

HISTORY OF WESTERN MUSIC I

MUS 3314-1

Dr. Tony Mowrer

Chapter 10

Opera and Vocal Music in the Late 17th Century

p. 323

Principal Italian Opera was in Venice. There, the aria reigned supreme. The significance of the Italian aria was found in the music, not the text. There are several different types of aria that may be identified by the type of musical forms they emulate. Note the types mentioned on pp. 324, 325. An aria accompanied by harpsichord and bass was the *continuo aria*.

The Neopolitan Style

The *Neopolitan Style* originated in Naples and was a move in opera that was more concerned with the solo melody and with elegance and external effectiveness than with dramatic truth. Additionally, from this style emerged two distinct types of recitative.

Recitativo secco---included only continuo accompaniment

Recitativo obbligato---included orchestral accompaniment

Recitativo arioso (arioso)---an arialike recitative

The *Da Capo Aria* also develops. The form is ABA.

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France---p. 328

Italian opera was accepted by the European countries except France. They developed their own opera in the 1670's. French opera included two peculiar characteristics.

1. Ballet
2. Classical French tragedy

The first French composer to succeed with French opera was Jean Baptiste Lully (1632-1687). Lully was an Italian who moved to Paris. In time, he became the musical dictator of France. He was able to blend the two characteristics. The style he created became known as *Trag* die Lyrique*.

The French language posed difficulties for composers. Lully found ways to get around those difficulties. His recitative shifted back and forth between duple and triple. This was called *r* citatif simple*. He also included an arialike section. Recitative that did include such a section would be called *r* citative mesur**.

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The Overture---p. 332

The *ouverture* (the French Overture) introduced opera and other large composite works. Its aim was to create a festive atmosphere for the opera to follow and to welcome the King. It had at least two sections. The first section was slow and homophonic and the second section was quick and fugal. Frequently, there would be a third section in slow, homophonic style.

The Italian equivalent to the overture was the *sinfonie*.

English opera had a modest beginning. It started as a way to avoid a ban on stage plays. The important composers were John Blow and Henry Purcell. The English were masters of compromise. Blow (1649-1708) combined Italian, French, and English preferences and created what was called a *masque* (seen in *Venus and Adonis*), which is similar to French court Ballet.

Henry Purcell (1659-1695)

Purcell was a pupil of John Blow. His masterpiece, *Dido and Aeneas*, is actually an opera in miniature. The recitatives are free and he has three arias written over a ground bass. Notable of these is the aria, *When I Am Laid to Rest*.

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Most of Purcell's output was incidental music for plays. In some, there is so much music that they are really operas.

After Purcell, the English were more enthused with Italian, French, and German opera than their own. In fact, it is a long time before the English generate their own opera.

Germany---p. 336

In Germany, the usual word for opera was *singspiel*. This was, literally, a play with music. It used spoken dialogue rather than recitative. *Singspiel* remained popular in Germany for many years. It was used by the romantics.

Cantata and Song---p. 337

The *cantata* first consisted of several short contrasting sections. Later, a pattern of alternating arias and recitative developed. It was for a soloist and accompaniment. The text was on love or some dramatic narrative. It was to be performed in a small room without scenery.

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Noted *cantata* composers included:

Carrissimi
Rossi
Cesti
Legrenzi
Stradella
A. Scarlatti

Allessandro Scarlatti wrote more than 600 cantatas. He used a wide harmonic range, including the diminished 7th in modulations. Note p. 339.

Vocal Chamber Music---pp. 338, 339

The *Vocal Chamber Duet* was for two, equal, high voices over continuo.

The *Seranata* was sort of a mixture of opera and cantata, taking advantage of elements of both.

The *Catch* was an English round or canon to be sung a cappella. The texts were humorous, sometimes with ribald or obscene allusions---double entendre.

Church Music and Oratorio---p. 340

Oratorio

Oratorio was intended for sacred concerts and served as a substitute for opera during Lent. It was performed in church and in the courts. *Oratorio Vulgare* became more prevalent than the Latin version.

French Church Music

French church music was largely an assimilation of Italian and French elements. One leader of French Church music was Charpentier. He wrote many oratorios. In these, the chorus was important.

Composers for the royal chapel of the King wrote cantatas which were similar to the secular cantata. They also wrote more elaborate motets for soloists, double choruses, and full orchestra. These were multi-sectional and had tempo and meter changes. This style was called *Grands Motets*. Grand they were as they employed large forces of singers and players.

Regarding other music for the Church, the English preferred anthems while the pietists opposed any kind of high art. This left the Lutherans. The golden age of Lutheran Music was from 1650-1750. The *chorale* had begun its development much earlier and came to have evenly measured phrases with a fermata closing each phrase.

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Lutheran Church Cantata

This was introduced by Erdmann Neumeister who introduced poetic texts that dwell on the scripture texts. He blended the subjective with the objective in a spiritual sense. Neumeister wrote cycles of the Church Cantata for the Church Year. He used the madrigal style and included the chorale, solo, and concerted medium. The greatest master of the Church Cantata was J.S. Bach. Other important composers were:

J.P. Krieger

J. Kuhnau

F. Zachow

G.P. Telemann

The Passion---p. 355

Historia was a musical setting based on a biblical narrative. *Historia* were more important than the oratorio. The *Passion* was the most important *historia*. The *Passion* was later referred to as *Oratorio Passion*. This was an oratorio with the *Passion* as a subject. The text is usually taken from only one account of the *passion* story rather than a mixture of the gospels.

The Sacred Concerto was a solo aria based on a biblical text. There were different types of the Sacred Concerto.

1. Arias only or arias and chorus in the concertato medium
2. Chorales only in the concertato medium
3. Arias and chorales in either simple or concertato form.