songs as 'On the Banks of Allan Water'" (Davison 5). To that end, "his mother regularly sang and played for him at home, nurturing his taste for music that had first been aroused in him by hearing William Henry Holmes playing" (Reid 5). Like any doting mother with connections, Maria employed Holmes as Davison's music teacher. James Davison went to a traditional boarding school in Surry where he excelled in French and continued his other scholarly interests – particularly that of music for the next six years.

It was here and through his piano teacher, Holmes "that Davison, while still in his teens made two lifelong friends: George Alexander Macfarren and William Sterndale Bennett, sedulous composers of cantatas, oratorios, symphonies, concertos, operas and song cycles – ornaments both of that new British school which the chauvinistic Davison was to extol to the skies" (Reid 5). Davison's proclivity towards traditional English composition and its association with his musical friendships in his youth, conditioned him to remain steadfast in his musical tendencies.

His partnership with Macfarren encouraged him to pursue composition. He did so with various piano ballads set to words by Shelley, Keats, and Desmond Henry Ryan. It was such that he was critical of his own compositions that he penned a letter to an acquaintance later in life, Davison "declares that he has 'suppressed' almost all his compositions. His orchestral works and chamber music existed no longer even in manuscript; he wouldn't know where to lay hands on a single one, whether symphony, overture, or quartet. Of three sonatas he rather liked the first – yet hoped that not a copy survived" (Reid 17). It is to be noted that one of his orchestral works was played at a *Society of British Musicians* concert in an effort to promote and advance the native talent of England. This performance was a notable moment of musical influence in Davison's life

as the *Society of British Musicians* was founded on the auspicious goal of “advancing native talent in composition and performance as one of the rules adopted was to exclude all foreign music from the programmes of the Society’s concerts and to admit none but natives of Great Britain among its members” (Mackeson 5).

Davison’s compositional goals, in turn, were limited. “Davison entered neither music college nor academy. He had no tutor and sought none. Apart from what he picked up in the beaten way of companionship from Macfarren and Bennett, both of whom were academically qualified, he was self-taught, as anyone may be who knows how to read music and has a piano” (Reid 16). As time etched forward, he transitioned from music composition and performing to music critique. This was due to his own disparagement with his music compositions. “Of three sonatas he rather liked the first – yet hoped that not a copy survived” (Reid 17). Davison then began his freelance criticisms to *The Times* in 1845. Employed as a freelance contributor to *The Times*, head critic, Charlie Kenney saw Davison’s writing talent mentoring him and later overseeing the transition as lead writer. “Before the end of 1845, Kenney’s health failing for a time, he had to find a substitute as music critic and chose Davison” (Davison 64).

Davison married the prodigy pianist, Arabella Goddard in 1860. She was twenty-four years his junior. His affection for her was not only her immense talent, but also her famous career. It could argued be that her profession as a famous pianist brought an aspect of nostalgia as his own mother was just as famous in her day. This union was also another way for him to solidify connections within the industry and keep the spherical influences in his life to her performances as she willingly attended to the musical advice of Davison. He was her mentor and promoter during the early portion of their marriage. This partnership between Arabella and J.W. resulted in two sons – Henry and Charles Davison – the former being a poet and journalist who

comprised the memoirs of J.W. Davison and created a biography cementing the legacy of his father's music criticisms.

Chapter II:

Literature Review

The most important aspect of this scholarship was the historical research. It was important for me to understand the historical context of James William Davison's life for me to effectively communicate his rhetorical choices later in the examination. There was much to explore regarding the Romantic Time period and 19th century England. Therefore, it was best for me to parse it down to backgrounds from two incredibly reliable sources: Henry Davison, J.W. Davison's son - who wrote a biography with this father's memoirs called: *Music During the Victorian Era, from Mendelssohn to Wagner* and 20th century music critic, Charles Reid and his biography on Davison called, *The Music Monster*. This information informs my rhetorical analysis of Davison's critiques because of its historical and cultural information. This is significant for my research and further examination of critical discourse analysis. The remaining aspects of my literature review are the artifacts from James William Davison's penned criticisms in *The Musical World* which are sectioned in Chapter III.

Chapter II (a): Son's Biography on James William Davison

For my research, it was important for me to find credible sources regarding James William Davison. While it might be a biased source because of the relationship (son writing about father) – I believe that Henry Davison's account and collection of letters give insight into the very interesting life leading up to James William Davison's career as a critic. So much of his criticisms are encapsulated in the period of his adult life up until his death that a good portion of his youth and record of it are limited. Therefore, it was essential to my research that I obtain the son's biography of James William Davison which includes his various letters, and memoirs

therein, entitled, *Music During the Victorian Era, from Mendelssohn to Wagner: Being the Memoirs of J.W. Davison, Forty Years Music Critic of the Times*.

What was interesting to note was that its publication date was in 1912 which was twenty-seven years after Davison's death in 1885. This also concludes that Henry Davison was fifty-three years of age at the time of publication which puts the timeline squarely in the Edwardian era. The timeline of Henry Davison's choice of publication of his father's letters, memoirs, and critiques were two decades past his death in 1885. However, either for sentimentality – being that Henry felt obliged to memorialize his father due to his own increasing age, or due to his own love of England, the book was primed for narratives that leant themselves to the way of the Englishman.

In 1912, Germany and England were in an arms race which later snowballed into World War I. However, the English were doing what they could to tamper down the military buildup of Germany at this point in time (Scott 5). While this particular fact might seem to be outside the scope of this study, it is wholly informative. In this book of memoirs, Henry Davison writes about his father thusly, “In [the German composer] Schumann, he saw the head of a pretentious regiment of German doctors and metaphysicians, affecting profundity, laying down the law aesthetic, sneering at English and English opinion, yet invading England and ousting English musicians” (Davison 184). He then concludes that his father, J.W. Davison “perhaps saw the strength and feared the success of the new movement, saw one waxing and another waning from high estate, and so, with Shelleyan disapproval of whatever the world approved, with that obstinacy which will be in opposition, with something of the knightly sentiment which chooses the losing side, or shall we say, that sense of equilibrium which flings its possessor to

the end of the rising balance, he again took up the cudgels for the sneered-at nation and the sneered-at composer” (184).

These assertions regarding Davison’s opinions toward German composers later verified his artifacts. The harsh criticisms in which Davison wrote both in *The Times* and *The Musical Examiner/Musical World* had to be motivated by something deeper than the music itself. His intense disdain for foreign musicians, especially those from Germanic regions, give insight to his greater breadth of understanding. It is true that he favored Felix Mendelssohn, a German, as one of his best-loved composers and friends. However, per my research it is obvious that Mendelssohn’s conservative writings in music composition and his mentorship of protégé, William Sterndale Bennett – a close companion of Davison – helped influence, if not solidify Davison’s penchant for the English sound. Mendelssohn’s “essentially conservative musical tastes set him apart from more adventurous musical contemporaries” (Todd 7). These adventurous musical contemporaries will be further examined later through Davison’s criticisms.

