Keddlestone Hall in Derbyshire was designed by the architect Robert Adam for Lord Curson, this magnificent stately home was based on well-known Roman models.

The arched centre piece of the south façade is modelled on the Arch of Constantine.

It’s columns are topped by statues and an arch shape surrounds the main door. The climax at the heart of Keddlestone is the marble hall, this is clearly Roman in inspiration and richly decorated with classical sculptures. Enlightenment thinkers surrounded themselves with images of their Roman heroes. A cultivated Emperor Hadrian and the admired stoical ruler Marcus Orealius take pride of place in the Townley collection.

But what was so admirable about ancient Greece and Rome? To the enlightened thinker classical antiquity provided a powerful alternative to the biblical and the ecclesiastical authority of contemporary Europe.

The philosophers dream of antiquity evoked a society based on enlightened values on reason rather than religion and on artistic and architectural perfection.

**BAND ONE**
Section 4 : Humanity and The Noble Savage

**TONY LENTIN**

The philosopher’s passion for the classics was paralleled by their interest in non-Europeans like the heroes and philosophers of ancient Greece and Rome they were appealing because they were different.

The ancient civilisation of China was greatly respected, the cultivated ruling class of Mandarins were admired and the exquisite artistry was highly valued. Eastern religions were thought to be based on...
reason and natural morality rather than revelation and dogma.

India was well-known in Britain through the activities of the East India Company. British artists depicted their Indian contacts as exotic and elegant. Englishmen themselves were sometimes portrayed in Indian dress.

And there were even occasional marriages between Englishmen and Indian women.

But one of the most lasting enlightenment concepts on man and human nature was the noble savage. The phrase embodied a Utopian dream of an earthly paradise, a golden age in which man was good, living freely and innocently without need of laws or churches. The vision of the noble savage received a huge boost with Captain Cook’s discovery of the South Sea Islands and Australia. Artists portrayed cultures, which were sexually liberated and therefore, free.

The noble savage became a cult in high society. The Polynesian Prince Omi was brought from Tahiti to England in 1774 after Cook’s second voyage. He was celebrated in London society and his portrait was painted by Sir Joshua Reynolds, he was admired by enlightened thinkers for what they saw his natural charm and dignity uncorrupted by artificial social convention.

However, much of society did not extend this benevolence towards Africans or Afro-Caribbean’s. While the Pacific Islanders were idealised. Africans were portrayed as inferior, a convenient view for those who benefitted from the brutal but highly lucrative slave trade.

But the Philosophs were uncompromising in their objection to slavery.

QUOTE

‘This buying of Negro’s to reduce them to slavery
is one business that violates, religion, morality, natural laws and all the rights of human nature.'

TONY LENTIN

In a very few cases former African slaves themselves became enlightenment thinkers and were accepted as part of the circle.

Olaudah Equiano was born in what is now Nigeria, he served as a slave boy in the Royal Navy he then struggled in the West Indies to buy his freedom from his white master. Eventually he emigrated to England and became a moderately prosperous Christian Englishman. In his Autobiography he writes against the horrors of slavery

Music: Minuetto 1

Another well-known black writer in Britain was Ignatius Sancho he was born on a slave ship in 1729 and was sold as a child in London but managed to become acquainted with London society, Sancho wrote novels and music and became part of the London Literary scene. Successful former slaves such as Equiano and Sancho vindicated enlightenment belief in basic human equality.

BAND ONE

Section 5: Frederick The Great and Enlightened Absolutism

Music: Bach Allegro

Frederick the Great was absolute ruler of Prussia from 1740 to 1786 he was a devotee of the enlightenment and shared many of it’s values. He was he said a king by duty and a Philosoph by inclination.

Frederick was culturally speaking a Francophile. He described Voltaire’s Candide as the only novel one can read and re-read. He called himself the Philosoph of Sans Souse. Sans Souse was the name he gave to the Rococo Pleasure Palace at Potsdam outside Berlin. He designed the palace