Chapter 6

George Worgan Plays His Piano in Rio de Janeiro

If George Worgan had the skills and time to tune and maintain his piano during the First Fleet’s journey to Botany Bay, there would have been nothing to prevent him from deriving satisfaction from playing the instrument when conditions at sea, and his workload, allowed. The piano would have needed to be in good working order when, according to fellow voyager Arthur Bowes Smyth, Worgan used the instrument in performance on board the *Sirius*.

During the First Fleet’s journey to Botany Bay, a week-long stopover in Tenerife, in the Canary Islands, was made between Sunday, 3 June and Sunday, 10 June 1787. ‘Santa Cruz, with its warmth, humidity and Spanish architecture set against a backdrop of dramatic, rocky mountains, must have seemed like another world’¹ to some of the First Fleet’s officers and crew.

Whilst in Tenerife, John Turnpenny Altree (1736–98), the surgeon volunteer appointed to the women’s convict ship the *Lady Penrhyn*, became ill and was taken off the ship. He was replaced with ‘the 37-year-old assistant surgeon’² Arthur Bowes Smyth.

‘Bowes Smyth was born in Tolleshunt D’Arcy in Essex, the seventh son of a surgeon, and as a youth would follow in his father’s footsteps, working locally as a surgeon, before signing up with the First Fleet.’³ Smyth, ‘an evangelical Christian’,⁴ joined the *Lady Penrhyn* in late March 1787,⁵ arriving in Portsmouth by mail coach⁶ four months after George Worgan had been discharged from the Portsmouth guardship *Ganges*⁷ to the *Sirius*. (As will be seen, the articulate and perceptive Smyth provides us with a detailed account of the context within which Worgan played his piano for a select group of his fellow officers.)

Having sailed down the coast of Tenerife, past the ‘spectacular high peak of the island with its ruffled collar of clouds’⁸—‘the altitude of which … was 15,396 feet

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¹ Groom, *First Fleet Artist*, p. 13.
² Hill, 1788, p. 75.
³ Ibid., p. 75.
⁵ See Hill, 1788, p. 75.
⁸ Groom, *First Fleet Artist*, p. 13.
[4693 metres], only 148 yards [135.3 metres] short of three miles”—the First Fleet made its way to the Portuguese port of Rio de Janeiro (commonly known as St Sebastian).

It may, at first, seem odd that after leaving Tenerife—that is, the Canary Islands, off the coast of north-west Africa—the fleet should make for the Cape of Good Hope (Africa’s southern tip) via Rio de Janeiro (South America). Why not simply follow the West African coast southwards?

During the eighteenth century, time-honoured ‘sailing rituals remained fundamentally unchanged—follow the currents, sail before the winds and follow the paths of seabirds’. The route from Tenerife to the Cape of Good Hope was designed to avoid the Doldrums—or the Intertropical Convergence Zone as the meteorologists call it … In this region … violent thunderstorms and stagnant calms … are … frequent. Often there is no wind, not the slightest breeze. And a ship becalmed in extreme heat is a danger to the health of its crew, let alone to any human cargo below decks without adequate ventilation … If a ship persisted in maintaining a southerly bearing, it would, when finally emerging from the Doldrums, be slowed by … [a current known as the South Atlantic Gyre] flowing in the opposite direction. And if it stayed close to the West African coast, it would encounter head-on the full force of [the so-called Benguela Current thundering up from the Antarctic] … Phillip therefore steered a south-westerly course from Tenerife.

From Rio de Janeiro, a strong current—known as the Southern Connecting Current—flows eastwards to the Cape of Good Hope, and this provided the First Fleet with ‘a red carpet ride to Cape Town’.

On Tuesday, 7 August 1787, the fleet arrived at Rio de Janeiro, anchoring ‘in a harbour graced by 40 islands, and surrounded by peaks … with rainforested slopes’.  

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9 Currey, A Voyage to New South Wales with Governor Phillip 1787–1788, pp. 32–3.
11 Ibid., pp. 170–2.
12 Ibid., p. 171.
13 Groom, First Fleet Artist, p. 13. A watercolour drawing entitled City of St. Sebastians, Rio Janeiro; Sirius & Convoy at Anchor, 1787, by William Bradley (1757–1833), is housed at the State Library of New South Wales, Sydney: Call No. ML Safe 1/14, opp. p. 37; Album ID. 823705; Digital Order No. a3461005.
In elegant, closely written copperplate, Smyth informs us in his journal that on 7 August 1787—the start of a month-long stopover in Rio de Janeiro—he received a pressing invitation [from Worgan] to dine on board the Sirius while we lay in harbour, & to hear him play on the piano forte. He has a very fine one on board, is the son of Dr. Wogern D. Mus [Doctor of Music]: & seems a very agreeable good kind of man.

In ca 1790, Smyth compiled a fair copy of his journal. When compared with the original journal, the fair copy’s entry for Tuesday, 7 August 1787 is slightly enlarged:

This day Mr. Wogan Surgeon of the Sirius dined on board, to whom I was introduced by Mr. [John] Watts [a naval lieutenant, who was a sketcher and diarist], & rec’d an Invitation to dine wth him in the Sirius, & to hear his piano forte; he is a son of Dr. Wogan D. Music: & seems a very sensible good kind of man.

Smyth’s evaluation of Worgan’s piano as being ‘very fine’ suggests that the instrument may have been the beautifully veneered 1780/86? Beck square piano. Smyth’s opinion concerning the quality of Worgan’s piano raises several questions.

1. Was his evaluation based on comments made by others?
2. Was his evaluation based on a comment made by Worgan?
3. Had Smyth already seen, but not heard Worgan’s piano?
4. Had Smyth already both seen and heard Worgan’s piano?
5. Was Smyth’s evaluation based singly upon his observation of the piano’s ornate casework and unique legs? (As luck would have it, the design and quality of manufacture of British furniture were at their zenith just as British culture took root in the Antipodes.)

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16 Ibid., Parts 41–2.
17 There are three extant manuscript versions of Smyth’s journal. What is believed to be the original version is held at the National Library of Australia, Canberra. The British Museum, London, and the State Library of New South Wales, Sydney, each hold a version that is believed to be a fair copy.
6. Was Smyth’s evaluation based upon an informed perception of the inherent musical qualities of the instrument?

7. What were Smyth’s criteria for judging the quality of a piano?

8. Was Smyth simply being polite?

Unfortunately, Smyth provides no information concerning his prior experience with pianos, music or his criteria concerning the evaluation of quality and aesthetic worth.

On Saturday, 18 August 1787, 11 days after receiving Worgan’s ‘pressing invitation’ to dinner and a recital, Smyth states: ‘Mr. Wogan the Surgeon of the Sirius dined with us this day & made me promise to dine with him on board the Sirius on Monday & after dinner … go into the town to visit 2 monasteries where there were organs to play upon.’20

In the ca 1790 fair copy of his journal, Smyth’s equivalent entry reads: ‘Mr. Wogan did us the favor of his company to dinner this day, & made me promise to dine on board the Sirius wth him on Monday & proposed after dinner going into the town to visit two monasteries where there were excellt organs.’21

Smyth was true to his promise and, on Monday, 20 August 1787, he reports that he ‘went wth Mr Watts to dine on board the Sirius wth Mr. Wogan (the Surgeon)’.22

In the fair copy of his journal, Smyth’s entry for Monday, 20 August 1787 begins: ‘Went accompanied by Mr. Watts to dine on board the Sirius with Mr. Wogan’;23 this was 13 days after Worgan had first issued his invitation for Smyth ‘to dine on board the Sirius … & to hear him play on the piano forte’.24 During this 13-day period, Worgan would have had time to stabilise the tuning of his piano, as well as to practise. (Given that the Sirius lay anchored in the calm waters of Rio de Janeiro Harbour at the time, it is likely that these activities took place with greater ease than would have been possible on the rolling open ocean.)