Chapter II (b): Biography of J.W. Davison from Music Critic, Charles Reid

For my research to have the appropriate breadth of resources, it was necessary for me to have a biography of J.W. Davison from a not so near familial relation. This is why I chose the 20th century biography entitled *The Music Monster: A Biography of James William Davison, Music Critic of the Times of London, 1846-1878 With Excerpts from His Critical Writings* by Charles Reid. This particular biography was wholly informative because of its objectivity by Charles Reid. It was important for me to use his biography on Davison for analysis because it was written with specific sections devoted to Davison’s criticisms. It also gave insight of a 20th century music critic writing about a 19th century music critic as Charles Reid wrote for several publications such as: *The Observer*, *News Chronicle*, *The Spectator*, and *Punch*. Not much is

made available on Reid's biography, except the list of papers he worked for and a mention of his favorite hobby, ice skating in the book jacket. However, his biography on J.W. Davison is sectioned well with Part I and Part II.

What is interesting is that in Part I, Reid focuses on the various strained relationships within James William Davison's life. He even refers to Henry Davison's biography in a couple of mentions as well. His focus was to truly implement the correspondence and expand upon those ties between critic and composer. He states in the introduction: "For my expansions and elaborations I have had recourse to over sixty volumes of reminiscences by musicians, and the like, of the same period who knew, or knew of, Davison" (Reid x). His writing about the relationships that existed in Davison's life were not glossed over. He mentions that "Davison's purpose was to bias two generations against the pre-eminent musical geniuses of his century" (Reid 2). This is made evident by chapters entitled: *Meyerbeer Foul*, *Verdi Ruffled*, *Dickens wasn't Amused*, and *Liszt – Music? Hateful Fungi, Rather*.

These readings give more insight into the complexities of Davison and his opinions of notable composers locked within his era. The excerpts that exist within the biography, such as from Joseph Bennett a fellow music critic who wrote on Davison, "He was the servant of his emotions. These were the determine influence of his life in a degree approaching to that of femininity...." (Reid 101). It is also well documented that he was quite influenced by his mother preferring her due to her musical style and wit (Reid 5). His obsession with the poet, Shelley was also of note as he changed his dietary habits to acquiesce to the influence of this ecocentric poet. "Another of Shelley's points: mankind would be immensely more cheerful and strapping if it renounced meats and spirituous liquors, living instead on vegetables and pure water. One only had to look at Napoleon Bonaparte's face – his bile-suffused cheek, wrinkled brow and the

yellow of his eyes – to read the entire Napoleonic tale of murders and victories and throne-snatching. Had he descended from vegetarian, water-drinking stock, there would have been none of this. Davison and his circle eagerly assented and conformed” (Reid 7).

The lifestyle and musical leanings of Davison was very much impacted by those he admired; Percy Bysshe Shelley, as aforementioned, his mother, the friends of his youth: George Alexander Mcfarren and William Sterndale Bennett. Charles Reid’s biography of Davison, *The Music Monster* speak to these intimate influences. First-hand accounts of Davison’s temperament from fellow composers and music critics give a perspective into Davison’s ideations.

Another perspective that Reid provides is the relationship between Davison and his editor of *The Times*. In his own publication, *The Musical Examiner*, later becoming *Musical World* – Davison was his own editor-and-chief. He had founded the publication on pretenses that music from England must be represented in the public sphere and made statements about management within the theatre. What is interesting, is that Reid makes mention of Davison having to be reminded by his editor of *The Times*, John T. Delane about the purpose of music criticism: “Pray remember in future that we have nothing to do with [theatrical] managers, that all our interest is in the public, and that we justly lose credit and influence with the public when we postpone their interest to that of managers. Real theatrical criticism is great and healthy action upon dramatic literature and upon acting, but mere praise of what is worthless is ruinous to the art and disgraceful to the newspaper” (Reid 109). Therefore, exploring the criticisms in greater detail give more perspective to the voracious appetite that Davison had toward his rivals in the public space of newspaper print.

Chapter III:

Methodology

To facilitate research regarding music criticism in the 19th century, it was important for me to explore the reasons and meanings behind James William Davison's choice of discourse when it came to his polemic writing. His criticisms both in the *Musical Examiner/Musical World* and *The Times* heralded him fame and notoriety due to his harshness of various composers seeping into the English society at the time – evidence listed in the artifacts listed above. While it would be easy to show this study within the context of musicological purposes – solely focusing on the composers and compositions – it is overlooking the main reason as to why he wrote in the first place. He was thinking of his audience.

Therefore, viewing Davison's writing from a rhetorical stance, my objective is to observe his role as a prominent music critic in print media and the subject to which he engages – rating a composer or performance, it is completely plausible for me to question his tendency to praise British musicians while excoriating foreign ones. Through my research, I will submit evidence that he made rhetorical choices as a proud Englishman to persuade his audience and support a sense of profitability to the English society at large which was going through a huge social change especially in the ways of accessibility to music. “The conservative world was beginning to be disturbed, crystallizations to be fractured or fused, the surface of the earth to show cracks and fissures” (Davison, H. 140). This conservative music scene which was profoundly waning needed an emphatic voice to take the charge. James William Davison made it his mission to advocate for English compositions and composers above all. Consequently, it is important to analyze Davison's prose through the theory of social discourse and its variants within.

Chapter III (a): Artifacts – Criticisms by J.W. Davison

Below I have extracted several criticisms from James William Davison. They will be used as the main artifacts to which I will apply my research methods. What is important is to understand the motivation behind the criticisms. The research questions informing my artifact selection and research method include: Why did Davison choose this composer? What were the word choices? What was his purpose to persuade the public for either mass praise or public shame for this performance? My research will show, through word choice and phrasing, that Davison is consistent throughout most criticisms. He pans those of the foreign background with new music to present. He also extols his future wife, Arabella Goddard who keeps the English tradition by playing compositions from composers who were more conservative in their writing style.

The excerpts were chosen from Reid's *The Music Monster* in his Part II section. These Davison criticisms are from his publication, *Musical World*. I chose these instead of *The Times* of London criticisms because believe he was somewhat censored in *The Times*. I believe this platform, *Musical World*, gave him more freedom to pontificate his opinions as he was the founder and editor-and-chief of this publication. These artifacts were chosen due to their autonomous nature. Davison had no editor to report to other than himself, therefore he is fully forthcoming in his opinions without any restriction. Therefore, my study of these particular excerpts gives full insight into his true opinions.

