

1. Alessandro Scarlatti was an Italian Baroque composer who lived from 1600-1725. Father to Domenico and Pietro Filippo Scarlatti, Alessandro is also father to the development of an opera style bridging the Baroque and Classical periods, as well as an innovative composer of chamber cantatas. Scarlatti's early works, primarily operas and secular cantatas, were written and performed in Rome until 1684. These operas, or "opera seria", were relatively short and included much comic relief injected into the often heavy or tragic plots. In 1677, the Pope outlawed public opera. Thus, Scarlatti's early operas were performed only privately in palaces of the Roman aristocracy and clergy. In 1684, Scarlatti became director of the Chapel Royal to the Viceroy of Naples, a prestigious post that allowed him to create large-scale operas with involved, elaborate plots and ornate scenery. Most importantly, these new operas featured a pioneering development of Scarlatti's: the da capo aria, occurring at the climactic, most stirring part of a scene. This added to the emotive intensity of the plot, keeping the audience more engaged as well as more clearly delineating the narrative of the story through keeping scene transitions more obviously marked. After leaving Naples in 1702, Scarlatti returned to Rome where he developed the grand da capo aria and the Italian overture in three movements (fast-slow-fast) in his 1705 serenata for soprano and castrato soloists with orchestra, *Endimione e Cintia*. Scarlatti returned to Naples and later to Rome between 1708 and his death in 1725, recommencing his Chapel Royal position. By this time, aria-centered opera is at its peak of popularity and *bel canto* singing now "assumes its 18<sup>th</sup> century definition as vocal music which features elaborate coloratura embellishment which rivals instrumental technique."<sup>1</sup> His formal 3-act opera buffa (comic opera), *Il trionfo dell'onore*, is the first of its kind, premiering in Naples in 1718.

Most of Scarlatti's operas were labeled *dramma per musica* and highlighted many often-short arias that were broken up by obligatory recitative functioning to pay respect to the poetic text and unravel the plot. This recitative-aria pairing became a standard opera staple. Unlike French opera directly preceding him, Scarlatti's favored "serious plots with happy endings and historical or imaginary personages, stylized, with no inner life revealed."<sup>1</sup> The French favored more hardcore tragic opera; Jean Baptiste Lully (1632-1687) was influenced by French 17<sup>th</sup> century Classical tragedy. In overall form and theatrical blueprint Lully's operas resemble French tragedies but the subject matter is relegated to legend or mythology. In Scarlatti's operas characteristic of *opera seria*, the characters generally consist of pairs comprised of rulers, their close friends and their servants. During his time in Rome, women were prohibited from the stage, so all the roles were played by men. Opera composers like Scarlatti heavily emphasized and showcased arias as features of their operas. Lully, the father of French opera, however, stuck to a strict form of 5 acts with a prologue, with arias restricted to acts' beginnings or injected into ballet "*divertissements*." Further, traditional French operas were performed in metered recitative, unlike Italian *opera seria*'s flexible rhythm that escalates the passion of ariosos. Lastly, Lully's operas featured numerous ensembles and choral numbers, while *opera seria* favored spotlight given more to soloists or limited to a pair of individuals on stage. The French were heavily into ballet, which imbued itself into

1. (Burnett, Lecture 8).

French opera's influences and is not present in *opera seria*.

Vocal forms employed in Lully's operas differed from those in *opera seria* as well. "*Ariettes*" were light homophonic dance songs accompanied by orchestra, and

“airs” referred to arioso passages. Often placed in acts’ beginnings were rondeau continuo arias, extremely expressive and contrapuntal in style, pushing the plot’s action forward by setting a temperament for ensuing action. The form “consisted of an arioso refrain with recitative-like episodes in between.”<sup>2</sup> The orchestra played the opening and closing ritornellos and the rest accompanied by the basso continuo. Lastly, Lully’s metered recitative dialogue was strongly rhythmic and pulsating, often changing meter according to the texts’ accents. The strong pulse allowed an easy flow between recitative-like passages and arioso exclamations. Unlike opera seria, vocal ornaments are “pointillistic (from the lute repertoire) and only ornament individual notes (no scales or runs).”<sup>2</sup> French opera’s texture is very smooth and free and follows the text rhythms at all times. This higher emphasis on the text’s rhythms differs from opera seria’s less devoted adherence to the text.