When Smyth and Watts arrived on board the Sirius, Commodore Arthur Phillip25 and Captain John Hunter,26 captain of the Sirius,
were on deck … the Commodore inform’d me that he had mention’d my going to use my drudge [medical skills] to the Vice Roy & that I had permission to use it when & where I pleased, & that when I went he w[oul]d supply me w[2] 2 men & a Portuguese from the Pallace.27

In this instance, Governor Phillip gave Smyth permission to use his medical skills within contexts other than on board the ships of the First Fleet. The granting of such permission was both a gracious gesture and a required protocol, given the context.

Smyth recalls the event in simpler terms in the ca 1790 fair copy of his journal: ‘When I went on board the Sirius, Governor Philip & Cap’ Hunter were both walking the quarter deck & behaved very politely to me.’28

Smyth names seven of those who sat at table together: Lieutenant Maxwell of the navy (most probably George William Maxwell, Third Lieutenant of the Sirius); Lieutenant John Long, the Adjutant of Marines and Second Lieutenant of the Sirius; ‘Mr. Wogan the Surgeon’; John Palmer, the Purser of the Sirius; ‘& three others, names unknown to me’.29

A subtly altered version appears in Smyth’s ca 1790 fair copy: ‘These were present at dinner Lieut Maxwell, Lieut Long the Adjutant of Marines, Mr. Wogan the Surgeon, Mr. Palmer the Purser, & 3 other gentlemen unknown to me.’30

Given that Smyth ‘went w[il]th Mr Watts to dine on board the Sirius w[il]th Mr. Wogan (the Surgeon)’,31 it is reasonable to assume that Lieutenant John Watts was also a member of Worgan’s dinner party.

The eight officers ‘sat down to a fine dinner freshly cooked and the wine sparkling in the glasses was drunk freely’.32 As officers, Worgan and his seven dinner companions would have eaten better food than that normally available to the marines and ordinary sailors on board ship.

The following list of daily rations, issued by the Royal Navy in 1796, shows that ordinary sailors were expected to endure alarmingly monotonous and unappetising culinary fare:

Sunday: One pound of biscuit, one gallon of small beer [that is, watered-down beer], one pound of pork, and a half-a-pint of pease.

28 Smyth, A Journal of a Voyage from Portsmouth to New South Wales, Image 45 (no. a1085045).
30 Smyth, A Journal of a Voyage from Portsmouth to New South Walesca, Image 45 (no. a1085045).
32 Crittenden, The Voyage of the First Fleet 1787–1788, p. 46.
Monday: One pound of biscuit, one gallon of small beer, one pint of oatmeal, two ounces of butter, and four ounces of cheese.

Tuesday: One pound of biscuit, one gallon of small beer, and two pounds of beef.

Wednesday: One pound of biscuit, one gallon of small beer, half-a-pint of pease, a pint of oatmeal, two ounces of butter, four ounces of cheese.\textsuperscript{33}

Ensuing days of the week saw a repetition of the same. Additional protein was provided in the form of weevils, which inevitably burrowed into all stored foodstuffs.

The gastronomic delights of shipboard food are described, for example, by Joseph Banks (1743–1820), who, travelling on the \textit{Endeavour} as part of Captain Cook’s Tahitian expedition to observe the transit of Venus, writes:

\begin{quote}
Our bread indeed is but indifferent, occasioned by the quantity of vermin that are in it, I have seen hundreds nay thousands shaken out of a single bisket. We in the cabbin have however an easy remedy for this by baking it in an oven, not too hot, which makes them all walk off, but this cannot be allowed to the private people who must find the taste of these animals very disagreeable.\textsuperscript{34}
\end{quote}

A daily ration of 160 ounces of beer may have been of some assistance to navy crews, helping them to ignore the tiny beetles scurrying through their food. Relief from this dietary horror often depended ‘on the next port of call on a ship’s voyage … [where] the crew might look forward to fresh tropical fruit, raisins, currants, olive oil, mutton, pickled beef suet, and the substitution of brandy, rum, or arrack (made from fermented coconut palm sap) in place of the beer allowance’.\textsuperscript{35}

Captain David Collins tells us that while the First Fleet lay ‘in harbour in Rio, every convict was regularly given one and a half pounds of fresh meat, a pound of rice, a suitable portion of vegetables and several oranges. Sailors returning from jaunts ashore brought a great number of oranges and even pelted the convicts with them.’\textsuperscript{36}

The diet of First Fleet officers was more varied than anyone else’s and would have been ‘regularly supplemented by the slaughter of a chicken, a pig or some

\textsuperscript{34} Quoted in Hunt, \textit{Girt}, p. 60.
\textsuperscript{35} Dill, \textit{Myth, Fact, and Navigators’ Secrets}, p. 38.
\textsuperscript{36} Keneally, \textit{A Commonwealth of Thieves}, p. 74.
other animal on board’. Smyth’s journal reveals that officers also had access to port and other wines (during the eighteenth century, red port wine was a dry table wine, not the heavily fortified sweet wine of today). Sometimes, a small quantity of spirits was added to the wine as a preservative for long sea voyages.

Smyth informs us that following the convivial meal of Monday, 20 August 1787 held on board the *Sirius*, ‘Mr. Wogan play’d after dinner on the piano forte, & soon after Major Ross came from the Great Cabbin to us, & Mr. White the Surgeon General also came there’.

In the ca 1790 fair copy of his journal, Smyth describes events in slightly different terms: ‘After dinner Major Ross & Mr. White who din’d that day with the governor on board, came down to us to hear the piano forte.’

Major Robert Ross (1740?–94) was both Lieutenant-Governor of the new colony and the officer in charge of the First Fleet’s marine garrison. Presumably, Major Ross (and perhaps also White) had just dined with Governor Phillip in the Great Cabin, and came from there to hear George Worgan’s performance, arriving either soon after it had begun (perhaps having been enticed by the sounds of the piano) or soon after it had concluded.

If Major Ross and Surgeon White had dined with Governor Phillip in the Great Cabin, it is not surprising that the fleet’s commanding officer did not join his dinner companions to hear George Worgan play the piano; Governor Phillip, it seems, was not particularly interested in music.

Smyth’s remark ‘came from the Great Cabbin to us’ suggests that Worgan’s piano was not housed in the Great Cabin. Smyth does not tell us the exact location on the ship where Worgan’s recital took place. As the concert occurred directly after dinner, it is reasonable to assume that

1. the dinner took place in the Ward Room
2. Worgan’s piano was located either in or close to the Ward Room.

