

The Hibernian Catch Club: Catch and Glee Culture in Georgian and Victorian Dublin

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Introduction

The increase in tavern and drinking culture in British and Irish society during the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries led to the establishment of various networks, specifically between musicians and gentlemen, which resulted in the eventual formalization of social entertainment and convivial music-making. Thus originated the widespread popularity of catch and glee clubs in cities across England and Ireland during the Georgian and Victorian eras. The London clubs were the most renowned, attracting the best professional musicians from England and abroad and notable gentlemen in society. The foremost club was the Noblemen and Gentlemen's Catch Club (London), established in 1761. The demand for membership was such that it stimulated the establishment of several such clubs in the capital, and, when membership in more than one club became the norm, this facilitated dissemination of the culture and the repertoire. The growing interest in catch and glee singing soon spread to the provinces (Oxford, Canterbury, Salisbury, Chichester, York, Lincoln, Norwich, Lichfield, Bristol, Bath, Nottingham, Liverpool and Manchester), reflecting the significant growth in popularity of this sort of club from the 1760s through to the 1790s.¹ Even though the provincial clubs mirrored their London counterparts in purpose and outlook, their membership represented a smaller, less diverse network of musicians. Many of those established in cathedral cities were dominated by vicars choral. Several provincial clubs permitted the admission of instrumentalists, which led to the diversification of performance practices and contributed to the development of the glee from unaccompanied partsong to orchestrated form.²

¹ Brian Robins, *Catch and Glee Culture in Eighteenth-Century England* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2006).

² Robins, 88–134.

The infiltration of catch and glee culture into Irish society came about through cultural links with England, an increase in associational culture and social activity.³ By the end of the nineteenth century, catch and glee clubs were active in Dublin, Cork and Castlebar.⁴ There was a noticeable growth in the number of Dublin clubs established between 1820 and 1897. Even though some clubs were active for a relatively short period, the developments in Dublin reflect the overall increase in amateur music-making and the associated popularity of vocal music in the city at that time. As was the case for many London and provincial English clubs, several of the Dublin clubs performed catches and glees as part of a wider vocal and instrumental repertoire. However, by the end of the nineteenth century the culture had peaked, as evidenced by the establishment and subsequent demise of the following Dublin catch and glee clubs: Amateur Glee Club (1820–2), Ben Edar Glee Choir (1897, 1899), Dublin Glee Choir (1882–7), Dublin Glee and Madrigal Union (1866–73, 1874–5, 1897–9), Dublin Glee Singers (1896–1900), Dublin Harmonic Society (1855–7), Dublin Harmonic Union (1860–1), Dublin Madrigal Society (1846–64), Dublin Scottish Glee Choir (1891–4), Irish Harmonic Club, or Society (1803–15), Masonic Glee Club (1880–99), Philharmonic Society (1826–79) and Strollers' Club, or Society (1865–).⁵ This apparent decline must be attributed to the wider political and cultural changes experienced in Ireland following the Act of Union (1801).⁶ The gradual departure of the Anglo-Irish community following Ireland's political unification with Britain had an impact on social

³ John Cunningham and Niall Ó Ciosáin (eds), *Culture and Society in Ireland since 1750. Essays in Honour of Gearóid Ó Tuathaigh* (Dublin: The Lilliput Press, 2015); D. W. Hayton and Andrew R. Holmes (eds), *Ourselves Alone? Religion, Society and Politics in Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century Ireland. Essays Presented to S. J. Connolly* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2016); James Kelly and Martyn J. Powell (eds), *Clubs and Societies in Eighteenth-Century Ireland* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2010); James H. Murphy, *Ireland: a Social, Cultural and Literary History, 1791–1891* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2003).

⁴ Ita Hogan, *Anglo-Irish Music 1780–1830* (Cork: Cork University Press, 1966), 84; Estelle Murphy, 'Catch and glee clubs', in Harry White and Barra Boydell (eds), *The Encyclopaedia of Music in Ireland* (henceforth *EMIR*) (Dublin: UCD Press, 2013), 171; Susan O'Regan, *Music and Society in Cork, 1700–1900* (Cork: Cork University Press, 2018).

⁵ Ita Beausang, 'Music Societies (Dublin)', in *EMIR*, 712–3; Adèle Commins, 'Dublin Madrigal Society', in *EMIR*, 328; Catherine Ferris, 'Irish Harmonic Club [Irish Harmonic Society]', in *EMIR*, 530–1; Catherine Ferris, 'The Philharmonic Society', in *EMIR*, 831–2; Catherine Ferris, 'The Management of Nineteenth-Century Dublin Music Societies in the Public and Private Spheres: The Philharmonic Society and the Dublin Musical Society', in Paul Rodmell (ed.), *Music and Institutions in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2016), 13–32.

⁶ Jacqueline Hill, 'Dublin after the Union: The Age of the Ultra-Protestants, 1801–1822', in Michael Brown, Patrick M. Geoghegan and James Kelly (eds), *The Irish Act of Union, 1800. Bicentennial Essays* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2003), 144–56.

and cultural activity in Dublin. Music-making was no exception. Activities once dominated by Dublin's Protestant elite became more accessible to working and middle-class Catholics as evidenced by their increased participation in Dublin's music societies from the mid-nineteenth century onwards.⁷ Other factors which affected development of the culture in Dublin include the difficulties related to shared club membership, the diversification of repertoire and performance contexts, and the undisputed dominance of the Hibernian Catch Club.

