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# ‘Ancient Music’, Nationalism and Handel’s English Works, 1710-1745

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# Abstract

The early meaning of the term ‘ancient music’, associated with the birth of The Academy of Ancient Music in 1731 in London, is only vaguely appreciated by modern musicologists, who understand it broadly as early or old music thriving on the appearance of musical ‘classics’, hence accounting for the phenomenal success of Handel's music in English concert life after his death. However, when Handel’s works were regarded as modern music in their own time, they had already acquired an important position in Johann Christoph Pepusch’s Academy, alongside Elizabethan music. Scholars’ inattention to this situation has not only obscured the nationalistic strength of Handel’s English works, but has also given rise to terminological misconceptions that restrict our understandings of ‘ancient music’.

This thesis focuses on the nationalistic subtext of the term ‘ancient music’ in early eighteenth-century England. It is based on a detailed study of three stages of development in Handel’s English music. The first is represented by his English anthem style conveying an Elizabethan harmonic heritage through two representative works: *As pants the Hart* (HWV 251a, 1712) and *Utrecht Te Deum* (HWV 278, 1713). The second stage is a transitional one where Handel integrated sacred choral settings into a traditional cantata structure in order to create drama with an English identity, and is explored in detail through his first English dramatic work *Acis and Galatea* (1718). The third stage, represented by Handel’s English oratorios from *Esther* (1732) to *Semele* (1744), captures fully-fledged ‘ancient music’ where operatic works are localized in England through sacred themes and harmonies. The selected works demonstrate the process through which Handel created English opera, and how he balanced aesthetic values associated with operatic tradition and English culture.

# List of Abbreviations

***CMS*** *Church Music Society. Six Settings of the Preces & Responses by Tudor Composers.* Eds. Ivor Atkins and Edmund H. Fwllowea. London: Oxford University Press, 1933.

***EECM*** *Early English Church Music. Thomas Tallis: English Sacred Music. II, Service Music*. Eds. Leonard Elinwood and Paul Doe. London: Stainer and Bell for the British Academy, 1974.

***HG*** *G.F. Händel's Werke: Ausgabe der Deutschen Händelgesellschaft,* Eds. W. Chrysander and Max Seiffert. Leipzig and Bergedorf bei Hamburg, 1858-94, 1902.

***HHA*** *Hallische Händel-Ausgabe im Auftrage der Georg-FriedrichHändel-Gesellschaft.* Series I-V and suppl. Eds. M. Schneider, R. Steglich, et al. Leipzig and Kassel, 1955 -.

***HWV*** Thematisch-systematisches Verzeichnis der Werke Georg. Friedrich Händels. In Händel-Handbuch. Vols. 1-5. Leipzig and Kassel, 1986.

***MB*** *Musica Britannica. A National Collection of Music.* Ed. Anthony Lewis. London: Stainer and Bell published for the Musica Britannica Trust, 1951-.

***ODNB*** *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004.

***OEE*** *The Old English Edition. No.25.* Ed. Godfrey Edward Pellew Arkwright. London: Joseph Williams, Oxford: Parker and Co., 1904.

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# List of Musical Examples

# Introduction

In recent decades, with a rise in interest in music reception, composers' posthumous endorsements have gradually occupied a prominent place in historically informed analysis. The remarkable reception of George Frideric Handel (1685-1759), beginning with the 1784 Handel Commemoration, has enlightened, and influenced audiences and scholars of successive generations and is ultimately deemed central to assessing his status in western music history. Reception-related continuities that had not been witnessed for earlier "masterpieces" enabled scholars to assert that Handel is "the earliest of all 'perpetually-in-repertory' ('classical') composers" who opened a classic era in western music history.[1] However, in examining the challenges that Handel faced when composing English-text compositions within the context of historical aesthetic norms in England, it is important to recognize that his works also possess a nationalistic subtext beyond their musical value in the classical tradition. My thesis contributes to this discussion by contextualizing Handel's English dramatic works within the intellectual milieu of early eighteenth-century England, focussing on the discursive power of Handel's music in the development of English opera as a nationalistic genre.

This thesis is methodologically indebted to Ruth Smith's research (1995) dividing Handel's English dramatic works into two distinct halves: Handel's music; and the libretti that convey the writers' respect for English dramaturgical tradition.[2] Smith emphasized the need to separate text and music in order to achieve a better understanding of Handel's and other English theatre works. In doing so, she minimized Handel's musical statements and placed the librettos at the forefront. This approach gave unprecedented attention to Handelian playwrights' dramaturgical theory, which revealed the English artistic norms of their era. At the same time, though, there are limitations to this method of research as demonstrated in recent musicological studies. If in examining the Englishness of Handel and his contemporaries' dramatic works, the nationalistic subtext of the libretto text inevitably acquires a dominant position, the composers' musical language is often overlooked. For example, the nationalism in cantatas by Johann Christoph Pepsuch (1667-1752) are said to be manifest in John Hughes' abandonment of Italian poetry and its 'feminine sweetness' in favour of English texts (such as *Island of*

[1] Richard Taruskin, "Class of 1685 (II)", in *The Oxford History of Western Music*, vol. 2, *The Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 326.
[2] Ruth Smith, "Introduction", *Handel's Oratorios and Eighteenth-Century Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 2–3.

*Beauty* and *Alexis*, 1710);[3] in Handel's oratorios, the nationalism lies in his playwrights' proper selection of John Dryden's English poetry (*Alexander's Feast* HWV 75, 1736) and Biblical texts (*Israel in Egypt* as a good example, HWV 54, 1739).[4] It would be wrong to attribute all the shortcomings in musicologists' examination of nationalism in early eighteenth-century English opera to the influence of Smith's research (even though her research has certainly been influential). From my perspective, scholars' reluctance to engage with the music of English opera has deep historical roots, grounded in a lack of trust in music within English aesthetic sensibilities, which privilege rational and educational taste. The nationalistic subtext explored in my thesis is based on this aesthetic foundation. Factoring in the separation of the composer's musical language from the libretto, can the functions of rationality and education be sustained? This constitutes the crux of my inquiry into nationalism in Handel's dramatic music.

Handel's oratorio broke the boundaries between the genres of theatrical stage and sacred church in England; when analysing his music's contemporary nationalism, his musical hinterland therefore needs to be taken into account. In the following sections, I will demonstrate a series of contradictions and reactions that were exposed in the London theatrical and sacred milieus of the age between supposedly primitive English aesthetics and the emerging Italian opera music after the Restoration. In addition, integrating Handel's German musical background, I will analyse the intersection of these three musical cultures and examine the impact they had on the later Handelian oratorio.

## Historical Context

### Rational taste in the London theatrical milieu

The fervent passion of eighteenth-century English audiences for Italian opera is widely acknowledged and documented. After the Restoration, King Charles II's favouring of the French-related light musical style could be seen as the beginning of the upper class in England embracing foreign music. Robert Cambert (1628-1677) for example, a French musician, was mentioned by *Encyclopædia Britannica Edinburgh* (1778) for having written an opera that pleased the English public. He became superintendent of music to King Charles II and was obliged to arrive in England in 1672.[5] This new fashion for French style is also documented by

[3] Sean M. Parr, "Johann Pepusch, Aesthetics, and the Sister Arts", in *The Lively Arts of the London Stage, 1675-1725* (ed.) Kathryn Lowerre and Jane Milling (New York: Routledge, 2016), 90.
[4] Smith, "Music, Morals and Religion", in *Handel's Oratorios and Eighteenth-Century Thought*, 90; Matthew Gardner, "Seventeenth-Century Literary Classics as Eighteenth-century Libretto Sources: Congreve, Dryden and Milton in the 1730s and 1740s", in *Music in the London Theatre from Purcell to Handel* (eds.) Colin Timms and Bruce Wood (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 157-65.
[5] *Encyclopædia Britannica.Prosoectus*, vol. 3 (Edinburgh: J. Balfour and Co. W. Gordon, J. Bell, J. Dickson, C. Elliot, W. Creech, J. Mccliesh, A. Bell, J. Hutton, and C. Macfarquhar, 1778), 1587.

John Andrews: since the Restoration, he explained, the music in England "was menaced with French invasion". [6] Charles Burney (1726-1814) summarized both French and Italian influences in late seventeenth-century England: the music of Jean-Baptiste Lully (1632-1687) and Cambert was regarded as the official style in order to flatter Charles II. With the growth of the national economy at the beginning of the eighteenth century, London attracted a never-ending stream of foreign musicians in pursuit of an affluent life.[7] As a German musician, Johann Mattheson (1681-1764) indicated in 1713 that "anyone who wants to be eminent in music at the present time takes himself to England".[8] Stephen Rose (2009) lists musicians from Germany, France, and especially Italy who flocked to London at the turn of the eighteenth century and occupied the principal musical markets.[9] Meanwhile, Italian music began to make its impact at the highest level and gradually moved beyond French music to become the leading style in England. According to Burney, an advertisement in the *London Gazette* from 1692 announced the following:

> […] the Italian lady (that is lately come over that is so famous for her singing) though it has been reported that she will sing no more in the consort at York-Buildings; yet this is to give notice, that next Tuesday, January 10th. She will sing there, and so continue during the season.[10]

Later, Italian companies began their operatic invasion of London. According to modern writers, Italian music dominated musical life in England. Giorgio Riello, for example, has insisted that England had a never-ending demand for things Italian in the eighteenth-century enlightenment, resulting in more than one hundred Italian musicians coming to London.[11] In terms of primary sources, Burney's book also demonstrated that English people in the first decade of the eighteenth century were passionate about anything that was not English, and the whole of England was of "foreign growth".[12] In 1706, the Lord Chamberlain ordered a reorganization, which rendered almost all of the indigenous operatic forms in England no longer viable.[13] England was ultimately devoid of its own music, it seems, in the eighteenth century; the worshipping of Italian music was clear. Joseph Addison's view is typical in this respect. In his

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[6] John Andrews, *An Inquiry into the Manners, Taste, and Amusements, of the Two Last Centuries, in England*, (London: J. Debrett, 1782), 66.
[7] Giorgio Riello, "A Taste of Italy: Italian Businesses and the Culinary Delicacies of Georgian London", *The London Journal*, 31 (2006), 201-02.
[8] Johann Matheson, *Das Neueröffnete Orchestre*, (Hamburg: B. Schiller, 1713); Stephen Rose, "The Musical Map of Europe c. 1700", in *The Cambridge History of Eighteenth-Century Music*, (ed.) Simon P. Keefe (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 8.
[9] Ibid, 8-9.
[10] Charles Burney, *A General History of Music: From the Earliest Ages to the Present Period,* vol. 4 (London: T. Becket, Strand, J. Robson, and G. Robinson, [1776]-89), 195-96.
[11] Giorgio Riello, "A Taste of Italy: Italian Businesses and the Culinary Delicacies of Georgian London", *The London Journal*, 31 (2006), 201.
[12] Burney, *A General History of Music,* Vol. 4, 227.
[13] Richard Platt, "Theatre Music I," in *The Blackwell History of Music in Britain*, vol. 4, *The Eighteenth Century* (eds.) H. Diack Johnstone and Roger Fiske (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990), 105-06.

collection *The Spectator*, he noted on 21 March 1711: "Italian tongue was so well understood in England", and "Italians have a Genius for music above the English." Then on 4 August 1711, he insisted that "the genius of the Italians, which is so much addicted to music and ceremony, has moulded all their words and phrases to those particular use." And the following year, on 14 June 1712, he explained: "we are likely to lose the greatest performer in dramatic music that is now living, or that perhaps ever appeared upon a stage. I need but acquaint my readers, that I am speaking of Signor Nicolini."[14]

It is my belief that the dissatisfaction of patriotic musicians with Italian opera stemmed not from the intensification of market contradictions, but rather from a fundamental cultural clash between two different artistic aesthetics. The first public performance of Italian opera in England took place in 1673, with Francesco Sacrati's *La Rosinda* at the Lincoln's Inn Fields Theatre in London. Subsequently, English playwright Thomas Shadwell (1642-1692) began to reflect on and debate how to anglicize Italian opera in their preface to *Psyche* (1675). As Todd Gilman (1994) explained, "English opera during this period [1675-1745] was not a static genre." And the English found it difficult to accept continental operatic forms, as foreign influences were often viewed with suspicion.[15] This is particularly evident in the playwright's preface to *Psyche*, which recorded

> That poetry and musick, the chief manifesters of Harmonical Phancy, should produce such discordant effects in many, is more to be pityed than wondered at; it being become a kind of fashionable wit, to Peck and Carp at other Mens conceptions, how mean soever their own are.
>
> The first may be the Title, Opera To this I must answer, that the word is borrowed of the Italian; who by it, distinguished their Comedies from their Opera's; those, a short plot being laid, the Comedians according to their different Theams given, speak, and Act extempore; but these after much consideration, industry and pains for splendid Scenes and Machines to illustrate the Grand Design, with Art are composed in such kinds of Musick as the Subject requires: and accordingly performed.
>
> May justly wear the Title, though all the Tragedy be not in Musick: for the author prudently consider' d, that though Italy was, and is the great Academy of the World for that Science and way of Entertainment, England is not: and therefore mixt it with interlocutions, as more proper to our Genius.[16]

[14] Richard Steele and Joseph Addison, *The Spectator, 1711-1712. In Five Volumes*, vol. 3 (ed.) Donald F. Bond (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), 405.
[15] Todd Gilman, "The Theory and Practice of English Opera and Related Genres in London, 1675-1745." (PhD diss., University of Toronto, 1994), 3-11.
[16] Matthew Locke, *The English Opera, Or, the Vocal Musick in Psyche with the Instrumental Therein Intermix'd* […] (London: T. Ratcliff, N. Thompson, and John Carr, 1675), preface.

Shadwell considered it unfortunate that some felt the need to criticize the artistic creations of others, even when they did not have the same level of creativity or skill themselves. The playwrights were probably implying the English dissatisfaction with the achievements of Italian opera of the age; they continued to explain that the term opera was borrowed from Italian, and that Italian operas are composed with a great deal of consideration and effort, often featuring grand visual displays and musical accompaniments tailored to the specific subject matter of the opera. Here, English opera accrued two different meanings. As Gilman noted, Matthew Locke (1621-1677), the composer of *Psyche*, subsequently entered this debate in support of his playwright, Shadwell. For them, "opera" refers to the musical part of the work, which was entirely an imported commodity from Italy.[17] So, did "English" simply refer to the English language in this context? Shadwell conclude by stating that the English version of opera may rightfully wear the title, and that operas mix these musical elements with interludes of spoken dialogue, which are more in line with English "Genius". Therefore, the word "English" in English opera embodies a form of their native play in which operatic music is interwoven with spoken dialogue, and which reflects the English genius.

The definition of English opera was subsequently challenged by John Dryden (1631-1700) in his *Albion and Albanius* (1685):

> If wit has truly been defined a propriety of thoughts and words, then that definition will extend to all sorts of poetry; and amongst the rest, to this present entertainment of an opera. Propriety of thought is that fancy which arises naturally from the Subject, or which the poet adapts to it. Propriety of words, is the cloathing of those thoughts with such expressions, as are naturally proper to them: and from both these, is they are judiciously perform'd, the delight of poetry results. An opera is a poetical tale or fiction, represented by vocal and instrumental music, adorn'd with Scenes, machines and dancing.[18]

He continued,

> [T]his Opera . . . was Originally intended only for a Prologue to a Play, Of the Nature of the Tempest; which is, a Tragedy mix'd with Opera; or a Drama Written in blank Verse, adorn'd with Scenes, Machines, Songs and Dances: So that the Fable of it is all spoken and acted by the best of the Comedians; the other part of the entertainment to be perform'd by the same Singers and Dancers who are introduc'd in this present Opera. It [i.e., the original version, not the one at hand] cannot properly be call'd a Play, because the action of it, is suppos'd to be conducted sometimes by supernatural means, or Magick; nor an Opera because the Story of it is not sung. But more of this at its proper time.[19]

[17] Gilman, "The Theory and Practice of English Opera and Related Genres in London, 1675-1745.", 18.
[18] John Dryden, *Albion and Albanius an Opera* (London: Jacob Tonson, 1685), preface.
[19] Ibid.

When addressing the debate around the parameters of English opera for seventeenth-century playwrights, Gilman also used this material to explain that, in contrast to Locke, Dryden believed that a musical drama (or "semi-opera" see interpretation on the next page) could not be called an opera unless it was all-sung; the latter, moreover, was essentially regarded as an Italian or French opera with English words.[20] This statement has far-reaching implications in the field of musicology, with modern scholars believing that Dryden's preface represented a significant historical transformation for English opera in response to the emergence of Italian opera. Sarah McCleave (2013) has affirmed Dryden's position, stating that "poet laureate John Dryden coined the term 'dramatic opera'".[21] Martin Adams has indicated that Dryden was "England's greatest playwright and literary analyst from the second half of the seventeenth century", and that "his attitude towards opera in the Italianate style was, at best, ambivalent and sometimes even hostile."[22]

In my opinion, the importance of Dryden's definition of English opera lies in its emphasis on the English genius in a play, which Locke had also mentioned. Based on the two prefaces above, we ascertain that while Locke and Shadwell claimed that poetry and music are the main ways to express the concept of "Harmonical Phancy", which incorporates the notion of harmony and beauty, Dryden emphasized poetry as the expression of "propriety of thought" when "an opera" comprises vocal and instrumental music used to present "a poetical tale or fiction". He ranked the poetry of the libretto above the music of the opera, and the aesthetic of "propriety of thought" also influenced the future development of English opera. At the end of the preface, Dryden outlined,

> This almost needless to speak anything of that noble language, in which this musical drama, was first invented and performed. All, who are conversant in the Italian, cannot but observe, that it is the softest, the sweetest, the most harmonious, not only of any modern tongue, but even beyond any of the learned. […] The rest of our words, which are derived from the Latin chiefly, and the French, with some small sprinklings of Greek, Italian and Spanish, are some relief in poetry; and help us to soften our uncouth numbers, which together with our English genius, incomparably beyond the trifling of the French, in all the nobler parts of verse, will justly give us the Preeminence. But, on the other hand, the effeminacy of our pronunciation, (a defect common to us, and to the Danes) and our scarcity of female rhymes, have left the advantage of musical composition on for Songs, though not for recitative, to our neighbors.[23]

[20] Gilman, "The Theory and Practice of English Opera and Related Genres in London, 1675-1745", 24.
[21] Sarah Yuill McCleave, "Introduction" in *Dance in Handel's London Operas* (Rochester NY Woodbridge Suffolk: University of Rochester Press, 2013), 5.
[22] Martin Adams, "Opera as Literature and the Triumph of Music" in *Music in the London Theatre from Purcell to Handel*, 29.
[23] Dryden, *Albion and Albanius an Opera*, preface.

This entry appears to praise the superiority of the Italian language for operatic composition, but Dryden was actually keen to draw a clear boundary between the feminine and soft Italianate artistic quality and that of the manly and masculine expressed in English (or English poetry). Dryden believed that the English genius and operatic music were incompatible. To reconcile this, he introduced a unique form of dramatic work that later critics, such as Roger North, would be label as "semi-opera".[24] This form effectively shielded the indigenous dramatic form from being interfered with by Italian aesthetics. His assertion, which upheld the use of spoken dialogue and the separation of poetry and music in a work, reflects the fundamentally rational taste in the English dramatic tradition.

Although the distinction between English spoken plays and operas was not always clear-cut in the generic designations of seventeenth-century England, it retained the rational taste rooted in Elizabethan and Jacobean theatre. William Shakespeare's *Tempest* (1611), for example, can be considered a typical English spoken play to integrate spoken dialogue and masque music. In this work, Ariel is a spirit who uses music as part of his magical abilities. He sings several songs throughout the play, including "Full Fathom Five" and "Where the Bee Sucks". However, these songs were merely regarded as Ariel's "magical embellishments" and did not have a major impact on Shakespeare's storytelling. In addition, the composer did not incorporate singing into the spoken dialogue.

We are now in a better position to understand why spoken dialogue is considered to be part of the English genius. Its presence in a play signifies the literary superiority over other art forms (especially music) in the context of English taste. Rational thinking and literary expression dominate a play, which is completely distinct from its musical component. When the emergence of Italian opera shook theatrical taste and principles, playwrights began to attempt to reconcile poetry and music (as shown in the preface to *Psyche*), but were interrupted in time by Dryden. We can therefore anticipate the nationalistic implications conveyed by the typical features of semi-opera during the Purcellian era. Curtis Price and Louise K. Stein (2001) argue that Henry Purcell's semi-operas were different in approach from earlier works, emphasizing a greater separation between the spoken and musical components.[25] One of Purcell's notable examples of dramatic opera is *The Fairy Queen* (1692), which used Shakespeare's comedy *A Midsummer Night's Dreams* for part of its libretto. As Richard Taruskin points out, 'Purcell

[24] While I use the term "semi-opera" for convenience, it's important to note that modern scholars, such as Martin Adams, might argue the genre's rationality is better conveyed by "dramatic opera". Therefore, in the following sections of my thesis, I will use the term "dramatic opera" which is more widely accepted in contemporary musicology, to refer to this specific dramatic genre.
[25] See Curtis Price and Louise K. Stein, "Semi-Opera," *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online* (Oxford University Press, 2001) Web. 14 Dec. 2022.

did not set a single line of Shakespeare's to music'.[26] McCleave also reveals that, in Purcell's time, musical elements in dramatic works were considered a decoration or interlude and defines the masque as "a musical interlude presented to its audience as a kind of social commentary".[27] Modern scholars have identified the characteristics of Purcellian masques as 'the main obstacle to full-blown opera in English'; Jeffrey Barnouw (2017) not only asserts that Purcell's *The Fairy Queen* and *King Arthur* 'hardly redeem the genre', but also borrows C. A. Price's statement to emphasize the distance between these works and opera.[28]

Setting aside the probable historical inevitability of the dramatic opera eventually evolving into an all-sung operatic form after Purcell, Dryden's dramaturgical theory has influenced my understanding of the Englishness inherent in English opera. This understanding is supported by modern musicological research on the development of the English operatic genre. Michael Burden (2009), for example, provides a comprehensive analysis of the evolution of English opera genres from the Restoration to the mid-eighteenth century, highlighting the significance of "opera with spoken dialogue", which he argues fulfilled the audience's desire for a rational, comprehensible, and traditional form of theatre, rooted in the pre-Commonwealth era.[29] More recently, as acknowledged by Adams, English genius encompasses a concept of taste that is deeper than the modern definition of "preference". During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the term genius commonly referred to the prevalent feeling, opinion, sentiment, or taste, as well as the distinctive character or spirit associated with a nation or age. Moreover, the development of dramatic opera is notable for its deliberate avoidance of the all-sung operatic form. Instead, proponents of the genre emphasized a separation of music and spectacle as the only way to reconcile the tensions between the two forms.[30]

In spite of a thorough analysis of the differences between dramatic opera and all-sung opera, scholars still attribute the latter in the eighteenth century to the development of English opera. The all-sung operatic form, which has been identified by Burden as another genre of English opera, emerged later than dramatic opera and originated from a competition announced in *The London Gazette* in 1700. Participants were asked to compose music based on a specific masque text, *The Judgement of Paris*, written by William Congreve (1670-1729). The successful works

[26] Taruskin, "Courts Resplendent, Overthrown, Restored", in *The Oxford History of Western Music.* Vol. 2, *The Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries*, 131.
[27] McCleave, "Introduction", 7.
[28] Jeffrey Barnouw, "Lost Chances: Obstacles to English Opera for Purcell and Handel", in *Music in the London Theatre from Purcell to Handel*, 49-50.
[29] Michael Burden, "Opera in Eighteenth-Century England: English Opera, Masques, Ballad Operas", in *The Cambridge Companion to Eighteenth-Century Opera* (eds.) Anthony R DelDonna and Pierpaolo Polzonetti (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 206.
[30] Adams, "Opera as Literature and the Triumph of Music", 29.

included one by John Eccles (1668-1735) performed in 1701. Burden also highlights other representative works, such as Handel's *Rinaldo* (HWV 7, 1711) and J.F. Lampe's *Amelia* (1732), to illustrate the subsequent development of this form in early eighteenth-century England. In contrast to semi-opera, the all-sung dramatic form fully embraced Italianate operatic structures. Consequently, works that abandoned the tradition of spoken dialogue, such as the masque, English serious opera, and Handel's pastoral masque, were thought to be modelled on foreign (Italian) styles. While the importance of the all-sung operatic form in the development of the English opera genre cannot be denied, I am sceptical of its Englishness on account of the influence of Dryden's dramaturgical theory. In addition, according to Burden,

> by choosing a masque as the basis for the competition, Tonson was emphasizing the Englishness of the enterprise. The genre is the one indigenous form that England at this time possessed, and was indelibly associated with ideas of national identity, the court, and Charles I only 50 years after he was executed.[31]

Gilman's thesis raises questions about the strictness of genre definitions in English opera of the time. Hume, as cited by Gilman, argues that *The Judgement of Paris* was "mounted as entities [of masques] unto" itself, which is "inexact" in its generic categorization. Additionally, the masque genre underwent significant changes in the early eighteenth century, with Roger Fiske noting that Restoration masques were nearly always all-sung, whereas earlier court masques included spoken dialogue.

In other words, this thesis does not judge the Englishness of an English opera based on whether it conforms to the musical traditions of its predecessors, nor on the extent to which its libretto conforms to English poetic aesthetic. Instead, and in order to determine the nationalistic subtext of English opera, it examines whether a given work displays English genius and evokes a sense of rational taste. In my subsequent discussion, then, I chose *Acis and Galatea* (HWV 49a, 1718) as the beginning of Handel's nationalistic English opera, rather than his earlier work *Rinaldo*. Although Curtis Price (1987) explicitly points out the connection between the libretto of *Rinaldo* and the story of the dramatic opera *The British Enchanters* (1706), as well as resistance to the ban on the stage performance of spoken drama (The Lord Chamberlain's order mentioned above), Aaron Hill (1685-1750) and Giacomo Rossi's contribution to the libretto ultimately invoked Handel's Italian operatic music.[32] The dramatic opera form of the subject matter does not provide a basis for exploring rational taste in Handel's dramatic works.

[31] Burden, "Opera in Eighteenth-Century England: English Opera, Masques, Ballad Operas", 209.
[32] Curtis Price, "English Traditions in Handel's Rinaldo", in *Handel Tercentenary Collection* (eds.) Stanley Sadie and Anthony Hicks (Basingstoke: Published for the Royal Musical Association by Macmillan Music Division, 1987).

**Rational taste in the church**

The incorporation of spoken dialogue in masque music was not the only expression of English genius in a dramatic work, as evidenced by the rational taste that prevailed in its religious subject matter. Smith has demonstrated that the classical humanist view, represented in eighteenth-century England primarily by Horace, held that art must be moral, instructive, and rational in order to transcend mere diversion. This view maintained that the arts had an unmatched capacity to be instructive and required that "poetry should concern itself with human worth, national achievements, and religion".[33] Smith also indicated that it had been absorbed by Dryden and his followers, including James Thomson and Hill, who in turn imparted these principles to Handel and his librettists. The classical humanist view and its influence served to rationalize Handel's oratorios, from *Esther* (HWV 50a, 1732) to *Messiah* (HWV 56, 1742), blurring the boundaries between theatrical and religious genres and receiving positive feedback in musical circles of the time. Does this imply that the rational taste in Handelian oratorio was solely contributed by the librettists and had nothing to do with Handel's music? To answer this question, we need to investigate the rational implications of English church music at the time of Handel's arrival and its potential influence on Handel's musical exploration of English genius.

It is important to note that the emergence of Italian opera at the end of the seventeenth century not only caused a "crisis of taste" in the theatrical environment in London, but also impacted on the ecclesiastical field, which could not remain unaffected. I will explore this topic in detail in Chapter 2 and demonstrate how this crisis, as conveyed in the sermons of religious activities at the end of the seventeenth century, motivated Purcell's development of the Symphony anthem. It should be noted that the breaking down of musical genre boundaries was not an original idea of Handel's in his oratorios. It had earlier social roots in London religious celebrations and was somewhat passive in nature. Donald Burrows' *Handel and the English Chapel Royal* (2005) provides a detailed exposition of this issue.[34] According to Burrows, the practice of performing symphony anthems and secular court odes, in the celebration of St. Cecilia's day, played a significant role in strengthening the collaboration between the Chapel Royal and the King's Musicians. These events not only provided a public stage for the ensembles, but also helped to attract a larger audience of discerning music lovers who admired their unique style.[35] Through these collaborative performance opportunities, dramatists had a

[33] Smith, "The Purpose of Art", in *Handel's Oratorios and Eighteenth-Century Thought*, 51-54.
[34] Donald Burrows, *Handel and the English Chapel Royal* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).
[35] Ibid, 19-20.

dependable platform from which to integrate themselves into the identity of church musicians. Precedents from Purcell and John Blow (1649-1708) existed, as well as excellent Cecilia librettos, from Dryden's *Alexander's Feast* (1697) to Hughes' *Cecilia ode* (1703). We therefore witness Handel and his contemporaries, including Pepusch's *The Union of the Three Sister Arts* (1723) as an after-piece on Cecilia's Day (see Chapter 1), and Handel's *Alexander's Feast* (1736), to be discussed in Chapter 4, inheriting the tradition of Cecilia and exploring the power of music. Unfortunately, despite the musicians' freedom to switch between activities, the rational implications of church music remained unproven.

Sean M. Parr discusses the tradition of the annual performance of a musical work dedicated to St. Cecilia, which was established in London in the 1680s. The figure of St. Cecilia, who was divinely inspired and connected to music, represented an appealing duality for English poets and composers.[36] In my opinion, though, Parr confuses the artistic intentions of playwrights with those of composers. The composers' concept of "Sister Arts" and their attempt to elevate the status of music in Cecilia odes will be discussed in Chapter 1. Here, I will focus on exploring the rational taste of the Cecilia ode and its aesthetic roots in an intellectual context. The Cecilia odes were narratological in form and typically began with an exhortation to begin the music-making, followed by a description of various instruments and their respective powers to move the affections, then an exposition of the value of harmony. They concluded with a celebration invoking heavenly singing.[37] Does the description of Cecilia's Ode to praise music therefore convey the educational function of music (or harmonic music specifically)? Perhaps we can find an answer in Hughes' poem. In 1703, he wrote *An Ode in Praise of Musick* opening with a chorus,

Awake, Celestial Harmony!

Awake, Celestial Harmony!

Goddess of Melodious Sound!

Let the TRUMPET's shrill Voice,

And the Drum's Thundring Noise,

Rouse ev'ry dull Mortal from Sorrows profound!

[36] Sean M. Parr, "Johann Pepusch, Aesthetics, and the Sister Arts", in *The Lively Arts of the London Stage, 1675-1725*, 94.
[37] Bryan White, "The Rise and Fall of the London Cecilian Feasts 1683-1700" in *Music for St Cecilia's Day: from Purcell to Handel* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2019), 8-12.

See, see!

The mighty Pow'r of Harmony!

Behold how soon its charms can chase

Grief and Gloom from ev'ry Face!

How Swift its Raptures fly,

And thrill thro ev'ry Soul, and Brighten ev'ry Eye![38]

This quotation reveals the true intention of the playwright to convey through Cecilia the divine voice of God through the sanctity of the goddess. All of Hughes' descriptions of music have a strong religious foundation, such as "Celestial Harmony" and the implication of the voice of God in the Trumpet and Drum. In other words, the "mighty pow'r of Harmony" that Hughes refers to only exists in the voice of God awakened by the goddess and not in the harmony of music itself. As for the music, Hughes asserted that "although the often poor quality of Italian poetry from *opera seria* was to be avoided, the sweetness of its music was not".[39] Parr also acknowledged the religious implications in the libretto of Pepusch's *The Union of the Three Sister Arts*:

> These surface descriptions [throughout the libretto of *The Union of the Three Sister Arts*] clearly indicate a personification of the arts via mythological figures, but, at the same time, they also suggest Christian undertones, […]. Apelles is the name of a Christian at Rome whom Paul salutes and styles as 'approved in Christ' (Romans 16:10), while Cecilia's status as a saint also has clear Christian implications. Homer as a writer of the great Greek heroic epics seems less related because of pagan themes, but the stories of heroes are common in religious works as well. It has even been argued that the Gospel writer, Mark, consciously emulated Homer in his writings.[40]

In 1711, Arthur Bedford published a book, *Great Abuse of Musick*, in which he set up an opposition between English theatre and church. Like many musicians mentioned above, Bedford undisguisedly disliked "the play-house", believing that it "is to corrupt the Age, to banish all serious thinking and reflection, and to loss the conscience asleep, or sear it with a hot Iron."[41] More importantly, on music, he explains that

> As music is a liberal and a noble Science, designed at first for the Glory of God, and the Exciting to Virtue; so it might reasonably have been expected, that such

[38] John Hughes, *An Ode in Praise of Musick, Set for Variety of Voices and Instuments by Mr. Philip Hart. Written by J. Hughes* (London: B. Lintot and J. Nutt, 1703), 1-2.
[39] Parr, "Johann Pepusch, Aesthetics, and the Sister Arts", 90.
[40] Ibid, 97.
[41] Arthur Bedford, "Part II. The Introduction", in *Great Abuse of Musick* (London: John Wyatt, 1711), 61-62.

> who profess the same, and are skilled in composition, would endeavour to keep up its Dignity and reputation, and take a due Care, that nothing should render the Science contemptible which they profess, and consequently reflect upon their own Credit.
>
> But more especially that Christians should not debase it in such a Manner as constantly made it loathsom in the heathen world. Composition of Musick is a genteel imployment, and in it self as much excels a common musician as an Architect excels a Mason, an Engineer excels a private centinel, or a Mathematician excels a common sailor. The study hereof improves our reason by undoubted demonstrations, and the Practice delights our sence with an excellent Harmony.[42]

This tells us that music is a means to praise of God, and that the study of musical science should not forget this principle. Therefore, in the minds of English musicians, the rational power of music comes from the pursuit of God, rather than from music itself. Behind both instrumental and vocal music, there are images of God to reflect their moral pursuit. Bedford's belief appears to have deep roots in English history. According to Andreas Werckmeister, his treatise *Musicalische Paradoxal-Discourse*, which was issued posthumously in 1707, represents "the last significant exposition of the traditional cosmological understanding of music in which biblical principle and Keplerian philosophy form the background to the practice of performing".[43] Werckmeister's idea is based on an Augustinian concept that transferred Pythagorean and Platonic principles into a Christian framework; he explains in the second chapter that "God is the author and creator of harmony, thus explaining why harmony is agreeable to humans […] any harmonic reality originates in God, and that it is a set form and image of God, through which God reveals a fragment of his wisdom to humans."[44] Therefore, Augustine rejected the idea of allowing corporeal bodily senses to govern the incorporeal and divinely inspired soul, which by definition was superior to the corporeal. He believed that the sound of music was capable of affecting one's ethical state by communicating the order and unity of the cosmos to the soul through numerical proportions, but did not believe that human sense should be the ultimate authority in matters of the divine.

In conclusion, the inherent conflict between English aesthetics and Italian opera in the eighteenth century was rooted in the English mistrust of human perception and fear of the power of pure music. Music, according to English aesthetics, must be subservient to the power

[42] Ibid.
[43] Andreas Werckmeister, *Andreas Werckmeister's Musicalische Paradoxal-Discourse: A Well-Tempered Universe* (trans.) Dietrich Bartel (Lanham, Maryland: Lexington Books, 2017), x.
[44] Ibid, 63-64.

of words, and the power of words must reflect religious connotations in order to best embody rational taste or what is known as English genius.

**Handel's German background and the idea of 'ancient music'**

After examining the English emphasis on "rationality" in the dramatic arts and how English playwrights perceived Italy's "sensual" contributions, it becomes evident that Handel introduces a third, distinct artistic perspective rooted in his German musical background. Although he had been an Italian opera composer before his move to England, his outstanding achievements in church music composition after arriving in London in 1710, his close collaboration with Scriblerus club poets such as Hughes and Alexander Pope (1688-1744), and his religious subject matter in his oratorios, all naturally lead us to believe that this was the result of a wholehearted acceptance of English dramatic practice, without the influence of German and Italian music. And this acceptance then forms the basis for an understanding of Handel as an English composer. However, my thesis aims for a more nuanced understanding, uncovering, from a musical perspective, the differences in nationalistic perception wrought by Handel and his intellectual environment.

The influence of Handel's German style on his English works will be discussed principally in Chapter 2 and beyond. This mainly focuses on the strong and powerful use of staccato chords in his music, inspired by his early musical training under Friedrich Wilhelm Zachow (1663-1712). The limited range of examples that will appear do not demonstrate the dominance of the German style in his English musical career, nor can they provide points of comparison with his Italian style. However, given Handel's background and education at the Lutheran Gymnasium in Halle (Saale), it is reasonable to assume that he was exposed to religious ideas that may have influenced his later musical compositions. As John Butt (1997) explains, the Lutheran Gymnasium in Halle, where Handel was educated, preserved traditional Lutheran education at a high level and provided practical music instruction. Lutheran ideas emphasized a personal and emotionally complex religious life, as well as devotion to good works, and opposed elaborate liturgy, complex music, and most forms of drama.[45] This Lutheran perspective contrasts with the view, likely from the Anglican perspective as mentioned earlier, that the Christian church should trust only in the wisdom of God, not in personal judgment. Therefore, this may have provided the cultural foundation for Handel to depart from religious themes in his oratorios and seek the power of reason in music. This also leads us to another England

[45] John Butt, "Germany -- Education and Apprenticeship", in *The Cambridge Companion to Handel*, (ed.) Donald Burrows (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 12-13.

based German composer, Pepusch. The influence of Lutheranism is not extensive here, but in the history of the Academy of Ancient Music led by Pepusch, there are musical approaches consistent with Handel's oratorios. Handelian oratorio thus had musical roots in German aesthetics, which I shall link to the concept of 'ancient music'. The specific content of 'ancient music' and the connection between Pepusch and Handel will be discussed in detail in Chapter 1. For the time being I will emphasize that although 'ancient music' is closely related to these two German musicians, it is not limited to musicians of German identity. I shall highlight a group of musicians, from Purcell to Handel, who represent this concept, and who explored and contributed to English opera while engaging with the nationalism of the early eighteenth-century English stage. My thesis therefore involves re-assessing the nationalistic subtext of Handel's English career in London from 1710, the year of his first arrival and of the emergence of Pepusch's concept of 'ancient music', to 1745, the year of the performance of Handel's final secular oratorio, *Hercules* (HWV 60, 1745).

One of the significant innovations of this thesis is therefore to advance the discussion of the origins of nationalism in English music history from the commonly studied Oxford Movement to the early eighteenth century. The nationalistic aspect of the story of English music history has long been associated with a Tudor-Elizabethan inheritance, in which a group of reformers glorified later English patriotic musicians for provoking a national musical renaissance. By the end of the eighteenth century, Elizabethan sacred music had already been established as a representation of the glory of English music, as clearly illustrated in Burney's *A General History of Music* (1789):

> In speaking of Choral Music during the long and prosperous reign of Queen ELIZABETH, our nation's honour seems to require a more diffuse detail than at any other time: for perhaps we never had so just a claim to equality with the rest of Europe, where Music was the most successfully cultivated, as at this period; when indeed there was but little melody any where. Yet, with respect to harmony, canon, fugue and such laboured and learned contrivances as were then chiefly studied and admired, we can produce such proofs of great abilities in the compositions of our countrymen, as candid judges of their merit must allow to abound in every kind of excellence that was then known or expected.[46]

He further claims,

> I have found no other Music printed expressly for the cathedral service to English words during the reign of Edward VI. than that of Marbeck, which was

[46] Burney, *A General History of Music: From the Earliest Ages to the Present Period,* vol. 3, 13.

> mere canto fermo, without counterpoint; but the year after the publication of the English Liturgy by Queen Elizabeth, the following choral work appeared […].[47]

Among reformers, John Taverner and John Marbecke published their English sacred repertories *Western Wynde Mass* (1528) and *Boke of Common Praier Noted* (1550) incorporating Romish traditions. English church style "was not fully accomplished in England until after the mid-sixteenth century", when it was initiated in Thomas Tallis' English works.[48] In fact, with the development of the Renaissance Revival and a rise of the concept of 'ancient music' (see Chapter 1), Thomas Tallis' status as the "Father of English Church Music" became more and more evident in the vernacular repertory. Leading editors such as John Barnard (1641), Thomas Tudway (1720s) and William Boyce (1760) all opened their collections with Tallis' music for the reformed church.[49] In addition, William Croft (1678-1727) specifically mentioned Tallis' name in the preface to his *Musica Sacra*:

> The immortal Mr. Thomas Tallis, (who was Organist to the Court in the reigns of King Henry VIII. King Edward VI. Queen Mary and Queen Elizabeth) was the first that ever composed a Cathedral-Service in the English Tongue, from which excellent Work, justly esteemed at this very Day, we may conclude, that the Art of Musick was not Young in this Kingdom in his Days; […].[50]

Tallis' "English Tongue" was continually explored in the nineteenth century for its far-reaching influence, identified by Metcalfe when discussing the Reformation. In asking "What was the Reformation", Metcalfe revealed his proud feelings about this movement, which "anglicized the church Catholic to a sober, thoughtful, independent-minded Englishman". He also explained the greatness of Tallis' harmony: it "may creep into the Englishman's heart on the breath of his native harmony".[51] At the beginning of the twentieth century, German critic Schmitz underestimated England as "Das Land ohne Musik" (the land without music).[52] No doubt his assertion caused indignation among English musicians who in the modern age devoted serious attention to the national identity of "English music".

Therefore, it is almost always the influence of Tallis' music on the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries that is a topic for modern research, for the purpose of negating Schmitz's "Das Land ohne Musik" statement. Drawing on Metcalfe's research from the nineteenth

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[47] Ibid, p. 21.
[48] Frank Ll. Harrison, *Music in Medieval Britain*, (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1958), preface.
[49] Suzanne Cole, "Who Is the Father? Changing Perceptions of Tallis and Byrd in Late Nineteenth-Century England", *Music & Letters*, 89 (May 2008), 212-226.
[50] William Croft, *Musica Sacra*, volume 2 (London: John Walsh, 1724), preface.
[51] J. Powell Metcalfe, "The Music of the Church of England, As Contemplate by the Reformers", *The Musical Times and Singing Class Circular*, 12, no. 274 (1 Dec 1865),158.
[52] Oscar A. H. Schmitz, *Das Land ohne Musik: Englische Gesellschaftsprobleme* (Munich: Georg Müller, 1914); For its English version, see Schmitz, *The Land Without Music*, (trans.) H. Herzl (London: Jarrolds, 1926).

century, Dorothy Louise regarded the difference between Tallis' reform music and the previous Latin tradition, particularly in the field of counterpoint and melodic design, as evidence of a cohesive phase in Anglican history.[53] Suzanne Cole has designated plagal-amen cadences as 'Tallis' Amens' in order to observe influences on English native harmony in Victorian England; years later, another scholar Jason Terry took a similar approach, situating the cadence in the historical context of nineteenth- and twentieth-century England.[54] Jim Samson has even asserted that,

> The timely adoption of Elgar as a national figure, together with the creative reclamation by later composers of folksong and the Tudor-Elizabethan inheritance in a circular and self-referential quest for 'Englishness', belongs essentially to twentieth-century history.[55]

As I shall show in Chapter 2, though, the cadence has ramifications for Handel's English church works in the early eighteenth century.

## Thesis Structure

Chapter 1 of my thesis delves into the history of the Academy of Ancient Music during the early eighteenth century, with a focus on separating the concept of 'ancient music' from other patriotic movements of the age. By examining documentary evidence from Sir John Hawkins (1719-1789) and Joseph Doane, as well as other correspondents of the time, the chapter highlights the nationalistic and operatic spirits of the term 'ancient music', and its ideological contributions to the cultivation of Handel's nationalistic genres. Moreover, the author explores the innovation and theatrical implications of the concept by situating the Academy within the context of early eighteenth-century artistic norms, and by displaying Pepusch's musical activities and ideas, as well as his relationship with Handel. I argue that 'ancient music' does not simply refer to an ever-changing repertoire or an established aesthetic value, but rather represents the ideas behind Pepusch's leadership.

Chapter 2 delves into Handel's early career in London and his involvement with English sacred music. It explores the impact of the Elizabethan composer Tallis on Handel's harmonic style, which is in line with the Academy and 'ancient music' concept discussed in Chapter 1. Despite Tallis's influence being neglected in contemporary research, he was a significant figure in

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[53] Dorothy Louise Murray, "The Arts in Transition: A Study of the Effect of the Reformation in England on Selected Examples of Music and Architecture during the Reigns of Henry VIII and Edward VI" (Ph.D. diss., Ohio University, 1980), 111-97.

[54] Suzanne Cole, "'The Englishman's Harmony': Tallis and National Identity" in *Thomas Tallis and His Music in Victorian England* (Woodbridge, England; Rochester, New York: The Boydell Press, 2008), 172-73; Jason Terry, "A History of The Plagal-Amen Cadence" (PhD diss., University of South Carolina, 2016), 71-76.

[55] Jim Samson, "Nations and Nationalism" in *The Cambridge History of Nineteenth-Century Music* (ed.) Jim Samson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p. 592.

English nationalistic discourse during Handel's time. Handel's first verse anthem, *As pants the hart* (HWV 251a, 1712/1713), and service music, *Utrecht Te Deum* (HWV 278, 1713), immediately reflect his engagement with Tallis-style harmonic techniques. The chapter provides an in-depth analysis of the rapid and profound influence of primitive English harmonic techniques on Handel's choral settings.

Chapter 3 delves into the early English dramatic works of Handel, focusing on his Cannons masque *Acis and Galatea*, and how it exemplifies the fusion of the nationalistic subtext of 'ancient music' with the indigenous English operatic tradition. The chapter also explores the influence of the Scriblerus club, which played a significant role in the literary form of Handel's *Acis and Galatea*, particularly in the development of pastoral poetry. Overall, this chapter sheds light on Handel's search for a new path towards a sustainable English opera. It explores how his predecessors contributed to the national foundation of this genre and how Handel's innovative practices and reforms of the chorus illuminate the road ahead for his oratorios. By skilfully blending the nationalistic subtext of 'ancient music' with the indigenous English operatic tradition, Handel created a new form of English dramatic music that continues to inspire and captivate audiences today.

Chapter 4 focuses on Handel's oratorios as examples of the mid eighteenth-century application of Pepusch's 'ancient music' ideas. I examine the historical context and artistic value of Handelian oratorio in the 1730s, discussing its choral insertions, variable musical traditions, and the balance between dramatic and narrative music language. I explore the religious themes and the arrangement of the choral parts in Handel's oratorios and how they convey English nationalism. The chapter also highlights Handel's contemplation of the power of music and the collision between the ideas of the Academy of Ancient Music and the Apollo Academy, by examining his *Deborah* (HWV51, 1733) and *Alexander's Feast* in particular.

In Chapter 5, I explore the reception of Handel's oratorios in the 1740s, focusing on *Messiah* and the challenges Handel faced in writing English oratorios at this stage of his career. While *Messiah* is often praised for its incorporation of biblical text and its influence on later musical classics, I identify how Handel experienced adversity during the 1740s due to dissatisfaction among religious audiences and active resistance from Italian organizations aiming to undermine his secular oratorios. The chapter also offers a new perspective on scholarly debates surrounding Handel's works in the context of English opera, including *Semele* (HWV58, 1744) and *Hercules*, demonstrating Handel striving towards English opera as an 'ancient music'

composer. Moreover, I also contribute to our understanding of the transition of the Academy of Ancient Music from a society associated with nationalistic promotion focused on English opera to a society associated with old music.

# 1

# Rethinking the Term ‘Ancient Music’ in Early Eighteenth-Century England

## 1.1 Introduction

What is ‘ancient music’ in musicology? In the late twentieth century, William Weber’s *The Rise of Musical Classics in Eighteenth-Century England* (1992) led scholars to pay attention to this term in the realm of historical research. As Weber indicated, the Academy of Vocal Music was officially called the Academy of Ancient Music (the Academy) under Pepusch’s direction in 1731, and the term ‘Ancient Music’ entered English music vocabulary.[56] In his book, Weber created a coherent concept for this musical term that was applicable across the eighteenth century. He demonstrates,

> The term 'the classics' will denote musical works that were revered for their greatness and were performed on a continuing basis, as has been its essential meaning in the musical press since the early nineteenth century. 'Canon' will refer to the ideas that bound these works together as a set of masterpieces and thereby bestowed authority upon them. In modern musical life, canon has had three main components: repertory, critical judgement, and ideology.[57]

Weber considered the idea of ‘ancient music’ as recognising that the Academy had initially provided to the Elizabethan church ‘a firm sense of cultural authority’, and cultivated the old musical taste of early eighteenth-century London. In 1776, ‘ancient music’ was “redefined to mean any music more than about two decades old” under the auspices of the Concert of Antient Music. The old musical taste reached its climax in the 1784 George Frideric Handel commemoration, where Handel is recognised as “the earliest of all ‘perpetually-in-repertory’ (classical) composers” who made his contribution in opening the classic era in western music history.[58] The centre of the Academy’s repertory successfully shifted from Elizabethan church (Tallis-Byrd) to Handelian works. The term ‘ancient music’ related to the Academy was therefore identified in modern research as a predecessor of musical classics.

[56] William Weber, *The Rise of Musical Classics in Eighteenth-Century England: A Study in Canon, Ritual, and Ideology* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), 29.
[57] Ibid, 21.
[58] Taruskin, “Class of 1685 (II),”, *The Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries*, 326.

In Weber's view, 'ancient music' represented an interest in old music influenced by Elizabethan church repertory. This interest was supported by the Tory party and had a strong political foundation in England. Weber believes that although the interest (or the taste) was given a name in 1731, it was relevant throughout eighteenth-century England, saving and preserving the native pedagogical church tradition. Therefore, the establishment of the Academy naturally became a part of a series of patriotic movements of the age. His understanding of 'ancient music' has had a profound impact on musicological research in this century. Rose (2013), for example, explores the motives behind the Bonocini-Lotti scandal that occurred on the eve of the establishment of the Academy. He understands 'ancient music' as referring to music composed by those who "lived before ye end of the Sixteenth Century", and should be used by the Academy to enrich their repertory, featuring Elizabethan polyphonies by "William Byrd (1540-1623) and Thomas Morley (1557-1602)". Rose also documents "political undercurrents" to the Academy's activities, as many of its members "inclined towards the Tories" who identified the taste of 'ancient music' with a political and religious order found lacking in eighteenth-century England.[59]

In 2016, Amy Dunagin examined the writings of two prominent English musicians, Thomas Tudway and Roger North, and their role in shaping the narrative of English music history during the eighteenth century. She specifically mentioned the intimate relationship between music history and politics. 'Ancient music' in her article refers to a body of music composed for the Elizabethan Church of England, which was emphasized in the writings of music historians North and Tudway. They sought to shape a narrative of English music history that emphasized the excellence of this ancient English repertoire and called for maintaining an older sacred repertoire consistent with Tory emphasis on continuity with the past. Their influence was felt in the establishment of the Academy of Ancient Music in 1726, which promoted 'ancient music' through performance and sought to revivify the Elizabethan and Jacobean repertoire as part of a broader eighteenth-century movement towards cultural and religious reform and pride.[60] Through these two examples, and under the influence of Weber's position, we see that the artistic purposes of the Academy were largely exploited by the political control of the Tory party of that time. Scholars overwhelmingly focused on the Academy's

[59] Stephen Rose, "Plagiarism at the Academy of Ancient Music: A Case Study in Authorship, style and Judgement," in *Concepts of Creativity in Seventeenth-Century England* (eds.) Rebecca Herissone and Alan Howard (Suffolk: Boydell & Brewer, 2013), 184-86.
[60] Amy Dunagin, "Tory Defenses of English Music: Thomas Tudway and Roger North", *Eighteenth-Century Life* 1 April 2016; 40 (2), 40-42.

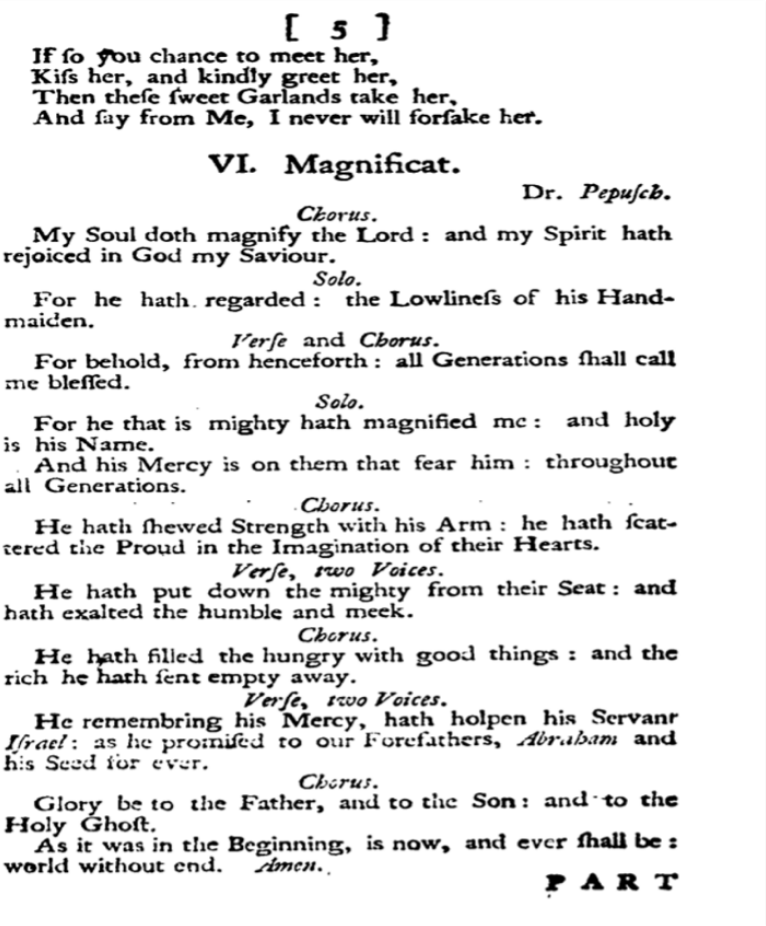
contribution to the repertoire of the Elizabethan church, and the idea of 'ancient music' was specifically identified with this repertoire.

More recently, Weber's influence has expanded to the field of Handelian studies. Mathew Gardner (2017) extended Weber's interpretation of 'ancient music' by changing the body of old music under consideration and flexibly setting its reference point as the entirety of eighteenth-century England. He believes that 'ancient music' refers to a growing interest in the works of English poets from the seventeenth century, such as Dryden, Congreve, and John Milton (1608-1674), which were becoming modern literary classics. Specifically, the musical settings of these literary works, along with the music of Purcell, were being referred to as 'ancient music' and served as inspiration for composers like Handel and his contemporaries. The use of these works as the basis for librettos contributed to the development of English-language works in the 1730s and 40s and their growing position as national composers. The author suggests that a reassessment of the literary traditions that influenced Handel and his contemporaries can provide a wider literary context for understanding the development of English-language works during this period.[61]

Gardner's explanation encourages us to address the difference between the repertoire of Elizabethan church music represented by 'ancient music' and other old works in eighteenth-century England. As mentioned above, The Concert of Antient Music provided a new definition - any music that was older than approximately twenty years - for the term 'ancient music' in 1776, which could be reasonably regarded as the consequence of the historical development of the Academy in the late eighteenth century. However, if we consider this consequence (early music taste) as a factor in the Academy's original goals, we can see a deviation in its focus, illustrated by the shift from Elizabethan polyphony to the music of Purcell. An evolving musical canon is not as unified, continuous and coherent a concept as is often assumed.[62] Obviously, the Academy's activities were by no means underscored and justified by old music in a single, simple way. In fact, a number of contemporary works, including Handel's oratorios, were incorporated into the repertoire of the Academy long before the end of the eighteenth century. The Academy of Ancient Music's performance lists from 1746 to 1761 reveals the inclusion of several eighteenth-century composers. For instance, at the "Motets, Madrigals, and Other Pieces" concert held on Thursday, April 24th, 1746 in London, the second part featured

[61] Gardner, "Seventeenth-Century Literary Classics as Eighteenth-century Libretto Sources: Congreve, Dryden and Milton in the 1730s and 1740s,", 157.
[62] Weber, "The History of Musical Canon," in *Rethinking Music* (eds.) Nicholas Cook and Mark Everist (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 337 and 354.

Pepusch's *Magnificat* followed by Thomas Morley's *Madrigal for Four Voices* (see Figure 1). Handel's Te Deum was also performed during the third part of the concert. The concert catalogues for the years 1749, 1751, 1757, and 1761 frequently mention the names of eighteenth-century composers such as William Croft, John Travers, G. F. Handel, and Dr. Pepusch. This demonstrates a fairly equal balance between contemporary and Elizabethan composers,[63] and reflects the Academy's high regard for its contemporary works.



[ 5 ]

If ſo you chance to meet her,
Kiſs her, and kindly greet her,
Then theſe ſweet Garlands take her,
And ſay from Me, I never will forſake her.

## VI. Magnificat.

Dr. *Pepuſch.*

*Chorus.*

My Soul doth magnify the Lord: and my Spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour.

*Solo.*

For he hath regarded: the Lowlineſs of his Hand-maiden.

*Verſe* and *Chorus.*

For behold, from henceforth: all Generations ſhall call me bleſſed.

*Solo.*

For he that is mighty hath magnified me: and holy is his Name.

And his Mercy is on them that fear him: throughout all Generations.

*Chorus.*

He hath ſhewed Strength with his Arm: he hath ſcattered the Proud in the Imagination of their Hearts.

*Verſe, two Voices.*

He hath put down the mighty from their Seat: and hath exalted the humble and meek.

*Chorus.*

He hath filled the hungry with good things: and the rich he hath ſent empty away.

*Verſe, two Voices.*

He remembring his Mercy, hath holpen his Servant *Iſrael*: as he promiſed to our Forefathers, *Abraham* and his Seed for ever.

*Chorus.*

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son: and to the Holy Ghoſt.

As it was in the Beginning, is now, and ever ſhall be: world without end. *Amen.*

PART

Figure 1 *Motets, madrigals, and other pieces; performed by the Academy of Ancient music, on Thursday, April 24, 1746*, (London: [s.n.], Printed in the year M. DDC. XLVI. [1746]), 5.

Furthermore, there was also active exchange in the Academy between sacred genres and the theatrical stage in the 1730s. John Hawkins provided an account of the Academy's early history in 1770. His records show that the Academy demonstrated its advantages as early as February 1731-2, during the interval between the secession of Dr. Greene (Maurice Greene), a leading

[63] *Motets, and Other Pieces; Performed by the Academy of Ancient Music, on Thursday, April 6, 1749*', (London: [s.n.], 1749), 3-4; *Motets, Madrigals, and other Pieces; Performed by the Academy of Ancient Music, on Thursday, February 28, 1751,* (London: [s.n.], 1751), 3, 7-8; *Motets, and Other Pieces; Performed by the Academy of Ancient Music, on Thursday, April 29, 1756*, (London: [s.n.], 1756), 5,7; *Motets, and other Pieces; Performed by the Academy of Ancient Music, on Thursday, May 5, 1757*, (London: [s.n.], 1757), 7-8; *Motets and Madrigals; Performed by the Academy of Ancient Music, on Thursday, April 30, 1761,* (London: [s.n.], 1761), 3-4.

musician of the Chapel Royal, and Mr. Gates (Bernard Gates), who was the Master of the Children of the Chapel Royal. Both were leading members of the Academy and contributed Chapel Royal resources. At that time, the Academy presented the oratorio *Esther*, which Handel had originally composed for the Duke of Chandos, performed in character by the Academy's members and the children of the Chapel Royal. The enthusiastic reception it received suggested to Handel the idea of presenting that genre of composition at Covent-Garden theatre.[64] Handel's oratorios had always played an important role in the Academy, but not always as old music. This brings us to the question as to why Pepusch, along with a club of theatre composers, was inclined to absorb Handel's oratorios when they challenged the boundaries of music in the church and the theatre. Eggington noticed this situation in the Academy and indicated that the academicians' interest in a diverse range of composers, and their appreciation for Handel, stemmed from a somewhat idealized and vaguely defined concept referred to as 'harmony', and that they 'sought ways to rationalize their conception of Handel's choral music as the pinnacle of sublime art founded on timeless natural principles'.[65] Although Eggington mainly used the historical records of the Academy during the reign of Pepusch's successor Benjamin Cooke (1734-1793), his article encourages us to re-examine the artistic objectives of the Academy that lay behind the concept of 'ancient music'.

In my thesis, the concept of 'ancient music' centers on Pepusch's music ideas behind his directorship, rather than being defined solely by a particular repertoire or established aesthetic value. By re-examining documentary evidence of academicians Sir John Hawkins and Joseph Doane, combined with other correspondences of the age, my chapter will focus on the history of the Academy during the early eighteenth century, separating the idea of 'ancient music' from the purpose of other patriotic activities in early eighteenth-century England. In addition, I will examine innovation and theatrical implications of the idea of 'ancient music', by situating the Academy within the context of early eighteenth-century artistic norms and discussing Pepusch's musical activities and ideas and his relationship with Handel.

[64] John Hawkins, *An account of the institution and progress of the Academy of Ancient Music*, (London: [s.n.], 1770), 6.
[65] Tim Eggington, "'Universal Harmony in Enlightenment England: Handel and the Academy of Ancient Music", in *Händel-Jahrbuch 63* (ed.) Annette Landgraf (Kassel, Germany: Bärenreiter, 2017), 49-52.

## 1.2 The Renaissance Revival: a fundamental building block for the Academy of Ancient Music

**Patriotism informing the modern interpretations of 'ancient music'**

It is difficult for scholars to accurately define the term 'ancient music' from the enormous number of references to it in extant eighteenth-century books and documents. It is also unclear from which authority it originated. Upon close inspection of the terminological explanation of 'ancient music', we find that references to the age of the word "ancient" remain frustratingly obscure. Before Weber, Percy Lovell's article, "'Ancient' Music in Eighteenth-Century England" (1979), situates the 'ancient' in the context of a controversy between "ancient" and "modern" across the arts in England at the beginning of the eighteenth century. He believes that the rise of "ancient" music at the turn of the eighteenth century can be attributed to the "antiquarian spirit" of the age, whereby musicians "[were] glad to use the supposed perfection of a past epoch as a stick to beat the alleged shortcomings of its own time".[66] Lovell continues that there was no collection of ancient Greek or Roman music that was comparable to the "Classical antiquity" studied and appreciated by scholars and art enthusiasts. Instead, musicians looked to a much later time, the Renaissance, for examples of excellence. They found inspiration in the polyphonic masterpieces created during this era.[67]

Here, two distant eras appeared at the same time. According to Lovell, because of their abundant resources, "the polyphonic masterpieces of the Renaissance" had become a kind of replacement for "ancient" music lovers chasing the beauty of "Hellenic or Roman music". It is also worth noting that Lovell regards Handel's oratorios as modern music, with "brisk Italian instrumental styles". Christopher Hogwood (1983) focused on the historical contribution of Thomas Tudway's music collection in his age, beginning his discussion with "the old Quarrel of Ancients and Moderns".[68] There were two extremes in this "Quarrel". The musical antiquarians, represented by Pepusch, insisted that the art of music disappeared with the loss of "ancient" music, while the musicians "in practical circles", represented by Handel, asserted that Greek modes was useless to modern music, evidenced by Handel's letter to Johann Mattheson on 24 February 1719 stating that "I cannot see what use the Greek modes can be to modern music."[69] Interestingly, Handel is once again regarded by scholars as the representative of modern music, in opposition to Pepusch's view. Roger North (1653-1734) and Thomas

[66] Percy Lovell, "'Ancient' Music in Eighteenth-Century England", *Music & Letters*, 60, no. 4 (October 1979), 403.
[67] Ibid, 404-405.
[68] Christopher Hogwood, "Thomas Tudway's History of Music" in *Music in Eighteenth-Century England: Essays in Memory of Charles Cudworth* (eds.) Richard Luckett and Charles Cudworth (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 19.
[69] Ibid, 19-20.

Tudway (1650? -1726), as two musicians in the "antiquarians" camp, both paid special attention to "the music by Tallis" which underlies their literary works.[70] However, the authors did not explain the musical connection between Tallis' music and the Greek modes. A large gap therefore appears between the two, which raises another question: if "ancient" represented antiquarian activities, is it reasonable to ignore its musical manifestations in all of the musical products between ancient Greece and Rome and the Renaissance?

Weber did not address this gap in 1992. He basically followed the prevailing view that 'ancient music' is a term relating separately to two different eras, namely ancient Greek and Roman music in the realm of the literary, and the musical repertory of the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries in the realm of musical practice.[71] The latter is particularly associated with the Academy of Ancient Music, as the society not only served as a library to collect the manuscripts of the Elizabethan church, but also as an important performance venue for these manuscripts at that time. Therefore, when 'ancient music' was regarded as early or old music, previous scholars ignored the reason why two eras with a huge gap in time were particularly prized by the English in the early eighteenth century. My study will begin with this England's interest in the musical achievements of their past, also discussing concerns in the field of musical theory and musical practice and finding intrinsic connections between them. This step can help us better understand the motivation for the Academy's foundation in 1731.

The introduction of Italian opera to England prompted patriotic scholars to question its value and raised a larger debate among eighteenth-century scholars over whether the Ancients or the Moderns held greater artistic superiority. Lovell provides evidence of resistance to the burgeoning Italian taste by invoking the long history of ancient art to criticize the frivolity and allure of Italianate culture.[72] It is my view that this debate aimed to defend traditional English artistic norms, rooted in the styles of ancient Greece and Rome, and centered around the conflict between foreign and national aesthetic tastes, rather than simply between the ancient and the modern.

William Wotton's *Reflections Upon Ancient and Modern Learning* was published in 1705. From "Epic Poems of Homer" to "De achitrctura of Vitruvius", the author regards these ancient Greek and Roman masterpieces as "perfection" in the "Art of Writing".[73] As for the realm of

[70] Ibid, 20-23.
[71] Weber, "The Origins of The Idea of 'Ancient Music'", *The Rise of Musical Classics in Eighteenth-Century England*, 28.
[72] Lovell, "'Ancient' Music in Eighteenth-Century England", 403.
[73] William Wotton, *Reflections upon ancient and modern learning* (London: Tim. Goodwin, 1705).

music, the words for a harmonic modulation expressing ancient Greek poetry, "ancient music", appeared throughout his writings. He claims,

> […]the science of Music, so admired by the Ancients, is wholly lost in the world: and that what we have now, is made up of certain Notes that fell into the fancy of a poor friar, in chanting his Mattins: it may seem improper to speak of music here, which ought rather to have been ranked amongst those sciences wherein the moderns have upon a strict enquiry, been found to have been out-done by the Ancients.[74]

In a similar way in a defence of ancient art, Cole Campbell published *Vitruvius Britannicus* around 1725, discussing the respect for ancient architecture. According to his preface,

> We travel, for the most part, at an age more apt to be imposed upon by the ignorance or partiality of others, than to judge truly of the merit of things by the strength of reason.
>
> […]
>
> With him the great manner and exquisite taste of building is lost; for the Italians can no more now relish the Antique Simplicity, but are entirely employed in capricious ornaments, which must at last end in the Gothick.[75]

The lack of rational strength on artistic authority is an important reason why English scholars insist that the ancient art, including the science of ancient Greek and Roman music, disappeared in early eighteenth-century England. In discussions, "modern" is equated with "Italianate" which destroyed the values that art had previously always adhered to. As Smith claims,

> The moral and religious worth of Athenian tragedy was one of the main factors in the movement to revive the use of the chorus on the modern stage, a topic on which, according to one literary historian, debate 'raged throughout the eighteenth century'.[76]

**Renaissance Revival**

Amid this patriotic artistic movement, music also made an impact. As I mentioned in my Introduction, the English had a strong understanding of the power of music, and religious themes ("the music for the God") were undoubtedly the focus of their attention and protection. This led to the second Renaissance Revival in the early eighteenth century. It must be reiterated here that it is inaccurate to conflate the Academy's 'ancient music' with the Renaissance Revival. England's interest in Elizabethan church music and their past 'masters' was not a new

[74] Ibid, 307-08.
[75]Cole Campbell, *Vitruvius Britannicus, or the British architect, containing the plans, elevations, and sections of the regular buildings, both publick and private, in Great Britain, with variety of new designs; in 200 large folio plates,* volume. 1 (London: [s.n.], 1722 or 1725), preface.
[76]Ruth Smith, "The Purpose of Art", in *Handel's Oratorios and Eighteenth-Century Thought*, 62.

phenomenon in the early eighteenth century. Building on modern research on the Renaissance Revival, Thomas Day in the late twentieth century argued that it was a musical revolution focused on the revival of old polyphony in eighteenth-century England, leading to "a few pieces of Renaissance polyphony (Gothic polyphony)... [that managed] to stay in the repertory of many English cathedral choirs, at least until the last years of the eighteenth century."[77] Day traced the origin of the Renaissance Revival, with Elizabethan polyphony first revived by John Barnard's *The First Book of Selected Church Musick* in 1641, acknowledged the destructive impact of seventeenth-century Puritans, and then identified the second, 'official' beginning of the revival around 1700, with Henry Aldrich (1648-1710) in a pioneering position.

According to Day, the concept of 'ancient music' became a part of the Renaissance Revival. He explained that some Elizabethan composers, such as Tallis, Byrd, and Orlando Gibbons (1583-1625), were not forgotten in eighteenth-century England. Musicians tried to "resume their heritage of polyphony just where they had left it in 1644" after the Restoration. William Boyce's Cathedral Music reserved "at least a quarter of the space" for Elizabethan and Jacobean composers, and "a sermon delivered by the Rev. George Horne on July 8, 1784" praised "the music of Tallis, Byrd, and Gibbons."[78] Moreover, Day repeatedly argued that Italy had influenced England in the idea of keeping "alive their own national heritage of Renaissance polyphony." In a similar fashion to the Roman School honoring Palestrina, the Renaissance Revival also served as an inspiration for Elizabethan composers. Therefore, confusing the concept of 'ancient music' with the Renaissance Revival denies the historical significance of the former.

In the early eighteenth century, the English were not drawn to Elizabethan polyphony for its age but also for its religious themes and musical texture, which embodied the concept of celestial harmony and served their rationalistic artistic aesthetic. This aligns with similar movements in other fields, such as literature and architecture, that advocated for the preservation of ancient Greek and Roman ruins in order to save the artistic environment that had been corrupted by contemporary Italianate genres (see examples, Wotton, 1705; Campbell, 1725, mentioned above). Moreover, Renaissance Revival provided a rich source of musical repertory for the establishment of the Academy of Ancient Music.

[77] Thomas Day, "A Renaissance Revival in Eighteenth-Century England", *The Musical Quarterly*, 57 (1971), 577.
[78] Ibid, 575.

(i)Henry Aldrich (1648-1710) and the Christ Church Library

Aldrich, dean of Christ Church Oxford (in 1689), unswervingly advocated the revival of early English musical heritage at the turn of the eighteenth century. He may be in fact the most illustrious character of the age predisposed to saving Renaissance musical works and adapting them in English. Hawkins described Mr Aldrich as an excellent historian: he "formed a design of a history of music", and his works were "carefully perused" in the Christ Church library.[79] Twentieth-century scholars also draw attention to Aldrich's responsibilities at Christ Church; Aldrich's enthusiasm for ancient music contrasted starkly with the lack of attention it had received during the period of the Civil War.[80] Aldrich, as we shall see, bequeathed early English musical works to posterity, becoming an important architect of the Renaissance Revival.