If Worgan normally stored his piano in his cabin (with the instrument’s stand dismantled and the hinged legs folded underneath the piano), it is likely that prior to the dinner party, he would have

1. brought the instrument to the location of the recital

37 Hill, *1788*, p. 77.
40 Smyth, *A Journal of a Voyage from Portsmouth to New South Wales*, Images 45 (no. a1085045) and 46 (no. a1085046).
2. assembled the instrument on its stand
3. stabilised the instrument’s tuning.

He may even have done these things some days earlier, in order to practise for the concert (unless he was so talented that he did not need to practise—there is, however, no evidence that Worgan was blessed with such genius).

If the recital took place in the Ward Room, Worgan’s piano, with its lid closed during dinner, may have functioned as a side table during the meal.

After Worgan’s concert, Smyth and Lieutenant John Watts ‘accompanied by Mr. White & Surgeon Wogan left the Sirius ab[out] 6 o’clock & went on board the Lady Penrhyn; where they did us the favor of their company to supper’—that is, the late evening meal—and ‘went away ab[out] 10 o’clock.’

In the fair copy of his journal, Smyth’s recounting of these events includes Watts by name: ‘Abt 6 o’clock left the Sirius & return’d accompanied by Mr. Watts, Mr. White, Mr. Wogan on board the Lady P: where they all staid [for] supper it being too late to go to the town as was at first proposed.’

Counteracting normal protocol, the Viceroy of Brazil, Luiz de Vasconcelos (1742–1807), had given the British officers permission not only to go ashore without guards, but also to wander freely through Rio de Janeiro’s streets up to 8 kilometres from the town centre. ‘This gesture was almost unheard of in security-conscious Rio de Janeiro’, and it was taken ‘for granted that it was due to the standing of [Arthur] Phillip in the Portuguese community’. First Fleet convicts were allowed to exercise on the Ilha das Enxadas (Isle of Hoes).

Smyth’s mention of the approximate time at which he and George Worgan left the Sirius for the Lady Penrhyn and the fact that Worgan ‘play’d after dinner’ confirm that these events took place immediately following the second-last meal of the day. Under normal circumstances, ‘dinner’ was taken between 2 pm and 5 pm. If this was the case on Monday, 20 August 1787 (there is no evidence to the contrary), Worgan would have had more than enough time after the meal had concluded to demonstrate his pianistic skills and the beauties of the sound of his piano, before leaving the Sirius ‘about 6 o’clock’.

It is not known exactly how long Worgan’s recital took, nor whether he played repertoire calculated for the Kenner or the Liebhaber. At the very least, Worgan

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43 Ibid.
44 Smyth, A Journal of a Voyage from Portsmouth to New South Wales, Image 46 (no. a1085046).
46 Pembroke, Arthur Phillip, p. 177.
may only have run his fingers cursorily over the keys. At best, he may have played one or several pre-composed works in their entirety. He may also have improvised.

Crittenden states that ‘this was only one of many such dinner parties held while the fleet was at Rio’. Crittenden implies that Worgan’s piano playing formed the conclusion to more than one dinner held on board the Sirius. Although contemporaneous documentary evidence does not support Crittenden’s statement, it is tempting to hypothesise that Worgan gave more than one piano recital on board the Sirius whilst the ship lay at anchor during its month-long stopover in Rio de Janeiro.

That several officers heard Worgan play was, in microcosm, a reflection of the rage in England during the 1780s for attending concerts.

Music is everywhere the rage … a very elegant concert was given a few evenings ago at a butcher’s near Leadenhall-market … Three-penny concerts in a hay-loft, and six-penny Sunday concerts, at a common public-house, are proofs that the rage for music is extending from the higher to the lowest classes of society. Because a disproportionate share of the eighteenth-century written record has been left behind by the literary representatives of bourgeois culture, the idea that the music-listening norms of the bourgeoisie represent the activities of the lower classes is dubious in the extreme.

Musical discourse of the period was by no means concerned only with marking itself off from the old ruling order but was also intent on distinguishing itself from, and considering its relationship to, the lower classes of society.

It seems that attendance at public concerts (as well as at the theatre) had a particular attraction for men of the sea. Sailors (and not just the officers) were a conspicuous … presence in British theatres. Seamen worked under conditions of danger, deprivation and harsh discipline. After a voyage, which could last for a year or more, they were given their wages as a lump-sum payment and discharged. The money was then thrown away in a wild round of whores, drink and theatre, followed by a sheepish return to the sea.

47 Crittenden, The Voyage of the First Fleet 1787–1788, p. 46.
48 The Times, 23 February 1788; The Morning Chronicle, 15 December 1791. Quoted in McVeigh, Concert Life in London from Mozart to Haydn, p. 34.
Despite the fact that in late eighteenth-century London there was a strong taste for public concerts amongst the lower orders, many of London’s successful concert venues reveal that public recitals represented a form of entertainment that was calculated for the refined. It is reasonable to assume that several of the officers who heard Worgan play his piano on board the *Sirius* were erudite listeners. Some may even have suffered from the late eighteenth century’s most celebrated disorder: extreme sensitivity.51

What Feelings were Engendered by George Worgan’s Recital?

The English passion for attending concerts was an outgrowth of the broad intellectual trends of the age. That listeners were regarded as important reflects a mid-century move away from early eighteenth-century theories of music aesthetics and composition. The ‘rationalism that traced its descent from [René] Descartes [1596–1650] was a dominant paradigm of the Enlightenment’,52 as were ‘Cartesian ideas about the passions as they were applied to music’.53 Johann Mattheson, in his *Der vollkommene Capellmeister*, proposed that specific emotional states were best expressed musically by specific intervals—for example, joy by wide melodic leaps, and grief by small, often chromatic intervals.54 ‘Such conventions were the basis of the mechanistic system of musical figures employed by composers of the early eighteenth century. Like the systems derived from rationalistic philosophers, this doctrine of the affects gave little attention to the perception of the listener.’55

A legitimisation of the perception and responses of the listener took place during the 1750s, with recognition that ‘affects were not only conveyed by the composer, but sensed by the listener … It was to a Lockian paradigm,56 the inclusion of sensory perception as a valid aspect of cognition, that many writers … looked to … legitimise the response of listeners and spectators’.57 Within the context of musical performance, mid-century listeners could now pay composers

51 See Berg, *The Correspondence of Christian Gottfried Krause*, p. xxvi.
52 Ibid., p. xxi.
53 Ibid., p. xxi.
the supreme compliment: music could make them weep. In 1793, the English clergyman and writer on music the Reverend Richard Eastcott (ca 1740–1828) described such an event:

Whilst writing this article, a musical friend who accidentally called upon me, told me, that he had very lately met this same person at a gentleman’s house, in the vicinity of the town of Tiverton, in Devonshire; that the lady of the house, who sings with great taste, and is a very pleasing performer on the piano-forte; obligingly sat down to entertain her friends on that instrument, but was soon interrupted by [an unnamed gentleman] bursting into a flood of tears, and appearing to be greatly affected; she was obliged to desist.

Generally, however, by the very end of the eighteenth century the fashion for delicacy of feeling publicly displayed had waned. An article published in the *Monthly Magazine* of October 1796, for example, sought an answer to the question ‘Ought sensibility … be cherished, or repressed?’ The anonymous author of the article concluded that the ‘current of taste and opinion seems at present, to tend towards the negative side of this question’.