It is believed that the Hibernian Catch Club was established c1680, making it Dublin's oldest music society.⁸ (For convenience throughout this article, it will frequently be referred to as 'the Hibernians' or simply 'the Club'.) Its existence appears to pre-date the foundation of the most renowned London catch and glee clubs, emphasizing its significance within the wider context of catch and glee singing.⁹ Owing to its relationship with Dublin's two Anglican cathedrals and important links with wider musical, religious and social groups both in Dublin and in England, the Hibernians represents a distinct cultural and performing network. Although there are notable scholarly studies and encyclopaedia entries which document the activities and management of various music societies in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Dublin and provincial Ireland, the contribution this club made to musical and cultural life remains largely unexplored.¹⁰ Consequently, the

⁷ Ita Beausang, 'From National Sentiment to Nationalist Movement, 1850–1900', in Michael Murphy and Jan Smaczny (eds), *Music in Nineteenth-Century Ireland. Irish Musical Studies* 9 (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2007), 36–51.

⁸ Information from sources in *IRL-Dm* (see note 11): Programmes Y3.1.2; Dinner Lists A2; Dinner Lists A3; Membership Lists Y3.1.10. See also Barra Boydell, *A History of Music at Christ Church Cathedral, Dublin* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2004), 124; Brian Boydell, *A Dublin Musical Calendar 1700–1760* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 1988), 267; Hogan, *Anglo-Irish Music*, 73–4; Murphy, 'Catch and glee clubs', 171; Robins, 14; Paul Rodmell, 'The Society of Antient Concerts, Dublin, 1834–64', in Murphy and Smaczny, 212.

⁹ The Club is still in existence today (2018). I would like to thank Ben Barnes who provided me with information regarding its contemporary activities. Dinner meetings are held once a month between November and March at the premises of the Law Society in Blackhall Place, Dublin. Their programme includes catches and glees and barbershop works, and lighter repertoire has also been introduced. Membership is currently at 100 non-singing members and fourteen musical members, all male and predominantly cathedral or ex-cathedral singers.

¹⁰ Ita Beausang, 'Dublin Musical Societies 1850–1900', in Patrick Devine and Harry White (eds), *The Maynooth International Musicological Conference 1995. Selected Proceedings: Part Two. Irish Musical Studies* 5 (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 1996), 169–78; Brian Boydell, 'Music, 1700–1850,' in T. W. Moody and W. E. Vaughan (eds), *A New History of Ireland IV: Eighteenth-Century Ireland 1691–1800* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), 568–628; Derek Collins, *Concert Life in Dublin in the Age of*

purpose of this article is to address the lacunae in the research by examining the contribution that the Hibernian Catch Club made to musical life in Georgian and Victorian Dublin. To contextualize this analysis I will examine how the Club's activities and membership reflect aspects of Dublin's wider social, political and cultural life during this period. A striking fact to emerge from the examination of extant administrative records is that there is very little evidence of change in the Club's practices in over a century, between 1787 and 1899. Acknowledging the reasons behind this lack of change enables us to understand the Club and its activities in a complete way. The extent to which the Club reflects the traditions associated with the culture as established in England will be identified, before the discussion turns to an exploration of the repertoire. The main source of information for this research is the Hibernians' substantial archive of administrative records and printed music, deposited at Marsh's Library, Dublin.¹¹

Origins

The Hibernian Catch Club was founded by the vicars choral of St Patrick's and Christ Church cathedrals 'as a Brotherhood for the cultivation and knowledge of the best Glee, Catches, Madrigals, &c.'¹² Dublin's vicars choral comprised accomplished local

Revolution (PhD dissertation, Queen's University Belfast, 2008); Peter Downey, 'Belfast Music Society', in *EMIR*, 81–2; Peter Downey, 'Belfast Philharmonic Society', in *EMIR*, 82–3; Catherine Ferris, 'The Music Collections of the Anacreontic Society and the Sons of Handel Society, and Music-Making in Dublin c1740–1865', *Brio*, 43:1 (2006), 21–33; Catherine Ferris, 'Anacreontic Society', in *EMIR*, 21–2; Catherine Ferris, 'Antient Concerts Society', in *EMIR*, 25–6; Catherine Ferris, 'Musical Academy', in *EMIR*, 713; Catherine Ferris, 'Sons of Handel', in *EMIR*, 944; Catherine Ferris 'Incorporated Irish Musical Fund Society', in *EMIR*, 519; Andrew Johnstone, 'University of Dublin Choral Society', in *EMIR*, 1024; David Mooney, 'Dublin Musical Society', in *EMIR*, 328; Mary Louise O'Donnell, 'Belfast Harp Society', in *EMIR*, 81; Mary Louise O'Donnell, 'Drogheda Harp Society', in *EMIR*, 316; Mary Louise O'Donnell, 'Dublin Harp Society', in *EMIR*, 326; Susan O'Regan, 'Cork: art music', in *EMIR*, 245–8; Rodmell, 'Society of Antient Concerts', 211–33.

