

Music is the most delightful science that the Almighty has ever bestowed upon his creatures and when performed in a proper manner with the heart and understanding having the whole soul enflamed with love to God and Christ by the sweet influences of the Holy Spirit & near akin to the employment of angels and Arkangels and spirits of the just made perfect in glory – short of this is many times too awfully abused to the devils perpose and it is to be lamented most of the best music is devoted to him and not to God as it ought to be

Many great men have made music there study and have reduced it to form and order so as to be inabled by mean of notes to convay it from one to another – many have wrote upon music some of one part and some of another in their introductions to their content Books and some to their tune Books the best of which that ever I have seen is in Dr Rippons collection of tunes by Mr Walker – others again have wrote upon music as Body in all its parts these authors are very scarey and some of them in every thing cannot be depended upon the best authors I have seen of this sort is D Fenning in his young mans book of Knowledge yet his plan of explanation is very hard to comprehend – Tansers is for more easy but many of his rules will not do to be depended upon – I believe there are other authors are far more plain and perfect but I have not seen them not have the perusel of them

Although I showed very much like to it – I must therefore give an opinion of my own recommending every learner in the first place to peruse and learn the introduction to Dr Rippons tune book now for my opinion

Music consists of 12 distinct sounds or semitones called A natural A sharp B natural C natural C sharp D natural D sharp E natural F natural F sharp G natural G sharp – all of which are never used at one time or in the same tune coupling by the transposition of keys the five sounds called sharps also go by the name of Flats - which you may observe by taking the above scale backward beginning at G natural and then G flat F natural E natural E flat D natural D flat C natural B natural B flat A natural A flat which is the same sound as G sharp and which comprises what is called an octave which include 13 semitones the first and the last being the same sound when sounded together and having the other 11 sound silent between

In all natural keys the Flats and the Sharps remain silent and are not need only occasionally when the tune runs out of the key and must? commonly? the note below the key note in a minor keyed tune placed in A key which is what is called the minor key or flat key – C is what is termed the major or sharp key in the which within Flat nor sharps are but very seldom introduced – The air ground bass parts of all tunes sett in A or C would seldom need any Flats or Sharps that is if a minor Keyed tune stood in A or a major keyed tune stood in C so that out of the 12 sound before mentioned only 7 or 8 are in use at one time the rest may be termed silent sounds but in the transposition of keys these sounds may be brought into use whilst some of the natural sounds remain silent.

Transcription by Mick Henry

'Musical Thoughts' were added notes found at the end of the Oxley Farm Diaries and may have been written between 1833 and 1856. Nicholas died in 1833 and his son Thomas emigrated to the USA in 1856. The assumption at the time of writing is that Thomas wrote the notes.

The 'thoughts' give us an idea of how Thomas experienced music, and gives an insight into his study of Dr. Rippon's book.

Thomas's main reference was Dr. Rippon's 'Selection of Psalm and Hymn Tunes' ed. by Thomas Walker ed.1792.

Dr. Rippon was highly respected and arguably the first to add expression marks, performance directions and names for the tunes, (Marshall, 1936, p.39). (pdf images of the 1792 edition are available on <https://www.hymnologyarchive.com/john-rippon>)

Thomas called C a 'sharp' key and A a 'flat' key.

C major and A minor are diatonic scales made up of major and minor intervals, based on the distance from the first note C.

The diatonic scale of C major consists of all the white notes on the a piano between C and C, (the Ionian mode), made up of tones and semitones.

The A natural minor scale starts on the 6th degree (letter) of C major and uses the same notes but from A to A (or the Aeolian mode).

C major and A minor are called relative major and minor keys because they both share the same notes and key signature (ie. no sharps or flats),

Noting where two adjacent white notes fall within the pattern dictates the semitone positions, when going from C or A. There are no sharps or flats.

Preserving the same interval patterns from other start notes allows transposition into other keys, which then dictate the use of sharps and flats.