No extant documents describe the emotional responses of the men of feeling who heard George Worgan play his piano on board the *Sirius*. The absence of descriptions concerning the effect that Worgan’s music making had upon the audience may not be due to the fact that his playing was merely competent, or that none of the listeners at his recital was musically sensitive. Rather, his audience comprised men of ‘their time’ and profession, officers who would have regarded the display of tears within the context of Worgan’s concert not only as an exaggerated, self-indulgent gesture, but also as a feminine expression (it was commonly theorised that the effect of music on women was especially profound). The ‘growing artistic and rhetorical convention of praising “nature” over “art” was reflected in … authors’ praise of “natural” feminine behaviour. They translated these concepts into minute rules of behavioral practice, thereby revealing links between gender, science, and the aesthetics of sentimentality.’

58 See ibid., p. xvii.
During the late eighteenth century, the rise of an overtly emotional musical style\textsuperscript{62} not only created socially acceptable musical contexts within which women might be ‘profoundly’ and openly moved, but also caused one writer to lament: 

Our music has become so totally changed. It is not now sought as a repose for the mind after its fatigues, but to support \textit{tumults},—not to impress the \textit{delights of calm reason}, or prevail on us to \textit{listen} to the \textit{charmer}; but she must leave the purity of her \textit{own nature}, and by divesting herself of \textit{simplicity}, force us to \textit{admire}, not \textit{feel}, and yield to \textit{astonishment} and \textit{absurdity}, instead of \textit{chaste beauty} and delight.\textsuperscript{63} 

On the other hand, late eighteenth-century English men were encouraged to perceive music as a science rather than as a catalyst for the overt expression of emotion: 

\textit{Music is a science} established on the most sublime parts of mathematical truths; its \textit{theory} founded on the doctrine of \textit{proportion}; on the most \textit{wonderful}, though the most \textit{simple} and \textit{few principles}; the knowledge of which, fills the enquiring mind with the most transcendent pleasure, and admiration of the wisdom of the Creator, who ‘\textit{hath filled all things with good.’}\textsuperscript{64} 

Music was associated with logic and ratio. Music was abstract. ‘For men, as listeners, a constrained emotional response was regarded as appropriate because music was “a masculine and mental practice [whose aims were] … utilitarian”.’\textsuperscript{65} ‘Intellectual pursuits were deemed manly.’\textsuperscript{66} 

A man was expected to ‘maintain his rank through his manners: assuming an air of personal dignity, the appearance of easy assurance, a controlled deportment, the repression of emotional display, the assumption of distinguished speech, and by proper decorum in his relations with the world in all its various degrees’.\textsuperscript{67} 

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\textsuperscript{62} Commonly referred to as the \textit{empfindsamer stil} (‘sensitive style’). Music composed in this style reveals an emphasis on ‘the expression of a variety of deeply felt emotions within a musical work’. ‘\textit{Empfindsamer Stil}’, in \textit{Encyclopædia Britannica Online} (Encyclopædia Britannica Inc., 2011). 


\textsuperscript{64} \textit{Euterpe}, p. 15. Quoted in Leppert, ‘Social Order and the Domestic Consumption of Music’, p. 515. 

\textsuperscript{65} Leppert, ‘Social Order and the Domestic Consumption of Music’, p. 515. 

\textsuperscript{66} Goold, \textit{Mr. Langshaw’s Square Piano}, p. 147. 

If, within a music-making context, a performer was a man, his very identity was at risk precisely as regards that component of his identity most central to himself and all other men who might view him, his sexuality …

Writers of the period commonly urge the man who would be a musician to practice his art ‘at his private recreation’—a tacit acknowledgment of shame. The sight of men making music was derogatively described with considerable consistency.68

Men who played keyboard instruments were not exempt from such negative criticism. Some conduct books linked women and femininity specifically with the harpsichord. The English physician, naturalist and writer John Berkenhout (1726–91), for example, wrote: ‘As two gentlemen were passing the window, I heard one of them exclaim—“I hate to see a man at the harpsichord!” I had never before annexed the idea of effeminacy to that instrument, but from that moment, I began to be of that gentleman’s opinion.’69 It is not surprising that such a view should have been given contemporaneous credence; after all, late eighteenth-century English culture was ‘steeped in hedonism and sexual intrigue … culture was bound up with the giddy round of social pleasures that its critics found so morally offensive. It provided the public space for gustatory and bibulous excess, the venue for courtship, seduction, and the pleasures of the flesh.’70

In 1722, the English dancing master and choreographer John Essex (ca 1680–1744) created a list of instruments that he considered appropriate for women, along with a list of those that were not. Essex regarded instruments with phallic similarities as tainting:

The harpsichord, spinet, lute and base violin, are instruments most agreeable to the ladies: there are some others that really are unbecoming to the fair sex; as the flute, violin and hautboy; the last of which is too manlike, and would look indecent in a woman’s mouth; and the flute is very improper, as taking away too much of the juices, which are otherwise more necessarily employ’d, to promote appetite, and assist digestion.71

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69 Quoted in Leppert, ‘Music, Domestic Life and Cultural Chauvinism’, p. 112.
'During the late 18th century, harpsichords were generally replaced by fortepianos, lutes by English guit[t]ars, violas da gamba [also called base violins] by violoncellos.' On the other hand, some felt that 'the unladylike position required for playing the bass viola da gamba and the cello' precluded these instruments from feminine patronage. For example, in his *Lettre de Monsieur l'Abbé Carbasus*, the composer François Campion (ca 1686–1748), publishing under the pseudonym Abbé Carbasus, remarked that 'decency, modesty, and the hoopskirt fashion effectively prohibit the fair sex from playing the viol'. An anonymous writer in the *Musikalischer Almanach für 1784 [Musical Almanac for 1784]*, observing that when a woman plays a 'cello she must spread her legs', prudishly remarked: 'in thousands of people it calls up pictures that it ought not to call up.' (If a woman played the cello, it was recommended that she play it 'in the “side-saddle” position, an attitude that persisted in certain educational institutions well into the twentieth century'.) 

The English aristocrat Peter Beckford (ca 1740–1811), a patron of Muzio Clementi and a hunting enthusiast, expressed a distrust of music because of its links with femininity:

> Though music is a charming talent, I think more time is allotted to it than it deserves, considering the little use that is made of it afterwards; besides, it increases sensibility, particularly in a female breast, which surely is no advantage, and frequently procures a tête-à-tête that had always better be avoided.

No extant contemporaneous document suggests that the officers who gathered around George Worgan as he played his piano for them on board the *Sirius* regarded him with any derision; after all, 'the traditional bastion of male security (from fear of female fickleness) is male solidarity'. There can be little doubt that the officers in question ‘were mostly young men, educated and shaped by the Enlightenment, romantic, well meaning and impressionable’. Perhaps Smyth’s perfunctory description of the event—’Mr. Wogan play’d after dinner on the
Chapter 6

piano forte”\(^{82}\)—reflects the fact that Worgan’s colleagues cast no aspersions on their musical fellow officer concerning his performative involvement with piano music. On the other hand, Smyth’s seeming lack of feeling concerning the event may represent an attempt to mask his reservations (this is unlikely, however, as his account is consistent with the generally unemotional tone and descriptive nature of his journal entries).