¹¹ *IRL–Dm*, call numbers Y3.1.2, Y3.1.4, Y3.1.6, Y3.1.7, Y3.1.10, Y3.1.15, Y3.1.39(a). These sources include minute books, programmes, miscellaneous papers, dinner and membership lists and an index to music. The call numbers for the music collection run from Y3.1.11–14, Y3.1.16–39 and include call numbers beginning with the initials HCC. Eight items of printed sheet music, and three volumes of printed texts for a selection of glees, all of which relate to the Hibernian Catch Club, are held by the National Library of Ireland (<http://catalogue.nli.ie>), shelfmarks JM 5471, Add Mus 9113, Add Mus 9434, JM 2644, JM 1957, Add Mus 948, Mu-sb-583, JM 1916, Ir 360 p 26, P1195(11) and AA108, Ir7871hr.

¹² See Miscellaneous papers Y3.1.39(a). This source includes a single copy of the club's constitution and membership list printed in 1854 (henceforth Hibernians' Constitution 1854).

The Hibernian Catch Club

singers, together with an influx of talent from London and provincial England, attracted by the generous salaries on offer.¹³ Firm documentary evidence identifying the year in which the Club was established remains elusive. Extant minute books do not pre-date 1787 and the Hibernians does not appear to have publicized its activities in Dublin newspapers until the late eighteenth century. It seems likely that at least an informal version of the Club was in existence by 1680, particularly given its links with the vicars choral, music having been established at both of the cathedrals from 1660.¹⁴ John S. Bumpus states that the Club was founded in the middle of the eighteenth century; however, he fails to provide any documentary evidence supporting this claim.¹⁵ It seems more likely that the eighteenth century represents the period during which the Hibernians became a constituted club, formalizing its status and activities. This theory is supported by the wider societal developments evident in Dublin, such as the growing network of self-constituting and self-regulating clubs established in the city from the 1720s onwards.¹⁶ Furthermore, lay members were apparently admitted from 1770:¹⁷ this may well represent the time when the Hibernian Catch Club became a fully constituted music society.

Management

Even though extant minute books and administrative records are fragmentary, they are crucial in identifying the activities and workings of the Club.¹⁸ Most catch and glee clubs were managed on the same basis, employing an administrative hierarchy. In the case of the Hibernians, an elected management committee, comprising professional

¹³ Barra Boydell, *Music at Christ Church*; Kerry Houston, 'Reformation to the Roseingraves, Music 1550–1750', in John Crawford and Raymond Gillespie (eds), *St Patrick's Cathedral, Dublin: A History* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2009), 231–56; Kerry Houston, 'Music Before the Guinness Restoration, 1750–1860', in Crawford and Gillespie, 286–307; Kerry Houston, 'Restoration and Consolidation: Music, 1865–1977', in Crawford and Gillespie, 353–82; Frank Lawrence and Paul Arbuthnot, 'Vicar choral', in *EMIR*, 1028.

¹⁴ Barra Boydell, *Music at Christ Church*, 64–100; Houston, 'Reformation to the Roseingraves', 231–56.

¹⁵ John S. Bumpus, *Sir John Stevenson: A Biographical Sketch* (London: Thomas B. Bumpus, 1893), 11.

¹⁶ Kelly and Powell, 'Introduction', 27–35.

¹⁷ Brian Boydell (*Calendar*, 267) states that 'records go back to 1770, when lay members were admitted' but provides no reference to the primary source(s) from which he established this fact.

¹⁸ There are no minute books surviving for the period 1813–82. Extant volumes of dinner and membership lists do not predate 1889, and extant programmes do not predate 1883. Although records apparently date back to 1770 (see note 17), there appears to be some anomalies in primary source material. At the time of writing this article, records pertaining to the Hibernians before 1787 were not available; it is possible that some sources have been misplaced or destroyed over time.

(vicars choral) and amateur (gentlemen) musicians was involved in the day-to-day running of the Club. Between nine and eleven ordinary members were elected to the committee, and the offices of President, Secretary and Treasurer were held on the basis of rotation. The President took the chair at weekly committee and monthly dinner meetings, was required to attend monthly dinners and was responsible for the safe-keeping of the music. There was provision for a Vice-President who deputized in the President's absence, while the Secretary was responsible for carrying out administrative duties and for communicating with club members. For some individuals, fulfilling these roles afforded them a status that they had not enjoyed before, which reflects a relaxing of social boundaries evident in wider society. This was the case mainly in relation to the vicars choral. For example, Langrish[e] Doyle (1750s?–1813), Walter Bapty (*fl.* 1890–1906) and Benjamin Mullen (1827–1908), all vicars choral, fulfilled the roles of President, ordinary member, and Honorary Secretary, respectively.¹⁹ For those of a higher social standing, fulfilling roles on the managerial committee served to augment further their status in Dublin society. While the committee's decisions to punish absenteeism most likely were influenced by a similar practice in use by cathedral authorities—vicars choral were fined for non-attendance at rehearsals and cathedral services—such penalties were also characteristic of the major London singing clubs and wider club culture.²⁰ Fines and forfeits were usually incorporated into a club's constitution and most were imposed following absenteeism or poor behaviour.