Here are some of the examples below: **i, ii, iii**

(i)

Musical World, 26 June 1852

Arabella Goddard is too admirable a player... and is already too great a favorite with the public not to have created a certain amount of antagonistic feeling in certain minds... An anxious desire to take the piece at the tempo indicated by the composer – which she and few beside her can do – and the nervousness naturally consequent thereon were no doubt the cause of her forgetfulness.

~ J.W. Davison ~

(ii)

Musical World, 10 June 1854

Philharmonic Concert, seventh of the season, Monday 3 June. Queen Victoria, Prince Albert, the King of Portugal (and two Royal children) were present.

The only novelty was Herr Schumann's symphony in B flat, which made a dead failure and deserved it. Few symphonies of the 'Society of British Musicians' were more incoherent and thoroughly uninteresting than this. If this music is all that Germany can send us of new, we should feel grateful to Messrs Ewer and Wessel if they would desist from importing it. The performance was spirited but course and unfinished.

~ J.W. Davison ~

(iii)

Musical World, 30 June 1855

Turn your eyes, reader, to any one composition that bears the name of Liszt if you are unlucky enough to have such a thing on your pianoforte and answer frankly, when you have examined it, if it contains one bar of genuine music. Composition indeed! – decomposition is the proper word for such hateful *fungi* which choke up and poison the fertile plains of harmony, threatening the world with drowsy – the world that pants for ‘the music which is divine’ and can only slake its burning thirst at the ‘silver fountains’ of genuine, flowing melody – *melody*, yes, melody, absolute melody.

~ J.W. Davison ~

Chapter III (b) Social Discourse:

To fundamentally approach Davison's critiques through a rhetorical lens, it is important to use discourse analysis as a method of analysis. I choose this method because of its ability to investigate meaning through a societal and historical lens. This method allows me to study Davison's language choices (music criticisms) in its social context (the newspaper) to convey a social identity (English nativism) in order to persuade his audience (the consumers). In Norman Fairclough's book, *Discourse and Social Change*, there is scholarly evidence for the need to approach language from a socio-cultural perspective. "The importance of using language analysis as a method for studying social change" reflects how language and communicative discourse are tantamount to the social process of its time (Fairclough 1). I explore this idea because the mainstay for music critics in the 19th century was the newspaper. "The newspaper press traditionally remained most attractive to full time music critics, and musical writing of all kinds appeared in general periodicals to the end of the century" (Langley 585). Due to this reality in the 19th century, it is important to me to approach music criticism not only as a time capsule of music centered to a specific historical period, but also to embrace it as a rhetorical choice for the writer and their audience.

Discourse by its own merit, "emphasizes interaction between speaker and addressee or between writer and reader and therefore processes of producing and interpreting speech and writing, as well as the situational context of language use" (Fairclough 3). Therefore, one does not exclude newspaper articles, journalism, adverts, and for the emphasize of this study, music criticism which brought to the forefront of music dialogue in the Victorian period. It is through my research that the requirement of Davison to write weekly periodicals of music criticisms for not one, but two publications made for a necessary means of persuasiveness. The point was to

sell newspapers. This is why I choose discourse analysis as the method of studying these criticisms. It is based upon the rhetorical choices of Davison and less so the musicological aspect of his history. So, while I am using biographical information from books such as *Music During the Victorian Era* and *The Music Monster* - I am also pulling concepts from Fairclough's *Discourse and Social Change* to further dissect these criticisms through critical discourse analysis.

Applying contemporary discourse analysis to James William Davison's writings fills a void in the otherwise overlooked research in 19th century music – mainly music criticism. In my findings, scholars have admitted that “there is not yet a major critical study of any English music journal or nineteenth-century music publisher, music printer, or writer on music” (Langley 10). It is my goal to explore the notion that Davison is a facilitator of social rhetorical discourse with his viewpoint and opinions. “Discourses do not just reflect or represent social entities or relations, they construct or ‘constitute’ them” (Fairclough 3). This is why I intend to understand his upbringing, background, and influences along the way, artistic or otherwise. There is a social importance to the language that is used in Davison's criticisms which will be discussed further in this thesis. However, the value of art forms depends on consumption for its survival if not reputation. Davison knew this and therefore he was willing and able to wield his social status as “the arts have been required to restructure and reconceptualize their activities as the production and marketing of commodities for consumers” (Fairclough 4).

The social aspects of Davison's upbringing have much to do with his prosaic tendencies in print. Reading about how he arrived at his opinions required further research. Therefore, it is important for me to fully understand his upbringing; the influence of his mother, his friendships, and how they shaped his musical choices. Applying this method as a lens of study helps to

unpack the rhetorical choices of Davison's music criticisms. It is through his social interactions and influences in youth that he established many of his English music compositional leanings. Fairclough makes this point plain with his observation in the social theory of discourse that "discourse is socially constitutive" (Fairclough 64). In this regard, it can be argued that Davison is wielding his authoritative powers as the editor of *The Musical Examiner/Musical World* and the principal critic of *The Times* by sidelining certain composers through his writing prowess. This platform allows a representation of discourse to contribute "all the construction of what are variously referred to as 'social identities' and 'subject positions' for social 'subjects' and types of 'self' along with the construction of social relationships between people, and [most notably] the construction of systems of knowledge and belief" (Fairclough 64).

These systems of knowledge and belief propel the discourse of Davison as he is linked identifiably to not only his English upbringing and the heritage therein, but also his willingness to set a standard for future music making. Therefore, I am viewing Davison's writings as a collection of information that encompass his personal experiences, convictions, and education as a playmaker in order to make his personal opinions valid music criticisms. I will study the interconnectedness based on the interactions he has with fellow composers – good, bad, or indifferent. I will research the subjectivity of his word choices as he has tendencies to advocate based on beliefs and less so on knowledge. It is clear that he cannot advocate for something he does not know – new music for example. These areas of study are not complete without the comprehension of cultural impact as one of the main systems of knowledge and belief propelling Davison forward. How has the culture he was immersed in such as: societal norms, values, and traditions make him defensive of English music? What was his cultural impact?

It is prudent to apply social theory constructions to Davison's rhetorical choices as he is very much entangled with his own identity, relationships, and position. He is embedded in

discursive practices with his criticisms, because naturally, he is asserting power through the use of language (Foucault). “Discursive practice is constitutive in both conventional and creative ways: it contributes to reproducing society (social identities, social relationships, systems of knowledge and belief) as it is, yet also contributes to transforming society” (Fairclough 65). It is in my observation and research that Davison perpetuates these ideas. He is using creative and persuasive text to lambast composers in who he finds intolerable. He in turn, advocates for composers and performers that meet his musical preferences. Therefore, I am investigating that Davison’s criticisms are not only aiding consumption for his preferred composers but also preserving them. Is this his way of trying to transform society by preserving it?