In his collection (1687), Aldrich bluntly criticized those of his peers who disliked English church music, explaining:

> It is somewhat surprising that one, who has left the church of England to go over to that of Rome, should attempt to justifie [sic] his desertion by pretending both churches are agreed.[81]

As Dryden's work at the end of the seventeenth century suggests, the English favoured Italian music, which became the model for canon creation.[82] However, Aldrich was possibly the first musician emphatically to distinguish the church music of Rome from that of England; he effectively encouraged English people to find their own music.

Burney suggests that Aldrich was "a great admirer and collector" who translated the texts of compositions by Tallis, Byrd, and Robert White (1538-1574), which had previously served for the "Romish" as Latin works heard in English cathedrals. The Mason's collection, *Anthem-book for York Cathedral*, also explains that the beginning of the history of English church music dates "from the Reformation to the Restoration, in year 1660; including [Christopher] Tye, Tallis, [Richard] Farrant, Bird, [John] Bull, Orlando Gibbons, William Lawes, and Palestrina, adapted to English words, by Dr. Aldrich".[83] In the same year, Atterbury pointed out that Aldrich had applied the English language to many works by Palestrina, Carissimi, and other Italian composers for the church with his considerable skill and judgment.[84] His assertion

[79] Hawkins, *A General History,* Vol. 1, xxii.
[80] Lovell, "'Ancient' Music in Eighteenth-Century England", 408; Weber, *The Rise of Musical Classics*, 32-6.
[81] Henry Aldrich, *A Reply to Two Discourses Lately Printed at Oxford Concerning the Adoration of Our Blessed Savior in the Holy Eucharist*, (Oxford: Printed at the Theater, 1687), preface page.
[82] Dryden, *Albion and Albanius: an opera*, preface.
[83] Burney, *A General History*, vol. 1, 85.
[84] Francis Atterbury, *The Miscellaneous Works of Bishop Atterbury*, volume. 1 (London: [s.n.], 1789), 481-3.

can be documented through the earlier collections by Hawkins who listed the specific works translated by Aldrich: the part of the sixty-third psalm, "O God thou art my God" frequently sung in cathedrals as an anthem; and another work by Palestrina adapted in English as "We have heard with our ears O Lord".[85] In a later volume, Hawkins also discussed Aldrich bringing his outstanding translation skills to bear on Italian musical works, and "in some degree made their works our own."[86] At the end of the eighteenth century, Aldrich was appreciated by English scholars as follows: "He had a great share in the controversy with the papists in the reign of James II. and bishop Burnet ranks him among those who examined all the points of popery with a solidity of judgment, clearness of argument, depth of learning, and vivacity of writing, far beyond any who had before that time written in our language."[87]

For the twentieth-century scholar Ian Spink (1995), Aldrich was the most important musician ever to be associated with the venerable institution of Christ Church (which is both a Cathedral and a college of the University of Oxford). Providing evidence to support Aldrich's contributions to the translation of foreign works, he identifies "thirty or so English adaptations of Latin works by Palestrina, Carissimi, Tallis […]".[88] More recently, Handley (2004) stated that Aldrich reinforced church music in the process of restoring the English tradition.[89] And Vaughan Hart presented the evidence to prove it in 2013:

> In December 1709 a Latin translation of Andrea Palladio's octavo guide to Rome, L'Antichità di Roma (Rome, 1554), was published in Oxford. The translation was sponsored by the famous Dean of Christ Church, Henry Aldrich (1648–1710).[90]

(ii)Thomas Tudway and the Harleian Music Collection

The next musician, Tudway, was the professor in music at the University of Cambridge; he was employed in collecting musical books for Edward Harley who had previously been involved with Aldrich's projects at Oxford.[91] Tudway explained his duties in a letter to Wanley in 1715:

> I have made a collection of most ye Chappell Tunes, us'd at ye King's Chappell, St Paul's Westminster, Windsor, here & at Oxford, & in ye Cathedralls over England; I have allso added ye responces to ye Suffrages, in 4 pts sung to ye

[85] Hawkins, *A General History,* vol. 2, 183.
[86] Hawkins, *A General History,* vol. 5, 11.
[87] *The Beauties of Biography, A Selection of the Lives of Eminent Men, Carefully Digested from Correct and Approved Publications*, volume 1 (London: G. Riebau, 1792), 125.
[88] Ian Spink, *Restoration Cathedral Music 1660-1714,* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 318-9.
[89]Stuart Handley, "Aldrich, Henry (1648–1710)", *ODNB* 2004, 3.
[90] Vaughan Hart, "A Copy of the Oxford Edition of Andrea Palladios L' Antichità di Roma (1709)", *Library*, 14, no. 2 (2013), 208.
[91] Weber, *The Rise of Musical Classics,* 40-41.

> Organ Anciently on ye great festivals, By Bird; I'm now much busied, in making a Collection of Church Musick, of such Authors, as liv'd and compos'd, before ye Restauration of King Charles ye 2d beginning wth Tallis, Bird, Bull, Tye, Giles, Morley, Amner, Orlando Gibbons, Laws, Mundey, Tomkins, Hooper, Farrant, Mole, Publick Orator to ye University &c, wch will compleat the 1st volume wch I hope to finish, by Lady day; This collection is from ye Reformation to ye Restauration.[92]

Tudway had great enthusiasm for the works of old English masters such as Tallis, Byrd, and Gibbons; he was probably regarded as a successor to Henry Aldrich. Eighteenth-century theorists used to treat their two libraries as a common treasure trove when searching for manuscripts by sixteenth and seventeenth-century English musicians. Thomas Tomkins was an important historian devoted to Byrd at the beginning of seventeenth century; Burney stated that many of Tomkins' compositions are "preserved in Dr. Tudway's collection, British Museum, and in Christ church and Magdalen college, Oxford". In addition, Burney explains: the choral compositions of Pelham Humphrey "are five preserved in score by Dr. Aldrich, in Christ-Church, Oxford; and six in Dr. Tudway's Collection, British Museum […]".[93]

According to these documents, it seems reasonable to conclude that Tudway continued the Renaissance Revival work carried out by Henry Aldrich after Aldrich's death. In addition to his achievements in adapting old works, Tudway was also ambitious about developing the taste for early musical works. In this context, he started to elicit the support of the nobility, writing to Lord Harley:

> The standard of church music begun by Mr. Tallis, Mr. Bird, and others, was continued for some years after the Restoration […]
>
> His Majesty who was a brisk, & Airy Prince, coming to the Crown in the Flower, &vigour of his age, if I may so say, tired with the grave and solemn way which had been established by Tallis, Bird, and others, ordered the composers of his chapel to add symphonies,&c. with instruments to their anthems… The old masters of music, Dr. Child, Dr. Gibbons, Mr. Low, &c. organists to his majesty, hardly knew how to comport their compositions, according to the old style, and therefore there are only some services and full anthems of theirs to be found. In about 4 or 5 years time, some of the forwardest and brightest children of the chapel, as Pelham Humphrey, John Blow, &c. began to be masters of a faculty in composing; this his majesty greatly encouraged, […] so that every month, at least, they produced something new of this kind. In a few years more, several others, educated in the chapel, produced their compositions in this style; for otherwise it was in vain to hope to please his majesty.[94]

[92] The text has been cited by William Weber, "Thomas Tudway and The Harleian Collection of 'Ancient' Church Music", *The British Library Journal* 15, no. 2 (Autumn 1989): 194.
[93] Burney, *A General History of Music*, Vol.3, 327-444.
[94] The original text was also given in the following collections: Burney, A *General History of Music*, vol. 3, p. 442; and Christopher Hogwood, "Thomas Tudway's History of Music", in *Music in Eighteenth-Century England Essays in memory of Charles Cudworth*, 25.

Tudway took every opportunity to introduce these Elizabethan works to Lord Harley in order to acquire upper-class support. He not only claimed as a necessity the rescuing of old manuscripts containing music by English composers, but also suggested to his sponsor that the music of these English masters could provide marvellous models for the composition of modern works. He attempted to develop this "English style" as a quasi-official canon in aristocratic circles and inject this style into contemporary music. But it was not plain sailing. Lord Harley, for example, only employed Tudway to complete his private library not to develop ancient musical taste more generally.

From these two case studies, it becomes evident that musicians' enthusiasm played a significant role in preserving and advocating for the Elizabethan polyphonic style as a means of defending the genres of English church music. Tudway not only followed Aldrich in saving English musical treasures from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, but also attempted to assimilate these classics into mainstream musical taste through the support of the nobility. Dunagin explains that Tudway believed in the superiority of English church music and in promoting the power of English national identity; he wanted to canonize "the Elizabethan and Jacobean sacred repertoire, emphasizing such composers as Thomas Tallis, William Byrd, Thomas Morley, Thomas Tomkins, Thomas Weelkes, and Orlando Gibbons.".[95] Therefore, strong nationalism was the fundamental motive for the Renaissance Revival and the controversy of "ancient" and "modern" to happen simultaneously in eighteenth-century England.

## 1.3 Bononcini-Lotti madrigal scandal

Let us now consider whether the establishment of the Academy can be seen as a continuation of the Renaissance Revival, which was previously discussed in relation to Aldrich's Christ Church Library and Tudway's Harleian Music Collection. The following section will mainly rely on two eighteenth-century treatises on the history of the Academy, namely *An Account of the Institution and Progress of the Academy of Ancient Music* (John Hawkins,1770) and "A History of the Academy of Ancient Music" in *A musical directory for the year 1794* (Joseph Doane), aiming to nuance our understanding of the Academy and to restore it to its rightful position as an intellectually advanced organization centered on musicians and their musical ideas.

First, we turn to a sensational scandal that occurred at the establishment of the Ancient Music Academy. On 16 January 1731, the *Daily Journal* and the *London Gazette* reported that the

[95]Dunagin, "Tory Defenses of English Music", 39.

composer of the madrigal *In una siepe ombrosa* was not Giovanni Bononcini (1670–1747), as previously thought, but rather Antonio Lotti (1666–1740). The report marked the beginning of the first musical plagiarism dispute debated in public in England, prompted by political undercurrents related to defending Tory auditor members.[96] The Bononcini–Lotti affair divided the Academy and pushed Bononcini and his supporter Greene, together with other English church composers, out of the academy.

While Hawkins only provide limited detail on the case, Doane gave a clear account of it:

> An Italian Madrigal "In una Siepe ambrosa" being selected by one of the Members from a book of duets and other pieces, composed and published at Venice by Antonio Lotti, Vebeto Organesta della ducale di san Marco, for performance, it was afterwards discovered that the Madrigal in question had been produced in manuscript to the Academy, by Dr. Greene, as an original composition of his friend Giovani Bononcini, who was then a Member of the Academy. On this Bononcini complained to the Society, and loudly accused Lotti of plagiary, asserting that he himself had composed the said Madrigal 30 years before. The inquiry however which followed on these remonstrances ended to the honour of Lotti and the disgrace of Bononcini, who was clearly proved to be an impostor.
>
> This affair, so disgraceful to Bononcini, destroyed his interest with the Marlborough Family, in which his behaviour had for some time been inconsistent with strict honour.[97]

This material shows that it was Bononcini who first stirred up the dispute, but that the Academy's investigation led to his own personal downfall. The Academy's concern over this matter is intriguing, as in England at that time the borrowing and recycling of musical materials was not uncommon. Ironically, the work that Pepusch composed in the same year, *The Beggar's Opera*, has been revealed by modern historians to have included a substantial amount of 'borrowed' and 'arranged' music.[98] Thus, Rose states boldly: "the plagiarism dispute can be read as an effort by Bernard Gates to push Bononcini and Greene out of the academy."[99] I shall not explore the reliability of this conclusion, but am stimulated by the hypothesis to advance the possibility that a disagreement about how to promote English national heritage was taking place at the Academy.

In terms of the result of the Bononcini-Lotti scandal, Doane illustrates the awkwardness of Greene siding with Bononcini and finding "himself quite singular in his opinion", such that he

[96]Rose, "Plagiarism at the Academy of Ancient Music: A Case Study in Authorship, Style and Judgement", 184.
[97]Joseph Doane, "A History of the Academy of Ancient Music", in *A Musical Directory For the Year 1794* (ed.) R. H. Westley Messrs (London: Longman & Broaderip; Smart; Bland; Betts; Fentum; &c. &c., 1794), 77.
[98]Parr, "Johann Pepusch, Aesthetics, and the Sister Arts", 86.
[99]Rose, "Plagiarism at the Academy of Ancient Music",190.

left the Academy of Ancient Music in order to set up another society (the Apollo Academy).[100] Hawkins comments on Greene's departure as well: "[…] about the year 1728, when Dr. Greene thought proper to leave it, and set up an Academy at the Devil-Tavern, Temple-bar, which subsisted but a few years."[101] It is well known that these two organizations competed with each other during the mid-eighteenth century, with Handel challenging Apollo composers in oratorios on similar themes (see Chapter 4), and displayed distinctly different attitudes and opinions. As Hawkins explains,

> The secession of Dr. Greene and his dependents was not such an injury to the Academy, as it was feared it would prove: they left it, it is true, but they left it in peace, and the members of which it was composed, in consequence of the loss they had sustained, became emulous to excel each other in their endeavours to promote its interests, and to disseminate the love of harmony throughout the kingdom.[102]

It seems that the outcome of this affair was a triumph for Pepusch, as it gave him power within the Academy, consolidating his leadership for the next two decades. Therefore, this affair becomes a crucial piece of evidence to help us distinguish between the Academy of Ancient Music and the Renaissance Revival, as well as the conservative religious forces in England. In the following two sections, I will examine Pepusch's personal musical experiences and historians' records in order to investigate what kind of musical world he aimed to establish through the Academy. This will also help to explain 'ancient music' terminologically.

## 1.4 The Academy of Ancient Music and the Elizabethan church

Pepusch is key to understanding the idea of 'ancient music', and enables the correction of a historical misunderstanding. Almost all modern historians state that the Academy was founded as "The Academy of Vocal Music" in 1726, and then taken over by Pepusch in 1731. However, an earlier year for Pepusch's leadership of the society can be proposed. According to Hawkins,

> The Academy of Ancient Music, at the Crown and Anchor-Tavern, in the Strand, was instituted about the year 1710, by a number of Gentlemen, performers on different instruments, in conjunction with some of the most eminent masters of the time.
>
> Under the direction of the late Dr. John Chrisropher Pepusch, whose memory will be ever revered by all lovers of music, and with the assistance of Mr. Galliard, Dr. Maurice Greene, Mr. Bernard Gates, and the gentlemen and boys of St. Paul's cathedral, and the Chapel Royal, […].[103]

[100]Doane, "A History of the Academy of Ancient Music", 77.
[101]Hawkins, *An account of the institution and progress of the Academy of Ancient Music*, 4.
[102]Ibid, p. 5.
[103] Hawkins, *An Account of the Institution and Progress of the Academy of Ancient Music*, 3.

Strangely, Johnstone considered this information a clerical error on Hawkins' part.[104] But six years later when Hawkins wrote another famous historical study, it appeared again,

> The Italian music had for near fifty years been making its way in this country; and at the beginning of this century many persons of distinction and gentlemen had attained to great proficiency in the performance on the *viol da gamba*, the violin, and the flute. In the year 1710 a number of those, in conjunction with some of the most eminent masters of the time, formed a plan of an academy for the study and practice of vocal and instrumental harmony, […].[105]

Further, in 1794, Joseph Doane made a similar statement in introducing the Academy:

> The happy and refined taste for music which prevailed amongst the Nobility and Gentry of this Kingdom in the beginning of the present Century, induced, in the Year 1710 (memorable for Handel's first appearance amongst us) a number of the most eminent composers and performers in London, to concert a plan of an Academy […].
>
> Amongst the foremost in this undertaking were Mr. John Christopher Pepusch, […].[106]

Therefore, there is sufficient evidence for us to consider Pepusch's establishment of the antecedent of the Academy of Ancient Music in 1710 (Pepusch's Academy) as a beginning for the concept of 'ancient music'.

Simultaneously, historians recorded the specific responsibilities of Pepusch's Academy,

> The design of this establishment was to promote the study and practice of vocal and instrumental harmony; in order to which, the foundation of a library was laid, consisting of the most celebrated compositions, as well in manuscript as in print, that could be procured, either at home or abroad.[107]

This entry highlights its commitment to the preservation and dissemination of important musical works, and we can speculate that the cultural context of the Renaissance Revival movement likely supplied Pepusch's Academy with a substantial collection of Elizabethan masterpieces. Doane also suggested that Pepusch's Academy was closely tied to the church. He indicates, "The first Subscription required from the Members was only Half-a-Guinea each, which, with the Gentlemen of the Chapel Royal and St. Paul's Choirs, enable the Academy to open, […]".[108] Therefore, Pepsuch's Academy in its first years was seen as an Elizabethan church music library comparable to the Renaissance Revival such as Henry Aldrich's Christ Church Library and Thomas Tudway's Harleian collection.

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[104] Johnstone, "Westminster Abbey and The Academy of Ancient Music: A Library Once Lost and Now Partially Recovered", 331.
[105] Hawkins, *A General History of the Science and Practice of Music*, vol. 5, 123.
[106] Doane, "A History of the Academy of Ancient Music", 76.
[107] Hawkins, *An Account of the Institution and Progress of the Academy of Ancient Music*, 2-3.
[108] Doane, "A History of the Academy of Ancient Music", 76.

However, after the Academy of Ancient Music was established and Handel's *Esther* (HWV 50b, 1732) was performed, Hawkins once again described the Academy's responsibilities, stating that,

> In short, they determined upon such an establishment, and such a subscription, as would render the Academy at once a society for the entertainment of its members, and a seminary for the instruction of youth in the principles of music, and the laws of harmony.[109]

In comparison to 1710, it is evident that the Academy's purpose had shifted from being solely a collector of works to becoming a "seminary" that aimed to teach "the principles of music" and cultivate the "laws of harmony". This is further supported by the correspondence between the Academy and Antonio Lotti during the investigation of the scandal. In 1731, H. Bishop, representing the Academy, wrote to Lotti, stating that the Academy was established "not for the management of theatrical affairs but for the improvement of the science, by searching after, examining, and hearing performed the works of the masters, who flourished before, or about the age of Palestrina."[110] Therefore, at this stage, the Academy did not rely on the concept of the Renaissance Revival solely to save and preserve the Elizabethan sacred repertory but rather to develop this repertoire into a canon through pedagogical and performing methods.[111]

Under Pepusch's direction, the Academy practiced what they preached. According to Hawkins, Pepusch used advertisements to attract "a large number of children" who would receive professional music education he himself would provide, and generously covered educational expenses for the best among them.[112] His behaviour earned him a good reputation. In part he was making amends for the departure of Greene and Gates following the scandal. More important though, Pepusch had begun to train young talent that could serve his Academy in the future. Doane also explained Pepusch's efforts in terms of the need to fill the vacancy in boys' voices:

> The Academy being thus left without boys to sing the Treble parts, it was determined to educate four boys at the expence of the Academy, under the direction of Dr. Pepusch, who were to be instructed in English Grammar, writing and Arithmetic, and to be taught to sing, accompany on the harpsichord, and to compose, for which Dr. Pepusch was to receive 50 Guineas per Annum,

[109] Hawkins, *An account of the institution and progress of the Academy of Ancient Music*, 8.
[110] *Letters from the Academy of ancient musick at London, to Sigr. Antonio Lotti of Venice; with his answers and testimonies.* (London: Geo. James, 1732), 3.
[111] The pedagogical and performing canons are two major types of musical canon for Weber. See, Weber, "The History of Musical Canon", in *Rethinking Music*, 339-41. He emphasizes that the performing canon had "for the most part been part of specialized pedagogical canons" at the beginning of the eighteenth century, and that "The two kinds of canon coexist and interact extensively -- they are ultimately interdependent".
[112] Hawkins, *An account of the institution and progress of the Academy of Ancient Music*, 8-9.

> of which was intended to pay an Assistant under the Doctor, to take constant care of the Boys, was designed for their schooling, […].[113]

Doane mentioned the training courses undertaken by these children, including not only singing but also "English Grammar, writing and Arithmetic" and composition.

The correspondence between the Academy and Lotti also directly revealed the purpose of the Elizabethan polyphonic repertory in the Academy in the 1730s. H. Bishop asked Lotti for his own works:

> Upon this occasion of writing, the Academy have ordered me to add, that is you will please to communicate to us any of your works, accommodated to our institution, such as Mottets, Masses, or other church pieces, for four or more voices, with or without instruments, we shall ever acknowledge the favour, and very gladly repay all Expences of copying and sending the papers.[114]

The Academy was not simply demonstrating friendship towards Lotti here, but had practical purposes in mind too as they stipulated "four or more voices church pieces, such as motets and masses". In addition, they clarified in a subsequent letter that,

> And it is our design to search for what is beautiful in the works of the Ancients, and to seek out those things that have been either neglected or forgot, we doubt not but we shall find you worthy to be placed in the list of those few who cultivate the true Study of Musick, which you justly complain is at present too much neglected.[115]

Here, "what is beautiful" refers to the "science of harmony", and the identity of the "Ancients" is subsequently revealed in the last letter they sent to Lotti. Providing Lotti with the works of Tallis and Byrd in order to present their 'father advancement of the harmonick science', the Academy claims: "So that to our Ancestors, in whose footsteps we tread, it is that we are chiefly indebted for what we know and practice, and we dutifully acknowledge the Obligation."[116] Therefore, at this stage, the Academy established a subject of harmonic science centred on Tallis-Byrd works, and intended to collect striking works, old or new, to reflect its core ideas, and thereby to enlarge its repertory.

Now we are in a position to speculate on why Pepusch introduced the concept of 'ancient music' in the Academy in 1731. In Pepusch's later years, John Wesley recalled in his diary in 1748,

> Mond. 13. I spent an Hour or two with Dr. Pepusch, he asserted, that the Art of Music is lost: That the Ancients only understood it in its Perfection; That it was revived a little in the Reign of King Henry VIII, by Tallys and his Cotemporaries;

[113] Doane, "A History of the Academy of Ancient Music", 77-78.
[114] *Letters from the Academy of ancient musick at London, to Sigr. Antonio Lotti of Venice*, 4
[115] Ibid, 17.
[116] Ibid, 40.

> as also in the reign of Queen Elizabeth, who was a Judge and Patroness of it: That after her Reign it sunk for sixty or seventy years, till Purcell made some attempts to restore it; but that ever since the true, ancient art, depending on Nature and mathematical Principles, had gained no Ground, the present Masters having no fixed principles at all.[117]

This material sheds light on Pepusch's understanding of the term 'ancient'. Rather than referring to a specific historical period, it encompasses the mathematical and natural principles underlying harmony that transcend time. Elizabethan church music shone under the influence of Tallis' legacy and revival, he thought, and contemporary music practices need to continue restoring it along this path.

## 1.5 'Ancient music' and English opera

### Music and music-related themes

In the previous section, I examined the innovative nature of the Academy, distinguishing it from the conservative Renaissance Revival, and revealing the facts behind the Academy's attention to Elizabethan polyphonic style, namely the absorption and application of its harmonic composition techniques. I shall now turn to theatrical and operatic predilections of the Academy.

Hawkins discusses the evolution of the Academy of Ancient Music following the death of Pepusch in 1752. Some members of the Academy believed that restructuring the organization as a concert series featuring talented performers on specific instruments would attract a wider audience and bring in more support for the Society. The goal was to broaden the Academy's appeal beyond narrow academic circles and attract those who may not have previously been interested in the Academy's mission.[118] However, this new situation was short-lived due to funding difficulties. Hawkins took this opportunity to summarize Pepusch's contribution to the Academy, highlighting reflections of the academicians. He explains that

> The members of the Academy therefore find themselves reduced to the necessity of recurring to the principles of its first institution, and they desire, if possible, to perpetuate the existence of a Society calculated for the improvement of one of the noblest of the sciences, and the communication of rational and social delight, to which end they wish for the assistance of those, who profess to love and admire music; such as are susceptible of its powers such in short as

[117] John Wesley. *An extract from the Reverend Mr. John Wesley's journal, From November 25, 1746, to July 20, 1759.* (London: H. Cock, J. Robinson, and T. James, 1754), 77.
[118] Hawkins, *An Account of the Institution and Progress of the Academy of Ancient Music*, 10.

> are capable of distinguishing between the feeble efforts of simple melody, and the irresistible charms of elegant modulation and well-studied harmony.[119]

In my view, Hawkins' writing is crucial for a re-examination and new understanding of the Academy of Ancient Music (during the leadership of Pepusch). The quotation reveals two musical ideologies in the Academy: firstly, that music has the power to disseminate rationality; and secondly, that audiences have the ability to distinguish between "bad" music ("the feeble efforts of simple melody") and "good" music ("the irresistible charms of elegant modulation and well-studied harmony"). Drawing on Hawkins' descriptions, we can naturally associate "simple melody" with Italianate operatic music, and "well-studied harmony" with Christian sacred music. The opposition between these two kinds of music encapsulates the long-standing dissatisfaction with Italian opera's infringement on English rational aesthetics since the Restoration period, and the "English fear" of music's power to evoke human emotions. However, we can clearly see that the Academy believes in the perception of human beings and insists that humans "are capable of distinguishing". This discovery distinguishes the Academy from traditional English musical culture, where it was believed that the rational power of music should be conveyed through "Christian worship" (see my Introduction) and related subject matter. The Academy, on the other hand, believed that 'well-studied harmony' was capable of communicating rational power by itself.

Hawkins' subsequent discussion explores his personal understanding of the Academy. He first clarifies a misunderstanding that his peers had about the Academy, which is the belief that the Academy blindly follows and worships old music. To refute the argument that "the efficacy of music is abated by repetition," he explained:

> […] let it be asked, does any man forbear the perusal of an Epic poem, merely because he has read it before? Or does an admirer of painting or Sculpture withdraw his eye from a fine picture or status, because it has once surveyed them? […] Again, let it be asked, are these objections to the best music of the best times, founded in truth and experience, or are they the result of a vicious taste and a depraved judgment? Much of the music now in the possession of the Academy is as new to us as it was to our fathers; and will any one in his sober senses assert, that they had not ears and rational souls as well as ourselves?[120]

Hawkins suggests that a corrupted taste or judgment can lead people to reject older music simply because it is not new. He argues that we should use our ears and rational souls to judge music, rather than judging it by its age, and encourages a more open-minded approach to music

[119] Ibid, 11.
[120] Ibid, 13-14.

that allows for the appreciation and study of both old and new works. This perspective challenges the idea that the value of music is based solely on its novelty and highlights the importance of considering the music itself, rather than just the time period in which it was composed.

More importantly, "the ears and rational souls" (mentioned by Hawkins above) have once again refuted the correlation between the power of music and its subject matter. At the end of his book, Hawkins describes the hopes and expectations of the founders of the Academy of Ancient Music, who are confident in the success of their endeavours due to the people's inclination towards the cultivation of the arts and the general encouragement of noble pursuits. Musicians have great faith in the good sense of the nation, he explains, which has been proven by the long-standing respect given to the works of great dramatic poets of the past, despite their antiquity, and to composers such as Handel, Palestrina, Purcell. Both can provide rational and intellectual delight to those who appreciate this noble science. He highlights the equal status of "compositions for the church, the theatre and the chamber", and the Academy provides an opportunity for young people to indulge in the innocent pleasures of music and steer clear of negative influences like intemperance.[121]

The Academy's insistence on exploring the rational power of music itself is the core theoretical underpinning for my thesis. I believe it is necessary to present the composer's (in my case Handel's) response to the intellectual background dominating English artistic norms from the perspective of music. Although, as I demonstrated in the Introduction, playwrights guided the development of English opera, composers expressed their own voices and ideas in ways that cannot be ignored. Undoubtedly, Pepusch's vision for the Academy was to achieve his ideal of English opera. His objective was to endow secular theatrical music with English rational artistic attributes, thereby distinguishing it entirely from Italian music. Through this, we gain insight into the significance of Handel's oratorios in the Academy. Unlike their contemporaries who believed that English opera was a fusion of nationalistic themes and exotic Italian music (which has been the prevailing view of Handel's oratorios and other English dramatic works in musicology from the eighteenth century to the present), the Academy advocated an English opera that featured national choral music and secular subjects. This constitutes the essence of 'ancient music' for the purposes of this thesis, and it is also the ultimate objective of the

[121] Ibid, 19-24.

development of Handelian oratorio. Moreover, this explains why Handel's oratorios shifted to secular subjects such as *Semele*, and *Hercules* after *Alexander's Feast*.

**"Sister arts" and the power of music**

The composer's unique understanding of the power of music and their expectation of "[raising] the status of music" is an important link between Pepusch's ideas about 'ancient music' and Handelian oratorio. We already know that irrespective of how the Academy of Ancient Music developed, Handel's oratorios and other English-text works were always held in high regard. From Smith to Gardner, scholars have viewed Handel's choral insertions as a bold breakthrough in English music history, but in fact, they have a long history and solid theoretical foundation.

Purcell's preface to *Dioclesian* (1691) indicated the composer's attitude toward music:

> Music and Poetry have ever been acknowledg'd Sisters, which walking hand in hand, support each other; as Poetry is the harmony of Words, so Musick is that of Notes: and as Poetry is a Rise above Prose and Oratory, so is music the exaltation of Poetry. Both of them may excel apart, but sure they are most excellent when they are joyn'd, because nothing is then wanting to either of their Perfections, for thus they appear like Wit and Beauty in the same person.[122]

This entry emphasizes the close relationship between music and poetry, describing them as sisters that support each other. Poetry is seen as the harmony of words, while music is the harmony of notes. Together, they elevate each other to perfection, like wit and beauty in the same person. Perhaps this is the earliest public statement we can find about the concept of sister arts. Purcell stands in opposition to playwrights, believing that music can aid in the understanding of poetry and even enhance the meaning of words. Through the metaphorical image of sisterhood, he strives to achieve equal status for poetry and music in a dramatic work. Purcell also notes, despite being a later bloomer compared to "neighboring" countries, England is gradually shedding its barbaric tendencies, as the current generation is already showing signs of refinement and an ability to distinguish between wild fancy and a well-composed piece of music. Here we can find the embryonic idea for the Academy, and Purcell also believed that the audience's perception can distinguish between "good" and "bad" music. Unfortunately, Purcell's practical application of his concept of "sister arts" did not align with his words. For

[122] Henry Purcell, *The Vocal and Instrumental Musick of the Prophetess, Or, the History of Dioclesian Composed by Henry Purcell* (London: J. Heptinstall and John Carr, 1691), preface.

instance, in his subsequent work *The Fairy Queen* (1693), as described by Taruskin, Purcell did not set any of Shakespeare's lines to music.[123]

In the eighteenth century, Pepusch again referred to the concept of Purcell's "sister arts" in his cantata *The Union of the Three Sister Arts* (1723). Let us briefly review Pepusch's circle in the English theatre world. Pepusch worked with John Hughes in the same year as the constitution of the Academy was established (1710), with a repertory comprising six cantatas. The next year Hughes and Handel got to know each other through their mutual friend Andreas Roner, and Handel subsequently made a musical contribution to Hughes' *Venus and Adonis* in 1714.[124] Under the direction of Pepusch, both Handel and Hughes were prominent figures in the Cannons circle, which in effect was Pepusch's own personal resource for theatrical music. Although the relations between Handel and Pepusch remain obscure in historical research, Graydon Beeks (1987) still found direct evidence from the diary of Dr Henry Brydges (1675–1728) that these two composers simultaneously appeared at Cannons' circle on 17 April 1718 and stayed close while Handel composed *Acis and Galatea* (HWV 49a, 1718), his first English dramatic work. From then on, we can observe Pepusch's long-term support for Handel's oratorios. In addition to the repeated references to the Academy's contributions to choral performance in *Esther*, Pepusch later provided choristers (the boys he cultivated in the Academy after John Bates "retired, and drew off with him the children of the Chapel Royal" in 1734[125]) for Handel's 1738 and 1740 oratorio seasons, after the dean of the Chapel Royal forbade his boys from performing in the theatre.[126]

Nevertheless, Pepusch's personal music career did not go as smoothly as Handel's. In the preface to *Six Cantatas*, Hughes claims that,

> MR. Pepusch having desired that some account should be prefixed to these Cantatas relating to the words, it may be proper to acquaint the public that they are the first essay of this kind, and were written as an experiment of introducing a sort of composition which had never been naturalized in our language.[127]

Perhaps Pepusch intended to prove the compatibility of music and English text through this experimental genre, but the sweetness of operatic music could not be changed through the "Italian manner". Then, he shifted to the English Cecilia tradition. In the Introduction, I

[123] Taruskin, "Class of 1685 (I)," 128-31.
[124] Donald Burrows, Helen Coffey, John Greenacombe, Anthony Hicks, eds. *George Frideric Handel Collected Documents (volume 1) 1690-1725* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 223-24.
[125] Hawkins, *An Account of the Institution and Progress of the Academy of Ancient Music*, 6.
[126] D. F. Cook, "The Life and Works of Johann Christoph Pepusch (1667– 1752), with Special Reference to His Dramatic Works and Cantatas" (PhD diss., King's College, University of London, 1982), 320-21.
[127] John Hughes, *Six Cantatas; or Poems for Music. After the Manner of the Italians. Set to music by Mr. Pepusch* (London: I. Walsh, 1710), preface.

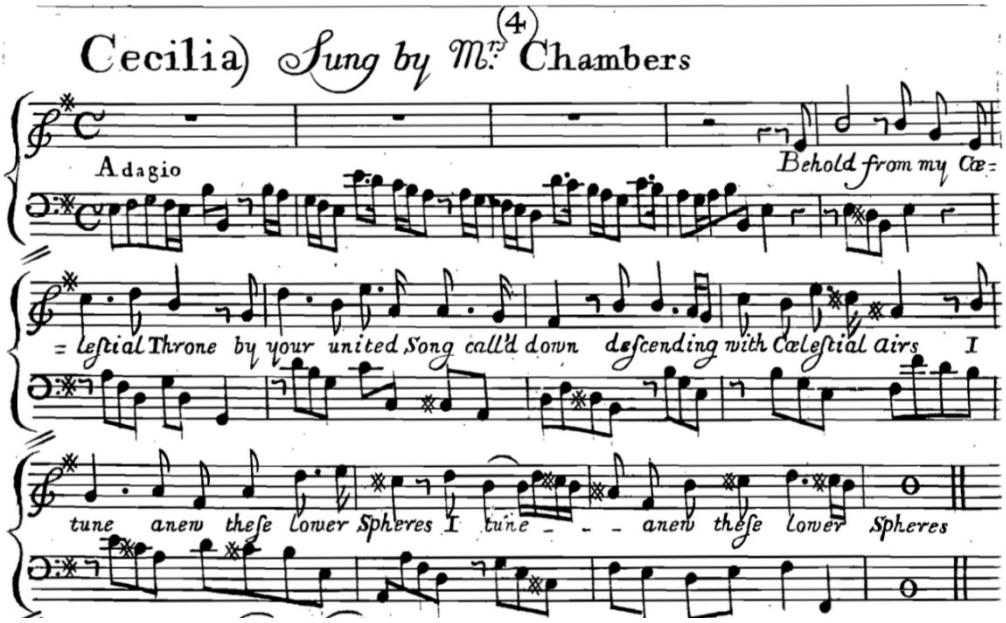
examined how the praise of music in the English Cecilia ode libretto is based on its religious connotations. Represented by Hughes, English playwrights aimed to use the sanctity of Cecilia and the stage format of the cantata to create a ritual dialogue between the audience and God, thereby rekindling their love for church music. They always feared the power of pure music. This is also displayed in *The Union of the Three Sister Arts*, as Parr indicated,

> These surface descriptions [throughout the libretto of *The Union of the Three Sister Arts*] clearly indicate a personification of the arts via mythological figures, but, at the same time, they also suggest Christian undertones, […]. Apelles is the name of a Christian at Rome whom Paul salutes and styles as 'approved in Christ' (Romans 16:10), while Cecilia's status as a saint also has clear Christian implications. Homer as a writer of the great Greek heroic epics seems less related because of pagan themes, but the stories of heroes are common in religious works as well. It has even been argued that the Gospel writer, Mark, consciously emulated Homer in his writings.[128]

Distinct from the ideology displayed in the libretto, Pepusch hoped to elevate the status of music itself through personification, using Cecilia's sanctity to create a concept of "sister arts" that harmoniously coexists with poetry in cantata music. According to his music, it can be observed that Pepusch changed his Italian compositional style. After the overture, the story is presented through a series of arias in da capo form and finished by a chorus. We can also witness the influence of Restoration masque music on his English prosody. For example, at the beginning of Cecilia's air "Behold from my Celestial Throne", there is a short-long rhythm on the word "behold" that falls on the up-beat (Ex.1.1), which reminds us of the similar treatment of English declamation by John Blow in his *Venus and Adonis* (see Chapter 3). In addition, in the following Homer's aria "When the battering Grecian Thunder", the regularly rhythmic pattern and the melismas on words "thunder" and "funder" (Ex.1.2) enhance the Restoration masque style of the work.

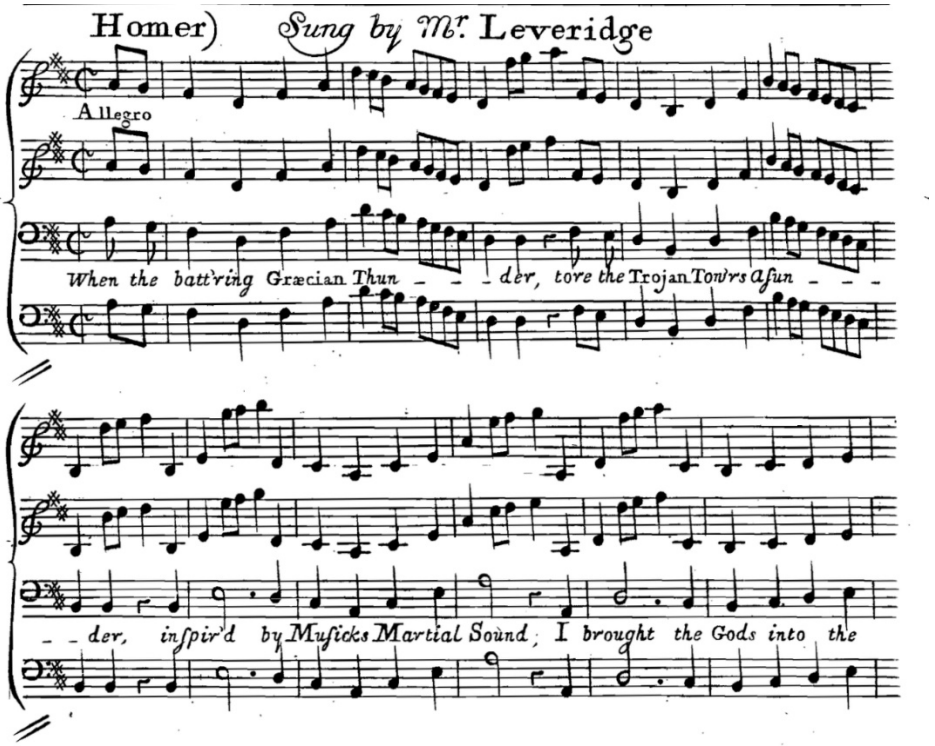
[128] Parr, "Johann Pepusch, Aesthetics, and the Sister Arts", 97.

**Ex. 1.1 : Pepusch, Cecilia Air "Behold from my Celestial Throne", *The Union of the Three Sister Arts* (bars 1-13).[129]**



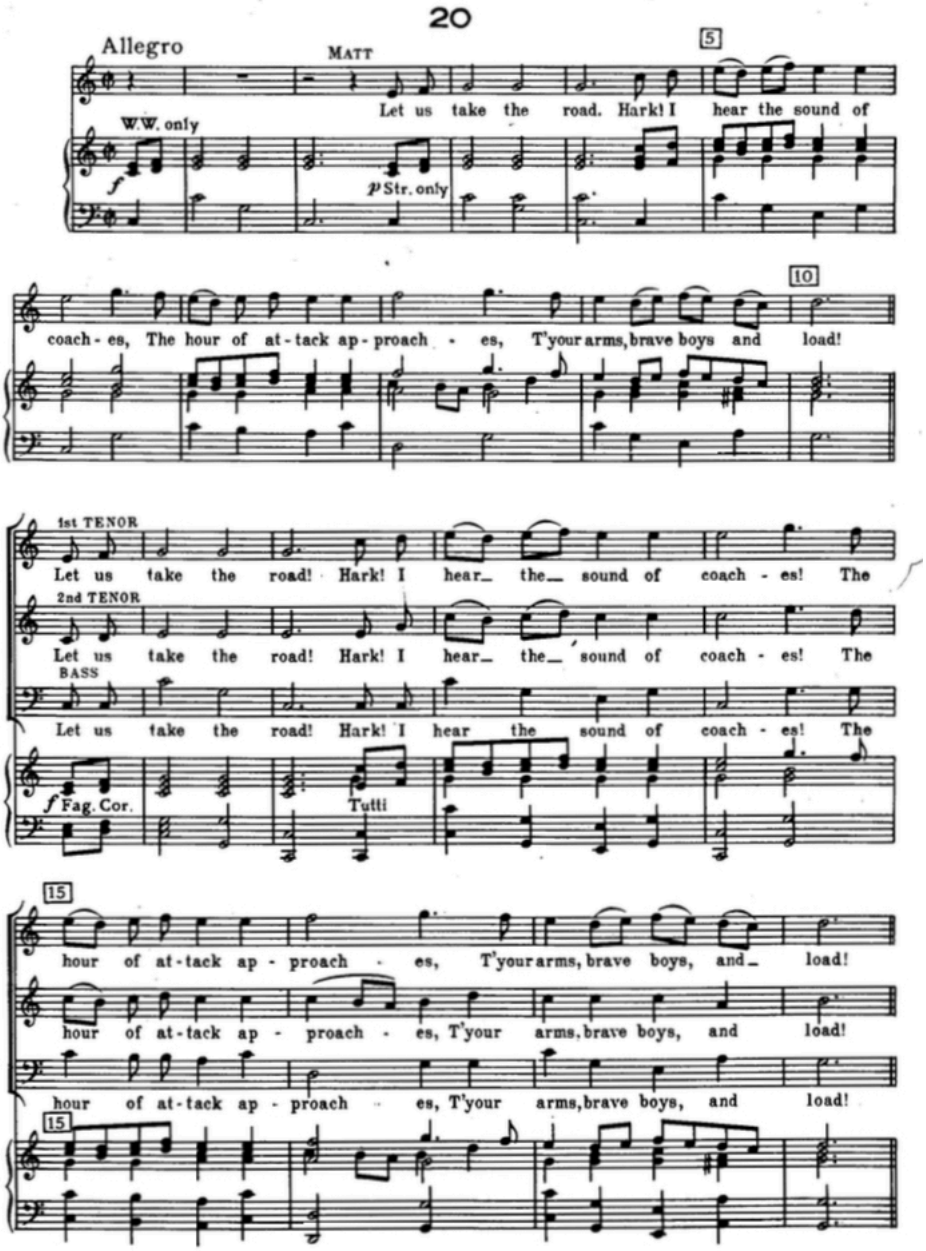

[129] John Christopher Pepusch, *An Entertainment of Music call'd The Union of the Three Sister Arts as it is perform'd at the Theatre in Lincolns Inn Fields for St Cecilia's Day 1723*. (eds.) I. Walsh and Ino & Ioseph Hare (London, 1723), 4.

**Ex. 1.2 : Pepusch, Homer Air "When the battering Grecian Thunder", *The Union of the Three Sister Arts* (bars 1-12).**




In terms of Pepusch's aspiration to elevate the status of music and his belief in the concept of "sister arts", his musical expression in the Cecilia's Day Ode falls short of expectations. We cannot observe any significant progress in his exploration of the rational power of choral music in this work. Pepusch mainly expressed the artistic idea of music's "high" status by increasing the length of Cecilia's arias and through the configuration of the soprano role, with implications limited by the framework of the libretto in my view. Although he used a chorus at the end to embody the harmony of different art forms, the musical style was still the triple-time chorus influenced by French dance style, an important musical form for rendering emotions following solos in the Restoration masques. The same treatment also appeared in his later work, *The Beggar's Opera* (1728), where in Matt's recitative "let us take the road", the choral music repeated the previous solo voice (Ex.1.3). Although this work broke ground in satirizing Italian opera and forming the genre of English ballad opera, it did not reflect Pepusch's theoretical achievements demonstrated at the Academy.

**Ex. 1.3: Pepusch, Matt Recitative "let us take the road", *The Beggar's Opera*.[130]**




In sum, the essence of the concept of 'ancient music' sees Pepusch wanting to create English opera by integrating English harmony that had featured in Elizabethan polyphony into an Italianate operatic form. On the one hand, its nationalistic connotations put it in opposition with powerful Italian opera companies. On the other hand, theatrical implications established its differences from mainstream English aesthetics. Handel arrived in 1710 in London just after

[130] John Gay and Pepusch, *The beggar's opera.* (ed.) Edward Joseph (London: Oxford University Press, 1954), 31.

the city had witnessed the birth, growth and decline of Pepusch's 'ancient music' concept. In the chapters ahead I shall connect Handel's musical style to 'ancient music', tracing his English products through the genres of sacred anthem, sacred drama (oratorio) and secular drama.

# 2

# Elizabethan Heritage in Handel's First Two English Church Works: *As pants the hart* and *Utrecht Te Deum*

## 2.1 Introduction

Handel's first arrival in London "in the winter of the year 1710" was not specifically to promote English music, but rather at the invitation of members of the nobility who admired his Italian operas and had encountered him in Italy and Hanover, Germany. In John Mainwaring's *Memoirs of the life of the late George Frederic Handel* (in the first 1760 version), Handel's first biography, he confirms that Handel's "uncommon abilities had been conveyed to England before his arrival […] and honoured with marks of the Queen's favour."[131] This resulted in his *Rinaldo* (first performed at the Queen's Theatre in London's Haymarket on 24 February 1711), which promptly presented his talent to English audiences and gained "the greatest applause" in London.[132] After a one-year stay in London, he went back to Hanover, returning to London in "about the latter end of the year 1712,"[133] when he immediately composed his first English verse anthem *As pants the hart* (HWV 251a, 1712) and later his distinguished service *Utrecht Te Deum and Jubilate* (HWV 278 and 279, 1713) and a series of Chapel Royal music, such as *The 'Caroline' Te Deum* (HWV 280, 1714) and *O sing unto the Lord* (HWV 249a, 1714). Subsequently, during the period 1715–1719, he reached a compositional climax in relation to English church music. He stopped writing Italian works temporarily at this time and completed twelve English sacred settings (eleven Chandos Anthems and one Chandos Te Deum), with his first English dramatic work *Acis and Galatea* emerging afterwards.[134] Most significantly, the effect of this church music composing experience on Handel's later English dramatic works is significant, and we can find a great variety of practices borrowed from his anthem resources in his oratorios. These examples will be described in more detail in Chapters 4 and 5.

The compositional process of Handel's English sacred music and his intimate relationship with the Chapel Royal have been illustrated by Burrows.[135] As he notes,

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[131] John Mainwaring, *Memoirs of the Life of the Late George Frederic Handel. To which is added, a Catalogue of His Works, and Observations Upon Them* (London: R. and J. Dodsley, 1760), 78.
[132] William Coxe, *Anecdotes of George Frederick Handel, and John Christopher Smith* (London: W. Bulmer, Cadell, Davies, E. Harding, and J. Eaton, 1799), 13-4.
[133] John Hawkins, *A General History of the Science and Practice of Music*, volume V (London: T. Payne and Son, 1776), 267.
[134] My reason for regarding *Acis and Galatea* as Handel's first English dramatic work rather than *Rinaldo* has been elucidated in the Introduction chapter of my thesis.
[135] Burrows, *Handel and the English Chapel Royal*.

> At the time of the English Reformation the Chapel Royal became critical to the course of church history in both liturgical and musical matters. New vernacular liturgical experiments were apparently first tried out at the Chapel Royal, […] [and it] was henceforth at the centre of a national church where religion and politics were intertwined, and the religious as well as institutional life of the Chapel came to reflect this.[136]

As for its musical attention, Burrows then explains,

> […] the distinctive flavour of the new Anglicanism which the Chapel represented is to be found in other liturgies than the Communion Service. […] The anthems settings of sacred texts in English, were initially compositions with simple homophonic texture for full choir, but within thirty years of the Reformation these were supplemented by 'verse' anthems with passages for one or more solo voices.[137]

Therefore, it is the anthem music that had a long ancestry in the Chapel Royal since the English Reformation. However, by re-examining the repertoire of Handel's sacred works, it is obvious that he mainly engaged in a subdivision of verse anthem, symphony anthem, usually being isolated from the norm of English church music by modern research. Burrows shows in Tudway's blunt opening to his *A Collection of the most celebrated services and anthems used in the Church of England from the Reformation to the Restoration of K. Charles II* that,

> […] such like pieces as these ['symphony anthem'], are only proper in the Church, for great occasions of Publick Thanksgivings; &c, These compositions therefore, are not Stricktly call'd Church Music, although, they are upon the same divine Subject; I have been the more particular upon them, because, they are the production of this Age only, at least in England.[138]

This supports the assertion of Ian Spink, another central late twentieth-century figure in English church music history, that the genre of symphony anthem was "typical of the Chapel Royal only during its heyday under Charles II. In cathedrals and collegiate churches, a much more conservative tradition persisted, while in parish churches things were quite different."[139]

The starting point for the symphony anthem was when King Charles II's French taste during the Restoration was effectively integrated into the existing verse anthem tradition, and some Chapel Royal members, including Henry Cooke (1616-1672), Locke and Pelham Humfrey (1647-1674), started to develop the new form of this genre. The new influence on the music has been clearly recorded in John Evelyn's statement,

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[136] Burrows, "The Chapel Royal before Handel's Arrival in England: Symphony Anthems and Thanksgivings", in *Handel and the English Chapel Royal*, 19-20.
[137] Ibid., 20-21.
[138] Ibid., 31; this is also recorded in Ian Spink, *Restoration Cathedral Music, 1660-1714*, 447.
[139] Ian Spink, "Church Music II: from 1660," in *The Blackwell history of music in Britain.* Vol. 3, *The Seventeen Century* (ed.) Ian Spink (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992), 98.

> […] (one) of his Majesties Chaplains preachd: after which, instead of the antient grave and solemn wind musique accompanying the Organ was introduced a Consort of 24 Violins betweene every pause, after the French fantastical light way, better suiting a Tavern or Play-house than a Church: This was the first time of change, & now we no more heard the Cornet, […][140]

After the time of Charles II, the musical treatment changed the style from the "French fantastical light way" to the Italian fashion dominated by Purcell's highly individual features. Spink gives the example of Purcell's *O sing unto the Lord* (1688), "where all is conditioned by the tonal framework yet without any sense of harmonic impoverishment which one often gets with the Italians."[141] By the turn of the century, the symphony anthem gradually developed into something approaching operatic music, combining trumpets and strings as their orchestrally accompanied obbligato, and played an important role in festal celebration in London.[142]

Interestingly, though the genre comprises rich foreign elements musically, its effect on the performance activities in London at the turn of the eighteenth century (before Handel's arrival) paved the way for Handel's nationalistic compositional life, and we can therefore understand why he had a great preference for the symphony anthem that henceforth accompanied his oratorio composing. First, its orchestral accompaniment contributed to "the cooperation of the Chapel Royal and the King's musicians", which is extremely unusual in the history of England with its strict boundary between the sacred and secular music. As Burrows states, "by 1683 the practical traditions built up in the Chapel Royal and in the performance of court odes moved into the wider circle of London's musical life through the inauguration of the Musical Society for the celebration of St Cecilia's day."[143] Because of the edifying theme embraced by these public celebrations including St Cecilia's day, and subsequently the Festival of the Songs of the Clergy and Thanksgiving's day, the court's string-players who had previously performed in the London theatres had their first opportunity to perform at Westminster Abbey and St Paul's Cathedral. This change not only made theatre composers engaged in sacred music activities in London, such as Pepusch's the *Union of the Three Sister Arts* for St. Cecilia's Day during the 1723–1724 season (see Chapter 1) but also made it less unusual for Handel to invite the children of the Chapel Royal to perform the choral part of his *Esther* many years later (see Chapter 4).

[140] *Diary of John Evelyn, Volume III: Kalendarium, 1650-1672* (ed.) E.S. de Beer (Cary: Oxford University Press, 1955), 347.
[141] Spink, "Henry Purcell", in *Restoration Cathedral Music, 1660-1714*, 163.
[142] Burrows, "The Chapel Royal before Handel's Arrival in England: Symphony Anthems and Thanksgivings", 30-1.
[143] Ibid., 23.

Second, the development of the symphony anthem came to reflect the impact of the influx of Italianate music on the Chapel Royal, which was not spared under its independent genre tradition. Burrows presents two sermons of the St Cecilia's festival in 1693 and 1696 respectively, conveying a great deal of information about the threat of "Roman Catholicism and the Dissenters" to the "Anglican church music"; the symphony anthem emerged as a major feature of the Chapel Royal, with orchestral instruments being used to counter people's growing weariness of "King William's austere taste". Just over a decade prior, King William's order had led to the absence of orchestras in church music due to the influence of Calvinism.[144] At the same time, the large-scale musical form of the symphony anthem might be a response to the new operatic music. Spink notes that "socially these people [the audience who would like to listen to the symphony anthems at the Chapel on Sunday] were not very different from those who attended the opera 40 years later, and to some extent the two types of music performed the same role."[145]

For Handel's arrival in London, it seems reasonable that scholars focus only on his immediate models of Purcell and Croft. They take the 1710 Festival of Sons of Clergy as an important starting point, perfectly coordinated as it was with Handel's first arrival in London. According to Burrows:

> Handel first arrived in London 'in the winter of the year 1710', but it is unlikely that he was there in time for the Thanksgiving Service on 11 November. If he heard any orchestrally accompanied church music at all during his first visit, this might have been at the Sons of the Clergy service at St Paul's cathedral on 5 December.[146]

This festival subsequently led to Handel's first English achievements, namely the *Utrecht Te Deum and Jubilate* (1713) mentioned above. Furthermore, the names Henry Purcell and William Croft frequently appear in the relevant studies on account of their 1694 *Te Deum* and 1709 *O praise the Lord, all ye that fear him* settings, respectively, which were certainly performed at the festival. Even though *Te Deum and Jubilate* settings had been carried out "since the earliest edition of The Book of Common Prayer", as I noted regarding the particularity of the symphony anthem above, "use of orchestral accompaniment in the setting of the Morning Canticles had been a relatively recent development in England."[147] This supports an argument from Burrow's earlier research that Purcell's St Cecilia's Day *Te Deum*

[144] Ibid., 25-7.
[145] Spink, "Church Music II: from 1660," 126.
[146] Burrows, "Handel and the English Verse Anthem: His First Setting of *As pants the hart*, c. 1712," *Handel and the English Chapel Royal*, 44-5.
[147] Graydon Beeks, "Handel's Sacred Music", in *The Cambridge Companion to Handel*, 169-70.

*and Jubilate*, together with Croft's Thanksgiving Service version, were the only pieces written before Handel's works that were useful to him. Therefore, it has generally been assumed that these two figures exerted a dominant influence on Handel's nascent English musicality.

However, this chapter will put aside the near-contemporary English influence on the musical treatment of Handel's church works and focus on the antique style of his harmonic part, consistent with the interpretation of the Academy and 'ancient music' idea discussed in Chapter 1. Though neglected by modern research, in the eighteenth century the Elizabethan composer may have been a crucial figure in English nationalistic discourses, taking into account Handel's music identity within the historical context of Renaissance Revival and the Academy of Ancient Music. With the increasing influence of these momentous events, Tallis' musical status around English church music was in the ascendancy. In the same year as Handel's second arrival, the anthem word-book *Divine Harmony* reveals this,

> In the beginning of the Reign of King Henry VIII. And some time before, many excellent Arts and Inventions, had either a Birth or Resurrection; which proved as the Dawn to the wonderful Reformation of our Church that soon after succeeded: Musick (among others) arose from the obscurity, under which it had been buried for many Ages, and was then improved, and has since flourished to such a degree, that we have no reason to envy any foreign Compositions.
>
> In that Age, Mr. Tallis became famous all over Europe, for the Elegancy and Solemnity of his Musick; which recommended him to the Favour and Service of the King, who was himself particularly excellent in that Faculty, (as well as in other parts of Learning) and Composed the Anthem which begins this Collection: for although the name of Mr. Mundy has been printed to it, yet the late learned and Reverend Dr. Aldrich, Dean of Christ Church in Oxford, has restored it to its proper author; and it is at present used in that Collegiate Church, as the work of their Royal Founder.[148]

Given this interest in the "Elegance and Solemnity" of Tallis' music, it should come as no surprise that Handel could access abundant resources supporting his learning of the harmony of Elizabethan polyphony. Moreover, although it is difficult to find in Purcell and Croft's anthems, there was no vacuum in Tallis' influence after the Elizabethan period in the service music composing of the Chapel Royal. As Spink indicates, for the service music in particular, after 1660 "the Responses and Litany were often sung in harmonized versions, that of Tallis maintaining its currency throughout the period", and "the most part dignified homophony

[148] *Divine harmony*; *or a new collection of select anthems, us'd at Her Majesty's Chappels royal, Westminster Abby, St. Pauls, Windsor, both Universities, Eaton, and most Cathedrals in her Majesty's Dominions. Publish'd with the Approbation of the Subdean of Her Majesty's Chappel Royal, and of several of the greatest Masters* (London: S. Keble, C. King, and J. Hazard, 1712), To the Reader pages.

prevailed within sober common time freely syncopated to allow for just accentuation of the words and cadential suspensions". He continues, for Blow's main works, his "settings include a ceremonial Te Deum and Jubilate with accompaniment for trumpets and strings written for the St Cecilia service of 1695, and several others, including four late 'short' services in which Blow reverted to a deliberately archaic style that might almost be described as 'mock-Tudor'."[149]

In this chapter, we witness Handel's immediate engagement with Tallis-style harmonic techniques as reflected in his choral settings from the first verse anthem *As pants the hart* and service music *Utrecht Te Deum*. To present a detailed description of the rapid and profound influence of the primitive English harmonic technique on Handel, the following sections will focus on these two works. Considering the limited evidence available, it is difficult to find information about any musical communications Handel may have had with Pepusch prior to their residence at Cannons (1718–1719).[150] Consequently, we can only assume that the agreement between Handel's application of Tallis' choral technique during his early English career and the harmonic research advocated by Pepusch in 1710 was simply a coincidence. Nevertheless, it is this special compositional period that marked Handel's first step towards the concept of 'ancient music', thereby distinguishing him from other academicians.

## 2.2 Thomas Tallis' harmony and its authority

Before we focus specifically on musical manifestations of Tallis' harmonic technique in Handel's church works, it is necessary to understand the technique's overall characteristics and how it could come to represent the most outstanding harmonic improvements in the reign of Elizabeth, subsequently being described as the "English harmony" forming the heart of eighteenth-century patriotic musicians. At the time of the English Reformation, composers of the Chapel Royal met the challenge that they needed to set English-language liturgy for their national prayers. As nineteenth-century scholar Powell J. Metcalfe claims, the Reformation in England was "a movement to Anglicize the church Catholic", being "sober, thoughtful, independent-minded" manifestations of English national music.[151] Burrows also emphasizes this turning point when outlining the history of the Chapel Royal:

[149] Spink, "Church Music II: from 1660", 99-103.
[150] With *George Frideric Handel Collected Documents. Volume 1. 1690-1725* as an important basis.
[151] Powell J. Metcalfe, "The Music of the Church of England, as Contemplated by the Reformers", *The Musical Times and Singing Class Circular* 12, 273 (Nov 1865): 157.

> It is significant that the earliest official English-language liturgy was the Litany of 1544, generated at a critical stage during the war with France, when the need was felt special for prayers at a time of national crisis.[152]

Therefore, except in the different era and genre, the challenges encountered by the reformers were not substantially different from those faced by the dramatic composers at the beginning of the eighteenth century. Two eighteenth-century historians, Burney and Hawkins, illustrate Tallis' specific debt to this movement. As Burney records,

> Though the melody of the cathedral service was first adjusted to English words by Marbeck, yet Tallis enriched it with harmony. […] the harmony in which he has clothed it is admirable; and the modulation being so antique, chiefly in common chords or fundamental harmony to each note of the diatonic scale, often where the moderns have sixths, sevenths, and their inversions, produces a solemn and very different effect from any Music that has been composed during the present century.
>
> […] the honour of our nation, they should see, that long before the works and reputation of Palestrina had circulated throughout Europe, we had Choral Music of our own, which for gravity of style, purity of harmony, ingenuity of design, and clear and masterly contexture, was equal to the best productions of that truly venerable master.[153]

Moreover, Hawkins highlights Tallis' harmonic progression and its musical expression by analysing his services and *Preces and Responses* in particular,

> As to the music, […] though every musician knows that, in strictness of speech, in a musical composition there can in reality be but four parts, for where there are more, some must rest while others sing; yet this of Tallis is so contrived, that the melody of the four parts is so broken and divided as to produce the effect of as many parts as there are voices required to sing it.
>
> As to the Preces of Tallis in his first service, they are no other than those of Marbeck in his book of Common Prayer noted: the responses are somewhat different, that is to say, in the tenor part, which is supposed to contain the melody; but Tallis has improved them by the addition of three parts, and thereby formed a judicious contrast between the supplications of the priest and the suffrages of the people as represented by the choir.[154]

Here, we see that as a pioneer setting the prototype of Anglican liturgy, Tallis created a kind of chordal progression for English syllabic words through his services and *Preces and Responses*, which then developed into the music in a "solemn and grave" style aligned with Queen Elizabeth's requirements in 1559 for "a modest and distinct song, so used in all parts of

[152] Burrows, "The Chapel Royal before Handel's Arrival in England: Symphony Anthems and Thanksgivings", 20.
[153] Charles Burney, "The Progress of Music in England during the Time of King Henry VIII. Continued", in *A General History of Music, From the Earliest Ages to the Present Period.* Volume 3, 72.
[154] Hawkins, *A General History of the Science and Practice of Music*, volume V, 262-64.

the Common Prayer in the Church, that the same may be plainly understanded, as if it were read without singing."[155]

The contribution of Tallis' harmonic technique has been also explored in depth by Suzanne Cole when demonstrating his musical influence on Victorian England. In Chapter 4 and Chapter 5 of her *Thomas Tallis and His Music in Victorian England*, Cole confirms Tallis' contribution to providing "a Solid Rock of Harmony" to the text of *Preces and Responses* and then praises his "Englishman's Harmony" through other service music.[156] Therefore, similar to previous research, in this chapter I will also focus on these materials of Tallis' English church works, comparing them with Handel's sacred choral writing.

In addition to snippets of evidence in Hawkins' collection, Dorothy Louise Murray's doctoral thesis represents one of the most comprehensive studies, discussing Tallis' harmonic characteristics after the Reformation featuring in his repertory *Dorian Service*. The following principles underpin her research:

1. Tallis prefers short melodic and rhythmic patterns. The melodic lines of the vocal parts do not cross as was customary in the Medieval style. Each voice has its own vocal range and remains within it. Pitch levels have been set: the alto remains below the soprano, the tenor below the alto and the bass below the tenor. The vocal parts are not all equally interesting, as the four voices have different functions. While some simply complete the harmony, the soprano conveys the melody.
2. Tallis has a predilection for suspensions; they are placed on the strong beat of a bar, in full crotchets. A cadence on a triad with a raised third and its cancellation becomes a consistent harmonic factor in Tallis' style. Accidentals are applied from time to time, particularly at cadential points.
3. Tallis' method of composition makes it difficult to separate a melody from a rhythm. One chord for each beat is heard simultaneously in each syllable. Tallis has a preference for tying over the bar and does so consistently when the first word of the new bar is not especially important; at the end of each verse or period there is a short melodic cadence.
4. Tallis uses a "block" rhythmic pattern. In other words, the same rhythmic pattern is simultaneously present in all four voices. This reduces independent, horizontal line movement that is so typical of polyphony and the medieval style.[157]

[155] John Harley, "The Reign of Elizabeth I: Music with English Words", in *Thomas Tallis* (Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate, 2015), 156.
[156] Suzanne Cole, *Thomas Tallis and his music in Victorian England*.
[157] Murray, "The Arts in Transition: A Study of the Effect of the Reformation in England on Selected Examples of Music and Architecture during the Reigns of Henry VIII and Edward VI," 111-97.

## 2.3 Handel's pre-London choral background

Handel's pre-London sacred compositions have received little attention thus far. In fact, Handel started to compose "motets for the service of the church" when he was nine and maintained a stable output of "one every week for three years, with scarce any intermission."[158] These autographs have unfortunately been lost, and Handel subsequently went to Hamburg to start his opera career, rarely engaging with sacred music. He concluded his Latin church music compositions in 1707 on account of his wish to get along well with his potential sponsors in the Roman church. According to James Hall, with Mainwaring's narrative in mind, Handel "made his peace with" the Romish church, although his Lutheran background created problems for him.[159] It might have motivated Handel to abandon his previous German experiences and to think of himself as an Italian composer. He was highly productive when in Rome, mainly composing for "particular occasions and festivities in the Roman Catholic liturgy,"[160] including *Dixit Dominus* (HWV 232) and *Nisi Dominus* (HWV 238).

Though the evidence is limited to a few examples spread across Handel's German background, modern scholars have detected the profound influence of studying with Zachow on his church music compositions prior to his move to England. As his biographer Mainwaring notes, as an organist to the cathedral church, when Zachow was teaching Handel music, "the first object of his attention was to ground him thoroughly in the principles of harmony."[161] This is clearly reflected in Handel's compositions. In analysing his Latin psalm settings composed in Italy, Beeks explains: "The techniques employed in the choruses vary from chordal homophony to imitative polyphony. Handel's occasional use of chorale-like themes in long notes, while undoubtedly related to techniques he had learned in his studies with Zachow, reflected a favourite usage in Rome in which the melodies were frequently drawn from Gregorian chant."[162] Until the first decade in his English career phase, Handel's church settings still reflected on Zachow's technique "in harmonic and melodic aspects."[163]

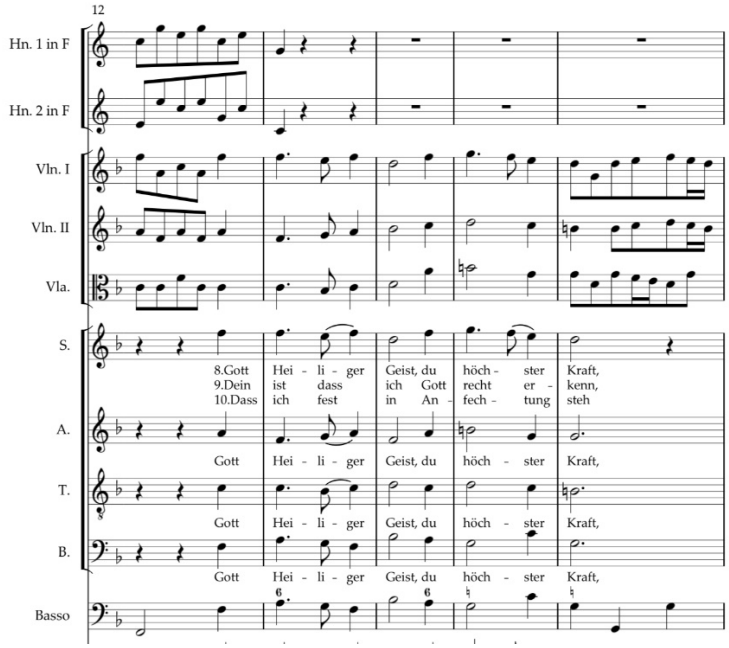
Moreover, it is worth noting that when Bernd Baselt examined Handel's general German music background, he particularly mentions the Lutheran chorale tradition in Handel's church music, as "Handel's early teachers were masters of the chorale cantata."[164] Although there were no

[158] Hawkins, *A General History of the Science and Practice of Music*, volume V, 264.
[159] James S. Hall, "The Problem of Handel's Latin Church Music", *The Musical Times* 100, 1394 (April 1959), 197.
[160] Annette Landgraf and David Vickers, eds., *The Cambridge Handel Encyclopedia* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 149.
[161] Mainwaring, *Memoirs of the Life of the Late George Frederic Handel*, 14.
[162] Beeks, "Handel's Sacred Music," 165.
[163] Burrows, "Handel and the English Verse Anthem: His First Setting of *As pants the hart*, c. 1712", 54.
[164] Bernd Baselt, "Handel and his Central German Background," in *Handel Tercentenary Collection*, eds. Stanley Sadie and Anthony Hicks (London: Macmillan, 1987), 55.

thematic links between these two genres (chorale cantata and English anthem) before "the late 1730s" according to Baselt, it still provides us with an important clue for exploring the origin of Handel's harmonic technique. In Handel's *Dixit Dominus* he included substantial choral movements with an expressive opening as a large-scale festival setting. It is common knowledge that a probable model for this grand work is Scarlatti's setting (1700), as Handel borrowed some features from Alessandro Scarlatti (1660-1725). For example, in their first *Dixit Dominus* movement, they both set the verse "Dixit Dominus Domino meo" homophonically, switching to the solo voice for the subsequent "sede a dextris meis." However, differences are also apparent: Scarlatti's melodic line is smoother than Handel's, thereby integrating long lyrical melodies into every verse, whereas Handel still relies on imitation of short phrases to build his movement. This is similar to the opening of Zachow's *Nun aber gibst du, Gott* (Ex. 2.1 and 2.2) on account of its typical chorale concerto treatment (mixed vocal and instrumental genre) widely used in the late seventeenth-century Lutheran sacred compositions.[165] Close examination of these two examples reveals that Handel effectively integrated the Zachow's homophonic technique that, "the expressive value of the suspension is used to the greatest advantage in underlining a text or shaping a phrase."[166]

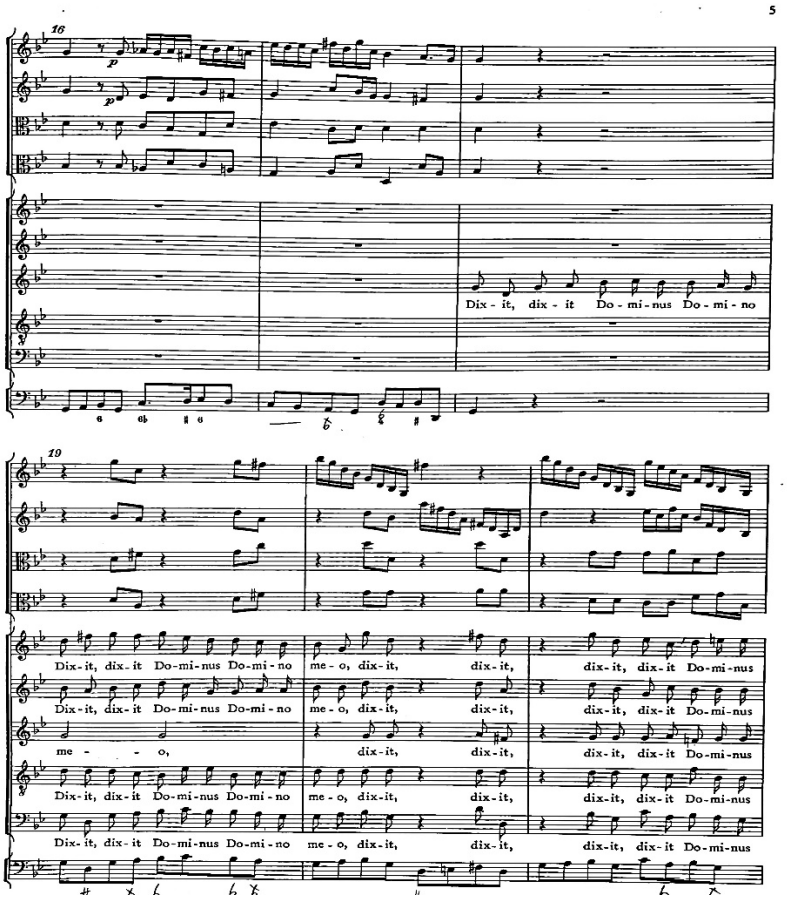
[165]Richard, "Chapter 21 Fat Times And Lean," in *Music in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries: The Oxford History of Western Music* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 49-52.
[166]Gray Adams, "The Chorale Cantatas of Friedrich Wilhelm Zachow," *The Choral Journal* 21, no. 1 (September 1980): 11.