We may never know exactly how Worgan’s audience felt about his playing the piano for them, nor what their emotional response to his music making was as they heard his pianistic musings after dinner on board the *Sirius* on Monday, 20 August 1787.

The Effect of the Weather on George Worgan’s Square Piano: Weather during the First Fleet’s voyage

Whilst George Worgan played his piano on the *Sirius* as the ship lay at anchor in the tranquil waters of the ‘very commodious’\(^{83}\) Rio de Janeiro Harbour, there can be little doubt that surrounding levels of temperature and humidity would have caused significant stress to the instrument. This was not the first time during the voyage to Botany Bay that Worgan’s piano would have been exposed to a potentially harmful atmospheric environment. Since leaving London, the 11 ships of the First Fleet had already experienced weather at its most uncomfortable—and there were still many surprises to come as the fleet made its way across thousands of kilometres of little-known and mostly uncharted waters.

Every owner and player of historical musical instruments will tell you from experience that rapid fluctuations of temperature and/or (especially) humidity are deleterious for any fortepiano. This is because the resultant expansion and/or contraction of the soundboard and bridge may cause these vital parts of the instrument to split. Overly high temperatures can also soften the animal glue that holds the piano together, and the instrument can shift. As Carl Dieudonné (ca 1780–1825) and Johann Lorenz Schiedmayer (1786–1860) state in their *Brief Manual on the Proper Use and Knowledge Concerning the Playing, Tuning, and Maintenance of Fortepianos*:

> [W]ood is a material that is unable to resist the effects not only of *heat* and *cold*, but especially also of *dryness* and *humidity*.\(^{84}\)

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\(^{84}\) Dieudonné and Schiedmayer, *Kurze Anleitung zu einer richtigen Kenntnis und Behandlung der Forte-Pianos*, p. 286.
... [O]ne can assume that the temperature of 15–18 degrees [Celsius] ... is the best for the piano ... pianos ... are soon ruined in rooms that are overheated, or at least lose their good tone; the action loses its precision and clatters and one is lucky if such an instrument, which has been reduced to a shambles, does not come apart at its main joints.

[Dampness] ... can be absolutely ruinous for the piano. [Humidity can cause] ... such destructive effects that the glue in the joints dissolves.85

Inevitably, and at the very least, tuning stability is utterly compromised; even a slow humidity fluctuation of 3–4 per cent is enough to undermine tuning stability.

During the eighteenth century, ocean voyages were usually planned with major atmospheric and oceanic circulation systems in mind. This is because long journeys necessarily included stops at established supply ports. Data originating from the First Fleet itself tell us of the atmospheric environments within which Worgan’s piano found itself: aboard the Sirius, Lieutenant William Bradley (1757–1833) ‘kept a daily logbook of weather observations including temperature, barometric pressure and winds’.86 Lieutenant Bradley, ‘who excelled in navigation ... was the nephew of the astronomer royal and son of a mathematics master’.87

Portsmouth to Tenerife

‘On leaving the English Channel, the [First Fleet] ... sailed south past Spain and northwest Africa into the latitudes of the northeast trade winds and the Canary Current.’88 Lieutenant Bradley’s observations reveal that during the time it took to travel to Tenerife, the temperature climbed steadily, and the humidity rose and fell wildly.

Tenerife to Rio de Janeiro

Between Sunday, 3 June and Saturday, 9 June 1787, the First Fleet took on fresh water and provisions at the port of Santa Cruz, on the island of Tenerife (in the Canary Islands).

Of all the ports visited by the [First Fleet] ... Santa Cruz had the longest history of European possession and was the most familiar to navigators; however, it had not been the most prosperous of colonies ... a successful

85 Ibid., p. 293.
87 Groom, First Fleet Artist, p. 10.
commerce in wine [had been established] but the harsh environment was not generally suited to European agriculture … the inhabitants relied on costly shipments of grain from Spain, America and Germany … [In general, the food left much to be desired, and there was] a scarcity of fresh water.\textsuperscript{89}

The fleet departed Santa Cruz on the morning of Sunday, 10 June. The fleet passed the Cape Verde Islands (off the coast of north-west Africa), but was prevented by the wind from landing at Port Praya on the island of St Iago (the largest and most fertile of the Cape Verde Islands). And so the fleet continued onward towards Rio de Janeiro.

Between Monday, 18 June and Wednesday, 20 June, the fleet entered the Doldrums in the Atlantic Narrows. As the First Fleet entered the Doldrums, ‘the European world was [on the verge of being] … turned upside down’,\textsuperscript{90} in France, because of the failed harvest and resultant famine, discontent was rising, and ‘in London a group of Christian gentlemen formed a society to abolish the slave trade’.\textsuperscript{91}

On the evening of Saturday, 14 July 1787, the fleet crossed the Equator in serene conditions, after which it encountered hot, humid and squally weather. ‘The extreme heat of the tropics brought … rotting food, the stench of unwashed people, sickness and diarrhoea. Six convicts died on the passage from Tenerife; many suffered from low spirits, [whilst] … some of the officers … gave the most cause for concern as they argued and drank to excess.’\textsuperscript{92}

Following a period of light, variable winds, ‘the ships progressed south and southwest in the Brazil Current and southeast trade winds to Rio de Janeiro where they anchored … [on Tuesday, 7] August 1787’.\textsuperscript{93} So far, the fleet had followed a tried and true trade route. Captain David Collins (1756–1810) observed: ‘the track which we had to follow was too beaten to afford us anything new or interesting.’\textsuperscript{94}

Whilst in Rio de Janeiro, Bradley did not record any meteorological observations. The weather may well have been characteristically humid and sultry. (It was on Monday, 20 August 1787, 13 days after the fleet’s arrival in Rio de Janeiro, that Worgan played his piano for some of his companions on board the \textit{Sirius}.\textsuperscript{95}

\textsuperscript{89} N. Starbuck, \textit{Constructing the ‘Perfect’ Voyage: Nicolas Baudin at Port Jackson, 1802}, PhD dissertation (University of Adelaide, 2009), p. 46.
\textsuperscript{91} Ibid., p. 14.
\textsuperscript{92} Brooke and Brandon, \textit{Bound for Botany Bay}, p. 45.
\textsuperscript{93} Gergis et al., ‘The Weather of the First Fleet Voyage to Botany Bay’, pp. 315–16.
\textsuperscript{94} Quoted in Hoskins, \textit{Sydney Harbour}, p. 21.
Since the First Fleet’s departure from Tenerife (on Sunday, 10 June 1787), the journey to Rio de Janeiro had taken a longer than expected two months. To this point, Worgan’s piano had been subjected to typically warm equatorial air and fluctuations in humidity, both of which represented massive departures from the cool English climate in which the instrument had sat during the first year(s) of its life. ‘High temperatures and heavy tropical rain caused distress and anxiety.’96 The heat was enervating, the humidity debilitating. By the time of the piano’s arrival in Rio de Janeiro, it is possible that the proper functioning and physical integrity of the instrument may already have been adversely affected by extremes in the weather.

**Rio de Janeiro to Cape Town**

After replenishing supplies in Rio de Janeiro, the fleet departed on Wednesday, 5 September 1787, riding the westerly winds south to the Cape of Good Hope, South Africa. During the more than five weeks that it took to complete this leg of the journey, temperatures rose and fell, ranging from the mid 20s to 12ºC. Humidity levels rapidly soared and plummeted. These were conditions of extreme stress for Worgan’s piano.

