Commonplace Book

Alexander Zlokapa

1 Music

1.1 Composers and performers

- PDQ Bach, Anna Russell
- Joseph Hague (Heifetz), Glenn Gould's personas (and "So you want to write a fugue?"), Horowitz's asparagus and Dover sole
- Handel's duel against Mattheson
- "Tweedledee and Tweedledum" coming from Handel-Bononcini rivalry
- Alessandro Stradella's survivorship
- Count of St. Germain violinist
- Rousseau as an opera composer, and the Querelle des Bouffons
- Rameau's termination of his 29-year contract ("II tira tous les jeux d'orgue les plus désagréables, et il y joignit toutes les dissonances possibles." Maret's Éloge)
- Beethoven's "I will not play for such swine!" and waiter violence at the "Swan"
- Beethoven insulting Steibelt
- Beethoven's insult to Prince Karl von Lichnowsky: "There have and will be thousands of princes; there is only one Beethoven."
- Beethoven to Holz: "I've done nothing less than consume the entire morning and all of yesterday afternoon on the corrections for two pieces, which has left me hoarse from cursing and stamping around."
- Beethoven's sixty coffee beans; inspection of eggs for bread soup
- Seyfried on turning pages for Beethoven
- Brahms's forged Beethoven sausage score
- Brahms's chicory coffee (Mandyczewsky)
- Schumann's concerto seance
- Bruckner's obsessions
- Composers' demises: Schoenberg's fear and death on Friday the 13th, Schumann hearing an A, Ravel's disease, the Alma problem
- Conductor deaths: "In questa misura e morto il Maestro Mitropoulos", Felix Mottl, Joseph Keilberth, Giuseppe Sinopoli
- Stokowski's fake accent
- "TOSCANINI ACQUITTED ON ASSAULT CHARGE; Psychologist Testifies Conductor Is Irresponsible When Leading and Is Overcome Afterward."
- Alfred Schlee's smuggling of scores
- Brillat-Savarin playing in America's only professional orchestra
- Heisenberg on the Chaconne
- Mozart's starling
- Julie d'Aubigny

1.2 Compositions

- The Classical Style opera
- The Beggar's Opera (and the Faustina-Cuzzoni fight)
- Arlecchino opera
- Cancellation of Tristan und Isolde after 77 rehearsals
- Couperin's unmeasured preludes
- Puzzle canons (e.g., Bach's Canon No. 13, Bach's Latin hints in The Musical Offering, and the chessboard puzzle canon)
- Musikalisches Würfelspiel
- Hill's The Bird Fancyer's Delight
- Thomas Morely's "Will you buy a fine dog?"
- Gibbons's "The cries of London"
- Janequin's Le caquet des femmes (also described by Huizinga)
- Capriccio stravagante
- Contrappunto bestiale alla mente
- Biber's Battalia a 10
- Marais's "The Bladder-Stone Operation"
- Le Tableau de l'Opération de la Taille
- Telemann's Gulliver Suite (3/32 and 24/1)
- Bach's coffee cantata
- Mozart's "Difficile lectu" and "O du eselhafter Peierl"
- Funeral March on the Death of a Parrot
- Stravinsky's Circus Polka
- Hindemith's Ouvertüre zum "Fliegenden Holländer"
- Bernstein's French recipes
- Barber's "The Monk and His Cat"
- Sullivan's Lost Chord
- Oleanna (song)
- F-A-E Sonata
- Froberger's works

- False horn entrance in Eroica ("That damned horn player!")
- Schnittke's Violin Concerto No. 4 visual cadenza
- Cage's "As Slow as Possible"
- Satie's Vexations

1.3 Instruments and practices

- Odd instruments: rackett, hurdy gurdy, and Mozart's musical clock organ, Hutchins's violin octet, theorbo
- English customs impounding Inigo Jones's theorbo
- Historical accounts of the cat organ
- Schönberg's music typewriter patent
- Ars subtilior's eye music
- Bach's supposed tuning instructions in his doodles
- Harry Gray's paper on Beethoven's metronome
- Nathaniel Giles and Henry Evans legally kidnapping children for Queen Elizabeth's choir
- Allegro non troppo (Italian version of Disney's Fantasia)
- Memeworthy: Dudamel meme conducting, line rider classical music, Peter van Leusink's conducting
- Zwölftonwerbung
- Steinway's airdropping of Victory Vertical pianos