**Ex. 2.1: Zachow, Choral "Gott heil'ger Geist du höchster Kraft" from *Nun aber gibst du, Gott* (bars 12–16).[167]**




[167] Friedrich Wilhelm Zachow, *Choral: Gott heil'ger Geist du höchster Kraft* (ed.) Richard Kram. *Petrucci Music Library*. Web. 7 Nov 2022 <http://imslp.org/wiki/>.

**Ex. 2.2: Handel, "Coro: Dixit Dominus", *Dixit Dominus* HWV 232 (HHAIII, 1: bars 18–22).**




The style of the chorale concerto progression continued to inspire Handel's ensuing musical material. Employing an array of choral movements, he gave each voice a degree of independence; their alternate performance of the melody produced rival forces. In addition, Handel relied more generally upon short or fleeting chord sounds; especially in the second half, chords became more decisive and compact. In other words, Handel preferred to use rhythmic variations rather than harmonic diversity to increase the sense of passion. These techniques of simultaneously working on two musical themes and setting homophonic progressions staccato can usually be found in church cantata works of his contemporary J. S. Bach, with a notable example occurring in *Christ lag in Todes Banden* (BWV 4, 1707).

## 2.4 Tallis' harmony in Handel's anthems: from *As pants the hart* to the later works

### Handel's verse anthem: *As pants the hart* (HWV 251a)

Handel finished his first and the only English verse anthem *As pants the Hart* at the end of 1712, soon after his second arrival in London.

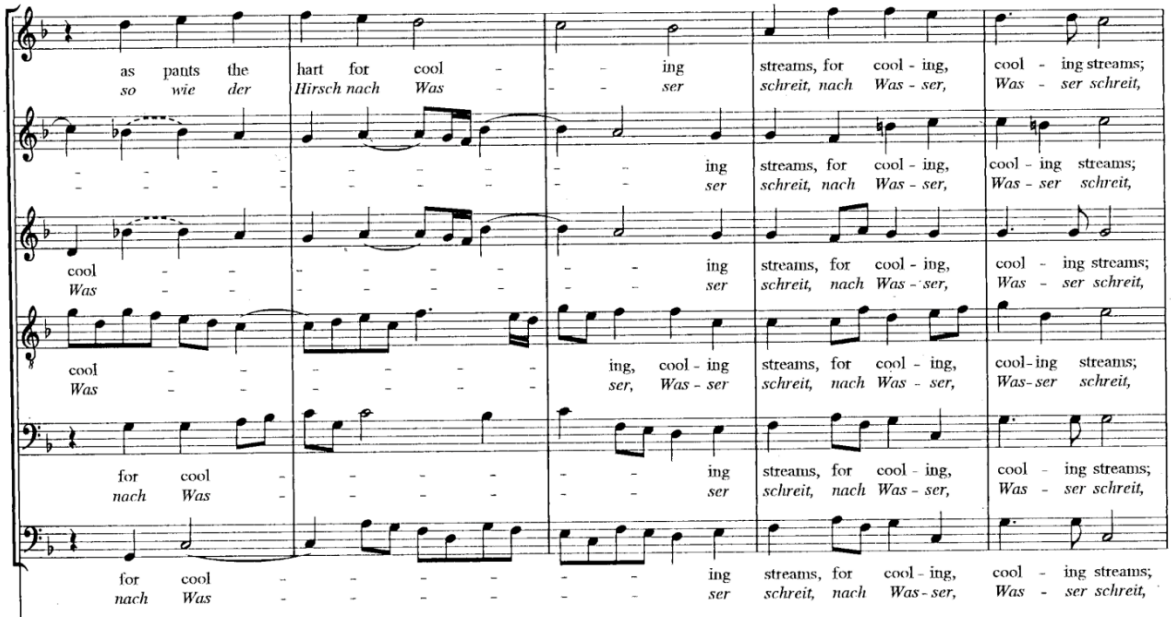
As Beeks explains: "The music reflects both English and German traditions of the seventeenth century, and is the least Italianate of all Handel's sacred compositions".[168] Burrows also located Italian influence in the first version of *As pants the hart*, for example the "continuo-accompanied arias" submitting to Handel's previous operatic church music from Italy.[169] Their assertions ring true for the most parts of the work. First, Handel employed his previous German compositional practices. Some rhythmic features are directly reworked from the composer's *Laudate Pueri Dominum* for *As pants the hart*. The opening bars of his aria movement "Quis Sicut Dominus" from *Laudate Pueri Dominum* used a repeated first syllable in order to convey a sense of intense questioning. This technique reappears in his first English setting, in the aria "Tears are my daily food" and the subsequent duet "Why so full of grief". In addition, according to Burrows, the beginning of Handel's choral section "In the voice of praise", followed Zachow's style in featuring, "[…] German keyboard and vocal models […] [and] the use of a typical canzona-type repeated-note subject".[170] At the same time, Handel chiefly employed an Italian multi-voice form in *As pants the hart*, including: the sequential entries for different voices in the "As pants the hart", "in the voice of praise" and "Why so full of grief" movement openings; and the imitative short phrase melody at "Now, when I think there upon", as a way of bringing together the whole movement. Both of these devices are familiar from Handel's Italian sacred works. Handel even copied the melodic line from the second half of his Italian duet *Troppo cruda, troppo fiera* (HWV 198) in the duet from this English setting.

However, the reservation of these putative foreign styles was unable to eliminate the auditory surprise brought by Tallis-style harmonic progressions Handel employed in this work. There are three choral settings in Handel's *As pants the hart*. For the first two, 'As pants the hart for cooling streams' and 'In the voice of praise and thanksgiving' Handel generally followed his previous Latin psalm harmonic techniques setting the music, especially the second where we find typical Lutheran staccato choral melody. The influence of Elizabethan harmonic technique

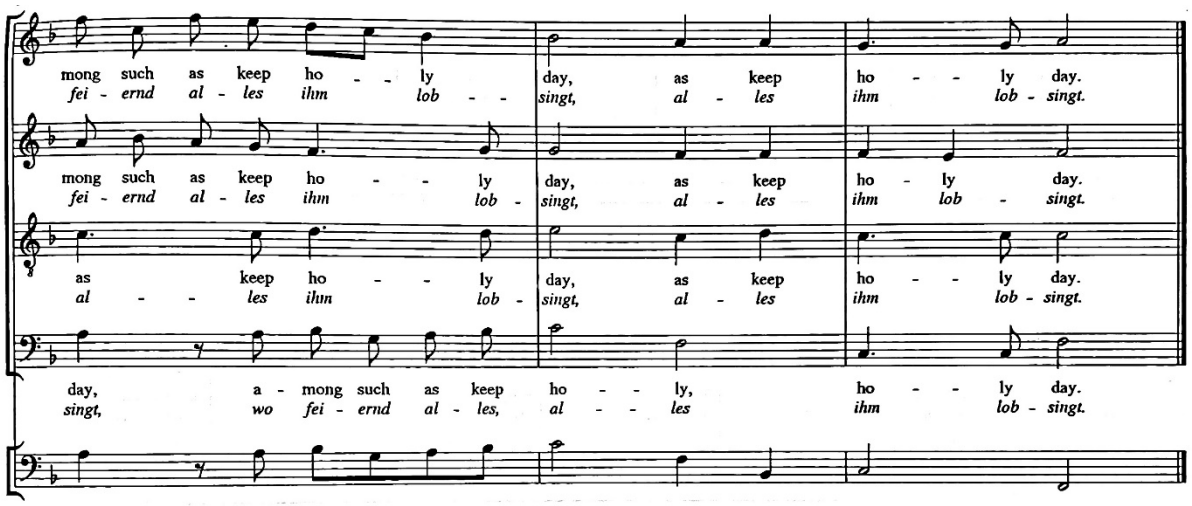
[168] Beeks, "Handel's Sacred Music", 169.
[169] Burrows, "Handel and the English Verse Anthem: His First Setting of As pants the hart, c. 1712", 60-72.
[170] Ibid., 70.

is equally distinctive. Handel employed a harmonic block to repeat the verse "for cooling steams" and finished it with a melodic cadence comprising the suspension (Ex. 2.3). A similarly harmonic treatment was also shown by the next 'In the voice of praise and thanksgiving' which tended to emphasize the verse "as keep holy day" (Ex. 2.4). In emphasizing the value of a particular short verse, while Handel paused the voices and the music was filled by impressive concerto accompaniment in *Dixit Dominus*, he inclined to a newer technique, suggested by Tallis above, that he use the concentrated homophony and the transformation of harmonic tones to achieve the same effect in his English anthem.

**Ex. 2.3: Handel, "As pants the hart for cooling streams", *As pants the hart* HWV 251a (HHAIII, 5: bars 23-27).**



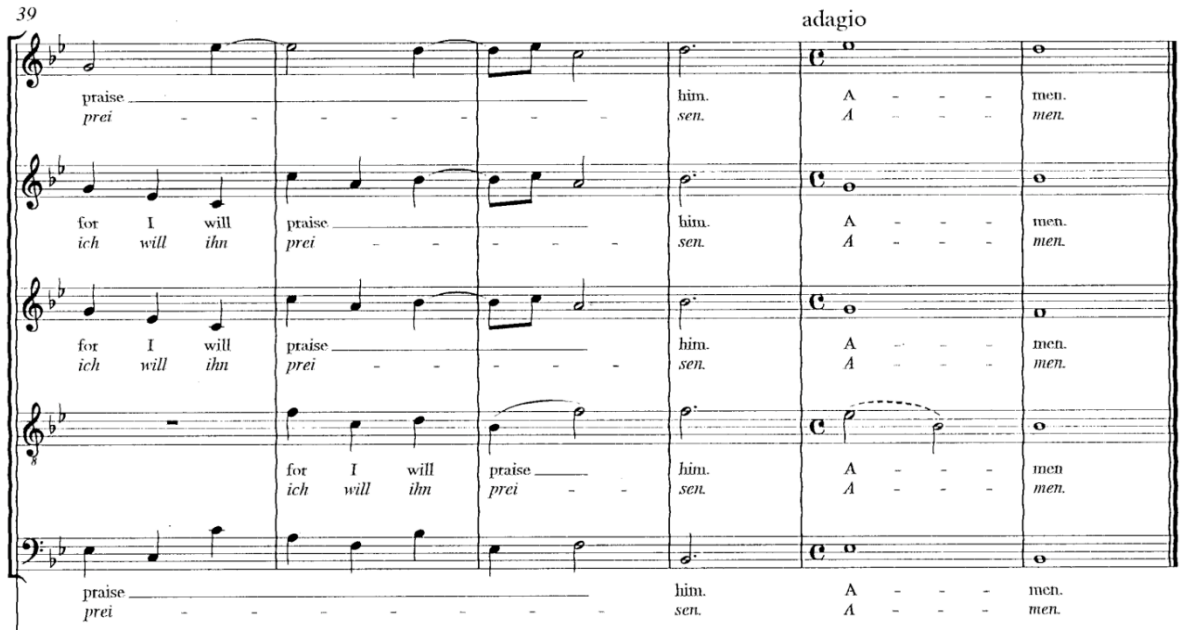
**Ex. 2.4: Handel, 'In the voice of praise and thanksgiving', *As pants the hart* HWV 251a (HHAIII, 5: bars 27-29).**



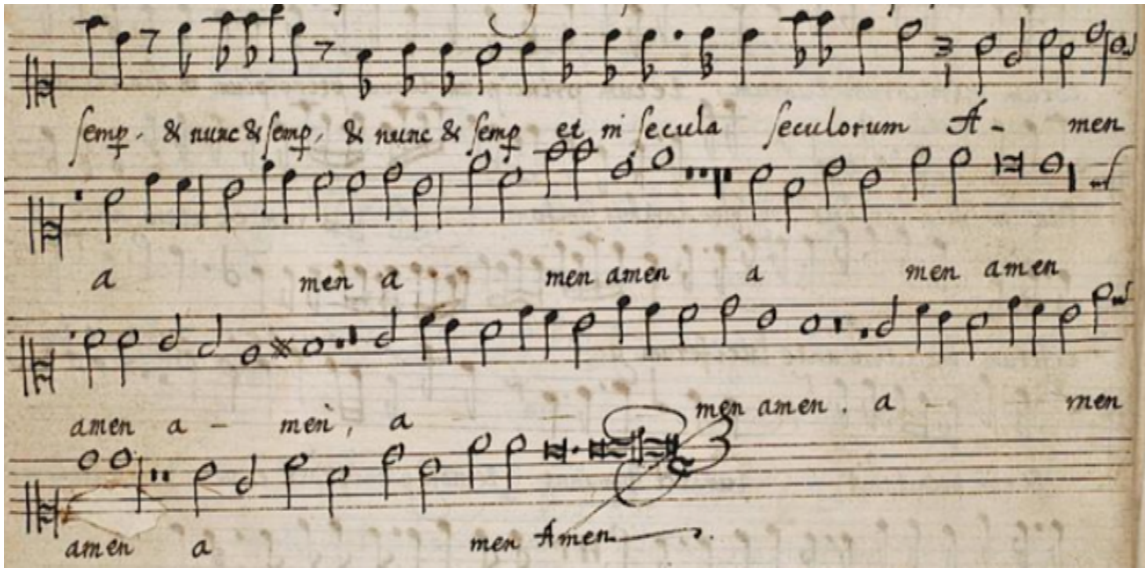

The final chorus 'Put thy trust in God' might be regarded as Handel's attempt at a Tallis-style chorus. In addition to the coherent block rhythm with a melodic cadence for every single phrase, he wrote a plagal-amen cadence tail at the culmination of the final phrase after his normal authentic cadence ending (Ex. 2.5), perhaps in direct imitation of Tallis' "three amens" form in his service music *The Preces and Responces*. As far as I am concerned, Handel could not have learned this form from German, or Italy; only in English harmonic tradition was it taught. In the seventeenth century, the coda-like amen ending assumed fugal connotations, and became fashionable in both liturgical and non-liturgical European music.[171] Italian composer Antonio Bertali (1605–1669) was one of the first to exploit this style; his manuscript *Dixit Dominus* (Ex. 2.6) below provides a case in point. This rhetorical device was used by Handel in every one of his early Latin sacred settings including the *Laudate pueri dominum*, *Dixit Dominus* and *Nisi Dominus* mentioned above. Nevertheless, in his first English sacred settings, he suddenly but decisively changed his "amen" ending.

[171] Geoffrey Chew, Edward Foley, and Joseph Dyer, "Amen", *Grove Music Online*. 2001. Web. 2 Aug 2019 < https://oxfordmusiconline.com/grovemusic/>.

**Ex. 2.5: Handel, 'Put thy trust in God', *As pants the hart* HWV 251a (HHAIII, 5: bars 39-44).**



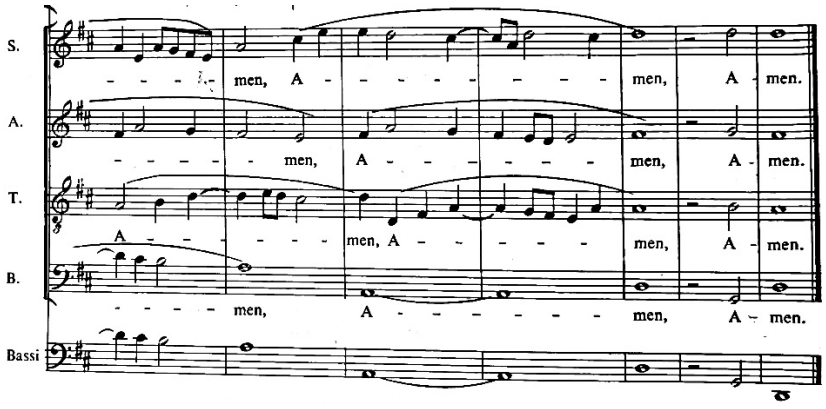

**Ex. 2.6: Bertali, 'Canto Imo mi Coxc' from *Dixit Dominus* (final bars).[172]**




[172] Antonio Bertali, *Dixit Dominus*. Manuscript, n.d. (ca/ 1650), printed by Technische Universität Darmstadt, D-DS scanned /no. 256525. Web. 15 Dec 2022 https://imslp.org/wiki/.

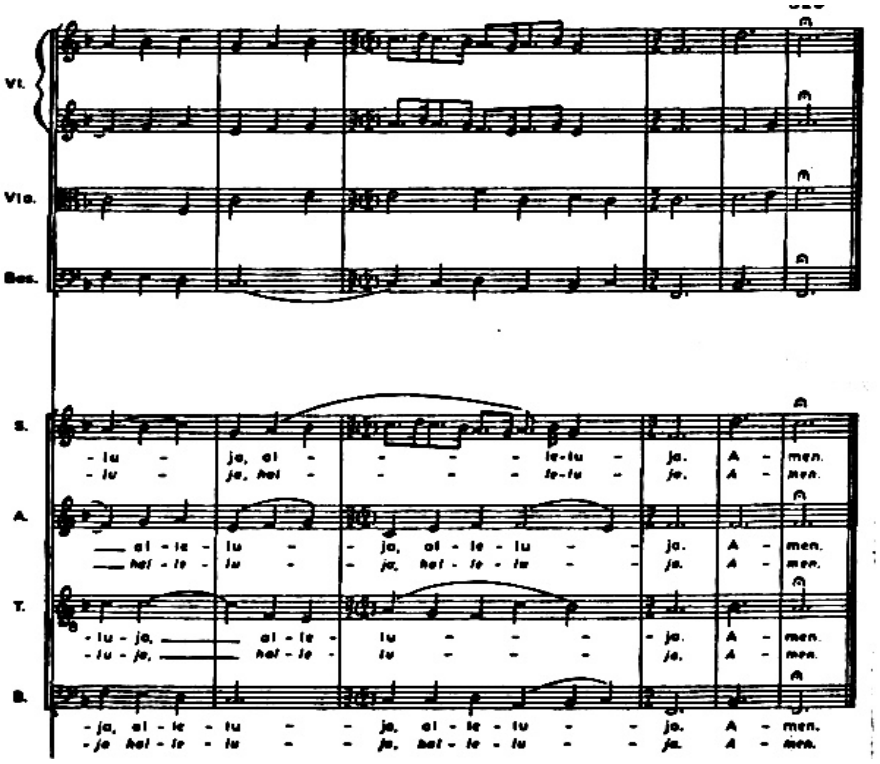
Native composers' applications of different "amen" cadence forms were perhaps a reflection of a highly individual treatment to the style of the Chapel Royal canticles. In examining Purcell's anthem repertories, both early verse anthem and later symphony service, we witness him maintaining the tradition of plagal-amen cadences. Potential examples with a similar plagal-amen include *O sing unto the Lord* (Z 44, 1688) and *Jubilate Deo for St Cecilia's Day* (Z 232, 1694) (Ex. 2.7 and 2.8). Yet when William Croft composed his Burial Service based on Purcell's *Thou Knowest, Lord*,[173] he did not follow Purcell's plagal-amen cadence and replaced it with an authentic amen cadence in G major. Another work by Croft as well, *O Give Thanks unto the Lord*, in 1715 even used a half cadence in C major, perhaps following Purcell's usage in *Gloria Patri et Filio* (1680), which concluded in the dominant with "amen". The half-amen cadence tradition, in fact, had long existed in Anglican history.

**Ex. 2.7: Purcell, *Jubilate Deo in D*, Z 232 (bars 205-211).[174]**




[173]William Croft explained in the preface of the Burial Service: "In that Service there is one Verse composed by my Predecessor, the Famous Mr. Henry Purcell, to which, in Justice to his Memory, his Name is applied", *Musica Sacra*, (London, 1724), preface.
[174] Henry Purcell, *Te Deum and Jubilate for St. Cecilia's Day 1694* (ed.) Denis Arnold (London etc.: Eulenburg, 1965). Notes: a copy of this edition is now in the possession of Glasgow University. Parts of this work to agree with the original, and including Cembalo, are published in the series Praeclassica No. 8 9 For conducting, this score should be used.

**Ex. 2.8: Purcell, *O Sing unto the Lord,* Z44 (bars 323-328).**[175]

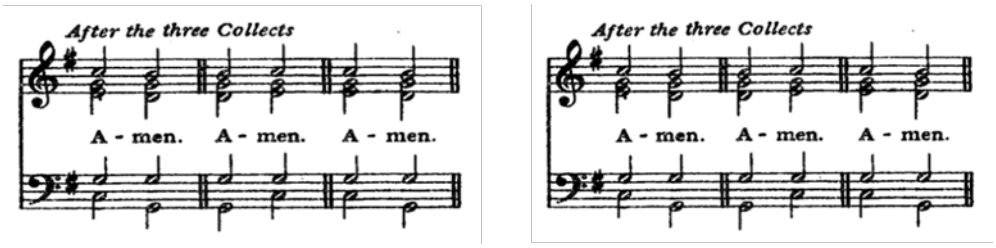



Thus, there were no standard versions of the amen ending in England for Handel when he composed his first *As pants the hart*. Moreover, by re-visiting the text of this anthem, it comes as a surprise that Handel probably added this homophonic ending according to his own inclination. The only parallel setting by John Arbuthnot is lost. As one of Handel's English friends, Arbuthnot had great enthusiasm for settings of English anthems; he adapted the Psalm 42 from the Prayer Book in Tate and Brady's version (*A New Version of the Psalms*, 1712) and maybe then introduced it to his foreign friend. After checking through the text, Arbuthnot did not even write the "Amen" ending in his version.[176] Given the reputation of Purcell and the growing interest in the harmonic techniques of "ancient" masters in the Academy, it is not hard to imagine that Handel heard the plagal-amen cadence in such a "grave and solemn" style at St Paul's Cathedral while listening Purcell's *1694 Te Deum and Jubilate,* and then explored this form; his starting point was probably Tallis' usage, as evident from the collections in the Academy's library.

[175] Henry Purcell, *O sing unto the Lord: anthem for solo voices, strings and organ* (ed.) Denis Arnold (London etc.: Eulenburg, [196-?].
[176]Burrows has shown the two texts together, see details in ibid*,* p. 58, Table 3.2.

Tallis' *Preces and Responses*, featuring his earliest examples of plagal-amen cadences that will be regarded below as an important case of Handel's borrowing, further reinforces the importance of Tallis' harmony in the context of Anglican music. His sequential three Amens ending with the final plagal cadence in this composition (Ex. 2.9), employed minims and thereby differed from long-note rhythms in the continental European tradition. Cole suggests, according to Barnarr Rainbow, that the "three Amens as harmonised by Tallis" at the end of Tallis's *Responses*, "are simple five-part, or possibly even four-part, cadences". In addition: "it is hard to see how any authorship can be claimed for them, yet describing them as 'Tallis' Amens' gives them authority".[177] Therefore, this special form of plagal-amen cadence has become synonymous in music history with "Tallis' Amens". Jason Terry explained this device in his thesis, stating that Tallis "alternates between the plagal and authentic cadences" with his final three amens[178]. In his first version of the *Responses*, for example, the modulation from A major to D major occurs in the middle of the amen verse, constituting a "IV-I; V-I; IV -I" structure (Ex. 2.9). However, his study suggests that it is a complete "IV- I, I-IV, IV-I" phrase, emphasizing the relationship between the subdominant and tonic chord effect, rather than three independent cadences in the context of two modulations. Although the signal note G is missing in the middle Amen's chord, creating ambiguity, further information can be gleaned elsewhere in the piece.

**Ex. 2.9: Tallis, 'The Responses After the Creed' (the first and second versions), from *The Preces and Responses* (CMS: final bars).[179]**

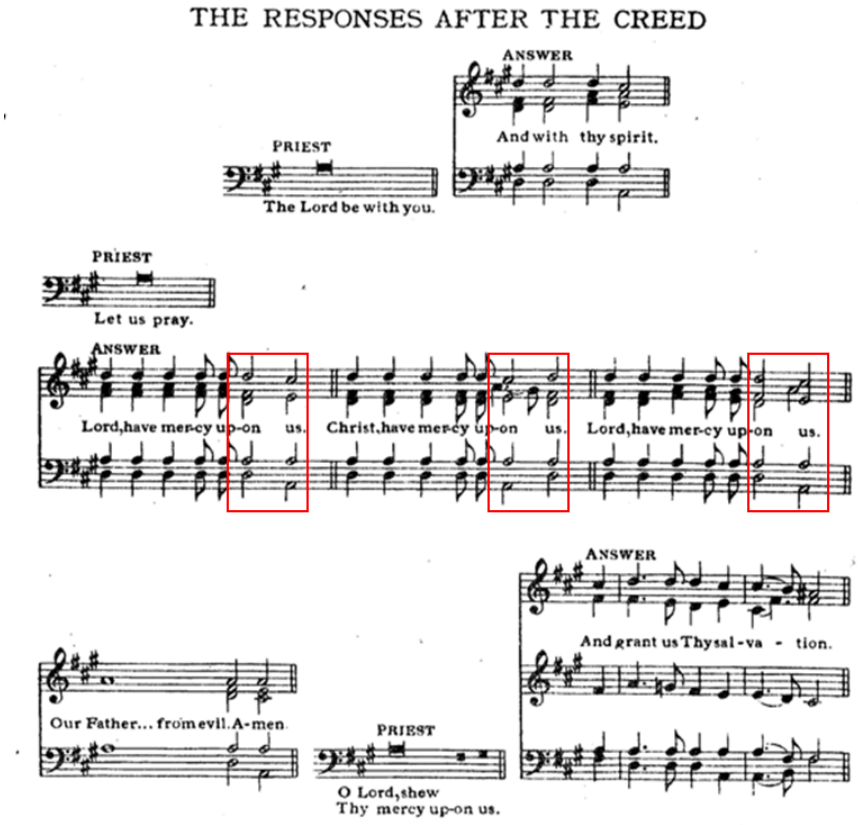



*The Responses* (after the creed) consist of the alternate priest solo and choral answer (Ex. 2.10). According to the second chorus entry "Lord, have mercy upon us", the structure comprises three expansion phrases to the final three amens, especially the minim chords in every phrase ending (red squares in Ex. 2.10), which involve the same notes for the final chords (Ex. 2.9).

[177]Cole, *Thomas Tallis and His Music in Victorian England*, p. 54; "three Amens as harmonised by Tallis" was first mentioned by Bernarr Rainbow, *The Choral Revival in The Anglican Church, 1839-1872*, (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2001), 119.
[178]Terry, "A History of The Plagal-Amen Cadence", (PhD diss., University of South Carolina, 2016).
[179] *Six Settings of the Preces & Responses by Tudor Composers* (eds.) Ivor Atkins and Edmund H. Fellowes (London: Oxford University Press, 1933), 1-15.

Obviously, the G sharp is retained in the second phrase, which means there is no modulation here. Furthermore, before the next "O Lord, shew Thy mercy upon us", there is a single previously-ignored "IV-I" amen cadence finishing the whole. Therefore, the complete harmonic pattern for this long Answer is "IV-I, I-IV, IV-I. IV-I" in A major. The last "IV-I" amen cadence seems like a postscript trailing behind the third "Lord, have mercy upon us". This rhetorical device obtained wider use by a group of Tudor composers in their "ancient" style.

**Ex. 2.10: Tallis, 'Responses after the creed' (first version), from *The Preces and Responses* (CMS: opening bars).**



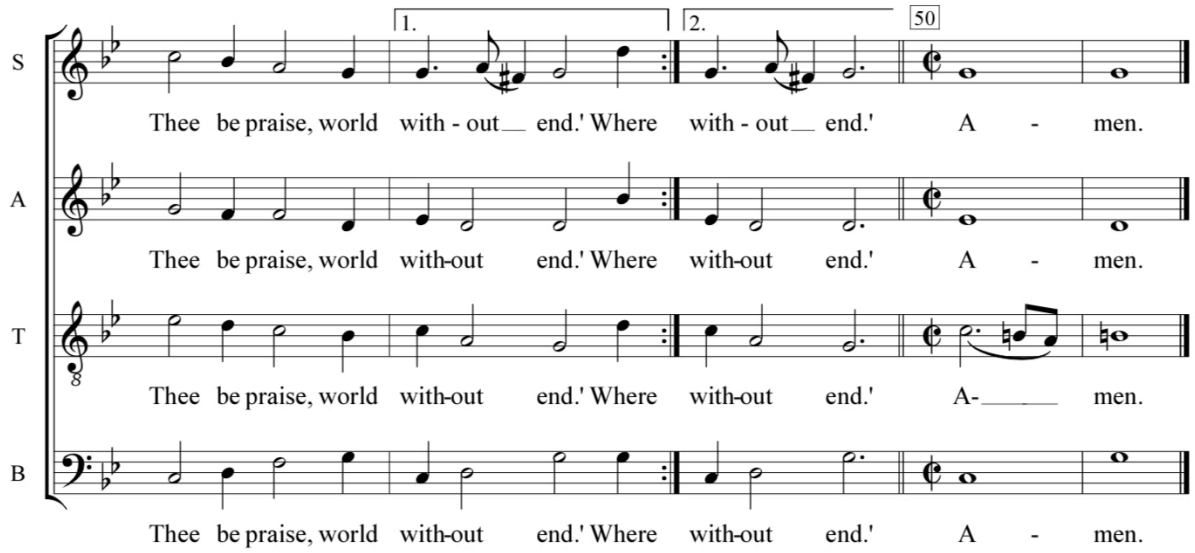

Tallis, along with four Tudor successors from Byrd to William Smith (1603-1645), were collected in an edition titled *Six Settings of the Preces & Responces by Tudor Composers* in 1933.[180] Excluding the "three amens" plagal cadence ending,[181] their long statements "Lord,

[180] Ivor Atkins and Edmund H. Fellowes, *Six Settings of the Preces & Responces by Tudor Composers,* (London: Oxford University Press, 1933).
[181] Among these six works, William Byrd and William Smith used the "three amens" with authentic cadence, but their long sentence patterns still followed the Tallis plagal-amen cadence, as will be shown below.

have mercy upon us. Our Father…from evil. Amen" evolved slightly from the second version of Tallis' work changed to the V-I, I-V, V-I. IV-I structure. Here Tallis chooses the authentic cadence rather than the plagal cadence before his single plagal-amen cadential tail. Then, William Byrd offers the V-I, I-V, V-I. IV-I, Thomas Morley the IV-I, I-IV, V-I. IV-I, Thomas Tomkins the V-I, I-V, V-I. IV-I, and William Smith the I-IV, IV-I, V-I. IV-I. In contrast with Tallis' first version, all the final plagal-amen cadences followed an authentic cadence in their settings, no matter how the previous three cadences had changed. Therefore, Tallis' plagal-amen cadence was commonly added as a post-cadence successor to the perfect cadence verse in the Anglican harmonic tradition of the Tudor period.

Further, Tallis extended this device to his other verse anthems as well: *Oh Lord, in Thee is all my trust*, is a good example first published in 1650, using a creative plagal-amen cadence after the "world without end" verse (see. 2.11). This example is similar to Handel's plagal-amen cadence (see, Ex. 2.5), including the passing notes of the tenor voice that Handel adopted from Tallis. However, this particular English plagal-amen cadence did not gain traction in English music history, even from Tallis himself. Other works collected in John Barnard's *First Book of Selected Church Music*, for example, reveal different rhythms for the plagal-amen cadences finishing pieces such as *Wipe away my sin* and *With all our hearts*.

**Ex. 2.11: Tallis, *Oh Lord, in Thee is all my trust*. Ed. James Gibb (ChoralWiki: bars 47-52).[182]**




To sum up, although there is no direct evidence that Handel addressed Tallis' *Preces & Responces* or any other historical settings in his early English compositions, the sudden transformation of the amen ending in his first English works points to the influence of "ancient music". If plagal-amen cadences in *As pants the hart* represent a tentative exploration of Tallis' for Handel, his *Utrecht Te Deum* can be regarded as a first successful appropriation of "ancient music" as a measure of English identity.

**Symphony anthems from his early period**

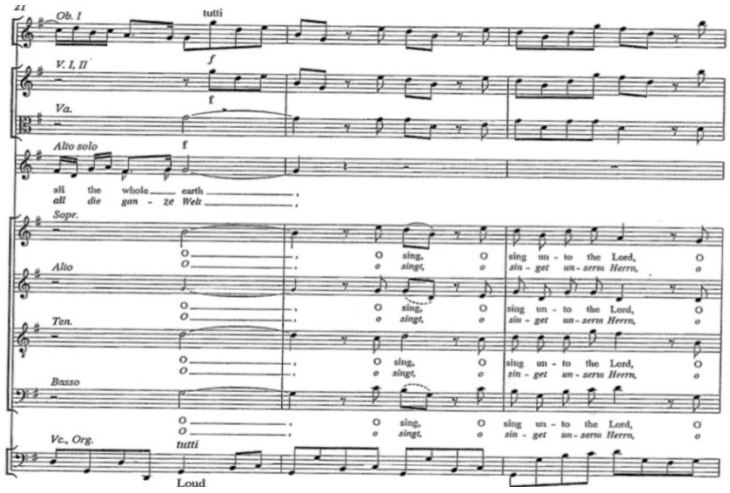
Handel's first symphony anthem, *O sing unto the Lord* (HWV 249a), finished in 1714, was considered by scholars as a companion work to his Caroline Te Deum (HWV 280), as "both works include a flute in the orchestra and Baker among the vocal soloists."[183] Handel's ambiguous boundaries between English church genres was partly due to symphony anthems setting up the consistent musical association with service during his era (see my Introduction), and partly illustrated the great influence of his successful *Utrecht Te Deum and Jubilate* on later sacred music. Burrows has pointed out the similar treatments of the opening bars of *O*

[182] Web. 9 Jun 2023 https://www.cpdl.org/wiki/.
[183] Burrows, "Other Chapel Royal Music from the First Period, 1712-1714", 131.

*sing unto the Lord* and *Utrecht Jubilate* – that the first solo verse is followed by a choral restatement of the same melodic pattern.[184]

For the three choral settings appearing in this anthem, Handel basically followed his Lutheran choral technique. The latter two ('O worship the Lord in the beauty' and 'Let the heav'ns rejoice') offered varied evidence of his Zachow tradition, such as the simultaneous working of two subjects, with an extended tone over the bars staying in the top against its lower four-part homophonic block rhythm, and an earlier entry of one voice part followed by the staccato homophony of the rest. However, we can still find English influence in his first movement. In bar 21, Handel introduces a subtle modification to his original Latin church music in chorale concerto style. Rather than using the oboes and violins to bridge the musical gap created by vocal suspension, as demonstrated in Example 2.2, they now perform in unison with the vocal parts, creating a homophonic effect that enhances the auditory experience using doubled instrumentation (Example 2.12). This is particularly associated with Hawkins' comments on the melodic line of Tallis' chorus being so "contrived" and "broken" that it required as many parts as possible to sing it.[185]

**Ex. 2.12: Handel, *O sing unto the Lord*, HWV 249a (HHAIII, 9: bars 21-23).**



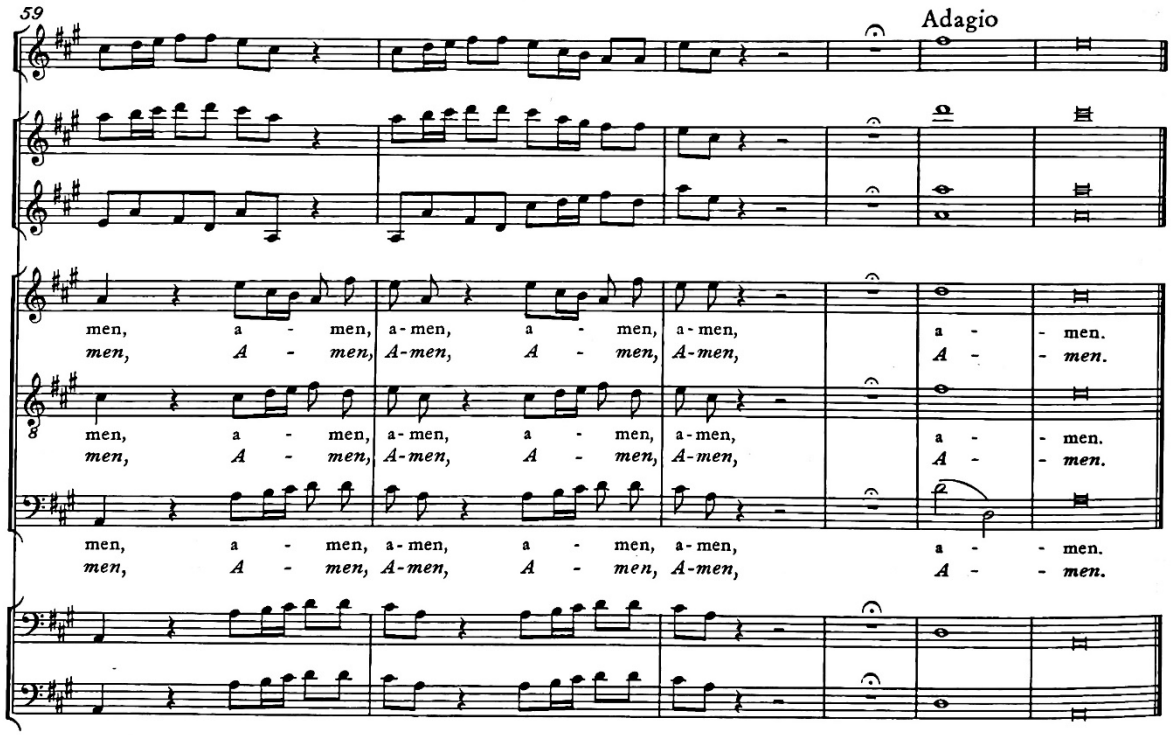

Handel composed a series of symphony anthems when becoming composer in residence at Cannons (1717-1719). As with the choral music, the English influence of his previous Chapel Royal anthems and Te Deum services (which will be analysed below) might have been effectively integrated into the eleven Cannons Anthems. These choral settings gradually

[184] Ibid, 133.
[185] See the original text in the section of "Tallis" above.

developed into Handel's highly individual style, and the material would later be recycled in his oratorios (see chapters 4 and 5).

It is worth noting that Handel retained the plagal-amen cadence in the three of his Cannons Anthems including *I will magnify thee* (HWV 250a), *The Lord is my light* (HWV 255) and *O be joyful in the Lord* (HWV 246). In particular, he punctuated the subdominant and tonic amen effects in several plagal-amen cadences, further revealing Tallis' influence. It is also displayed in the final bars of *I will magnify thee*, before the final "amen" ending, Handel including three sets of amen verses delineated by crotchet rests in the voices. The music was divided into three choral blocks by the crotchet rest (Ex. 2.13). If the passing notes are deleted, all three blocks comprise a "I-IV-I" which comes close to Tallis' "three amens" pattern.

**Ex. 2.13: Handel, 'My mouth shall speak the praise of the Lord', *I will magnify thee* HWV 250a (HHAIII, 5: bars 59-64).**




## 2.5 Handel's Festival Service Music

### *Utrecht Te Deum* (HWV 278)

After *As pants the hart*, Handel finished his second English setting *Utrecht Te Deum and Jubilate* (HWV 278 and 279) performed at the Thanksgiving Service in 1713. This was the

first time that Handel had composed for the English festival service that played such an important role in the musical life of the nation. Surprisingly, Handel completed it in a short time and arguably surpassed his English predecessors such as Purcell and Croft. His *Utrecht Te Deum* became the annual festival service in the Sons of the Clergy that had previously employed Purcell's 1694 setting.[186] Early on, writers only compared Handel's Te Deum to Purcell's version, as the two outstanding festival Te Deum settings in Anglican history. For example, Anselm Bayly commented in 1771 that, "In the Te Deum to animate the musician's imagination are three great ideas, namely, praise, adoration and petition, […]it may be proper to take some notice of with observations on Purcel's and Handel's grand Te Deum".[187] In modern times, Ian Spink first challenged the authority of Purcell's influence on Handel's Utrecht canticles: "It is sometimes suggested that Handel's 'Utrecht' Te Deum (HWV 278) was modelled on Purcell's of 1694, but there is little to support this and their differences fully reflect the years between".[188] Other recent scholars also tended to pay attention to Handel's more recent predecessors, such as John Blow (1649-1708) and William Turner (1651-1740) from Purcell's generation and William Croft (1678-1727, relative to the 1709 setting). Controversy ensued among the academic community. Johnstone believed Purcell's composition represented the "more obvious exemplar" to Handel, although Handel "would almost certainly have heard" some of Croft's outputs.[189] Also, Burrows discussed Croft at length as "the most active contemporary Chapel Royal composer" influencing Handel's early English compositions, but for *Utrecht Te Deum*, inclined to Purcell's influence (as demonstrated by his lengthy quotation of Bayly's text).[190] However, Matthias Range investigated two versions of Croft's Te Deum and Jubilate in 1709 and 1715, proposing a close relationship between Handel and Croft's sacred settings[191]. Instead of taking sides in this argument, I shall examine the influence of Tallis' choral technique in *Utrecht Te Deum*, after Handel's first experiment with it in his English anthem *As pants the hart*.

Before his regular instrumental prelude, Handel adds an Adagio with a series of chords spaced by rests. Although it is likely borrowed from the opening bars of Corelli's *concerto grosso* in D Major (Op.6, No. 5), Handel configures a formidable tone for the whole setting at this point, which was not achieved by the earlier Te Deum music. He continues to showcase the chorus

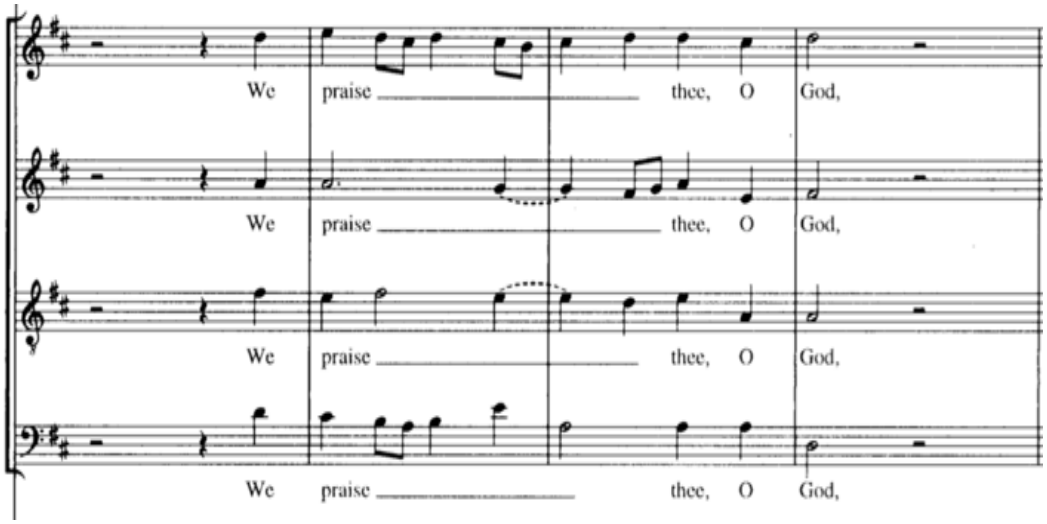
[186] Johnstone, "Handel's London-British Musicians and London Concert Life", in *The Cambridge Companion to Handel*, 70.
[187] Anselm Bayly, "Observations on Cathedral Compositions: Chants, Service and Anthems", in *A Practical Treatise on Singing and Playing With Just Expression and Real Elegance* (London: J. Ridley, 1771), 81.
[188] Ian Spink, "Postscript: George Frideric Handel", *Restoration Cathedral Music 1660-1714*, 187.
[189] Johnstone, "Handel's London-British musicians and London concert life", 65.
[190] Burrows, "Handel's Music for the Peace of Utrecht, 1713", in *Handel and the English Chapel Royal*, 92-93.
[191] Matthias Range, "Handelian Revisions? William Croft's Orchestrally Accompanied Te Deum and Jubilate", *The Musical Times* 156, iss. 1930 (Spring 2015), 47-72.

in his first verse entry when both Purcell and Croft chose an imitative antiphonary frame. For the composition as a whole Burrows explains that "the amount of solo work in his (Handel's) Te Deum is very slight" compared to his predecessors,[192] and suggests that Handel might have found the grand St Paul's Cathedral building incapable of supporting solo voices when listening to Purcell's setting. Equally, Handel might have been used to featuring a dominant chorus in his festival service, following his Italian work *Dixit Dominus*. Yet in this section, given the introductory remarks about Pepusch's 'ancient music' idea in the previous chapter, I will raise another possibility – namely that when composing the *Utrecht Te Deum*, Handel further studied Elizabethan harmony fuelled by Tallis' techniques, and combined these with his composing tradition in Lutheran style, which would later provide substantial music resources for his English oratorio.

In *Utrecht Te Deum* Handel starts to compose the complete musical phrase, matching the homophonic chord to the verse, with a harmonic cadence at the end (Ex. 2.14). His choral component neither comprises four independent voices, commonly appearing in his Italian sacred works, nor simply voices singing the same pitch, as in the opening verse of *Nisi Dominus*. It is closer to Tallis' English service in harmonic and melodic respects. Four voices, within their own limited range, perform simultaneously as a chord during musical progress, then ended by a melodic cadence. His predecessors also used this device for some phrases in their Te Deum settings; Handel, though, began to employ it extensively beginning with his Utrecht setting, which not only maintains the grandeur of choral writing, but also enhances the harmonic effects and sense of uniformity.

[192] Burrows, "Handel's Music for the Peace of Utrecht, 1713", 89.

**Ex. 2.14: Handel, 'We praise thee, O God', *Utrecht Te Deum* HWV 278 (HHAIII, 3: bars 17-21).**




In the second verse, both Handel and Purcell expressively enhanced the word "all". Purcell composed the two-bar arpeggio sung by the four voices alternately, ranging from bass to soprano, while Handel followed his *Dixit Dominus* in having short homophonic voices repeat the same word in crotchets divided by crotchet rests. They achieve the same goal in different ways, then, further illustrating Handel's propensity for homophonic progressions.

In the following movement, Purcell sets his antiphonary for chorus and solo during the "holy, holy, holy" verse. This innovation was followed by Blow and Turner in their subsequent Te Deum settings and praised by Thomas Tudway in 1720:

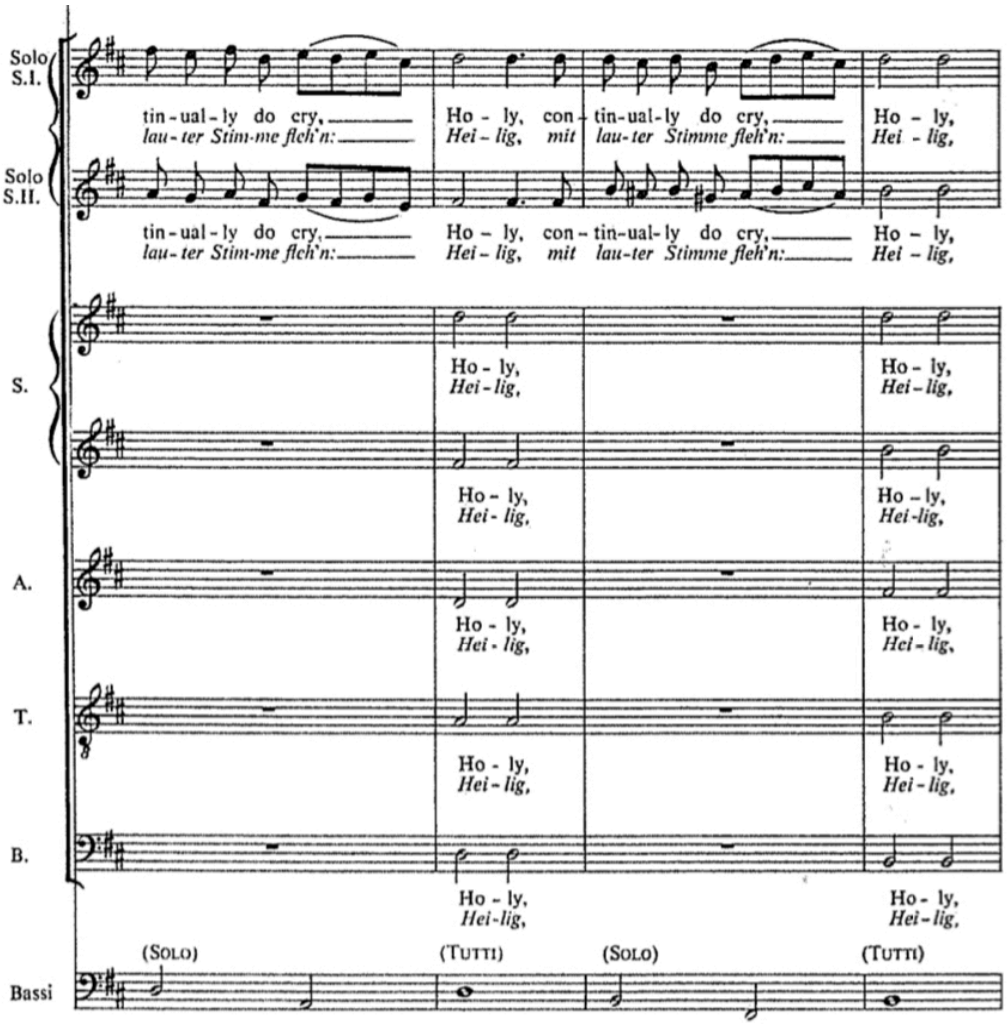
> […] To thee Cherubins, & Seraphins, continually do cry; and then the Great Organ, Trumpets, the Choirs, & at least thirty or forty instruments besides, all Join in most excellent Harmony, & Accord; The Choirs singing only the word Holy; Then all Pause, and the Choristers and instruments, Joine again, & sing Holy; this is done 3 times upon the word Holy only, changing every time the key, & Accords; then they proceed altogether in Chorus, with Heav'n & Earth are full of the Majesty of thy glory; This most beautifull and sublime representation, I dare challenge, all the Ortors. Poets, Painters & of any Age whatsoever, to form so lively an Idea, of Choirs of Angels Singing, and playing their Adorations.[193]

However, this rhythmic cell might be creative to Tudway, but it was familiar to Handel. The similar structure can be found in the instrumental overture of *Dixit Dominus* (Ex. 2.15); both chords support the higher melody. It invisibly diminishes the important role of the verse "holy,

[193] Quoted in Burrows, "Music for the Peace of Utrecht, 1713", 90-91. He also corrected the mistake of Purcell's illustration that "the setting of 'Heaven and earth' is divided between solo and chorus voices.".

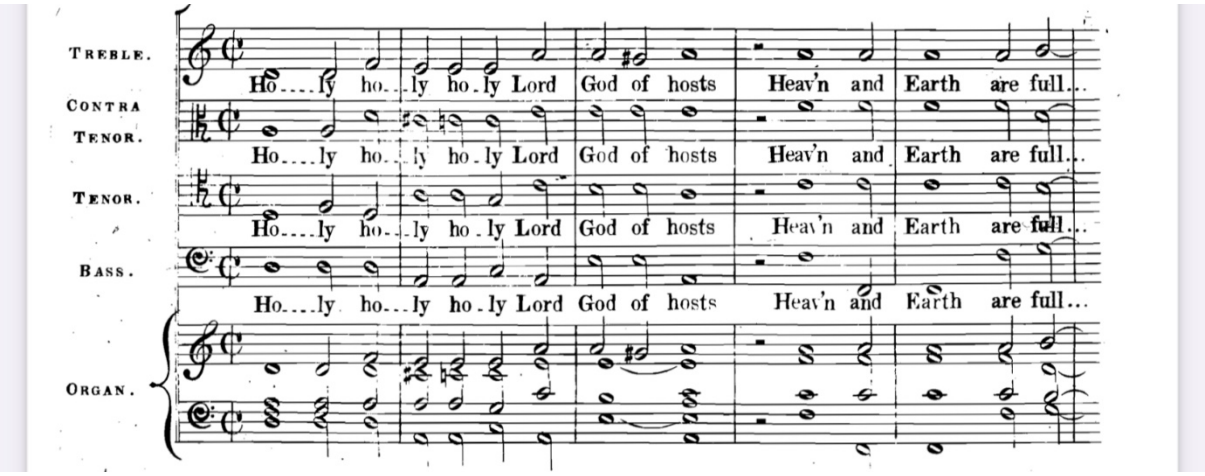
holy, holy" as an independent manifestation. In contrast, Handel, follows the Croft in "[bringing] the 'accords' on the repetitions of the word 'Holy' next to each other"[194] to emphasize the word "holy". Moreover, these two composers also use the same rhythm to accompany a tonic chord in D for their first "holy". The only difference is that Handel separates all three "holy" iterations, seeking a more dramatic effect than Croft who employs it only two times. It is possible that Croft borrowed the opening "holy" rhythm from Tallis' Sanctus of *Dorian Service* (Ex. 2.13), again on D, and that Handel did likewise – or followed Croft – at a higher pitch. However, after the "holy, holy, holy" verse, Handel departs from Croft who, after finishing his movement, starts a new one with solo voice.

**Ex. 2.15: Purcell, *Te Deum Laudamus in D*, Z 232 (bars 56-59).[195]**




[194] Ibid, 91.
[195] Henry Purcell, *Te Deum and Jubilate for St. Cecilia's Day 1694.*

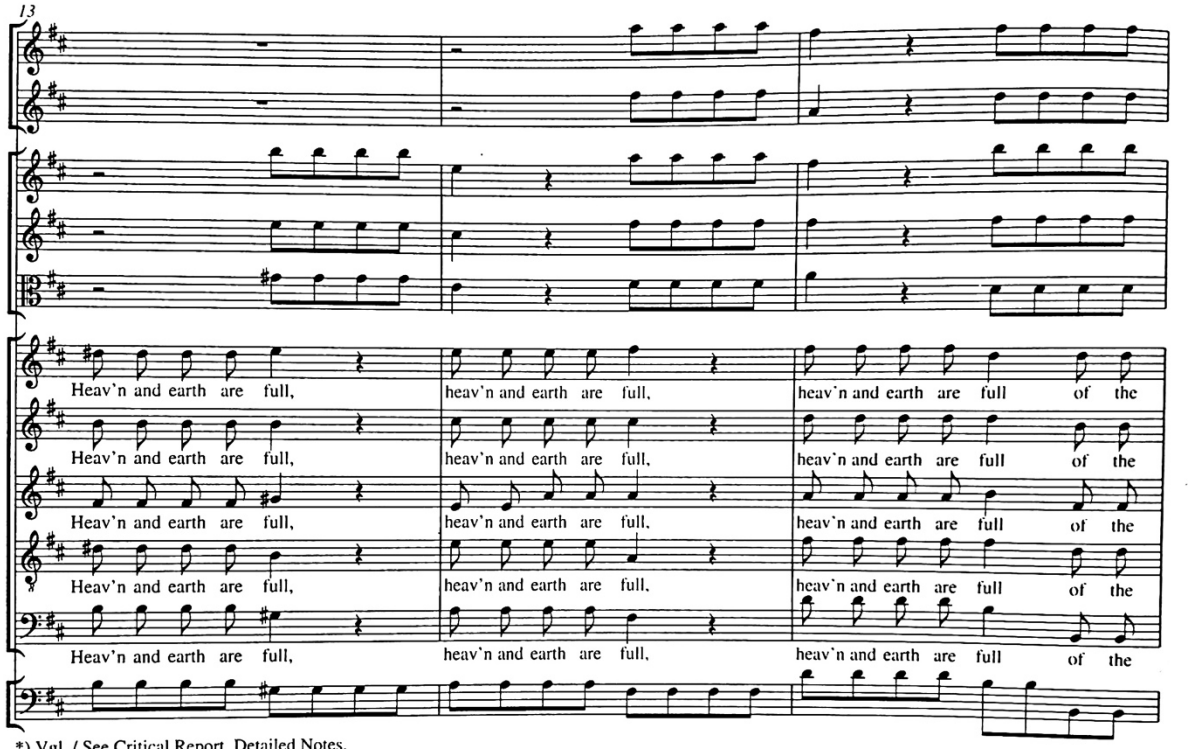
**Ex. 2.16: Tallis, "Sanctus", *Dorian Service* (bars 1-5).[196]**




Before the ending, one more verse, "Heaven and earth are full", as set by Handel concluded in a thrice-repeated rhythm (Ex 2.17). Compared to his "holy, holy, holy", the rhythm remains basically unchanged -- Handel uses four quavers to replace the previous minim, and the crochet rest was filled with an imitated instrumental accompaniment. These two modifications successfully complete the mood strengthening of the music, ranging from the solemn "holy, holy, holy" to the formidable closing verse. Handel's conduct in this passage is more in line with earlier Te Deum setting in the style of "ancient music". In spite of the different musical pattern, both Croft and Purcell add a loud dynamic marking (forte and fortissimo respectively) to their "holy, holy, holy" phrase.

[196] Thomas Tallis, *Dorian Service* (London: Vincent Novello, 1870). Web. 22 Jun 2022 <http://imslp.org/wiki/>.

**Ex. 2.17: Handel, 'To thee Cherubim and Seraphim', *Utrecht Te Deum* HWV 278 (HHAIII, 3: bars 13-15).**




However, Tudor composers including Tallis, Byrd and Gibbons preferred to create a cantabile mood to accompany the word "holy", which was usually a weak strike with a dominant chord ending in their Te Deum works. In addition, "holy" sounds more transitional than the climax of the entire movement. Although he exaggerates the Tallis' "holy" pattern with one more repetition than Croft, Handel refuses the *forte* notation of his predecessors, delaying the climax until the next phrase, which is closer to the preference of the Tudor composers. Further, his "Heaven and earth are full" repeated-note rhythms drawing on Croft's later verse "Thou art the everlasting Son", which is very similar to Tallis' Choral Service in the *Preces* setting. In his two Preces settings, Tallis chiefly employs the repeated-note block pattern, with three or five chords to a set, to structure the whole work. He ingeniously makes marked use of the first-short-after-long rhythmic pattern, obtaining an elegant sound from the monotonous repeated chords. The repeated chords had appeared in Handel's sacred works from his Italian period onwards. One representative example can be found in the opening verse of his *Nisi Dominus* (HWV 238). Handel does not include distinctive rhythmic patterns here as well, so the whole phrase sounds somewhat heavy. As mentioned above, repeated notes also appeared

prominently in his Italian solo religious melodies, and, according to Mattheson, were criticized by other composers as a melodic shortcoming.[197] However, Handel's English repeated block chords, learned from Elizabethan harmony, represent a small-scale example of stylistic evolution.

Moving on to his next movement (The glorious company of the Apostles), Handel continues to promote repeated block chords imitated by instrumental accompaniment. This device frequently appeared in his Utrecht Te Deum setting, representing a good example of his integration of an English rhetorical device into his existing compositional style. It is also to be noted that, in the fourteenth verse of this movement, Handel raises the third note of the triad to finish the verse on a major triad, which corresponds to Tallis in the same location of his *Dorian Te Deum* and *Te Deum "For Meanes"*. According to Murray:

> The harmonic structure is modal (minor) but Tallis employs musica ficta, particularly at cadence points to add major tonal colour. This addition of musica ficta is noteworthy because it is so abundant. Specific accidentals such as G-sharp or C-sharp are added at cadence points and then abandoned immediately on the next note. The result of this procedure is an unstable tonal structure fluctuating quickly from modal to major and jarring to the modern ear. A cadence on a triad with a raised third and its cancellation becomes a consistent harmonic factor in Tallis' style. Accidentals are applied at certain points, particularly cadential points and, with no preparation, they are deleted.[198]

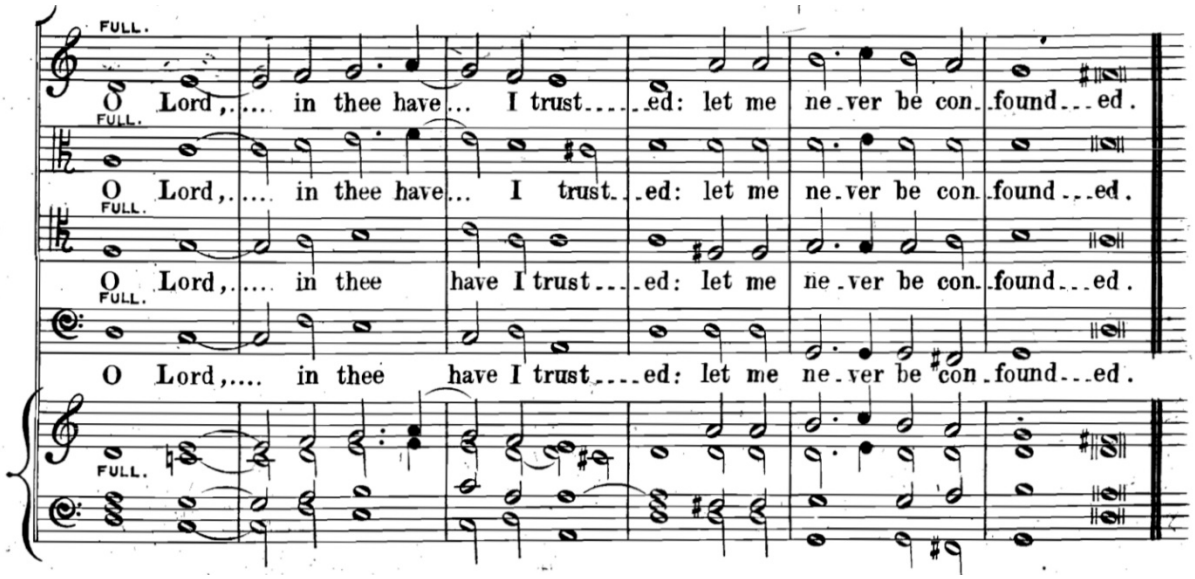
More noteworthy is the fact that Tallis employed the same A chord in his two settings, in spite of the change of tonality, and that Handel also retained the same chord in his F major tonality. Composers deliberately configured a modulation to A minor with the third note raised, which suggests that Handel borrowed Tallis' Te Deum harmony in this verse. Ever since the Tudor period, the fourteenth verse has been an important point in the Te Deum setting. Aplin has examined the endings of verses in the Te Deum settings of Elizabethan musicians such as Tallis, Byrd, Gibbons, Parsons, Sheppard, Parsley and Mundy, in order to "[compare] the cadences in a number of representative settings"[199]. He finds similarities among these works in terms of "A, or occasionally E […] (for) the harmonic resting point for verse 14".[200] Craig Monson identifies "tonal similarities" between the Te Deum settings of Tallis and Byrd from their *Short Service*, referencing Aplin's evidence.[201] This verse sits at the centre of the whole setting and its final

[197] Beeks, "Handel's sacred music", 164.
[198] Murray, "The Arts in Transition", 179.
[199] The complete table can be found in John Aplin, "The Survival of Plainsong in Anglican Music: Some Early English Te Deum Settings", *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 32, no. 2(1979), 274.
[200] Ibid.
[201] Craig Monson, "'Throughout All Generations': Intimations of Influence in the Short Service Styles of Tallis, Byrd and Morley", in *Byrd Studies* (eds.) Alan Brown and Richard Turbet (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 86.

chord has been explored by researchers as a means of differentiating composers' identities. Byrd not only followed Tallis' "cadence on A", but also raised the third note in a hitherto unrecognized fashion. However, after Byrd, this harmonic tradition was treated flexibly by English composers such as Purcell and Croft in their festival settings. Purcell works in the A cadence but without the third note raised, while Croft raised the third of the triad but finished on a different chord (F). Handel, in this vital place in the setting, goes against the practice of his near contemporaries, following the Elizabethan style practices of Tallis and Byrd.

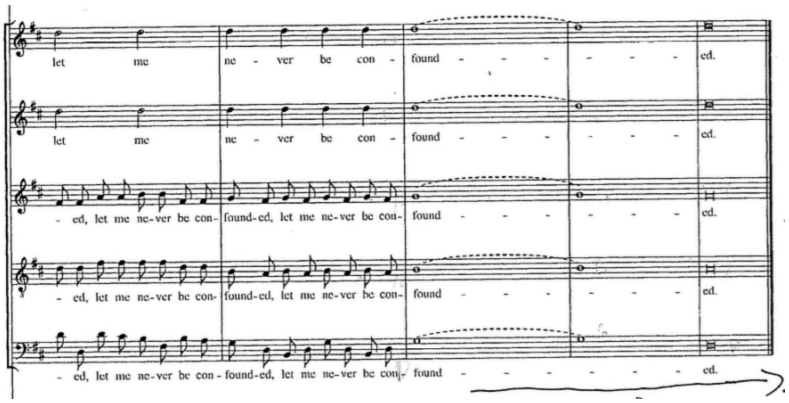
In addition, Handel followed Tallis' plagal-cadence conclusion (on D) to the *Dorian Service* Te Deum (Ex. 2.18 and 2.19), thereby concluding all his first three English canticles with this cadence (see also his *Utrecht Jubilate*). Setting aside the close connection between the two composers' plagal-amen cadences discussed above, Handel's final plagal cadence in Te Deum also suggests the influence of Tallis, because both Croft and Purcell use the authentic cadence to finish their Te Deums.

**Ex. 2.18: Tallis, "Te Deum", *Dorian Service* (final bars).[202]**




[202] Thomas Tallis, *Dorian Service* (London: Vincent Novello, 1870). Web. 22 Jun 2022 <http://imslp.org/wiki/>.

**Ex. 2.19: Handel, 'O Lord in thee have I trusted', *Utrecht Te Deum* HWV 278 (HHAIII, 3: bars 25-29).**




Thus far we have identified two end-of-verse melodic cadences set by Handel which apparently borrowed from Tallis' Te Deum (Dorian Service) setting. In order to investigate further the harmonic influence of Elizabethan harmony on Handel's Utrecht Te Deum, I shall now list the cadences of the full twenty-nine verses of the Tallis, Croft, Purcell and Handel Te Deum settings. (Table. 2.1). As shown, Tallis' Te Deum contains an equal number of Authentic (V-I), Plagal (IV-I), Half (I-V), Lydian (VII6-I) and Phrygian-half (IV6-V) cadences. William Byrd used this kind of cadence pattern in his *Short Service* Te Deum in D while later English composers gradually came to promote the authentic cadence in their settings, including Gibbons, Child and Aldrich. They even abandon the Phrygian-half cadence in their Te Deum works. However, this cadence was revived in the English Te Deum setting by Purcell in 1694 for St Cecilia's Day (see Table 2.1).

**Table 1: End-of-Verse cadence in four composers' Te Deum settings (Tallis, Dorian Service; Purcell, Te Deum for Cecilia's Day in 1694; Croft, Te Deum in 1709; Handel, Utrecht Te Deum in 1713).**

| | Tallis (Dorian Service) | Purcell (Z. 232, 1694) | Croft (1709) | Handel (HWV 278, 1713) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. We praise thee, O God | IV — I; A minor | V — I; D major | V — I; D major | V — I; D major |
| 2. All the earthdoth worship thee | VII6 — I; C major | V — I; D major | V — I; D major | IV6 — V; B minor |
| 3. To thee all Angels cry aloud | IV6 —V ; A minor (end E) | V — I; D major | V — I; D major | I6/4 — V; F sharp minor |
| 4. To thee Cherubim and Seraphim | IV6 — V; G major (end D) | | | |
| 5. Holy, holy, holy | IV — I; A minor | IV6 — V; B minor | IV6 — V; B minor | VII — I; B minor |
| 6. Heaven and earth are replenished | V — I; D major | V — I; D major | V — I; D major | V — I; D major |
| 7. The glorious company of the Apostles | V — I; D major | V — I; B minor (solo) | V — I; F sharp minor (solo) | |
| 8. The goodly fellowship of the Prophets | V — I; G major | V — I; F sharp minor (solo) | V — I: D major (solo) | |
| 9. The noblearmy of Martyrs, praise thee | V — I; G major | V — I; D major (solo) | V — I: D major (solo) | V — I; D minor |
| 10. The Holy church throughout all the world | IV — I; C major | VII6 — I; D major | V — I; D major | V — I; A minor |
| 11. The Father of aninfinite Majesty | IV — I; C major | | V — I; A minor | VII6 — I; F major |
| 12. Thy honourable, true, and only Son | I — V; A minor | V — I; B minor | V6 — I; F major | VII6 — I; C major |
| 13. The Holy ghost also being the Comforter | I — V; A minor | V — I; D major | V — I; D major | IV6 — V; D minor |
| 14. Thou art the King of Glory, O Christ | IV6 — I; A minor | VII6 — I; A major | IV6 — V; B minor | VII — I; A minor |
| 15. Thou art the everlasting Son | IV6 — V; A minor | V — I; D major | V — I; D major | V — I; F major |
| 16. When thou tookest upon thee to deliverman | V — I; C major | V — I; F sharp minor | V — I; F major | V — I; F amjor |
| 17. When thou hadst overcome the sharpness | V — I; C major | V — I; D major | V — I; A minor | V — I; C major |
| 18. Thou sittest on the right hand of God | VII6 — I; C major | V — I; D major | V — I; G major | V — I; C major |
| 19. We believe that thou shalt come | VII6 — I; A minor | | | |
| 20. We therefore pray thee | VII6 — I; G major | V — I; A major | V — I; C minor | IV6 — V; G minor |
| 21. Make them to be numbered | V — I; G major | V — I; D major | V — I; G minor | VII — I; B flat major |
| 22. O Lord, save thy people | V — I; D minor | V — I; B minor | V — I; G minor (solo) | VII — I; A minor |
| 23. Govern them, and lift them up | V — I; C major | V — I; D major | V — I; B minor (solo) | V — I; G minor |
| 24. Day by day, we magnify thee | V — I; C major | I — V; D major | V — I; D major | VII6 — I; A major |
| 25. And we worship thy name | VII6 — I; G minor | V — I; D major | V — I; D major | V — I; D major |
| 26. Vouchsafe, O Lord | V — I; D major | VII — I; C major (solo) | | VII — I; A major |
| 27. O Lord, have mercy upon us | V — I; D major | | | |
| 28. O Lord, Let thy mercy lighten upon us | IV — I; A minor | V — I; D major (solo) | V — I; B minor (solo) | V — I; B minor |
| 29. O Lord, in thee have I trust | IV — I; D major | V — I; D major | V — I; D major | IV — I; D major |

Similar to his compositional colleagues, Purcell's first polyphonic setting was finished before the 1680s without any Phrygian half cadences. But once he had assumed a role as reformer who started the English Te Deum with the festal style including orchestral accompaniment, he added a Phrygian half-cadence in his "holy, holy, holy" verse (see verse 5 of Purcell in the table above). Scholars have paid more attention to the first half of Purcell's "holy, holy, holy" structure than to his primitive renaissance harmony at the end of the verse. Moreover, Purcell's usage apparently influenced his follower William Croft who included a Phrygian cadence in the same verse in his 1709 Te Deum setting (see Croft verse 5). Comparing all the end-of-verse cadences of these two settings clarifies that Croft followed Purcell's harmonic patterns in many other respects including the same cadence type and modulations. In contrast, the cadential pattern of Handel seems a bit abrupt. His *Utrecht* setting includes all the cadential diversity of Tallis' model; he employs the Phrygian half cadence more than Purcell and Croft, which resonates with Tallis' *Dorian Service* Te Deum (Table 2.1) and his Te Deum *"For Meanes"*. Handel also keeps this "three times" tradition in the Chandos Te Deum (HWV 281, 1718) and even his considerably later Dettingen Te Deum (HWV 283, 1743).