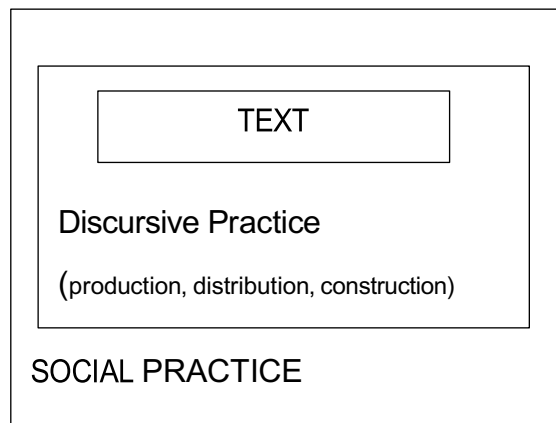
When looking at Davison’s rhetorical choices in his weekly periodicals, I note that they are motivated by a standard of discursive constitutionalism. “Discursive constitution of society does not emanate from a free play of ideas in people’s heads but from a social practice which is firmly rooted in and oriented to real, material social structures” (Fairclough 66). Therefore, application of this critical analysis of discursive practice would only help to confirm the setting and existence of James William Davison’s pen. This research is based upon a broader understanding of the music criticisms by observing the language used. Putting Davison in a position of “authority” as the music critic, by default I am going to view his rhetorical choices such as vocabulary, syntax, and style. How is he wielding his social status in these moments of prose?

He is much about changing the sociolinguistic order by framing society to bend to his perspective and not allowing others into the framework of his column. To view this further, it is sagacious to note that “political and ideological practice are not independent from each other, for ideology is significations generated within power relations as a dimension of the exercise and

power and struggle over power” (Fairclough 67). This is why J.W. Davison is incapable of distancing the two.

The diagram that Fairclough uses breaks down the observance of texts in order guide the reader. It is helpful for social discourse and critical analysis because Fairclough concludes that “analysis of discourse as text, as discourse practice, and as social practice – in order to emphasize that text analysis is not something that should be done in isolation” (Fairclough 198). Therefore, analysis of texts cannot be separated from their social constraints and/or context.

Diagram:



The application of this diagram depicts the methodology applied to Davison’s texts. Fairclough attempts to “bring together three analytical traditions, each of which is indispensable for discourse analysis” (Fairclough 72). Texts by their nature are made up of meanings and interpretations. Therefore, it is a consistent endeavor to approach music criticism, especially that of a notable (if not notorious) Victorian Era music critic. The purpose of my research is to culturally situate the word choices that Davison uses. I will do this by identifying the word selection and how they are paired within the criticism. This will shed light on as to why Davison had his preferences.

The last aspect of social discourse as a lens of study is that it exists within the society's framework. When looking at the print media in 19th century England, it is very much tailor-made for an emerging industrial population which was inherently tied to consumerism (Langley 7). Davison knew this whether it was intentional or serendipitous, and wanted those in his circle to financially benefit from the advert – a good criticism. There are key moments in Davison's biography which would endeavor him to do so. "Davison's attitude as a music critic had from first been definitely that of an ardent supporter of native talent" (Davison 47).

Hegemony is also an influential aspect of social discourse analysis. This is because "Hegemony is about constructing alliances, and integrating rather than simply dominating subordinate classes, through concessions or through ideological means, to win their consent" (Fairclough 92). Davison is very much in the placement of power as he can wield his pen to ink out those, he finds inferior – all to appease the British populous in keeping their nativism in alignment with his. It is noted that he can write more tersely in his own publication of *Musical World* as opposed to *The Times* of London. "In *The Times*, Davison was not as free as in less responsible papers, he could not unrestrictedly follow his fancy, rambling around a subject or even making excursions right away from it. Nay, he was sometimes expected to subordinate his own opinions and even in the style of his writing to those persons in authority" (Davison 73). Noting this, it was imperative to my research in with the major foci being his criticisms in *Musical World* as he only had to report to himself – thus truly understanding his writing choices.

This exploration of social discourse will provide answers to my research questions because the method provides insight into Davison's influences. These influences shape his opinions and help construct his narrative regarding music criticism. He is beholden to his English

ties whether it be familial or culturally, it is with this exploration that I will prove his intentions. It is with this application of social discourse that I will inevitably prove his loyalties.

Chapter III (c): Intertextuality

Even with the proponent of discursive practices and the social influences therein, it is prudent to approach Davison's criticisms with intertextuality as well. This is because texts are not limited to the discourse of social rhetoric but are also used as a reference point for prior texts. Davison is clearly making inference to his earlier scholarship as a musician, writer, and bibliophile when approaching his music criticisms. Therefore, intertextuality is another approach to studying his music reviews of foreign and native-born composers. Fairclough notes, "The relationship between intertextuality and hegemony is important. The concept of intertextuality points to the productivity of texts, to how texts can transform prior texts and restructure existing conventions (genres, discourse) to generate new ones. But this productivity is not in practice available to people as a limitless space for textual innovation and play: it is socially limited and constrained, and conditional upon relations of power" (Fairclough 102-103).

Davison is creating his own hegemony by not only being the sole music critic for *The Times* but also, the founder and editor-and-chief of *Musical World*. His tendencies toward English composers are made apparent early on in his criticisms and never waver throughout his lifetime. Davison has proved to be sentimental in his letters and his obsession with Shelley is a hanging cloud over his writing desk which further confirms the influence of previous texts that seep into his music criticisms.

"Intertextuality has important implications – the constitution of subjects through texts, and the contribution of changing discursive practices to changes in social identity... The position is that intertextuality, and constantly changing intertextual relations in discourse, are central to understanding of processes of subject constitution. This is so on a biographical timescale, during

the life of an individual, and for the constitution and reconstitution of social groups and communities” (Fairclough 133). It is with this type of research that I will be viewing Davison’s criticisms as well. He brings his values into the music criticisms – he also brings a monopoly as well. As the sole voice of both *The Times* of London and *Musical World*, it is sufficient to note that involvement in both publications were his life’s work. It is through my research that I further investigate his biographical timescale and his influence in English society’s scope of musical understanding.

As previously mentioned, musicologists frame music critics as recorders of musical evidence but pay no mind to their authorship. In turn, musicologists advocate for music critics and criticisms due to the belief that “Criticism becomes an important figure, a handmaid to beauty, holding out the sacred lamp in whose light creation proceeds, feeding the lamp with oil, trimming the wick when it flares or smokes” (Forster 29-30). However, it stops there. While this is completely acceptable in defining the purpose of the music critic – they are entirely looking over their value as a writer. Therefore, it is important that these criticisms be viewed through a rhetorical lens. In the larger definition of music criticism, there are also the pervasive ideations that others view music critics and label them as biased because they will “inevitably judge it, for instance, according to their own aesthetic predilections” (Sessions 46). This perspective fully formulates writing styles being within the framework of “tenor, mode, and rhetorical mode” (Fairclough 127). This is where further research is needed because music criticism is often an overlooked discipline within the study of writing analysis.

