

Neil Jeffares, *Dictionary of pastellists before 1800*

Online edition

BÉRANGER, Gabriel

Rotterdam 5.V.1731 – Dublin 18.II.1817

Also Berenger; Huguenot artist from Rotterdam. Although sources give his birth as 1729, he is no doubt (first noted here, 2024) the Gabriel Béranger born to Henry and Anne-Marie Le Duc in Rotterdam 5.V.1731 and baptised 9.V.1721 (his parents married there in 1713). He travelled to England and (according to one source) was sent by the Archaeological Society to Ireland in 1750 to make a series of topographical drawings. Initially he resided with a cousin from a branch of the Béranger family that had settled in Ireland; David Beranger kept a coffee-house, print-shop and warehouse for artists' materials on St Stephen's Green Dublin, which Gabriel took over on David's death in 1758. On 25.V.1756 (when he was described as a wine merchant of the City of Dublin) he was married to his cousin Louisa (c.1717–1782), David's daughter. Béranger exhibited at the Society of Artists 1765–68 from the St Stephen's Green address. He moved to South Great George's Street in 1769 (he was naturalized from that address on 6.VI.1769, and was still there when a sublease was granted by deed of 28.III.1798), teaching and executing flower and bird pictures.

Several advertisements appeared in the *Dublin gazette* (4.II.1774 and other dates): "John Mestayer, jeweller and goldsmith at Mr Gabriel Beragner's, Great George's Street, No. 5, having lately provided himself with a large Collection of the most elegant Patterns from Paris... was ready to execute all Commands in the Jewellery Way, for the Fancy Ball" as well as "the Ornaments introduced in Mr Beranger's designs, under his directions." This followed—"Gabriel Beranger, Painter and Print-seller...who designed dresses for the last Fancy Ball at the Castle" offered his "painted fancy dresses" as well as "the various dresses of the different Nations, coloured in the most rich manner imaginable."

On 29.II.1782, at St Mary's, Dublin, Béranger was married a second time, to Elizabeth Mestayer (c.1744–1802), another Huguenot, sister of the jeweller John Mestayer; another brother was Lewis Mestayer, a colonel in the engineers, East India Company, who amassed a fortune in India from which Béranger later benefitted. He died in a friends' house on St Stephen's Green and was buried in the cemetery to the French church in Peter Street.

Béranger's toile of Lord Charlemont inspecting a review in Phoenix Park was a popular printed textile. Among Béranger's patrons was William Burton Conyngham, treasurer of the Royal Irish Academy (and the subject of pastels by Hamilton and Mengs); he arranged for Béranger's tours around Ireland, starting in 1779. The following year he was appointed Assistant Ledger Keeper in the Treasury, a sinecure. His collaborators included Barralet, Forrest, Vispré (*qq.v.*) and General Vallancey.

A memoir on Béranger was published by Sir William Wilde in 1870 and completed by Lady Wilde in 1876.

Monographic exhibitions

Béranger 2017: *Beranger's Ireland: eighteenth-century watercolours by Gabirel Beranger, c.1729–1827*, Dublin, Royal Irish Academy, 14.VIII.–21.XII.2017

Bibliography

David Agnew, *Protestant exiles from France...*, 1886, p. 477f; Bénézit; Béranger 1870/71; Breeze 1985; Crookshank & Glin 1994; Figgis 2014; Peter Harbison, "Berenger's painted people", RIA blog post, 28.IX.2017; William Laffan, "The origins of Irish 'plein-air' painting", *Apollo*, .IX.2007; John O'Hart, *Irish pedigrees*, 1887; Saur; Strickland 1913

Pastels

J.1436.101 SELF-PORTRAIT, pstl/ppr, 24x18.8 ov., c.1780 (Dublin, NGI, inv. 3292. Rev. Cotton Walker, rector of Ballinasloe; Miss Emily Cotton Walker, Kingstown. Don Miss D. Pilkington 1956). Exh.: Dublin 2023. Lit.: Béranger 1870/71, grav. repr.; Strickland 1913, I, p. 59 n.r.; Le Harivel 1983, repr. \emptyset