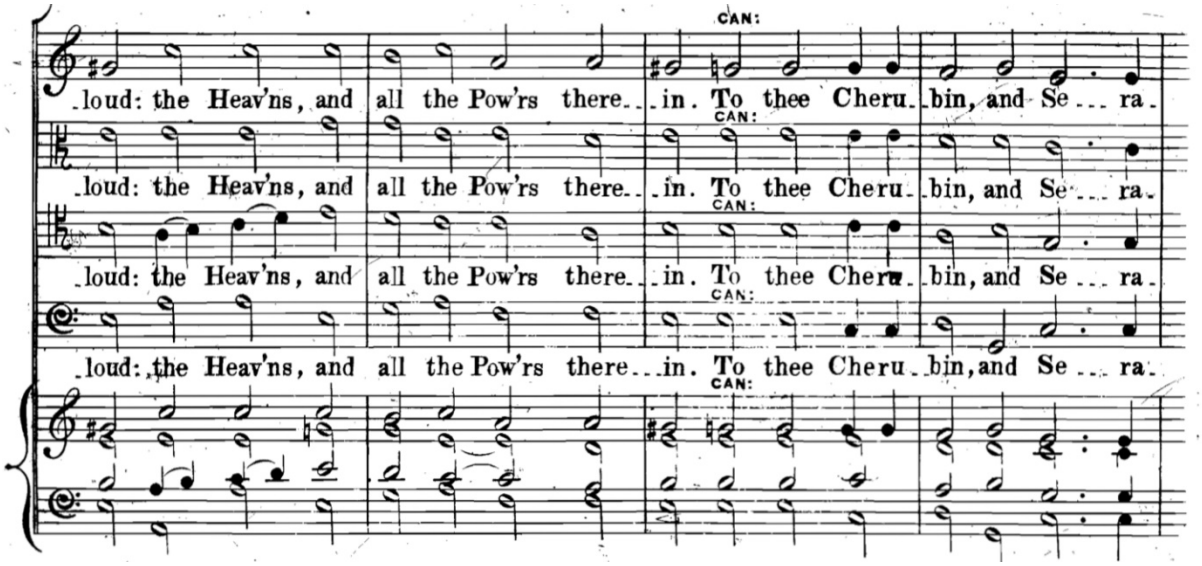
In terms of Handel's Phrygian half-cadence, Jan La Rue believed (2001) that it "[lay] in the works of Corelli"[203]. He cited as an example Handel's Recorder Sonata in G minor (HWV 360) composed c. 1725 and Corelli's sonata Opus I finished in 1683, also claiming that the "absence of Purcell from this list may come as a slight surprise"; furthermore, "Purcell's approach to harmony seems to be more linear than structural"[204]. From our perspective of sacred music, however, we reach the conclusion that Handel had already used the Phrygian half-cadence in his 1713 Te Deum, probably referencing Purcell's use in the same context. The Phrygian half-cadence, comprising an IV6-V chord progression, featured in the Renaissance and earlier[205]. Before the sixteenth century, Arana suggests, it was developed by polyphonic composers on the Iberian Peninsula and commonly used in later Spanish opera.[206] The medieval French composer, Guillaume de Machaut (1300-1377), used the Phrygian half-cadence, with an "I-III6/4-IV6-V" progression, in his rondeau *Rose, liz, printemps, verdure* in 1350. This cadence form likely originated in Medieval secular music, then, and reached most European countries. For later eras, recent scholarship has emphasized the leading role played by the Phrygian half-cadence in the Baroque, including in the fields of operatic, orchestral and keyboard music in late seventeenth-century Europe. La Rue stated that "Numerous Corelli sonatas and concertos employ Phrygian closes for interior slow movements […]".[207] And Peter Manuel (2002) claimed the "Phrygian" tonality in "Spanish and Latin American musics" from Scarlatti's style.[208] In terms of its development in sacred music, La Rue only mentioned the "small minority of Phrygian closes" in Palestrina's *Magnificat*; he believes "Palestrina felt no need to use Phrygian cadences".[209]

However, before Palestrina the Phrygian cadence had already been employed prominently in Tallis' Te Deum settings. Handel did not borrow this kind of cadence directly from European secular harmonic tradition when he used it in his Te Deum setting. As we can see, according to his *Dorian Service* setting, the first two verses follow the "I-VI-IV6-V" pattern (Ex. 2. 20 and 2. 21) while the last "Thou art the everlasting son of the father" verse comprises "V-VI-IV6-V" (Ex. 2. 22). He preferred to use the "VI-IV6" progression in advance of V where the lowest note is the same for both, and the first chord in the pattern was tonic or dominant to

[203] Jan La Rue, "Bifocal Tonality: An Explanation for Ambiguous Baroque Cadences", *The Journal of Musicology* 18, no. 2 (2001), 286.
[204] Ibid, 287.
[205] Finn Egeland Hansen, "Cadential Harmony", in *Layers of Musical Meaning,* volume 33 (Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum Press, 2006), 208.
[206] Fernando Carmona Arana. "La Cadencia Frigia. Elemento De Cohesión Entre Estéticas Y Países TITLE: The Phrygian Cadence. An Element for the Cohesion between Aesthetics and Countries." *DEDiCA Revista de Educação e Humanidades (dreh)* 3 (2012), 165.
[207] Rue, "Bifocal Tonality: An Explanation for Ambiguous Baroque Cadences", 286.
[208] Peter Manuel, "From Scarlatti to 'Guantanamera': Dual Tonicity in Spanish and Latin American Musics", *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 55, no. 2 (Summer 2002), 311-336.
[209] Rue, "Bifocal Tonality", 288.

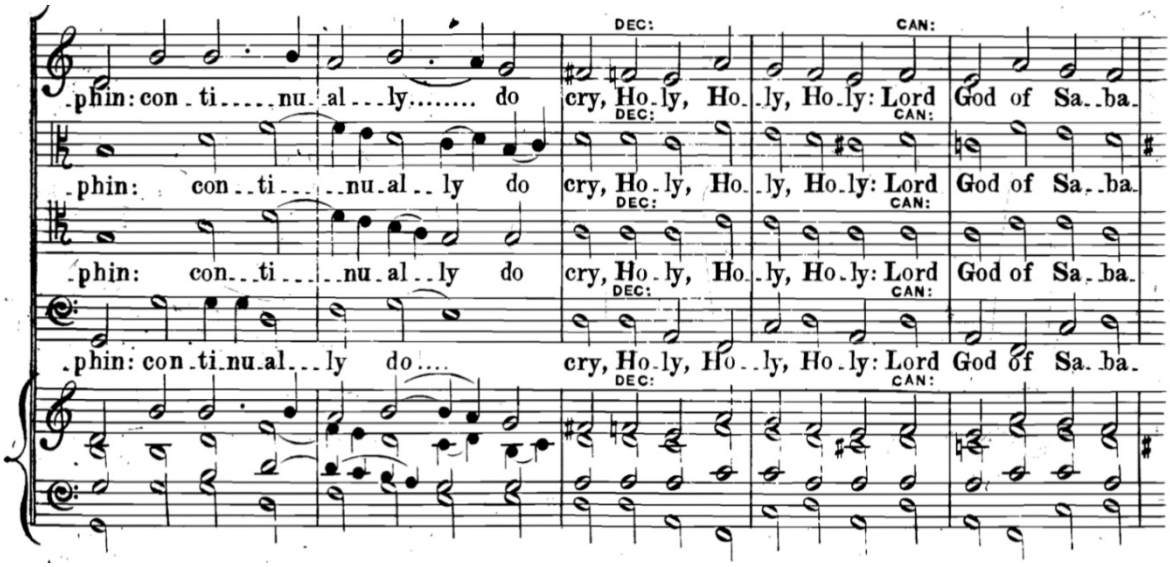
create his special Phrygian half cadence pattern "I-VI-IV6-V" or "V-VI-IV6-V". Although Tallis' Phrygian half cadence disappeared from Anglican history for a long while after Byrd, Purcell made reference to the "V-VI-IV6-V" from the Tallis tradition (Ex. 2. 23); this usage influenced his follower William Croft who included a Phrygian cadence in the same verse and with the same "V-VI-IV6-V" progression in his 1709 Te Deum setting.

**Ex. 2.20: Tallis, "Te Deum", *Dorian Service* (bars 10-13).[210]**

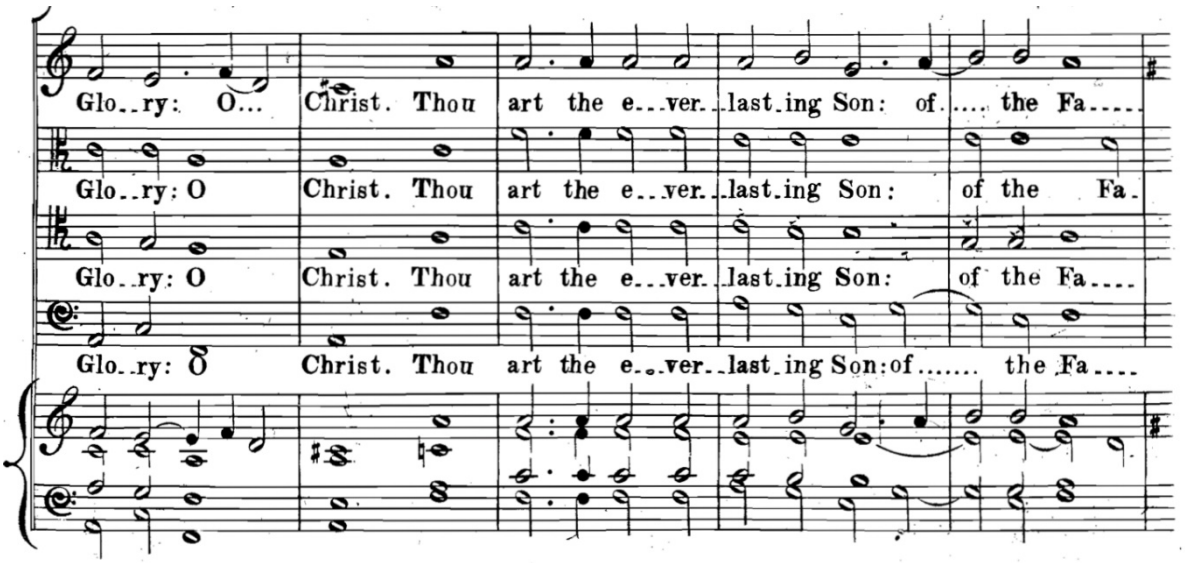



[210] Thomas Tallis, *Dorian Service* (London: Vincent Novello, 1870). Web. 22 Jun 2022 <http://imslp.org/wiki/>.

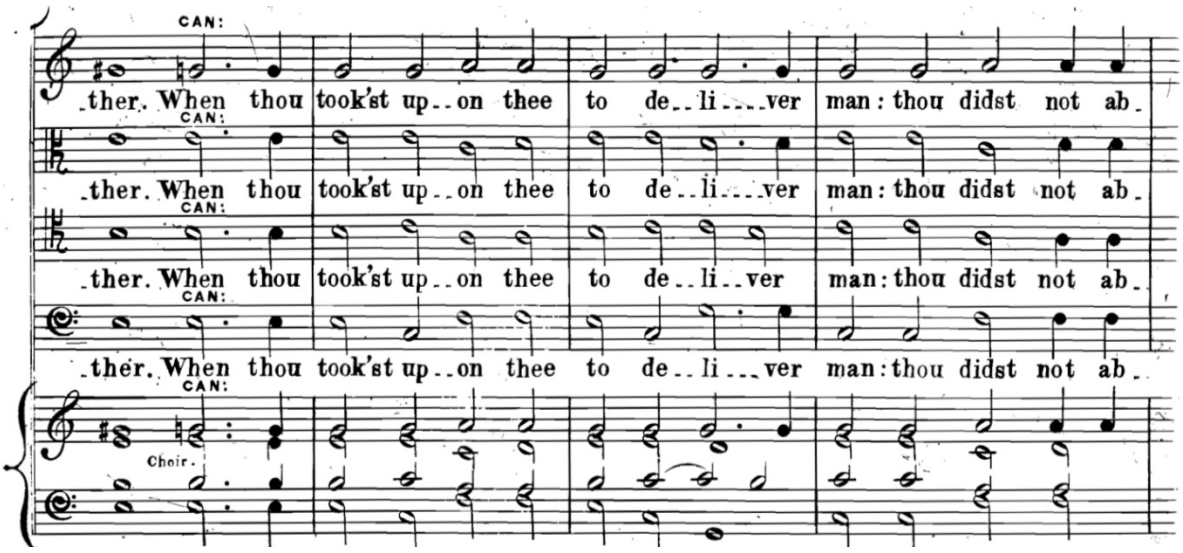
**Ex. 2.21: Tallis, "Te Deum", Dorian Service (bars 14-18).[211]**




**Ex. 2.22: Tallis, "Te Deum", Dorian Service (bars 42-50).[212]**




[211] Ibid.
[212] Ibid.


CAN:
ther. When thou took'st up on thee to de li ver man: thou didst not ab
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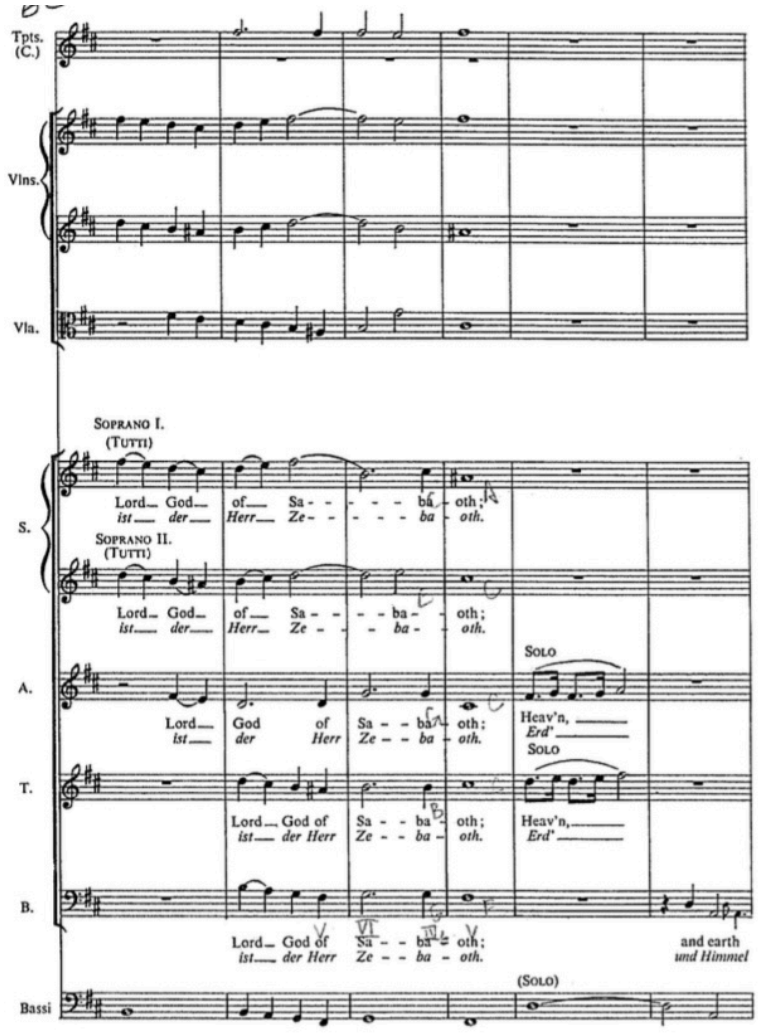
**Ex. 2.23: Purcell, *Te Deum Laudamus in D*, Z 232 (bars 60-65).**[213]




The Phrygian half cadence of Handel's Utrecht Te Deum has a more uncertain origin. La Rue believes that the "probable source" of it was Corelli's Trio Sonatas from 1683. Here, Corelli employed the Phrygian half cadence in his Grave from No. 5. It is clear that he uses the "I-I6-IV6-V" progression, but Handel the "V6-VI-IV6-V" in his Utrecht Te Deum. Handel's Anglican Phrygian cadence from the Tallis-Purcell tradition is only one of several connections. Like his plagal-amen cadence, Handel extended this harmonic pattern to his later Te Deum settings (Table. 2.2) including Chandos Te Deum (HWV 281) and Te Deum in A major (HWV 282). As outlined in the table below, Handel employed a similar cadence pattern in his three

[213] Henry Purcell, *Te Deum and Jubilate for St. Cecilia's Day 1694.*

early Te Deum settings, with the Phrygian half cadence appearing in the same position each time. In addition, in the Chandos Te Deum, Handel included another Tallis "I-VI-IV6-V" progression in his twentieth verse when it appears neither in Purcell nor Croft. Also, in his Te Deum in A major, he used this progression in the same verse.

**Table 2: End-of-Verse cadence in three Handel's Te Deum settings.**

| | Handel (HWV 278, 1713) | Handel (HWV 281, 1718) | Handel (HWV 282, 1726) |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. We praise thee, O God | V --- I; D major | V --- I; B minor | V6 --- I; A major |
| 2. All the earthdoth worship thee | IV6 --- V; B minor | IV6 --- V; C major | IV6 --- V; B minor |
| 3. To thee all Angels cry aloud | I6/4 --- V; F sharp minor | I --- V; B falt major | I --- V; F sharp minor |
| 4. To thee Cherubim and Seraphim | | | |
| 5. Holy, holy, holy | VII --- I; B minor | VII6 --- I; F major | VII6 --- I; A major |
| 6. Heaven and earth are replenished | V --- I; D major | V --- I; B flat major | V --- I; F sharp minor |
| 7. The glorious company of the Apostles | | V --- I; B flat major | V --- I; B minor |
| 8. The goodly fellowship of the Prophets | | V --- I; D minor | V --- I; D major |
| 9. The noble army of Martyrs, praise thee | V --- I; D minor | | |
| 10. The Holy church throughout all the world | V --- I; A minor | V --- I; G minor | I --- V; B minor |
| 11. The Father of an infinite Majesty | VII6 --- I; F major | VII6 --- I; E flat major | I --- V; B minor |
| 12. Thy honourable, true, and only Son | VII6 --- I; C major | VII6 --- I; B flat major | V --- I; B minor |
| 13. The Holy ghost also being the Comforter | IV6 --- V; D minor | IV6 --- V; G major | V --- I; F sharp minor |
| 14. Thou art the King of Glory, O Christ | VII --- I; A minor | V --- I; F major | |
| 15. Thou art the everlasting Son | V --- I; F major | V --- I; B flat major | VII6 --- I; A major |
| 16. When thou tookest upon thee to deliver man | V --- I; F major | V --- I; F major (solo) | V --- I; A major (solo) |
| 17. When thou hadst overcome the sharpness | V --- I; C major | V --- I; C major | V --- I; G major (solo) |
| 18. Thou sittest on the right hand of God | V --- I; C major | V --- I; G major | V --- I; D major (solo) |
| 19. We believe that thou shalt come | | | |
| 20. We therefore pray thee | IV6 --- V; G minor | IV6 --- V; E minor | IV6 --- V; E minor |
| 21. Make them to be numbered | VII --- I; B flat major | V --- I; G major | V --- I; G major (solo) |
| 22. O Lord, save thy people | VII --- I; A minor | | |
| 23. Govern them, and lift them up | V --- I; G minor | V --- I; E minor | V --- I; E minor |
| 24. Day by day, we magnify thee | VII6 --- I; A major | VII6 --- I; A major | VII6 --- I; G major |
| 25. And we worship thy name | V --- I; D major | V --- I; D major | V --- I; C major |
| 26. Vouchsafe, O Lord | VII --- I; A major | V --- I; F major (solo) | V --- I; A minor |
| 27. O Lord, have mercy upon us | | V --- I; D minor (solo) | V --- I; E minor (solo) |
| 28. O Lord, Let thy mercy lighten upon us | V --- I; B minor | V --- I; G minor | V --- I; A minor (solo) |
| 29. O Lord, in thee have I trust | IV --- I; D major | V --- I; B flat major | V --- I; A major |

## 2.6 Conclusion

From the evidence of the first two English church compositions by Handel, the rhythmic patterns and harmonic processes related to Elizabethan heritage exerted an influence on Handel. The works of Tallis and Handel are chronologically far apart. But their connections suggest that Tallis' harmonies "creep into the Englishman's heart", particularly in the context of the plagal-amen cadence and the Phrygian half cadence. However, at this stage, Handel's understanding of Tallis' music seems fairly rudimentary, unsurprisingly perhaps given Handel's short time in London thus far. To some extent, it is more like a kind of "borrowing" of one or two bars by Tallis, even sometimes at the same pitch and note value, than stylistic appropriation or assimilation. For *As pants the hart*, a composition in Handel's German and Italian style, an English tail is added that cites the ending of Tallis' *Oh Lord, in Thee is all my trust*. Subsequently, in the same way, *Utrecht Te Deum* drew on Tallis' practices. The question remains, though, as to why the work achieved such great success exceeding the settings of other native composers of the time.

On the whole, the harmony of Handel's *Utrecht* Te Deum seems like a captivating musical puzzle, where different styles are placed in their appropriate positions. Although Handel was not familiar with English ancient style and even the English language, he sensibly employed Tallis' harmony in the same rhythm to the words of prayer and praise including "amen", "holy" and "O Christ", which effectively enabled his work to be identified as an English output promptly accepted by English audiences. In addition, Handel animated Tallis' "block" rhythmic pattern throughout his whole setting, using rests or instruments to build short homophonic phrases that enlivened the choral structure. At the same time, although Handel mainly relied on choruses in this setting, limited solo parts also appeared in every movement, which means he wrote with elaborate vocal parts and concomitant emotional expression in mind. His rivals, in contrast, were criticized for a less flexible attitude towards choral and solo writing; in "Vouch safe, O Lord", for example, both Purcell and Croft employed the solo voice from beginning to end while Handel switched to homophony for the second half of the text. Furthermore, Handel retained much of his previous compositional style when writing in the "ancient music" tradition. He used orchestral patterns from Corelli to open his instrumental overture in a similarly grand homophonic form, while also employing the repeated chord from Tallis' *Preces* to heighten his repeated-note melody.

Of course this was just the beginning of Handel's English musical journey. From 1715-1718, he reached a compositional climax in relation to English music. He temporarily stopped writing Italian works at this time and finished twelve English sacred settings (eleven Chandos Anthems and one Chandos Te Deum). His years of experiencing English harmony are reflected well in his Chandos church works and the examples discussed in my study. As explained above, rather than simply replicating Tallis' single plagal-amen cadence as a postscript, Handel began to vary Tallis "three amens" with the "VI-I, I-IV, IV-I" progressions in his Chandos Anthems (see *I will magnify thee*, HWV 250 and *The Lord is my light* HWV 255 for examples). In my opinion, he also incorporated Tallis' "I-VI-IV6-V" Phrygian half-cadence, which distinguished itself from the most examples of English composers between Byrd and Purcell. Tudor harmony, then, had begun to exert an influence on his music. Further, the effects and influence of Tudor harmony were not limited to sacred music. At the end of 1718, he finished his first English opera (or English pastoral masque) *Acis and Galatea*, which can be considered a forerunner to his English oratorios. It is interesting to find the Phrygian half-cadence here, at the close of the Sinfonia movement in a "V-VI-IV6-V" progression. And he continued using the progression

subsequently in his first English oratorio *Esther.* We shall now turn in more detail to the impact of English music traditions on Handel's English oratorios.

# 3

# A National Foundation for Handel's English Opera: *Acis and Galatea* (1718)

## 3.1 Introduction

As explained in Chapter 2, Handel's first two English sacred works are distinguished from other masterpieces by native composers, such as Purcell and Croft, which can be attributed to the influence of the Elizabethan church. By 1718, with twelve Cannons anthems (1717-1718) in hand, Handel followed up this success in the field of English church music, solidifying his reputation as a national composer. At the same time, his two Cannons masques, *Acis and Galatea* and the first version of *Esther* (HWV 50a, ?1718) were notably successful among a series of parallel attempts to resuscitate English opera c. 1715 comprising *Calypso and Telemachus* (1712) by Johann Ernst Galliard (1687-1749), and Pepusch's *Venus and Adonis* (1715) and *Apollo and Daphne* (1716). More importantly, these two masques effectively anticipated his later English oratorio, especially by integrating chorus movements that drew stylistically from his earlier anthems, thereby echoing the sensibilities of sacred music. The employment of the nationalistic subtext delivered by the concept of 'ancient music', from sacred to dramatic Handel compositions, appears distinct and smooth. However, situating his Cannons masques in the historical context of the 1710s shows Handel's compositions also having to adapt to English indigenous operatic tradition. If the sacred works analysed in Chapter 2 showed Handel's composing talent relative to Elizabethan harmony, then his Cannons masques will give us reason to confirm his status as an English dramatist.

In examining the nationalism of English opera after the Restoration, my Introduction explored semi-opera, with its employment of the spoken vernacular satisfying a peculiarly English interest in the rational aesthetic. At the beginning of the eighteenth century, this genre was almost driven from the London stage because of the Lord Chamberlain's edict and vicious competition between the theatres,[214] while its interpolated Masque music was retained as an independent genre. Before that, continuing the tradition of low profile since Charles II era, English masques commonly appeared as afterpiece or interludes in a spoken drama.[215] This

[214] Gilman, "The Theory and Practice of English Opera and Related Genres in London, 1675-1745", 40-41.
[215] Ellen T. Harris, "Handel's Pastorals in the German, Italian, and English Styles", in *Handel and the Pastoral Tradition* (Oxford University Press, 1980), 195; Michael Burden, "The Independent Masque 1700-1800: A Catalogue", *Royal Musical Association Research Chronicle* 1995, no. 28 (1995), 59.

even includes Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas* (Z. 626, 1689) being broken up to accompany the performance of Shakespeare's *Measure for Measure* in 1700. Here it is necessary to emphasize some subtle differences between the circumstances of Masque music in the spoken play and those in semi-opera. As outlined in my Introduction, in keeping the poetic verses full of rational thoughts from being threatened, the use of musical Masque in a semi-opera is more like the extravagant and frothy ornament – as a spectacular addition which neither appears at the same time as the spoken dialogue nor promotes the episodes. A good example is Purcell's *Fairy Queen*. However, in his *Dido and Aeneas*, like the situation for other contemporary classical masques, its music contributed to the integrity of a drama and laid the foundation for the development of this genre.

English masques aroused nationalistic arguments when identified as the only indigenous operatic tradition after the Restoration. As Taruskin indicated, the major trigger for nationalistic disparagement in the context of English masques post-Restoration was the foreign composer, Luis Grabu. He faced criticism for his perceived inability to set English words correctly in his work *Albion and Albanius* (1685).[216] Therefore, with Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas* performed later, modern scholars identified an "idiosyncratic English declamation" which abounds in this native composer's composition and attributed this characteristic metric pattern to an important national identity in English theatre stage. From this point on, we note that the implications of English nationalism may change according to theatrical context. There are seventeenth-century English playwrights desirous of highlighting their "English genius" as evidence of rational expression in their poetic librettos, while their contemporary composers were more than happy to reach a perfect blend of English prosody and operatic music. In my observation, the emergence and increasing popularity of all-sung masques indicate a shift in focus away from the semi-opera as the primary form of indigenous English opera. This change suggests that the distinctively English characteristics traditionally associated with semi-operas became less prominent as Italian opera exerted a growing influence on the English stage. In my thesis, while the concept of 'ancient music' is primarily associated with the rational aesthetic, this chapter will address both aspects when examining Handel's early English dramatic works. Taruskin pointed out some other "typically masquelike" figures in Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas*, including the "dancing-air-plus-chorus" structure following most recitatives.[217] This Purcellian parameter of English masque reminds us to connect it with Handel's later treatment.

[216] Richard Taruskin, "Courts Resplendent, Overthrown, Restored", 132-33.
[217] Ibid, 134.

Unfortunately, Purcell's English declamation experienced controversies after the composer's death, and Harris has identified four types of "operatic productions" on the early eighteenth-century English stage, including a group of musicians hoping that they could revive 'the Purcellian models', which "did not survive the decade".[218] John Dennis was regarded as a good representative who published his essay in 1706 to alert the English audience to the fact that Italianate operatic music had already shaken the foundations of the English mind.[219] Nevertheless, what he apparently refused to recognise is that the Italian model was the only feasible form from which to develop English opera at this time. Burden divided the development of early English all-sung opera into three stages, in 1700, 1715 and 1732 respectively.[220] These stages collectively mark a period of intensive patriotic activity from 1700 to 1732. The last two stages will be aligned with turning points in Handel's 'ancient music' outputs in my thesis: *Acis and Galatea* and *Esther*. On March 21, 1700, the *London Gazette* reported a competition in setting music for William Congreve's libretto *The Judgement of Paris*. This might have been a last hurrah for the indigenous operatic tradition before English opera entirely entered the phase of the "Italian manner". The award-winning composers, John Weldon (1676-1736), John Eccles (1668-1735), Daniel Purcell (1664-1717), and Godfrey Finger (1655-1730), presented us with instances of what Burden identified as the classical masque. When reviewing these scores, Richard Platt explains that "none of the scores has any recitative, but there is a good deal of florid arioso typical of contemporary English vocal music. Eccles' music, […], may have seemed rather old-fashioned".[221] Subsequently, Burden's description more directly claims the relationship of this group of works to Purcellian masque tradition, that "the music of the scores was otherwise fairly predictable in idiom and form, and written in a lighter, post-Purcellian style."[222]

In 1715, when Colley Cibber promoted his new libretto *Venus and Adonis* to the stage after John Hughes' failure of *Calypso and Telemachus*, it took on the role of a barrier, separating the English opera of indigenous tradition from a new journey that featured "[compositions] after the Italian Manner". There is also an interesting transformation in that the librettists seem more intent on cooperating with German composers than their native ones; examples include Galliard (the composer of *Calypso and Telemachus*), Pepusch (the composer of *Venus and*

[218] Harris, "Handel's Pastorals in the German, Italian, and English Styles", 193.
[219] John Dennis, *An essay on the opera's after the Italian manner, which are about to be establish'd on the English stage: with some reflections on the damage which they may bring to the publick*, 9.
[220] Burden, "Opera in Eighteenth-Century England: English Opera, Masques, Ballad Operas", in *The Cambridge Companion to Eighteenth-Century Opera* (eds.) Anthony R. DelDonna and Pierpaolo Polzonetti (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 2009).
[221] Richard Platt, "Theatre Music I", in *The Blackwell History of Music in Britain*, vol. 4, *The Eighteenth Century*, 99.
[222] Burden, "Opera in Eighteenth-Century England: English Opera, Masques, Ballad Operas", 209.

*Adonis*), and finally Handel. This can be attributed to their dual compositional experiences of setting music in English and Italian, and these collaborative practices underscored the growth of private functions for the Scriblerus poets and German composers Pepusch and Handel. The intersection of their thoughts, combined with their musical activities during the years at Cannons, predict Pepusch's 'ancient music' and its manifestations in Handel's oratorios.

In fact, the Scriblerus club contributed to the development of pastoral poetry, playing a considerable role in the literary form of Handel's *Acis and Galatea*. The members, including John Arbuthnot, Jonathan Swift and John Gay, were active as the strong ideological supporters behind Alexander Pope and exerted a heated debate with Ambrose Philips in about 1710 "concerning the true literary form" of their pastoral opera.[223] They were naturally divided by their positions into two factions. The camp of Pope put all of their efforts into the classical and Arcadian style, while Philips insisted on the development of the realistic and rustic style. However, as Harris revealed, "both factions in this controversy condemned Guarini's *Il pastor fido*" promoting the use of "wit", "conceit", and "intrigue" without "a certain majesty in simplicity".[224] This is important information, as it not only deepens our impression of the English artistic aesthetics of the "simple and divine", but also helps us understand the negative contemporary reaction to Handel's *Il pastor fido* (HWV 8a, 1712). *Acis and Galatea* marked a significant achievement in Handel's English opera career, successfully navigating the complexities of English taste. While Handel had explored the genre of English opera before—his earlier works leaned more towards an Italian style in a diminutive and light manner, often eliminating elements of chorus and dance in a French style—*Acis and Galatea* resonated with audiences in a unique way. Unlike his earlier attempts, this work effectively aligned with English sensibilities, thereby solidifying its significance in Handel's oeuvre. This chapter will focus on analysing the development of a nationalistic subtext in *Acis and Galatea*, emphasizing its role as a milestone in Handel's English career.

Composed after the Italian manner, Pepusch's pastoral masque, *Venus and Adonis*, used secco recitatives and airs in a da capo form, with the chamber group emphasising strings and woodwind. This was also displayed in *Apollo and Daphne* and *The Death of Dido*. However, in Handel's *Acis and Galatea*, as I will show, there are various relationships to Purcellian masque models neglected by other all-sung masques and idyllic pastoral scenes satisfying to English aesthetic culture. At the same time, Handel separated the choral setting from its

[223] Harris, "Handel's Pastorals in the German, Italian, and English Styles", 191.
[224] Ibid, 191-92.

common pastoral experience that mixed in dances, making it a structurally independent musical force. Handel was explicitly searching for a new path to a sustainable English opera, and this chapter will present the musical progress of this path, from his predecessors' contribution in the national foundation of this genre to his own practice and reform of choruses which illuminate the road ahead for his oratorios.

## 3.2 The English Masque in the Blow-Purcell tradition

### English musical declamation

By the end of the seventeenth century, the development of the English masque was neither coherent nor steady. Blow's *Venus and Adonis* (1683) eliminated monologue parts stemming from the spoken play tradition in its all-sung musical settings, which fundamentally confirmed the form of the indigenous English masque. This work suffered from Charles II's cold attitude, while the later *Albion and Albanius* (1685) by a foreign composer he admired, as mentioned above, aroused 'the first expressions of musical nationalism' around the accuracy of music prosody in English musical works.[225] Grabu's self-centred musical language and his inappropriate English declamation produced an interesting contrast with the tone of John Dryden's preface. Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas* (1689) marked a significant positive shift for the English masque, enabling the genre to withstood nationalistic crisis on account of its ability to display the declamatory style in a perfect balance of florid style and English accentuation patterns.[226] Therefore, scholars often considered Blow and Purcell's masques illustrative of English tradition on account of their contribution to establishing English declamation.

In my view, the development of musical declamation in English masques across the seventeenth century demonstrated the wisdom of poetry and rational taste in the context of English dramatic music. Harris examined the musical declamation of Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas*, and traced its 'earliest musical precedent': William Lawes' *The Triumph of Peace* (1634), where the composer improved Nicholas Lanier's imitation of Italian recitative style and set the English monologue in 'a strict metrical framework yet with no rhythmic patterning'.[227] As Harris explained,

> The declamatory air was deemed more suitable for dramatic situations as the music was more subordinated to the words. […] In some ways, the declamatory air of the first half of the seventeenth century substituted in England for continental recitative. However, it never became as emotionally charged or

[225] Taruskin, "Courts Resplendent, Overthrown, Restored", 132.
[226] Harris, "Musical Declamation", in *Henry Purcell's Dido and Aeneas*, 2ed (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018), 98-122.
[227] Ibid, 101.

> affective; rather, its melodic structure and harmony remained largely triadic and often static. Its purpose was more to heighten the words than to reflect their emotional content.[228]

This quotation provides evidence that, prior to Blow-Purcell period, English masque was at an early stage, different from continental recitative-air form in being focused only on narrative expression rather than on affective implications. Lawes' musical declamation restricted the expression of emotion, and the irregular rhythm met the different accents of monologue, thereby achieving clear articulation.

The development of Lawes' declamatory style was interrupted as interest in French dance airs grew after the Restoration. Harris has pointed out 'the changes in style' of Mathew Locke's declamatory music. In *Cupid and Death* (1653 and 1659), Locke set up florid melismas on 'unimportant words' and the music "leans toward a more lyrical and embellished setting".[229] However, to modern ears, on the one hand, frequently florid melismas do affect the accuracy of the monologue's articulation. On the other hand, the repetitive rhythmic patterns of dance music satisfy the expressive demands of lyric poetry. As Ian Spink indicates,

> During the 70's the triple-time air, modelled on the rhythm and form of the dance, reached the peak of its popularity.
>
> For the age of Dryden was a classical period in which polished regularity became one of the principal technical aims of poetry. This new ideal found its most typical expression in the heroic couplet, rhyming and stopped; a powerful vehicle for lofty or satirical themes but ill-suited to song. As a result, artificiality of feeling affected lyric forms so that correctness and ornament replaced the fervour and metaphysical conceits of an earlier generation.[230]

Consequently, when Blow and Purcell adapted the English declamatory style—characterized by its specific accentuation patterns—from their predecessors, it likely had a dual impact. First, it contributed to refining the tuneful music settings, marked by their regularly polished rhythms. Second, it perpetuated English artistic norms.

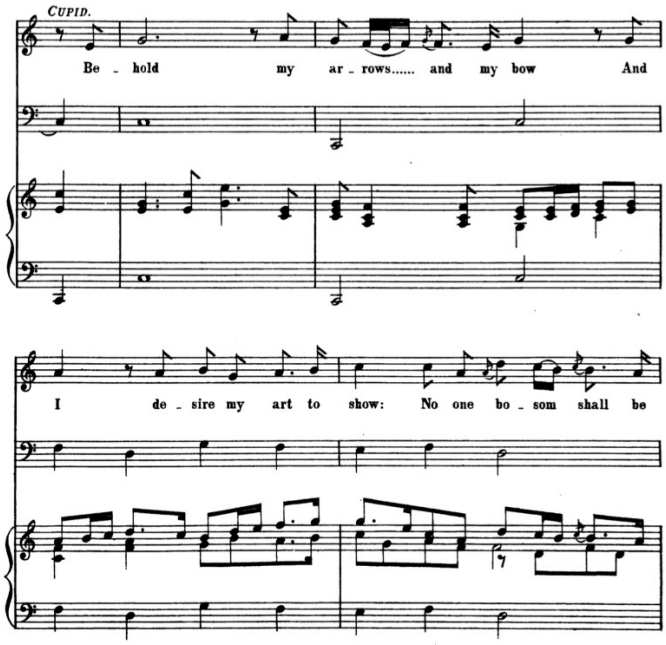
**The nationalistic subtext in Blow-Purcell masque**

The musical enhancement of the prologue enabled Blow's *Venus and Adonis* to appear in a musically continuous form distinguished from its predecessors. Following the overture, a typical declamatory air led by Cupid ("Behold My Arrows") opens the prologue. From this point onward, Blow mainly employs regular rhythmic phrases to set all the monologue and dialogue of the characters, while various declamatory strategies can be identified that clearly

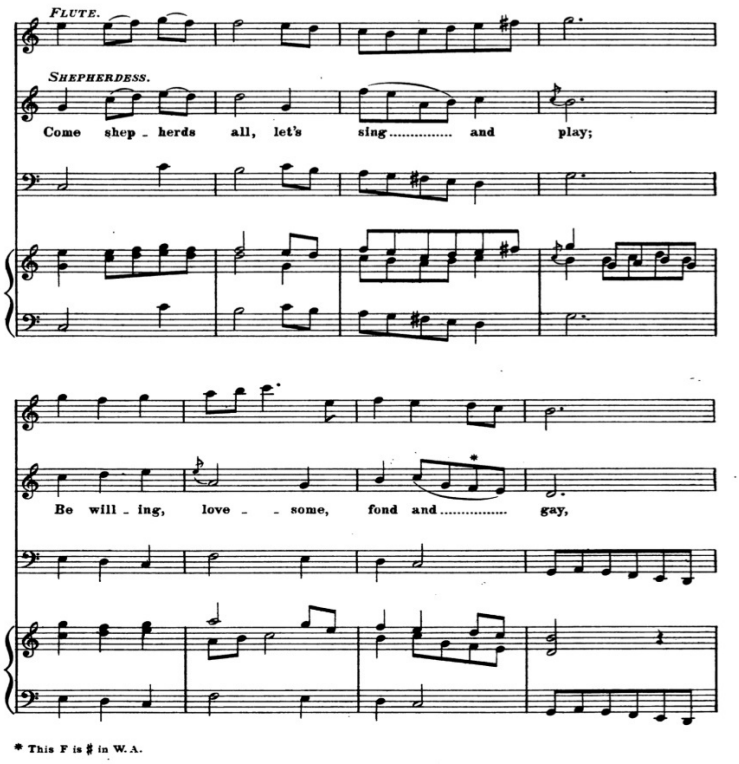
[228] Ibid, 104.
[229] Ibid, 105.
[230] Ian Spink, "Ayres and Songs sung at Court" in *English Song: Dowland to Purcell* (New York: Taplinger, 1986), 151-52.

present the composers' exquisite skills and ability to balance them. Blow uses a dramatic short-long rhythm on Cupid's initial "Be-hold" followed by a rest, then a slightly longer and steady phrase completes the rest of the first rhythmic pattern (Ex. 3.1). The musical setting generally conforms to the English articulation, and the recurring rhythm was slightly adjusted by the composer due to the requirements of the recitation, although short ornaments appear on the unimportant words, such as "and" and "shall". This obviously contrasts with the ensuring solo and chorus "Come shepherds all" which is in triple meter and strictly repetitive rhythmic patterns (Ex.3.2). This dance song is tuneful, and Blow places a set of downward quavers on the word "and", reflecting a concern for musical beauty rather than accurate stress.

**Ex. 3.1: Blow, Cupid "Behold My Arrows" from *Venus and Adonis* (OEE: bars 1-5).**

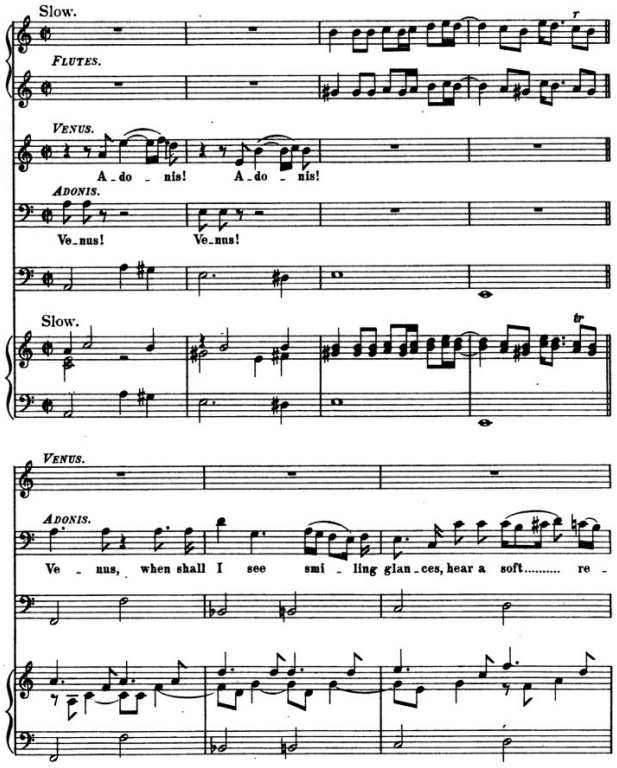


**Ex. 3.2: Blow, Shepherdess "Come Shepherds all" from *Venus and Adonis* (OEE: bars 1-8).**




The prologue concludes with Cupid's dance, and the subsequent Act I opens with instrumental curtain-music ("The Act Tune") dominated by the sound of the flute. There is no rich emotional content throughout the act, but changes of style are witnessed in the characters' songs. The dialogue between Venus and Adonis at the beginning is a good example of Blow's regularly rhythmic patterning disappearing, and he uses a more continental style, the elusive and interpolated instrumental accompaniment, to promote emotional content (Ex.3.2). Moreover, his chromatic writing effectively enhances the word painting of the word he would like to emphasize; for example, we witness a melisma at a turn figure on the word "soft" (Ex.3.3). This technique is also used to depict Venus's sorrow at the beginning of the final Act "Adonis uncall'd for sighs".

**Ex. 3.3: Blow, "Venus! Adonis!" from *Venus and Adonis* (OEE: bars 1-7).**




We observe a more coherent and unified declamatory style in Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas*. As Harris explained, lacking the alternation of recitative and aria, the "contiguous song forms" distinguished *Dido and Aeneas*.[231] In comparison with Blow's music, Purcell made improvements in English songs, mainly employing binary form. This meant that his contiguous songs created a boundary between narrative and affective expression in each movement. With the increasing influence of continental style, English masque integrated more emotional and tuneful content. Unlike Blow who was hesitant to balance the florid style and English accented precision, Purcell separated the two. It seems that English declamation made good use of inherited materials in this respect; some of Lawes' openings surprisingly appear in *Dido and Aeneas*. Among these, Dido's "Ah, Belinda" is particularly expressive, as its triple repeated "Ah" at the beginning takes us back to Lawes' *The Triumph of Peace*, which is similar to the opening of "Hence, ye profane".

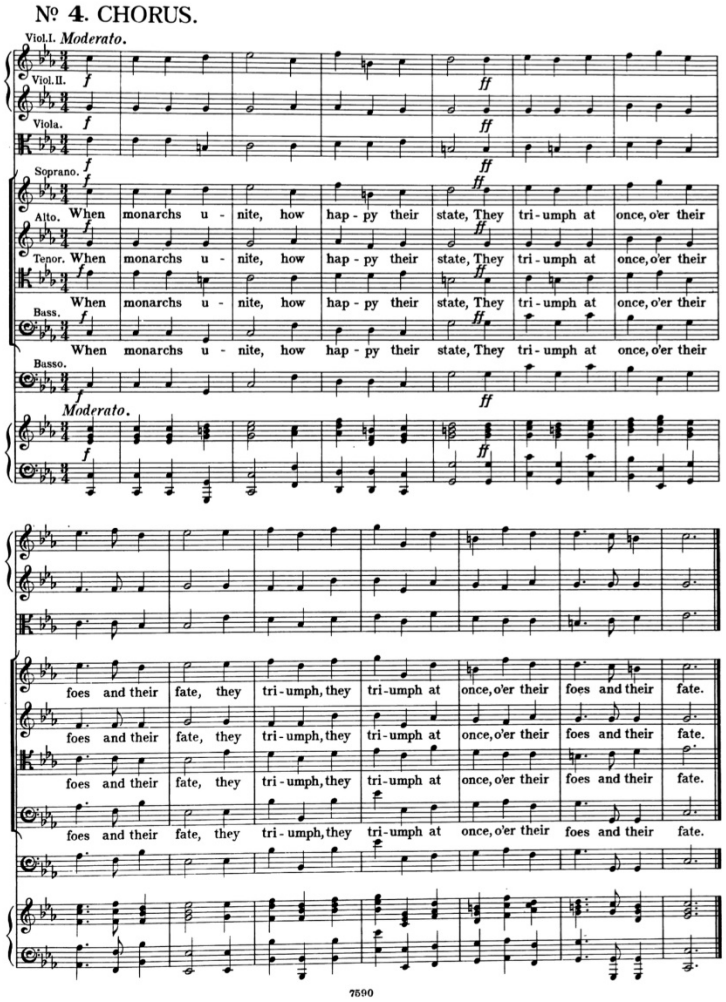
More importantly, Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas* makes us notice the role of choruses in an English masque of the age and the musical ideas displayed. In a similar fashion to Blow's masque, the choruses basically appear as a repetition of the previous solo part without

[231]Harris, "Musical Declamation", 113.

independent musical content. Their connection to the dance part is not only reflected in the repetitive rhythm in triple time, but also in the musical language. At the end of Act I, before the dance of the furies, there is a four-part chorus using the same musical material. The lyrical music is sung by the chorists, then accompanies the dancers. This practice also appears in Blow's *Venus and Adonis* where he uses the tuneful choral setting "Mortals below, Cupids above" to praise the goodness of the Grace, and then the Graces begins to dance to the same musical accompaniment to end Act II. Here, it is easy to understand that the choruses are only incorporated in order to provide structural force to the masques in the Blow-Purcell tradition.

Besides, the chorus "When monarchs unite" integrated into the first Act by Purcell shows his response to contemporary dramaturgical aesthetics. This chorus is in the middle between Dido and Belinda's dialogue and Dido's monologue. Both songs follow in standard declamatory style with the regularly recurring rhymed couplets. The music is calm without distinct harmonic change, and the libretto depicts Dido's worries about her dangerous love. However, the choral music provides a strong contrast with the songs in a brisk and vivid effect (Ex.3.4). The libretto "When monarchs unite, how happy their state | They triumph at once o'er their foes and their fate" also takes on an untimely air of optimism, which seems to be a true reflection of Dido's inner emotion different from her remorse and reflection. The chorus in fact indicates that Dido will be lost and will fall in love, which will also ensure her tragic fate. This practice illustrates the change in the status of the musical element in English masque – namely its ability to promote the plot. At the same time, it also shows Purcell identifying the power of music in a single simple way. Consistent with the playwrights' taste, Purcell uses choral music to narrate Dido's inner conflict, which seems to be a seduction luring her into a desperate entanglement with Aeneas. Nevertheless, as I shall show in Chapter 4, this perception will be overturned by Handel in his oratorios.

**Ex. 3.4: Purcell, Chorus "When monarchs unite" from *Dido and Aeneas.*[232]**



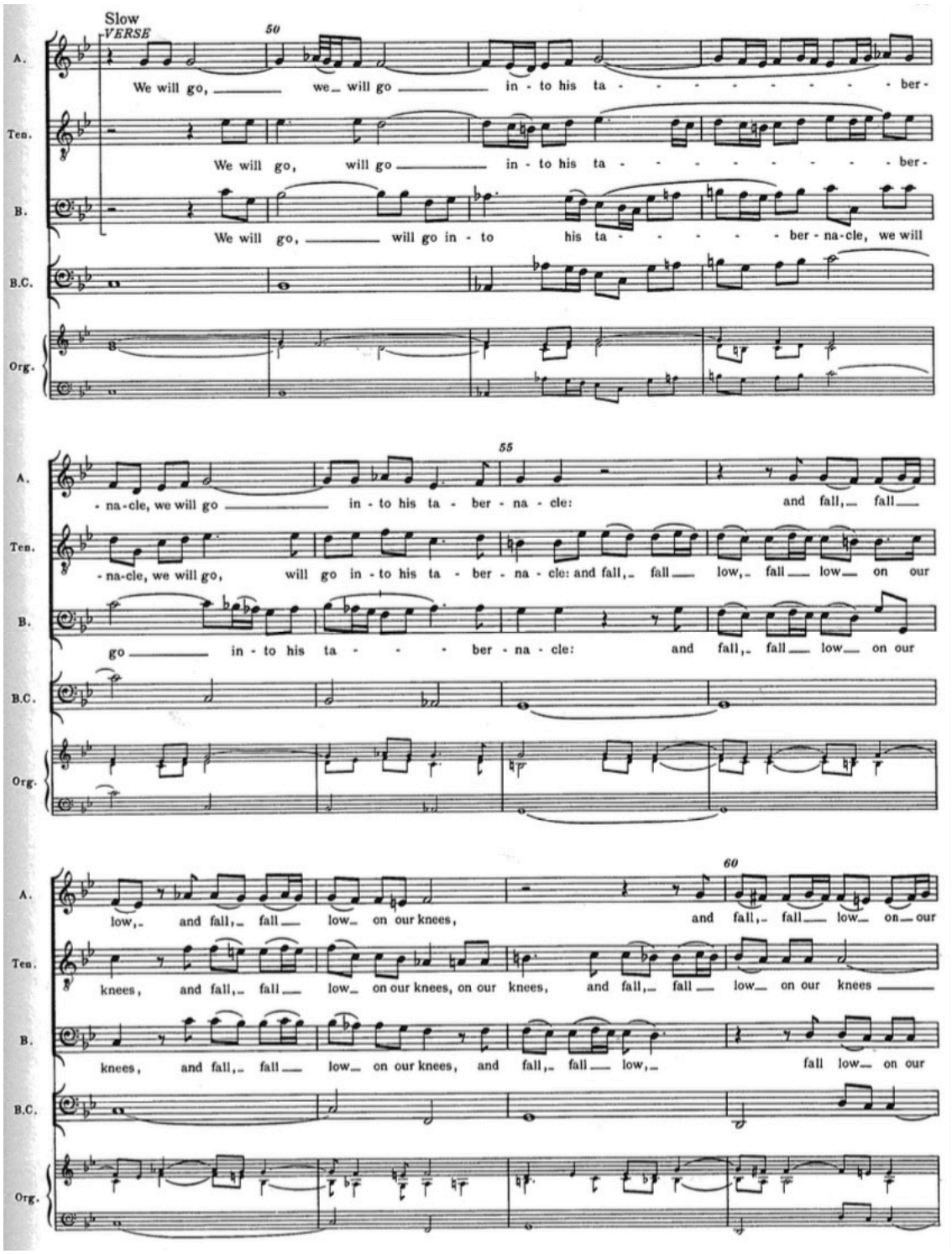

It is worth noting that both John Blow and Henry Purcell employed a quadruple-time chorus in a grand and solemn style to conclude their masques. While both composers utilized elements of choral settings often associated with sacred or liturgical music, it's essential to distinguish between stylistic choices and thematic foundations. The narratives in their respective works, such as *Venus and Adonis* and *Dido and Aeneas*, are fundamentally rooted in classical literature and mythology, rather than in religious texts. Although the grand and solemn musical treatments may evoke a sense of the sacred, it is more accurate to regard this as a theatrical device designed to amplify emotional impact rather than as an indication of religious subtext.

However, the music itself carries enough emotional weight to transport the audience into scenes that could be interpreted as religious, as exemplified in Example 3.4 above, which is associated with a funeral setting. Examining the chronology of Blow and Purcell's careers reveals their

[232] *The Works of Henry Purcell, Volume 3, Dido and Aeneas*. Edited under the supervision of the Purcell Society by Margaret Laurie (London: Novello, 1979).

active participation in the development of the symphony anthem (see Chapter 2). We observe similar musical treatments in the final chorus of *Venus and Adonis*—"Mourn for thy servant"—and the slow section of Blow's later orchestral anthem "I was glad" (Ex.3.5).

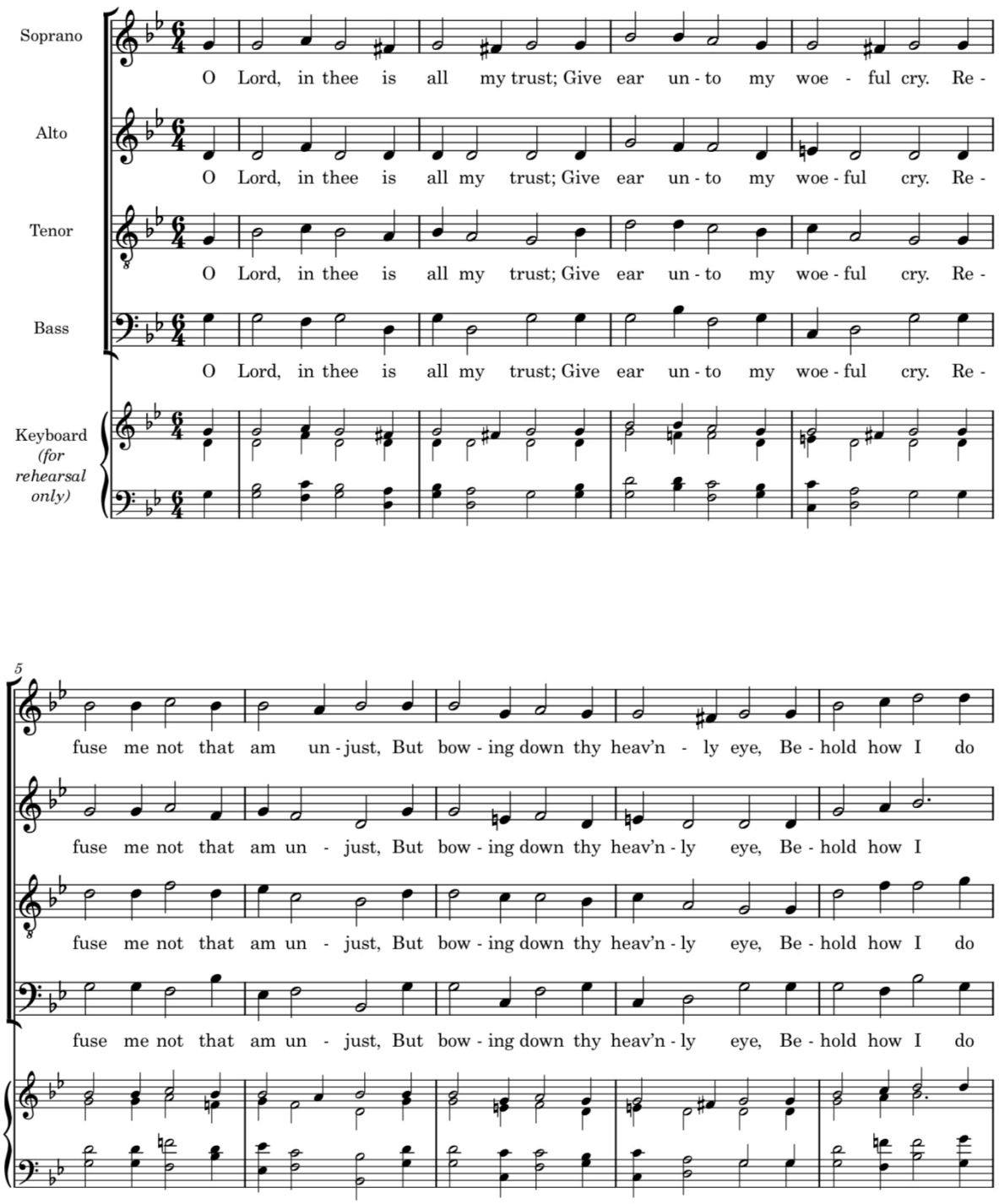
**Ex. 3.5: John Blow, *I was glad* (MB50: bars 49-60).**



It's also worth noting that Handel's oratorios often blurred generic musical boundaries between the church and stage, thereby bypassing what might be construed as a "profound sacred compositional foundation" established by Blow and Purcell as they cultivated the indigenous masque tradition towards the end of the seventeenth century. However, it is misleading to attribute to them a "profound sacred compositional foundation". Such musical choices are better understood within the broader context of a theatrical tradition that frequently borrowed from various musical genres, including the sacred. Moreover, the similarities in musical treatments between Blow and Purcell's stage works and their contributions to the symphony anthem genre do not necessarily indicate a religious underpinning in their masques. Instead, these similarities suggest a fluidity in compositional techniques that were employed across both sacred and secular domains.

Finally, in examining pieces like Purcell's "Fear no danger" from *Dido and Aeneas* and Tallis' anthem "O Lord, in Thee is all my trust", we witness a continuous lyrical short-long rhythmic pattern separated by minims (Ex.3.6), highlighting the diverse influences and styles employed by these composers.

**Ex. 3.6: Thomas Tallis, *O Lord, in Thee is all my trust* (bars 1-9).[233]**



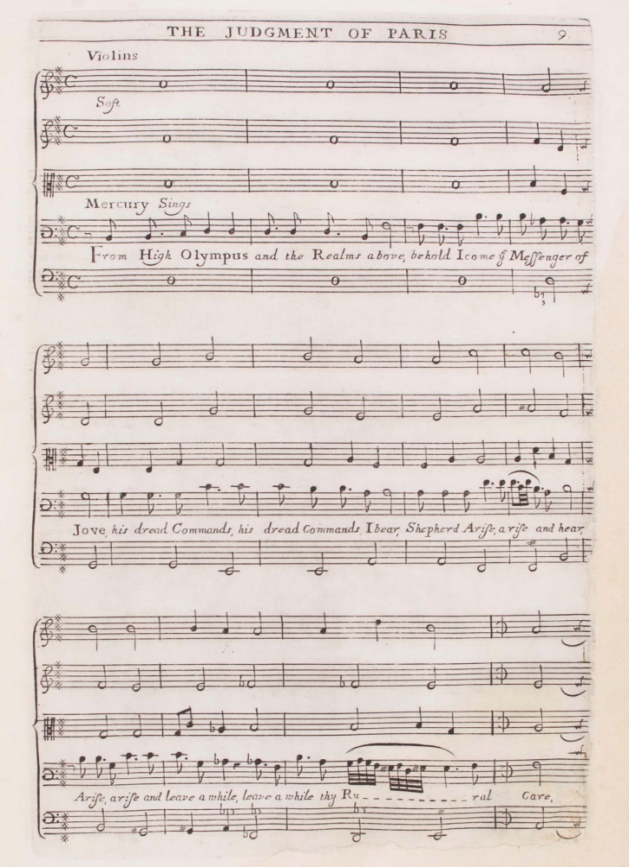

[233] Thomas Tallis, *O Lord, in thee is all my trust,* as edited by Dennis Larson. Addition of rehearsal piano part based on the version edited by F. L. Dunkin Wedd. Web. 16 March 2023 https://www.cpdl.org/wiki/.

## 3.3 Italian Influence

Early eighteenth-century England experienced an increasingly Italianate influence on masque music. In general, the alternation of recitative and air succeeded in subverting the development of contiguous song forms and French dance style; the influence of dance decreased sharply while string accompaniments increasingly filled the gap between the vocal settings. Unexpectedly, this new trend was completely supported by English playwrights. Although they denied the elaborate influence of Italian music, the separation of narrative and emotional expression in Italianate opera allowed them to throw more literary skills towards recitative without considering musicality and word-tone. Its effect on the musical outputs was remarkable, as displayed by the two collaborations between William Congreve and John Eccles.

There were revivals of the Purcellian models in Eccles' *The Judgment of Paris* (1700) where he employed a classical two-part air, suggested by *Dido and Aeneas*' "Grief increases by concealing", to Mercury's song "From high Olympus". Although accompanied by a four-part string texture, the musical declamation conforms to a regularly rhythmic pattern breathed on every minim (Ex. 3.7). Eccles used the pomp of demisemiquaver notes in a turn figure on the word "rural" at the end of the first part, followed by a tuneful second part.

**Ex. 3.7: John Eccles, "From high Olympus", *The Judgment of Paris*, as printed by J. Walsh and J. Hare (London, 1703), bars 1-11.**




However, few years later their second collaborative work *Semele* (1707) captured their efforts to establish a standard operatic recitative-air pattern. Congreve's preface contained the playwright's musical advocacy:

> It was not thought requisite to have any regard either to rhyme, or Equality of Measure, in the lines of that part of the dialogue which was designed for the Recitative Stile in Musick. For as that Stile in Musick is not confined to the first observation of Time and Measure, which is required in the composition of Airs and Sonata's […].[234]

This entry revealed Congreve's desire for the revival of Italianate recitative movement in his English opera. His understanding of the recitative music was obviously aligned with Lanier's declamatory style modelled by the Italian lament.[235] He was keen to recall this primitive

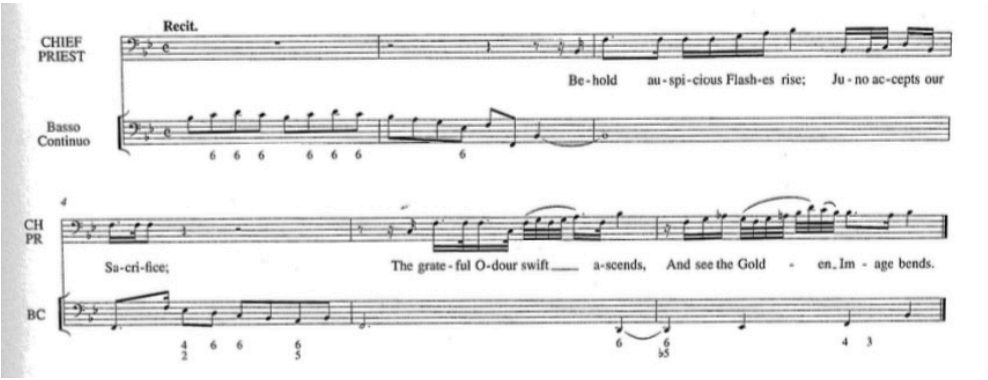
[234] William Congreve, *The works of Mr. William Congreve: in three volumes. Consisting of his plays and poems*. The Fourth Edition (London: Jocob Tonson, 1725), 163-64.
[235] This parallel comparison is suggested by Harris' demonstration of the origin of the English musical declamation by Nicholas Lanier (1588–1666). See, Harris, "Musical Declamation", 99.

English declamation to make music subservient to the words, thereby giving the playwrights room to present the beauty of poetry. Congreve subsequently explained,

> For, what they call Recitative in Musick, is only a more tuneable speaking; it is a kind of Prose in musick; its beauty consists in coming near nature, and in improving the natural Accents of Words by more Pathetick or Emphatical Tones.[236]

It should come as no surprise that Eccles puts such emphasis on a natural rhythmic pattern of his opening recitative "Behold auspicious Flashes rise" (Ex.3.8) in *Semele*. Here, the Italianate influence was distinct, but we can still find Eccles' respect for English accents, such as his employment of short-long rhythm on the words "Behold" and "ascends". This practice makes it unclear whether the recitative music at this stage pursued the modern Italian style or their earlier Jacobean model. However, it is clear that both styles prioritize the rational development of literary expression.

**Ex. 3.8: Eccles, "Behold auspicious Flashes rise" from *Semele* (MB76: bars 1-6).**




Congreve's recitative statement would later appeal to Hughes whose preface to *Calypso and Telemachus* (1712) once again indicates the difference between air and recitative in an opera,

> If the airs in operas may be heard with delight for the same reason, even when the words are not understood, yet it is impossible the recitative should give pleasure which can raise no such ideas; this being not so properly singing, as speaking in musical cadences.[237]

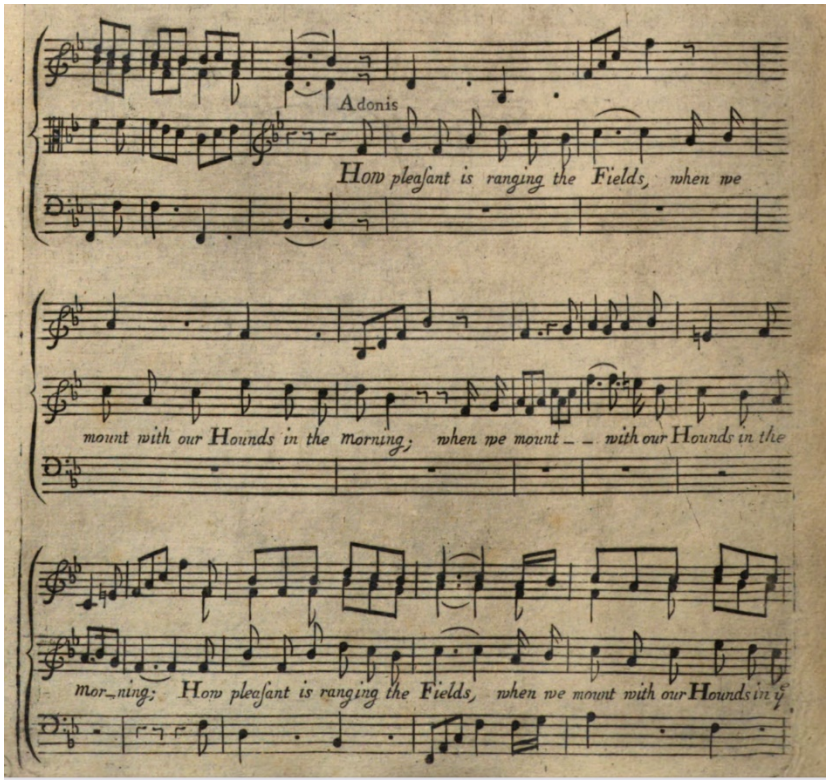
Hughes' words further expose the playwright's artistic intention to use an Italianate format to eliminate the lyrical and tuneful admiration of English song, with the French dance air used to enhance the rational aesthetics of English opera.

[236] Congreve, *The works of Mr. William Congreve: in three volumes. Consisting of his plays and poems*, 164.
[237] John Hughes, *Calypso and Telemachus. An opera. Perform'd at the Queen's Theatre in the Hay-Market. Written by Mr. Hughes. The musick compos'd by Mr. Galliard* (London: E. Sanger, 1712), preface.

Regrettably, the compositions *Semele* and *Calypso and Telemachus* exemplified the challenges faced by English musicians who sought to bring their native opera's rational taste to the stage. These works either never saw the stage or faced considerable delays in their productions. Their fate was emblematic of a three-year hiatus for English opera, during which Italian opera almost exclusively dominated the scene in its homeland. In 1715, when Pepusch's *Venus and Adonis* was performed in the public, Colley Cibber's position was no longer an ambitious one. He acknowledged that 'we are so far from establishing theatrical music in England'.[238] In most ways the form of this work followed Italianate style with a standard alternation between recitative and air without the choral setting. At the same time, some ungainly text setting throughout the music seems to recall the circumstance of Grabu's *Albion and Albanius*. The opening da capo aria "How pleasant is ranging ye fields" is a good example. The short-long rhythm on the word "morning" means Pepusch put the accented syllable on the upbeat and it also increased the difficulty for the singers singing short rhythms on the accented syllable (Ex.3.9). This was effectively worked out later when a dotted rhythm was set properly on the second "morning" on the strong beat. Such practices revealed Pepusch's neglect of English declamation, rendering his music ungraceful to sing.

[238] Colley Cibber, *The dramatic works of Colley Cibber*, vol. 5, (London, 1777), 213-14.

**Ex. 3.9: Pepusch, "How pleasant is ranging ye fields", from *Venus and Adonis* (bars 16-30).[239]**




However, when Handel came to compose *Acis and Galatea* in 1718, he was fortunate to have already spent a number of years setting English texts, which were rooted in English sacred tradition. Interestingly, *Acis and Galatea* has not yet been adequately categorized in generic terms. According to a letter from Sir David Dalrymple first conveying information about *Acis and Galatea* to the public, this work was "a little opera".[240] At the end of the eighteenth century, Charles Burney termed it a "sacred drama",[241] while John Hawkins defined it as "serenata".[242] Among modern scholars, Harris believed it to be Handel's pastoral masque, and Dianne Dugaw followed Hawkins, identifying it as a "anglicized Italian serenata".[243] Each of these definitions is reasonable: for a "through-composed English masque" might suggest a derivation from the traditional Purcellian masque and English pastoral tradition; and "anglicized Italian serenata" might imply a connection between this work and his previous Italian serenata with the same plot, *Aci, Galatea e Polifemo*. More recently, Lawrence Zazzo has added another layer of

[239] Pepusch, *The songs and symphony's in the masque of Venus and Adonis as they are perform'd at the Theatre Royal* (London: J. Walsh, 1716).
[240] *George Frideric Handel Collected Documents (volume 1) 1690-1725*, 392-93.
[241] Burney, *A General History of Music: From the Earliest Ages to the Present Period*, vol. 4, 360.
[242] Hawkins, *A General History of the Science and Practice of Music*, vol. 5, 272.
[243] Dianne Dugaw, "Parody, Gender, and Transformation in Gay and Handel's 'Acis and Galatea'", *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 29, no. 4 (Summer, 1996), 346.

complexity by emphasizing the bilingual nature of Handel's 1732 version (HWV 49b), describing it as a "bilingual pasticcio". According to Zazzo, this version is not merely a musical adaptation; it also represents a strategic linguistic choice on Handel's part, made to balance generic and artistic considerations against the practical limitations of his cast. This insight indicates that the work resists easy classification, whether as "through-composed English masque", "anglicized Italian serenata", or "bilingual pasticcio".[244] Thus, in the following section *Acis and Galatea* will serve as a lens through which to examine Handel's evolving attitudes toward English opera and his initial conceptualizations of 'ancient music', prior to his full embrace of the English oratorio genre. In contrast to his German contemporaries, who fully adopted Italianate elements, Handel achieved a unique balance in *Acis and Galatea*. He omitted the prologue and dance elements typical of the traditional Purcellian masque but retained the choral sections. This dual influence implies that Handel was synthesizing a variety of dramatic experiences, both English and Italian, in his approach. The aim of my study is to clarify the extent of this synthesis and to investigate the influence of Handel's earlier canticle works on *Acis and Galatea*.