The 6th and/or the 7th notes of the natural minor scale can be altered for use in harmony or to create singable melody lines.

Thomas's use of 'sharp' and 'flat' as terms to describe C major and A minor, may have been an early 19th century perception of 'happy' or 'sad' keys, or Thomas may have been referring to the 'sharp' side or 'flat' side of the cycle of fifths, a pattern which preserves a cycle of perfect 5th intervals and dictates the start note of each new scale.

Thomas wrote that the chromatic scale uses all the black and white notes between C and C.

Enharmonic equivalents (same notes, different letters) were named in the chromatic scale ascending and descending, exemplified by G#/Ab.

Thomas also described an octave interval from C to C, the two Cs played together, with all the notes in between 'remaining silent'.

Thomas did not specifically mention diatonic intervals which are the building blocks for four part harmonic progressions used in hymn writing.

Thomas wrote that he found other authors, such as Fenning, 'very scary (sic)' or 'hard to comprehend', and Tanser as unreliable.

Dr. Rippon's 'Selection' used three and some four part writing.

The use of just a two line Air and Bass enabled ease of use for amateur musicians (Marshall, 1936, p.39), omitting the diatonic four part harmony.

Dr. Rippon placed the Air part in the middle above the Bass in the three part writing, stating the Air was always sung by the congregations (Rippon, 1792).

It is not clear which edition Thomas used, as Thomas Walker (an alto vocalist) produced numerous editions from 1806 onwards.

The newspaper archive on Find My Past has a sale notice of household goods for William Oxley following his decease in 1830,

and for his son in law Thomas Oxley before his move to the US.

The lists include a pianoforte owned by the household of William OXLEY d.1830, and a five octave Seraphine owned by Thomas OXLEY who emigrated to the US.

The US censuses tell us that Thomas OXLEY was a violin teacher.

Thomas may have been sitting at his seraphine at home or at the chapel organ while he was writing his notes.

Thomas clearly had an excellent ear for music and showed a preference for Dr Rippon's tune book and the violin.

Rippon's 'Psalmody' was suitable for the metres of various chapel hymn books.

Metre was a term used to state the number of syllables in each line of the hymn.

Lady Huntingdon's hymn book which Nicholas referred to in the diary, was used at the Heathfield Independent Chapel.

#### Newspaper References

OXLEY, William, The Sussex Advertiser, [www.findmypast.co.uk](http://www.findmypast.co.uk), Auction Notice, 24th Jan 1831, original data: The British Library.

OXLEY, Thomas, The Sussex Advertiser, [www.findmypast.co.uk](http://www.findmypast.co.uk), Bucksteep Farm Sale, 3 Oct 1831, original data: The British Library.

OXLEY, Thomas, The Sussex Advertiser, [www.findmypast.co.uk](http://www.findmypast.co.uk), For Sale by Auction, 26 Sep 1854, original data: The British Library

The notes may have been added earlier, between the dates of the last diary entry in 1823 and 1833 or later in the 1840s by Thomas OXLEY junior.

The handwriting has been compared to four OXLEY signatures found on the marriage record of Thomas OXLEY and Ann Elizabeth OXLEY. The marriage was in 1845 in Herstmonceaux, and they were half first cousins. The signatures include those of the groom Thomas, the bride Ann Elizabeth, and the witnesses were her sister Mary OXLEY and Othniel. The way Thomas formed his letter O shows a possible match between his signature and the original handwriting.

