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Charles Dickens: Life, Work and Legacy

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Dickens was a lifelong admirer of music. At an early age he and his sister Fanny (1810-48, who studied at the Royal Academy of Music) were drawn into the society of young gifted musicians such as John Hullah (1812-84), who collaborated with Dickens on an operetta entitled *The Village Coquettes* (1836). Dickens particularly loved ballads and popular vocal music, and introduced quite a number of them into his work. Of particular interest are Thomas Moore's *Irish Melodies*, which not only found their way into *The Old Curiosity Shop* (1840-1) and *David Copperfield* (1849-50), but would also be sung aloud by Dickens, late into the night, with his friend, the Irish painter Daniel Maclise (1806-70). Among them was the touchingly sentimental song 'Believe me if all those endearing young charms'.

In Dickens's lifetime numerous composers from England and America based comic and sentimental parlour pieces on characters and incidents from his novels. They included W. Wilson's 'David Copperfield Polkas', Stephen Glover's 'What the Wild Waves Are Saying' (from *Dombey and Son*, 1846-8), and George Linley's 'Little Nell' (from *The Old Curiosity Shop*, 1840-1).

More recently, twentieth-century composers have written musical scores for Dickensian films. The composer Herbert Stothart wrote the music for George Cukor's *David Copperfield* (1935), and Walter Goehr provided the background music for David Lean's *Great Expectations* (1946). The most popular musical adaptation of Dickens is Lionel Bart's *Oliver!*, produced as a stage play in 1960, and as a film in 1968. It featured such famous numbers as 'Food, Glorious Food' and 'You've Got to Pick a Pocket or Two'.

Dickens and Music