Noting that the platform of these music criticisms become situated within the confines of a journal or newspaper article of its time, it is imperative for the researcher to consider the intertextuality and structure of words. In my work, I will display the artifacts (music criticisms)

listed in the literature review and break them down for further examination. I will label and determine the parameters of the intertextuality by defining the relationship between the words. For example, “the activity sets up subject positions for a news giver [the author of the report] and a news receiver [the reader]” (Fairclough 129).

This application of intertextuality for music criticism is important for general research purposes, not just my own. In an endeavor to view music critics as writers and value their texts within texts – this rhetorical lens of study will help solidify the various reasons why music critics make certain word choices. A glimpse of Davison’s word choices in his many criticisms is just one example of how scholarship regarding music criticism and music critics, can and should be viewed from a rhetorical perspective.

Chapter III (d): Text Analysis

The one approach that will help to complete the study of Davison’s rhetorical choices in his famed criticisms is that of textual analysis. To do so, the basis must be in the framework of the intended audience and how the rhetorician is making a claim to that readership. For example, it has been a long-held value among musicologists and journalists that “Nobody pays any attention to the general manager’s evaluation of his own artists. His business interests would naturally incline him to pronounce them all geniuses in the highest order. He needs the expressed opinion of a recognized authority, and the only recognized authority whose evaluation can be used in such a way is the music critic of the daily press” (Samaroff 80).

Davison’s tendencies to create collocational relationships for his readers are perplexing at times because of the purpose behind his writing cues. For example, Fairclough states: “There are two participants in discourse practice: the reader of the text and the writer of the text” (172). The

relations between the two fluctuate based upon the identification, summarization, and influences within the text. “Foucault refers to ‘various rhetorical schemata according to which groups of statements may be combined (how descriptions, deductions, definitions, whose succession characterizes the architecture of a text, are linked together’” (Fairclough 174). Therefore, it is Davison who is painting this rhetoric with decisive textual application in order to facilitate his perspective – but does have twinge of relativism.

Relativism is the “view that what is right or wrong and good or bad is not absolute but variable and relative, depending on the person, circumstances, or social situation” (Schick 90). It is therefore important apply textual analysis to Davison’s criticisms as they can be studied from what Fairclough advocates, “a social motivation for analyzing transivity is to try the way to work out what social, cultural, ideological, political, or theoretical factors determine how a process is signified in a particular type of discourse, or in a particular text” (179-180).

To confirm this methodological approach as valid, these texts must be viewed within the framework of their sentence structure but not separate from space and time. They provide insight to the rhetorical choices of Davison: good, bad, or indifferent. “Music criticism provides a day-by-day account of events in the music world, it discusses and summarizes the musical experience more clearly than other professional writing about music... and its language and style are usually simpler than those of more specialized journals” (Schick 3). Davison is not bereft of this viewpoint, and it is important to now highlight the outcomes of Davison’s rhetorical choices. Whether his music criticisms be studied with social discourse, intertextuality, or text analysis – he is intentional with what he has to say.

Chapter IV:

Analysis of Artifacts

The purpose of this research is not only to view these music criticisms with a rhetorical lens, but also to explain why it is important to do so. This scholarly approach to music criticism is one that is either avoided or ignored due to its subjective relationship to musicology. The analysis of these artifacts studied through the methods in which I provided above will give insight into the word choices of James William Davison. I have chosen criticisms through his publication, *Musical World* as he opined more freely in these articles. I will endeavor to dissect them to fully understand their contextualization and purpose. I intend to prove the value of viewing them through a rhetorical lens to not only give perspicaciousness to Davison's prose but also confirm that he was more than just a music critic – he was a writer.

Chapter IV: Analysis of Artifacts (i)

Musical World, 26 June 1852

Arabella Goddard is too admirable a player... and is already too great a favorite with the public not to have created a certain amount of antagonistic feeling in certain minds... An anxious desire to take the piece at the tempo indicated by the composer – which she and few beside her *can* do – and the nervousness naturally consequent thereon were no doubt the cause of her forgetfulness.

~ J.W. Davison ~

In looking at artifact (i), it is necessary to provide context. Davison wrote this criticism at the height of Arabella Goddard's young career as a pianist. She was only fourteen years old at the time. Davison was thirty-eight. In this performative instance, she was playing Mendelssohn's *Morceau Caractéristique*. "When two-thirds of the way through she stopped and put a troubled

finger to her brow. Her memory had failed her. The audience cheered vociferously, as audiences will in such situations. She signaled to the concert manager, asking him to bring on the copy. The manager declined, bidding her in dumb show to start the piece again. Arabella complied – and stopped at the same place. The cheers this time were positively tumultuous. The manager brought on the copy and set it on the piano desk. Arabella started again. Paying the copy little attention, she played the *Morceau* at a speed and with a precision never heard before” (Reid 48).

What is fascinating is that while Arabella Goddard clearly had every reason for a music critic to eviscerate her performance due to memory lapse – James William Davison did quite the opposite! Knowing the history between the two, that she eventually would go on to marry him about eight years later gives some perspective on the matter regarding his glowing review. He lists her by her full name: “Arabella Goddard” – he only does these full name mentions if he favors the performer and/or composer in his various criticisms demonstrates intertextuality. This acknowledgement is an example of his discursive practices establishing an element of social discourse. In this further analysis, he also states that she is “too admirable a player” meaning that she is considered quite well positioned as a musician and continued to applaud her demonstrates social discourse/textual analysis. This wording formulates social discourse because he is indicating to his audience that she is worthy to be heard.

However, what is interesting is his use of words regarding her disposition: “anxious desire... nervousness naturally consequent thereon...” (i). While he is acknowledging a negative moment of memory lapse in her performance, he basically justifies it by stating, “to take the piece at the tempo indicated by the composer - which she and few beside her *can* do-” (i). The word “can” is italicized in the criticism demonstrates intertextuality. He is emphasizing her ability and proficiency at the instrument. He is formulating further social discourse with this emphasis and alluding to her disposition as a woman performer standing out amongst other

performers, redeeming herself with the ability of being able to do something – “*can* do” (i).