Detailed financial accounts, recorded in the surviving minute books and dinner attendance lists, indicate an affluent club which entertained a wealthy cohort of gentlemen from Dublin and from wider Irish and English society. Monies accrued from attendance fees and fines for absenteeism averaged between £10 and £11 monthly. In financial terms the Club appears to have been managed most responsibly. Table 1 provides a summary of accounts relating to the dinner meeting of April 1898 and is representative of the accounts for the late nineteenth century:

¹⁹ Doyle fulfilled the role of President for a time in 1798. Bapty was an ordinary member of the management committee during the late nineteenth century, and Mullen was appointed Honorary Secretary in 1878. See Minutes A8 and Y3.1.7.

²⁰ Barra Boydell, *Music at Christ Church*, 153–7; Houston, 'Reformation to the Roseingraves', 243–4; Houston, 'Restoration and Consolidation', 359–61; James Kelly, 'The Bar Club, 1787–93: a dining club case study', in Kelly and Powell, 385–89; Robins, 60, 85, 97–8.

Table 1: Summary of accounts, 16 April 1898

	£	s	d
<u>Balance Carried Forward</u>	<u>154</u>	<u>09</u>	<u>07</u>
Payment for 26 dinners	14	19	00
Extras	00	05	00
Payment for wine	10	10	00
Hire of rooms, Kitchen, Gas & Fires	04	19	03
Piano Hire	01	01	00
Printing	01	11	10
Incidentals ²¹	06	10	00
<u>Total Expenses</u>	<u>39</u>	<u>16</u>	<u>01</u>
<u>Balance Carried Forward to May 1898</u>	<u>114</u>	<u>13</u>	<u>06</u>

As is to be expected, income and expenditure were more modest than is recorded in the case of larger London clubs, and the figures are comparable to the finances associated with the smaller or provincial English clubs.²² Over time, increases in subscription fees and fines were recorded both in the accounts and in revised versions of the constitution.²³ Unlike many convivial clubs, which could carry out their proceedings with the bare minimum of refreshments and amenities, the Hibernians required a venue to accommodate dinner and with space for a piano, a need that contributed further to expenditure. The range of expenses reflects the variety of managerial tasks involved, for example the hiring of rooms, the purchase of music, the

²¹ This figure includes payment of £3.6.0 to Mr Morgan (alto) for singing on the evening of 12 April 1898.

²² Robins, 61–3, 78 and 96–9.

²³ In November 1802 the dinner attendance fee increased from 5s 5d to 7s 9d and the fine for absenteeism was raised from 2s 8d to 3s 9d. In April 1805 the admission fee increased from 5 to 10 guineas. By the end of the nineteenth century the cost of membership had risen by approximately £6 (an amount calculated by the present writer based on figures recorded in the minute books). Further to this, a fixed fee of 14s was recouped for dinner attendance, and guests were admitted to dinner meetings on payment of a fee of 21s. Fines ranged from 1s 1d for non-attendance by the President on weekly nights at nine o'clock, to £1 2s 9d for the incumbent secretary if he failed to provide written notice to his successor. Any member could be fined 1s 1d for interrupting a musical performance.

supplying of wine and refreshments, and the cost of printing. The accounts also show the occasional payment to some professional singers, an expense incurred when supplementary singers were required.

Despite the private context in which its music-making occurred, the Club frequently publicized its activities in the following eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Dublin newspapers: *The Volunteers' Journal*, *The Irish Herald*, *The Daily Express*, *The Daily Mail* and *The Irish Times*.²⁴ Newspapers were an important means of controlling the dissemination of information pertaining to individual clubs and their activities; Powell describes the relationship between social clubs and newspapers as 'the crucial bonding agent of associational life'.²⁵ This bond is certainly evident in the case of the Hibernians. The Club used newspapers to publicize and convey social and cultural status, while also declaring religious and political loyalties. This was achieved by publishing the names of eminent guests invited to dinner meetings, advertising the prize-winning competition for glee compositions, and reporting the list of after-dinner toasts.²⁶ The President and Vice-President were regularly acknowledged in their newspaper announcements, which augmented the status of individuals within the context of the Club and broader associational life. Toasts to the monarch, the royal family, the Lord Lieutenant and to Ireland demonstrate that, as an organizational entity, the Hibernians possessed dual political loyalties. Such loyalties reflected the broader views of the Anglo-Irish ascendancy and Protestant nationalists, who wished to maintain connections with Britain but who also argued for greater recognition of Irish legislation and interests, particularly following the Act of Union.²⁷ Consequently, nationalism played its part in the Club and its outlook. In terms of Irish nationalism, this was clearly reflected in its name and in its repertoire.²⁸ Thus the concept of music and Irish nationhood, as recently defined by White,²⁹ was not confined to the national

²⁴ *The Volunteers' Journal* (also known as *The Irish Herald*) began publication in 1783; *The Daily Express* (also known as *The Daily Mail*) began publication in 1851; *The Irish Times* began publication in 1859. See Newspaper Database, <https://www.nli.ie/en/catalogues-and-databases-printed-newspapers.aspx>.

²⁵ Martyn J. Powell, 'The Aldermen of Skinner's Alley', in Kelly and Powell, 210–12; Martyn J. Powell, 'Convivial Clubs in the Public Sphere, 1750–1800', in Kelly and Powell, 354–8.

