

## 5.2 Early Music in Late Summer (2013)

What's happening here?  
What kind of immortality is this  
as sound climbs high  
in Garrick's little temple dome beside the Thames?  
What meets the watcher's eye  
is simple – digits dance  
upon the narrow octaves of a  
harpsichord, and propagate the  
foreplay and the flight, well-tempered  
waves of sound which bear our spirits up:  
that's what it is, or what it seems to be.

But more's at play, much more:  
who is the master here?  
Is it we, who all came here to sit  
in expectation of a  
summer evening's transport –  
do we command? Without our ears  
there'd be no sound, indeed  
there'd be no score. And I, as part of this?  
My eye has chosen not to close but  
watch, to try and see what's happening here.  
Electric is the oriental face engaging  
with the densely figured score:  
intaken breath, with eye intent and fingers poised,  
is this where everything begins?

Or is it not the source of sound itself?  
There's male and female here: the passive  
waiting instrument implies three centuries  
of craft, her body, throat and heart invite  
analogies, but nothing contradicts her readiness,  
so tightly wrought, to please and serve her  
purpose, as soon as she is struck. Her  
deeper registers, more womanly than virginal,  
vibrate and resonate: she yields to touch, and  
fully played upon can render up  
the fullness of her self. This whole, a single  
instrument, a single flow of energies which runs  
from score, through fingers, notes and  
subtlest physics, to reach the ready and attentive  
ear, the mind and heart behind.

What more is there? Of course!  
Who orchestrates, inspires, the whole?  
Vast, his shadow on the dome reflects the  
gleaming  
river and the setting sun; he over-arches us –  
that fleshy German smile, the rigorous eye,  
observe  
as yet again his priceless gift is given,  
his art applied, to even such a few as we:  
his the spirit, his the inner ear and voice  
which animates the whole –  
born of all those years of culture, faith,  
and industry, and love. The immortality is his,  
not only for today but till the very end of time.

Hampton - August 2013