In studying these word choices, I also felt that it was important to understand the context of the historical period due to the nature of the language being used. Regarding the descriptors of Arabella Goddard, they are stuck in a time and place. The time and place belong to 19th century England, also known as the Victorian Era. Acknowledging this, I could not separate Arabella Goddard’s gender from the analysis due to the rhetorical choices made within this article. This timeframe of mid-19th century Victorian Era, women had certain expectations put upon them regarding their disposition. “Victorian women were expected to have frail disposition easily prone to ‘nerves’...” (Schiff 3). This rendering of a woman’s weakness was paramount discourse during the 19th century. Therefore, it made sense why Davison would reference it. While their eventual marriage is not fully detailed in the memoirs or biographies, it is recorded in *Punch* magazine by Davison’s friend, Shirley Brooks regarding their matrimony:

AD ARABELLUM

A fact, one known to him, kind *Punch* may be

Allowed to graduate his *rara avis* on:

Joy to the lady of the keys! From G,

The music of her life’s transposed to D,

And Arabella Goddard’s Mrs. Davison

This mention of Arabella Goddard becoming Mrs. Davison proves the social aspects of women in Victorian society. Nevermore is she the successful pianist of old. Nay, she is now considered or, reduced to being the wife of Mr. Davison validates intertextuality. I point this out, because while his earlier criticisms laud Arabella Goddard’s talent as a formative pianist, she is then reduced to “Mrs. Davison” in another Victorian music journal. Although Davison’s criticisms throughout their marriage were quite applaudable toward her skill as an artist and

musician, her status as a woman in Victorian society were limited to her husband's praises.

"Wherever and whenever Arabella played, Davison flew into a dithyramb: Unprecedented success... her powers and her execution marvelous" (Reid 48). Therefore, it is interesting to note that much of Arabella Goddard's future success in her adult life was further tied to Davison's pen, as he was the promoter and advocate for her performances – providing social discourse to his audience.

In applying social discourse to this criticism of Arabella Goddard, it demonstrates Davison's tendencies not only to praise this English pianist, but also to acknowledge that he adoringly criticized her negative moment of memory relapse. He is placing honest critique towards this English pianist while also placing a positive spin on the matter by socially constructing her presence within the community via the criticism showcases textual analysis: "too great a favorite with the public..." (i). His intention here is to create Arabella Goddard's social identity. He does so by using her first and last name – a use of honorifics in his criticisms proves demonstrates intertextuality. He also helps to create the social relationship by presenting her to the public through his criticism.

Therefore, while Arabella Goddard is the performer who made the musical mistake, she is worthy of correction and praise. It is with Davison that he writes a forgiveness mention by changing the narrative with his writing of the music criticism displays social discourse. He is contributing to the construction of systems of knowledge and belief by fixing her mistake in a public forum with the publication of his article expresses textual analysis. My application of discourse analysis allows me to conclude with these forms of evidence: He uses specific word choices by praising a woman therefore, showing textual analysis. He uses societal framing by acknowledging her flaws providing social discourse. He uses strategic word choices by redeeming the woman of her flaws demonstrating intertextuality.

While musicologists would readily acknowledge a woman's place in society of Victorian England, it is easy to dismiss how the music critic of this same era further shapes it by his writing choices. James William Davison endeavors himself to praise Arabella Goddard even in his negativity. This rhetorical lens of study into his word choices through social discourse provides a unique contribution to this field that many have overlooked when studying Davison. He is creating a narrative to his audience only as he can do when regarding his future wife Arabella Goddard. Her English performative ways are worth listening to regardless of her memory lapses. He is constructing her future using his pen – demonstrating social discourse.

Chapter IV: Analysis of Artifacts (ii)

Musical World, 10 June 1854

Philharmonic Concert, seventh of the season, Monday 3 June. Queen Victoria, Prince Albert, the King of Portugal (and two Royal children) were present.

The only novelty was Herr Schumann's symphony in B flat, which made a dead failure and deserved it. Few symphonies of the 'Society of British Musicians' were more incoherent and thoroughly uninteresting than this. If this music is all that Germany can send us of new, we should feel grateful to Messrs Ewer and Wessel if they would desist from importing it. The performance was spirited but course and unfinished.

~ J.W. Davison ~

Artifact (ii) displays Davison's tendencies toward English nativism. While he applauds his future wife, the English pianist, Arabella Goddard he is quick to disregard German composers. This is a common theme throughout his criticisms – his disparagement especially of German composers. There were many to choose from in his writing archives, but I felt that this was one of the more severe criticisms due to his use of language within the criticism.

For example, he points out the audience members to this specific performance and gives them their honorific titles proving social discourse. These are text choices based upon the parameters of his rhetorical discourse. The first paragraph is indented in such a way that it is almost equivalent to the heading demonstrating intertextuality. This formative use of intertextuality creates a specific intention to alert his audience. This intertextuality is purposeful. He writes that in attendance of the Philharmonic Concert were “Queen Victoria, Prince Albert, The King of Portugal, and two Royal Children” (ii) which also informs his audience his respective leanings (social discourse).

What is interesting to note that the next named mention was “Herr Schumann” (ii). He does not indicate his first name, Robert, nor does he identify him as a composer or concert master. He simply states: “Herr” (ii). While this title is equivalent to the English moniker “Mister” it still denotes a touch of casualty and nativism. Through this text choice he is choosing to keep Schumann in Germany expressing intertextuality. In most criticisms, Davison applies social discourse and intertextuality by using both names if the performer is worthy of such attention. In others, he will advocate their title in greater formality with honorifics.

To expand on Herr Schumann, as Davison calls him, he states that his “Symphony in B flat... made a dead failure and deserved it” (ii). While he acknowledges its newness “novelty” he completely negates it by describing it as “a dead failure” (ii). Applying both intertextuality and text analysis to this criticism was essential. This term “dead failure” is synonymous with “dead loss” an idiom that means something, or someone is completely useless or unsuccessful (Word Reference 2). He then later emphasizes this conclusion with “and deserved it” (ii). In observation of the text deserve meaning to “do something or have qualities worthy of (reward or punishment)” (Oxford 1) – this use of text that Davison is applying is purposeful. This study of textual analysis Davison is insinuating that not only did this particular new work be completely useless or unsuccessful, but he is also saying that it had the qualities of reward or punishment!

He then goes onto say, “Few symphonies of the ‘Society of British Musicians’ were more incoherent and thoroughly uninteresting than this” (ii). This is compelling because he is making a point through his word choices that there is a “new” (novelty) sound coming into these performances which were originally formatted to preserve British music. This is another application of social discourse to his audience; he is positioning the friendly reminder of nostalgia indicating textual analysis.

To give context, “The Society was founded in 1834 with the object of advancing native talent in composition and performance. In the original prospectus of the Society, attention was called to the contrast between the encouragement offered to British painting, sculpture, and other arts at the Royal Academy, and the comparative neglect of English music and English musicians, the overwhelming preponderance of foreign compositions in all musical performances being cited as ‘calculated to impress the public with the idea that musical genius is an alien to this country,’ and as tending also to ‘repress those energies and to extinguish that emulation in the breast of the youthful aspirant, which alone can lead to pre-eminence’” (Grove). Therefore, it is sufficient to say why Davison who was in wholly support of these efforts railed against the new “importation” of sound as made evident in his social discourse and textual choices.