## 3.4 Handel's *Acis and Galatea* I

When discussing Handel's *Acis and Galatea*, scholars have commonly associated it with the influence of *Venus and Adonis* by Pepusch.[245] However, *Venus and Adonis* represented only one fashionable musical type conceived in the Italian manner, in advance of English opera acquiring its own national status. After 1719, this masque "would probably have been forgotten",[246] while Handel's *Acis and Galatea* acquired long-term viability in part through its numerous revisions.[247] According to Winton Dean:

> […] its [English-text operas'] artistic climax, the highest point reached by the English masque, was Handel's *Acis and Galatea*, probably composed in 1718. […] Handel thus placed himself, however unwittingly, at the head of a movement that might have established English opera by another route, and this at a time when the Italian form appeared to be in eclipse, for no operas were produced at the King's Theatre between June 1717 and April 1720.[248]

[244] Lawrence Zazzo, "'Not Local Beauties' Handel's bilingual oratorio performance, 1732-1744" (PhD diss., Queen's University Belfast, 2015), 31-34.
[245] See, for example, Winton Dean, "Acis and Galatea", *Handel's Dramatic Oratorios and Masques*, (London. Oxford University Press, 1959), 59; D. F. Cook, "Venus and Adonis: An English Masque 'After the Italian Manner'", *The Musical Times* 121, no. 1651 (September 1980), 555.
[246] D. F. Cook, "Venus and Adonis: An English Masque 'After the Italian Manner'", p. 556.
[247] Although the first version of *Acis and Galatea* was for a private patron in 1718, Handel revised the work in oratorio style in 1732 (HWV 49b). Before Handel's death, it was often performed on the English stage (until 1742).
[248] Dean, *Handel's Dramatic Oratorios and Masques*, 155.

A boost to English dramatic opera, then, *Acis and Galatea* reflected Handel's diversified music composing, rather than repeating *Venus and Adonis* and its "Italian manner". For his perfect blend of these complicated musical traditions, I will particularly pay attention to how he balanced the demands of English nationalism from the Scriblerus club's librettists with his previous composing experience in an Italianate fashion. In fact, although the plot of *Acis and Galatea* is virtually the same as Handel's Italian serenata *Aci, Galatea e Polifemo* (HWV 72, 1708), the characters and construction of the music are different. In terms of the overall structure, we witness clear distinctions between recitative and da capo aria. So, did Handel realize Congreve and Hughes' interests in recitative of a rational and literary disposition? If so, how did he express the affective elements in his aria? Were they florid Italian music or in a lyrical style with regular rhythmic patterning? At the same time, we find an increase in the numbers of choral settings in *Acis and Galatea*, which were seen as comparable to the Purcellian masque model. Were these choruses closely related to dance music as well? Was the musical style of his choruses related to his earlier symphony anthems? How did *Acis and Gatalea* presage his later oratorios? To delve more deeply into these questions, I will now examine each type of movement, reflecting the two aspects of the nationalistic subtext of English opera as I understand them. First, I will focus on the solo voice and analyse Handel's use of English declamation. Second, I will concentrate on the multiple-part settings and discuss Handel's innovation in choral settings in masque music, which foreshadowed the inclusion of choruses in his later oratorios.

**Sinfonia**

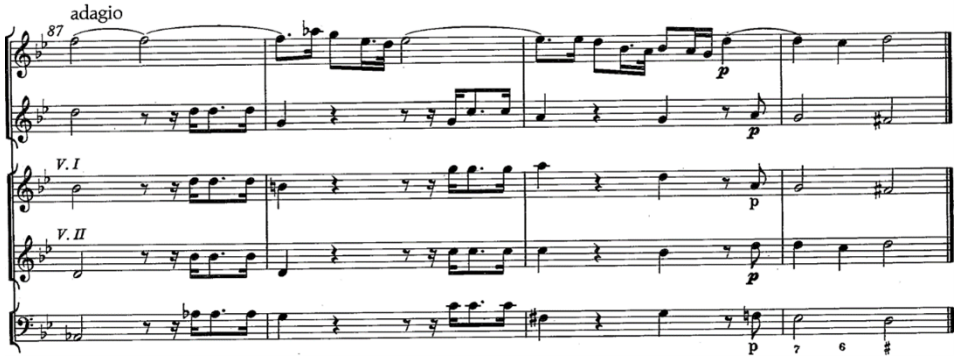
In the broader context of the work's instrumentation, it is noteworthy that Handel adds two oboes to the accompaniment and includes strings in some recitative sections as accompagnato replacements.

The opening prelude consists of two parts - a brisk and energetic presto, and a four-bar solemn adagio. It is scored for two winds (oboe), strings (violin) and bass. Such features are not typical of masque openings, where English composers preferred to introduce their masque as an overture with two contrasting or similar sections. The examples were easy to find in Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas* and *The Fairy Queen* (1692). When German composers resumed English masque composition during the second decade of the eighteenth century, they changed the two-part overture to a strophic (ABA) form. John Ernest Galliard and Pepusch both include a presto – adagio - presto design at the beginning of *Calypso and Telemachus* (1712) and *Venus and Adonis* (1715). Handel nevertheless simplified the frame, maintaining the presto part as the

primary material and adding one final adagio phrase without a presto repeat, a similar procedure to the symphony of his Chandos Anthem *Let God Arise* (HWV 256a).

*Acis and Galatea* and *Let God Arise* are similar in various respects. In addition to structural connections, they achieved comparable interweaving musical lines through lyrical oboes and tense semiquavers in the violins. For their final phrases, the music suddenly changes mood, with all the instruments performing slowly in unison and in dotted rhythmic blocks (Ex.3.10). The affinity between these two movements has already been noticed by Gerald Hendrie, who speculated that Handel might have borrowed the *Andante* of Anthem 11A (HWV 256a) in his *Acis and Galatea*.[249] This adagio ending had been already used in Handel's other works, in advance of the Cannons anthem. Among these were *Rinaldo* (HWV 7a) in 1711 as Handel's first output composed in London and ensuing Brockes-Passion, another German dramatic work. Thus, a striking musical resource was able to circulate in various genres of Handel's outputs, which perhaps foreshadowed his later success of combining English choral harmony and Italianate operatic form. Also noteworthy, in *Acis and Galatea*, is Handel's placing of a melodic oboe in the highest voice of the tutti. The interplay here between the high oboe and the chords creates a kind of echo between solo and accompaniment. Moreover, Handel's phrase is eventually finished by a standard Tallis-like Phrygian half cadence (V-VI-IV6-V) in anticipation of the ensuing choral section. This technique instantly brought an Anglican harmonic effect to this dramatic work.

**Ex. 3.10: Handel, "Sinfonia", *Acis and Galatea* HWV 49a (HHAI, 9/1: bars 87-90).**




**Recitative**

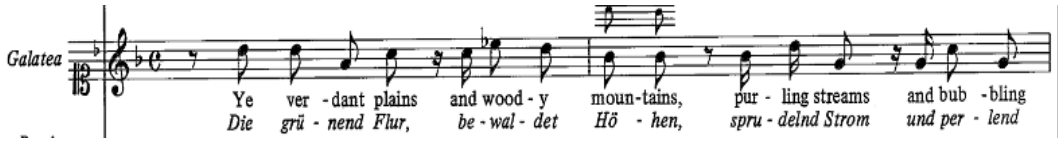
The recitative music in *Acis and Galatea* demonstrates Handel's distinctive personal style. We can observe that it is concise and focused on individual character monologues. Traditionally,

[249]Gerald Hendrie, "Handel's 'Chandos' and Associated Anthems: An Introductory Survey", in *Bach, Handel, Scarlatti Tercentenary Essays*, (ed.) Peter Williams (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 149-159.

recitative settings tended to include interaction between several characters by having them sing one by one in order to retain an effect of dramatic conflict. This is frequently illustrated in both Italian and English works, such as Handel's own *Aci, Galatea e Polifemo* and Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas*. However, Scriblerus club writers provided Handel with substantial monologues. This practice may reflect Hughes' dramaturgical idea mentioned above, which suggests that recitative should not exhibit excessive emotional content, and is not entirely singing, but rather a style of speech with musical cadence.[250] Handel's musical language displayed a plain and unadorned style, supported by incessant semiquavers. He avoided the use of florid melismas or chromatic harmonies favoured by his predecessors in their masques. In addition to repeated notes, he also enriched the melodic content with pure fourths and minor thirds. For this rhythmic patterning and melodic lines, we can also find similar treatment in his *Aci, Galatea e Polifemo* recitatives. He has even been criticized for this, Graydon Beeks explaining that Handel knew 'very little about melody' in Italy, referencing Mattheson.[251]

Nevertheless, in his *Acis and Galatea*, Handel appears to have abandoned lengthy phrases and instead focused on the interplay between the length and brevity of melodic lines. Any potential tediousness was avoided through flowing and flexible lines. Galatea's opening recitative – "Ye verdant plains and woody mountains", is a good example. In the first half, Handel employed attractive minor thirds to portray a melancholy nymph, and then included a modulation from D minor to A minor followed by a downward leap of a perfect fifth. For the recitative "Cease, o cease, thou gentle youth", featuring a similar musical line, Handel also used falling minor thirds to denote "love". Further, while the melodic line in Italianate recitatives contained breathless long phrases, Handel made these shorter in his English ones, tending to apply short-long rhythms throughout. The most obvious advantage here was giving the singer more chance to breathe, and Handel linked every verse by the same notes through smooth musical movement (Ex. 3.11).

**Ex. 3.11: Handel, Galatea Recitative "Ye verdant plains and woody mountains", Acis and Galatea HWV 49a (HHAI, 9/1: bars 1-2).**




[250] Hughes, *Calypso and Telemachus,* preface.
[251] Graydon Beeks, "Handel's Sacred Music", 165.

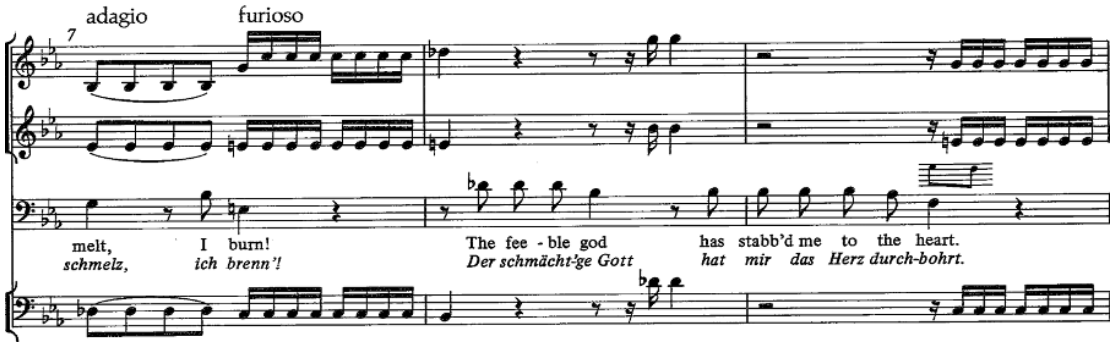
Handel's plain and unadorned rhythmic patterns somewhat weaken the accents of the English declamation. We can take Galatea's recitative (Ex.3.11 above) as an example. For the first phrase, although the stressed syllable of the word "mountains" falls on the strong beat of the melody, the duration of the stressed syllable is equal to that of the other. As a result, we can imagine that the performer does not sing as naturally as they do in the works of Lawes' *The Triumph of Peace* and Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas*. As the music progresses, we can observe that Handel often uses two equally valued notes on different syllables of the same word, which greatly obscures the stress patterns of English declamation.

In addition to Handel's personal style, he also incorporated the tradition of English masques, especially the Purcellian model, into his recitatives. We have witnessed Handel regularizing melodic lines in what was for him an unfamiliar language. However, matters are different in Polyphemus' opening recitative ("I rage!") from the beginning of the second act. Dianne Dugaw stated that Handel's Polyphemus "roars out" in an imitative manner influenced by Marcella from Purcell's *The Comical History of Don Quixote* (1694-96).[252] But this recitative actually borrowed from Handel's own music "Ma qual horrido suono" (*Aci, Galatea e Polifemo*), including the tense ritornello with thick semiquavers and the conversation between voices and instrument. Handel usually used a portamento solo voice following the ritornello, lending a strong sense of Italian style to the music.

Purcell's music will have inspired Handel for "[…] I rage, I rage, I melt, I burn!", but the influence of his own existing music cannot be denied. After a swift transformation from adagio to furioso in one bar, Handel imaginatively allowed the human voice and instrumental accompaniment to appear alternately and thereby express in equal measure the rage of Polyphemus (Ex. 3.12). Here, Handel temporarily sets aside Hughes' assertion and utilized numerous dissonances to represent Polyphemus' emotional conflict and simultaneously to prepare for his ensuing sorrow. Thus, Handel is shown integrating multiple musical emotions into a single recitative in order to depict the complex personality of one of his characters.

**Ex. 3.12: Handel, Polyphemus Recitative "I rage!", *Acis and Galatea* HWV 49a (HHAI, 9/1: bars 7–9).**

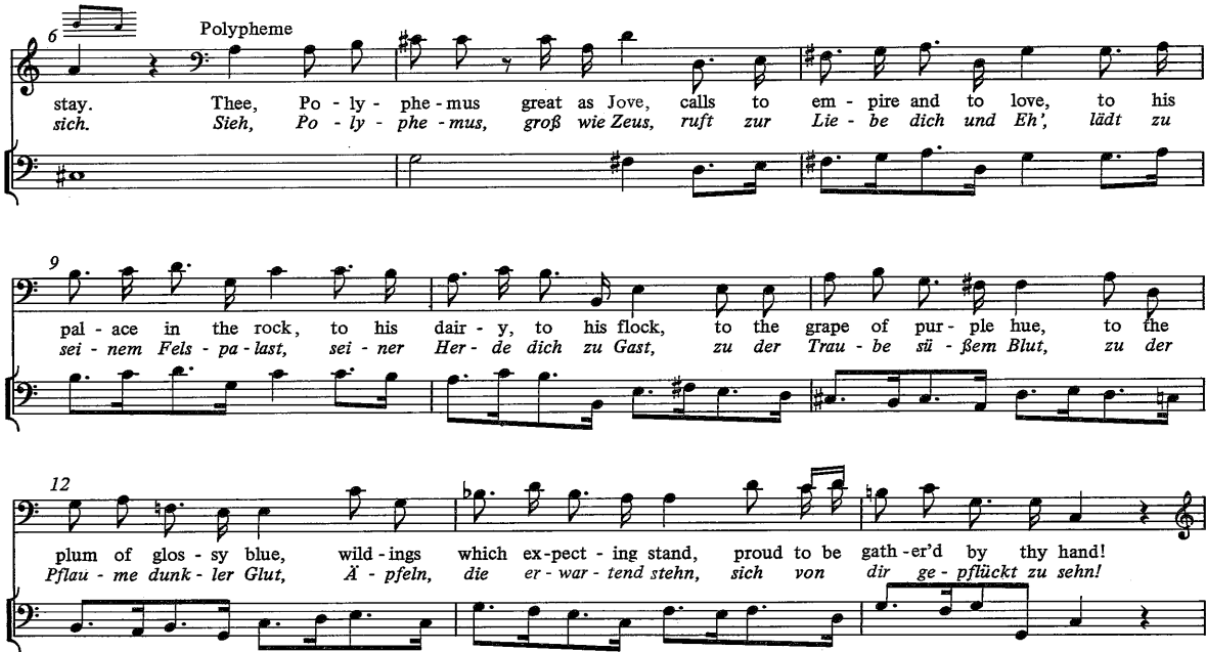
[252] Dugaw, "Parody, Gender, and transformation in Gay and Handel's 'Acis and Galatea'", 352.




In his next recitative "Whither, fairest art thou running", the influence of Purcellian masque tradition is further intensified. When Polyphemus invites Galatea to become his conquest, he confidently sings four rhyming couplets. At the same time, a fluid vocal line emerges (Ex. 3.13). Dugaw regards the musical design of this continuo dotted rhythm as "funny".[253] But this is surely not accurate when the episode was likely influenced by the Restoration English declamatory air from the turn-of-the-century native masque. Here, Handel asserted this kind of rhyming phrase for effect following a more conventional recitative. It might have imitated Purcell's two-part aria in *Dido and Aeneas* (see his setting "Grief increases by concealing" in the last section) nearly thirty years later, which delivered on Daniel Purcell's expectation that a dramatic composer should be able to create their "true" English opera from the "examples of the ancients" rather than "the Italian practice".[254]

**Ex. 3.13: Handel, Recitative "Whither, fairest art thou running", *Acis and Galatea* HWV 49a (HHAI, 9/1: bars 6-14).**

[253]Ibid, p. 355.
[254] Daniel Purcell, *Six Cantatas for a Voice with Through Bass: Two Of Which Are Accompanied With A Violin: Compos'd (After the Italian Manner)* (London: J. Cullen, 1713), preface.




**Air**

When discussing Handel's aria settings in *Acis and Galatea*, scholars (including Dugaw and Harris) consistently draw attention to an Italian pastoral "throw-back" on account of its ABA da capo form.[255] Steven LaRue also focused on Handel's aria music throughout his life, stating similarly that Handel took the "A1 A2 B (B) A1 A2 five-part da capo aria" as his principal form.[256] However, insufficient attention has been paid to the identity of *Acis and Galatea* as an English masque. While the Italian da capo form appears in the arias, Handel combined it innovatively with English indigenous tradition.

Unlike the recitatives with their dominant rhythmic line of plain quavers, Handel exploited dotted rhythms throughout his twelve arias, showing his familiarity with the rhythmic patterning of English declamatory air. For the Italian treatment of da capo form, Handel preferred to employ the solo voice with two strings (violin) and one wind (oboe or flute) above, plus basso continuo accompaniment, throughout the first half, leaving only the bass line in place for the second half. When employed, a ritornello usually foreshadowed the melody of the ensuing verbal text. Therefore, interdependence between instrument and voice was generated in his aria settings. Dugaw pointed only to intimacy between voice and solo instruments in Galatea's "Must I my Acis still bemoan".[257] In actual fact Handel frequently used echoing

[255] See Dugaw, "Parody, Gender, and transformation in Gay and Handel's 'Acis and Galatea'", 350. He referenced Ellen Harris: "This is a throw-back to the Italian pastoral which emphasized regularity and consistency as musical and Arcadian virtues", from, Harris, *Handel and the Pastoral Tradition*, 207.
[256] C. Steven LaRue, "Handel and the aria", in *The Cambridge Companion to Handel*, 111.
[257] Dugaw, "Parody, Gender, and transformation in Gay and Handel's 'Acis and Galatea'", 359.

interplay in earlier Italian works, including 'Che non puo la gelosia' from *Aci, Galatea e Polifemo*. And he retained it in 'Where shall I seek the charming fair', 'Shepherd, what art thou puring' and 'Love in her eyes sits playing'.

Acis' opening aria illustrates how Handel used the musical theme presented at the outset to generate content for the remainder of the piece. Here, the first two vocal phrases, "Where shall I seek the charming fair?" and "Direct the way, kind genius of the mountains!" directly imitate two of the upper instrumental lines from the prelude. Handel then set these two phrases in triple time, treating them imitatively and sequentially, until the ritornello material is heard again to conclude the first section. In other words, section A comprises the ritornello plus strategies for elaborating it (repetition, imitation, sequence etc.). In section B, Handel changes some rhythmic details, but follows a similar technique of elaboration. Comparable settings in this work include Damon's "Shepherd, what art thou pursuing" and Polyphemus' "Cease to beauty to be suing". Both Dean and Dugaw noticed the "threefold repetition at the words 'murm'ring still his gentle love'" originating from the ritornello bars in Galatea's final aria.[258] These three parallel sequence phrases would have reminded the audience of English popular song from their national masque. Purcell's "Pursue thy conquest, love" from *Dido and Aeneas* set up the whole section in a similar way. Also, in the case of "Happy thou of Human Race" from Eccles' *The Judgment of Paris*, it was another English song addressing the "threefold repetition" whenever the phrase "Happy I" appeared.

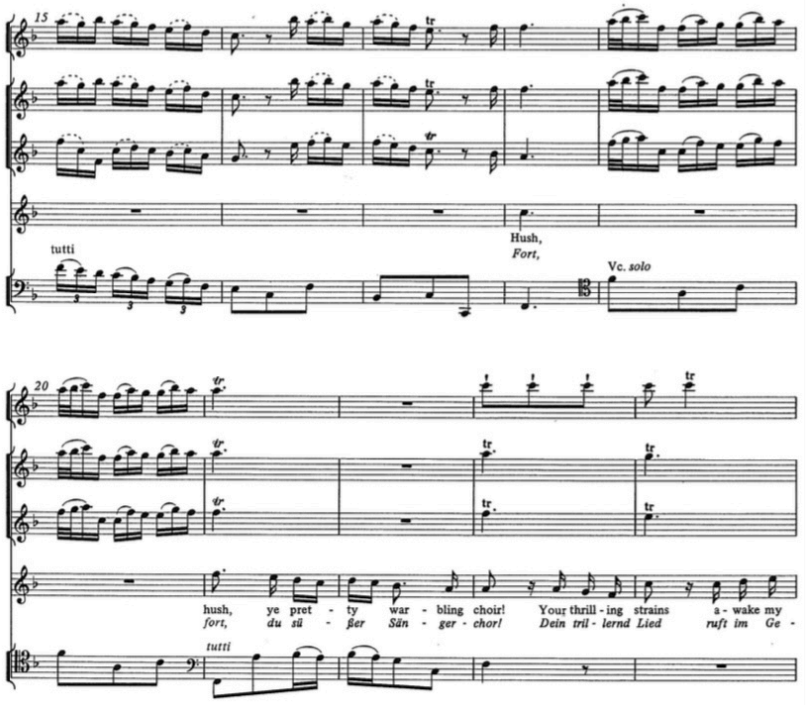
It is worth noting that this approach is essentially different from the Italianate aria. The impact of a musical theme on both the voice and accompaniment throughout a movement reflects the tradition of using lyrical elements to express emotions in English masques. English composers often used music to support a single and complete emotional content, without excessive variation. This also facilitates their use of the French-related aria form with repetitive rhythms. However, Italian arias typically use luxurious melismas to emphasize the emotional content of specific words during performance, underscoring a delicate and complex emotional puzzle.

Furthermore, compared to recitatives, the musical material of arias seems to have given Handel enough space to apply English declamatory style. First, Handel would use long notes to mark the end of a rhyme or phrase in his music, a technique commonly found in the prologue of Blow's *Venus and Adonis*. Examples include "When beauty's the prize" from "Love sounds the alarm" and "you thrilling strains, awake my pains" from "Hush, ye pretty warbling choir!".

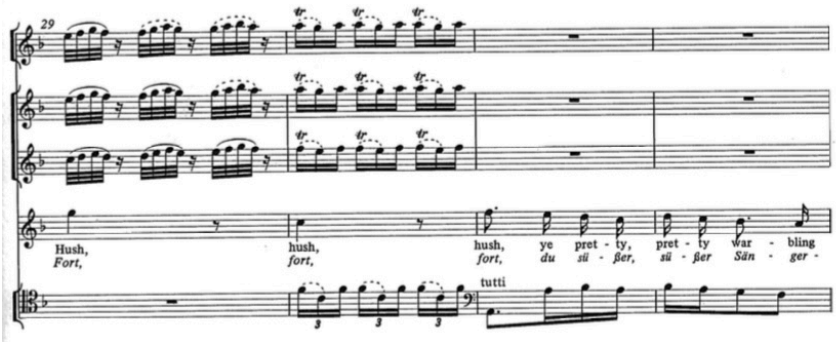
[258] Dugaw quoted Dean's description in his article, "Parody, Gender, and transformation in Gay and Handel's 'Acis and Galatea'", 361-62.

In the latter Handel set up the repeated word with staccato singing, another vocal change relative to earlier Italian practice. In the opening phrase, Galatea enters with the word "Hush" on C subsequently repeating it a fifth higher (Ex. 3.14). When the text repeats, she sings the word "hush" three times at different pitches (Ex. 3.15). Handel also exploited recurring words at other moments, such as in the next aria (Ex. 3.16) and in Galatea's "As when the dove" (Ex. 3.17).

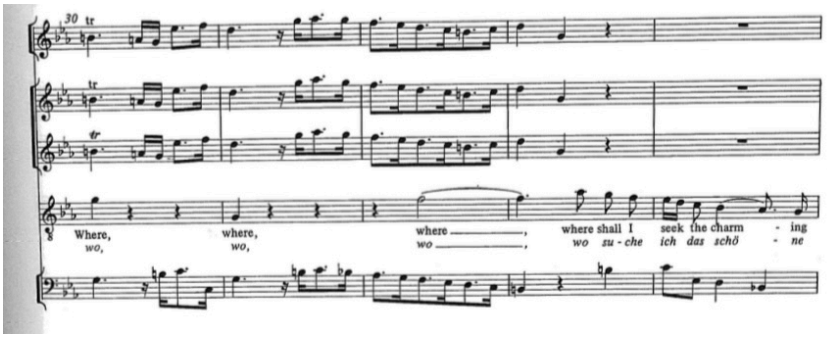
**Ex. 3.14: Handel, Galatea Air "Hush, ye pretty warbling choir!", *Acis and Galatea* HWV 49a (HHAI, 9/1: bars 15-24).**



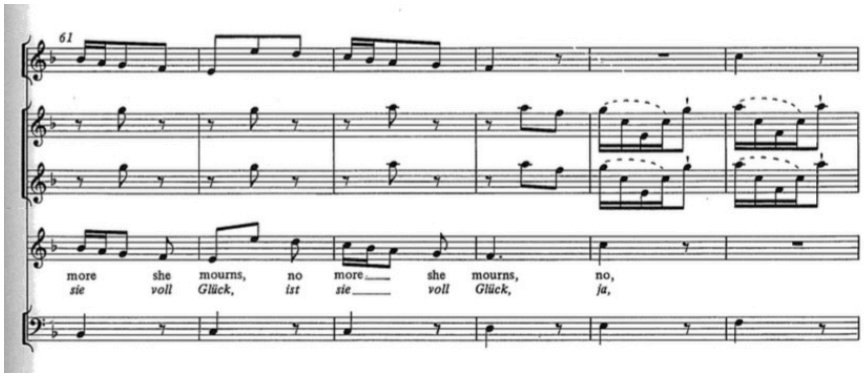

**Ex. 3.15: Handel, Galatea Air "Hush, ye pretty warbling choir!", *Acis and Galatea* HWV 49a (HHAI, 9/1: bars 29-32).**



**Ex. 3.16: Handel, Acis Air "Where shall I seek", Acis and Galatea HWV 49a (HHAI, 9/1: bars 30-34).**




**Ex. 3.17: Handel, Galatea Air "As when the dove", *Acis and Galatea* HWV 49a (HHAI, 9/1: bars 61-73).**

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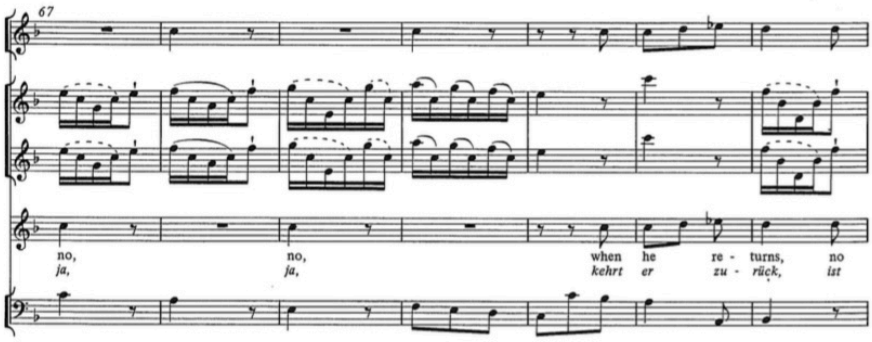
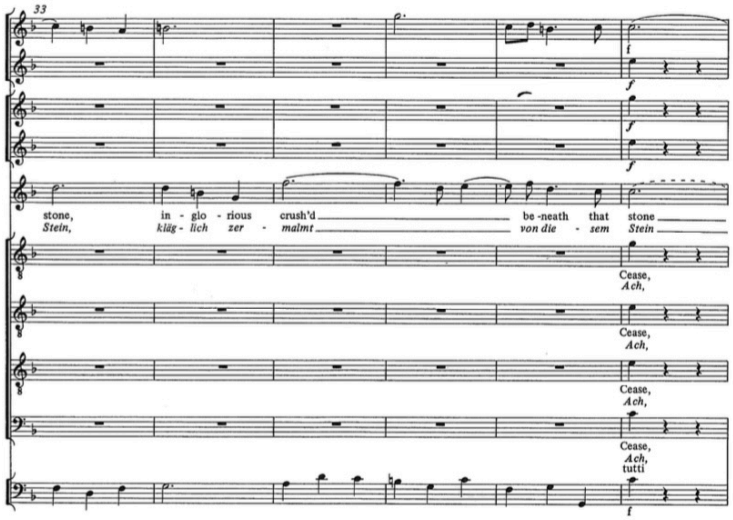



This kind of single-word repetition is clearly an expression that conforms to the style of English declamation featured in Purcell's opening "Ah! Belinda" (*Dido and Aeneas*). Handel had also employed these techniques in his Cannons anthem, including the rewritten *As pants the hart* (HWV 251b), probably finished in early 1718, and *Let God Arise*. For the aria 'Tears are my daily food' Handel emphasized the first word of a phrase through similar rhetoric to that witnessed in *Acis and Galatea*. The sorrowful soprano entered on a long note on "Tears" and

repeated the first word “Where” in the next verse an augmented fourth and minor second apart to produce an unforgettable manifestation of heartache. Just as *Let God Arise* influenced the opening instrumental Sinfonia of *Acis and Galatea*, Handel also retained some musical elements from contemporary and preceding church music.

Regarding the church style, we notice that Handel's *Acis and Galatea* differs from Purcell and Locke's masques in terms of how he handles the relationship between solo and chorus singing. This apparently corresponds with Handel’s “Must I my Acis still bemoan” comprising aria and chorus where Handel employed some novel musical schemes. The binary genre arrangement was fairly common in English masque, always featuring a choral melody that imitated the previous solo voice in a dance music fashion, as in the second part of Handel’s opening chorus (see the following section below). However, for this section, Galatea entered after the ritornello as in his other aria settings; when singing the long note on “stone”, the supporting harmony is articulated with a different rhythmic pattern and text (Ex. 3.18). The sustained note of the soprano and its independence from the other voices faithfully conformed to Elizabethan polyphonic style. The plain sustained note, free of all decorative rhythm, might be traced back to Tallis’ polyphony in an ‘ancient music’ style. Tallis’ *Wipe away my sins* collected in Barnard’s 1641 *First Book of Selected Church Musick* is a good example. In the first verse “O Lord, wipe away my sins”, Tallis included a three-bar-long note to the word “sins” in the highest voice (Ex. 3.20), which appeared on the word “I”, “art” and “God” as well. As mentioned in Chapter 2, Tallis reduced the independent and horizontal line of medieval polyphony to a more solid harmonic block of reformed polyphony. In this case, he normally added an upper part, articulating the melodic line supported by a harmonic foundation. Therefore, his polyphony usually had five voices divided into two parts with the leading voice and harmonic support together. Subsequently, the music progresses to a climax with Galatea’s repetition of “die” on a downward stepwise scalar pattern, which echoes the harmonic block (Ex. 3.19). The solo voice here aligned with the character of Purcellian dramatic style, while the antiphonal solo and harmonic block evokes the aforementioned “holy holy holy” verse of his 1694 Te Deum. Thus, Handel drew on the English church genre, both ancient and modern, for his aria setting, conspicuously demonstrating a balanced dramatic setting.

**Ex. 3.18: Handel, Solo and Chrous "Must I my Acis still bemoan", *Acis and Galatea* HWV 49a (HHAI, 9/1: bars 33-42).**

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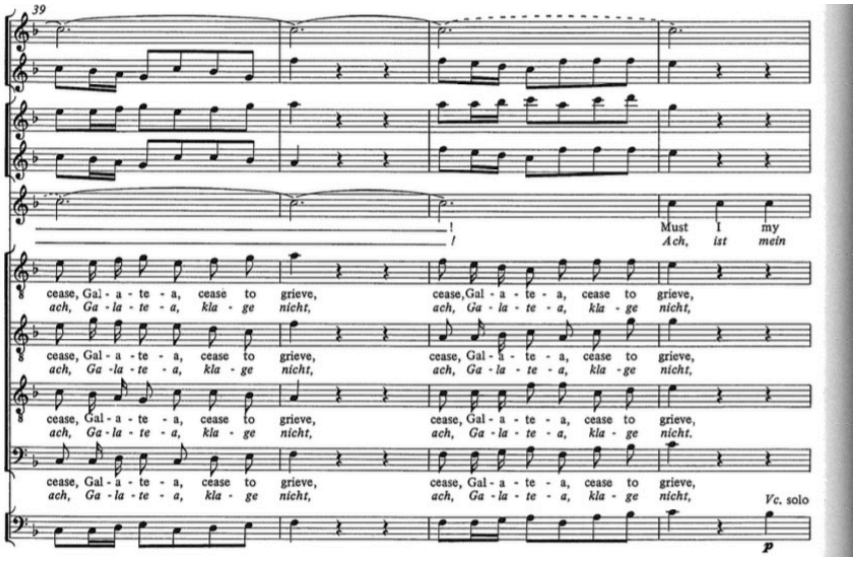
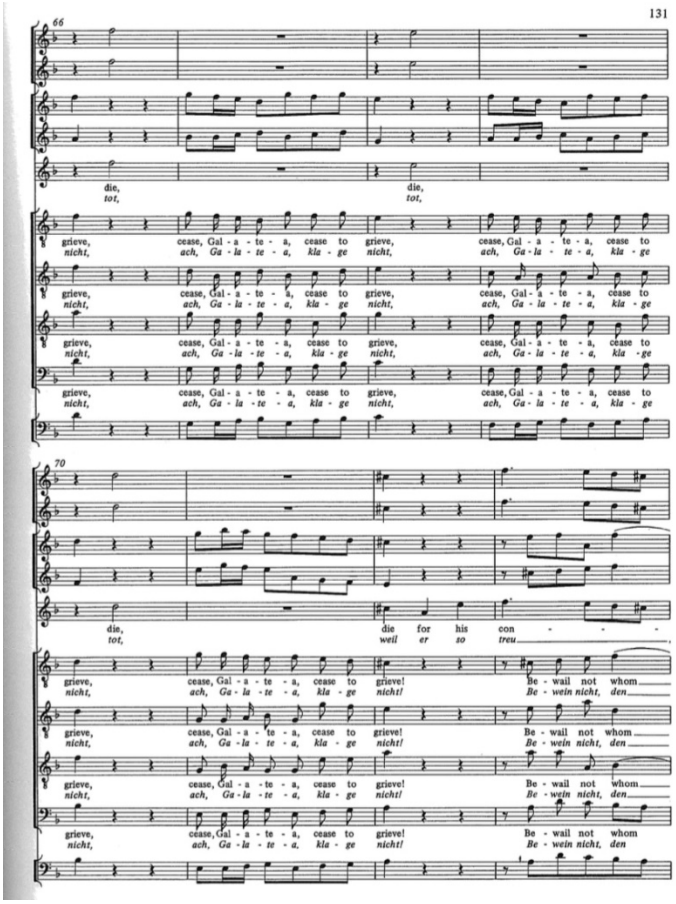
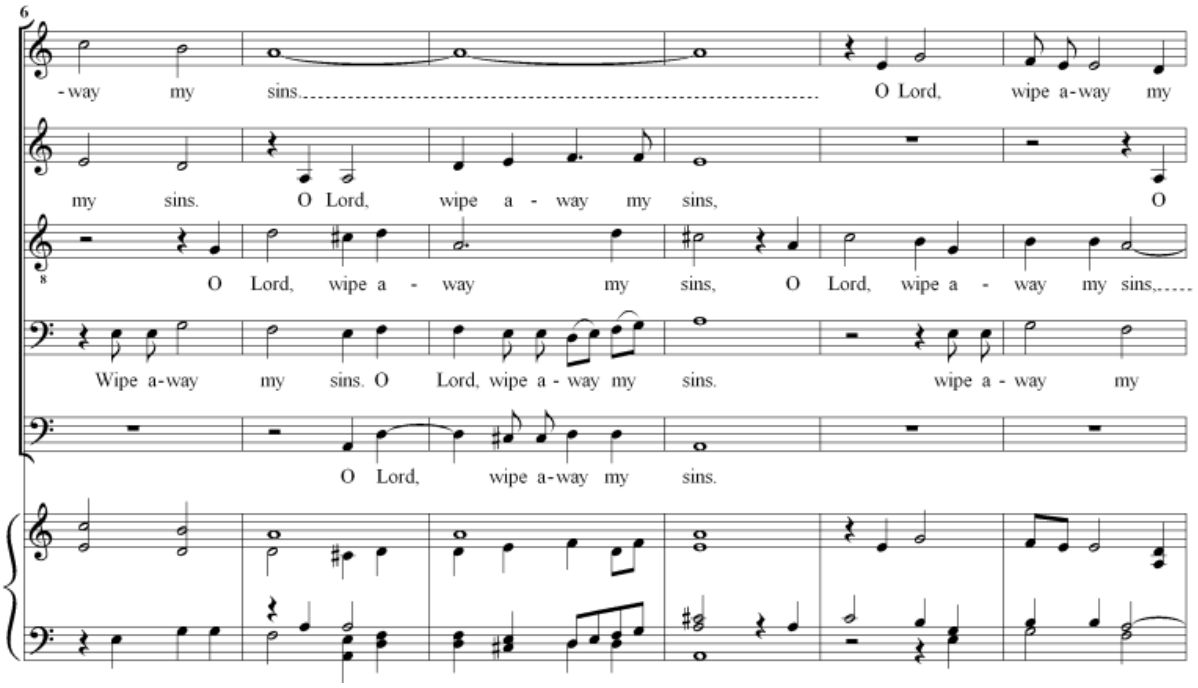


**Ex. 3.19: Handel, Solo and Chorus "Must I my Acis still bemoan", *Acis and Galatea* HWV 49a (HHAI, 9/1: bars 66-73).**



**Ex. 3.20: Tallis, *Wipe away my sins*. Ed. Michael Gibson (ChoralWiki: bars 6-11).[259]**




## 3.5 Handel's *Acic and Galatea* II

In my view, the musical structure of *Acis and Galatea* generally follows the tradition of English Restoration masque rather than the 'Italian manner'. It is worth noting that, in addition to the absence of a prologue, the Dance and Act Tune are completely absent in this two-part masque, and are replaced by independent choruses that serve as the structural framework of the work. Moreover, a duet and a trio made significant contributions to the development of the plot and must not be neglected.

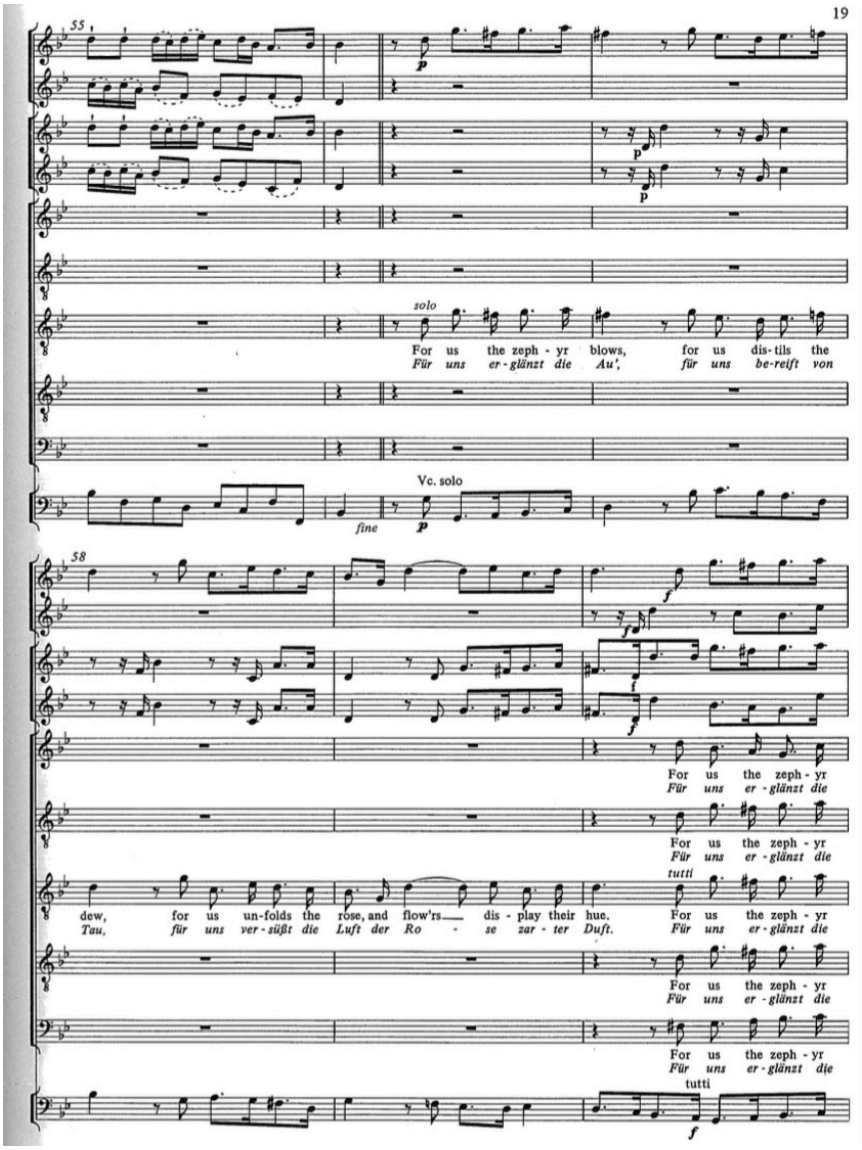
Handel opened the story with the choral setting "Oh, the pleasures of the plain!". It is for five voices with orchestra accompaniment, following the instrunental sinfonia. Surprisingly, the chorus is no longer inserted as a musical echo between dance or solo movements. Handel applied the da capo form of the aria in order to have the chorus present the pastoral scene in its entirety, which sets the tone for the entire work. An ABA structure, in line with convention, it includes a nine-bar prelude with two oboes and violins. The opening verse up to the bar 14 with its grand homophonic block effect, typical of the resonant and extended sound "Oh",

[259] Edition notes: Transposed up a tone and note values halved (manuscript: c.1560-1590 in British Library Add. MS 30480-30484 Hamond Partbooks, no. 30). Web. 16 March 2023.

reveals the English canticle influence mentioned in the last chapter. In the following verse "Happy nymphs and happy swains!", Handel made a minor modification to the vocal parts to create a mimicking effect rather than homophony. For this passage, Handel repeated the word "happy" with patterns of semiquavers and quavers, similar to those found in Eccles' duet from *The Judgement of Paris*. Thus, using repetition of the word "happy", this musical phrase hinted at the content of the later duet "happy we" with its echoing of "happy". For section B of this chorus, Handel seemed to suddenly jump into the Blow-Purcell masque tradition, unfolding his music as two rhyming couplets in regularly rhythmic patterning followed by imitative homophony, with numerous examples including 'Thanks to these lonesone vales' from *Dido and Aeneas* and "Let Ambition fire thy mind" from *The Judgement of Paris*. Furthermore, we observed that Handel used a typical English declamatory rhythm, consisting of dotted semiquavers, on the word "zephyr" (Ex. 3.21). When speaking of the "dotted rhythm" at its first entry, Dugaw identified it as an "emblem of the Italian style".[260] However, I believe that this is a typical Purcellian-style English declamatory rhythm that Harris emphasized (see section 3.3 above). It is hard to determine whether Handel was studying and advancing English prosody. He apparently regarded it as a novel English compositional style without considering the deeper meaning of any nationalistic subtext, continuing to use his familiar plain rhythm on "free and gay" in section A.

[260] Dugaw, "Parody, Gender, and transformation in Gay and Handel's 'Acis and Galatea'", 347.

**Ex. 3.21: Handel, Chorus "Oh, the pleasures of the plain!", *Acis and Galatea* HWV 49a (HHAI, 9/1: bars 55-60).**




If strictly following the template of Restoration masque, the first part of Handel's *Acis and Galatea* would have ended with a joyful dance-style chorus, rather than his duet "Happy we". With the duet depicting the sweetness of two lovers in ABA da capo form, the plot reached its first climax at the end of Act I. After a ritornello with brisk dotted triplets, Acis stated the musical theme with a two-bar solo to "happy, happy". Throughout the first section, Acis and Galatea repeatedly reiterate the text "Happy we". In the next section, preceding the homophonic passage, Handel set up two rhythimg couplets sung separately by the lovers. Handel had employed a similar duet "Sorge il di" in his Italian serenata ten years earlier, also

comprising an ABA da capo with ritornello. However, this duet was closer to English than Italian style. Although both versions include antiphonal exchange between Acis and Galatea, Handel produced a kind of dialogic scheme in his Italian version and foregrounded imitation and sequence in his English one consistent with his Cannons anthems. It is perhaps not surprising as a result that his sacred duet "Why so full of grief" from HWV 251b demonstrated similar obbligato and other musical features to the dramatic duet "Happy we!". Handel's choice of using a duet to showcase the joyful love between the main characters may be a reflection of his personal dramatic style, in which the main characters are capable of expressing the emotional content of the drama themselves, without the need for the chorus to represent them. On the other hand, this may also be Handel's attempt to reform the function of the choral sections in traditional English masques. We can see that the contrast between the joy of the duet and the sorrowful music of the choral section at the beginning of the second part creates a striking effect.

With "Wretched lovers" at the beginning of Act II, the chorus seems to predict unfortunate and worrisome events, preceding Polyphemus' angry monologue. This subtle change, in my opinion, represents an important reform in the role of the chorus joining in the plot. In previous masques, choruses generally did not show up early on, and the instrumental opening favored by Handel's predecessors did not give a clear indication of the subsequent development of the plot. However, in Handel's *Acis and Galatea*—and later in his oratorios—the text sung by the chorus often serves as a predictor or commentator on key plot developments experienced by the soloists.

Discarding the ABA da capo form, "Wretched lovers" falls into three parts. Up to bar 14, the music contained five voices and bass-line obbligato. After the final homophony concluded with an authentic cadence, the orchestra accompaniment entered and the vocal parts were repeated at a higher pitch. It is rather chorale-like in style and somewhat similar to the opening theme of the Cannons anthem *As pants the hart* (HWV 251b). As discussed in Chapter 2, this chorale-like opening may be indebted to the tradition of English anthems current from Tallis to Croft, as also in the first version HWV 251a. Moving on to the second part, two segments of short homophony at "be-hold" bring a high degree of dramatic expression. Handel reduced the previous five melodic lines, creating an echoing voice accompanied by homophony in semiquavers. Similar to the aforementioned settings "Must I my Acis still bemoan" and "The flocks shall leave the mountain", Handel employed two opposite emotions interwined together, accentuating a kind of dramatic conflict rather than solemn homophony in the opening bars. In

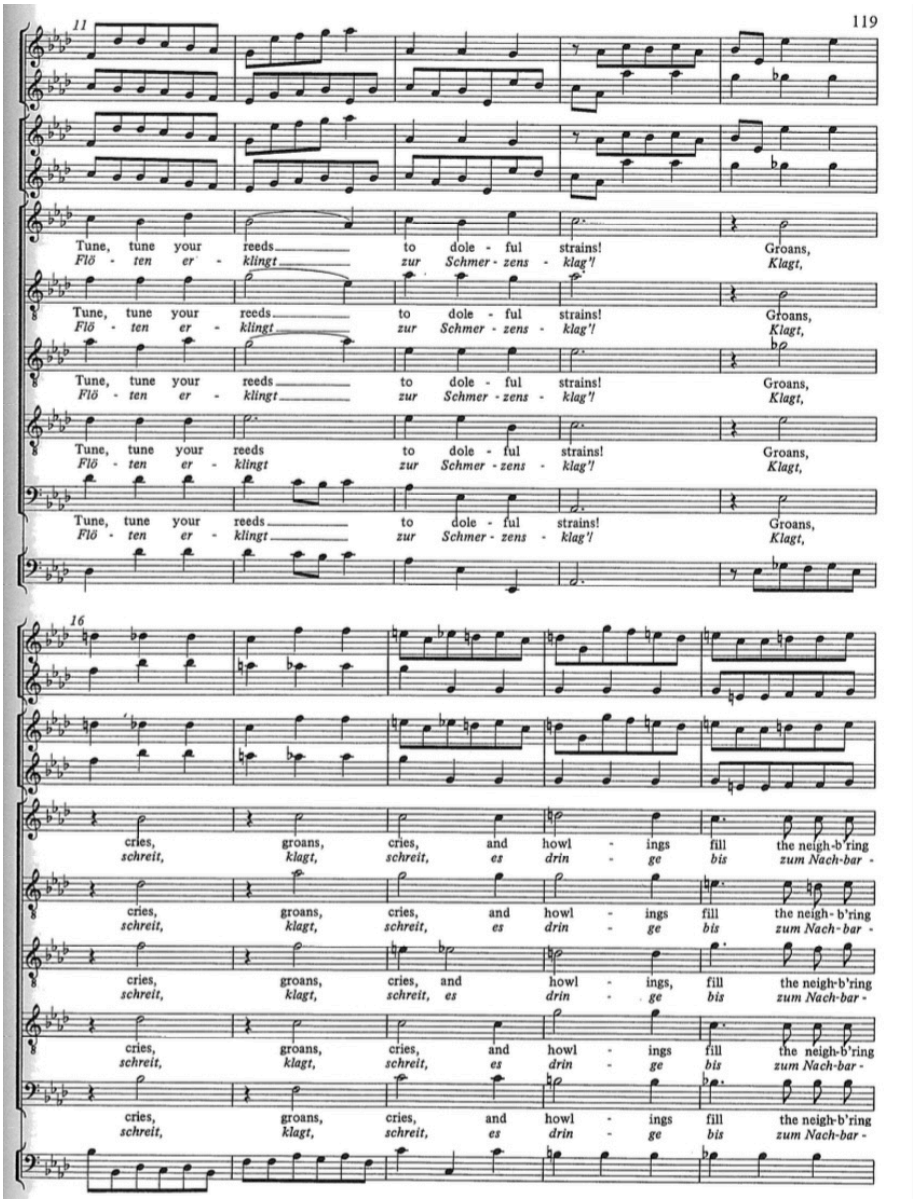
the final passage, from bar 57 onwards, Handel moved the contrasting vocal parts towards his familiar modern technique, as found (for example) in the choral settings of *Dixit Dominus* (HWV 232). Moreover, Handel wrote a two-bar arpeggio on the word "hark" sung alternately by the four voices reversing the effect on the word "all" in the opening passage of Purcell's 1694 Te Deum. As already discussed in the last chapter, Handel recast this device by Purcell, replacing it with his familiar Italian style comprising repeated short homophonic voices on the same word "all". When he composed the "hark", he put these two effects together.

The three main characters in this masque meet in the trio "The flocks shall leave the mountain", and the intense conflicts push the plot to a climax. Here, Handel demonstrates his outstanding skills in creating dramatic music. Before the lovers are disturbed by Polyphemus, Acis and Galatea present a harmonious duet passage with a plain repeated-quaver pattern. However, Polyphemus contrapuntally interjected harsh octaves when the lovers sang the word "love" together. Then, up to bar 36 the octave paired quavers change to stepwise semiquavers and in the succeeding five bars Polyphemus continuously repeats the text "die, presumptuous Acis", extending "die" at the beginning of each phrase to foreshadow Acis' tragic destiny. Three trios were written by Handel for his Italian serenata. 'Provera lo sdegno mio' was placed in the same position as his "Happy we" to conclude Act I, but its three vocal parts bring their independent melodic lines together, in an invocation of medieval canticles. The following trio, 'Dolce, caro amico amplesso', is most similar to his English trio with the same duet of two lovers at the outset then broken by Polyphemus. However, Polyphemus and two lovers sing alternately rather than simultaneously as in the English version. Handel here reduced the confrontation of the opposing characters, isolating them instead. This design also appeared in Purcell's "Ruin'd ere the set of sun" (*Dido and Aeneas*), where the sorceress, with her hurried repeated quavers, was delayed by two witches.

After the death of Acis (in *Acis and Galatea*), Handel also composed a grand chorus "Mourn, all ye muses!" to mark the conclusion of the masque, as had his English predecessors. However, he rejected conventional English anthem form, retaining the solemn homophony of Elizabethan church borrowed from Tallis' Dorian Service instead. As in *Utrecht Te Deum*, Dorian Service had already witnessed an impressive example of 'ancient music' at "holy, holy, holy". So, we must assume that the invocation of Elizabethan polyphonic style in his dramatic work is deliberate, as in the other movements mentioned above. Indeed, throughout the whole setting, threre are harmonic blocks that seem familiar from *Utrecht Te Deum.* For example, at 'the neighb'ring shore', Handel integrated a rhythm of short-long quavers close to the verse

"Heaven and earth are full" from HWV 278. The debt of the *Dorian Service* to his previous canticles was chiefly to be found in isolated verses, in the context for example of grand homophony. In *Acis and Galatea*, it is ingenious for Handel to borrow the form from Tallis' harmony directly. So he is bolder in assimilating Elizabethan polyphony than his contemporaries. In addition, the rhythm of the repeated single words "groans" and "ah" in *Acis and Galatea* (Ex.3.16), retained a predilection for the short homophonic style that had first surfaced in his *Dixit Dominus* and had subsequently appeared in *Utrecht Te Deum*. Handel appears to have felt that solid, homphonic composition could now be accommodated in a most traditional English style.

**Ex. 3.22: Handel, Chorus "Mourn, all ye muses!", *Acis and Galatea* HWV 49a (HHAI, 9/1: bars 11-20).**



In the final chorus "Galatea, dry thy tears" Handel provides a grand conclusion to the work, and echoes earlier movements in various respects. While it is almost twice as long as the preceding "Mourn, all ye muses!", it continues to align with Elizabethan polyphony at its homophonic opening. After the first entry the voices step aside for fourteen bars, while the triplets in the strings invoke the ritornello melody from Galatea's earlier aria "Hush, ye pretty warbling choir!". The next verse "Hail! Thou gentle murm'ring stream" echoes rhythmic patterns on the striking short phrases "shepherds pleasure" and "muses' theme" from "free and gay" in 'Oh, the pleasures of the plain!'; imitative vocal antiphony in both also strengthens their affinity. In the second part of the chorus, after the music was repeated to the rhymed text "Through the plains still joy to rove, […] love", Handel recast the stable homophony, giving the first soprano 'murm'ring still thy gentle love' in a natural reply to Galatea's monologue 'murm'ring still his gentle love'. Featuring similar musical and rhythmic patterns, Handel scales up to five voices for his conclusing phrase.

## 3.6 Conclusion

While *Acis and Galatea* has normally been regarded by commentators as one of the "short English masques produced in London",[261] after Pepusch's *Venus and Adonis* and Galliard's *Calypso and Telemachus*, this chapter has uncovered possible derivations from English opera.[262] The Sinfonia resembled that of *Let God Arise* (HWV 256a) in both form and harmony; the recitatives and aria conformed to a typical 'Italian manner', chiefly employing plain quavers as narratological agents; and influenced by the genre of English songs under the Purcell-Blow model in late seventeenth-century England, an attention-grabbing repeated rhythmic patterning intermittently appeared. In addition, the distribution of choral movements is particularly striking in the context of Elizabethan harmony. Handel included substantial homophonic blocks often found in Tallis' polyphony for his choruses, integrating them into English theatre music, which was consistent with Pepusch's stated aspirations towards 'ancient music'. However, *Acis and Galatea* also exposed Handel's suspicion of and hesitation towards English opera. Leaving aside the varying lengths of the recitatives, the changed da capo form of the arias and the fluctuating number of vocal parts in the choruses, he sometimes confined these musical subjects to one movement, and seemingly as tentative expositions. In the

[261] Anthony Hicks, "Handel and the idea of an oratorio", *The Cambridge Companion to Handel*, 150.

[262] It is worth noting that this thesis categorizes the efforts of composers in the early eighteenth century to write independent masque music genre as an important component of English opera exploration. Building upon the arguments presented in the previous two chapters, this chapter focuses on exploring the unique English declamation and choral movements of Handel's *Acis and Galatea*, despite its classification as a masque in the genre of that period, highlighting its distinct nationalistic context.

recitative setting "Whither, fairest art thou running", he added an episode of English song following the dialogue declamation; for the opening air "Where shall I seek the charming fair?", he restricted the upper instrumental accompaniments to the second section, leaving the bassline to articulate a recitative passage; and the bass part also frequently emerged in solo pieces at the beginning or middle of his choral settings such as "Oh, the pleasures of the plain!" and "Must I my Acis still bemoan". In musical respects, Handel's inner conflicts are also obvious. He "borrowed" the musical theme for the ritornello of "S'agita in mezzo all'onde" (*Aci, Galatea e Polifemo*) from that of "Hush, ye pretty warbling choir!", but transformed it to a staccato melody similar to "Tears are my daily food" (*As pants the hart*, HWV 251b) from the first verse onwards. Moreover, in the first section of "Cease to beauty" (an aria for Polypheme in Act II), Handel made five rhythmic changes to the same thematic material, capturing the various possibilities he was considering for an English composition.

*Acis and Galatea* was not Handel's only dramatic product from 1718, as he also composed *Haman and Mordecai*. The process that turned *Harman and Mordecai* into a genuine successor in the context of English opera involved Handel improving both music and form. *Haman and Mordecai* has no acts, and is divided into six scenes performed without interruption. It comprised arias and choral movements normally following recitative. The rising status of choral movements in Handel's English opera was thereby demonstrated. Moreover, in contrast to various musical styles such as English song from Purcellian masques, homophonic blocks of Tallis' harmony and individual musical pieces from his earlier Italian serenata, Handel drew on recent compositional experiences in *Haman and Modercai*. The recitatives used plain quavers in a short-long rhythm, and arias were usually in a da capo form with ritornello passages. Both characteristics derive from *Acis and Galatea*. For the choral settings, Handel retained the style of his earlier English anthem, including a soprano part sung by Chapel Royal boys. The opening instrumental Ouverture also drew parallels with the Cannons anthem *As pants the hart* (HWV 251b), just as *Acis and Galatea* had done. Besides, modern scholars have also supplemented the influence of *Haman and Modercai* in other examples of *Brockes Passion* and *Cannons Te Deum*.[263]

After 1718, Handel resumed his duties as an Italian opera composer at the Royal Academy of Music, so suspended work on English opera. However, the position of supremacy for Italian opera was gradually changing in the 1720s. In terms of competing activities, for example,

[263] Hicks, "Handel and the idea of an oratorio", *The Cambridge Companion to Handel*, 151.

Thomas Tudway completed the important 'Collection of the most celebrated services and anthems used in the Church of England from the Reformation to the Restoration of L. Charles' in six volumes to enrich the Harleian Music Collection that was a treasure trove of 'ancient music'; and in 1726, The Academy of Vocal Music received funding for the promotion of "contrapuntal vocal music" in contrast to the less contrapuntal Italian opera.[264] In addition Italian opera in general was undergoing a decline on the English stage. As noted by Mrs Pendarves when participating in the rehearsal of Handel's new opera on 11 November 1727:

> I doubt operas [performed in The Royal Academy of music] will survive longer than this winter, they are now at their last gasp; the subscription is expired and nobody will renew it. The directors are all squabbling, and they have so many divisions among themselves that I wonder they have not broke up before.[265]

As a result, it was not a surprise that Pepusch in 1728 set *The Beggar's Opera* (staged an unprecedented sixty-two times in one season) as an English-texted work. Indeed, the success of Pepusch was a sign that patriotic musicians' efforts on national opera seriously threathened the supremacy of Italian opera, and predicted the Bononcini-Lotti scandal under Pepusch's Academy that would reflect his ambition further to establish a fully developed 'ancient music'.

When Handel recognized the significance of English opera on the London stage, he revised and retitled his *Haman and Mordecai* as *Esther* in 1732, marking the beginning of a period devoted to composing English oratorios. Most historians categorize *Haman and Mordecai* as the first version of *Esther*. However, this study proposes a different interpretation, viewing it as an English dramatic work deeply influenced by the precedents set by *Acis and Galatea*. The distinction lies primarily in the structural and thematic elements of *Haman and Mordecai*, which bear greater resemblance to English masques and operas than to the oratorio format. For example, the work's narrative arc, its use of dramatic dialogue, and its inclusion of theatrical elements like staging and costumes set it apart from traditional oratorios, which are more focused on religious themes and usually lack theatrical components.

The key difference between *Haman and Mordecai* and *Esther*, from a musical perspective in this study, is that Handel directly incorporated choruses from his own Coronation Anthems into the original version of *Haman and Mordecai* to create *Esther*. This move marks the beginning of my exploration into how Handel's oratorios broke down the rigid boundaries that existed at the time between theatrical and religious music genres. In the following chapter, I

[264] Rose, "Plagiarism at the Academy of Ancient Music: A Case Study in Authorship, style and Judgement", 184.
[265] *The Autobiography and Correspondence of Mary Granville, Mrs. Delany* (ed.) Lady Llanover, 3 vols (London: Richard Bentley, 1861), 1: 148-19. Web. 6 Jun 2023 http://web.stanford.edu/.

will delve further into Handel's English oratorios, examining them as a new compositional phase in which he promoted the concept of ‘ancient music’, an idea closely associated with Pepusch’s Academy.

# 4

# The Power of Music: Handel's Experiment in 'Ancient Music' in His Early Oratorios

## 4.1 Introduction

After laying the groundwork in the first three chapters, I will now observe and examine Handel's oratorios in chronological order as important examples of Pepusch's 'ancient music' put into practice in the mid-eighteenth century. As stated in Chapter 1, Hawkins indicates that Handelian oratorio was a respected and established musical genre in the Academy since *Esther* (HWV 50a) was performed in 1732, and that the Academy's performance of the composition played a significant role in popularizing this genre.[266] This brought about long-lasting prosperity for Handel's oratorios on the English stage. The motivation behind Handel's attempt to establish the genre of English oratorio is not clear from historical records, and we can tentatively assume that it was a backup plan for his Italian opera career in England. This assumption is not without foundation. Dean has highlighted the complexity and difficulty in defining oratorio. It is a slippery form and cannot be easily categorized without excluding some famous works that are widely considered to be oratorios.[267] When discussing its origins, Dean indicated that "the original motive … behind the oratorio was didactic", with the intention of instructing through visible action. However, the balance between art and instruction was difficult to maintain, and the aesthetic aspect often became more important than the didactic one. Despite the efforts of religious organizations such as the Jesuits, the oratorio began to resemble opera in its emphasis on artistic expression rather than religious instruction. Dean also gives an example to show the similarities between Italian opera and oratorio in terms of their musical form and structure: "shortly before Handel's visit" (to Italy), the ban on public performance of opera in Rome did not lead to a decline in the popularity of the solo singing tradition, but instead led to the emergence of new forms of musical expression, such as serenatas and oratorios, which were essentially opera in a different setting.[268]

Handel was generally identified as the creator of English oratorio. The didactic textual content of the oratorio in its historical context, combined with its variable musical traditions, has drawn modern historians' attention to the textual content of Handel's oratorios in the context of their

[266] Hawkins, *An Account of the Institution and Progress of the Academy of Ancient Music*, 6-7.
[267] Dean, "The oratorio before Handel", in *Handel's Dramatic Oratorios and Masques* (London: Oxford University Press, 1959), 3.
[268] Ibid, 4-8.

overall artistic value. This is especially illustrated by Smith's book associating Handel's oratorio text with Christian worship in English tradition. She believes that "the oratorio Israelites were of real interest to them [the English audiences] as images of themselves", and "by praising God in the sublime tradition of the ancient Israelites, the English hoped to come closer to the Christian God of salvation".[269] As Dean demonstrated, most Italian oratorios of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were arranged as complete musical works centered on Biblical narratives and performed before and after sermons.[270] So, in Smith's chapter she naturally associates Handel's scriptural texts in oratorio with the musical conventions required by the sermon of the first Three Choirs festival in 1720. As she explains,

> The principal element of Christian worship, says Bisse, is praise; the best method of expression is words-and-music; being susceptible to music is not a weakness but a gift of God; music in worship on earth is a foretaste of music in heaven (Revelation V.I4); music can refine the passions, evoke devotion, and make converts to religion (St Augustine); St Basil gave permission to use music to win men to virtue; instruments can be used to support the voice; both musicians and congregation must concentrate devoutly on the spiritual purpose of the music; singers must utter the words distinctly; and the music should be appropriately solemn and majestic.[271]

This quotation reveals that music is only allowed to exist in combination with texts related to "Christian worship" and must "be appropriately solemn and majestic". Smith then gave an example of "the Song of Moses" in Handel's *Israel in Egypt* (HWV 54, 1739) serving not only as an example of religious poetry, but also as the original illustration of God's approval of vocal and instrumental music in divine worship, specifically in Anglican cathedrals. This song is seen as a precursor to the use of music in cathedral worship, with an accompanied, antiphonal double choir. In addition, the major characters and their roles in oratorio librettos can be traced back to this sermon tradition, with Moses at the Red Sea, David as a singer of psalms, and Solomon as the instigator of temple worship.

By the twenty-first century, historians have attributed the religious spirit conveyed by the "Israelite choruses" in Handel's oratorios to English nationalism. Taruskin observes that the music of Handel's oratorios, particularly the "thrilling choruses", presents an image of a devout and vibrant Israel as a collective entity. This portrayal gained strong recognition from the English musical public, who identified themselves as "self-made men", thereby emphasizing the stoutly nationalistic subtext of Handelian oratorio.[272] The religious themes and the

[269] Smith, "Music, morals and religion", in *Handel's Oratorios and Eighteenth-Century Thought*, 92.
[270] Dean, "The oratorio before Handel", 7.
[271] Smith, "Music, morals and religion", 88.
[272] Taruskin, "Class of 1685 (I)," in *The Oxford History of Western Music*, 238.

arrangement of the choral parts gradually attracted all the attention of scholars, becoming the hallmark of Handel's oratorios. Eva Zöllner has explained that while other English composers, such as Maurice Greene and William Boyce, took an interest in oratorio during the 1730s and 1740s, Handel did not face any significant competition in the genre during his career.[273] Zöllner believes the "religious nature of the libretto" and the prominent role played by the chorus could be characterized by two distinctive features that set it apart from contemporary opera.

In fact, the choral parts of Handel's oratorios have always been highly acclaimed in reception-related respects. Anthony Hicks points out that the success of the first performance of *Esther* was due to its novelty and resulted in full audiences for all six performances; one notable comment came from the Earl of Egmont, who observed that *Esther* was composed "in the church style", indicating that the impact of the choruses was particularly noteworthy to him.[274] However, if we consider the performance situation of Handel's oratorios at that time, we may determine that modern scholars have been too optimistic in their historical understandings of them. By straddling the fence between music for the church and music for the stage, Handelian oratorio undoubtedly broke through generic boundaries of their day and encountered controversy from genre-conscious writers of that era. The development of Handel's oratorios was not as plain sailing as is often assumed. The sacred religious subject matter made it extremely difficult for Handel's oratorios to be performed in theatres, and the failure of Handel's *Semele* (HWV 58, 1744) at the London theatre makes it apparent that its success in the 1730s (in a religious context) was only temporary.

The focus of this chapter is the glorious first decade of Handelian oratorio, specifically highlighting *Deborah* (HWV 51, 1733) as a reflection of the collision between the ideas of the Academy of Ancient Music and the Apollo Academy, as well as *Alexander's Feast* (HWV 75, 1736) as an example of Handel's contemplation of "the power of music". The choral insertions will still be the focus of my examination but will no longer be centered around the libretto. The nationalistic subtext has shifted from the expression of "Christian worship" in the text to the representation of the divine and majestic in Handel's harmony. Here, it is necessary to reiterate the differences between the attitudes towards choral music in the ideas of 'ancient music' and the traditional church culture in England. In the introduction to my thesis, I discussed the influence of Augustine's concept on presumptions about the didactic power of music, which states that the wisdom and arrangement of God are the foundation of astronomy, harmony, and

[273] Eva Zöllner, "Handel and English Oratorio", in *The Cambridge History of Eighteenth-Century Music*, 541.
[274] Anthony Hicks, "Handel and the idea of an oratorio", in *The Cambridge Companion to Handel*, 153.

stability, and that humans are incapable of discerning good or bad music. This theory influenced musicians such as Arthur Bedford in the early eighteenth century and penetrated the sermons of in the Three Choirs festival in the 1720s (see above). However, Chapter 1 discussed theoretical underpinnings of the Academy of Ancient Music, which explain that we need to determine the qualities of music ourselves. As Hawkins illustrated, under the direction of Pepsuch, the Academy was seeking the participation of individuals who had an appreciation for music and possessed the ability to distinguish between basic melodies and complex musical compositions that feature sophisticated modulations and harmonies.[275] This explains why I temporarily set side Handel's libretto in my research. In other words, while Smith uses 'religious words in his oratorios' to distinguish the "church style" of Handelian oratorio, I will examine it by exploring Handel's music.

This chapter maintains continuity with earlier chapters in terms of musical discussion. 'Ancient music' as an important defence of English opera nationalism is evident, and the practical manifestation of Handelian oratorio depends upon consideration of the Elizabethan polyphonic style and Handel's personal national anthem style in Chapter 2, as well as the declamation style and choral insertions in Chapter 3's pastoral masque. Oratorios are presented in chronological order, discussing competition with parallel works of the time and Handel's response to his intellectual musical background, which I regard as his key creative impetus.

## 4.1 *Esther* (1732): from masque to oratorio

Handel mainly took his new 1732 *Esther* for the public from the original Cannons version (1718), most interestingly inserting his earlier Coronation anthems without adaptation. This revised work has been regarded as a "pastiche" by historians.[276] On close examination of these two versions, we discover that Handel finished the transposition from pastoral masque to sacred drama piece within two months.[277] He did not simply expand the scale of the music by using some completed works to make *Esther* suitable for "a full evening's entertainment".[278] Instead, Handel shifted or eliminated movements when necessary, recasting Esther as a new heroine appropriate to opera.