The weather was stormier than it had been during the first and second stages of the voyage and the convoy encountered strong gales for the greater part of the passage to the cape. The transports pitched and rolled, sometimes shipping large quantities of water.97

On Saturday, 13 October 1787, the fleet arrived at Cape Town—‘the Dutch headquarters in Africa’98—where it anchored for a month.

After the seductive luxuriance of Rio, the … Protestant settlement at Cape Town proved a contrast … Some of the officers and gentlemen from the fleet visited the Dutch East India Company’s garden, near the centre of the town. In the garden was a menagerie, which contained ‘a vicious zebra … two of the birds called secretaries, [and] a crane’.99

Although there is no documentary evidence to support the notion, it is possible that during the preparations at Cape Town for the final and longest stage of the voyage to Botany Bay, George Worgan may have given a piano recital for some of his colleagues.

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97 Ibid., p. 179.
98 Keneally, *Australians*, p. 68.
It is likely that the extremes of temperature and rapid changes in humidity during the journey to Cape Town had already caused some damage to Worgan’s piano (crudely repaired cracks in the soundboard and bridge of the 1780/86? Beck square piano\(^{100}\) testify to the deleterious effect of such climatic extremes).

### Cape Town to Botany Bay: Ferocious storms, violent extremes

The fleet departed from Cape Town, in quiet conditions, on Tuesday, 13 November 1787, and sailed

into the westerly winds and tremendous swell of the Southern Ocean. The voyage from Cape Town to Botany Bay took about eight weeks.\(^{101}\)

Above decks was a babble of complaints from animals ... There were Captain Phillip’s greyhounds and horses on *Sirius*, Reverend [Richard] Johnson’s kittens on the store ship *Golden Grove*, as well as on every ship a number of newly purchased sheep, pigs, cattle, goats, turkeys, geese, ducks, chickens, rabbits and pigeons penned in various structures on every deck.\(^{102}\)

The fleet split up [into two divisions: the faster and the slower ships]. Phillip went ahead in the *Supply*, accompanied by three transports full of male convicts whom he intended to set to work [building storehouses and huts] immediately [upon arrival, before the remaining ships reached Botany Bay. Second Captain John] Hunter followed in the flagship *Sirius* [as an escort to the slower] ... seven other transports.\(^{103}\)

Arguably, ‘this was the [most] dangerous part of the voyage ... Phillip had to sail deep into the Southern Ocean to make full use of the Trade Winds, [and] there was ... the threat of icebergs in this region’.\(^{104}\)

The Southern Ocean is the largest stretch of unbroken water on Earth. It extends continuously around the globe, separating America, Africa and Australia from Antarctica. Nowhere else does the sea roll uninterrupted around the world, nor the winds have such an unimpeded range.\(^{105}\)

\(^{100}\) See ‘Soundboard’ and ‘Bridge’, in Appendix A, Volume 2 of this publication.


\(^{102}\) Keneally, *Australians*, p. 69.

\(^{103}\) Hoskins, *Sydney Harbour*, p. 21.


As the fleet sailed on the vast stretch of ocean between Africa and Australia, it was often battered by ferocious summer storms.

A little more than two weeks into the journey, on Wednesday, 28 November 1787, John Easty (fl. 1786–93), a marine on the *Scarborough*, recorded in his journal that the sea was ‘the heaviest … as ever I saw in my life’. The next day, on Thursday, 29 November 1787, Arthur Bowes Smyth wrote: ‘The wind was very high … The Sea rose in most prodigious mountains … In the night the ship rolled at the most prodigious rate that every thing which was moveable was thrown over in every part of the ship.’

Except for ballast, the [First Fleet’s] ships were wholly made from materials derived from trees and grass. The hull, masts and spars were of wood; the rigging, rope and cordage of hemp; and the sails of flax. At sea, the ships would pitch and roll, searching for equilibrium.

Furthermore, the average length of the ships making up the First Fleet was 27 metres; the average width 8.5 metres. In such small and fragile vessels, the havoc caused by pitching and rolling in violently stormy seas is unimaginable.

In 1849, the Irish political prisoner John Martin (1812–75), on board the *Mount Stuart Elphinstone* sailing from Cork to Van Diemen’s Land, described the consequences of a storm that must have been similar to that encountered by the First Fleet on 29 November 1787:

[The ship] rocked abominably … she was laying her sides alternately upon the water, down to the very hammock nettings. Such abominable sensations as the rocking produced! For noises there was the continual creaking & groaning of the strained timbers, the rolling clashing rattling & thumping of every moveable upon deck & in the cabins, except such as were firmly lashed … What a mess! I was sitting on my bed, holding on by hands & feet, and thanking my stars that I had two legs & thighs & hands & arms … We heard that the poor convicts in the prison thought the ship was going to the bottom & many of them fell on their knees in the water to pray for mercy.

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109 Data concerning the length and width of each of the First Fleet ships can be found in Perrem, ‘Articles and Facts’.
Such conditions cannot in any way have been favourable for Worgan’s piano. The instrument would have been stowed away (doubtless lashed to something immovable) in the hope that it would not be thrown around the cabin (how successfully it was stowed, we will never know). Even if the case of the instrument was protectively immobilised, the key levers, hammer shanks and dampers would have moved in response to every heave of the ship. At least the piano was not ‘tumbled about, and shivered to atoms, by the vessel’s motion’.\textsuperscript{111} The violence of the storms through which the fleet sailed was such that the \textit{Prince of Wales} lost its topsail and a man overboard.\textsuperscript{112}

Extreme fluctuations in weather continued. On Friday, 7 December 1787, Smyth, on board the \textit{Lady Penryn}, wrote that ‘the Sun shines so very hot that the seats upon the round House burnt you as you sat down upon them’.\textsuperscript{113}

As the fleet made its way through the Roaring Forties, temperatures fell and humidity, wildly fluctuating, climbed. On Tuesday, 18 December 1787, Second Lieutenant Philip Gidley King on board the \textit{Sirius} observed that there were ‘great quantities of rain, sleet, & large hail stones … the cold is as extreme here as in England at this time of ye’ year, altho’ it is the height of summer here’.\textsuperscript{114} Winds from the Antarctic brought low temperatures and misery. ‘The convicts must have been particularly cold as all they had to clothe them was their regulation dress and one blanket each.’\textsuperscript{115}

Two days later, Smyth remarked: ‘This day very cold.’\textsuperscript{116} On Saturday, 22 December, he wrote that the ‘swell of the sea [was] very great’.\textsuperscript{117} Conditions continued to deteriorate, and as Christmas approached, Lieutenant King on the \textit{Sirius} observed that there were ‘very heavy gales & a tumbling sea’.\textsuperscript{118}

In the big seas and constant swells that confronted Phillip’s fleet, the most critical situation was in the troughs, in the valleys between the waves. If a ship wallows, losing some of her way at the bottom, she runs the risk that she will not have the speed to outrun the following sea. If the sea overtakes her, a mass of breaking water will crash over the stern … More likely than not, she will slew around, presenting her broadside, and the next seas will overwhelm her, turning her on her beam-ends, carrying way her masts and rigging and consigning all on board to a watery grave. On the crests of waves the danger is different. As the crest

