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Patrick Little (History of Parliament)

Music at the Court of King Oliver

The Parliamentarian side in the Civil War disapproved of music. In 1644 church organs were banned. By 1649 all church music had been suppressed except for metrical psalms; and the royal chapel had been disbanded. However, on state occasions thereafter, such as the Lord Protector's entry into London in February 1654, trumpets and drums were used. The Protector and his advisors were aware of the sophisticated music played at foreign courts. He appointed as his master of the music John Hinkson, who had formerly served in the household of the Earl of Cumberland. Instrumental and vocal music was played at court banquets and the entertainments for the marriages of Cromwell's two daughters. Some former employees of the Chapel Royal worked for the Lord Protector. Although some M.P.'s thought of music as a corrupting influence, London also contained many patrons of music. The Protector loved music and discussed business with courtiers during musical evenings. Edward Gregg asked about the continuity of personnel with Charles II's Chapel Royal. Mark Blackett-Ord pointed out that violin strings were made of cow-gut, not cat-gut. Patrick Little agreed with Curt Noel that ceremonial diplomatic receptions were 'a linch-pin' of court life.