1.4 Writing about music

- *Grones Dictionary of Music*
- *The directory of tunes and musical themes*
- Schumann's "Rules for Young Musicians"
- Berlioz's "Seventh Evening" in *Evenings with the orchestra*
- *Lexicon of Musical Invective*, including the use of mathematics ("The music of Wagner imposes mental tortures that only algebra has a right to inflict")
- *The Bluffer's Guide to Opera* (and to *Music*)
- *How to be tremendously tuned in to opera*
- *From Bach to verse* (Josefa Heifetz)
- *One does not spell Mozart with a "T"*
- *Who killed classical music?*
- *On the cult of wrong notes*
- *Crescendo of the virtuoso*
- Hoffnung's *The Maestro* and other works

2 Art and architecture

2.1 Painting and sculpture

- Pittura infamante
- Victorian death portraiture
- Mummy brown
- *Series - Album primo-avrilesque* (monochromatic)
- German bear-dressing fad (see Jean-Marie Donat's Teddybär collection)
- Mauve's "sheep coming" and "sheep going" prices
- Art medals in the Olympics
- Stone of madness
- Meat-Shaped Stone, Jadeite Cabbage
- Restoration of Ecce Homo
- Netherlandish Proverbs
- Zeuxis
- *How to Talk About Art* by Miriam Shenitzer
- *Humorous Victorian spot illustrations*
- *La Caricature* and *Le Charivari*
- Idle members of the Société des Artistes Indépendants (the first post-impressionist society) raided the treasury to buy fishing rods; the cashier defended himself from angry nonangler members with a revolver. (The banquet years, pg 19)
- Borromean "humilitas" with crown
- Talking statues of Rome

2.2 Architecture

- Asarotos oikos
- Blondel's "architecture terrible"
- Carceri d'invenzione
- Robert P. McCulloch's purchase of London Bridge when it was falling down
- Hesdin prank chateau
- Spite houses

3 Mathematics and science

3.1 Scientists and scientific culture

- Student's t-test etymology
- Mathematics duels (Toscano's *The Secret Formula*)
- Wooden Spoon at Cambridge university
- Bishop Berkeley's "ghosts of departed quantities" as a description of calculus
- Newton and Gulf of Tonkin's single tide
- Symmes's hollow earth theory, and the impact of Reynolds on Poe, Melville, and Verne

- Blondlot's N-rays
- Lysenkoism
- Ferret Felicia at Fermilab
- Gasarch's account of Woodsor Kneading
- Copenhagen Faustparodie (in *Thirty years that shook physics*)
- "Scientist knows less than nothing" headline
- *Worm Runner's Digest* and its irreproducibility
- Maxwell's poetry and cat throwing
- Pauli's Jungian interests
- Grothendieck's Hanoi category theory lectures and dandelion soup
- Turing and Colonel Fillingham (according to Peter Hilton)
- Babbage's oven and Vesuvius experiments
- Humphrey Davis's wine experiment
- Newton's eyeball
- Sagan's anecdote about Los Alamos psychiatry with Lindner
- Nollet's electrocution of 200 monks
- Haber's wife's and children's suicides (and his daughter's work on an antidote to chlorine gas)
- Wronski's futile scientific endeavors and trial against Pierre-Joseph Arson
- Von Pettenkofer's cholera
- Fermi's irrigation canal
- Sikuliarsiujuittuq
- Heaviside's granite
- Airy's advice on how to strike Big Ben
- Fictional fossils, the skvader
- Bone Wars
- Jack Parsons, the founding of JPL, and occultism
- William Buckland's appetite
- Tesla's pigeons, and passage on "a violent aversion against the earrings of women… I would get a fever by looking at a peach" etc.
- *Pseudodoxia Epidemica*
- Asimov on thiotimoline
- *Alice in Quantumland* ("You cannot detach a gluon rope once it has seen the color of a Quark, so we have to fool it with something which looks just like a Quark.")