²⁶ Eminent, occasional guests included the Lord Lieutenant, the organist at St Paul's Cathedral (Sir George Martin) and the Chief Secretary of Ireland.

²⁷ Andrew Shields, 'Irish Conservative, the "Patriot" Tradition and the Act of Union, c.1829–69', in Cunningham and Ó Ciosáin, 144–59.

²⁸ Examples include the glees *Raise the song and strike the harp* and *Give me the harp* by John Stevenson (1761/7–1833), texts by John Wilson Crocker (1780–1857) and Thomas Moore (1779–1852), respectively.

²⁹ Harry White, 'Nationalism', in *EMIR*, 728–31.

songs of Thomas Moore but infiltrated the wider song repertoire as reflected by nineteenth-century Dublin's catch and glee culture.

Membership and networks

The dominance of vicars choral in the Hibernians is comparable with that in similar clubs established in several cathedral cities throughout the English provinces, including Norwich, Salisbury, Canterbury and Chichester.³⁰ It is highly likely that the Club's standard of performance reflected that of St Patrick's and Christ Church cathedral choirs owing to the shared membership.³¹ Towards the end of the eighteenth century, admission to Hibernians' membership was gained following a recommendation from an existing member and completion of a successful audition.³² Typically, new members were admitted to catch clubs by means of a balloting method. The audition process enhanced the Club's exclusivity while also maintaining performance standards, thus enriching musical life, albeit for a select private audience. There were two categories of audition, differentiating between amateur and professional singers, with expectations being higher in the case of professionals. The amateur singers were mostly Anglo-Irish gentlemen from the professional and upper classes, lords, barons, judges, medical doctors and university fellows. They formed a distinct socio-economic group, predominantly comprising those who possessed addresses in affluent parts of Dublin. While only a very small percentage of the membership was based in the Irish provinces, it is unlikely that members based outside Dublin travelled purposely to attend dinner meetings. It is more likely that attendance was incorporated in an individual's wider Dublin itinerary, whether travelling from provincial Ireland or from overseas.

³⁰ Robins, 92–3.

³¹ Many vicars choral were also engaged by Trinity College Chapel and the Chapel Royal at Dublin Castle.

³² 'Rule 1: Catch singers at sight may be admitted without limitation—A person proposed as such must be vouched by two professional members as having been regularly bred in a Choir, or that he is capable of singing any Glee or Catch at Sight, and that he would be a useful acquisition to the Club. Persons after Trial found capable of singing a part in, from Nine to Twelve Gleees or Catches may be admitted without limitation. ... Rule 4: A Catch-singer (not at sight) may be proposed for Trial on dinner day, ... if the person so proposed is approved of, a committee shall be appointed (of Catch-singers at sight and the proposer and seconder) to try the candidates abilities ...'. See Minutes A8 and Y3.1.6.

The audition process proved difficult to sustain. By 1899 it was completely removed from the constitution.³³ This change, together with the decision to limit admission of professional and amateur musicians, accounts for the increase in ordinary membership and a consequential reduction in performance standards, both evident by that time.³⁴ Honorary members resident outside Ireland were admitted as a direct consequence of adjustments made to the constitution in 1854 and again in 1899.³⁵ These actions reflect the Club's response to the gradual retreat of the aristocracy to England following the Act of Union, together with the decrease in the number of English musicians appointed to the two cathedrals following the Church Temporalities Act (1833) and Disestablishment (1870).³⁶

Despite this series of reforms which profoundly influenced Anglo-Irish culture and the established church, the Hibernians maintained its activities, demonstrating the Club's willingness and ability to adapt in order to survive. The involvement of Dublin's vicars choral remained steadfast, and continued to constitute its core musical membership. By the end of the nineteenth century overall membership stood in the region of eighty, having increased from about sixty during the 1790s.³⁷ This increase captures the likely growth in honorary membership following the cumulative effects of the Union, the Temporalities Act and Disestablishment. In broader terms, membership of the Club provided an outlet for maintaining aspects of established

³³ See the constitution (rulebook) printed in 1899 in Minutes Y3.1.7. Henceforth Hibernians' Constitution 1899.

³⁴ By 1883 on average five glees were performed at monthly dinner meetings, compared with the nine to twelve glees that singers performed at auditions as outlined in the Hibernians' 1797 constitution (henceforth Hibernians' Constitution 1797). See Minutes A8 and Y3.1.6; Programmes Y3.1.2 and note 32.

³⁵ 'Distinguished persons and Professors of Music residing in England or on the Continent, may, with the consent of the Committee be elected Honorary Members, by ballot, and shall be privileged to dine with the Club whenever they may be in Ireland, on paying One Guinea for their Dinner Cheque on each occasion' (Hibernians' Constitution 1854). 'Distinguished persons residing out of Ireland, may with the consent of the Committee, be elected Honorary Members by ballot, and shall be privileged to dine with the Club, whenever they may be in Ireland, on payment of the usual dinner cheque' (Hibernians' Constitution 1899).

³⁶ Barra Boydell, *Music at Christ Church*, 10, 102, 141–87; Houston, 'Music Before the Guinness Restoration', 294, 299, 306–7; Houston, 'Restoration and Consolidation', 358; Raymond Refaüssé, 'Introduction', in Crawford and Gillespie, 6, 12; John Crawford, 'Retrenchment, Renewal and Disestablishment, 1840–77', in Crawford and Gillespie, 308–27.