As he pontificates his criticism of Schumann, he states: “If this music is all that Germany can send us of new, we should feel grateful to Messrs Ewer and Wessel if they would desist from importing it (ii). What is fascinating here, is not that Davison is pointing out the guilty parties – the publishers, but *how* he is pointing out the guilty parties. Here, he is using the plural British honorific titles “Messrs” (ii) which are used for professional companies. His word choice implicates a form of respect to the publishers all the while, castigating them for bringing in German music. Ewer Publishing and Wessel & Co. as they were more formally called, were music publication companies situated in England with the intention of having exclusive rights to the works of the Polish composer, Frédéric Chopin (who Davison, wrote about positively in exchange

for a heavy stipend) (Reid 26). As the years dragged on, Ewer Publishing and Wessel & Co. consistently felt their need to appropriately represent foreign talent – especially that of Germany. This was possibility in part, due because of Prince Albert’s public enthusiasm for such music, or in part that it would bring newer curious attentions to the current European sounds. Nevertheless, it was these music publishing companies that “explicitly promoted themselves as importers of foreign works, especially from German” (Humphries 2). Therefore, it makes sense for Davison to complete his thoughts of such a composition by denoting it “course and unfinished” (ii) demonstrating yet another example of social discourse and intertextuality.

Circling back to understanding his earlier influences in life, his tendencies to preserve the English musical sound were done so in earnest. He relied on his own knowledge of composition, and he felt obligated to the English sound. Davison’s favoritism showed in abundance. His penchant for native music was a constant in his rhetorical choices as a writer - his “great causes or obsessive fallacies were the supremely of most contemporary British composers and the mediocrity of most foreign ones” (Reid i). Thus bodes the question as to why he made these preferences. As with most critics, their “voice emerges over time from his or her own experiences” (Langley 150). Therefore, it is important to point out Davison’s choice of words through textual analysis and social discourse. The use of intertextuality along with the social discourse helped to break down Davison’s criticism regarding Herr Schumann.

Firstly, it was observed in the honorifics and titles used for the audience members “Queen Victoria, Prince Albert...” (ii) as a way to acknowledge them with respect. It was then further observed in the lack of title for the performer – disrespect. These observances of the omission of title regarding the German composer, Herr Schumann, yet the advocacy of English titles for the audience certainly gives insight into J.W. Davison’s leanings linking textual analysis. His use of description of Herr Schumann’s performance as, “more incoherent... thoroughly uninteresting...” (ii) highlights the “theory of power relations and how they are shape (or are shaped by) social

structures and practices. His pairing of words to emphasize his disdain along with the request to keep music in Germany further confirms his English preferences demonstrates social discourse/intertextuality.

Chapter IV: Analysis of Artifacts (iii)

Musical World, 30 June 1855

Turn your eyes, reader, to any one composition that bears the name of Liszt if you are unlucky enough to have such a thing on your pianoforte and answer frankly, when you have examined it, if it contains one bar of genuine music. Composition indeed! – decomposition is the proper word for such hateful *fungi* which choke up and poison the fertile plains of harmony, threatening the world with drowsy – the world that pants for ‘the music which is divine’ and can only slake its burning thirst at the ‘silver fountains’ of genuine, flowing melody – *melody*, yes, melody, absolute melody.

~ J.W. Davison ~

To save the best for last it was essential that I place James William Davison’s most damning criticism as the last artifact for analysis. I chose this for several reasons. One, he is positioning his social discourse and text by placing his direct attention to the reader. Another is his lack of any title for the Hungarian composer, Franz Liszt demonstrates intertextuality. He is situating his audience to also not respect Franz Liszt through his efforts of social discourse and use of text. To further this point, his description of the music both as decomposition and fungi is very telling in his prose. These are interesting word choices, and it is very much in the caliber of Davison’s later critical writings. He was just getting started.

To give better background regarding Davison’s hatred of Franz Liszt – it is important to understand the influence of Liszt in England’s Victorian Era. He was the quintessential virtuoso of his day. This meant that he played the piano with such skill and technique that was confusing to

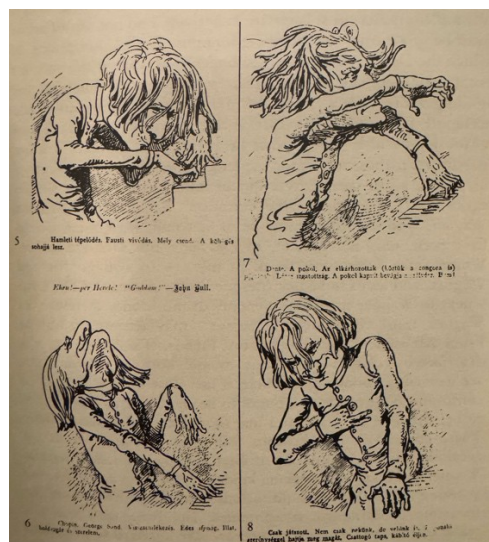
most proficient musicians. “Liszt became such a popular attraction in the salons of the well-to-do, especially with the female audience members, that his idolization became known as ‘Lisztomania’, a term coined by the poet Heinrich Heine (1797-1856). Ladies gasped and swooned before this devil of the keyboard, they even scuffled to have possession of the maestro’s gloves if he was careless enough to leave them at his piano or if he had tossed them dramatically to the floor as often as he did before he began to play” (Cartwright 2). This popularity was against the more conservative notions of the British and therefore, he was very much not widely appreciated by the more traditionally minded. This is why Davison’s specific critique of Liszt is so intriguing. It gives insight, if not confirms to his English predilections through his use of word choices in his criticism.

To begin, he addresses in the criticism, “Turn your eyes, reader,” (iii). He is instructing his audience proving textual analysis. He is telling them to turn their eyes “to any one composition that bears the name of Liszt if you are unlucky enough to have such a thing on your pianoforte” (iii). He is stating that the audience must view their pianoforte and acknowledge that they are “unlucky” to have ownership of any composition bearing the name of Liszt. He is demonstratively imploring his audience to listen to him through the criticism by way of textual emphasis and social pontifications demonstrating intertextuality. Viewing this rhetorically gives Davison the upper hand in hegemony as he is the sole English critic regarding Liszt during this timeframe.