[275] Hawkins, *An Account of the Institution and Progress of the Academy of Ancient Music*, 11.
[276] See, Anthony Hicks, "Handel and the idea of an oratorio", 152; Taruskin, "Class of 1685 (II)", in *The Oxford History of Western Music*, 314. Taruskin has called the 1718 *Esther* by the name *Haman and Mordecai*. In 2015, this name was rejected in *Handel's Collected Documents*: "The wordbook is the first authoritative document to give *Esther* as the title to the work: there is no evidence that Handel ever called it 'Haman and Mordecai'.". See, *George Frideric Handel Collected Documents,* volume 2. *1725-1734,* 497.
[277] According to the title page of wordbook, Handel still used his 1720 version of *Esther* (same movements but divided into three Acts) in the private performance on 23 February 1732. For the first performance in a London Theatre on 2 May 1732, the music featured "after the Manner of the Coronation Service": see, *George Frideric Handel Collected Documents,* volume 2. *1725-1734*, 497 and 522.
[278] Hicks, "Handel and The Idea of An Oratorio", 152.

The 1732 Esther consists of three Acts, each expanding the scenes relative to the Cannons version. First, and in contrast to his 1718 dramatic works, Handel rejected the influence of Restoration theatre music that normally engaged the "rhyming phrase" for English songs, and adopted Italian serenata style instead for the 1732 arias, with irregular rhythmic forms and intricate melismas. The movements "Alleluia" for Esther and "Endless fame" for Ahasuerus are typical in this respect. The Italianate "throw-back" was also illustrated by repeated notes frequently employed in his new recitative music, such as "Let me with freedom thy petition know" and "The king will listen to the royal fair". Moreover, for these new passages, Handel's compositional approach was strongly influenced by his earlier English experiences as well. He maintained the English prosody in short-long rhythm starting from the upbeat to determine the phrases and eliminated some short middle sections of da-capo-form arias that had appeared in the 1718 *Esther*, turning them into a standard English aria form, such as in "Praise the Lord with cheerful noise", "O beauteous queen" and "How art thou fall'n from thy height". Also, the "objections from Edmund Gibson", who did not agree to the Chapel Royal boys performing in the public theatre,[279] did not affect Handel's choral movements. Although two of his new Coronation anthems concluded the first scene of Act I and fourth scene of Act II, most of his 1718 choruses were recomposed and based on original musical material. For example, the opening chorus of the second act, "Tyrant may a while presume", featured a musical theme derived from the chorus "Virtue truth and innocence" found in scene V of the 1718 version, and employed a different text.

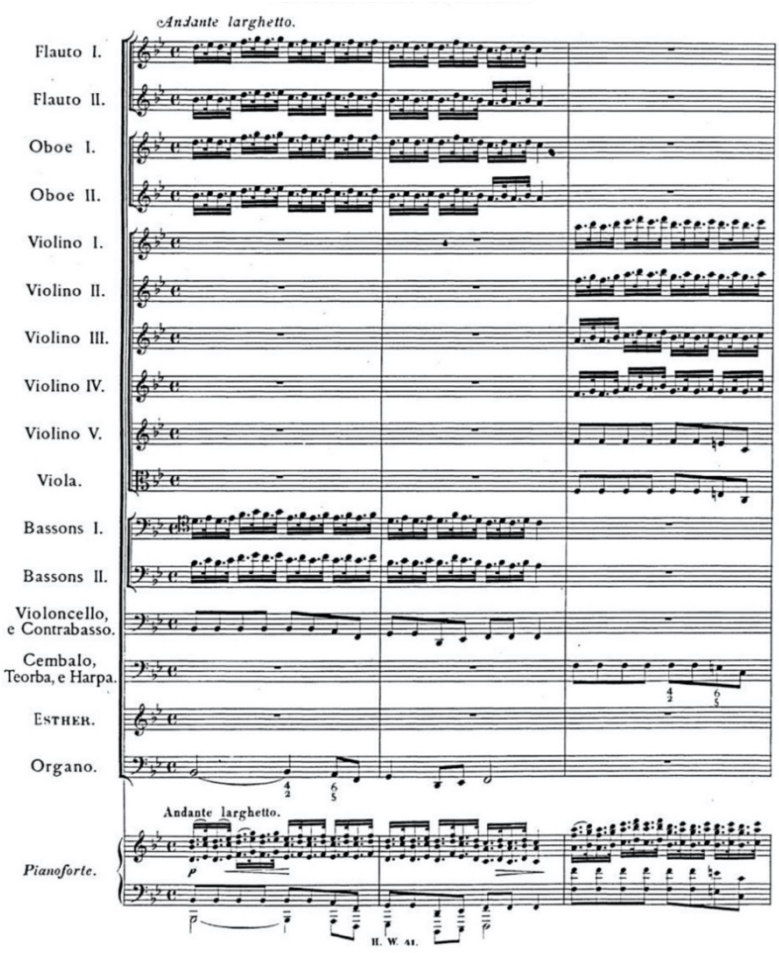
For the tripartite overture Handel used the same thematic material and rescored the instrumental ensemble for two groups of oboes and violins, viola and bass continuo parts in order to achieve a thicker harmonic effect than in the original.

The first act comprises five scenes. Placed before the beginning of the 1718 version, Handel included two new scenes that introduced the main characters. The music of scene one starts with an accompanied recitative, "Breathe soft ye gales", scored for double flutes, oboes, bass continuo, five violins plus single viola, cello and cembalo. In the ritornello, Handel split the grand accompaniment into two parts, the winds and strings alternately performing the same theme that derived from the corresponding location in Galatea's aria "Heart, the seat of soft delight" in the earlier masque (Ex. 4.1 and 4.2).[280] Here, the dotted semiquavers painting "the bubbling fountain" and lovers' "murmuring" in Acis and Galatea, directed attention to the "soft

[279] Zöllner, "Handel and English Oratorio", in *The Cambridge History of Eighteenth-Century Music*, 542.
[280] This thematic similarity is an original observation of this study.

breath" and "rills". For the final chorus of this scene, the dotted rhythm appeared again in the third section "up on the right hand" of his Coronation anthem My heart is Inditing (HWV 261), praising the beauty of the queen, which clearly had a specific connection to Galatea (Ex. 4.3). Therefore, Handel used the same musical theme in different genres of his English works to paint characters. The second scene comprises a secco recitative and a da capo aria in a typically Italianate style. In totality, these two additional scenes create a beautiful and loyal Queen Esther, a merciless but rhetorically effective Minister Haman, and a greedy King Ahasuerus with unlimited power.

**Ex. 4.1: Handel, Esther Air "Breathe soft ye gales", *Esther* HWV 50b (HG 41: bars 1-13).**

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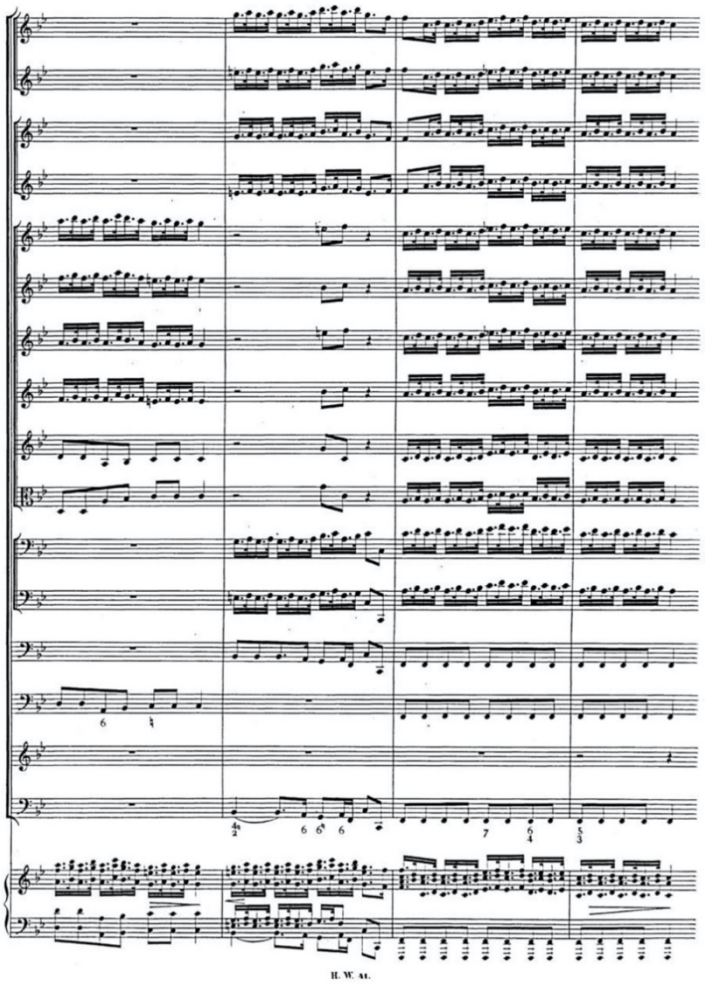

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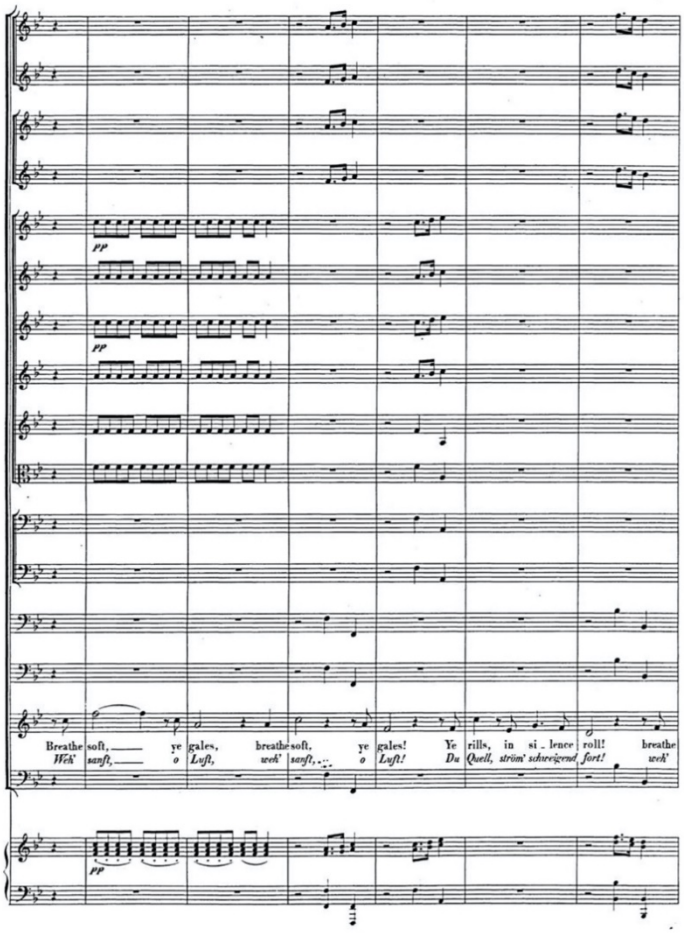
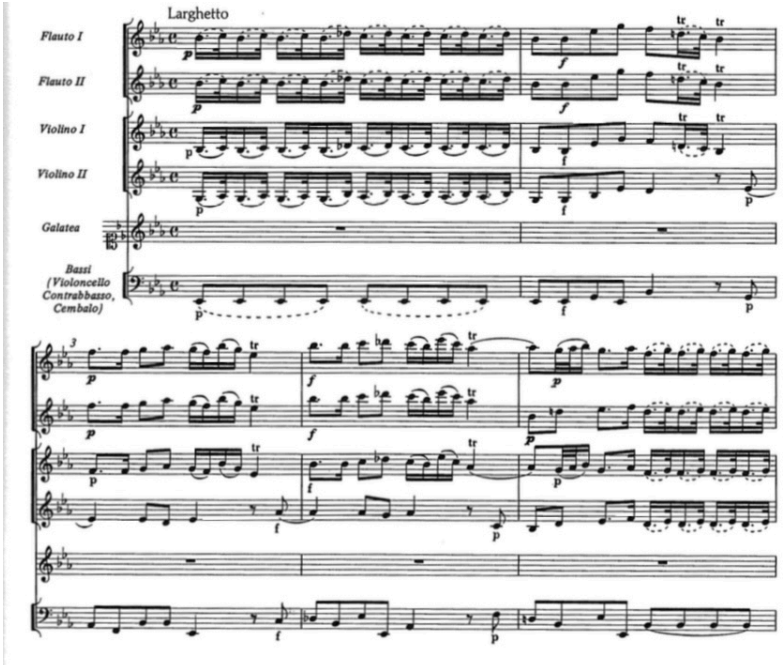



**Ex. 4.2: Handel, Galatea Air "Heart, the seat of soft delight", *Acis and Galatea* HWV 49a (HHAI, 9/1: bars 1-11).**



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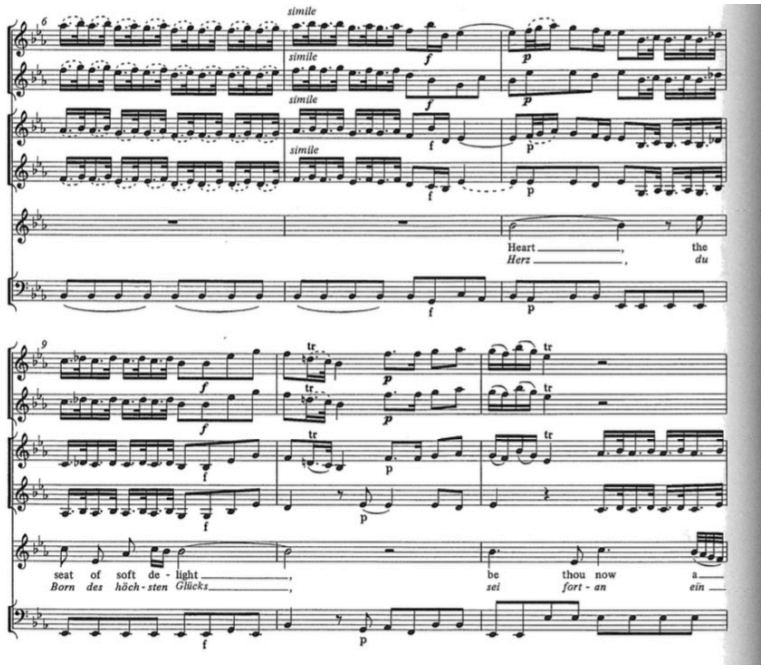
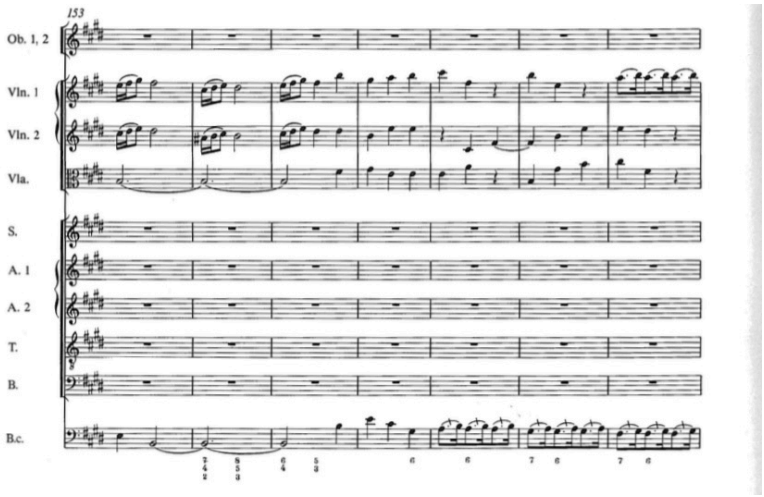



**Ex. 4.3: Handel, "up on the right hand", *My heart is Inditing* HWV 261, bars 153-173.[281]**

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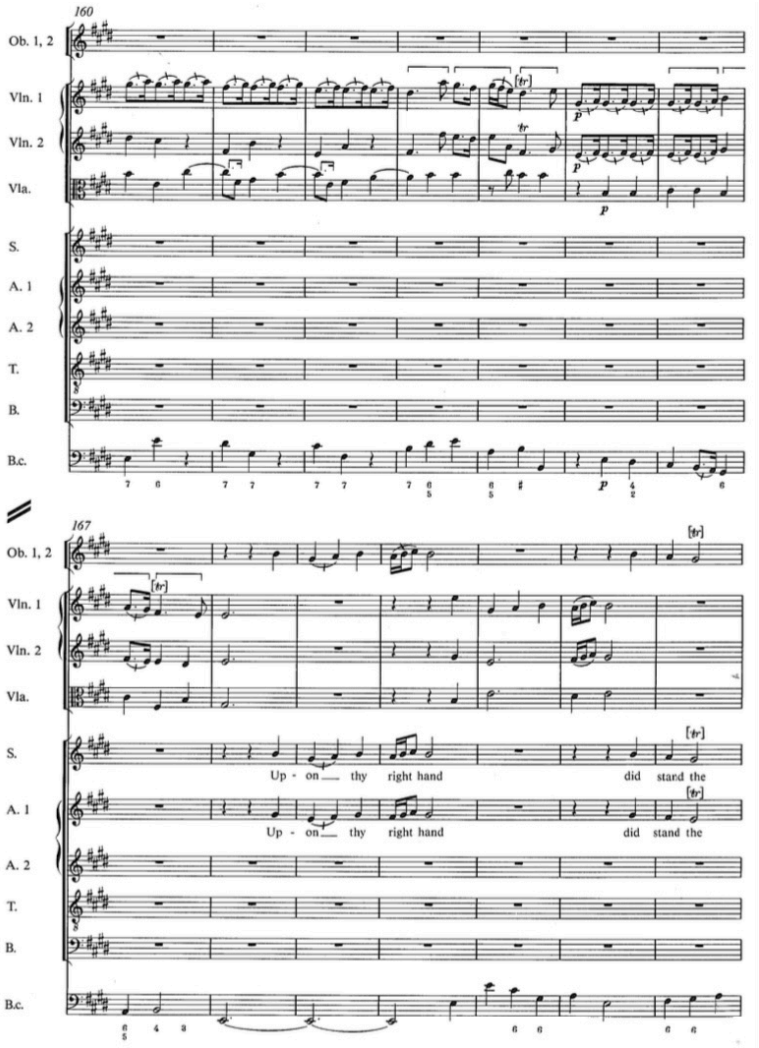
[281] Handel, *Four Coronation Anthems HWV 258-261*(ed.) Clifford Bartlett (Oxford: Oxford University Press, c1990), 120-21.




Although the remaining three scenes from Act 1 were all taken from the 1718 version, Handel still amended the form. First, the choral movement "Shall we of servitude complain" was changed into a secco recitative retaining the original text. Handel also eliminated the final repetition previously intended to conclude scene four. In scene five, Handel added a repetition of the chorus "ye sons of Israel, mourn" following the air "O Jordan, Jordan, sacred tide" in response to Mordecai. Here, Handel's choral setting connected effectively to the dramatic context through dialogue, and the repeated chorus was used to portray "God" derived from the text of the air "O Jordan, Jordan, sacred tide". Moreover, in the same scene, Handel combined two independent recitatives into one – "How have our sins provok'd Lord". Its first section, which was initially sung by Israel women, is changed to a secco recitative for Mordecai; the second section, with stressed dotted rhythm accompaniment in a short-long pattern, depicts a heart-wrenched Mordecai.

In most respects, and with only slight modifications, the second act follows the contents of scene IV to the first half of scene V from the 1718 version. It begins with a newly added scene, a five-part chorus "Tyrants may a while pressure" indicating that Esther will eventually defeat her enemy. As mentioned above, Handel did not compose new music for this movement, and the music was taken from a deleted chorus of the 1718 version set to a new text. It also shows how Handel's setting of the English language had become more flexible and skilful over time. The finale of the act comprised a new series of movements including another Coronation anthem *Zadok the Priest* (HWV 258). Handel rejected the middle section of the anthem, combining the outer ones into a concentrated church-style chorus. Following the ritornello passage with the contrast between walking quavers and short rising arpeggios in semiquavers, three trumpets and timpani enter together with seven-part homophony where the verses were changed to "God is our hope, and he will cause the King to shew Mercy to Jacob's Race". Handel altered the text of the conventional sacred theme in his anthem, aligning it with the dramatic progression in this composition. Subsequently, the final section "God save the King" followed the revised passage without a break. He used his earlier anthem in a fresh way, then, to end the second act, emphasizing the sacred power of Esther.

The final act, like the previous act, continually draws on the 1718 *Esther*. Nevertheless, there are also some new segments, especially in the choral settings. The second scene, "Through the nation shall be", in binary form, conveys the King's praise for Mordecai in an aria, and shows Israel's response to the king in a homophonic choral section. A comparable procedure occurs in Handel's 1718 dramatic work: "Must I my Acis still bemoan" in *Acis and Galatea*, as a 'solo and chorus' setting whose choral melody imitated the previous solo phrases. For the 1732 *Esther*, Handel was more conscious of the distinct styles of solo and chorus than he had been in *Acis and Galatea*. The accompaniment comprises an octave leap followed by running semiquavers in a falling scale for strings performed across the setting, and the first section is a typical Italianate aria with extended melismas; the second section is a church-style chorus with a series of harmonic blocks in short-long rhythms. The melodic line and rhythmic patterns of solo and chorus are different, and Handel incorporates the choral setting within the aria music, perhaps implying a connection between the Italianate solo voice and English sacred homophony. (The final chorus also inserts phrases from the preceding aria.) 'The Lord our enemy has slain, Alleluia' was identified as a 'new setting' by Burrows and "was also scored in full 'Coronation Anthem' style, including three trumpets and timpani".[282] In fact, it was

[282] Burrows, "The Chapel Royal and Handel's Oratorios", 294.

based on the 1718 version's finale featuring an orchestral 'Coronation Anthem'. Handel expanded the vocal parts from five to seven, beginning the movement with a powerful unison theme, following it with a series of intricate melismas on the word "Alleluia" that derived from the aria "Alleluia" in Act I from *Esther*. At the same time, Handel eliminated all the accompanying instruments, leaving only the bass continuo in place, and as a result created contrast between the powerful harmony and the melodic solo. Moreover, while the 1718 version brought in its second choral passages four times, the 1732 version gave it only once, shortening the length by a half and providing a concentrated setting.

In summary, Handel intended the 1732 *Esther* as a traditional Italianate operatic work, demonstrated not only by the musical style of the aria and recitative settings, but also by the reduction of the narrative movements relative to the 1718 version. Moreover, although Handel brought earlier works into the choral settings, he also introduced unmodified sacred anthems into the dramatic oratorio. Therefore, Handel started in his first oratorio setting to reconcile the opposition between the solo voice in an operatic context and the polyphonic harmony of the English "church style".

## 4.2 *Deborah* (1733): the music rivalry between the Academy of Ancient Music and the Apollo Academy

Although completed in a short time and using a substantial number of pre-existing materials, *Esther* made a splash with the London public: "all six performances were advertised as being by the King's Command and were attended by the royal family"; and (according to Viscount Percival's diary on the date of 6 May 1732) "the house [in which *Esther* was performed was] crowded".[283] Its success not only encouraged Handel to compose other works in the same genre, such as *Deborah* and *Athalia*, but also drew attention to this new vernacular oratorio among English composers, especially those from the Apollo Academy camp. Interestingly Handel liked to challenge his rivals with works on similar libretto themes, such as *Deborah* (1733) in relation to Maurice Greene's *The Song of Deborah and Barak* (1732), and *Saul* (HWV 53, 1739) following William Boyce's *David's Lamentation over Saul and Jonathan* (1736). Historians generally use personal grievances between Handel and Greene to explain this situation; according to Gardner, "Given Greene and Handel's difficult relationship, Handel's choice of Deborah as the subject … was almost certainly intended as a competitive attack

[283] *George Frideric Handel Collected Documents,* vol. 2. *1725-1734*, 522-26.

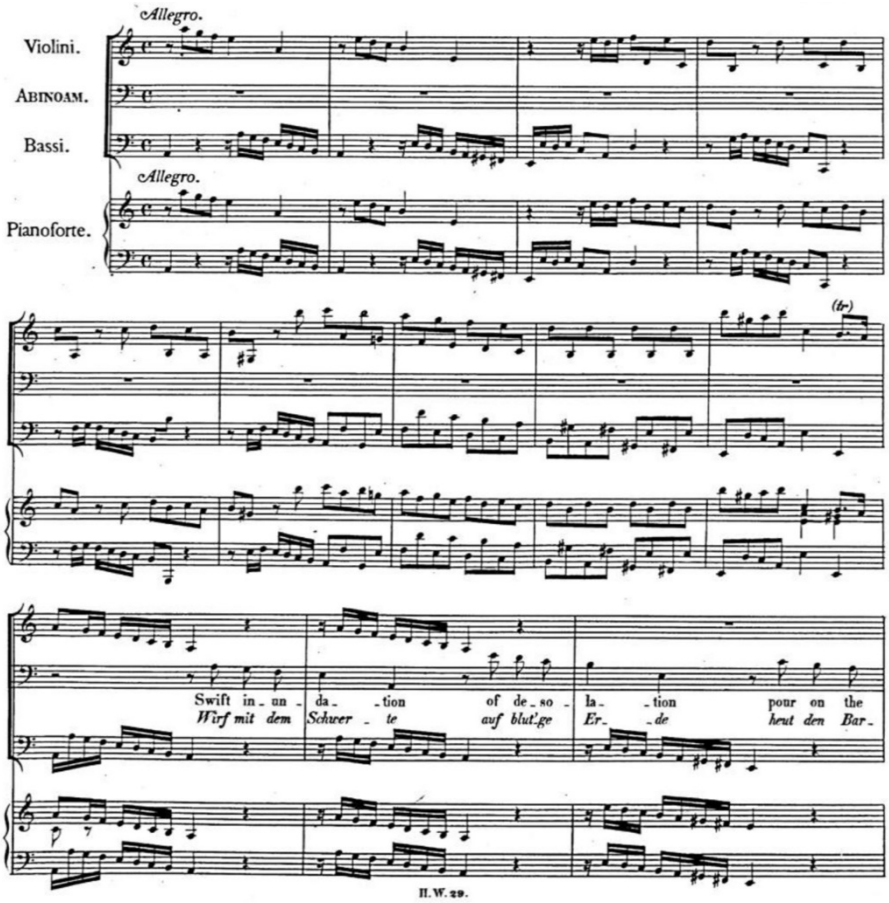
against Greene".[284] But they ignore the fact that a different society, the Academy of Ancient Music, was behind Handel. Handel and Greene had initially been close, until Greene started to associate with Handel's rival Bononcini in the end of 1720s; they fell out completely on account of the well-known Bononcini-Lotti plagiarism case, discussed in Chapter 1, when Greene sided with Bononcini and finally left the Academy of Ancient Music, setting up another society (the Apollo Academy). During the same year as Handel's successful production of *Esther* in London, Greene presented his *The Song of Deborah and Barak*. In my opinion, the different perspectives from the two societies in developing English opera is a driving force behind the competition between the two composers.

*Deborah* is in some ways a continuation of *Esther*, drawing on the rest of the Coronation Anthems and comprising a three-part sacred drama with a female heroine. However, differences are also immediately clear. Handel used more one-section than da capo arias in *Deborah*, and generally preferred descriptive to dramatic movements. This might represent a debt to Greene, who composed his *Song of Deborah and Barak* in ode style, perhaps explained by his background as a composer of church music.[285] The plot of *Deborah*'s third part is the same as that of the first half of *Song of Deborah and Barak*, which allows us easily to observe the differences in narrative and dramatic style between the two librettos. For example, when setting the story of Jael killing Sisera, the composers both employed a descriptive secco recitative, but Samuel Humphreys (1697–1738) skilfully lets Jael tell the story herself rather than (as in Greene's libretto) having it told by a narrator. As for the music, Greene's influence on Handel is clearly evident in a general way. Both composers reject the da capo aria and use four-part Israelite choruses to describe the victory in war. Moreover, the word painting from Greene is also evident on a number of occasions in Handel's *Deborah*. In the bass aria "Swift inundation of desolation" sung by Abimoan, Handel set the text "swift inundation" with a downward scale in running semiquavers (Ex. 4.4), borrowing the material from his earlier work *Acis and Galatea* when presenting Polypheme's anger and desire in the aria "O ruddier than the cherry" (Ex. 4.5). It also appears in his recitatives that employ continuously falling intervals to underline the repeated word "falling" in "The haughty foe" while in the ensuing movement

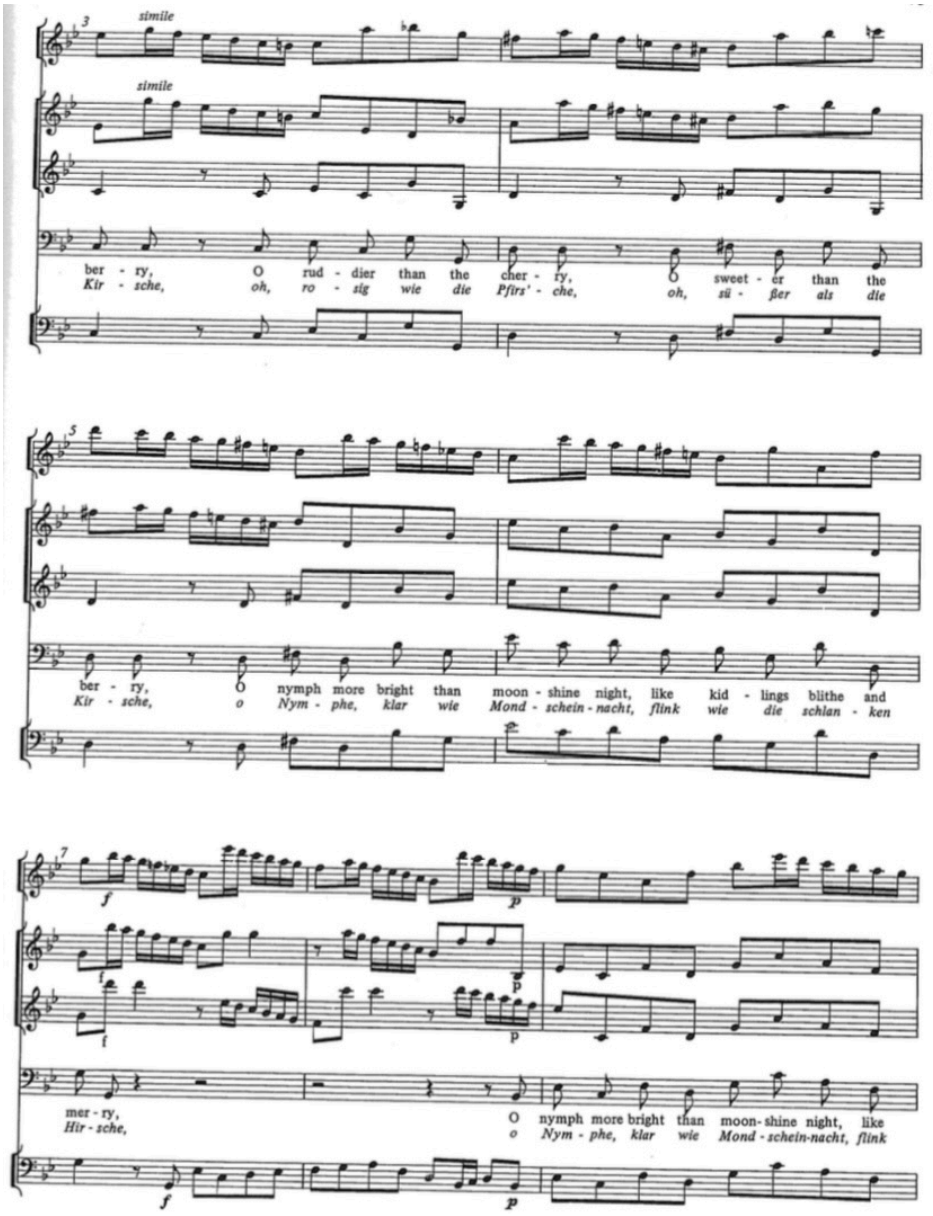
[284] See, Matthew Gardner, "Politics, Competition and Early Oratorio: Greene's The Song of Deborah and Barak and Handel's Deborah", in *Handel and Maurice Greene's Circle at the Apollo Academy: The Music and Intellectual Contexts of Oratorios, Odes and Masques* (ed.) Martin Staehelin (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2008), 22; the similar opinions can be found: Roger Fiske, "Concert Life in England I", 76.
[285] Gardner, "Politics, Competition and Early Oratorio: Greene's The Song of Deborah and Barak and Handel's Deborah", 37.

raising melodic intervals to support Barak's calls "my son" in "My prayers are heard" (Ex. 4.6 and 4.7).

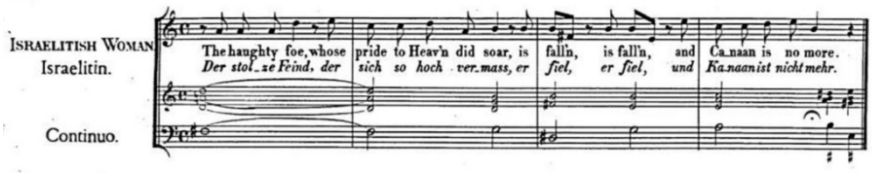
**Ex. 4.4: Handel, Abimoan Air "Swift inundation of desolation", *Deborah* HWV 51 (HG 29: bars 1-12).**



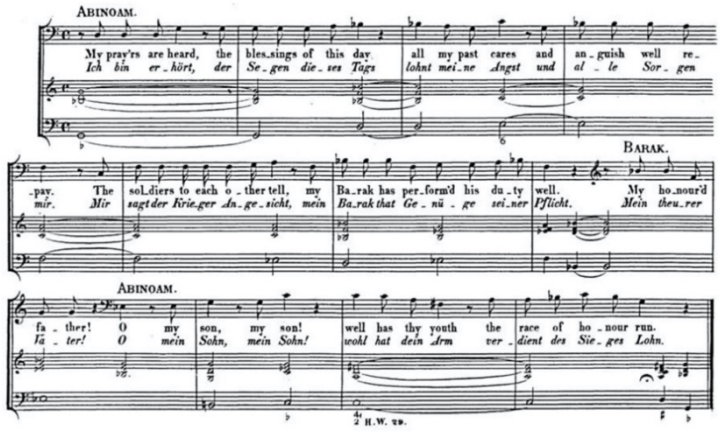
**Ex. 4.5: Handel, Polypheme Air "O ruddier than the cherry", *Acis and Galatea* HWV 49a (HHAI, 9/1: 3-8).**




**Ex. 4.6: Handel, Israelite Woman Recitative "The haughty foe", *Deborah* HWV 51 (HG 29).**



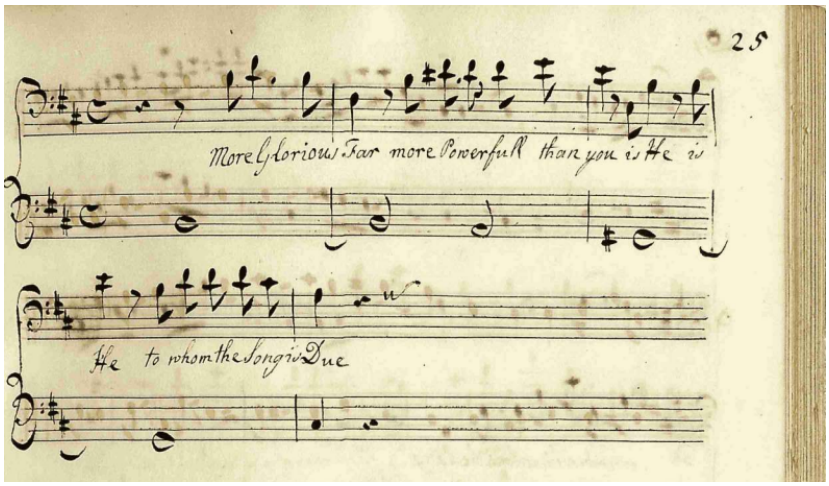
**Ex. 4.7: Handel, Abinoam and Barak Recitative "My pray'rs are heard", *Deborah* HWV 51 (HG 29).**




Handel and Greene appear to have had quite different views on formal aspects of dramatic music. There is no division of scenes or acts in *The Song of Deborah and Barak*: after the two-part overture, the sung movements are dominated by recitatives, especially accompanied ones. We learned in Chapter 3 that from the 1710s onwards, patriotic English musicians focused on recitative music as the best genre in which to combine the English "tuneable speaking" with Italianate monophonic music. Therefore, Greene spared no effort in showing the perfect combination of English libretto and recitative music, as well as the strict distinction between narrative and emotional movement in *The Song of Deborah and Barak*. This practice displays the continuity of the all-sung English opera tradition, which is also evident in Pepusch's *Venus and Adonis* (see details in Chapter 3). Greene's works primarily used secco recitative to drive the plot, while the aria often appeared with a chorus to render emotions when necessary. For example, in the chorus "attend ye Prince", the repetitive and upward chanting of "attend" in a short-long rhythm at the beginning of the chorus effectively boosted morale, followed by the urgent musical melody and the shuttle voice design, which also highlighted the emotions. However, one does not find the 'church style' in the music. In the following aria and chorus "He that in the highest dwells", the chorus's imitation and repetition of the solo music reminds us of Purcellian masque mode. Therefore, the chorus insertion in Greene's oratorios still remained in the musical experience of his predecessors. Moreover, one can feel disappointed at the musical setting of Greene's recitative. According to discussion in Chapter 3 and the introduction to this chapter, we know that secco recitative music plays an increasing role, as the playwrights hoped to enhance their words through this genre, allowing the audience to better understand the poetry and highlight the educational and reflective purpose of the music

in the oratorio. For an English composer, one might expect to see the kind of English declamation offered by Purcell or even the English accent templates left by Lanier and Lawes in his recitative. However, what one witnesses is Greene's neglect of English accent and rhythm in the pursuit of the "Italian manner". For example, the opening of his unaccompanied bass "More glorious" (Ex. 4.8) has the multi-syllable word "glorious" compressed on the weak beat at the end of the measure, losing not only its accent but some of its "glory" as well. The final phrase "to whom the song is due" also has this problem due to the melodic exploitation of plain semiquavers.

**Ex. 4.8: Greene, bass "More glorious", *The Song of Deborah and Barak*.[286]**

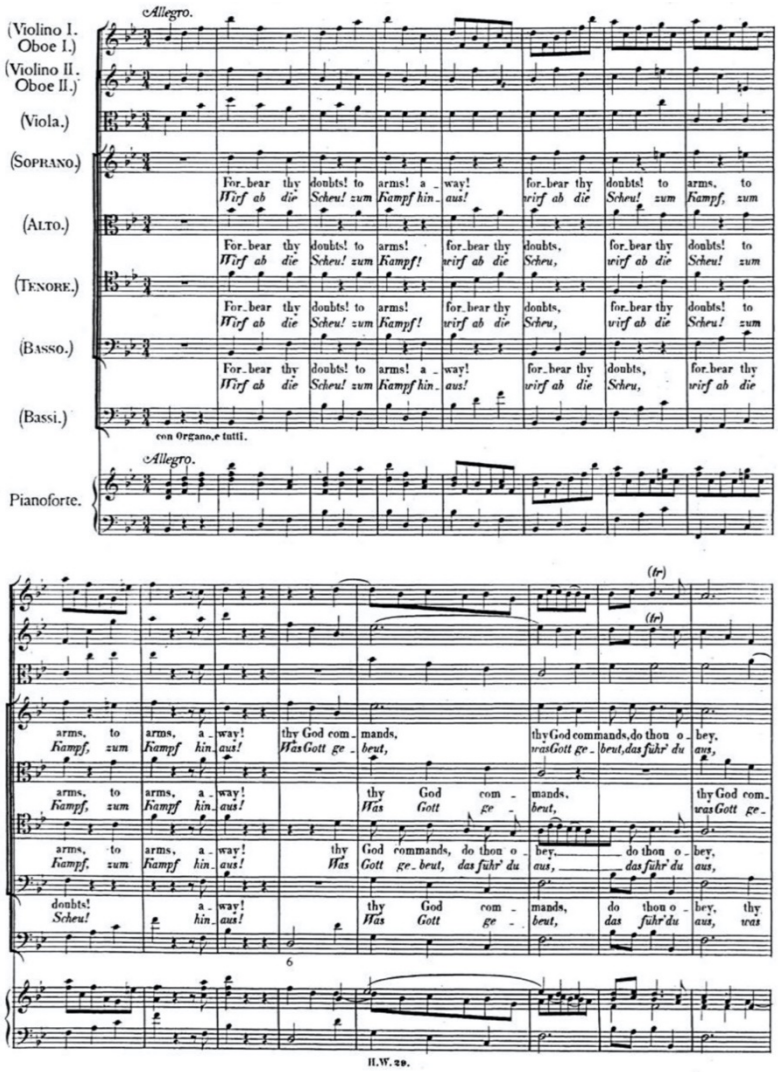



While Greene still drew on an "Italian manner" to support an English-texted work, Handel began to explore the intimate relationship between English sacred harmony and Italian operatic music. *Deborah* incorporated almost all the phases of English anthem settings that Handel had tried thus far, including Utrecht Te Deum, Cannons anthems, and Coronation anthems. The composition was therefore diverse. In the first scene, Handel introduced a new form in which the music moved smoothly between chorus and recitative, providing only one aria and a single duet. He wrote two types of choruses, and the opening eight-part choral form appeared for the first time in his English works. "Immortal lord of earth and skies" was scored for the trumpets, horns, timpani, oboes, bassoon and strings. The homophonic staccato of the strings and winds in the ritornello created an effect similar to the *Utrecht Te Deum*. The two soprano parts entered with only oboe accompaniment; here Handel seems deliberately to emphasize this part as he had had no chance to do so in *Esther*. The subdivision into two four-part groups, singing homophonically or through echoes, aligns with the design of "Day by day, we magnify thee"

[286] Maurice Greene, *The Song of* Deborah and Barak (London: John Alcock, 1757), 25.

in *Utrecht Te Deum*. The grand chorus acted as a foundation for the work, opening the drama and predicting the ensuing plot, and appearing in "O hear thy lowly servants pray'r" in the middle of the scene. Handel distinguished these two movements forcefully from the others. The music in them created a divine context for *Deborah*, while also representing a kind of stage scenery. For the four-part choruses in this scene, Handel also implicitly had them represent God. Following the duet where Deborah persuades Barak to believe in the power of "the God", in "Forbear thy doubts", the four-part chorus growls "To arms! Away!", as if to represent God's order to Barak (Ex. 4.9). Rejecting thick orchestral accompaniment, Handel took inspiration from Tallis' *Dorian services* where four-part music features a clear leading voice and well-crafted harmonic support.

**Ex. 4.9: Handel, Chorus of Israelites "Forbear thy doubts!", *Deborah* HWV 51 (HG 29: bars 1-16).**



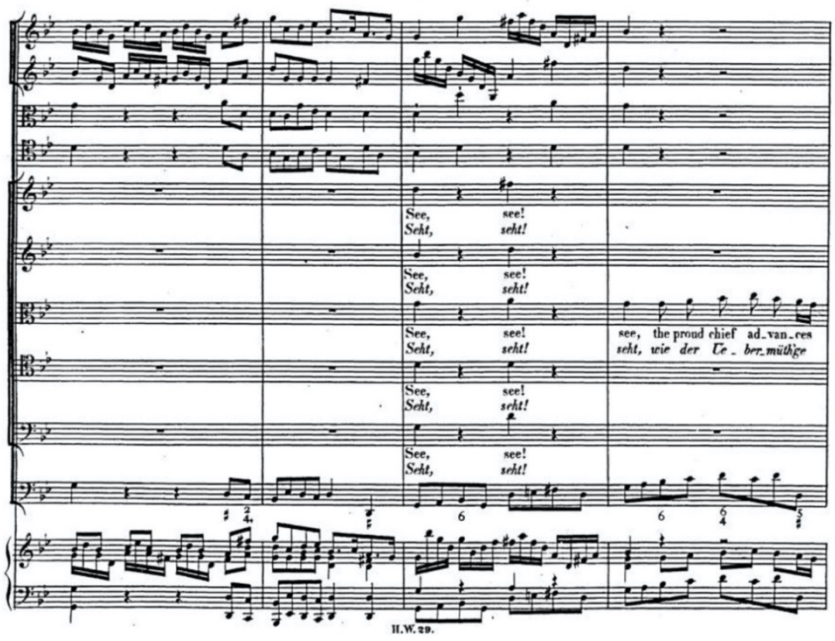
In the second scene, Handel avoided choral movements, adopting a cantata form with alternating da capo aria and secco recitative consistent with his earlier Italian serenata. For the remaining three scenes of Act I, the choruses took five-part form aligning with Handel's preference in *Esther*. The third scene concluded with a five-part chorus "Let thy deeds be glorious" echoing the previous air "All dangers disdaining" using the word "glory" in similar fashion to the aforementioned movement 'ye sons of Israel, mourn' in *Esther*. Moreover, after a recitative which declared Sisera's order to Barak's army, the finale to Act I follows the compositional practice from *Esther* of ending with a Coronation anthem: *Let thy hand be strengthened* (HWV 259). Above all, Act 1 incorporates a blend of styles representing English opera: it features anthem and masque music that Handel had explored in his earlier works, as well as the choral traditions evidenced in his Esther. These stylistic choices collectively display the breadth and versatility of Handel's approach to English opera. The choral movements also represented several practices, including the grand eight-part background chorus based on the idea of Utrecht Te Deum, the metaphor of "the God" movements with Tallis-like harmony in four parts, and the five-part effect associated with *Esther*.

As the plot develops, people from both camps meet in the second act, Handel thus identifying choruses of Israelites and Baal. As Hicks notes in regard to the new design of *Deborah*: "[Handel] use[d]…the chorus to portray different peoples, here the Israelites and the Priests of Baal; the former are represented by the standard forms of the church style -- rich harmony and well-crafted counterpoint -- while the music for the heathens is generally based on dance forms, with catchy rhythms and simpler harmonies."[287] Nevertheless, whether people were portrayed positively or negatively, Handel brought his earlier church style to both groups. The opening chorus of Israelite priests "See the proud chief advance now" can be regarded as a combination of his Italianate Latin anthem and the Utrecht Te Deum styles. Up to bar 20, Handel drew on the musical theme of *Dixit Dominus* (HWV 232), only replacing the violas with bassoons. The five vocal parts including double sopranos started with two staccato chords, and then the unaccompanied alto sung the motif followed by imitation from the rest. In line with the *Dixit Dominus*, Handel changed the positions of the staccato and the melodic phrase so that the next harmonic block in short-long rhythm followed on smoothly. From bars 20 to 35, the music is close to the Purcellian orchestral anthem as demonstrated by alternate voice and accompaniment at the outset and homophony on the word "now" in the "holy, holy, holy" style (see Chapter 2). Subsequently, the music turns back to the *Dixit Dominus* style, bringing

[287] Hicks, "Handel and the idea of an oratorio", 154.

independent melodic lines together. Compared to *Dixit Dominus*, the English version removes the lengthy solo parts featuring luxuriant melismas, only retaining the chorus for adaptation. In addition, this was the first time that Handel had adapted a Latin work into English, reminiscent of Tallis' English songs such as *I call and cry* and *With all our hearts*, which are also derived from Latin text settings. In fact, Handel employed a method similar to Tallis who often delayed the entrance of melodic phrases until after the upbeat and combined two short plain beats into single long beats in order to adjust to the fewer syllables required in the English language. These two features can be found in the first verse of 'See the proud chief advance now', when compared with the corresponding location in *Dixit Dominus* (Ex. 4.10 and 4.11).

**Ex. 4.10: Handel, Chorus of Israelites "See, the proud chief advances now", *Deborah* HWV 51 (HG 29: bars 15-22).**

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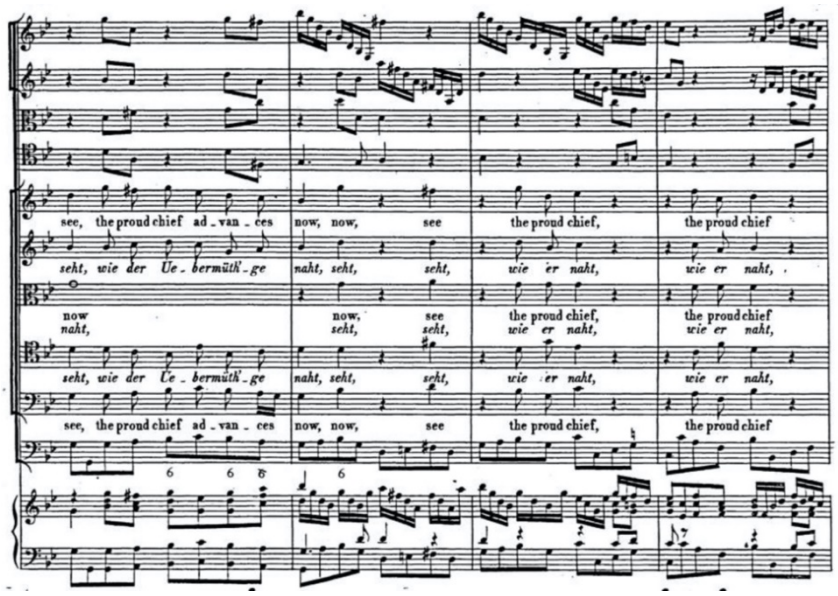
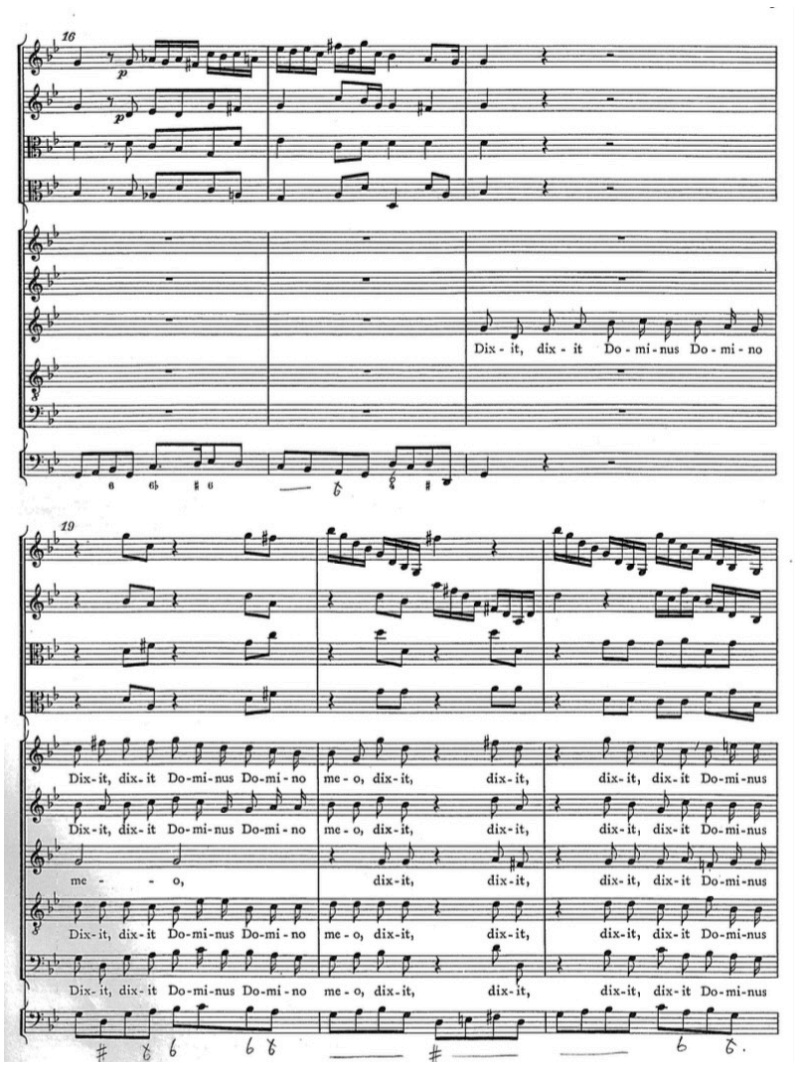



**Ex. 4.11: Handel, Chorus "Dixit Dominus Domino meo", *Dixit Dominus* HWV 232 (HHAIII, 1: bars 16-27).**



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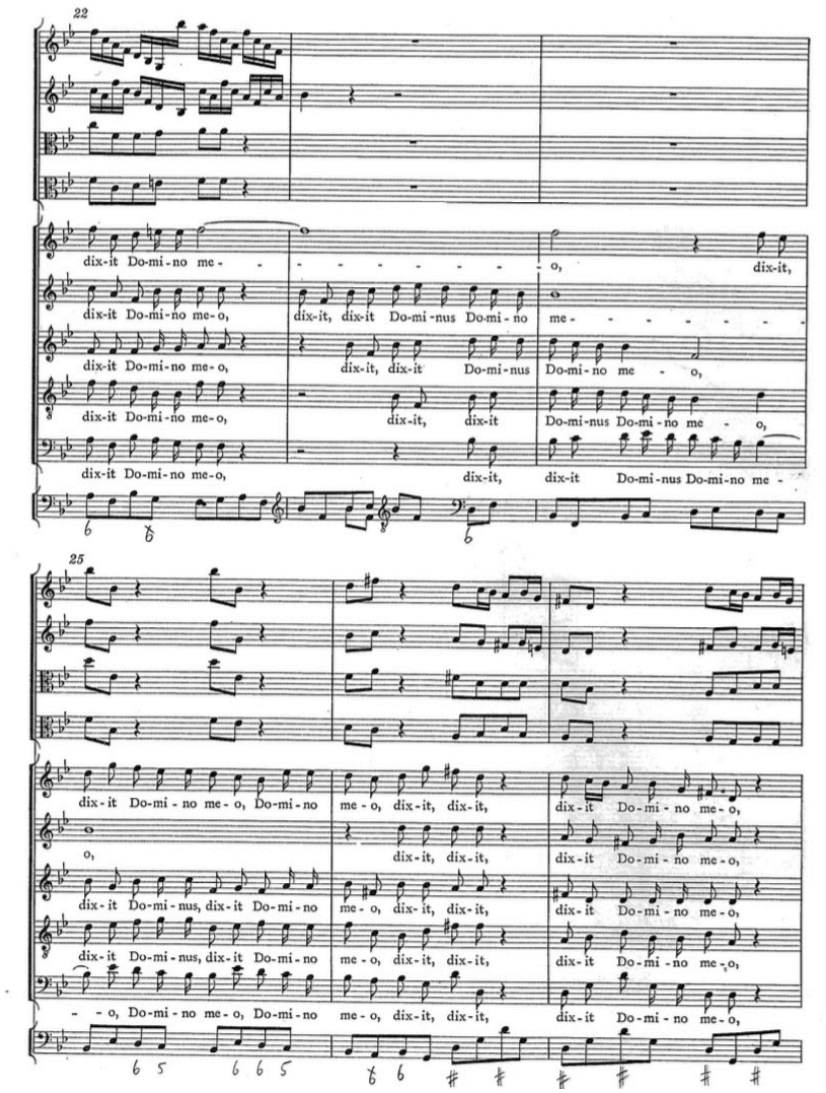



The verse “Jacob, arise! Assert thy god! And scorn oppression’s Iron rod!” in the second section of the movement, adopting a technique from “To thee Cherubin and Seraphin” from Handel’s *Utrecht Te Deum*, has two sopranos enter imitatively as well as a considerable number of short-long rhythms in a harmonic block. For the chorus of Baal’s priests, Handel lacked string accompaniment, so focused on short homophonic phrases rather than echo effects between parts. Another chorus for Baal’s priests appeared in the final act, taking up the theme of ‘To thee all Angels cry aloud’, the first movement of “To thee Cherubim and Seraphim”. For the next Israelites’ chorus “Lord of Eternity” in Act 2, the first half was in eight-part homophony predicting the end of justice, followed by a five-part choral movement. The music of the second half clearly draws on the material of ‘Blessed be God’ from the Chandos Anthem

*Let God Arise* (HWV 256a), which sets plain minims in the sopranos against running semiquavers. Handel's earlier anthem themes appeared not only in choruses but also in some aria movements in *Deborah*: "In Jehovah's awful sight", for example, borrows the basic form and the sorrowful ritornello in plain crochets from 'We believe that thou shalt come' in Utrecht Te Deum. The flute was replaced by the oboe here, but the same melody still conveyed sacred emotion.

## 4.3 *Athalia* (1733): The relationship between style and role in the insertion of choruses

While *Deborah* aligned with the common English ode-style tradition, Handel's next oratorio *Athalia* was distinctly more dramatic, focusing on Handel's own ideals of English oratorio rather than those competing against Greene's. As noted by Eva Zöllner the music of *Athalia* "demonstrates a noticeable move in the direction of greater dramatic coherence".[288] On this occasion Handel added to the number of arias (to a level similar to *Esther*), and arias for the first time in his sacred drama included dialogue. He also avoided the five-part chorus witnessed in *Athalia*, retaining four- and eight-part ones, and had the number of characters in the plot dictate the choice of form. In addition to accompanied recitatives that heightened emotion relative to the secco recitative in *Esther*, the arioso music newly interpolated in *Athalia* had a similar effect. In general, musical styles in *Athalia* are diverse: all the movements conformed to the demands of the drama as much as possible, instead of limiting themselves to conventions of contemporary sacred drama, and reveal Handel's personal character.

First, Handel closely linked different types of movement through dialogue, musical material and symmetrical text, probably suggested by the English song devised by Restoration composers for their French-style masques (see, for example, Purcellian dramatic works discussed in Chapter 3). For the first Act, rejecting a narrative introduction, *Athalia* begins with Josabeth's entry, an aria "blooming virgins, spotless train", speaking to the "young virgins" in temple with basso continuo only, and enticing the audience into the story. Two four-part choral movements then follow. For "The rising world Jehovah crow'd", the soprano enters first as the (single) voice of young virgins reacting to Josabeth, and the lower voices join in the second half of the movement, the Israelites thus together with the young virgins. Handel thereby singles out a part of the chorus to represent a specific group in a manner consistent with the text of the opening aria. Turning to the end of the scene, the Israelites' four-part chorus

[288] Zöllner, "Handel and English Oratorio", 544.

represents a prayer to Judas inspired by Abner's earlier aria in employing the same musical theme; two related descriptive movements thus conclude the scene. The next scene starts with Joad's recitative "Your sacred songs awhile forbear", the first half of which explains Athalia's betrayal through a secco recitative and the second half of which witnesses Joad's more upbeat appeal in accompanied recitative. The scene then finishes with Joad's aria and the Israelites. For the Palace scene, Handel integrated a complete recitative into Athalia's arioso "What scenes of horror". The piece proceeds smoothly through the entry of Mathan to speak to Athalia, and this arrangement represents the struggle between her obsessive heart and irritable character. The music of Act II is dominated by the solo voice; clearly recitatives and arias are mutually dependent, Joad's aria "Will God whose mercies ever flow", for example, answering Athalia's question raised in the previous recitative ("Give me to understand whose tender cares sustain'd and rear'd thee in thy infant years?"). The final Act is similar in this respect, including Josabeth's aria "Soothing Tyrant, falsely smiling" as a denouncing of Mathan's falseness in the previous recitative.

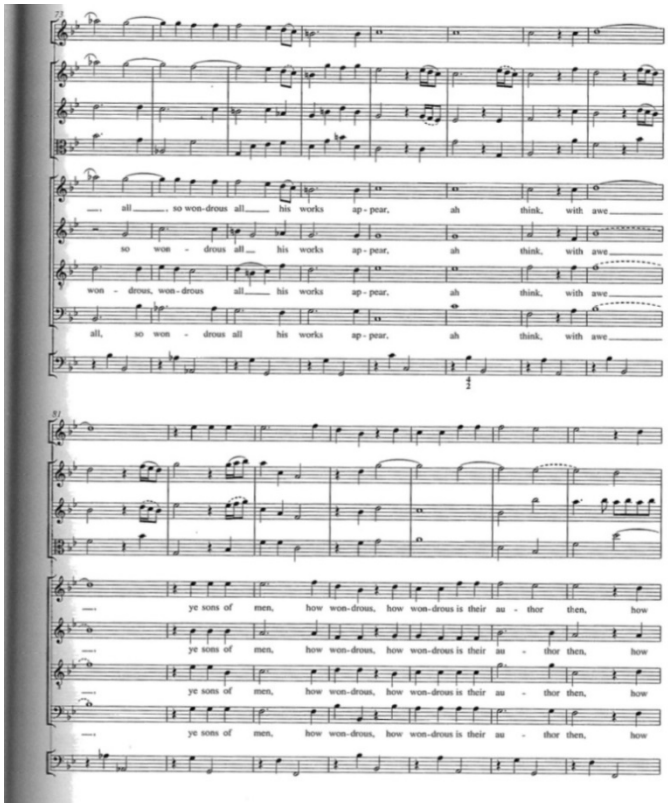
In arias, Handel included an unaccompanied vocal entry with the subsequently entering instruments doubling the vocal melody. This arrangement had appeared occasionally in arias for *Esther* and *Deborah*, perhaps inspired by the beginning of Purcell's St. Cecilia Te Deum, and was widely used in *Athalia*, not only to reduce differences between recitatives and arias in response to the plot, but also to display voice-instrument interactions different from those expected in operatic arias. Handel also retained his musical 'borrowings' in his aria settings. 'Hark, hark, his thunders round me roll' takes the motif of running semiquavers in repeated notes from 'Behold upon my head' in *Dido and Aeneas* by Purcell. Both of the two settings' text mention "thunders", and Handel uses the same musical material to interrupt Athalia's singing, linking its effect to anxious emotion.

Unlike earlier scholars such as Hicks and Zöllner, who regard the choral music in *Athalia* as Coronation music in "anthem style" or "church style",[289] I associate it with Elizabethan style alongside Handel's own dramatic preferences. In Act I, there are only four-part choruses. The Israelites' conformed to the *Dorian Service* featuring sequential harmonic blocks, with phrases broken by rests for metrical short-long patterns, while Baal's exposed Handel's Italianate distribution of staccato chords and opposition between parts. Interestingly, drawing equally on the English church style in the Israelites' and Baal's choruses, Handel employed different

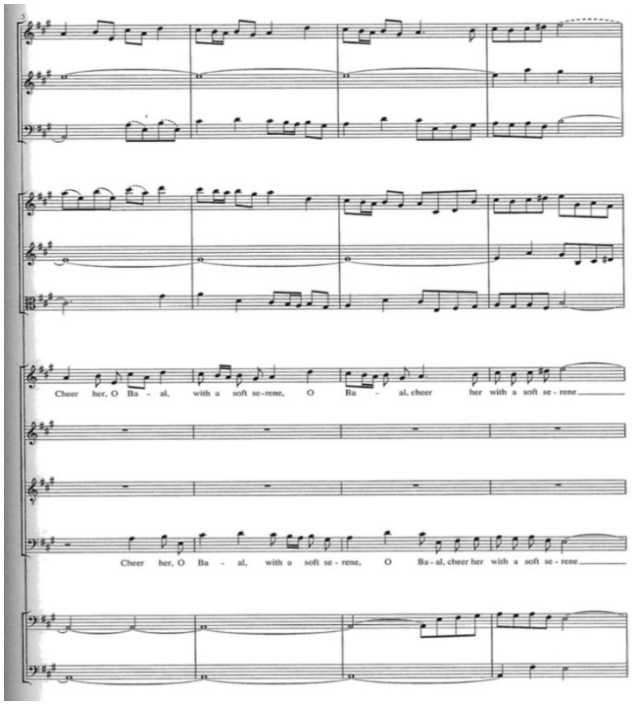
[289] Hicks, "Handel and the idea of an oratorio", p. 154; Zöllner, "Handel and English Oratorio", 544.

religious harmony for each: reformed Christian harmony for the Israelites; and Catholic harmony for Baal's. He boldly integrated his own personal preference into the music, using Tallis-style harmony for the believers and Italianate harmony to represent the traitors (Ex. 4.12 and 4.13). Handel also introduced many solo phrases into his choral music. As in previous outputs, the solo voice and homophonic accompaniment perform alternately and in imitation in some movements, just like solo voice and accompaniment in his arias. These include "Tyrants would in impious throngs" where Josabeth's solo voice directs her question at the homophonic Israelites and "Jerusalem, thou shalt no more a tyrant".

**Ex. 4.12: Handel, Priests and Chorus of Young Virgins and Israelites "O mortals, if around us here", *Athalia* HWV 52 (HHAI, 12.1: bars 73-87).**



**Ex. 4.13: Handel, Chorus of Attendants and Sidonian Priests "Cheer her, O Baal", *Athalia* HWV 52 (HHAI, 12.1: 5-12).**

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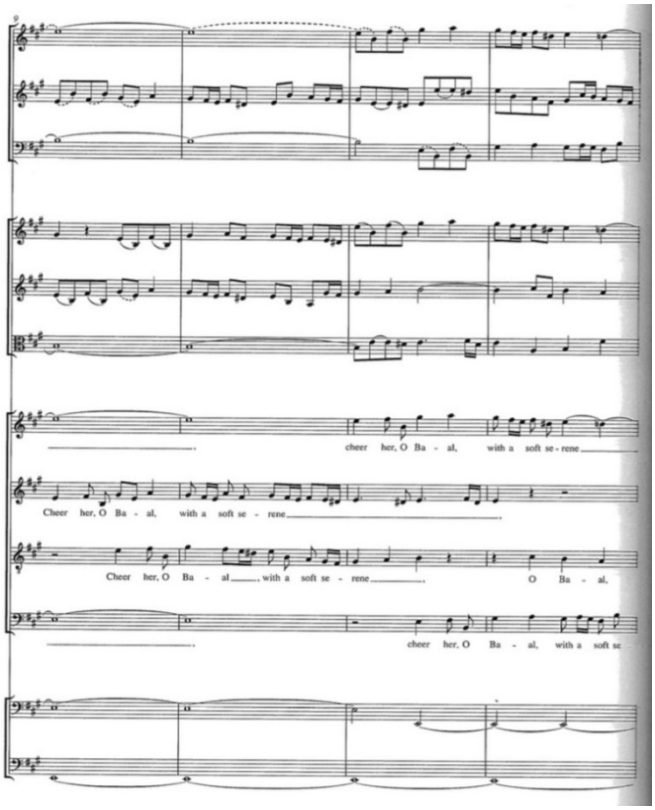


More importantly, Handel wrote two eight-part choral settings: 'The mighty power' and 'Around let acclamations ring' with Joad's unaccompanied solo piece between them. At the beginning of Act II, the eight-part form first appeared in the oratorio as a narrative movement comprising several groups of people including Israelites and Levites. It includes a ritornello apparently taken over from the Utrecht Te Deum, with staccato chords followed by semiquavers in the strings. The grand harmonic block at the opening lasts until bar 65 where orchestral participation and homophony come together; Joad's subsequent unaccompanied solo comprises an aria with thin accompaniment of oboes and flute to the rhyming text "He bids the circling season shine, Recalls the olive and the wine, With blooming plenty loads the plain, And crowns the fields with golden grain.". Homophony then appears again to depict Joad's text "Give glory to His awful name, Let ev'ry voice His praise proclaim!" The movement directly illustrated Joad's status as a spiritual leader, which was also supported by the eight-part setting 'Around let acclamations ring'. In this choral movement, Handel eschewed all instrumental accompaniment for Joad. The smooth melodic line was dominated by stepwise movement, and the phrase given room to breathe. Without accompaniment, the expressive setting struck a chord with Tudor composers' *Preces and Responses* settings that the priest normally sang alternately with the chorus. It is striking that Handel brought characters from the Christian church tradition into his oratorio music.

## 4.4 *Alexander's Feast* (1736): the power of music

### Contemporary understanding of the power of music during Handel's time

Handel turned his attention to seventeenth-century English literature when his Italian opera career was stalling in London, composing *Alexander's Feast* (1736) to a text of the same name by Dryden published in 1697. I have mentioned this work in Chapter 1 as an example to demonstrate the misinterpretation of 'ancient music' by modern scholars under the influence of Weber's position. As Gardner indicated, Handel's interest in Dryden's poem for his libretto during this period was driven by the rise of the idea of 'ancient music', as well as the composer's worship of "seventeenth-century literary classics and Purcellian operatic mode".[290] In my opinion, in addition to misinterpreting 'ancient music', his research also exaggerates the contribution of the libretto's text to the thought conveyed by a dramatic work. When observing Handel's *Alexander's Feast* from a musical perspective, I found its music did not really align with Dryden's poem, but rather represented an innovative approach.

[290] Gardner, "Seventeenth-Century Literary Classics as Eighteenth-century Libretto Sources: Congreve, Dryden and Milton in the 1730s and 1740s".

As Gardner notes, in early eighteenth-century England, there was a long-standing debate regarding the power of music over emotions.[291] However, prior to Handel, almost all commentary on this subject demonstrated a fundamental fear of the power of music. As I have already explained, Restoration playwrights represented by Dryden were dissatisfied with the rational threat posed by Italian operatic music to English poetry (see Introduction), and this sentiment continued in the early eighteenth century in the writings of John Dennis, a Purcellian semi-opera supporter (see Chapter 3). This fear persisted in the minds of playwrights in the 1730s, as demonstrated in Hill's poetry from 1737,

Near opera's sribling fugues, what muse can stay?
Where wordless warblings winnow thought, away!
Music, when purpose points her not the road,
Charms, to betray, and softens, to corrode.
Empty of sense, the soul-seducing art
Thrills a slow poison to the sickening heart.[292]

Hill expresses a deep scepticism towards opera and its music, suggesting that the intricate and complex "fugues" and "warblings" of the genre are so captivating and alluring that they can cause a person to lose their sense of reason and rational thought. This contrasts starkly with Hill's optimistic attitude towards opera in his letter to Queen Anne when he addressed the libretto and performance of Handel's *Rinaldo* in 1711. At that time, he hoped to 'afford the Musick Scope to vary and display its Excellence' through 'different Incidents and Passions' and promised to the Queen that he expected to see English opera become more splendid than its Italian counterpart.[293] However, over time, perhaps this ambition was erased by the rational taste of playwrights, leaving only a fear of the "psychological control" of opera music on the audience during performances.