Two marked types of recitative emerged in Baroque Italian opera seria, both of which displayed great “care in the harmonic progressions that support the quick changes of feeling and ideas in the text.”<sup>1</sup> *Recitativo semplice*, or simple recitative, later known as *recitativo secco*, or dry recitative was distinguished by being accompanied by the basso continuo in a malleable rhythm over slow bass lines. Here, the emphasis was on the poetic text, focused on transmitting important plot information to the audience, which would be destroyed through an overly busy musical accompaniment. Thus, *recitativo*

2. (Burnett, Lecture 9).

*semplice* was as speech-like as possible in carrying out long dialogue pieces or monologues. The second type, *recitativo accompagnato*, or *recitativo obbligato*, was employed for emotional and captivating scene moments and was accompanied by the

orchestra. The orchestra, who also reinforced the brisk emotional changes of the dialogue, enunciated singer's phrases with tiny exclamations. Unlike French Baroque opera with strict metered recitative, these two types utilized a very flexible rhythmic structure lacking in a regular pulse. Further, the chords of the recitative are locally related to each other, passing through a handful of implicated harmonic areas before cadencing in a distinct tonal "key." Lastly, there exists an aria-like recitative or recitativo arioso, lacking in any formal structure but equipped with a faster-moving bass and a melodic contour, less distinct in the former two recitative types.

Scarlatti's notable development of the Grand Da Capo aria results in the ritornello becoming thematically related to the aria rather than existing a mere interlude between stanzas, unapparent in French opera. An example in 1721's *Griselda* is a famous aria by Roberto, brother of Prince Corrado, occurring in Act III when Roberto must abandon his love Costanza. This aria is divided into 2 tercets of three lines each, sections A and B respectively. The A section features a quick tempo in 3/8 meter with an orchestral ritornello beginning on F (I) then moving to a major II (V/V) as the voice enters and sings the 1<sup>st</sup> tercet verse. The G or V/V then cadences on C (V) accompanied by an orchestral ritornello, moving to V7/IV followed by IV with the re-entrance of the voice and text repetition. This helps push the modulation back to F major, as the B-flat (IV) is followed by C, followed by an authentic cadence to I. This return to the tonic gives way to the fermata, also on I. The B section consists of the 2<sup>nd</sup> tercet sung completely once through. It begins on vi (dm), followed by g# diminished 7<sup>th</sup>, then concluding on A (V/vi). The orchestral ritornello (da capo) follows in I until the dal segno is reached. Obeying the dal segno, the A section repeats until the fermata or complete da capo.

However, this repeat is embellished and improvised upon by the singer before returning to the uniform fermata in I. This aria follows the general form of the da capo aria, in which the A and B sections have equal lines of text. The B section generally has little to no repetition and features a sparser texture as well as a slower harmonic rhythm, providing “thematic contrast and harmonic dissonance.”<sup>1</sup> Stranger modulations occur here, with vi moving to V/vi and III moving to V/III in minor as an example, and in the case of Roberto’s aria, exemplified by the remote modulation to A.

The Italian overture or sinfonia was another notable Scarlatti development. The Italian overture contains “motivically unified, very short, and underdeveloped”<sup>1</sup> in three movements (fast-slow-fast). A notable example is Scarlatti’s overture to *Endimione e Cintia*, written in Rome in 1705. The first movement is allegro in ritornello form, comprised of a total of 6 ritornello statements moving from i(dm)-III(F)-v(am) and featuring an oboe solo-VII(C)-iv(gm)-closing ritornello in dm(i) which proceeds immediately into the second movement, Adagio. This has a transitional character and goes from dm(i) through harmonic sequences, then back to i. Lastly, the 3<sup>rd</sup> movement, Allegro, is a simple, quick dance in binary form. Section A goes from i-v ( dm to am). After repeating A, section B goes from v-i (am-dm) and repeats, concluding the overture. Another example of Scarlatti’s Italian overture is in *Griselda*. This overture differs from *Endimione e Cintia*’s because it strays much further from the tonic. The first movement, Presto, once leaving the tonic never returns until the very end of the final 3<sup>rd</sup> movement. Another difference features a descending chromatic (or lamenting) bass towards the end of the first movement, intensifying the harmonic motion and employing diminished chords. This descending chromatic bass technique was generally avoided in French