To further the point, his remark is a disparaging one because he is insinuating that anyone who possesses composition of Liszt’s is pitiful to own such a work. He goes on to state: “when you have examined it, if it contains one bar of genuine music” (iii). This is harsh. In music, a bar is the equivalent of a measure is the smallest entity in music composition. He does not believe that even four notes within a measure of Liszt’s music is worth listening to which clearly demonstrates social discourse by his demonstrative criticism. He then goes on to use a play on words: “Composition indeed! – decomposition is the proper word” (iii). He is likening Liszt’s music to the worst form of critique by use of intertextuality and comparing it to rotting and decay by using the

word “decomposition”. He further implores this notion by calling it “hateful *fungi*” to where he purposefully italicized the word “fungi” in his music criticism demonstrating intertextuality yet again. He is driving the point to his readers that this use of italics which is a formality for most music compositions in print, is now a reference point to Liszt’s music – fungi, spore producing organisms that feed on organic matter. He then goes on to state “which choke up and poison the fertile plains of harmony, threatening the world with drowth” (iii). He is implying that the music of Liszt chokes up any real melody and although the word is obsolete now, “drwoth” means drought upon further examination. Therefore, by using intertextuality, textual analysis, and social discourse, I am able to identify Davison’s concern about the Hungarian influence in England.

To further exacerbate matters, Davison uses Hungarian caricaturist, Borszem Jankó whose pseudonym means ‘peppery-eyed dwarf’ as additions to his criticism of Liszt (Reid 226). Photos inserted below:



These above photos denote the progression of Liszt at the beginning of a piano recital to the finish of one. The translations of the numbered photos are listed below:

1. With practiced smile and rather shabby clothes, Liszt makes his bow to a tumult of applause.
2. Opening chord. Pause. He looks over his shoulder, as if to say: "Watch out! It's coming!"
3. With closed eyes, he forgets his audience and plays to and for himself.
4. Radiant pianissimo. Donning the mantle of Saint Francis of Assisi, he preaches to the birds.
5. He wrestles like Hamlet, struggles like Faust.
6. Chopin brings memories of sweet youth, fragrances, moonlight, and love.
7. In Dante's hell. Storms of sound that slam Hell's gates. Even the piano is penitent.
8. Concert ends with rowdy acclaim. Liszt bows modestly, conveying that he has been playing not only for us but with us. (Reid 226-227).

In viewing Article (iii) it was important for me to use text analysis as a method of analysis regarding this particular criticism as it was entirely lengthy and quite provocative. The use of Davison's word choices give insight into his disdain for Liszt. The application of his addressing his audience from the first sentence with demands of "turn your eyes..." (iii) this is his way to construct social reality by addressing the participants – his readers! He not only does this with a verbal demand, but he is also adding cartoon images of Liszt playing. He is constructing a schematic theme of Liszt through these visualizations and using rhetorical strategies to sway his audience to go against this Hungarian composer.

Therefore, it is safe to say from these above analyzations that Davison had an issue with foreign born composers. To break this down further, criticisms by their own merit are complex in terms of style. This is because the reader is positioned as the passive recipient while the author is source of knowledge and information. "To be successful, though, such a critic must begin with a

strong background in music” (Schick 52). Historically, James William Davison believed himself to be a proficient in music composition and therefore relied on his authoritative voice as the bellwether for societal excellence in the performing arts. It is also consequential to recognize that “public and private life are reduced to a model of individual action and motivation, and of relationships based in presumed popular experience of private life” (Fairclough 113). The platform of Davison’s criticisms proves the hegemonic nature of the print media at the time because it not only replicates but also situates the partnerships between the public and private discourse. This further proves the need for further study on rhetorical choices for the music critic which paramount in understanding what drives the writing to begin with.

In this study, it seems that in his criticisms at best - he is a nativist Englishman with a wistful nostalgia for the “better times” and at worst – he is a Xenophobe with tinged opinions about foreigners invading his Great Britain. Never mind the conquests and colonization leading up to this point (including the reign of Queen Victoria) those are non-factors in this study. However, it is certainly more visible to understand Davison’s leanings toward British nativism when looking at it through various forms of rhetorical analysis. It gives insight into his life, his complexities as a human being, - it is also a reminder that times really have not changed that dramatically. Therefore, studying music criticism in this way creates paths for a greater understanding and appreciation of not only music history but also the rhetorical choices of the music critic.

Chapter V: Discussions & Conclusions

To continue with the noble aspect of researching through a rhetorical lens, I must admit this was a daunting task. My need to research James William Davison through a rhetorical lens and less so a musicological one, placed me in newfound territory in understanding discourse analysis and how social structures work within the system. I have also found that there is a lot of information still missing. During my research process, I noted that while there were many musicology textbooks and history of Davison, none granted any information as to why he made his word choices. I came to realize very early on that I would be the one to make those efforts known as it is an overlooked scholarship.

Per my own conversations with others regarding my research of Davison and his penchant toward English music, I had a lot of push back – specifically from musicologists. It was as if there was a protective order to not denigrate the name or reputation of James William Davison. This was a peculiar response to me, as he made a living doing the same thing to other composers. What is interesting is that my research was not to disparage Davison or have history look on him unkindly. My effort was to understand him. My effort was to understand this chasm of English music in the 19th century. Where did it go? Why was it gone? Why is not studied in musical textbooks? It is as if we skipped an entire century of British music because it was deemed unworthy.

To Davison's credit, he believed that this music was worthy. His only shortcoming was that he could not accept the new with the old. This is why he had such issue with foreign born composers. He did not understand them. They did not remind him of his youth or traditional upbringing. They came with new sounds that were not necessarily pleasing to his conservative British ears. All the while, he is fighting for the recognition of lesser named composers, Sterndale Bennett and George Alexander Macfarren – musicians that are not even acknowledged in most

music textbooks as pillars of British musical sound.

It is this advocacy and recognition in where I desire to do more work. This thesis is just a small step into bigger projects ahead. There are thousands of criticisms of Davison that are yet to be dissected and understood. So much of his work is undiscovered because of its nature. It is stuck in the wormhole of the 19th century British music scene which for all intents and purposes is nonexistent in scholarly study. It is also not approached at all with any further understanding or perspective that James William Davison was first and foremost a writer. He was the only writer for both publications for the better part of a century. How is it that rhetoricians have not explored this as a scholarly goldmine?

The effort that I have put into this comprehensive study has only motivated me to do further examination on the subject of music criticism by viewing it with the rhetorical lens. It is important because this scholarship out there is missing. It is my goal to not just understand the music critic, but also inquire about their word choices, their social and cultural influences - most importantly understanding the audience at the time of their writing.

It is through this study that while I fully appreciate the value of the musician, I want to further understand the point and purpose of the music critic. Regardless of the motives involved, it is important to view their authorship through a rhetorical lens as it gives insight to their word choices. To that end, I acknowledge them as more than just music critics – I view them as profound writers who have something to share to their audiences.

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