³⁷ See Minutes A8 and Y3.1.6, dinner and membership lists A2, A3, Y3.1.10.

social, religious, political and cultural life, particularly during and following a period when the social structure of Dublin's population was changing.

Vicars choral were in demand by the ever-increasing number of music societies established in Dublin.³⁸ Consequently, it is possible to track certain individuals and their activities across the city's various performance contexts. Despite the absence of Club records dating from before 1787, and owing to the comprehensive documentation of the activities of Dublin's vicars choral in the research literature, some conjectural commentary may be offered regarding particular singers active in the eighteenth-century Hibernians. The likely membership of Daniel Roseingrave senior (c1655–1727) and John Mathews (d 1799) illustrates the Club's possible connections to the musical establishments at Gloucester, Winchester, Salisbury and Durham cathedrals.³⁹ Since Salisbury Catch Club was well-established by 1776, it is possible that Mathews also participated in its activities before leaving for Durham in 1764.⁴⁰ Owing to his copying skills, Mathews is credited with introducing some works from the English cathedrals to Dublin.⁴¹ Therefore, it is also possible that he contributed to disseminating glees between clubs in provincial England and Dublin. However, his hand has not been identified among the small number of manuscripts which survive in the Hibernians' music collection.⁴²

Owing to the position in society of Garrett Wesley (1735–81), First Earl of Mornington, and his engagement with Dublin's music scene, it is highly likely that this

³⁸ The participation of vicars choral in non-liturgical performances was frowned upon by cathedral authorities, although singing in charity events was permitted provided that no payment was received (records show, however, that some individuals were remunerated). For more on benefit concerts in support of Dublin charities see Brian Boydell, *Rotunda Music in Eighteenth-Century Dublin* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 1992); Triona O'Hanlon, 'The Mercer's Hospital Music Collection: an Overview', *Brio*, 49:2 (2012), 6–21; Triona O'Hanlon, 'Charity Performances of Handel's Works in Eighteenth-Century Dublin (1736–60)', in David Vickers (ed.), *New Perspectives on Handel's Music: Essays in Honour of Donald Burrows* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2018), forthcoming.

³⁹ Daniel Roseingrave senior was organist at Gloucester, Winchester and Salisbury cathedrals prior to his appointment to the Dublin cathedrals in 1698. Copyist and singer John Mathews held positions at Winchester, Salisbury and Durham cathedrals before his appointment to both the Dublin cathedrals in 1776. See Barra Boydell, *Music at Christ Church*, 117–19, 129–31; Kerry Houston, 'John Matthews', in *EMIR*, 636–7; Houston, 'Music Before the Guinness Restoration', 287–91; Houston, 'Reformation to the Roseingraves', 247–9; Kerry Houston, 'Roseingrave family', in *EMIR*, 892–3.

⁴⁰ Robins, 96–101.

⁴¹ Houston, 'John Matthews', in *EMIR*, 636–7; Houston, 'Music Before the Guinness Restoration', 289–92.

⁴² *IRL-Dm*, Y.3.1.18 and Y.3.1.31.

prolific composer of glees and catches was an honorary member of the Club.⁴³ Several of Lord Mornington's works are represented in the London Catch Club books, in the Warren Collection and in the Hibernian Catch Club Music Collection; they are evidence of the popularity of his compositions within the catch and glee culture of that time and identify some of the repertoire common to Irish and English clubs.⁴⁴ Mornington won prizes for glee composition from London's Noblemen and Gentlemen's Catch Club in 1776, 1777 and 1779, a fact further linking the Hibernians to the most prestigious catch club in London.⁴⁵

Singers and honorary members identified in nineteenth-century records illustrate the Hibernians' connections to the literary world, catch clubs, music societies, the music publishing trade and the operatic scene in wider Dublin and London society.⁴⁶ At the committee meeting of 20 October 1801 a 'Mr Thos Moore' was proposed as a 'Catch-Club singer' [sic]. This in all probability was the Irish poet-songwriter Thomas Moore, who was admitted to the Club as an honorary member on 10 November that year. Moore's nomination was supported by John Stevenson and an association with the poet may have benefitted the Club's cultural status at that time.⁴⁷ Evidence confirming Moore's attendance at dinner meetings is lacking, although as an honorary member his occasional attendance seems likely, particularly if meetings coincided with his visits to Dublin.⁴⁸

It is likely that Stevenson's own admission to the Hibernians coincides with his appointment as vicar choral at St Patrick's Cathedral in 1783.⁴⁹ He was a member of the Club's management committee during 1797 and fulfilled the role of president for a short period during 1798. The Hibernians acknowledged his musical achievements by presenting him with an inscribed silver cup in December 1800, and five years later he

⁴³ Barra Boydell, 'Mornington, Garrett Wesley, Earl of', in *EMIR*, 683–4.

⁴⁴ Robins, 62–70.

⁴⁵ Robins, 32–71.

⁴⁶ Programmes Y3.1.2; Hibernians' Constitution 1854; Dinner List A2; Dinner List A3; Membership Lists Y3.1.10.

⁴⁷ Glees were set to published poetic works. Moore's *Odes of Anacreon* and the works of Ossian and Shakespeare proved very popular.