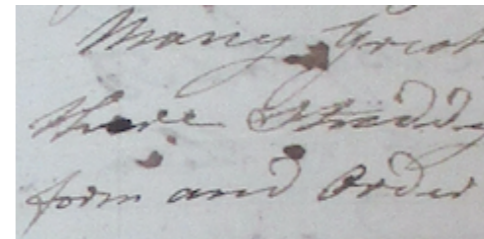
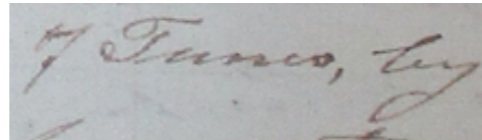
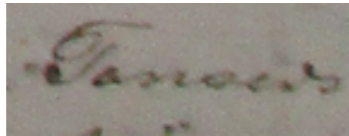
Thomas junior may have added the notes in the 1840s, as he would have been too young in the early 1830s. Thomas had a sale of household items prior to his departure for the USA, and included a five octave Seraphine which was a precursor to the harmonium. The instrument was used for singing hymns. The maker was a Joseph Hart who manufactured seraphines 1838-58. The dates suggest that it was most likely Thomas b.1819, son of Nicholas, who wrote the 'Musical Thoughts'. The range on the Seraphine was likely from C to C which was part of his musings. The sale also included two telescopes, a terrestrial globe and 200 books!

The handwriting was compared again, this time to the two marriage signatures of Thomas OXLEY senior, father of Nicholas. There is a distinct possible match between the strong curve of the capital T of Thomas and the capital Ts used in the diary notes. In addition Thomas always looped his Ys which is evident on the marriage images. It is possible Thomas senior was also a talented musician, and maybe even taught his grandson Thomas how to play the violin, bearing in mind the Seraphine did not exist before 1830 when Thomas senior died.

Nicholas does mention a possibly unusual moment when 'Father forgot two of the hymns in the afternoon', (Henry, M. 2024, p.142). Nicholas often wrote that 'Father, William and I stayed the afternoon' when they sang hymns (Henry, M. p.158). There is no further evidence that Thomas senior was musical, either in his will or in the sale of his household goods in 1830.

Nicholas showed an interest in music, as the diary records that he bought a dual purpose 'walking flute' in London for 19s, and then sold it to a Mr John Fox on Friday 21st July 1815 (Henry, M. p.83). A walking flute was a 'walking stick and flute combined'. Nicholas had a great enthusiasm for the singing at the chapel, and mentions the hymns and their page numbers many times, until the entry 'I must give up thinking about the Hymns' on Tuesday 9th July, 1816 (Henry, M. p.164). Evidence against the notes having belonged to Nicholas, is the handwriting is in a different hand.

Comments will be very welcome from readers to help solve the mystery of who wrote the 'Musical Thoughts'. The above mentioned marriage records containing the signatures are available on Ancestry and can be compared with the following hand writing examples from the original diaries. The evidence that Thomas owned a seraphine from 1838, may be conclusive.



Examples of original handwriting from 'Musical Thoughts', The Oxley Farm Diaries, AMS 7476/1/1 and AMS 7476/1/2 at ESBHRO at The Keep.

Bibliography and References for 'Musical Thoughts' Page 4 of 4

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"Musical Thoughts" attributed to Thomas OXLEY, written at the back of the Oxley Farm Diaries.

Holyoke, S, J.Rippon, J.Smith, Walts, I. (1804), 'The Christian Harmonist', original data: The Internet Archive.

Marshall, O.A. (1936) 'Rippon's Tunes' in Baptist Quarterly, Vol 8. (January 1936), pp.36-43, original data: The Internet Archive.

Rippon, J. (1792) Selection of Psalm and Hymn Tunes, ed. by Thomas Walker: London, original data: Hymnology Archive.

Find My Past

The Newspaper Collections

United States Censuses 1860-1880

The Keep Archive

<https://www.thekeepinfo>

Records of Nicholas Oxley and family, 1814-1844, AMS 7476, at ESBHRO at The Keep.

Other Internet Sources

<https://www.abebooks.co.uk>

<https://thearchive.org>

<https://biblicalstudies.org.uk>

<https://www.hymnologyarchive.com/john-rippon>

<https://www.scorpion-engineering.co.uk>

Allan, Dr. R.J. (2006-2026) 'The Seraphine' in Reed Organs in England, A Comprehensive Study of Reed Organs in England, Scotland and Wales.