3.2 Mathematics and computing

- Esoteric programming languages, (e.g., Romeo and Juliet), and quines
- Gömböc, constant-width solid, trajectoid
- Umbral calculus
- Variance of longest run of heads; size of second-largest draw from Gaussian
- Intransitive dice
- Rose plots of city streets
- Chernoff face
- Szalai's sociological observation of Ramsey theory

3.3 Physics

- Sonoluminescence, pistol shrimp, supercavitation
- Sounds never die out in Flatland / Huygens' principle only holds in odd dimensions
- Terrestrial gamma-ray flashes and lightning
- Units: Dirac, Helen, Hawking Index, morgen, pyramid inch
- Carrington event's aurora-powered telegraph conversation between Boston and Portland

3.4 Life sciences

- Greebles
- Controversial boiling frog experiments
- Pfeilstorch
- Pleasonton's blue glass
- Optography
- Charles VI and glass men
- Sancho the Fat (and his treatment by Hasdai Ibn Shaprut)
- Bicycle face
- Bates method (esp. sunning)
- "On ether-drinking and extra-alcoholic intoxication," Gentleman's Magazine
- Armsünderschmalz and mummia
- Tobacco smoke enema
- Styrian arsenic eaters (Parascandola)

4 Law and crime

4.1 Disputes

- Cadaver Synod, posthumous execution (e.g. Cromwell)
- Bertos's Inquisition trial due to his devilishly good sculpting
- Myra Clark Gaines, R v Dudley and Stephens, Tichborne case, Pimlico Mystery ("Now that she has been acquitted for murder and cannot be tried again, she should tell us in the interest of science how she did it!"), New Zealand city council suing itself
- Animal trials, such as Basel's egg-laying rooster and homicidal pigs (and Barthélemy de Chasseneuz)

- Scrope v Grosvenor and the arms that resulted
- English trial by combat against dead foes ("His Body Shall Be Brought to the Lists")
- Macquer's trial by combat against the greyhound of Aubry de Montdidier

4.2 Laws and legal customs

- Common scold, eavesdropping (repealed in 1967)
- Law of Fratricide (Mehmed the Conqueror)
- Feudal England rent of snowball at Midsummer and red rose at Christmas, allowing lease to be terminated at will
- Deodand (and Theagenes) and in rem jurisdiction
- Weregild
- Bechbretha
- Guano Islands Act (and Hemingway's brother)
- Hue and cry
- Clameur de haro
- Sanctuary knocker
- Corsned
- Reinheitsgebot (and Bavaria's condition for joining Germany)
- Wife selling in 18th/19th-century England as an alternative to divorce

4.3 Crimes

- Worth's Boylston Bank robbery, Great Gold Robbery, Baker street robbery, Sadamichi Hirasawa
- Scale of Affair of the Poisons
- Locusta's poisons
- Cons: Alves dos Reis and Portuguese counterfeit, Oscar Hartzell's use of the Garrideb (after falling for it), Barbara Erni's treasure chest scam, Gregor MacGregor's fake country of Poyais, Victor Lustig's sale of the Eiffel Tower, Titus Oates and the Popish Plot, Edward Dando's unpaid oysters
- Affair of the Fourteen
- Newton and counterfeiters (and guilty result from the trial of the Pyx)

5 History

5.1 War and politics

- Battle of Castle Itter, Operation Cowboy
- Xenophon and the Ten Thousand; see also Xenophon of the Americas (Gregor MacGregor)
- Potsdam Giants
- US camel corps
- Pig War (1859)
- Pastry War (1832)
- Oyster Wars between the Maryland Oyster Police Force and oyster pirates
- Puckle gun's square and round bullets for Turks and Christians
- Roman use of war pigs
- Bomb dowsers
- Project Pigeon
- Role of chansonniers in the French revolution (e.g., Darnton on flueurs blanches)
- Pazzi conspiracy
- Opération Persil, Operation Bernhard (and the consequent pause on 10 pound notes)
- USS William D. Porter's unfortunate career
- Pepsi's acquisition of 17 Soviet submarines
- The repeatedly accepted false Dmitry czars (and exiled bell of Uglich)
- Adrian Carton de Wiart's propensity to get injured
- Santa Anna's leg funeral, Horatio Nelson's brandy embalmment
- Theremin's The Thing