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{111} Williamson, \textit{East India Vade-Mecum}, Vol. 1, p. 48.
\item \textsuperscript{112} See Gergis et al., ‘The Weather of the First Fleet Voyage to Botany Bay’, p. 317.
\item \textsuperscript{113} Smyth, ‘Journal of Arthur Bowes Smyth’, Part 84.
\item \textsuperscript{114} King, \textit{The Journal of Philip Gidley King}, p. 29.
\item \textsuperscript{115} Brooke and Brandon, \textit{Bound for Botany Bay}, p. 46.
\item \textsuperscript{116} Smyth, ‘Journal of Arthur Bowes Smyth’, Part 84, entry for Thursday, 20 December 1789.
\item \textsuperscript{117} Ibid., Part 94.
\item \textsuperscript{118} King, \textit{The Journal of Philip Gidley King}, entry for Monday, 24 December, p. 29.
\end{itemize}
breaks and curls, streaming in a white cascade down the leeward side of the wave, the air is filled with flying spume, the wind shrieks and the ship simply slides, practically rudderless, barely in control.119

The activities and trappings of a traditional late eighteenth-century English Christmas would have been absent for those sailing to Botany Bay: decorating with holly and ivy; Christmas trees (these were introduced to England by Princess Charlotte of Mecklenburg-Strelitz when she married George III in 1761); sending food (principally fowls, hams, hares, pheasants and turkeys) to friends; giving presents (traditionally, presents were exchanged at New Year, but the custom of giving them at Christmas originated with Princess Charlotte); and entertaining and getting together with friends, in the evening, during the 12 days of Christmas (from 25 December to 6 January). The ritual of sending Christmas cards has its origins with the Victorians and Prince Albert during the late 1840s.

Four days after Christmas, during a respite between storms, Smyth had time to reflect: ‘We reckon ourselves this day at 12 o’clock at noon ab[out] 1000 miles [1600 kilometres] from the South Cape of New Holland, and 2000 [3200 kilometres] from Botany Bay.’120

On Monday, 31 December, Smyth wrote: ‘long and high swells, ship often rolls gunnell under. The sea the most mountainous of any since we sail’d … the sea was so very outrageous … The foretopsail was … split from top to bottom tho’ the canvas was double … at one time in the night there was hail fell.’121

Meanwhile, on board the *Sirius*, William Bradley’s measurements reveal that around New Year’s Day 1788, the temperatures were the lowest the fleet had experienced since leaving England.122

On New Year’s Day, Smyth described how the sea poured into his cabin on the *Lady Penryn*:

The seas … perpetually broke over the decks & even the round house … just as we had done dinner … a most tremendous sea broke in … it pour’d in all across the cabin and my cabin as the door happen’d not to be quite close shut [it] was half fill’d with water, the sheets & blanketts all in a flow: the water ran from the main deck nearly into the Great

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121 Ibid., Parts 102–3.
Cabin, it struck against the main and missen chains & the shock it gave
the ship at first alarm’d us all greatly; but particularly me, as i really
thought the ship was drove in pieces—not an hour’s sleep all … night.123

Newton Digby Fowell, a midshipman on the Sirius, described the violent
weather that greeted the new year in a letter written to his father: ‘This year
began with very bad tempestuous weather, it blew much harder than any wind
we have had since our leaving England.’124

John Hunter, Second Captain of the Sirius, reveals that as the storm continued,
the fleet was forced to slow in order to ensure that the ships’ sails did not tear.125
The people of the First Fleet ‘celebrated their New Year … with “hard salt beef
and a few musty pancakes”’.126 On 2 January 1788, ‘it blew so hard that we
could not set any sail’.127

Breaks in the weather allowed the Sirius’ company to observe some of
the strange phenomena of the southern hemisphere. On a night early in
the new year of 1788, the Sirius sailed through a sea of lights more than
a mile wide—’a luminous appearance or substance … lights floating
on the surface of the water’. The strange lights were fickle: when the
crew tried to scoop some up, they collected only dark sea water. On a
night soon afterwards, the aurora australis put on a spectacular display
of constantly changing red, orange, yellow and white streamers.128

From late November 1787 to this point in the epic journey (early January 1788),
it is unlikely that Worgan’s piano would have been used for either practice
or performance at any time. The rough weather and extremes of temperature
and humidity were not conducive, and were potentially detrimental to the
instrument. It is likely that the piano would have been placed within a protective
context, its unique hinged cabriole legs tucked underneath (Plate 213) and its
campaign-furniture-inspired stand’s two long detachable stretchers (Plate 203)
safely stored nearby.

124 N. D. Fowell, ‘Letter to His Family, 1786–1790, 12 July 1788’, Discover Collections at Your State Library
125 See Hunter, An Historical Journal of the Transactions at Port Jackson and Norfolk Island, Chapter 2,
September 1787 to January 1788.
126 Keneally, A Commonwealth of Thieves, p. 3.
128 Groom, First Fleet Artist, p. 16. Groom takes the quotation from: W. Bradley, A Voyage to New South
Wales: The Journal of Lieutenant William Bradley RN of HMS Sirius, 1786–1792, Reproduced in Facsimile
from the Original Manuscript with a Portfolio of Charts (Sydney: Trustees of the Public Library of New South
Van Diemen’s Land

In the first week of January 1788, the majority of the fleet ‘sailed past the southeast corner of Van Diemen’s Land (Tasmania)’. Extreme changes in the weather abounded. On Saturday, 5 January, Smyth wrote:

[I]n the night I was so hot in my cabin that I was obliged to throw off the cloaths from my bed. There are at this time in the window of the great cabin, a very fine grape vine wch flourishes much, also some scarlet geraniums in full blossom, there is also myrtles, banana plants, & several other sorts, bro’ from Rio de Janeiro.

The South Coast of New South Wales

‘Navigating now with the aid of maps made by [Captain] Cook’, the fleet made its way northwards along the coast of New South Wales. On Wednesday, 9 January 1788, Smyth observed that

the swell of the sea [was] greater than at any other time during the voyage … Many heavy seas wash’d entirely over the ship, & many of the fastenings to the different articles in the [great] cabin gave way, the tubs w* the bananas, grape vine, &c*, &c* overset & all except the vine were totally demolish’d … sometimes the spritsail yard dipp’d into the water, the ship pitched so much; towards morning it hail’d.