opera. A similarity between both overtures however is their binary dance form in each overture's third movement. This shares a similarity with French opera, which employed binary dance forms frequently. Following the overture, as common to almost every opera of the time, *Griselda* begins with an opening scene celebrating King Gaultiero with uninhibited reverence as he caters to the people's wishes by sending his beloved *Griselda* back to the forest. This opening scene paying reverence to the King occurred in practically every Lully opera overture, pointing to another shared trait between Italian and French opera of the 17<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> centuries.

2. John Blow and Henry Purcell were two notable pioneers in developing the relatively concise scope of opera in Anglican England. Henry Purcell lived from 1659-1695 and is the most renowned English opera composer in England's entire history. This can largely be owed to the England's late and somewhat half-enthused start in opera development. Thriving more in the literary and playwright schools of art, opera was given less importance in English culture during the 17<sup>th</sup> century than their European counterparts. Nonetheless, the English style introduced by Blow and Purcell was completely unique and distinctive, despite undeniably imbuing French and Italian influences. The English style differed in terms of harmonic language, rhythm and counterpoint.

First of all, unique to the English style are Purcell's anthems (Anglican sacred cantatas), odes and welcome songs. These forms of music were unique to England during the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Sacred cantatas existed throughout all European catholic countries but the Anglican Anthem separated itself by its form. The full anthem consisted of one movement choral concertos with organ continuo, employing a more restricted approach to contrapuntal treatment than Italian or French cantatas. The choral concertos may

include solo passages and “emphasis is on imitative polyphony in species counterpoint.”<sup>3</sup> Verse Anthems followed a different form. They consisted of multi-movement sacred concertos, often showcasing elaborate vocal solos ranging from 1-4 soloists, alternating with chorus at times. More popular than the full anthems, verse anthems constituted 51 out of 66 of Purcell’s anthems and were more operatic in style due to the emphasis on soloists and aria-like (in complexity) of solo passages. Verse anthems were either accompanied alone with organ continuo (including lute and cello) or were composed for church-related festive occasions as symphony anthems with string orchestra.

A famous such “symphony” verse anthem with string and organ accompaniment is Purcell’s “O Sing Unto The Lord” (1688), Psalm 96. What makes this symphony anthem so special is its symphonic outline in a still-modal approach in terms of harmony. It is a symphony in 44 bars in the style of an Italian sonata da chiesa, which gives it a homophonic opening followed by a fugato section, in F major. In its total of 10 verses, Purcell employs emphasis on soloist virtuosity mingled with chorus interactions. For example, solo bass and chorus alternate during the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the verse, during which the soloist performs an elaborate melismatic phrase on the words: “the round world,” employing word-painting in its evocation of the mighty grandeur of the massive “round world.” The chorus, in notes twice as long than the soloists, echoes the phrase. Also in the final verse: “Tell it out among the heathen,” the original key of F major returns, in a

3. (Burnett, Lecture 7).

“style used later by Handel, and which points to the early 18<sup>th</sup> century style where vocal polyphony is founded on harmonic procedures.”<sup>3</sup> Further interplay between soloists and chorus, a technique largely developed by the English, is present in the Alleluja Coda,

which is begun by soloists and carried on by the chorus. There is also the ritornello with strings and continuo before the concluding amen which utilizes a plagel (church) cadence. Other special and distinctive English characteristics employed by Purcell in this anthem are dotted angular rhythms (notably in Verse 3: “Declare His Honour” and Verse 6: “Glory and Worship are Before Him”) and a ritornello for strings with echo effects predating later concerto traditions in Verse 4: “The Lord is Great.” These intricate and textural qualities, especially the interactions between chorus and soloists, make Purcell’s symphonic anthem a cornerstone of English vocal style ahead of its Anglican era.