Unfortunately, no musical materials have survived from the two previous versions of *Alexander's Feast* by Jeremiah Clark (1697) and Thomas Clayton (1711). However, the text left by Clayton in the preface to his libretto still provides us with a way to gauge the composer's understanding of Dryden's poetry. Like other playwrights of his time (using John Hughes as

[291] Ibid, 165.
[292] Aaron Hill, "The Tears of the Muses: A Poem" in *The works of the late Aaron Hill, Esq; in four volumes. Consisting of Letters on Various Subjects, and of Original Poems, Moral and Facetious. With an Essay on the Art of Acting,* volume 4 (London, 1753), 175.
[293] *George Frideric Handel collected documents*. Volume1. *1690-1725* (eds.) Donald Burrows, Helen Coffey, John Greenacombe, Anthony Hicks. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 199-200.

an example), Clayton first explained the importance of recitative in opera works, stating that its duty is "to express Narrative or Description, by the continual flying up and down the Scale, according to the Nature of the Matter told or described." [294] He then expressed his disappointment with the practice of performing operas only in Italian in England and claimed that his current "endeavour" was to "revive English Musick" by setting Dryden's text to music. Regarding the text, he remarked that,

> The other Poem is that admir'd Work of Mr. Dryden's, call'd Alexander's Feast. In this the Poet supposes the Musician of Alexander, for the Ostentation of his Art, to practice upon the Temper of his Noble Master. He deduces his Original from Love, rehearses his 'Glorious Battels, represents the Distress of his Enemy, and the Uncertainty of all Human Affairs, exalts him and depresses him at Will, then inclines him to Riot, and then to Love, according to the Sounds which he pleases to give his Instruments. In this Poem here is Love, Anger, Pity in the utmost Degree, but the Composer would make but wild Work if he represented only Love, Anger, and Pity, in General. His Business is to shew the Love, Anger and Pity of Alexander the Great. The Words are sonorous and vowelly, and not inferior even in that part to the Italian.[295]

Dryden's idea of the power of music in his libretto – that is "Love, Anger, Pity in the utmost Degree" – relates to giving sounds to instruments. Clayton contends that the role of a composer is not confined to merely encapsulating general emotional registers; rather, it encompasses the nuanced translation of the specific emotional and thematic substrates inherent in a poetic oeuvre into a complementary and enriching musical form. This complex endeavour calls for an in-depth comprehension of both the poetic text and the characters it delineates. Clayton asserts that, when executed adeptly, such a synthesis allows English music to ascend to a level of artistic virtuosity that parallels its rich poetic heritage, thus enabling it to stand in competitive parity with musical contributions from other nations. To put it another way, in this creative context, music functions as an assiduous executor of the underlying poetic schema, while the composer serves as a steward of Dryden's dramaturgical principles, a point elaborated upon in the introductory chapter of this thesis. The method of suppressing musical emotions is discussed in his previous writing, where he states that,

> The nearer the Composure approaches to Speech, the more it is the Representation of Nature; and no Repetition of Words is sufferable, without the Matter of them deserves it, and the Passion is further urg'd by each Repetition. In a Word, to Compose a Piece of Poetry is no other than to translate it into

[294] William Harison and John Dryden. *The passion of Sappho, and feast of Alexander. Set to musick by Mr. Thomas Clayton. As it is perform'd at his house in York-Buildings.* (London: Jacob Tonson, 1711). preface.
[295] Ibid.

> Mufick, and expressing by Notes what the Author does by Words and Syllables.[296]

Although we cannot know how the music of *Alexander's Feast* was ultimately presented in 1711, Clayton's libretto did remove some repetitions. For example, in the final part of the Scene I, Clayton's libretto shows 'lovely Thais, by his side | Blooming sate, in Beauty's Pride. | Happy, happy, happy Pair! | None but the Brave deserves the Fair.',[297] while Clark's version is

The lovely Thais by his side,

Sate like a blooming Eastern Bride

In Flow'r of Youth and Beauty's Pride.

Happy, happy, happy Pair!

None but the Brave

None but the Brave

None but the Brave deserves the Fair.

[chorus]

Happy, happy, happy Pair!

None but the Brave

None but the Brave

None but the Brave deserves the Fair.[298]

Such changes demonstrate the composer and playwright's shared understanding of the singular power of music. By reducing repetition and the rendering of choral music, they aimed to maintain the rational power of this ode.

**Handel's use of dialectical music language**

At this point, we should be able to recognize more clearly that Handel's version is the composer's first attempt at using musical language to counter the one-sided understanding of the power of music in Dryden's libretto as well as in the works of his contemporaries. Consistent with the Cecilia ode tradition, *Alexander's Feast* also promoted instrumental

[296] Ibid.
[297] Ibid, 8.
[298] John Dryden, *Alexander's Feast, Or the Power of Musique an Ode, in Honour of St. Cecilia's Day / by Mr. Dryden* (London: Jacob Tonson, 1697), 2.

echoing of the libretto and the power of music more generally. Then, we come to Hamilton's preface:

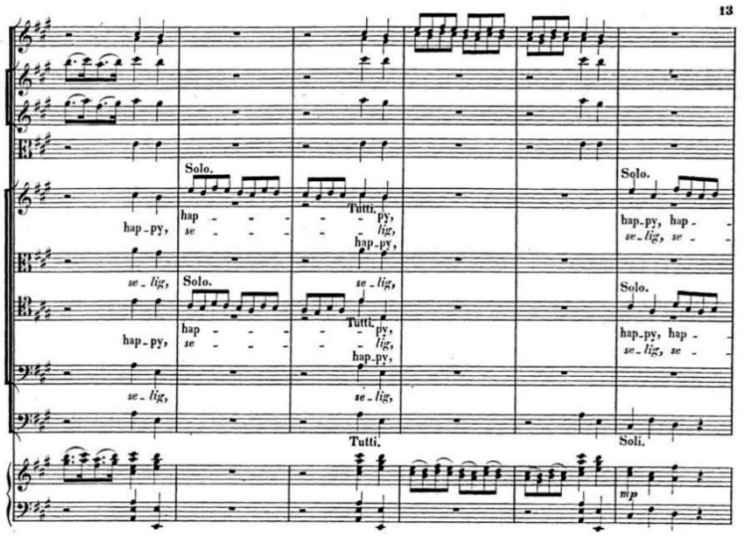
> But the late improvements in musick varying so much from that turn of composition, for which this poem [*Alexander's Feast*] was originally designed, most people despaired of ever seeing that affair properly accomplished: the alteration in the words, (necessary to render them fit to receive modern composition) being thought scarcely practicable, without breaking in upon that flow of spirit which runs through the whole of the poem, which of consequence would be rendered flat and insipid. I was long of this opinion, not only from a diffidence of my own capacity, but the ill success of some ingenious gentlemen, whose alterations of or additions to the original, proved equally ill-judged.
>
> […]
>
> I confess my principal View was, not to lose this favourable Opportunity of its being set to Musick by that great Master, who has with Pleasure undertaken the Task, and who only is capable of doing it Justice; whose Compositions have long shewn, that they can conquer even with the most obstinate Partiality, and inspire Life into the most senseless Words.
>
> If this Entertainment can, in the least degree, give Satisfaction to the real Judges of Poetry or Musick , I shall think myself happy in having promoted it; being persuaded, that it is next to an Improbability, to offer the World anything in those Arts more perfect, than the united Labours and utmost Efforts of a Dryden and a Handel.[299]

Handel followed traditions of St Cecilia ode settings suggested by his English predecessors when composing *Alexander's Feast*, employing secco recitatives to convey the story and to fulfil its dramatic functions. He drew on substantial accompanied recitatives and arias followed by a four-part chorus imitating an earlier solo melody to enhance the musical expression. Both Purcell and Greene had also done so in their Cecilia odes: among these are *Hail! Bright Cecilia* (Purcell, Z.328), opening with an accompanied recitative plus chorus, and Greene's *Ode on St Cecilia's Day*, composed in 1730. Overall, however, they employ more solo vocal movements such as arias and duets than Handel, with rich accompaniment to help achieve heightened emotional expression; Handel principally utilized changes from solo to homophonic writing to this end. His music also conformed to the customary English odes: arias normally began with a ritornello comprising the main theme; and the catchy instrumental rhythms appeared after the unaccompanied voice, hinting at expressive content. For example, the tenor air and chorus "Happy pair, none but brave" is scored for a standard accompaniment of strings and two oboes

[299] John Dryden, *Alexander's Feast; or, The Power of Musick. An Ode wrote in Honour of St. Cecilia, by Mr. Dryden. Set to Musick by Mt. Handel*, Preface. See also Gardner, "Seventeenth-Century Literary Classics as Eighteenth-century Libretto Sources: Congreve, Dryden and Milton in the 1730s and 1740s", 163.

providing contrast between staccato chords and strings' legato in dotted rhythm; the unaccompanied tenor voice subsequently doubled the theme to the text "Happy, happy, happy pair" followed by an instrumental repetition. The second choral section opened with grand homophony promoting the emotion in effective fashion; Handel used a Purcellian "holy, holy, holy" style (see Chapter 2 on Purcell's Te Deum for St. Cecilia's Day 1694), integrating melismatic solo soprano and tenor voices into a four-part tutti on the word "happy", exploiting the prevailing mood to the full (Ex.4. 14).

**Ex. 4.14: Handel, Air (tenor) and Chorus "Happy, happy, happy pair!", *Alexander's Feast* HWV 75 (HG 12: bars 6-11).**




Moreover, in order to properly integrate narrative secco recitatives into these movements, Handel used different voices to put into effect emotional transition rather than character change. For the first part, the ode opened with a tenor recitative introducing the background to the feast, and the following air and chorus with the same voice displayed the excitement of Alexander's triumph. Subsequently, the soprano accompanied recitative, "The song began from Jove", followed Timotheus' harp solo, implying that Alexander's mood began to change with Timotheus' music. After a seven-part chorus in Coronation anthem style, the soprano sang again, emphasizing Alexander's fascination with Timotheus' performance. Then, the emotion was suddenly interrupted by the tenor recitative "The praise of Bacchus", and Alexander's mood changed from excitement to anger under the influence of alcohol. However, Darius' story performed by the sorrowful soprano soothed Alexander's anger, restoring his calmness. In part II, Timotheus kept performing his harp until Alexander's expressed vengeance in his tenor aria,

and Cecilia finally appeared after a sorrowful soprano air “Thais led the way”, effecting a transition from the joy of revenge to the sorrow of destruction.

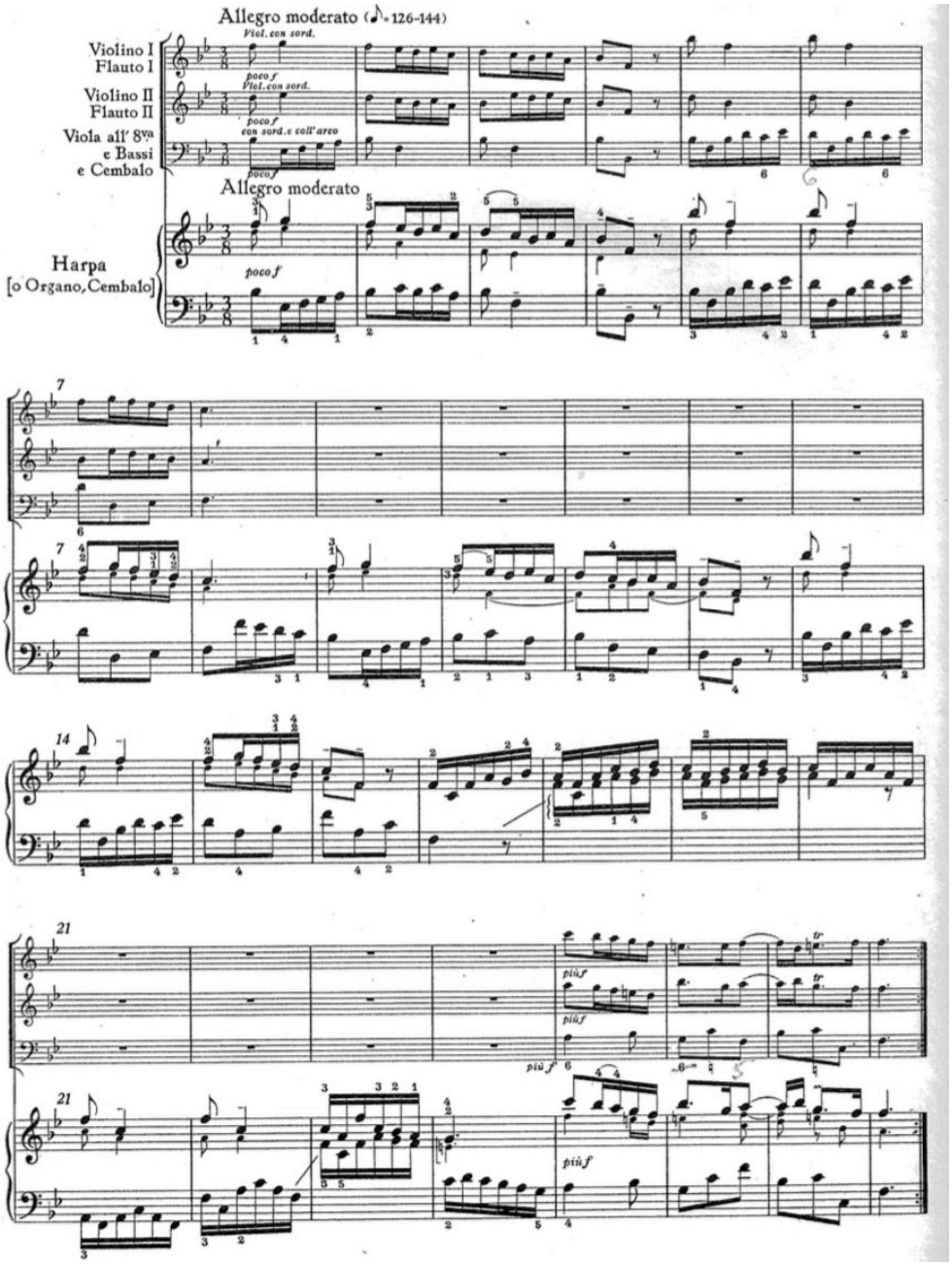
*Alexander’s Feast* also promoted instrumental echoing of the libretto and the power of music more generally. This was an extremely innovative and forward-thinking move. Based on the English understanding of the power of music that I mentioned, instrumental music in an English dramatic work was almost seen as optional decoration. In Purcell and Blow's masques, the curtain music, titled “The Act Tune”, had no emotional connection to the ensuing plot (see Chapter 3). In the eighteenth century, even the organ, an instrument often referred to as “the instrument of God”, faced criticism from church officials due to the contemporary and modernistic styles of composition and performance associated with it.[300] However, it was in Handel’s Cecilia ode that he began to experiment with coordinating the musical elements with the implied emotional content of the libretto according to the style and characteristics of different instruments. In my view, this marked a historic turning point in the status of music in English dramatic works. From Purcell’s statement in the preface of *Dioclesian* that “Music and Poetry have ever been acknowledg’d Sisters”,[301] to Pepusch’s use of personification in *The Union of the Three Sister Arts*, performed at the St Cecilia Festival in the 1720s, which demonstrated the equal (or even higher) status of music and other art forms (see Chapter 1). The desire of composers to elevate the status of music was finally put into practice in Handel's works. For example, Handel delayed the echoing instrument to the next movement thereby drawing text and music of adjacent numbers close together. Since the tenor secco recitative “The praise of Bacchus” mentioned “Sound the trumpets, beat the drums”, the following air ‘Bacchus ever fair and young’ employed an impressive 36-bar horn solo before the entry of the bass voice, thereby answering the former text “Sound the trumpets”. This integrative process paralleled the use of dialogues between characters to connect different styles of movement in *Athalia.*

Another two instruments, harp and organ, played a most significant role of pointing out dramatic confrontations across the work, enabling Handel creatively to integrate two instrumental solos into a traditional all-sung Cecilia ode, and to display the power of music in a dialectical fashion without language. The harp solo in part 1 following the tenor recitative “Timotheus, placed on high” was dominated by the melodious phrases for harp solo, with flute, violin and viola only heard in some transitional bars. In particular, the solo harp in the last

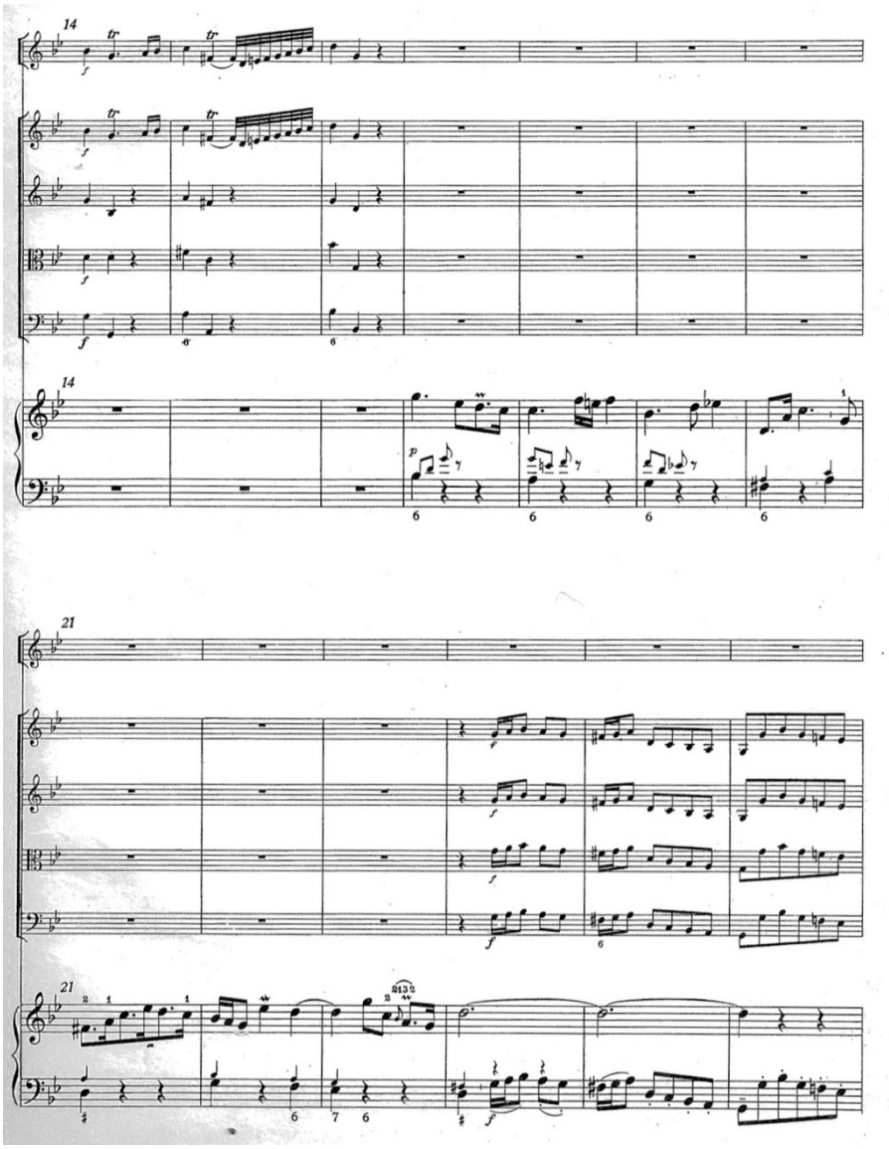
[300] Smith, “Music, morals and religion”, 86.
[301] Dedicatory epistle in *Dioclesian*.

Allegro Moderato is featured prominently against the remaining instruments, with its individual line dominating the melody despite being slightly accompanied by the harmonic support of the strings in the score. (Ex. 4.15). The organ solo, in contrast, was placed before the final chorus “Your voices tune” featuring at the opening orchestral accompaniment of two oboes, violins and single viola alongside the organ in ornate harmonic blocks. After that, the organ solo and orchestra participate alternately with the same material, achieving a conversational effect similar to that between the unaccompanied priest’s voice and choral response in *Preces and Responses* from *Athalia* (see discussion of the eight-part chorus “Around let acclamations ring” above). In this case, Handel used the harp to symbolize Cecilia’s image and to give it authority through association with an established form of English church composition, thereby again demonstrating the power of non-texted music (Ex.4.16).

**Ex. 4.15: Handel, "Allegro Moderato", *Harp Concerto, Op. 4, No. 6 in B Flat Major* HWV 294 (HHAIV, 2: bars 1-28).**



**Ex. 4.16: Handel, "Larghetto, e staccato", *Organ Concerto, Op. 4, No. 1 in G Minor* HWV 289 (HHAIV, 2: bars 14-26).**



Handel's close connections between Cecilia's musical image and English sacred harmony were not limited to the instrumental solos in this work. While the choral settings before the appearance of Cecilia were in a dramatic homophonic style, such as "The listening Crow'd", "Now strike the golden lyre" (an emotional progression from its previous solo part) and "Behold Darious, great and good" (a repetition of its previous aria music to build a da capo form), the one that indicated the coming of Cecilia, "At last divine Cecilia came", aligned with a typically Tallis-like harmonic progression used by Handel repeatedly in his earlier oratorios with harmonic blocks in short-long rhythm. Following the harp solo, the final chorus "Your voices tune" includes running semiquavers in the strings contrasting with the divine four-part homophony at the beginning, while in the second part there is no contrast and the strings play

the harmony with the other parts on the words "sacred to harmony and love". This chapter therefore raises the possibility that the dramatic conflict between Timotheus and Cecilia might metaphorically represent two English contemporary musical powers, Italian opera and national dramatic music. The text of the tenor accompanied recitative 'Thus long ago', which cleverly sums up the suppression of English opera ("organ" in the text) by Italian opera ("lyre" in the text) in early eighteenth-century England may point in the same direction:

Thus long ago,

Ere heaving bellows learn'd to blow,

While organs yet were mute,

Timotheus to his breathing flute,

And sounding lyre,

Could swell the soul to rage, or kindle soft desire.

Therefore, the significance of this work lies in the fact that it gave Pepusch's idea of 'ancient music' a huge boost. In terms of Handel's understanding of the power of music, the connection between the choral settings and the immortal's soul gradually declined. The anthem choruses were not frequently used to heighten the religious experience by him, as the dual power of seduction and rationality in music separated Handel's choral settings from religiosity. This gave Handel a broader compositional remit, and secular themes and operatic forms also found their way into his ensuing oratorios.

## 4.5 *Saul* (1739): An operatic oratorio

Handel's English oratorio returned to the stage in 1739, the premiere of *Saul* exhibiting as close a relationship with the Apollo Academy as *Deborah*, and telling the same story set by William Boyce in 1736. Handel's *Saul* and Boyce's *David's Lamentation over Saul and Jonathan* were therefore two comparable works. The clearest difference between them was that Boyce wrote a narrative oratorio similar to the one by his predecessor Greene (*The Song of Deborah and Barak*, 1732) while Handel insisted on a dramatic form and brought his "operatic experience" to the work.[302] Gardner compared the two works in this regard, and claimed:

> By producing a work that was narrative (not dramatic) and focused on a single event, Boyce may have been attempting to avoid a reaction from Handel similar

[302] Hicks, "Handel and The Idea of An Oratorio", 156; Taruskin, "Class of 1685 (I)", 313; Zöllner, "Handel and English Oratorio", 545.

> to the one against Greene's *The Song of Deborah and Barak* when Handel set the same subject within six months of the first performance of Greene's work.[303]

Handel's *Saul* was operatic, but not dramatic. With a tri-partite layout, substantial narrative scenes appear, particularly in the outer parts. In Part 3 describing the death of Saul, Handel employs recitative, articulating the story through the description of Amalekite. Here we discover that Boyce, or English composers in the Apollo Academy, exert an influence on Handel in communicating a narrative in a dramatic scene.[304] Equally, Handel affected Boyce in refusing to turn accompanied recitatives into 'word painting', as suggested by Greene's *The Song of Deborah and Barak*, and attempting to render dialogue with alternating secco recitatives and airs. In fact, in the development of oratorio Handel and the Apollo Academy composers learned from each other rather than rejecting each other; it is increasingly difficult to distinguish dramatic and narrative modes. Thus, this section will focus on the operatic characteristics of Handel's *Saul*, illustrating the effect of *Saul* on contemporary works through analysis of Handel's fusion of various musical genres including masque, ode and anthem.

Handel inserted the anthem style into the music of the opening scene describing the story of David killing Goliath and gaining the reverence of the Israelites. The scene begins with the chorus of Israelites "How excellent thy name" whose music is carried in the first half through standard harmonic blocks accompanied by an ornate orchestra. From bar 59 onwards, the voices split into two parts; here, Handel drew on the musical material of his Cannons anthem, "In the voice of praise and thanksgiving" (As pants the hart, HWV 251b), which strongly contrasts with the previous homophonic section. Subsequently, two narrative movements, the soprano air "An infant raised by thy command" and trio "Along the monster atheist" are connected through their repeated plain-quaver accompaniments and their increasing emotional intensity. This reminds us of a similar compositional approach in Handel's *Alexander's Feast*. Structurally, scene I is dominated by the choral settings. Before the final chorus "Halleluiah", the opening movement "How excellent thy name" is performed again, drawing on the formal scheme of his earlier anthem works. The *Funeral Anthem for Queen Caroline* (HWV 264), for example, employed a chorus of praise "How is the mighty fall'n" three times during the work. Handel integrated this anthem into the first part of his ensuing oratorio *Israel in Egypt*, and based on the autograph may have initially intended to draw on the anthem in *Saul* too, but did

[303] Gardner, "David's Lamentation over Saul and Jonathan: Boyce and Handel", in *Music in the London Theatre from Purcell to Handel*, 186.
[304] In *The Song of Deborah and Barak* and *Lamentation over Saul and Jonathan*, both Greene and Boyce used recitatives ('When Sisera, with weariness opprest' and 'David resum'd' separately) to relate the death of the villains.

not ultimately do so.[305] Handel's treatment of the opening scene with its conspicuous anthem style perhaps also support this original intention.

With alternate recitatives and airs in scene II, characters present their different attitudes towards David's victory. In a distinctive departure from his previous oratorios, Handel eliminated choral settings and employed dialogue between the soloists for dramatic purposes. He retained his preference from *Athalia* for using the aria movement in a flexible way either as the part of a dialogue (like "What objects thoughts a prince") or as a monologue of a character (like "Ah, lovely youth").

There are two instrumental symphonies in the remaining scenes of Act 1. Scene III opens with a light and cheerful carillon sinfonia, followed by Michal's recitative "Already see the daughters of the land", with the carillon part remaining in place as accompaniment. Then the sinfonia returns as the ritornello of the chorus "Welcome, welcome, mighty king" which connects to the word 'daughters' from the previous recitative by employing the soprano and alto voices alone in similar fashion to the soprano directing the "young virgins" in *Athalia*. The music is suddenly interrupted by an accompanied recitative reflecting the first emotional change from Saul, who worries that the people's love for David will threaten his position. When the chorus performs again, the accompaniment comprises a large orchestra of three trombones, two trumpets, carillon, timpani, oboes and strings, with voices in four-part homophony as well. Saul's subsequent recitative and air suggest envy towards David and a desire to seek revenge. In this scene, Handel uses two accompanied recitatives to display Saul's emotional changes, irritated by the worship women including Michal. In other words, Saul was essentially angered by the continuous carillon music, variously evident in the women's solo and chorus. And it clearly relates to *Alexander's Feast* where the power of music is emphasized; it also represents Handel's first attempt at working symphonic music into the middle of his oratorio. Another instrumental symphony appeared in Scene V, following David's air "O lord, whose mercies numberless" that featured a contrapuntally engaged lyre part accompanying David's phrases; the symphony repeated these phrases and had them performed on the lyre. Act 2 is cast in ten scenes, displaying the dramatic confrontations and complex inner emotions of the characters achieved principally through the solo movements. At the same time, Handel employed two similar choral settings at the beginning and end of the act. Both of them are narratologically driven and chorale-like in style, predicting the tragic fate of Saul. Among the highlights of the

[305] HHA. *Israel in Egypt: Oratorio in Three Parts, HWV 54* (ed.) Annette Landgraf (Kassel; London: Bãrenreiter, 1999), preface.

arias in this act are Handel's English masque "throw-back" featuring rhyming phrases with a short-long rhythm in the case of 'Such haughty beauties rather move' sung by David; Jonathan's air "Sin not, O king against youth", where the music begins with a upward-moving harmonic block in the strings, and the soloist presents the same melodic line under the string's harmony and achieves a thick harmonic effect consistent with Handel's Tallis-like texture; and "As Great Jehovah lives, I swear", where Handel drew on the musical theme of Mordecai's air "So much beauty sweetly blooming" (1732 *Esther*, HWV 50b) to create Saul's air "As Great Jehovah lives, I swear", removing the strings' ritornello and recasting the da capo form as a one-section work.

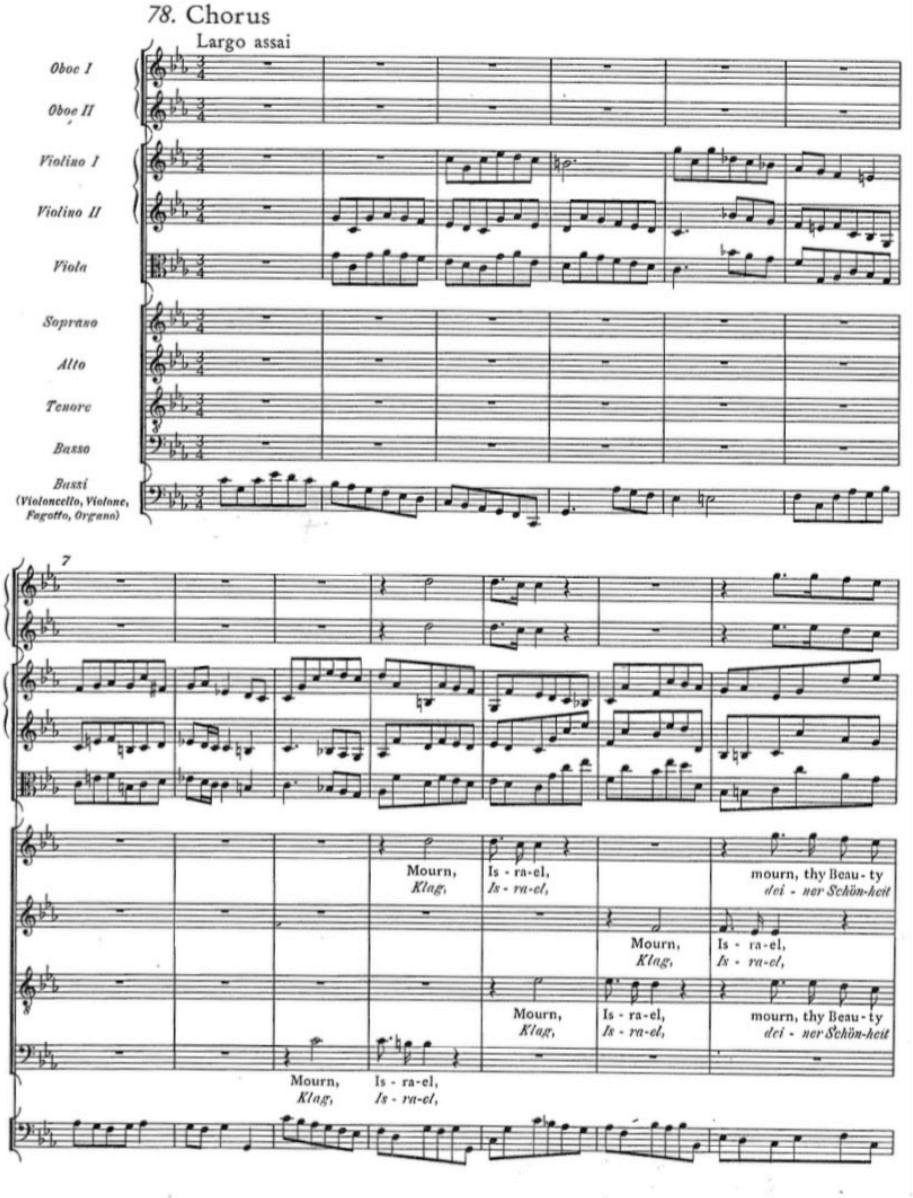
In Act 3 Handel concentrated on the same story as Boyce's *David's Lamentation over Saul and Jonathan*. Handel initially spends three scenes illustrating Saul's last struggle. The music starts with two accompanied recitatives presenting Saul's emotional transformation. "Wretch that I am" uses the same accompaniment as in Saul's previous recitative "The time at length is come", comprising hurried strings in dotted rhythms. The texts of these two settings contrast with those in Act 2, Saul arrogantly threatening to take revenge on David in Act 2, but in Act 3 "Wretch that I am" desperately begging for help from hell with – as an ironic touch on Handel's part - the same accompaniment. Nevertheless, hell did not sympathize with Saul, after Samuel's prediction of the deaths of both Saul and Jonathan, Handel employing a forceful symphony to imply the course of the war and conclude scene III.

Boyce's influence on Handel and his librettist Charles Jennens is felt in scene IV and V of Act 3. For the opening recitative 'Whence comest thou', featuring dialogue between David and Amalskite, Handel treated Amalskite as a narrator reporting the death of Saul consistent with the content of Boyce's alto aria "Israel is fallen". The following aria continued the preceding conversation that included David's response "Impious wretch!" in an angry tone before the entry of the ritornello. Like Boyce's work with its mood changes, the accompaniment to this aria is dominated by the strings reinforcing David's emotional changes in effective fashion through contrasting rhythms: intense upward-moving motifs in the first half, and slow harmonic blocks in short-long rhythms from bar 31 to the end.

Scene V opens with an instrumental Dead March scored for three trombones, timpani, Traversos, strings and continuo. The instruments perform repeated notes tutti in a walking rhythm, setting a sad and depressing tone. This was perhaps inspired by Boyce's substantial use of repeated notes in movements of *David's Lamentation over Saul and Jonathan*, such as

"Sing sacred prophet" and "For Saul, for Jonathan, they fast, they weep". After the March, Handel includes a chorus of Israelites mourning for Jonathan and all the warriors who died in the war. While "Mourn Israel" is perhaps comparable to Boyce's "For Saul, for Jonathan, they fast, they weep", it seems more fitting to link it to Handel's own duet "Sad Israel! Thy beauty's pride" on account of the textual connection and the similar opening musical theme. For this choral setting, Handel employs a chorale-like opening followed by staccato minim chords and a typical anthem style (Ex. 4.17).

**Ex. 4.17: Handel, Chorus "Mourn Israel", Saul HWV 53 (HHAI, 13: bars 1-13).**




To give the scene full narrative expression with various emotional changes as Boyce had done, Handel's following three arias for the High-priest, Merab and David allow each character to

comment on Saul's death. The first, "Oh, let it not in Gath be heard" similar to the text of Boyce's tenor recitative "Never Oh never", conveys the shame of defeat through a minor key and leaden harmony in the strings, while the second "From this unhappy day" (parallelling Boyce's tenor aria "On thee, Mount Gilboa") sung by Merab changes to a peaceful and hopeful mood in using a different rhythmic pattern of upward-moving intervals, although Handel does retain the strings accompaniment and minor key. David's aria "Brave Jonathan his bow never drew" consistent with "The bow fam's Jonathan so strongly drew" from *David's Lamentation*, is dominated by a beautiful melody line and simpler harmonies, introducing a major key and a change of instrument from strings to harp. Moreover, before the final chorus is performed, Handel follows the approach he took in *Athalia* of raising the spiritual leader's status. In "O Fatal day", Handel employs an unaccompanied solo voice for David and thick homophony for his believers, singing alternately to invoke the *Preces and Responses* of traditional Christian church music.

At the same time, as a leading composer of oratorios, Handel also exerted an influence on Boyce. From a structural perspective, Boyce followed Handel in composing dramatic music that refuses accompanied recitative and uses alternate secco recitatives and arias instead, integrating choruses when required. His oratorio consequently eschewed emotional change, as suggested by Greene in *The Song of Deborah and Barak*, and accentuated the driving narrative behind the story in line with Handel's dramatic approach. In musical respects, it is surprising that Boyce began with a sacred chorus in Elizabethan style; changing the situation of choral settings only reinforces the emotions of preceding accompanied recitatives in earlier ode-like oratorios. For the opening chorus "Sing, sacred prophet", which describes the defeat of the Israelites, the music begins with catchy rhythms on the strings, and features four-part homophony in short harmonic blocks creating a thick harmonic effect. This musical feature also appears in the subsequent chorus of mourning "For Saul, for Jonathan they fast, they weep" and inspiring chorus "Daughters of Israel, weep". In the final solo and chorus "How are the mighty fallen" Boyce combines a choral setting with a return to earlier solo music in da capo form, adopting Handel's approach from *Alexander's Feast*.

## 4.6 Conclusion

Overall, during the later 1730s, Handel and the Apollo Academy composers, while somewhat competitive, learned from each other when composing English oratorios, contributing collectively to the boom in the genre. No other English composer would ultimately exert a

greater influence than Handel in this field. The absence of public performances at the Apollo Academy was a factor in this respect, with Handel's public stagings extending his influence across England. In addition, the content of works themselves contributed to Handel's supreme position.

Two prominent features of Handel's oratorios during the 1730s are not in doubt. First, Handel applied his operatic abilities to the world of the English oratorio, breaking with traditions in the oratorio genre and creating English opera. This is evident in all the works discussed above, with their standard tripartite construction, lavish orchestral accompaniment and conspicuous drama. Although they chose the same biblical text as Handel, both Greene and Boyce concentrated on a single event in works scored for strings and hautboy parts and limited by an ode-like style. In dramatic terms, Handel's *Saul* and Boyce's *David's Lamentation* differ in that Boyce and Lockman blur the image of Saul as a heathen particularly displayed in the chorus of mourning "For Saul, for Jonathan", while Handel and Jennens employ "Mourn Israel" in the corresponding location as a prayer for Jonathan.

Secondly, Handel's oratorios worked to the satisfaction of contemporary patriotic musicians, paying attention to their traditional music aesthetic. Gardner has rightly situated *Alexander's Feast* amongst mid eighteenth-century discussions of "the power of music over the emotions".[306] And Handel drew on this new feature in *Saul*. While other composers wrote all-sung oratorios, Handel brought instrumental symphonies into his work and successfully involved them in the drama. The carillon that replaced Timotheus' harp fulfilled a seductive function, angering Saul and encouraging him to take revenge on David, but David's harp could not persuade the unbeliever and ultimately brought forth Saul's tragedy. At the same time, the leading librettists were keen to include the orthodox tendency of "God's directive" in their works, following such publications as Broughton's *Christianity distinct from the religion of Nature* (1732).[307] This would have reminded us of "music is a liberal and a noble Science, designed at first for the Glory of God, and the Exciting to Virtue" from Arthur Bedford's *Great Abuse of Musick*.[308] In fact, to support the religious intentions of his librettists, Handel poured considerable effort into choral settings reinforcing the sacred position of his hero and the Israelites. In *Esther*, he used his earlier Coronation anthems with minor change, actively praising the queen; in *Deborah*, Handel employed a Tallis-like harmonic progression to portray

[306] Gardner, "Seventeenth-Century Literary Classics as Eighteenth-century Libretto Sources: Congreve, Dryden and Milton in the 1730s and 1740s", 165.
[307] Ruth Smith, "Handel's English librettists", in *The Cambridge Companion to Handel*, 94-95.
[308] See more details about Bedford's stance in Chapter 1.

the character of the Israelites. Subsequently, in *Athalia* and *Saul*, he strikingly imitated the antiphony of *Preces and Responses* to give the heroes (Joad in *Athalia*, David in *Saul*) the status of leaders who align with priests in orthodox Christian culture. While Boyce in his *David's Lamentation* draws on standard devices of Tallis' *Dorian Service* device, his choral settings are limited to the theme of lament and ultimately more detached from the characters and the story than Handel's works.

# 5

# The Rise of Handel's English Opera and the Decline of 'Ancient Music'

## 5.1 Introduction

Scholars invariably turn their attention to Handel's *Messiah* when discussing his oratorios of the 1740s, and we have grown accustomed to the high praise this work has received in modern reception. The libretto of *Messiah*, along with an earlier work *Israel in Egypt*, directly incorporates biblical text, bringing the nationalistic subtext of Handelian oratorio to its climax. Furthermore, given the profound influence of *Messiah* on 'musical classics' in the late eighteenth century, it not only holds a central place in Handel's oratorios but also represents the pinnacle of English dramatic works throughout the entire eighteenth century.

However, it is worth noting that Handel's English oratorio career experienced unprecedented adversity in the first five years of the 1740s. This applied both to his sacred oratorios which provoked dissatisfaction among religious lovers for their theatrical performance, and to his secular oratorios, which were regarded as a betrayal of the sanctity of traditional oratorio by English audiences and suppressed by the Italian contingent on account of their adherence to opera. His two scriptural oratorios (*Israel in Egypt* and *Messiah*) were difficult for audiences in light of substantial insertions of Handel's earlier anthem movements and an innovative chorus-led form and suffered at the hands of the religious community who could not accept a composition relating to 'Christ worship' being performed on the theatrical stage. Furthermore, his ensuring works, *Semele* and *Hercules*, which blended secular stories with oratorio music structures, were deemed 'bawdy operas', as Reverend Patrick Delany's wife recorded; her husband even refused to attend a performance of *Semele* due to its "profane story".[309] As a result, their performances in 1744-45 were considered a failure compared to the simultaneous success of Arne's *Rosamond*, which had thirteen consecutive performances in the same season.[310]

However, in the face of the rise and fall of Handelian oratorio, this chapter provides a different interpretation to that offered by previous scholars, orientated towards the perspective of nationalistic values conveyed by the idea of 'ancient music'. First of all, the obscure narrations

[309] Hicks, "Handel and the idea of an oratorio", 159.
[310] Gilman, 175-76.

of *Messiah*, while pleasing Jennens and most English audiences for adding mysteries into oratorio-style performance as well as sacredness different from all other secular dramas, were deemed to have interrupted Handel's compositional intentions as an 'ancient music' composer who insisted on a full-blown national opera that should be understood by the English. The divergent perceptions of music drama between the artists ultimately caused Handel and Jennens to terminate their cooperation and expedited Handel's exploration of secular oratorio. Second, the appearance of *Semele* and *Hercules* represents a complex and contradictory phenomenon. On the one hand, they successfully accomplished the creative model of English opera as required by the idea of 'ancient music' in terms of music, by transforming the image of God and divine worship represented by the English choral music tradition into a reflective rational force inserted into a secular-themed opera work, thereby promoting the expression of the plot, and resonating with the audience. On the other hand, the failure of *Semele* and *Hercules* and their negative reception signalled the failure of the experiment to create English opera through the power of music advocated by Pepusch's ideas of 'ancient music'. Although Handel continued to produce music for oratorios, he did not create any further secular works in the oratorio form after 1745.[311] My analysis of Handel's oratorios therefore concludes in 1745.

The objective of this chapter is twofold: to provide a comprehensive conclusion to Pepusch's ideas on 'ancient music' in the eighteenth century and to offer a new perspective on the scholarly debates surrounding *Semele* and *Hercules* within the English opera genre. While Dean suggests that *Semele* and *Hercules* are "English operas under another name", based on their shared characteristics with other varieties of English opera, Gilman challenges this assertion. Gilman argues that the absence of key generic characteristics and the unstaged manner of performance for these works questions their place within the genre.[312] The failure of *Semele* and *Hercules* to be identified as either opera or oratorio hindered their classification within the English opera genre, as they did not conform to the defining characteristics of any other English opera, be it semi-opera or all-sung Italianate opera. Consequently, the confusion and annoyance felt by Handel's audiences can be attributed to the lack of a recognizable genre for these works, which would have enabled audiences to comprehend their form and purpose. This, along with other factors, such as their unstaged nature, explains their failure in terms of contemporary responses. Rather than being indicative of the declining popularity of English opera, as Dean suggests, Gilman argues that the primary reason for the failure of *Semele* and

[311] Hicks, "Handel and the idea of an oratorio", 160.
[312] Gilman, 171-72.

*Hercules* was their inability to fit into a recognizable genre. Other English operas, such as *Rosamond* and *Comus*, were successful during the same period. Gilman suggests that if Handel had produced a true English opera like *Rosamond*, it would have likely achieved success.[313]

The ongoing scholarly debate on the boundaries of the English opera genre serves as a reminder of the central idea in my Introduction, which asserts the Englishness of English opera as a recurring theme. In fact, from a musical perspective, Handel's transition from religious to secular oratorio can be seen in his dialectical thinking about the power of music in *Alexander's Feast* and *Saul*. What I understand as the English gene of English opera is finding an expression of rational taste in a dramatic work. However, mainstream studies seem only to accept the rational power and moral influence of the libretto but cannot accept that this essence exists in the music itself. They can accept that a secular musical genre (Italianate all-sung music) can express poetic or religious meanings as presented in the libretto, but they struggle to accept the idea that secular libretti could capture the reflective and rational power typically associated with religious music, in the music itself.

This chapter identifies a coherent compositional philosophy on Handel's part from *Israel in Egypt* to *Semele* in order to emphasize his efforts towards "English opera" as an 'ancient music' composer. At the same time, my study seeks to contribute to our understanding of the transition of the Academy of Ancient Music from a society associated with nationalistic promotion focused on English opera to a society associated with old music. I also recognize the Academy of Ancient Music as a predecessor of what we now term "classics" by explaining why Pepusch's 'ancient music' innovation ultimately failed.

## 5.2 Handel's Scriptural oratorios

### *Israel in Egypt* (1739)

With a narrative text from the Bible, an experimental anthem style comprising the substantial choral settings and a nationalistic subtext implied by a satirical technique, *Israel in Egypt* strongly contrasted with the operatic oratorio *Saul* that had appeared in the same theatre season. *The London Evening-Post* wrote the following on 5 April 1739:

> […] the Patrons and lovers of musick were in great pain for the Fate of the new oratorio at the Hay-Market; some Persons apprehending, with a good deal of reason, that the title of *Israel in Egypt* was, to the full, as obnoxious as that of

[313] Ibid, 176.

> the *The Deliverer of his Country*, […] tho' the Poets give us their Words, that *Savages*, *Stocks* and *Stones*, were sensible of his Harmony.[314]

Among modern scholars, Taruskin and John H. Roberts suggest that the libretti of Handel's oratorios from *Esther* to *Saul*, "followed much the same pattern", but that he "ventured into new territory" in *Israel in Egypt*, which completely rejects the dramatic format and uses "impersonal biblical narration".[315] After stating that Handel provided an "anthem oratorio" scheme for the work, Taruskin concentrates on the association between religious content and nationalistic subtext on account of the composer's humorous idea of plagues in Part II; Burrows also regards this idea as "semi-ironic" in the context of musical technique.[316] Both Hicks and Zöllner have demonstrated that Handel drew on the *Funeral Anthem for Queen Caroline* (HWV 264) in the first part of *Israel in Egypt*, extending "the possibilities of oratorio even further".[317] Borrowing from an English sacred work in a similar way, Handel draws on Dionigi Erba's *Magnificat* in the third part of the oratorio, as demonstrated in the matched movements detected by Roberts.[318]

I believe, however, that these features from Handel's *Israel in Egypt* were probably inevitable, given similar designs exhibited in Handel's oratorios from the 1730s. Indeed, Handel had been considering the possibility of working a narrative form into his dramatic oratorios before *Israel in Egypt*, a technique more fitting for English theatre. His *Deborah* and *Saul* were, therefore, inspired by the performances of Greene's and Boyce's ode-like oratorios, providing a series of narrative movements in the third part, and using a narrating character to describe the death of heathens. Handel's *Esther* is in all likelihood the first work to draw on his earlier anthem music, comprising two numbers in Act I and II. Subsequently in *Deborah* this "borrowing" becomes broader since, in addition to the remaining two of the Coronation anthems, Handel also draws on his Italianate Latin anthem *Dixit Dominus* (HWV 232) as the first section of the chorus "See the proud chief advance now" (with an English libretto), in a similar vein to *Israel in Egypt* adapting Erba's *Magnificat* in Part III. In another chorus, "Doleful tiding", Handel takes up the theme of "To thee all Angers cry aloud" from *Utrecht Te Deum*. And the opening movement of Handel's *Saul* takes its cue from his Cannons anthem *As pants the hart* (HWV 251b). The

[314] *George Frideric Handel Collected Documents*, volume 3. *1734-1742* (eds.) Donald Burrows, Helen Coffey, John Greenacombe and Anthony Hicks (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 478.
[315] Taruskin, "Class of 1685 (II)", 315-16; Roberts, "Handel, Charles Jennens and the Advent of Scriptural Oratorio", 222.
[316] Taruskin, "Class of 1685 (II)", 321; Burrows, "The Music, 1732-41", *Handel*. Second edition (Oxford University Press, 2012), 325.
[317] Anthony Hicks, "Handel and The Idea of An Oratorio", 156; Zöllner, "Handel and English Oratorio", in *The Cambridge History of Eighteenth-Century Music*, 545.
[318] See the table listing the original movements from Erba in left hand and Handel's parallel works in right by Roberts, "Handel, Charles Jennens and the Advent of Scriptural Oratorio", 231.

connection between nationalistic subtext and religious content possibly arose from the identity of the heroes. A good example is *Athalia*, where Handel employed a movement comprising alternately unaccompanied solos sung by Joad and grand homophony by the Israelites. This matched the treatment of *Preces and Responses* where the priest sang alternately with the chorus, and demonstrated Joad's status as the highest leader similar to a priest. Thus, in Handel's oratorios religious leaders are also heroes who can save the country. Furthermore, in terms of 'ancient music', Handel's composition of *Israel in Egypt* clearly engaged his experimental idea of anthem music fitting the environment of the theatrical stage. As pointed out earlier, English opera hardly developed under the "Italian manner", and English composers who were keen to create national opera needed to root it in their own musical material (the orchestral anthem in particular) in order for it to fit the English language.

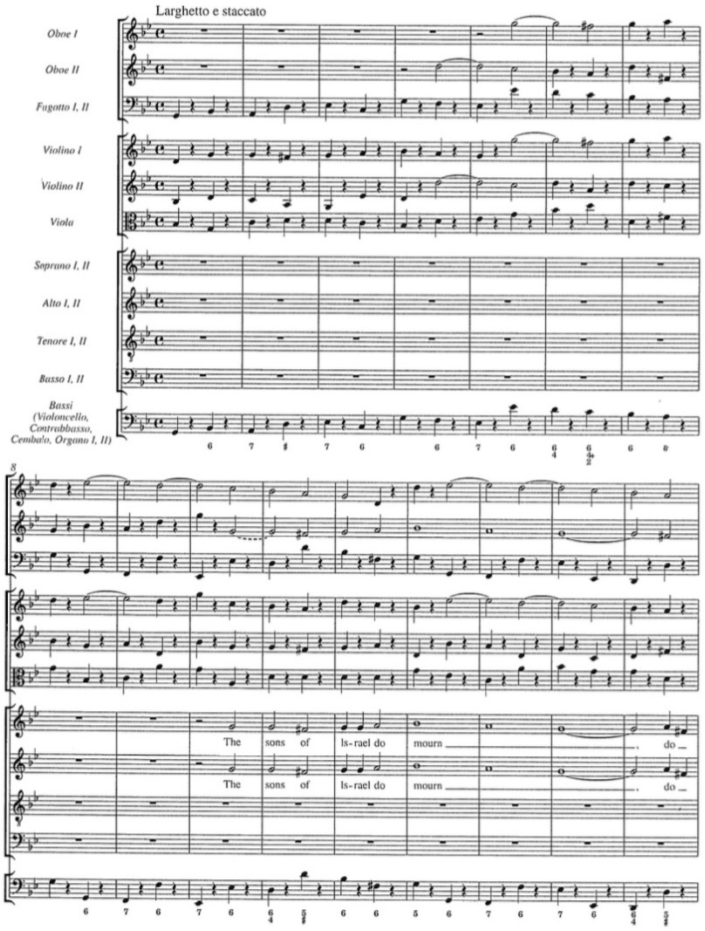
*Lamentation of the Israelites for the Death of Joseph* takes its material directly from Handel's Funeral Anthem, forming Part I of the work. In the verses from the Funeral Anthem Handel minimized changes, and the original Queen Caroline's "she" and "her" were replaced with Joseph's "he" and "him" in *Israel in Egypt*. Here, the actual Queen of England and the king of the biblical story were connected through the same Dead March, thereby enhancing nationalistic emotion. There are also a few changes to the original version of the music, with Handel adding a *fagotto* part to the strings group.

Following the initial section, a forceful eight-part chorus "The Sons of Israel do mourn" opens the vocal contribution to Part I. The first verse "The ways of Zion do mourn" in the *Funeral Anthem* was transformed to "The Sons of Israel do mourn", Handel dividing the minim note in the third bar into two crotchets over the word "Israel", similar to the procedure in *Deborah* when translating a Latin movement to English (Ex. 5.1). The accompaniment and the voices to the next movement, "How is the mighty fall'n", enter on the weak beat with expressive homophonic interjections outlining the melody of a continuously falling interval (word painting for "fall'n"); Handel also uses a short semiquaver followed by dotted crochet figure, dividing each phrase into a shorter unit in order to create a rapid and angry effect (Ex. 5.2). Before the final section, the voices split into two parts: "He that was great" sung by the upper part in a slow melodic line against the motif "How is the mighty fall'n" in the lower part. Burrows has suggested that the cries of "how" in the final section might have been inspired by

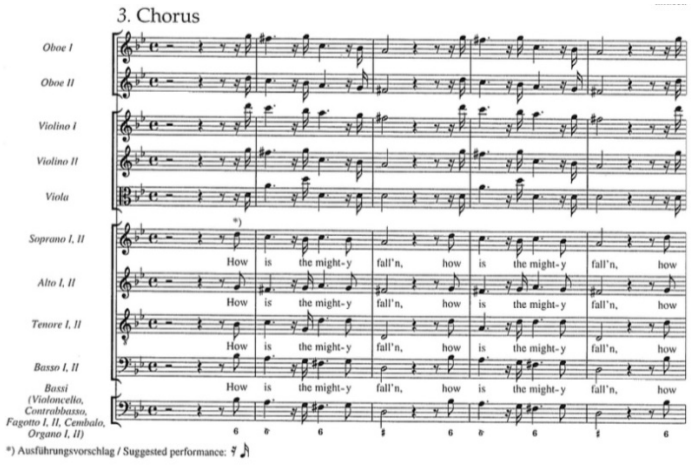
Bononcini's funeral anthem, "Howl, howl O ye fir trees".[319] But staccato chords over an emphasized word was a standard device for Handel's sacred work ever since his Italian phase, including in the English anthems from *Utrecht Te Deum* to *Funeral Anthem*. This interjectory movement appeared twice, with an abridged version after "When the ear heard him" and "He deliver'd the poor that cried". However, Handel changes the rhythms here, the music beginning with a held minim in bar 1 followed by plain crochets in short-long rhythm. This minor-key block was customary in Handel's anthem music, as suggested by Tallis' Dorian service, and appropriately recognized the emotional transformation from rage to sorrow. Furthermore, the settings are similar to "How are the mighty fall'n" from Boyce's *David's Lamentation over Saul and Jonathan* in relating biblical verses in a stable, repetitive melody, and showcasing Handel's preference for the relatively formal treatment of repeated-notes melodies evident since *Saul*.

[319] Burrows, "Anthems for Other Royal Family Occasions", in *Handel and the English Chapel Royal*, 73-74.

**Ex. 5.1: Handel, Chorus "The Sons of Israel do mourn", *Israel in Egypt* HWV 54 (HHAI, 14. 1-2: bars 1-16).**

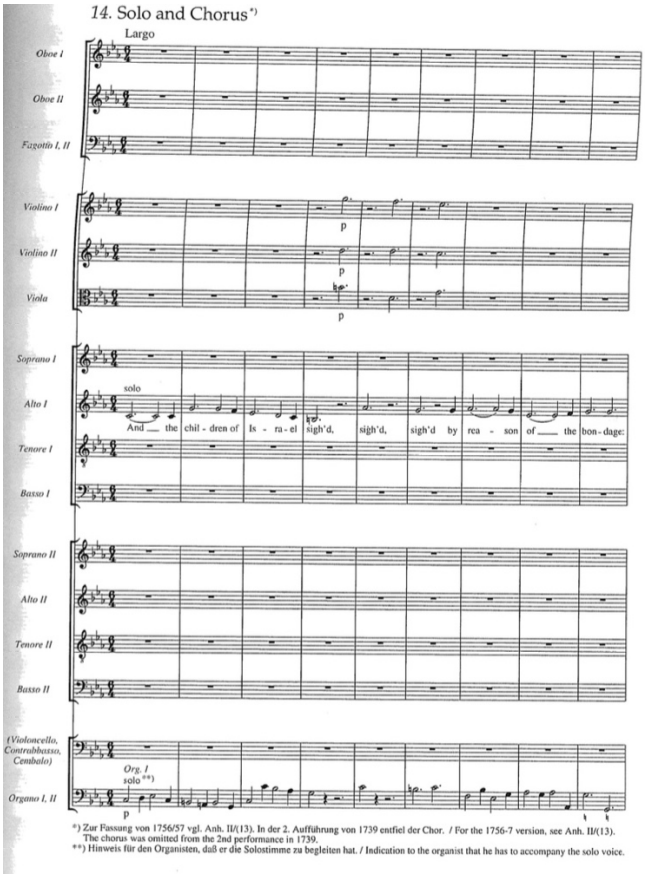



**Ex. 5.2: Handel, Chorus "How is the mighty fall'n", *Israel in Egypt* HWV 54 (HHAI, 14. 1-2: bars 1-5).**



As in the first part, the movements of *Exodus* are dominated by the choral settings, while the music is newly composed, conveys ten plagues and includes dramatic confrontations. On the whole, the first few movements in this part follow the approach taken in Handel's ode oratorio *Alexander's Feast*: an opening tenor recitative, "Now there arose a new king", introduces the miserable life of Israelites in Egypt under the new king "who do not know Joseph" and links to the Funeral music of Part I; a grand eight-part chorus "And the children of Israel sighed" subsequently enriches this sorrowful feeling, and the effects of voices and harmony in the choral setting make for effective word painting. The music begins with an unaccompanied alto solo emphasizing the word "sigh'd" employing repetition and a harmonic echo in the strings; the next phrase to the words, "And their cry came up unto the Lord", is straightforward in conveying an image of the Lord and immediately changes to an eight-part tutti with forceful orchestra of oboes, *fagotti* and strings. The upper vocal parts subsequently bring their independent melodic lines together in the verse "They oppressed them with burthens", with the preceding homophony continuing in the lower instruments (Ex. 5.3).

**Ex. 5.3: Handel, Alto Solo and Chorus "And the children of Israel sighed", *Israel in Egypt* HWV 54 (HHAI, 14. 1-2: bars 1-21).**



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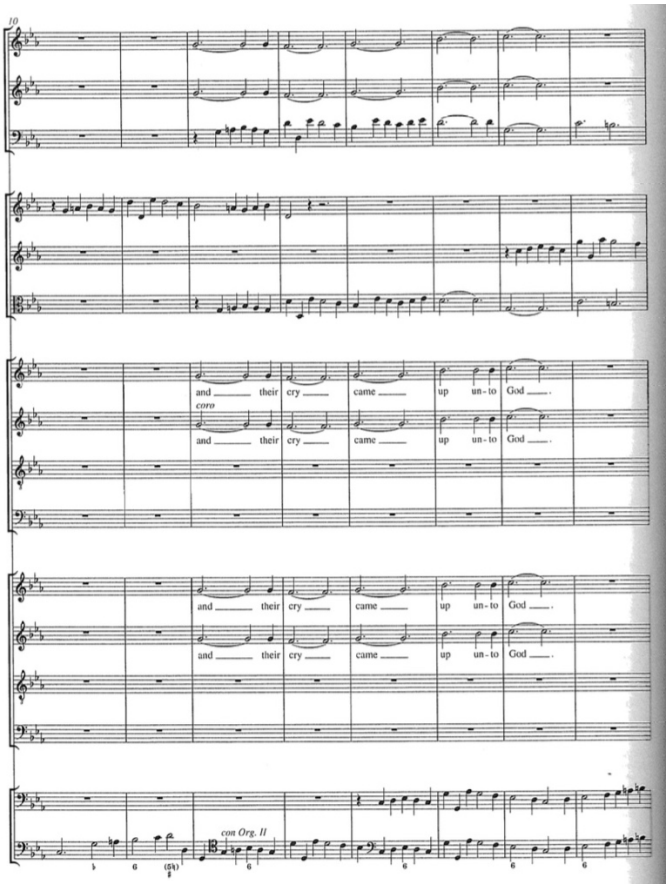


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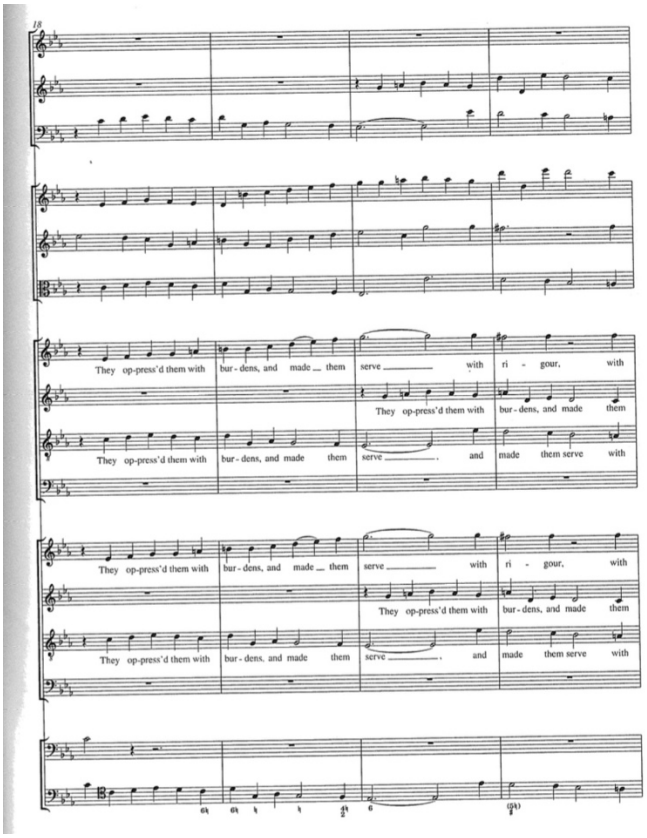



A tenor recitative and a four-part chorus complete the first plague, “bloody river”. This continues to conform to Handel’s ode scheme in which the choral setting normally enhanced the emotional expression of the preceding solo movement. Thus, after “Then sent he Moses his servant” narrating the main story, the chorus “They loathed to drink of the river” is dominated by competing vocal parts articulating dissonant harmonic progressions, clearly intended to create a tense atmosphere. For the next plague Handel employs a lively aria, with violin accompaniment in dotted rhythm depicting a “leapfrog”, even though the text denotes “pestilence”, “blotches and blains”. This joyous but ironic expression is maintained in the following plague “He spake the word”, where the running semiquavers in the strings imitate densely flying flies and lice to echo the previous unaccompanied phrase “and there came all manner of flies and live in all quarters”. Interestingly, in this movement the voices and accompaniment are treated separately by Handel, who gives the first tenor and bass homophony “He spake the word” an instrumental echo of short-long rhythm in the winds, providing a strong contrast with the later “flies and lice” section.

The two movements discussed above have attracted scholars' attention on account of their "semi-ironic" posture and "imitation of nature".[320] In his English dramatic works, Handel integrated his musical sense of humour into many roles of the heathens, illustrating their jealousy (Polyphemus' rhyming couplets in "Whither, fairest art thou running"), rage (the tenor air "The princess applaud with a furious joy" conveying Alexander's revenge) and the struggle with death (Saul's accompanied recitative "Wretch that I am") through exaggerated and humorous musical language. Indeed, in *Israel in Egypt* he does not use just one emotion to express the pain of the Egyptians. In addition to the tense feeling already mentioned at the beginning, the ensuing choruses, "He sent a thick darkness over all the land" and "He smote all the first-born of Egypt", also convey depressed and aggressive emotions, attained with dissonant chromatic harmonies and Lutheran staccato chords. This illustrates Handel's intention to challenge the tradition of dramatic works where emotional changes were normally achieved through an aria or accompanied recitative music; we learn that his choral settings can have the same effect. More importantly, in these choral settings featuring different emotions, Handel occasionally intersperses sacred homophony to portray the "Lord' confronting the Egyptians" music. In "He rebuked the Red sea" in particular, he presents the power of the Lord; here Handel exploits the same Funeral anthem style as in Part I, with a 'divine' eight-part harmonic block. Therefore, the nationalistic subtext in Handel's *Israel in Egypt* was not only displayed in his "semi-ironic" technique for Egyptians' music, but was also enhanced by the positive portrayal of a religious leader providing sacred homophony in short harmonic blocks. From the perspective of an "imitation of nature", Taruskin has identified a Vivaldian influence on Handel.[321] However, in *Acis and Galatea* Handel had already employed word painting for the presentation of different nature-related things, such as "purling streams" and "bubbling fountains" (from Galatea's accompanied recitative "Ye verdant plains and woody mountains"); there is also a succession of downward scales in running semiquavers that described "swift inundation" in *Deborah*, reappearing to emphasize the "hailstones" and "rain" in *Israel in Egypt*'s "He gave then hailstones for rain".

In *Israel in Egypt* Part 3 Handel drags the music back to "anthem oratorio" style echoing Part 1, and divides it into three sections. "Moses and the children of Israel sung this song", a short but magnificent introductory movement, employs a thick accompaniment orchestra scored for trombones, trombas, timpani, oboes, fagotti, violins and viola, with bass continuo. After the

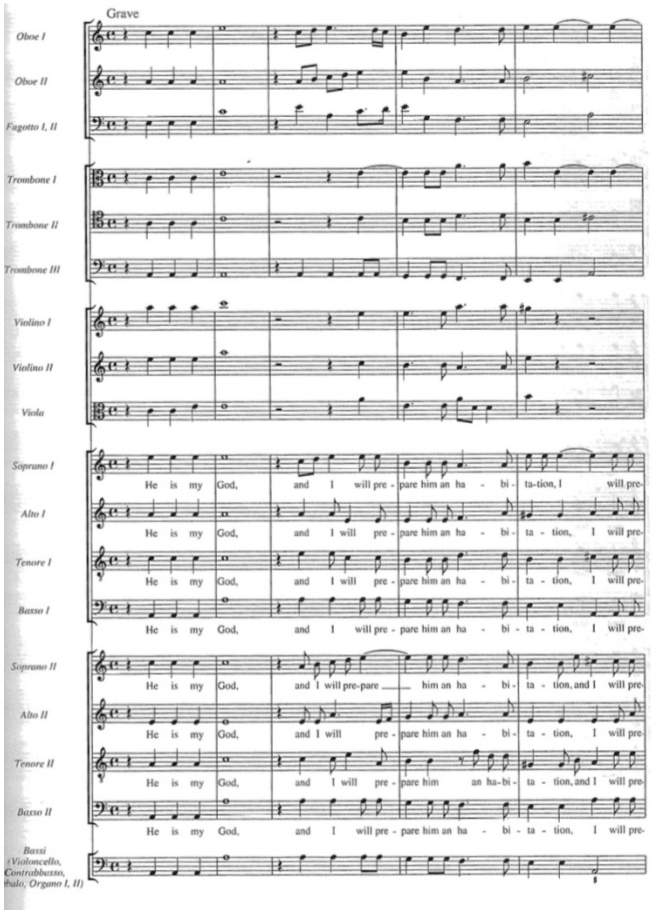
[320] Burrows, "Anthems for Other Royal Family Occasions", 325; Taruskin, "Class of 1685 (II)", 317.
[321] Taruskin, "Class of 1685 (II)", 317.

ritornello dominated by upward flowing dotted rhythms in the strings, the winds and percussion join in the music along with the eight-part vocal tutti, which outlines the choral melody. The movement pauses on the downbeat to avoid the closing effect and thereby transitions smoothly to the next chorus "I will sing unto the Lord" (which begins with the same tonic chord).

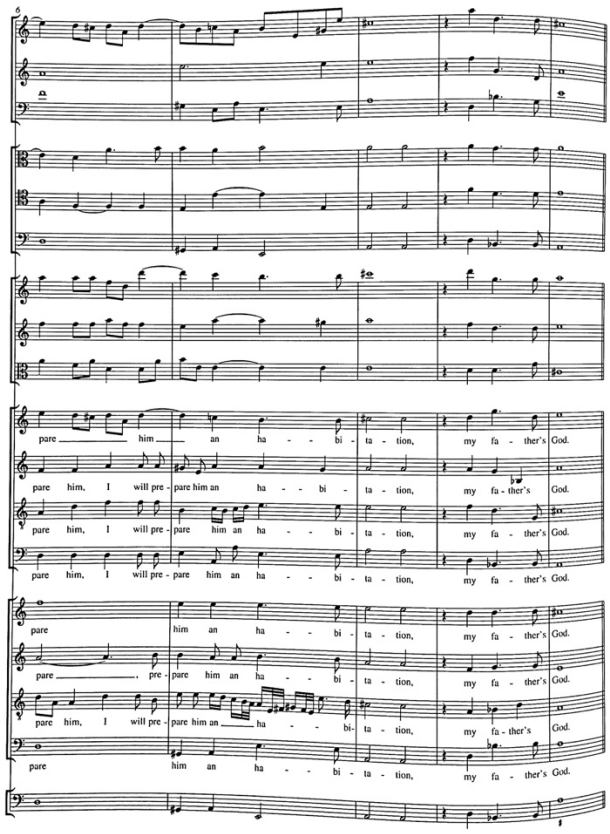
For the second section, the musical theme is "heavily based" (as Roberts puts it) on the Erba *Magnificat*,[322] which describes how the Lord's power destroys unbelievers, narrated by the Israelites. However, so thoroughly did Handel recast the format of these Italianate themes that they are smoothly integrated into this "anthem oratorio" as the movement proceeds. In the choral settings, Handel prefers to add some typical English anthem elements usually observed in the earlier sacred works at the beginning and the end of Erba's treatment. "He is my God" is a good example. The overlap of vocal and orchestral phrases includes straightforward short-long rhythmic homophony in bars 1-2 (Ex. 5.4), which had featured in Handel's English choral openings since *Utrecht Te Deum*; Erba's pattern adopted from "anima mea Dominum" follows. When the setting ends, the words "my father's God" modulates from A minor to D minor with a Phrygian-half cadence, linked musically to the next four-part chorus "And I will exalt him" (Ex. 5.5). As demonstrated in Chapter 2, this intermediate cadence is common in the middle phrase of Tallis' Dorian Service, and widely used in Handel's series of *Te Deum* settings. For the solo material, Handel concentrates on expanding the original simple phrase patterns, which are more fitting to the English prosody. Handel leaves only the initial motif from Erba in the opening bars and recasts the rest according to his anthem preference (see the duets 'The Lord is my strength and my song' and 'Thou in thy mercy'). To convey emotional expression from the Israelites in the final section, Handel follows the approach taken in Part I, employing a repeated grand tutti "The Lord shall reign for ever and ever" and imitating the musical form of "How is the mighty fall'n".

[322] Roberts, "Handel, Charles Jennens and the Advent of Scriptural Oratorio", 231.

**Ex. 5.4: Handel, Chorus "He is my God", *Israel in Egypt* HWV 54 (HHAI, 14. 1-2: bars 1-5).**



**Ex. 5.5: Handel, Chorus "He is my God", *Israel in Egypt* HWV 54 (HHAI, 14. 1-2: bars 6-10).**




***Messiah* (1742)**

Handel's next scriptural oratorio, *Messiah*, is normally compared by scholars to *Israel in Egypt* since the libretto is biblical and again written by Jennens; the composer maintains his preference for 'borrowing', straightforwardly drawing on his earlier anthems and Italianate solo works; and its nationalistic subtext in the choral settings is illustrated in a semi-ironic fashion.[323] In structural terms, *Messiah* clearly aligns with the standard 'ode-like' oratorio witnessed in parallel works by Handel's English contemporaries and in his own ode *Alexander's Feast*. *Israel in Egypt* is typical of the ode-like oratorio with its substantial choral settings, thereby making it acceptable to perform in church as *de facto* anthem music. In *Messiah* Handel included recitative and aria movements as well as choruses, consistent with the approach taken in *Alexander's Feast*; the various emotional changes, therefore, did not rely only on different types of choruses. Listeners to *Messiah* can grasp the different moods in the transformation of musical themes and vocal parts. Moreover, Handel used various instrumental

[323] Hicks, "Handel and The Idea of An Oratorio", 157; Zöllner, "Handel and English Oratorio", 547; Roberts, "Handel, Charles Jennens and the Advent of Scriptural Oratorio", 222.

sounds in the accompaniment to connect movements musically. In Part III, for example, the Air "The trumpet shall sound" has the expressive trumpet solo answer the last verse of the previous recitative "but we shall all be changed in a moment…at the last trumpet", apparently influenced by "Bacchus ever fair and young" from *Alexander's Feast* where a horn passage echoes the text "sound the trumpets". In the libretto, as Roberts suggested, Jennens brought the poetic lines of Pope's *Messiah* into Handel's Part I,[324] further confirming affinities with *Alexander's Feast*. Greene's music exerted more influence on *Messiah* than any previous oratorio by Handel, including *Deborah*. "Bacchus ever fair and young" followed Handel's standard preference for the horn to imitate the trumpet sound, while "The trumpet shall sound" chose the trumpet in line with Greene's practice in his oratorio music. In fact, *Messiah* reduced the instrumental ensemble to strings accompaniment, with the exceptions of 'Hallelujah', "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain" and "The trumpet shall sound", which employed trumpets, effecting the sound of English ode music. Greene's influence was also felt in the substantial amount of accompanied recitative in *Messiah*. In addition, *Messiah* made striking progress in combining the solemnity of English sacred harmony with the entertaining atmosphere of theatre music, and the following discussion examines prominent ideas of *Messiah* in relation to Handel's intentions for 'ancient music' idea.