5.2 Disasters and hoaxes

- Dancing plague of 1518, French convent of meowing nuns, Tanganyika laughing plague
- Dublin whiskey fire, London beer flood, great molasses flood, etc.
- Snowmen in The Miracle of 1511
- New Zealand's exploding trousers
- Great Tea Race of 1866
- Erfurt latrine disaster
- Belgian 2003 election bitflip
- Persecution of Cagots for unknown reasons
- Balloonfest '86
- Berners Street Hoax
- Dreadnought Hoax with Virginia Woolf
- Great Stork Derby
- 1904 Summer Olympics marathon
- Cheating in the first hot air balloon crossing the channel
- Philip II's Binche holiday (Ch VII, Ruiz)
- Locke's lunar hoax
- Straw Hat Riot (over fashion), Astor Place Riot (over Shakespeare), Nika Riots (over chariots)

- BBC spaghetti April Fool's

5.3 Lives

- Edwin Booth saving Robert Lincoln, Kate Warne's saving a disguised Abraham Lincoln
- Mael Brigte of Moray's posthumous killing of Sigurd
- Chevalière d'Éon
- Crassus' fire brigade
- Account of Albert Pierrepoint (hangman)
- Samuel Pepys's buried parmesan cheese and musical ark
- Harriette Wilson's rejection of the prince
- Stalin's forced drinking parties
- Lola Montez (and Ludwig I)
- Timothy Dexter's unexpected business fortunes (and *A Pickle for the Knowing Ones*)
- Daniel Dancer (miser)
- Elmer McCurdy's post-death misfortunes
- Publius Afranius Potitus's promised self-sacrifice
- King John pulling on Irish beards
- Lord Cuthbert Collingwood's tree planting

5.4 Organizations and institutions

- Nathaniel Eaton of Harvard
- The Society in Dedham for Apprehending Horse Thieves
- Ancient Order of Froth Blowers
- Order of the Occult Hand
- Julia Barnett Rice's successful Society for the Suppression of Unnecessary Noise (and Schopenhauer)
- Le Musée de la Mort (Paris Morgue)
- London Necropolis Railway
- Society for the Prevention of Calling Sleeping Car Porters "George"
- London Association for the Prevention of Premature Burial

5.5 Historical writing

- *The Comic History of England*
- *An Atlas of Extinct Countries*
- *Sleepwalking Into a New World: The Emergence of Italian City Communes in the Twelfth Century*

6 Customs and everyday life

6.1 Beliefs and folklore

- Affair of the Sausages during the Reformation
- Beast of Gévaudan
- List of games that Buddha would not play
- Šulak (bathroom lurker)
- Tio de Nadal and Caganer
- Cargo cults (Feynman)
- Telling the bees (see Morley's *The Honey-Makers*, Chapter XIX)
- Sin-eating in Wales
- Malicious Finnish frog coffins
- Explanations of bird migrations (e.g., *Description of the Northern Peoples*)
- Festa del Cornuto
- Barnacle goose myth and its classification as fish during Lent
- Feast of Fools
- Hitobashira
- Aarne-Thompson-Uther index and Motif-Index of Folk-Literature

6.2 Social practices

- Pteridomania
- Second sleep
- Variable hours of Edo Japan
- Obsolete jobs: link boys (required in J. Vila Blake's opera experience, "The London Fog"), knocker-uppers, Turnspit dogs, rag-pickers for paper (and Tycho Brahe's "rag sermons"), leech collectors, whipping boys
- Fox tossing
- Garden hermits (and John Bigg)
- Judas goat
- Mensur scar
- Saint Monday
- Mortsafes

6.3 Food and drink

- Parmentier's successful overturning of the 1748 French potato ban
- Sevigne's account of François Vatel's seafood service
- Fidel Castro's dairy obsession
- ISO tea standards and Orwell's essay on tea
- Dumas's Dictionnaire on the ortolan bunting and on truffles
- Castor and Pollux (elephants)
- Founding fathers' bar tab
- Vin Mariani

- Mrs. Beeton's directions to boil pasta for 1.75 hours
- England's obsession with pineapples (e.g., see Ruth Levitt)