Though Purcell is better known than John Blow, due to his famed and only opera masterpiece *Dido and Aeneas*, Blow was Purcell’s teacher and thus largely responsible for developing the English style Purcell expanded upon a few years later. John Blow’s *Venus and Adonis* (c. 1682) is a “court masque” written for a mistress of Charles II. A court masque placed emphasis on dance with songs and spoken dialogue. This was a hallmark of the English style, though definitely influenced by the French’s similarly placed importance on the theatrical tradition and festive quality music was relegated to. Like the French’s heavy interest in the Ballet de cour, the English (Renaissance) masque “emphasized spectacle and dance at the expense of dramatic vocal music.”<sup>3</sup> *Venus and Adonis* marked one of England’s first fully-fledged operas and contains striking, almost nonsensical free dissonance, chromatic bass lines, jagged rhythms, modal mixture through degree inflection and cross relations. These characteristics defined the English style especially in its unique and extreme use of free dissonance. However, beyond the French influence of a strong dance and theatrical foundation in opera, the English style was also molded by middle 17<sup>th</sup> century Italian Florentine monody and Venetian opera as



embodied by Monteverdi and Cavalli. Lamenting bass lines, or arias on ground basses employed by Monteverdi were most obviously borrowed by Purcell in his renowned “Dido’s lament” aria in *Dido and Aeneas*, in which, as implied, the ground bass literally “laments”, descending chromatically (deeper into the Earth) as Dido too leads herself back to Earth’s soil via her impending suicide. This word painting is of course not only a trait of all English opera, but has been employed in all opera’s history, set in groundwork by Italian Florentine monody and the first ever operas. The Italian madrigal tradition also set up this type of word painting and, so often integral in Italian madrigals as well are the heavy use of choruses used in English opera. Lastly, French opera composer Jean-Baptiste Lully in his fierce establishment of French opera tradition employed a syllabic approach to text setting (in many ways due to the French language’s unique lack of accents on individual syllables), as well as dances and an overture. The English derived this tradition as well, clearly illustrated in Purcell’s *Dido and Aeneas* (c. 1687).

*Dido and Aeneas* is a miniature opera consisting of a prologue and 3 small acts. Now considered to have been composed for the court of King James II, “the earliest printed score (dated 1689) was for performance by a girl’s school (Blow’s *Venus and Adonis* was also performed at Josias Priest’s dancing school).”<sup>3</sup> The chorological key scheme of the opera is as follows: spoken prologue (without music), Act I in cm-(e)-C and Act II (Pt. 1) in fm-(d)-F. Part 1 of the 2<sup>nd</sup> act’s witches scene parallels Dido’s first act court scene by beginning in a minor key and traveling to its parallel major. Act II (Pt. 2) goes from d-(a) lacking musical accompaniment, and the final Act III follows B flat-g-(c)-g. This ending in g minor coincides with Dido’s suicide, and the very beginning commencing in c minor is Dido’s key of tragedy, which utilizes foreshadowing of the

impending tragedy that will take place in the opera's climactic conclusion. *Dido and Aeneas* is English's most famous and best opera both in its time and since. It thus embodies all the qualities both unique to the English style as well as borrowed from France and Italy. French influences include, as discussed previously: the French style overture, dances (relating Dido to the court masque tradition), and the bare-minimum style of ornamentation (on single-notes only) and mostly syllabic text setting with special attention to word rhythms. Italian influences consist of madrigal style choruses as pioneered by Monteverdi, ground bass/basso ostinato arias, and free dissonance usage in a monodic style. The unique English style is most present however through the angular melodic lines that strictly follow the English poetry's text-rhythms (paying respectful homage to the libretto fits with the English's forte in the fields of literature and playwriting). Also present are cross relations, extremely active inner voices "characterized by leap instead of conjunct motion,"<sup>3</sup> and an overall diatonic harmony with discord between non-tonal or chromatic melody. Thus, *Dido and Aeneas* culminates in a total embodiment of the English style of opera, as built upon by Purcell's teacher John Blow and French and Italian influences from the early Renaissance to the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century.