The next day, many of the ships were damaged in the most severe storm the fleet had yet encountered. Smyth’s journal entry for 10 January 1788 reveals how terrifying the storm was:

[T]he sky grew very black, & the wind arose, & in half an hour or less, it blew a perfect hurricane … The sea ran mountains high … The ship was laid along side in such a manner as alarm’d every body much, & some very great flashes of lighteng were seen, & heavy peals of thunder immediately followed the lighteng … I never before saw the sea in such a rage; it was all over as white as snow; it rain’d prodigiously … Every other ship in the fleet (except the Sirius) sustained damage … During the storm the convicts on board our ship were so much frighten’d that most of them were on their knees at prayers … Towards even[in]g it cleared up and the wind was in our favor.
A week later, Smyth noted: “tis so intensely hot we are obliged to sit w\textsuperscript{th} cabin windows open; under the necessity of sleep & w\textsuperscript{th} my cabin door open, & throwing off most of the bed cloaths.”\textsuperscript{134} Throughout the fleet, below decks, the heat must have been unbearable for the convicts, who did not have the luxury of lightweight clothes to wear. (Eighty-six years later, those passengers who were fortunate enough to have a choice of clothing on their journey from England to New Zealand had their discomfort, in similar circumstances, alleviated, ‘there being a general turn out of boxes (in which clothes are stored) to let people get their light things for the heat’.)\textsuperscript{135}

A Recalcitrant Goat

Unfortunately, during that hot night, in the Great Cabin, the grapevine that had so stoically survived the journey from Rio de Janeiro through violent storms and extremes of temperature met its untimely demise. Smyth describes the fateful event: ‘Last night one of the goats got by some means imperceived into the great cabin & eat off all the green shoots of the grape vine.’\textsuperscript{136} However dire the situation may have seemed, all was not lost. Smyth continues: ‘since the weather has been so very hot the banana plant w\textsuperscript{ch} was brot from Rio de Janeiro & w\textsuperscript{ch} had never before appear’d to grow, has sprouted out several inches.’\textsuperscript{137} (Ultimately, ‘the plants and seeds collected at Rio de Janeiro’ that survived the journey were sown at Sydney Cove ‘in front of the governor’s house’.)\textsuperscript{138}

The extreme vacillations of temperature and humidity during the journey from Rio de Janeiro would have more than tested the fabric of Worgan’s piano.

Botany Bay

The \textit{Sirius} arrived at Botany Bay on Saturday, 19 January 1788 (only two days after the recalcitrant goat’s banquet in the Great Cabin of the \textit{Lady Penryn}, and two days before the slower vessels of the First Fleet arrived). The fleet’s arrival at its destination did not mean that the weather became any less stressful for Worgan’s piano.

‘Finding the soil, water and anchorage at Botany Bay unsuitable’,\textsuperscript{139} Governor Philip gave orders (on Wednesday, 23 January) for the entire fleet to leave Botany

\textsuperscript{134} Ibid., Parts 115–16, entry for Thursday, 17 January 1788.
\textsuperscript{135} L. Mayers (transcriber), ‘You will find a towel very useful …’, in \textit{The Cornwall Family History Society}, No. 143 (March) (Truro, Cornwall: The Cornwall Family History Society, 2012), p. 33. In this extract from \textit{Chambers’ Journal} (No. 551, July 1874) entitled ‘A Female Emigrant’s Letter’, the writer (a servant girl from Aberdeen) advises her sisters how best to equip themselves for the long sea voyage to New Zealand.
\textsuperscript{137} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{138} Hoskins, \textit{Sydney Harbour}, p. 29.
\textsuperscript{139} Groom, \textit{First Fleet Artist}, p. 16.
Bay for Port Jackson, 12 kilometres to the north. Strong headwinds, however, prevented the fleet from leaving Botany Bay. (Whether or not these conditions ‘can be associated with a La Niña\(^{140}\) is not entirely clear, but should not be ruled out’.)\(^{141}\)

Lieutenant Gidley King, having transferred from the *Sirius* to the *Supply* (as had Governor Phillip), wrote on Friday, 25 January 1788: ‘the wind blowing strong from NNE prevented … our going out … The wind blew so strong from y’ SSE that we were obliged to anchor & wait for the ebb tide & at noon we weighed & turned out of the harbour.’\(^{142}\) On the same day, on board the *Sirius*, George Worgan wrote: ‘the Governor sailed for Port-Jackson, in the *Supply* … but the wind coming on to blow hard, right into … [Botany] Bay, the *Sirius* and transports could not possibly get out.’\(^{143}\)

The following day, Saturday, 26 January 1788, First Lieutenant Ralph Clark, a marine officer on the *Friendship* (one of the transports for female convicts), described how the ships were blown dangerously close to the rocky coastline:

> [I]f it had not being by the greatest good luck we should have been both on the shore on the rocks and the ships must most have been all lost and the greater part if not the whole on board drowned for we should have gone to pieces in less than a half of an hour but how good the Almighty is to us.\(^{144}\)

Smyth, on the *Lady Penryn*, described the difficulties and damage—including ripped sails and a lost boom—associated with battling the huge seas that rolled into Botany Bay as the fleet attempted to leave:

> The ships having attempted to get out of the bay yesterday 3 times in vain, lay at single anchor till this morning in order to proceed out, but the wind … is still blow[ing] directly from [the] sea into the mouth of the bay … We were obliged to work out of the bay & w th the utmost difficulty and danger got out ab’ 3 o’clock p.m. The Charlotte was once in the most immense danger of being on the rocks & the Prince of Wales and the Friendship … came foul of each other … The Friendship carried away her jib boom. The Prince of Wales had her new main sail and her new main top mast stay sail rent in pieces. The Charlotte also came foul of the Friendship afterward and carried away some of the carv’d work from her stern, & it was with the greatest difficulty the Lady Penryn escaped the same fate.\(^{145}\)

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\(^{140}\) In eastern Australia, La Niña events are associated with above average rainfall.


\(^{142}\) King, *The Journal of Philip Gidley King*, p. 36.

\(^{143}\) Worgan, *Journal of a First Fleet Surgeon by George B. Worgan*, p. 32.

\(^{144}\) Clark, *Journal Kept on the Friendship during a Voyage to Botany Bay and Norfolk Island*, p. 1, Saturday, 26 January 1788.

Port Jackson

Approximately four hours later, about 7 pm, the fleet reached ‘the mouth of Port Jackson, & sail’d up it to’ Sydney Cove. According to Smyth, the ‘water … even to the very side of the shore is 5 & 6 fathoms, & exactly like a canal in a garden; you may wth ease fasten the ships to the trees instead of putting down the anchor’. ‘In the evening all anchord safe in Sidney Cove.’ ‘For the first time … ships bells rang through the summer night to mark the passing of time, and for the first time, the Eora people heard their tolling.’

George Worgan’s piano had been a part of ‘one of the major achievements of the Royal Navy’. Captain David Collins wrote:

Thus, under the blessing of God, was happily completed, in eight months and one week, a voyage which, before it was undertaken, the mind hardly dared venture to contemplate, and on which it was impossible to reflect without some apprehension as to its termination. This fortunate completion of it, however, afforded even to ourselves as much a matter of surprise as of general satisfaction; for in the above space of time we had sailed five thousand and twenty-one leagues [24 000 kilometres]; had touched at the American and African Continents; and had at last rested within a few days sail of the antipodes of our native country, without meeting any accident on a fleet of eleven sail, nine of which were merchantmen that had never before sailed in that distant and imperfectly explored ocean.

The Voyage of George Worgan’s Piano: Particulars

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It is reasonable to assume that at some stage during the days that followed the First Fleet’s arrival at Sydney Cove, George Worgan would have made a thorough inspection of his piano in order to ascertain if, or the extent to which, it had

146 Ibid., Part 131.
147 Ibid., Part 132.
149 Groom, First Fleet Artist, p. 16.
150 Ibid., p. 16.
been damaged by the extremes of temperature, humidity and violent storms through which it had passed on its journey from England. Doubtless, he would also have done all that he could to ensure that the instrument remained safe from potential further damage in the unfamiliar environment of Sydney Cove.
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