6.4 Fashion

- Fashion: iki, Roman sumptuary laws, Venetian chopine height, 1571 woolen hat act, Edward IV on poulaines, Theodosius II's death penalty against purple, banning of trousers and boots in Rome (399 AD), Peter the Great's beard tax (and rebellion)
- The bet on the Newbury coat
- Incroyables and marveilleuses
- Sprezzatura
- Crinoline fires
- *Vestiarium Scoticum* and the kilt
- Lightning rod fashion
- Removal of shoe tips at the Battle of Sempach
- Collars for the London garrotting panic
- French waiters' mustache strike of 1907

7 Language

7.1 Meaning and etymology

- Shibboleth, U and non-U English, and argot (e.g., Polari or Thieves' Cant)
- Loanword is calque and calque is loanword
- Rebracketing: origins of apron, nickname, etc.
- Etymologies: pants (Pantalone), nightmare (goblin), gamut (and solfege), caveat emptor (counterfeit bezoar), quagga (instead of zebra), mumbo jumbo, white elephant, violoncello (small large viola), serendipity (Sri Lanka), martingale (French pants, see Mansuy), ampersand, bracket
- Etymologies after people: silhouette, bowdlerize, ramponner, cardigan (and his acquaintance with shrapnel)
- Blaudruck idioms from indigo dyeing
- Lack of words: numbers in Piraha, blue-green distinction, etc.
- Words missing from English (*The Meaning of Tingo*): iki, tsundoku, nakhur, tsuji-giri, tingo, iktsuarpok, umarell, pana po'o, uitwaaien, rujuk, hakamaroo, giomlaireachd, luqma-shumar, olfrygt, hoo

7.2 Languages and language play

- Dante: for some say òc, others sì, yet others say oïl
- Académie de la Carpette anglaise
- Nonexistent French: encore (bis), double entendre (double entente), cause célèbre
- Duke of Edinburgh's Vanuatu title
- Papua New Guinea expression for an accordion
- British nicknames for rational French months
- Country-dependent names for syphilis
- My postillion has been struck by lightning
- 14th century French swears in ballads CXLV-CXLVIII of *OEuvres complètes de Eustache Deschamps*
- Moses' horns due to mistranslation
- Mumspimus and sumpsimus
- Cellar door's euphony
- Irony punctuation
- Asemic writing
- *English as She Is Spoke* (and the parody *English as She Is Wrote*)
- Twain's essay on German
- The fake French rhymes of *Mots d'Heures*, *N'heures souris rames* and *Anguish Languish*
- "My faith! For more than forty years I have been speaking prose while knowing nothing of it."
- The breakers of Quinquet lamps, eaters of walnuts, and other blason populaire
- Solresol's history

8 Books and literature

8.1 Reference works

- Dr. Johnson's definitions of oats, patron, anatiferous, dull, Monsieur, to worm
- Henry Cockeram's dictionary of hard words (parentate: "to celebrate ones Parents Funerals")
- *The Foolish Dictionary* (Goldsmith), *Le Dictionnaire des idées reçues* (Flaubert), and obviously Bierce
- Fictitious anti-plagiarism entries in encyclopedias
- The creation of the Oxford English Dictionary and William Chester Minor; mishaps in James Murray's collection of slips (shipping F to Florence)

8.2 Books and printing

- Medieval manicules and Blemmyes
- English's optional use of "e" to space margins
- John Baskerville's burial
- Book curse

- *Tristam Shandy*'s typography
- Typos: adultery in the *Wicked Bible* (for more Bible typos, see pg 145 of *Bizarre Books*, Lake and Ash), Uncle Silas in *Huckleberry Finn*
- Narrative of the Life of James Allen, and anthropodermic bibliopegy
- Disposal of the Doves typeface in the Thames
- Lithuanian book smugglers
- Non-burning of the Library of Alexandria