3. Jean Baptiste-Lully (1632-1687) is responsible for the rigorous development of French opera in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. With librettist Philippe Quinault, Lully established French opera, or tragedie lyrique en musique in 1673. His approach consisted of five acts with a prologue, formal arias relegated to acts' beginnings or injected into ballet divertissements, dialogue expressed in metered recitative with passionate ariosos, and numerous ensembles and choral numbers. Lully's developments quickly became French

opera tradition and were later expanded upon and taken apart by Jean Philippe Rameau later in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Influences on Lully's opera development included French 17<sup>th</sup> century classical tragedy, the French Ballet and the Pastorale, and Italian Venetian opera by Monteverdi and Cavalli. Classical tragedy playwrights Racine and Corneille were largely significant in Lully's theatrical framework in opera, which was very similar to the general outline of contemporary French tragedies. The difference laid in subject matter, which Lully restricted to legend or mythology. The French were initially disinterested in opera. They considered music to hold a purely entertainment value, lacking in depth or seriousness, as a mere accessory and decoration to festive occasions. Lully was able to transform this French antipathy to opera by injecting his opera with all the cultural elements the French loved: physical dancing of characters (as the French prized Ballet de cour), dance songs with lightness and frivolity the French were comfortable with, few vocal ornamentations to avoid an overwhelmed audience and keep the plotline clear and focused, and commenting upon "current political happenings concerning the king and the monarch"<sup>2</sup> (e.g. Lully's prologue to 1677's *Isis*). This kept the audience rapt with attention, allowing Lully to deepen opera's meaning through experimenting with more emotionally laden arioso passages mixed into the entertainment value required by the French audience. Lully however was harshly criticized for a "comic" scene in his 1674 opera *Alceste*. A prime example of seamless scene construction founded upon a mixture of arioso and metered recitative, it contains one of a sum total of two comic scenes in Lully's entire opera output. This mingling of tragedy with comedy as it either confused them and/or weakened the dear held tragic aspect of the story outraged the French. Italians on the other hand, favored serious plots that ended happily (dead opposite of

French tragedy) and the use of historical or imagery characters, in opposition to the French's preference for mythology.

The basic differences behind the French conception of opera with Italian opera of the same period involves the dance songs Lully injected, rondo continuo arias, and metered recitative, as well as the uniquely French form of Lully's invented "French Overture." Lully's dance songs with orchestra were homophonic and light in texture and called "ariettes." Arioso passages were referred to as "airs." Rondeau continuo arias were extremely emotional and more contrapuntal in behavior than Italian arias. Unlike Italian arias which were often found in several places, Lully's use of rondeau continuo arias was relegated to the beginnings of acts, setting the temperament and climate for the ensuing drama, thus used "as a springboard into further action and dialogue within the act."<sup>2</sup> An arioso refrain with recitative-like passages in the middle constituted the form, and the whole aria was accompanied by the basso continuo, with the exception of the opening and closing ritornellos which were played by the orchestra. This recitative-aria pairing became standard in Italian opera at the time as well, but Italian arias were not only accompanied by basso continuo as in Lully's method. Lully's metered recitative was heavily rhythmic and would often switch meter in accord with the accents of the texts, as French lacks a "tonic" accent and has irregular phrasing. This is in opposition to Italy's extremely accented and easily adaptable language, leading to the differences in recitative form. The strong pulse invented by Lully supported the recitative and allowed for a smooth flow between recitative dialogue and arioso exclamations for one or more text phrases. Also owing to the French language and differing in the Italian opera approach is the reduction of vocal ornamentation. Unlike Italian arias, often melismatic or replete

with ornamentations, sometimes even improvised, of entire melodic phrases, the French vocal ornaments are pointillistic. Stemming from the lute repertoire, only individual notes were ornamented, not runs or scales.