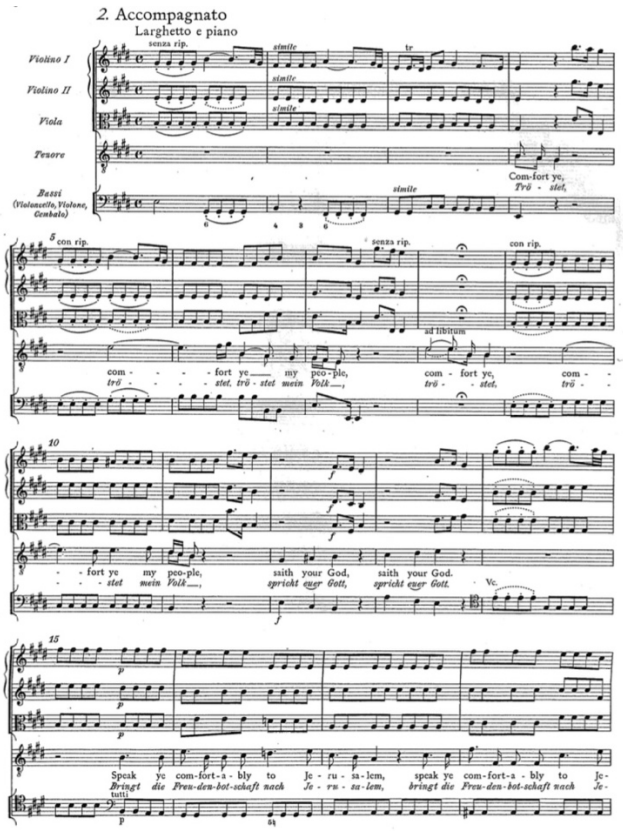
Part I generally conforms to the recitative-aria-chorus blocks used in Handel's masques from *Haman and Mordecai* onwards; it also appeared in *Alexander's Feast* but not in his sacred oratorios. Recurring musical motifs also characterize each "block", helping the audience to keep up with the often obscure narrative verses. Meanwhile, Handel employed a pastoral symphony in the middle of the part, locating it in a position similar to where it was found in his operatic music. Thus, in structural terms, Handel's *Messiah* seems more acceptable as theatrical entertainment than *Israel in Egypt.*

The music opens with a Sinfonia that promotes the main instrumental ensemble employed across the work, comprising double violins, viola and bass continuo; it is followed by the two-section tenor accompagnato "Comfort ye my people". What distinguished it from other accompanied recitative by English composers was the statement in its first section that relates to the aria style, deliberately using a short rhythmic pattern and a series of accentuated syllables under the melisma (particularly to the words "Comfort ye" and "saith your God", see Ex. 5.6). The ritornello over the first three bars forms the basis of the emotional expression: stable

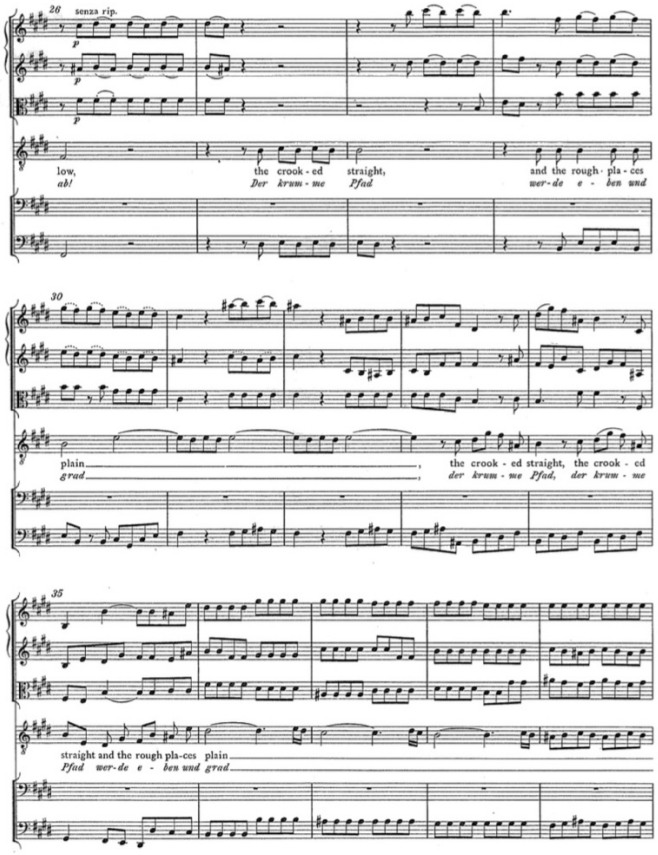
[324] Ibid, 237.

repeated notes are presented by the strings and the harmonic blocks in the tonic convey a sense of life and hope, which persists in the remainder of the section. When the tenor enters, the accompaniment is suspended, and then imitates the melodic line of the tenor, consistent with Handelian aria treatment. In the second section, after the verse "The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness", extended phrase patterns and impressive chromatic chords placed on every stressed beat in a staccato rhythm drag the music back to a standard accompanied recitative scheme. For the subsequent Air, "Ev'ry Valley shall be exalted", Handel reinforces the mood by changing the accompaniment to an upward-moving block in dotted rhythms, and the musical material of the previous recitative interestingly appears as a transitional passage with the dotted rhythm replaced by repeated chords – as word painting – on the word "plain" (Ex. 5.7). The four-part chorus "And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed" is similar to the opening chorus of *Acis and Galatea* 'Oh, the pleasure of the plains' on account of similar treatment of the leading alto part and of homophony. And the movement retains the dotted rhythm that had been used in the aria, to affect an expressive conclusion, and to finish the first 'music block' of Part I. This is Handel's first attempt at binding the three different types of oratorio movement through accompanimental material, simultaneously supporting the internal logic of the biblical text.

**Ex. 5.6: Handel, Tenor Accompagnato "Comfort ye my people", *Messiah* HWV 56 (HHAI, 17: bars 1-18).**



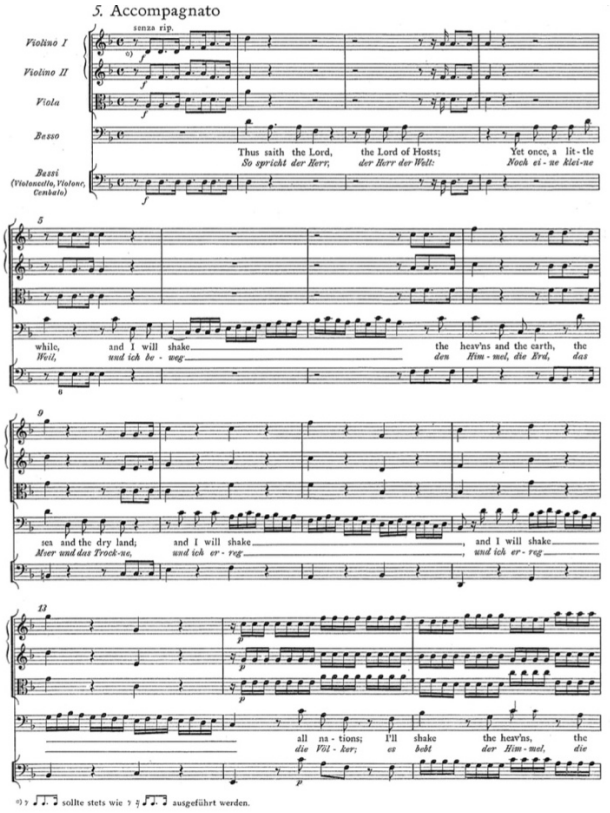
**Ex. 5.7: Handel, Air "Ev'ry Valley shall be exalted", *Messiah* HWV 56 (HHAI, 17: bars 26-39).**



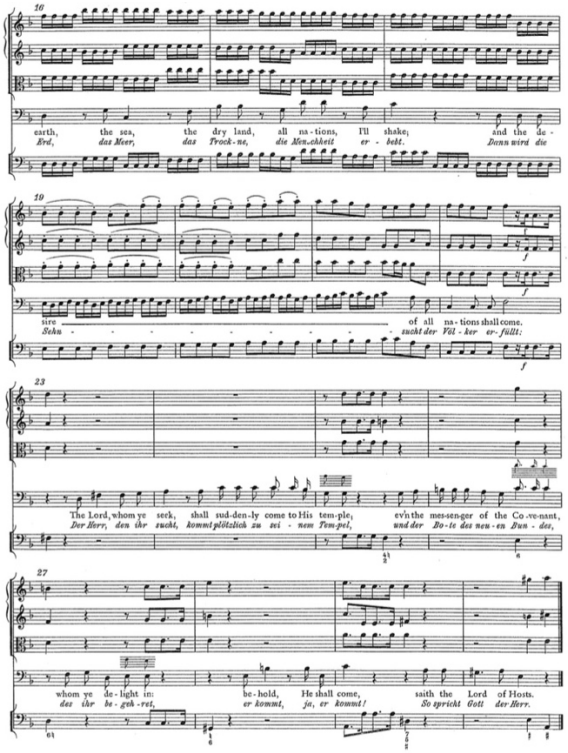

For the opening Accompagnato of the second block, "Thus saith the Lord", tense emotions are conveyed in dotted quavers on the downbeat under the string harmony; the bass voice creates the character of "Lord" in light of the verse implications of "Thus saith the Lord" and "I will shake…", effecting a musical sense of the Lord's majesty. As the story gets under way, the music develops to an expressive climax, borrowing the continuously running semiquavers that Handel had used for emphasizing the opening text "shake" (Ex. 5.8). The statement of the thematic material from bar 23 links to the idea of "Their land brought forth frogs" from *Israel in Egypt*, featuring truncated aria music in da capo form throughout the accompaniment, albeit in a one-section format (Ex. 5.9). Over the first half of the air "But who may abide the day of his coming", the triple-time rhythm relieves the tense atmosphere in an effective fashion and is more fitting for a chain of interrogative verses of the subject. When portraying the Lord as "a refiner's fire", Handel recycles his running semiquavers to echo the recitative, and it is retained in the dominant in the next chorus. As in the following two blocks, Handel brings the

movements together through shared content. He successfully achieves rich and delicate expressive changes in *Messiah*, distinct in various melodic lines, rather than through changes of instrumental timbre as in previous oratorios. The block conveying the biblical prophecy, for example, has Handel completing a transformation from gloomy to bright: he first uses repeated minor-second intervals in a plain rhythm in the recitative "For behold, darkness shall cover the earth"; subsequently, the intervals are fixed to the repeated notes with a series of upward-turning lines for verse "but the Lord shall arise upon thee".

**Ex. 5.8: Handel, Accompagnato "Thus saith the Lord",** ***Messiah*** **HWV 56 (HHAI, 17: bars 1-15).**



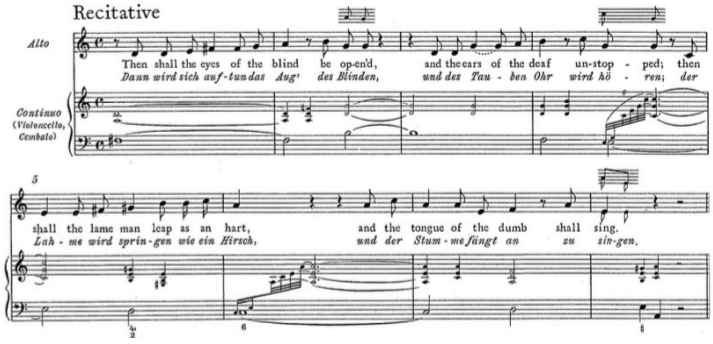
**Ex. 5.9: Handel, Accompagnato "Thus saith the Lord", *Messiah* HWV 56 (HHAI, 17: bars 16-30).**




Next, Handel employs a gentle string symphony in da capo form, linking to the next scene where the angel brings the prophecy to the "field". Here, he returns to secco recitative, with accompagnato too. The soprano soloist initially sings as narrator in "There were shepherds abiding in the field" and then in the character of the angel to comfort the shepherds' fear in "And the angel said unto them", in line with a conventional "ode-like" oratorio device from Greene or Boyce. The cheerful harmonies in a circling melodic line comprise a ritornello for the accompanied recitative, implying the identity of the next contributors to a choral setting through the text "And suddenly there was with the angel, a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God, and saying […]". This gives Handel an opportunity in a choral setting, previously witnessed in *Deborah*, for singers to play specific roles in the story. Musically Handel employed his anthem style in the four-part chorus "Glory to God in the highest", featuring the short homophonic blocks in short-long rhythm. In addition, he adds tromba parts in the accompaniment that double the vocal parts and produce a thick harmonic effect. This is different from the earlier choral movements of the part reset from his own Italian duets, where musical contrast comes to the fore. For the remainder of Part I, where the libretto derives from

the *Messiah* text by Pope – with whom Handel had already cooperated on *Acis and Galatea* – Handel employs "the isochronous stress-timing tendency" with rhyming phrases. This indicates, according to Andrew Pinnock, that "stresses, in natural-seeming English, recur at regular intervals (one per second, say), and between stresses, at the writer's discretion, different numbers of unstressed syllables can be fitted in."[325] Having used this technique for *Alexander's Feast*, Handel used it again to set English poetry in *Messiah*, including the recitative music "Then shall the eyes of the blind be opened" (Ex. 5.10).

**Ex. 5.10: Handel, Alto Recitative "Then shall the eyes of the blind be opened", *Messiah* HWV 56 (HHAI, 17).**



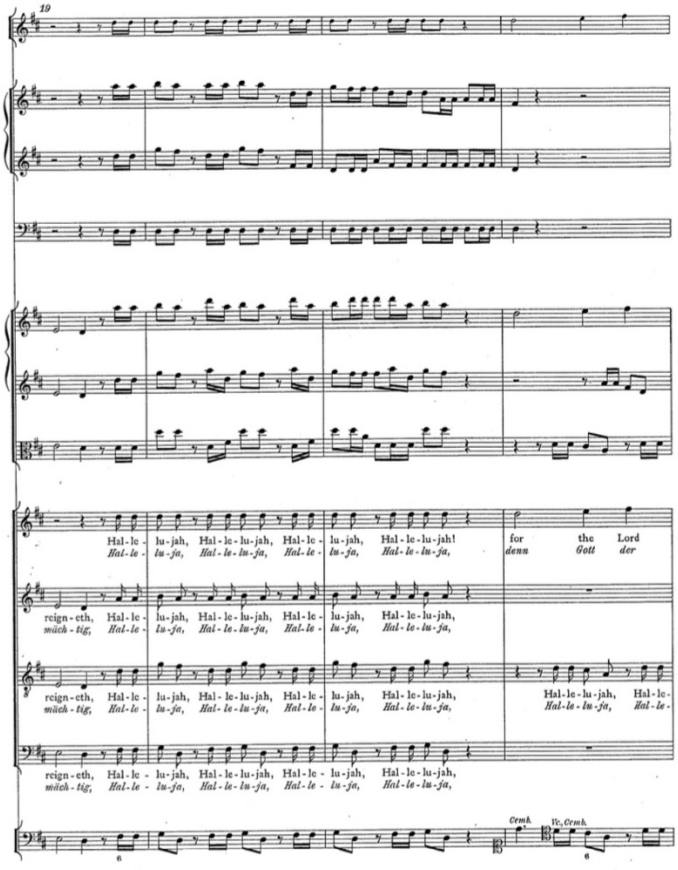

Handel employs chorus-led music for the first section of Part II illustrating Christ's miserable life on earth. The choral opening, "Behold the lamb of God", expresses the core of the story that Christ becomes the lamb of God to make atonement for the world. A sorrowful and depressive mood is conveyed through descending chromatic phrases in dotted rhythms, the music and its vocal parts imitating the design of Tallis' Mass by bringing in the four parts in turn and assigning a leading position to the soprano supported by the lower parts. The subsequent air, "He was despised and rejected of men", projects the expression of the English sacred style. With a da capo form, the A section uses a similar accompaniment to the previous choral setting, comprising impressive rhythms of three plain quavers that often feature in Croft's English anthems; syllables are also emphasized through single long notes rather than melismas. In the B section, emotions become angry, with running repeated semiquavers set against the vocal melody. Subsequently, Handel has three choruses present Christ's sufferings in a similar way to how his *Israel in Egypt* expresses the plagues of the Egyptians. However, these two works differ in that the singers of *Israel in Egypt* are narrators, whereas in *Messiah* they become male characters and participate in the story, experiencing in an ironic context a

[325] Andrew Pinnock and Bruce Wood, "Alexander's Feast, or The Power of Perseverance: Dryden's Plan for English Opera and its Near-fulfilment in a Handel Ode", in *Music in the London Theatre from Purcell to Handel*, 68 and 76.

coherent psychological progression from confession to happiness. The first chorus "Surely he hath borne our griefs" begins with a heart-wrenching ritornello comprising a dotted theme in short-long rhythm; the strings' harmony is supported by a staccato vocal part, creating a scene in which men confess to God. In the second chorus, the soprano and alto open the music in a duet, with two violin parts outlining the dominant melody in "alla breve, moderate" tempo. In the following music, Handel rejects harmonic blocks, and the four parts have their own independent and intertwined musical lines. This Catholic polyphonic music can be compared to the previous chorus in anthem style, implying men's betrayal of God, and is followed by an Allegro chorus "All we like sheep have gone astray" recomposing the music of Handel's Italian duet *No, di voi non vo fidarmi* (HWV 189). Handel's joyful melody satirized the ignorant men who experience no shame and feel at ease with Christ being abused.

The next two sections of Part II address Christ's conquest of death and his ascension into Heaven, with Handel returning to the same 'block' format as in Part I to convey the narrative text. The five-part chorus "Lift up your heads" employs a forceful symphony in strings as a ritornello, and its vocal parts sometimes converse and sometimes sing together – a distinctive feature of Handel's anthem music – while concluding the first block. After the passages about the resurrection of Christ, the exhortation of 'preachers' to the men and the resistance of the men create intense dramatic conflict; the second part then ends with the grand four-part chorus "Hallelujah". From bars 19 onwards in this famous number, trumpets and timpani alongside the voices display 'the power of music' to pray for Christ (Ex. 5.11).

**Ex. 5.11: Handel, Chorus "Hallelujah", *Messiah* HWV 56 (HHAI, 17: bars 19-22).**




Although in Part III Handel returns to a solo-and-chorus pattern to convey the story, the music largely draws on a Handelian church music style from early in his career for narrative purposes and for reflecting the biblical content. The musical theme of "To thee Cherubim and Seraphim", from *Utrecht Te Deum*, exerts an influence on the duet 'O death, where is thy sting' and its related chorus, with similar vocal movement and rhythmic patterns.[326] Also, for the tripartite finale 'Worthy is the lamb that was slain', the intermediate sections dominated by staccato chord progression and grand instrumental scheme employ the Phrygian half-cadence in "V6-VI-IV6-V" mode consistent with Handel's early orchestral anthems (*Utrecht Te Deum*, *Chandos Te Deum* and the *A major Te Deum*), while avoiding a sense of musical closure. More importantly, Handel seems to examine the birth of his personal anthem style in Part III through the reflective libretto. The text of the four-part chorus "Since by man came death" is directly from Corinthians in the New Testament, demonstrating two causalities about life and death; he also chose the primitive English homophonic style common in Tudor service music and his

[326] Although it is generally believed that the melodic motive of "O death, where is thy sting" comes from Handel's Italian duet Se tu non lasci (HWV 193, 1722), it seems more reasonable that the Italian duet was influenced by 'To thee Cherubim and Seraphim' in terms of time sequence.

own standard anthem music for supporting the text. At the verse "Since by man came death", the Grave chorus apparently derives from Tallis' Dorian Service featuring the short and unaccompanied harmonic progression, while in the verse "by man came also the resurrection of the dead", the music changed to Allegro and comprised the kind of forceful staccato chords and strings accompaniment frequently appearing in Handel's early anthems and oratorios. The strong contrast between these two treatments not only supports textual expression, but also (perhaps) reflects Handel's personal stylistic inheritance of traditional English harmony. Among the solo movements, the theme of "Heart, the seat of soft delight" from his earlier pastoral masque *Acis and Galatea*, supplies a motivic idea for the Air, with repeated intervals of a second in dotted rhythm before the entry of the vocal part and then also following the unaccompanied soprano to the text "And though worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God". Handel might have consciously made an association between these two movements on account of their similar stories about a man's dead body combining with nature and bringing his soul back to life.

## 5.3 The reception of Handel's *Messiah*: revisiting the interplay between the composer and playwright

The appearance of scriptural oratorio undoubtedly illustrated the uniqueness of English oratorio, with the religious text bringing reverence, including in substantial choral-led anthem movements. This achievement long made national musicians proud. As Roberts explains, in nineteenth-century England *Israel in Egypt* and *Messiah* "were regarded as the primary models of what an oratorio should be".[327] Meanwhile, the genre did not flourish in England after *Messiah*, and even Handel (post *Messiah*) also gave up exploring scriptural themes. Modern scholars have attributed this change to the pressures Handel faced when performing *Messiah* in London, including a public controversy and the dissatisfaction of the librettist, Jennens.[328] While the former has often been regarded as destroying Handel's confidence in scriptural oratorio, the disagreement between Handel and Jennens on *Messiah* may have been even more significant.

On the day of *Messiah*'s London debut, Philalethes' inflammatory remarks published in *The Universal Spectator* questioned the rationality of *Messiah*'s appearance on the theatre stage

[327] Roberts, "Handel, Charles Jennens and the Advent of Scriptural Oratorio", 243.
[328] See Burrows, "The Oratorio Composer I Dublin and London, 1741-5", in *Handel*. Second Edition, 350-57.

and quickly gained the support of religious zealots.[329] The Earl of Shaftesbury explained resistance to *Messiah*:

> In Lent 1743, at Covent Garden he performed his Oratorio of Samson, and it was received with uncommon Applause. He afterwards performed The Messiah. But partly from the Scruples, some Persons had entertained, against carrying on such a Performance in a Play House, and partly for not entering into the genius of the Composition, this Capital Composition, was but indifferently relished.[330]

While negativity from leading critics and religious figures affected *Messiah* subscriptions in ensuing seasons, it did not sufficiently account for initial difficulties in mounting a scriptural oratorio in London. *Messiah* did not apparently arouse dissatisfaction among its theatre audience. On the contrary, its choral movements caused quite a stir in London. According to James Beattie:

> When Handel's 'Messiah' was first performed, the audience was exceedingly struck and affected by the music in general; but when that chorus struck up, 'For the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth', they were so transported that they all, together with the king (who happened to be present), started up, and remained standing till the chorus ended: and hence it became the fashion in England for the audience to stand while that part of the music is performing.[331]

Indeed, Handelian oratorio was rejected by the religious community as early as in *Esther*, but Handel continued his sacred oratorio career for a further decade. With a strong audience base in London and a successful Dublin performance behind him, Handel surely would have been able to cope with the public controversy around *Messiah*. This was clearly evident in Handel's letter to Charles Jennens on December 29, 1741, from Dublin,

> […] it was with the greatest Pleasure I saw the continuation of Your kindness by the Lines you was pleased to send me, in order to be prefixed to Your Oratorio Messiah 1, which I set to Musick before I left England. I am emboldened, Sir, by the generous Concern You please to take in relation to my affairs, to give you an account to the Success I have met here.[332]

Handel subsequently provided specific details about the popularity of *Messiah* in Dublin, including the excellent performances of the singers, instrumentalists, and choir. He noted that the audience was composed of people of great distinction, including bishops, deans, heads of the college, and eminent people in the law, all of whom were very much taken with the poetry.

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[329] The article was quoted in Burrows, *Handel: 'Messiah'*, (Cambridge University Press, 1991), 25-26; Burrows, *Handel*, 355, and partly quoted by Roberts, "Handel, Charles Jennens and the Advent of Scriptural Oratorio", 236.
[330] Burrows, *Handel: 'Messiah'*, 29.
[331] Ibid, 28.
[332] *The Letter and Writings of George Frideric Handel* (ed.) Erich H Müller (London: Cassell, 1935), 40.

In addition, the excellent response of the sacred-themed *Samson* (HWV 57, 1743), performed immediately after *Messiah*, gave him high artistic credibility where national music was concerned. Before the premiere, Lord Shaftesbury wrote to James Harris:

> […] I read through the whole poem of Samson Agonistes, and whenever he rested to take breath Mr Handel (who was highly pleas'd with the piece) played I really think better than ever, & his harmony was perfectly adapted to the sublimity of the poem.[333]

Also, Newburgh Hamilton, librettist of *Samson*, pointed out in the preface to his text:

> But as Mr Handel had so happily here introduc'd Oratorios, a musical drama, whose subject must be Scriptural, and in which the Solemnity of Church-Musick is agreeably united with the most pleasing Airs of the Stage: It would have been an irretrievable Loss to have neglected the Opportunity of that great Master's doing Justice to this Work; he having already added new Life and Spirit to some of the finest Things in the English language.[334]

This reception reflects the success of Handel as a composer setting "English language" and, more importantly, in providing "ancient music", since "his harmony was perfectly adapted to the sublimity of the poem". In musical terms, he subtly used different styles of choral writing to increase the sensitivity of English listeners to their own religious harmony; it is easy to find that, in his later oratorios, anthem-style music conveyed little in terms of the story line, and was used to designate the arrival of gods or bishops. At the same time, this is also the case in the works discussed above, with the audience all "started up" "with the king" when the *Messiah*'s chorus "For the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth" struck up. Also, in *Samson*, Handel's librettist recognised in the preface that "he [Handel] … already added new Life and Spirit to some of the finest Things in the English language". Handel's abrupt abandonment of scriptural oratorio seems unlikely to be attributable, then, to "the lukewarm reception of his first two efforts".[335]

Before *Messiah* was heard in London, Jennens had already expressed dissatisfaction about *Messiah* when receiving the score; he promised to Holdsworth that he "shall put no more Sacred Words into his hands, to be thus abused."[336] Clearly, he did not appreciate Handel's treatment of his libretto – a different kind of objection to that voiced by the religious community. After the first performance, Jennens once again claimed:

[333] Quoted in Hicks, "Handel and the idea of an oratorio", 158.
[334] Ibid.
[335] Roberts, "Handel, Charles Jennens and the Advent of Scriptural Oratorio", 242.
[336] Burrows, *Handel: 'Messiah'*, 23

> [CJ to EH] Q. Square. Mar. 24. 1742-3
>
> Messiah was performed last night, & will be again to morrow […] 'Tis after all, in the main, a fine Composition, notwithstanding some weak parts, which he was too idle & too obstinate to retouch, tho' I us'd great importunity to perswade him to it. He & his Toad-eater Smith did all they could to murder the Words in print; but I hope I have restor'd them to life, not without much difficulty.[337]

The nature of Jennens' criticism reflects an inherent tension between some English librettists and their composers that had not been reconciled since the Restoration. Given that there is only one version of the wordbook published under Jennens's watchful eye and fairly close to Handel's manuscript, it is probably safe to assume that Handel did not cut large parts of Jennens's libretto when carrying out his musical work. Thus, the "murder" mentioned by Jennens, will have referenced the threat of Handel's music to his text. In other words, it is unacceptable for Jennens that when appreciating the *Messiah*, audiences paid more attention to Handel's music than to his dramatic verses.

Jennens's response vividly demonstrates the fear of the power of music that had long existed in the hearts of English playwrights since Dryden, and also illustrates the dynamics among playwright and composer in Handel's oratorios. We come to understand that there were two different parties attacking Italian opera through Handelian oratorio: one represented by Dryden, John Dennis, Addison and Hughes; and the other including Handel himself and Pepsuch who built the concept of 'ancient music', more gently and practically resisting Italian opera from a musical perspective by aiming to have operatic music express their own language with precision. Coincidentally, through Handel's sacred oratorios, these two parties reached a temporary consensus in the 1730s, absorbing more supporters for the Academy of Ancient Music and collectively contributing Handelian oratorios. The librettists admired their religious subjects, because sublimity no doubt heightened their dramatic poetry in a suitably pious fashion. Handel's *Alexander's Feast* seems directly to answer Dryden with two instrumental concertos: the harp one is seductive, and the organ one exhortatory.

Both parties advocated "understanding" their native opera but imparted the word with two different meanings. On one hand it was equated with "reason", as opposed to "sensing", and was captured in dramatic poetry, while on the other it concerned literal expression in their native language. In other words, during the creation of Handel's oratorios, the playwrights believed in the power of the written word behind the libretto, while not believing in the

[337] Ibid, 29.

perceptibility of human emotion. In contrast, the composer believed in the dialectical power of music and the ability of the audience to capture it. Indeed, when writing the libretto of *Messiah*, Jennens sacrificed the comprehensibility of verses for fulfilling a poetic and divine purpose:

> I would have his [Virgil's] adorers acknowledge that he is not without some faults, of which obscurity is one. But whatever becomes of Virgil, the Bible is not affect by the same objections: it stands upon a better Authority. Our Maker has a right to speak to us in what Language he pleases, & to humble our Pride with things above our Understandings.[338]

The obscure narration of scriptural libretto can be regarded as another "Italian language" confusing to the audience, prompting Handel to seek more comprehensible texts in continuing with English opera.

## 5.4 *Semele* (1744) as an English opera

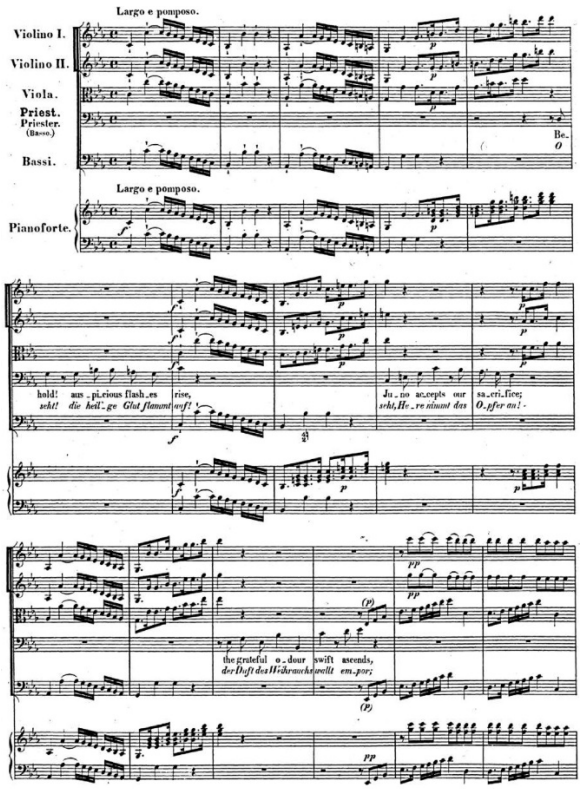
As mentioned in the Introduction, the performance of *Semele* caused a sensation in London. Some conservative audience members could not accept a secular love story presented through the musical structure of the oratorio. Modern-day researchers have correctly pointed out factors creating this tension, including Hicks who claims that "The presentation of dramatic works in oratorio form … created problems for audiences of Handel's time and for their successors, especially in the case of secular dramas where the justification of oratorio-style performance -- sacredness of subject -- was absent",[339] and Zöllner who explains the failure of *Semele* through "audiences expecting musical virtuosity in a suitably pious guise appropriate to the Lenten season." Ultimately, they were "dismayed and stayed away, with dire financial consequences."[340] The libretto of *Semele* is thoroughly dramatic, and was set by John Eccles in the 1710s as an English opera conforming to the "Italian manner", when the idea of 'ancient music' was not yet fully developed. Thus, comparison of the Eccles and Handel versions may cast light on whether the 'oratorio manner' could replace the "Italian manner" and help Handel create a full-blown English opera to fulfil the needs of the 'ancient music' camp.

In the eleven years between 1732 and 1743 Handel wrote many oratorios, but never in one consistent form, making it difficult to define a single "oratorio manner" on his part. In some respects, *Semele* is a follow-up to *Messiah*, with all the solo movements accompanied by strings and choral settings featuring extra parts for wind and drums. Also, Handel used vivid musical material (as in *Messiah*) in musical "blocks", for transmitting related content and expression.

[338] Roberts, "Handel, Charles Jennens and the Advent of Scriptural Oratorio", 241.
[339] Ibid, 162.
[340] Eva Zöllner, "Handel and English Oratorio", in *The Cambridge History of Eighteenth-Century Music*, 548.

For example, in the opening scene of Juno's temple, "auspicious flashes" are conveyed by ascending and descending semiquaver chords (Ex. 5.12), the same element repeatedly appearing in the same scene's Priest accompagnato "Behold, Auspicious flashes rise", the Chorus of Priests "Avert these omens, all ye powers" and Cadmus' accompagnato "Again auspicious flashes rise!" Meanwhile, to further imply that Jupiter is the actual controller of "auspicious flashes" (proved by the subsequent story), this musical pattern is consistently associated with the word "Jove", even though the character Jupiter has yet to appear. In the following scene, which displays the grieving of Athamas on account of Semele's betrayal and Ino's hopeless love for Athamas, their two aria settings "Turn, hopeless lover, Turn thy eyes" and "Your tuneful voice my tale would tell" are each heralded by the same triple-time rhythm in a minor key played Largo, simultaneously predicting their close relationship manifest by the end of the story. And, more subtly, Juno's accompaniment of the repeated semiquaver chords is invented for her revenge procedure narrated by the accompagnato "Awake Saturnia, from thy lethargy" where Juno first claims her plan, by "Somnus, awake" where Juno asks for help for Somnus, and by "Conjure him by his oath" where Juno manages to persuade Semele to assist. In a similar fashion to *Messiah* (including the pastoral movements), Handel portrayed a fairyland Arcadia in *Semele* through Jupiter's Air 'Where'er you Walk', with sweet melody for strings and a rhyming couplet. Semele's aria movement 'The morning lark to mine accords his note' is also in pastoral style, with the wavy-line ornament over the dotted semiquavers to imitate the "warbling throat" of a lark, and then sung by the soloist with a euphonious melisma.

**Ex. 5.12: Handel, Priest Accompagnato "Behold, Auspicious flashes rise", *Semele* HWV 58 (GH7: bars 1-16).**

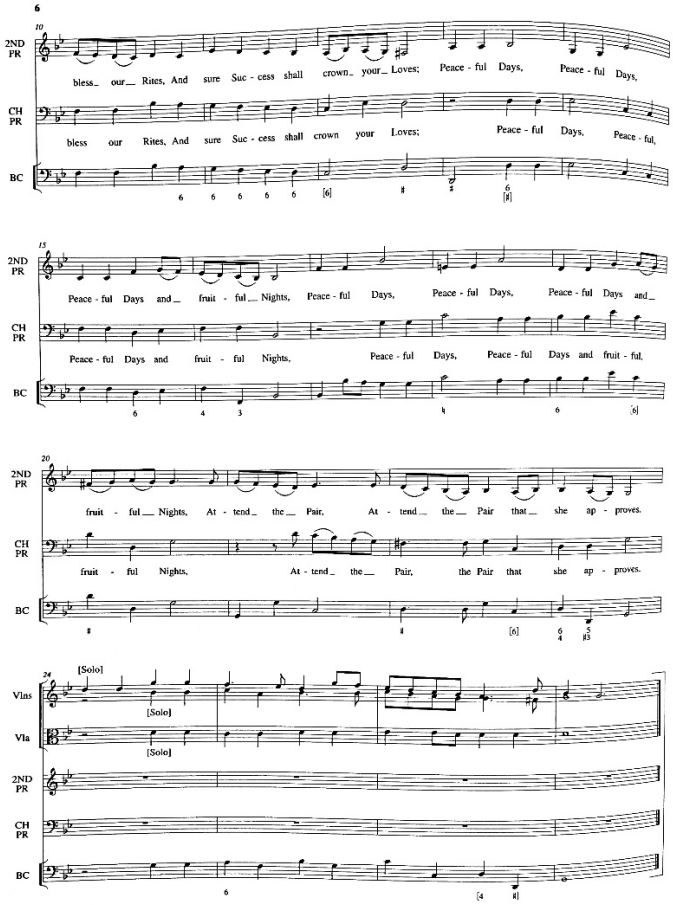



In addition to its position as a successor to *Messiah*, *Semele* captures Handel's idea of allowing previous experiences of oratorio to influence a new work. Two factors are important in this respect. The first is the insertion of choral settings in his anthem style. How to involve this customary English harmonic sound in a drama dominated by solo movements had always been crucial to Handel in composing his oratorios. We witnessed him drawing on Coronation anthems in *Esther* and *Deborah*; from *Athalia* onwards, he gave specific roles to the choral singers and portrayed the believers and pagans in different styles of choral settings; in *Alexander's Feast*, the choral singers took on narrative and commentary roles and also enhanced the emotional expression of preceding arias and recitatives thereby strengthening the links between numbers. In the chorus-led *Israel in Egypt* and *Messiah*, choral settings became an indispensable part of the "music blocks" of Handelian oratorio. In *Semele*, the choruses fulfilled a kind of background role, changing over the course of the story. The chorus in Act 1 first appear as priests in the temple of Juno and then as Priests and Augurs. They perform as Lovers and Zephyrs in the palace of Semele; when Jupiter turns the palace into a fairyland (scene 3), the Lovers and Zephyrs become Nymphs and Swains singing "Bless the Gold Earth"

to conclude the act. The Priests make a second appearance in the final act and show that Semele's fairyland has been destroyed, with events returning to the mortal world.

Moreover, the choruses in *Semele* contain rich expression assuming the function of the delicate ritornello and intermediate symphonies in Eccles' version, particularly where the musical accompaniment is concerned. For example, in the priests' first chorus we initially observe the people excitingly celebrating the wedding, accompanied by repeated semiquaver chords in B flat major; once they adopt the illusion of a peaceful and beautiful life, the accompaniment changes to rhythmically sustained chords in conjunction with a modulation to D minor, and bright harmony returns in bar 20 for the final verse "Attend the pair that she approves" (Ex. 5. 13). Eccles wrote a duet to this text; its ritornello and solo participation conveys only a joyful mood, the melody thereby not always matching implications in the text. After the quartet "Why dost thou thus untimely grieve", Eccles employs a symphony with short running chords to represent Jupiter echoed in Semele's prayer, while Handel worked a similar musical passage into the accompaniment of the next chorus "Avert these omens, all ye pow'rs"; in addition to the strings, oboes and timpani strengthen the portrayal of Jupiter.

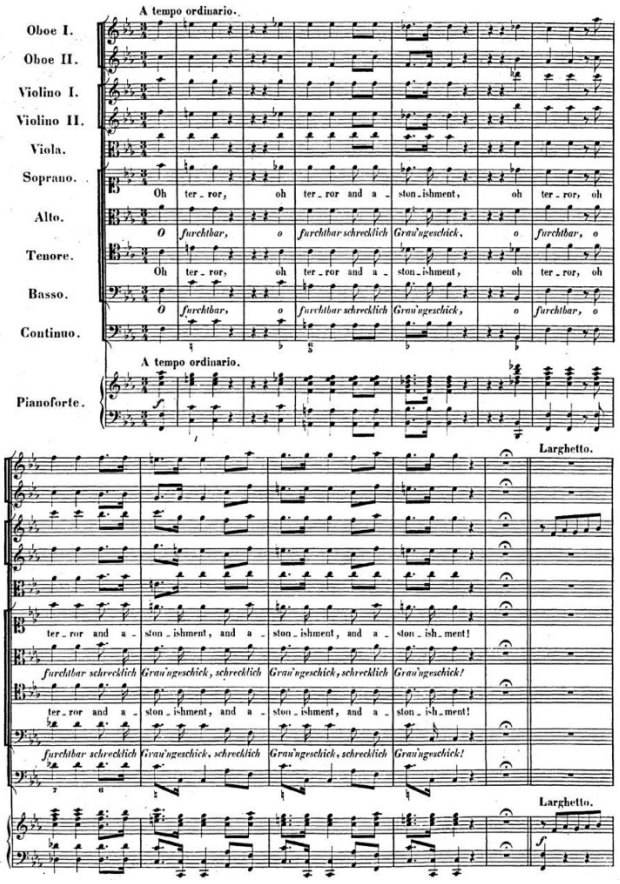
**Ex. 5.13 :Eccles, Duet "Lucky Omens bless our Rites", *Semele* (MB 76: bars 10-27).**



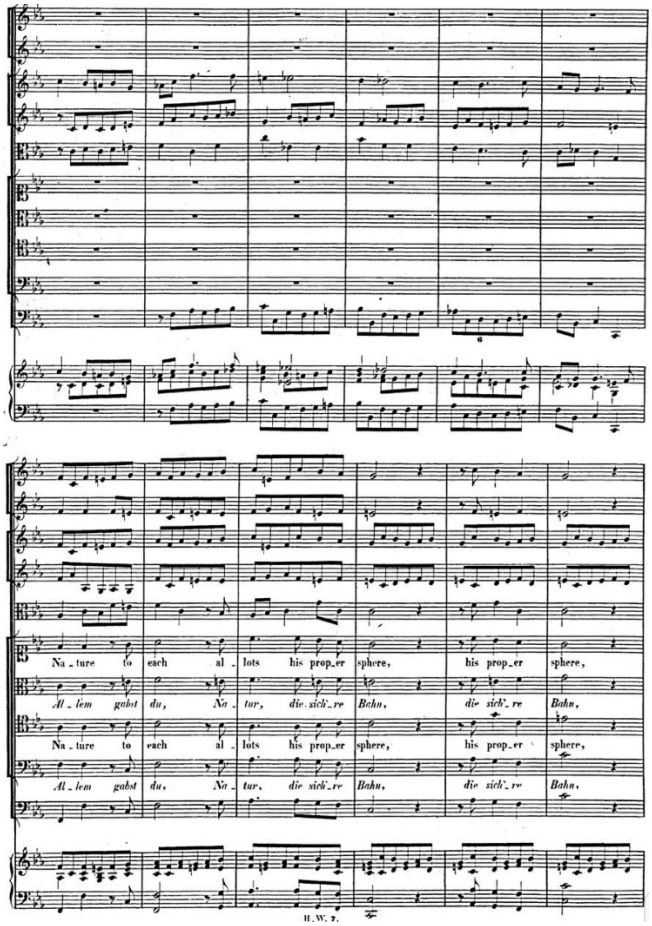

In Handel's late oratorios, the anthem chorus is not frequently used to heighten the religious experience, and is employed instead to reflect on the power of music, perhaps as a riposte to his librettists. After *Alexander's Feast* and *Messiah*, Handel again draws on anthem harmony to relate thoughts on Semele's tragedy and in conjunction with depicting a deity. Prior to the arrival of Apollo, a chorus of Priests "Oh, Terror, and Astonishment" (Act III, scene 8) captures a reflective moment through standard Handelian anthem music, suggesting a supernatural being commenting on the conduct of characters (Ex. 5.14). First, the priests state "Oh, terror and astonishment!" characterised by plain repeated chords and with supporting accompaniment from oboes and strings creating a grand effect. This is followed by a pensive strings ritornello introducing the text "Nature to each allots his proper sphere, | But that forsaken we like meteors err", which is conveyed by harmonic blocks in short-long rhythm. For the final verse "Toss'd through the void, by some rude shock we're broke, | And all our boasted fire is lost in smoke", featuring an agitated chorus, Handel uses staccato chords to display anger at contempt and resistance to natural rules. The music then dies away, leaving short sombre chords on "is lost"

and “in smoke”, like an echo from God, hinting at terrible consequences for the characters (Ex. 5.15).

**Ex. 5.14: Handel, Chorus of Priests “Oh, Terror, and Astonishment”, *Semele* HWV 58 (HG 7: bars 1-13).**



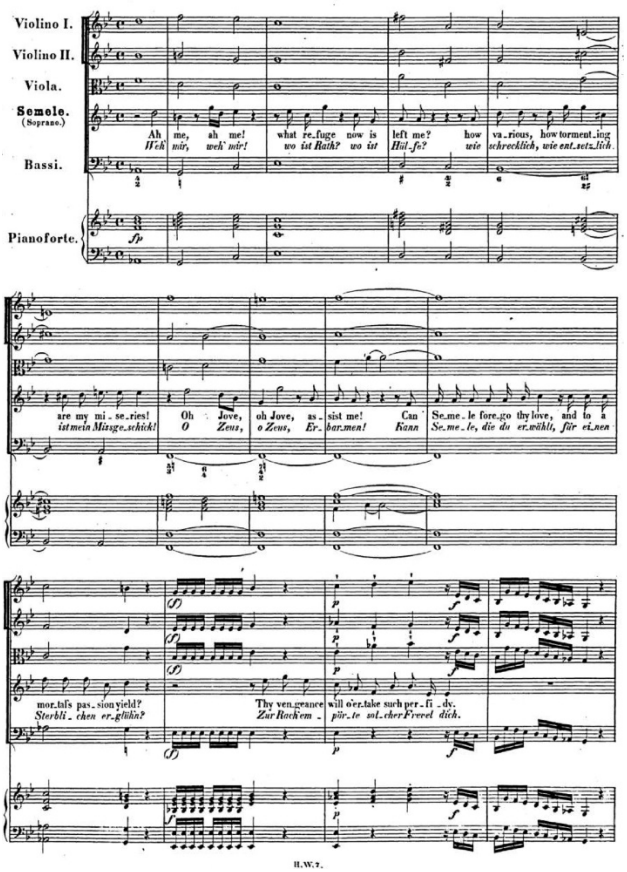
**Ex. 5.15: Handel, Chorus of Priests "Oh, Terror, and Astonishment", *Semele* HWV 58 (HG 7: bars 14-25).**



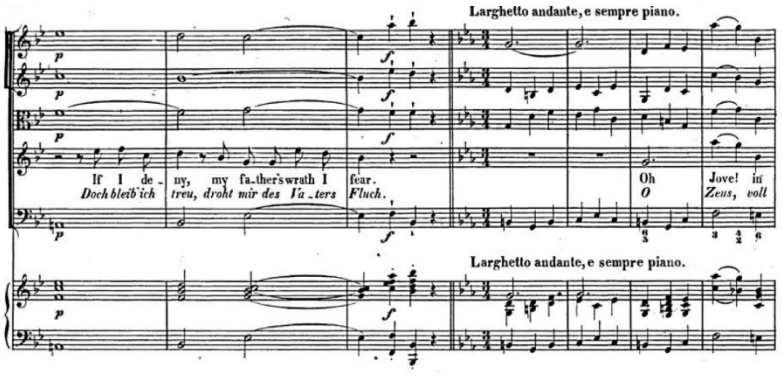

The influence of ode music suggested by Handel's English predecessors and by his own ode-like oratorios is also an issue relevant to *Semele*. In the approach to Apollo's first accompanied recitative in the last scene, Handel employs a symphony very similar to that of the organ concerto in *Alexander's Feast*, featuring alternating ascending demisemiquavers and rhythmically calm chords in oboes and strings. Both instrumental passages imply God classifying all chaos as peace and harmony. The substantial accompanied recitative settings in such a dramatic oratorio are also noticeable. On the whole, the accompagnato supports the expression of complicated inner emotional changes in characters (often not witnessed in the arias of *Semele*). For example, Semele's first appearance in Act I is a tortured recitative: "Ah, me, what refuge now is left me". She laments to the audience: "Ah me! | What refuge now is left me? | How various, how tormenting | Are my miseries [!]", accompanied by mournful, minor-mode held chords in support of her self-pitying mood. But suddenly she begs Jupiter to assist her, and the running semiquavers provide support (Ex. 5.16). Her sorrowful mood then returns in bar 15, with an accompaniment in long chords as well (Ex. 5.17). Ino's accompagnato

'Hear, mighty queen' (Act II, scene 1) also begins with sustained chords to illustrate her obedience to Juno; when she describes the ferocity of the dragon guard, anxious semiquavers above the soloist portray the mood. Interestingly, this musical material coincides with the text "[…] clap their brazen wings", imitating nature in a similar manner to the accompaniment of plague arias from *Israel in Egypt*. In Act III, where Jupiter makes a promise to Semele, their conversation is conveyed in two tense accompanied recitatives. The first, 'By that tremendous flood, I swear' (scene 4), demonstrates Jupiter's determination, repeated harmonies shifting to a new rhythm of staccato semiquavers to imitate the flowing river in answer to Jupiter's call of "Stygian waters". An affirmative reply is forthcoming in the ensuing *recitativo semplice* "You will grant what I require", which acts as a link to Semele's accompanied recitative "Then Cast off this Human". She is deceived by Juno and asks Jupiter to remove the disguise of a human being in order to appear in front of her in the image of God, a request that will have deadly consequence for her. In consequence, the strings underscore a dark mood through chromatically sustained chords.

**Ex. 5.16: Handel, Semele Recitative: "Ah, me, what refuge now is left me", *Semele* HWV 58 (HG 7: bars 1-14).**



**Ex. 5.17: Handel, Semele Recitative: "Ah, me, what refuge now is left me", *Semele* HWV 58 (HG 7: bars 15-21).**




Several accompanied recitatives make the soloist a narrator conveying the story in music. This is inspired by the Apollo Academy composers, with a striking instance being Greene's music *The Song of Deborah and Barak*: "[…] the alto arioso "Why stays my Sisera" is clearly a dramatic moment where Sisera's mother is worried about her son, whereas the same singer in the air "No more returns thy son to thee" is either a different observing character or the narrator."[341] Handel also worked a narrative passage into *Deborah*, but subtly employed a new character to retell the story for this purpose, while maintaining its drama. In Act I of *Semele*, Cadmus describes (as an observer) in "Again auspicious flashes rise" (scene 1) the auspicious flashes in Juno's temple repeatedly changing, and then relates the story of his daughter being taken away by Jupiter, who turned into an eagle ('Wing'd with our fears and pious haste', scene 4), with a varied accompaniment enlivening the narration and increasing the dramatic effect. However, in the arioso "Daughter, obey" and quartet "why dost thou thus untimely", Cadmus becomes a participant and interacts with other characters. For the sole appearance of Apollo in the finale, the narrative content relating to the birth of Bacchus is conveyed by the character himself. Its sustained long chords accompaniment, as Liam Gorry explains, had normally been used for "intense reflective moments or for moments of awe in the presence of a deity" since Handel's *Samson*, and were commonly identified as Recitative Accompanied.[342] In *Semele*, this accompaniment style relates both to religious power and to the emotional positions of characters. Perhaps the sacred implications of choral harmony are also conveyed here, in a solo number.

[341] Gardner, "Politics, Competition and Early Oratorio: Greene's The Song of Deborah and Barak and Handel's Deborah", 37.
[342] Liam Gorry, "Accompanied Recitative and Characterisation in Handel's Oratorios", in *Music in the London Theatre from Purcell to Handel*, 207.

Overall, the "oratorio manner" in *Semele* principally comprises choral insertions and ode-like form, reflecting the English genius for drama better than Eccles. First, the chorus successfully integrate themselves into a drama in changing their roles, and effectively determine the musical course of the action. The sound they and their instrumental accompaniment create not only imbues this dramatic product with religious awe and nationalistic thinking, but also transfers the spirit of interlinked symphonies from Eccles' version to the vocal movements. In order to further refine the position of music in the drama, dramatic verses and music are articulated in accompanied recitatives by alternating passages of recitative and instrumental accompaniment. This was also communicated to the audience in Handel's aria settings in *Semele*. He writes long unaccompanied solos followed by expressive melody, making the singers articulate their dramatic verses on stage, while in the arias in Eccles' version, the solo violin accompaniment engages in less effective extensions and repetitions to allow the singer opportunities to breathe. Moreover, Handel's underlying aim to convey the power of music in *Semele* produced two different musical manifestations – the seductive figure associated with solo melodies and the reflective moment delivered harmonically. This reflects the concept of 'ancient music' to a significantly greater extent than Eccles' version. In Semele's air "O sleep, why dost thou leave me" (Act II, scene 2), where she complains about the temporary departure of Jupiter, Handel rejects conventional string participation and uses the harp solo instead to accompany her grieving. The harp makes a second appearance in Semele's air "My racking thought by no kind Slumbers Freed" in Act III when she once again suffers for her mortal being, a mode of thinking that finally allows Ino successfully to seduce her. Here, harp music represents the seduction, recalling similar episodes in the ode-like oratorio *Alexander's Feast* when the king is irritated by Timotheus' harp concerto. Equally, the symphony heralded by solemn chords to represent the coming of Apollo also aligns with Cecilia's organ concerto. At points such as these, we have every reason to believe that *Semele* is a successful English opera representing the concept of 'ancient music'.

## 5.5 An ending for 'ancient music' in 1745

The proponents of Italian music in London were aware of the threat *Semele* posed to its exalted standing. Although Handel's previous oratorios attracted large English audiences and to some extent weakened the leading role of Italian opera in London theatres, the oratorios were still regarded by those favouring Italian music as a genre distinct from the world of opera. Nevertheless, the appearance of *Semele* made them fear that this successful "operatic" product to an English text would become more popular than operas in Italian. They therefore launched

attacks on Handel's *Semele*, as they had on English dramatic opera in the 1710s (see Chapter 3, especially on Eccles' *Semele*). For modern scholars, the revenge of the Italian party has usually been attributed to the break up between Handel and the Middlesex Opera Company during the summer of 1743. However, the premiere of *Semele* on 10 February 1744 appears not to have been affected, as noted by Mrs. Delany:

> There is a four-part song that is delightfully pretty; Francesina is extremely improved, her notes are more distinct, and there is something in her running (page turning) divisions that is quite surprizing. She was much applauded, and the house full, though not crowded; […].[343]

Shortly after the first performance, Mrs. Delany continues (21 February):

> They say Samson is to be next Friday: for Semele has a strong party against it, viz. the fine ladies, petit maitres, and ignoramus's. All the opera people are enraged at Handel, but Lady Cobham, Lady Westmoreland, and Lady Chesterfield never fail it.[344]

Eventually, the Italian opera contingent managed to derail Handel's *Semele* to such an extent that it was not performed after 1744.

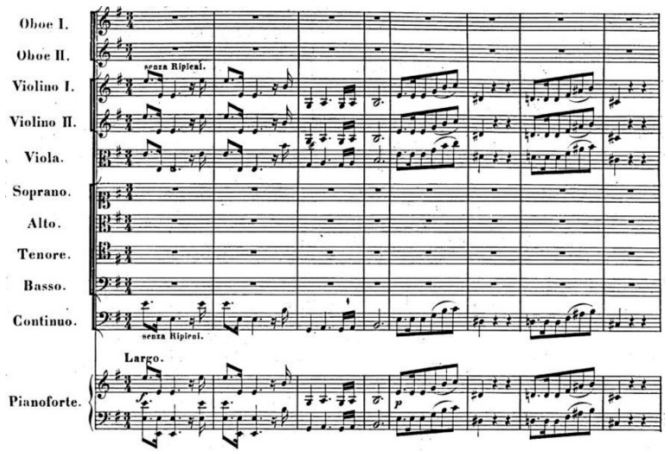
Additionally, Handel's parallel work, *Hercules*, similarly fell victim to contemporary criticism. Written by Thomas Broughton (1704-1744), this secular story is based on the myth of Hercules and delves into themes of jealousy, betrayal, and redemption. However, after its first performance, as reported by the *London Daily Post* on April 17, 1745, critics did not hide their disappointment and described the production as "the most shocking, unnatural, and disgusting performance ever exhibited on any stage."[345]

In Handel's musical compositions, the clever integration of chorus and plot design is reminiscent of his work on *Semele.* The chorists are able to seamlessly integrate themselves into the storyline through their diverse and multifaceted roles. In addition, the chorus no longer represents a longing for the supernatural or for God the divine, but rather functions as a commentary tool to reflect on the characters at appropriate moments. A notable example is the chorus in the second act: "Jealousy!". This chorus perfectly showcases Handel's masterful skill in expressing emotions through musical language. The libretto promotes in a general way the jealousy and anger that grow within the actors, and Handel depicts this heightened emotion with upward semiquavers scale material throughout the music. However, at the same time, in the opening bars, he has the musical line leap down an octave in the strings to convey a feeling

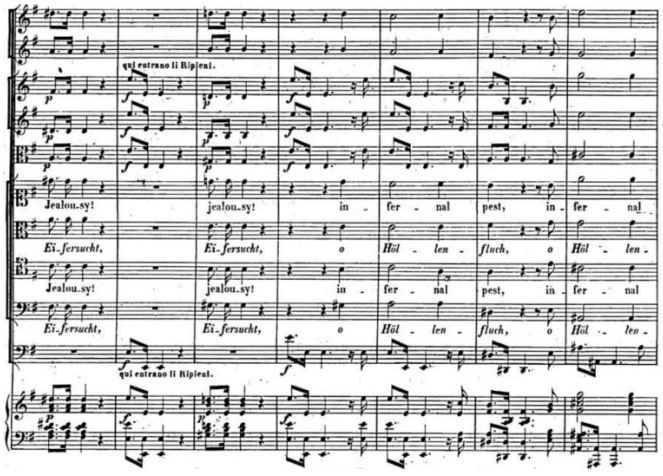
[343] Letter to Mrs Dewes, 11 February 1744: D, p. 582; Burrows quoted in his collection, *Handel*. Second Edition. 364-65.
[344] Ibid, 365.
[345] *The London Daily Post*, 17 April 1745, as cited by Dean, "Hercules", in *Handel's Dramatic Oratorios and Masques*, 461.

of horror and gloom, which contrasts sharply with the later upward motif of the choral voices (Ex. 5.18). And the same descending material appears later, which is followed by homophony on the word "jealousy" to convey a falling into infinite darkness (Ex. 5.19). It is clear that Handel's music does not simply follow the emotions conveyed in the libretto. Instead, he uses the impact of his musical style to showcase the dialectical power of music. His violin accompaniment not only foreshadows the tragic outcome resulting from jealousy but also prevents the audience from being lost in jealousy, instead provoking reflection through the ominous "echo". In my view, Handel demonstrates deep exploration of the musical significance of English rational taste in *Hercules*.

**Ex. 5.18: Handel, Chorus "Jealousy!", *Hercules* HWV 60 (HG 4: bars 1-8).**




**Ex. 5.19: Handel, Chorus "Jealousy!", *Hercules* HWV 60 (HG 4: bars 17-23).**




However, as Burrows revealed, the negative reception of *Hercules* led to Handel's decision to cancel the remaining performances of the season, resulting in significant financial losses. The

failure of *Hercules* also cast doubt on Handel's reputation as one of the leading composers of his time. In fact, Lord Shaftesbury reported that Handel's friends were considering his retirement in light of the opera's poor performance.[346] After 1745, "Handel created no further secular works in oratorio form".[347]

After facing the double blow of English critics blaming him for betraying his scriptural theme and the Italian company attacking him as a competitor, Handel mused on his predicament in the *Daily Advertiser*:

> Having for a Series of Years received the greatest Obligations from the Nobility and Gentry of this Nation, I have always retained a deep Impression of their Goodness. As I perceived, that joining good Sense and significant Words to Musick, was the best Method of recommending this to an English Audience; I have directed my Studies that way, and endeavour'd to shew, that the English Language, which is so expressive of the sublimest Sentiments is the best adapted of any to the full and solemn Kind of Musick. I have the Mortification now to find, that my Labours to please are become ineffectual, when my Expences are considerably greater. To what Cause I must impute the loss of the publick Favour I am ignorant, but the Loss itself I shall always lament. In the mean time, I am assur'd that a Nation, whose Characteristick is Good Nature, would be affected with the Ruin of any Man, which was owing to his Endeavours to entertain them. I am likewise persuaded, that I shall have the Forgiveness of those noble Persons, who have honour'd me with their Patronage, and their Subscription this Winter, if I beg their Permission to stop short, before my losses are too great to support, if I proceed no farther in my Undertaking; and if I intreat them to withdraw three Fourths of their Subscription, one Fourth Part only of my Proposal having been perform'd.[348]

The "undertaking" that Handel "proceed no farther" is his composition of secular oratorio, capturing his role as an 'ancient music' composer. According to Handel, he was taken aback by the loss of his audiences. In fact, it probably can be attributed only to the intervention of the Italian opera camp and thus does not provide firm evidence of the failure of Handel's "undertaking". English audiences were obsessed with Italian opera, but also stood up and cheered Handel's chorus from *Messiah* (see James Beattie's account above); the former is expressed in a foreign language they cannot understand, and the latter has obscure dramatic verses. After all, whether English playwrights admitted it or not, the audiences were always most attracted by the musical component of a drama, including simple melodies and solemn thick harmonies. Therefore, what really obstructs Handel's "undertaking" is not the audience's

[346] Burrows, "The Oratorio Composer I, Dublin and London, 1741-5", in *Handel*, 373.
[347] Hicks, "Handel and the idea of an oratorio", 160.
[348] Burrows, "The Oratorio Composer I, Dublin and London, 1741-5", 374.

preference or public taste, but the perceived infringement of his work on the interests of Italian opera, coupled with the worship of literary reason and disdain for operatic forms among leading English academicians of the era.

Unexpectedly, "after a season of thin houses at Covent Garden", *Messiah* acquired "successive public triumphs" at the Founding Hospital performance in 1750, reinforcing "the wider public image of 'the great Mr Handel'".[349] As Taruskin explains,

> The work [*Messiah*] became a perennial and indispensable favorite with the London public when Handel began giving charity performances of it in the chapel of the London Foundling Hospital, starting in 1750. These were the "consecrated" performances that led to the work's being regarded as an actual "sacred oratorio", although that was not the composer's original intention.[350]

The *Messiah*'s success as a sacred oratorio changed the performing environment of Handelian oratorio from the theatre to consecrated buildings, reversing *Esther*'s move to the theatre following advocacy from the 'ancient music' camp in 1732. This marks the failure of the revitalization of English national opera originating with the Academy of Ancient Music, and simultaneously brought the Academy an opportunity to reinvent itself.

Returning to William Weber's view discussed in Chapter 1, 'ancient music', a term linked to 'the rise of musical classics in eighteenth-century England' (to quote the title of Weber's book), was generally established by 'the music of Handel, especially the uniquely popular *Messiah*'.[351] This view has exerted a lasting influence on modern research not only in associating the term 'ancient music' with early or old musical repository, but also in linking the idea of classics to Handel and his oratorios. However, *Messiah*'s experiences observed the transformation of 'ancient music' from nationalistic subtext to a canon of 'classics' associated with early music, reflecting shortcomings in Weber's argument. The idea of musical classics was not initiated during Pepusch's Academy, when *Messiah* was still a contemporary work. It was customary for the composer reviving the score of *Messiah* to make revisions to adjust to a different cast. For example, he wrote three new versions of individual numbers for Burney around 1741 and they then became standard movements replacing the earlier ones.[352] And by the time of Handel's death, as Taruskin explains, "the British institution of choral festivals had been

[349] Ibid, 452.
[350] Taruskin, "Class of 1685 (II)", 326.
[351] Weber, "The Musical Festival and the Oratorio Tradition", 103.
[352] Burrows, "The Final Decade I The Last Major Works 1749–51", in *Handel*, 453–54.

established, and it maintained *Messiah* as a unique national institution, vouchsafing the unprecedented continuity of its performance tradition."[353]

We can clearly witness that members of the Academy, in the context of being unable to attract new contributors after Pepusch, had to defend their performance repertory featuring Handel's *Messiah* in order to make their concerts more competitive with those at public theatres (see chapter 1). Therefore, the concept of the "classic" was born in the Academy after Pepusch's directorship, more specifically, when *Messiah* evolved from contemporary music to early and old music. In other words, the appearance of the "classic" aimed to eliminate the objection that "the efficacy of music is abated by repetition" and guaranteed *Messiah* and Handel an exalted status among English audiences when the work was no longer substantively adjusted.

Moreover, the change in *Messiah*'s position on the English stage also exposes shortcomings in Tim Eggington's view of 'ancient music'. In explaining the intimate relationship between the Academy and Handelian oratorios, he claims that,

> The key to understanding what it was that interested academicians in this seemingly diverse assortment of composers, and why they prized Handel in particular, is in a much idealised, though never clearly defined property, which they termed "harmony" […] in it academicians perceived a mathematical, and archetypal language of nature, essential to what they saw as music's highest calling, the expression of serious and profound sentiments.[354]

This opinion might reasonably account for Benjamin Cooke's Academy promoting the authority of *Messiah* and other works by Handel, but it provides little evidence of the intentions of the Academy in the early eighteenth century. In fact, the academicians tended to favour a new musical form different from the simple melody of Italian opera for the compositional foundations of English opera, so as to promote a more harmonically focussed national identity. When widely used in sacred music, the appearance of associated stylistic features in secular music was not straightforward. With the exception of *Israel in Egypt*, Handel never put choral settings in the dominant position in his oratorios. As I have observed, the number of choruses in *Messiah* and *Semele* decreased in comparison to his earlier oratorios, and a functional transformation from religious symbol to reflective thinking was realized. This was not intended as a manifestation of the highest solemnity of harmony in music, but rather to convince the

[353] Taruskin, "Class of 1685 (II)", 326.
[354] Tim Eggington, "Universal Harmony in Enlightenment England: Handel and the Academy of Ancient Music", 50.

English that music could convey the rational element of a drama just like literature, and thus that music and dramatic verses acquired an equal position in dramatic works.

# Conclusion

The intellectual odyssey that unfurls in this thesis can be construed as a nuanced foray into the labyrinthine intersections of nationalism, aesthetic dispositions, and fundamental musical principles, all within the intricate tapestry of English opera—with an especial focus on the English oeuvre of George Frideric Handel. Guided by a commanding research question—namely, what are the implications of intertwining national identity, aesthetic sensibilities, and musical characteristics for the interpretive latitude of English opera? —this thesis employs a panoramic lens. The investigative scope of the preceding chapters, from tracing the historical predicates shaping English receptivity towards opera to the rigorous examination of Handel's stylistic nuances, has imbued this scholarly enterprise with a multidimensional texture.

Within the architecture of this intellectual endeavour, several thematic nexuses have emerged: the ontological—rather than historical—conception of 'ancient music' as proffered by Pepusch; the symbiotic relationship between rhythmic design and the peculiarities of English declamation in Handel's corpus; and the indelible relationship between these variegated musical constituents and English nationalism. These thematic pivots have collaboratively crystallized into a more synthesized understanding.

Amidst the overarching framework of this dissertation, the discourse on nationalism serves as an analytical nexus that articulates the Restoration opera's rational aesthetic foundations while contending with the indulgent sensorial dimensions of Italian musical idioms. This duality precipitates what could be termed as "English anxiety". Furthermore, it is critical to recognize that in the specific ambit of this scholarly inquiry, the discourse on English operatic nationalism frequently transcends the literary confines of the libretto. Even in their nascent interactions with the Italianate musical lexicon, English composers demonstrated a proclivity to communicate ideological nuances via their musical compositions, thereby inviting the scholarly query: Can the quintessentially rational aesthetic, intrinsic to English identity, be articulated musically in isolation from the thematic narrative?

The intricate conundrum finds its intricate unravelling in Chapters 4 and 5 of this dissertation. Specifically, in Handel's magnum opus, *Alexander's Feast*, one observes a semiotic alchemy wherein choral settings metamorphose from mere ecclesiastical augmentations to repositories of dual functionality: they wield the power of seduction whilst maintaining rationality. This epistemological transition not only amplifies the reach of Pepusch's 'ancient music' paradigm

but also liberates Handel's compositional pen, inviting secular motifs and operatic architectures into his ensuing oratorios.

Nonetheless, this paradigmatic shift navigates through a labyrinth of complexities and cultural paradoxes. Beginning with the oratorios of *Saul* and culminating in the music-dramatic spectacle of *Semele*, Handel's oeuvre undergoes an ontological transformation. The choruses, which once stood as potent nexuses of religious symbolism, have been relegated to subsidiary roles. Further complicating this are the ideological aspirations of the early eighteenth-century academic milieu, which endeavoured, albeit in vain, to establish a harmonic foundation for the construction of a nationalistic English musical identity.

These salient observations corroborate the foundational thesis that Handel's choral frameworks transcend mere acoustic ornamentation; they are, in essence, indelibly entwined with the overarching dramatic fabric. Yet, this symbiotic relationship unveils more than mere structural considerations; it illuminates broader epistemological shifts in English operatic nationalism. Such complexities manifest quintessentially in the cultural and critical tumult surrounding *Semele*. The work's secular ontology incited contentious debates among English literati and was further exacerbated by interference from the Italian opera contingent. Consequently, Handel retreated from secular composition in the oratorio form after 1745. Thus, whilst Handel's choruses harmonize congruously with the idiosyncratic norms of English artistic culture, their foundational entanglement with religious tropes illustrates a tapestry of irreducible complexities in the ongoing negotiation between aesthetic rationalism and musical morphology.

While the present thesis traverses an expansive hermeneutical landscape, it acknowledges the untapped reservoirs of academic potential for ensuing research endeavours. Key subjects beckon further scrutiny. One may contemplate the contributory role of contemporaneous composers in shaping the British operatic milieu or explore their reception amidst a mercurial cultural topography. Additionally, the query presents itself: can paradigms exemplifying the rational potency of music be located in thematic realms beyond the purview of Handelian oratorio?

Due to spatial constraints, the investigation into the musical traditions of the Elizabethan church remains perfunctory at best. It is an incontrovertible truth that for the ideological construct of "English harmony" to be fortified, a more comprehensive arsenal of musical material must be amassed, augmented by a systematic methodology. Future scholarly pursuits

would do well to intensify focus upon this domain. Intriguingly, the era of the Elizabethan church represents a juncture in the chronology of English musical history marked by a repressed and nebulous understanding of music's emotional capabilities. In the absence of intellectual contextual support, the question arises: can we once again differentiate the textual from the musical within the Elizabethan polyphony? This leads to an even more compelling query: can a music-theoretical paradigm be extrapolated from the Tallis-Byrd tradition to underpin the veracity of this dissertation's inquiry into rational musicality within the Handelian oratorio? In this vein, the urgency of locating direct evidence of Handel's engagement with the Tallis-Byrd corpus becomes salient.

Lastly, if the present study bears adequate persuasive force, one might venture to posit Handel as a proto-Beethovenian figure, one pre-emptively navigating the uncharted waters of musical humanism. Could it be that his philosophical musical ideas found a renaissance towards the close of the eighteenth century? These remain tantalizingly unresolved inquiries, ripe for academic exploration. Thus, this dissertation extends an invitation for a scholastic re-engagement with English opera—a reinvigoration and reconceptualization, if you will, of this predominantly overlooked sector of English cultural patrimony.

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