8.3 Comedy

- Bathos and mock-heroic literature (e.g., La secchia rapita, The Rape of the Lock, Peri bathous, Batrachomyomachia); related, Scriblerus Club
- *The Gashlycrumb Tinies*
- *Almanacco Purgativo*
- Everyday life: *Happy Thoughts* (Burnand), *The Diary of a Nobody*, *Three Men in a Boat*, *Idle Thoughts of an Idle Fellow*
- *The Stuffed Owl: An Anthology of Bad Verse*
- The *Bluffer's Guide* series (e.g., opera and archaeology)
- *The complete upmanship* (Potter)
- *Abridged classics: brief summaries of books you were supposed to read but probably didn't*
- *How to be an Italian* (D'Angelo) and *Boston English Illustrated* (Wilson)
- *The Kidner report; a satirical look at bureaucracy at the paper clip and stapler level.*
- *From Beowulf to Virginia Woolf; an astounding and wholly unauthorized history of English literature*
- *The British Character* (Pont)
- "I don't know if it's fiction or nonfiction, but the title is *Dante's Inferno*." (from *Overheard at the Bookstore*)
- Franklin's "Fart Proudly"
- *The Pooh Perplex* and *Postmodern Pooh*
- Commendatory verses of *Coryat's Crudities*
- *The Comic Bradshaw*
- *The Romance of the London Directory* ("What an odd thing it seems that there should be 181 Fishers and Fischers in the London Directory, only eight Rivers to fish in, and only sixteen Fish to catch! Nor is this all: they have only three Rodds amongst them, thirty Lines or Lynes, thirty Hooks and Hookes, six Wormsn, nine Grubbs, and not a single Fly")
- Twain's entry on "Uriah S. (or Z.) Graunt"
- Lucian's *Sale of Lives*
- Response to Ronald Knox's Berkeley limerick

8.4 Criticism and lives

- Chomsky and Zinn on LOTR
- *The Infernal Kitchen* of ancient Bablyonia
- Exeter Book riddles
- *Book of the Civilized Man*, *Enquire Within upon Everything*
- George Chinnery's correspondence to his mother ("I am not yet altered in opinion with regard to the mathematics: they are singularly inconvenient – they are destructive of every thing.") Quoted in *Oxford Figures*
- Death poems (and ironic poems, e.g., by Toko)
- *An Essay on Diseases Incidental to Literary and Sedentary Persons* ("It is dangerous to break upon rocks of too great learning.")
- *The Flyting of Dunbar and Kennedie*
- Ondine's curse (Giradoux play and disease)
- Commentary in *The Anatomy of Melancholy* on things like cabbage, and parodies such as *The Anatomy of Bibliomania*
- Conservative views in *The Anatomie of Abuses*
- *On Sledge and Horseback to Outcast Siberian Lepers*
- Erasmus's *Copia* and Queneau's *Exercises in Style*
- Attius Labeo's bad translation of Homer
- *The Right to Be Lazy*
- The performance for a century of Tate's happy *The History of King Lear* instead of the original *King Lear*
- Zola on work ("Écoute, le travail a pris mon existence…")
- Pseudotranslations and pseudohistory (*Historia Regum Britanniae*, *Historia Augusta*)
- Ossian's poetry
- Avadhanam
- Tailhade's remark: "What do a few human lives matter, si le geste est beau?"
- Franklin's macabre almanac feud with Titan Leeds
- Quarrel of the Ancients and Moderns (and *The Battle of the Books*)
- Lord Byron's bear
- Héloïse's letters
- Italians' duel over Tasso and Ariosto without reading poems (FL Lucas, *Literature and Psychology*)

9 Reading lists

9.1 Books to buy or read

- The War of the Fists
- The Anatomy of Melancholy
- Poetry and the Police
- Grand dictionnaire de cuisine
- Oxford figures: eight centuries of the mathematical sciences
- How to talk about art
- The banquet years
- From Bauhaus to our house; The painted word
- Montaillou
- Ex Libris
- The dandy: Brummell to Beerbohm
- Nothing if not critical
- *To be read.* The Lost Orchid. Satirikon's Всеобщая история. Новейший Плутарх. Balzac. Flaubert (and his parrot).

9.2 Books to find

- Anno Domini 3867. The history of the English revolution of 1867.
- Purgatory revisited; a Victorian parody
- National Character of the English and French People. By Junius Junior.
- I'll tell the world!: A guide to the greatness of England, mainly intended for American use
- 1066 and all that, musical version
- Pegasus Descending: A Book of the Best Bad Verse
- John Leech and the Victorian scene
- Bailhache, Secret of the English
- Muddling through; or, Britain in a nutshell