⁴⁸ Prior to their collaboration on *Irish Melodies*, volumes 1–7 (1808–18), and the first number of the *National Airs* (1818), Stevenson and Moore worked together on the collection *Songs and Glees*, published by James Carpenter in 1804.

⁴⁹ Lisa Parker and Elaine Sherwin, 'John Stevenson', in *EMIR*, 959–61; Bumpus, *Stevenson*.

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was made an honorary member.⁵⁰ Stevenson made a notable contribution to glee composition, winning several competitions organized by the Hibernians, the Dublin Amateur Society and the London Glee Club. His membership, together with that of brothers Francis junior, Joseph and William Robinson, Henry Bussell and Robert Prescott Stewart (all prominent musicians active in nineteenth-century Dublin), undoubtedly added prestige to the Club. These musicians represent the shared membership established between the Hibernians and the following Dublin musical societies and educational institutions: the Metropolitan Choral Society (1742–7), the Philharmonic Society, the Antient Concerts Society (1834–64), the University of Dublin Choral Society (1846–94), the Royal Irish Academy of Music and Trinity College Dublin.⁵¹ The membership of Joseph Robinson (1815–98) certainly facilitated use of the popular Antient Concert Rooms (at 52 Great Brunswick Street) as the venue for Club dinner meetings for much of the nineteenth century.⁵² That of Henry Bussell (1809–82) illustrates the Hibernians' links to Dublin's music publishing trade, a relationship which may have facilitated publication of some prize-winning glees.⁵³

The establishment by Robert Prescott Stewart (1825–94) of the Dublin Glee and Madrigal Union in 1865 is representative of the wider growth in the culture evident in Dublin during the period 1846–97. It is possible that Stewart founded the Glee Union in an attempt to rival the long-established Hibernians. Stewart's club appears to have had an interrupted existence. After a brief period when its activities were halted (1873–4) it was reconstituted in 1874, but completely ceased its operations in 1899, five years after Stewart's death. Fractious behaviour, evident in many clubs, may account for the Glee Union's interrupted history. Given the number of catch and glee clubs in existence in Dublin during this period, it seems likely that such a high level of catch-club activity was impossible to sustain, particularly owing to factors such as shared membership and the visible decline in Dublin's catch and glee culture with the approach of the twentieth century. The 'M. W. Balfe' listed as an honorary member

⁵⁰ 'Proposed by Mr White[?] that a Silver Cup of the value of twenty guineas be presented with a suitable inscription from this Club to Doctor Stevenson as an acknowledgement of the high esteem in which the Club hold his abilities. ... Agreeable to a proposition of the 2nd Instant of Mr Whitlow[?] that a silver cup of the value of twenty guineas be presented by the Club to Dr Stevenson with a suitable inscription as an acknowledgement of the high esteem in which the Club hold his Abilities. and on the question being put it was unanimously agreed to.' See Minutes A8.

⁵¹ Ita Beausang, 'Robinson family', in *EMIR*, 886–8; Lisa Parker, 'Robert Prescott Stewart', in *EMIR*, 961–3.

⁵² Ferris, 'Antient Concerts Society', in *EMIR*, 25–6; Rodmell, 'Antient Concerts Society', 217–19.

⁵³ Barra Boydell, 'Henry Bussell', in *EMIR*, 141–2.

and catch singer is in all probability the Irish composer Michael William Balfe (1808–70), who became the leading composer of English opera in mid-nineteenth-century Britain.⁵⁴ The presence of Balfe's name in extant sources indicates the Club's possible connections to the operatic scene in London, an association which would have benefitted its musical status.

Music-making and conviviality

A comprehensive overview of the works performed by the Club may be obtained from the contents of its substantial music collection, consisting of 110 retrospectively bound volumes of predominantly printed music, seven folders containing 237 individual items of printed sheet music, and five volumes of printed texts for a selection of glees.⁵⁵ This material is complemented by a handwritten index, most likely dating from the mid to late nineteenth century: a valuable catalogue in which its creator recorded the vocal scoring, the volume, and the number of copies acquired for each work.⁵⁶ The quantity and range of music in the collection is augmented by duplicate copies of some works and several volumes of music acquired from various other Dublin music clubs and societies (the Anacreontic Society, the Amateur Glee Club, Strollers' Club or Society) and the Windsor Catch Club in England. The presence of these particular volumes in the collection suggests shared membership and repertoire.

The Hibernians performed standard and popular glees as established by the leading London and provincial English clubs; overall the works of Samuel Webbe senior (1740–1816), John Danby (1757–98), John Wall Callcott (1766–1821), John Stafford Smith (1750–1836), R. J. S. Stevens (1757–1837), Stephen Storace (1762–96), Theodore Aylward (1730–1801), Thomas Arne (1710–78) and Henry R. Bishop (1786–1855) dominate. This repertoire was supplemented by glees composed by local Dublin composers whose participation in the Hibernians' prize-winning competition, which appears to have commenced c1801–2, facilitated development of the repertoire. The competition's protocols were taken quite seriously. Entries were submitted anonymously and were judged by the Club's professional musicians. The process, as

⁵⁴ Hibernians' Constitution 1854; Basil Walsh, *Michael W. Balfe: a Unique Victorian Composer* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2008).