Perhaps most importantly, Lully's invention of the French overture separates the French and Italian opera approach. The French overture is one movement in two repeated sections (thus in a large binary form based on dance form) and originally purposed as music to accompany the King and his family during their entrance to the theater. An example is Lully's 1686 Overture to *Armide*, in which the first section is in duple meter, refined and impressive in nature, adorned with dotted rhythms and chordal homophony, and begins in I and ends in V. True to binary form, this section repeats. The 2<sup>nd</sup> section then expands to triple meter, employs imitative texture and a faster, more dance-like tempo. Beginning in V (as the first section concludes in V), it moves through a subdominant harmony to V7 (catalyzing the return to the tonic). Then, the cadence to the tonic from V7 returns to duple-meter and the style of the opening section, before section B repeats with pointillistic ornamentation. This overture differed from the Italian approach because, if an overture was employed in Italian opera around this time, the Italian Overture was known as a *sinfonia* and was in three movements (fast-slow-fast). It was not dance-like or in binary form. Further, three movements are unified motivically, and very underdeveloped and short in length, as exemplified in Scarlatti's 1721 overture to *Griselda*.

Jean Philippe Rameau (1683-1764) developed the French opera tradition firmly established by Lully and took it to new heights, inevitably disobeying some of the "rules" Lully meticulously put into place. Formerly an organist and theorist before becoming an

established opera composer, Rameau employed his intense, new and groundbreaking theory understanding in his operas, most notably 1733's *Hippolyte et Aricie*. Rameau furthered Lully's original conception of opera as a *tragedie lyrique en musique* by incorporating the Italian da capo aria form along with Lully's older Rondeau aria form, which helped add to the expressive (and thus, tragic) element of the opera, which Lully wished for. However, Rameau also incorporated much more dissonance, a more active orchestra (larger and with independent brass and woodwinds parts as well as accompaniments to both arias and recitatives), a more contrapuntal style, and occasionally Italian style ornamentation. All these factors combined to, according to the conservative French Lullistes, ruin the drama by overpowering the text. One must recall that the French considered music to be first and foremost a form of entertainment. Despite these clearly Italian influences Rameau soaked his opera in, he did remain faithful to Lully's original conception. This is because *Hippolyte et Aricie* used metered recitative, consisted of 5 acts with a prologue (albeit one relevant to the opera's story, while Lully's were only showy reverent celebrations of the King) and was a "tragedie lyrique en musique." Further, the drama was given priority, and a ballet divertissement existed in every act. His criticized overabundance of music existed, according to Rameau, to *support* the drama of the text, not to undermine it as the Lullistes misunderstood. It was "just that Rameau was far more emotionally involved in the story than Lully seemed to have been and music was needed to support the passionate emotions of the drama."<sup>2</sup>

Thus, Rameau's Italian influences are what most sharply demarcate his opera approach from Lully's. His use of the Italian da capo aria, mixed in with Lully's developments or ariettes and airs, can be found in *Hippolyte et Aricie*'s finale of Act IV.

Directly preceding the intense action of a monster rising from the sea, a da capo aria in D major takes place, upping the ante of emotional drama. This finale of sorts before the real actions begins is led up to by the more light-hearted Lully developments beginning with a chorus followed by dance songs (“ariettes”), minuet I, then minuet II (“Trio”). It’s worth also noting that the leading up to the da capo aria features full orchestral accompaniment in the first minuet, another non-Lully characteristic. Thus, Rameau furthered Lully’s conception of opera as a *tragedie lyrique en musique* by importing the Italian influences of da capo arias, dissonant chords, more ornamentation, a fuller orchestra that accompanied arias, and a more contrapuntal style. However, Rameau remained faithful to Lully’s approach by continuing to use *rondeau continuo* arias, mythological subject matter, metered recitative, ballet *divertissements*, and Lully’s format of prologue and 5 acts.