⁵⁵ A cataloguing project undertaken in 2014 by the present writer resulted in the inclusion of a portion of the Hibernian Catch Club Music Collection in the RISM Ireland online database, see <http://www.rism-ie.org>. This project was generously funded by a Muriel McCarthy Research Fellowship, Marsh's Library. Phase II of the cataloguing project was undertaken by Kayleigh Ferguson.

⁵⁶ Alphabetical Index to Music Y3.1.15.

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detailed in the minute books, was both time consuming and rigorous, yet the competition, which included categories for the best 'serious' glee and for the best 'cheerful' glee, continued until 1869 at least.⁵⁷ The success that John Stevenson and Robert Prescott Stewart experienced in winning several competitions certainly contributed to the dominance of their glees within the Dublin repertoire.

The emergence of new glees did not eradicate the performance of older works from dinner programmes. The Club performed madrigals, canons, canzonets and elegies by composers including Thomas Morley and Henry Purcell.⁵⁸ Evidently the Hibernians cultivated an interest in performing sixteenth- and seventeenth-century music, a practice established by London's Academy of Ancient Music and the Madrigal Society.⁵⁹ Extant music and programmes reflect the decline in popularity of the catch, a genre superseded by the glee from the late eighteenth century onwards.⁶⁰ The lack of catches is also evident in the music collections of the Canterbury Catch Club and Bath Harmonic Society.⁶¹

The singing occurred at monthly dinner meetings, illustrating how the Hibernians purposefully engaged in dining and conviviality, activities inherent not only in the traditions associated with catch and glee culture but also within the broader social culture of the time. Partaking in such activities facilitated heavy drinking which in turn could fuel poor behaviour, boisterousness and bawdiness. The Noblemen and Gentlemen's Catch Club of London administered an 'alcoholic penalty' to persons who breached certain rules, ensuring that the atmosphere at their dinner meetings remained convivial.⁶² References to alcohol and to the indulgence of certain individuals, recorded in the minute books and constitution, reflect the Club's engagement with drink culture as it was emerging in nineteenth-century Ireland.⁶³ It would appear

⁵⁷ Minutes A8 and Y3.1.6; Programmes Y3.1.2.

⁵⁸ Programmes Y3.1.2.

⁵⁹ Tim Eggington, *The Advancement of Music in Enlightenment England: Benjamin Cooke and the Academy of Ancient Music* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2014); James Hobson, 'Three Madrigal-Societies in Early Nineteenth-Century England', in Rodmell, 33–53.

⁶⁰ David Johnson, 'Catch', in Stanley Sadie and John Tyrrell (eds), *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* (London: Macmillan, 2001), vol. 5, 280–1; David Johnson, 'Glee', in *The New Grove*, vol. 9, 942; Robins, 2–4, 92–5.

⁶¹ Robins, 92–106.

⁶² Robins, 60.

⁶³ Hibernians' Constitution 1797 in Minutes A8 and Y3.1.6; Bradley Kadel, *Drink and Culture in Nineteenth-Century Ireland: the Alcohol Trade and the Politics of the Irish Public House* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2015).

that the committee sought to control the purchase of alcohol, most likely in an attempt to manage finances. The consumption of alcohol, together with the rather Rabelaisian humour of the catch, may have generated negative impressions of the Hibernians and their activities. However, these activities appear relatively innocuous when compared to the Dublin and London Hellfire clubs, whose membership engaged in raucous, provocative and sometimes violent behaviour.⁶⁴

In contrast to the behaviour described in the preceding paragraph, the Hibernians organized an occasional 'ladies' night' when women in Dublin society were invited to attend. These occasions were not part of the regular schedule of dinner meetings and were organized as an additional 'party' or celebration.⁶⁵ It is unlikely that any of the women participated in the singing; however, adjustments may have been made to the programme. For example, selections from nine printed compilations entitled the 'Ladies Collection' [sic], published by John Bland of London and extant in the Club's music collection, were most likely performed on these occasions.

Conclusion

The Hibernian Catch Club was the leading Irish club of its kind, setting the standard in terms of performance. It gained status as Dublin's longest standing music society, and as such must be credited with pioneering catch and glee culture in Ireland. It was part of a wide performing network, its singers possessing connections with musical, social and religious organizations in Dublin, London and provincial England. The Hibernians engaged with and maintained the established traditions (singing, dining and conviviality) while also representing the social and cultural partnership formed between Dublin's amateur and professional musicians. The Club's activities and repertoire are comparable with those of the London and provincial English catch and glee clubs, illustrating the strong cultural connections between Britain and Ireland. Its singers, dominated by vicars choral, reflect the religious and social divisions evident in private music-making circles in Georgian and Victorian Dublin. There is no evidence to suggest that the Club ever considered broadening its social base; in fact, social, religious and musical exclusivity were inherent in its profile and are reflected by the overall lack of change in its activities, aims and outlook. The Hibernians' greatest achievement was its ability to endure the profound changes experienced by the Anglo-Irish community during the course of the nineteenth century, demonstrating the

⁶⁴ David Ryan, 'The Dublin Hellfire Club', in Kelly and Powell, 332–52.

⁶⁵ Minutes Y3.1.6.

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Club's crucial role which extended beyond the limits of music-making into social, religious and political life.

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