

## Chapter 8: Music in Italy, Germany, France, and England: 1600–1740

### I. Introduction

- A. During the seventeenth century, musical styles spread from one country to another while also connected to local traditions, values, and history.
- B. In Italy, new vocal styles gained popularity: opera, oratorio, and cantata.
- C. In France, Jean-Baptiste Lully produced *tragédie lyrique* (lyric tragedy) in resistance to the spread of Italian opera).
- D. The English favored musical entertainments such as masques and semi-opera.

### II. The rise of instrumental music

- A. The seventeenth century saw the rise of purely instrumental music and the ascendance of composers dedicated to writing it.
  - 1. Differing political circumstances and artistic traditions in Italy, France, Spain, Germany, and England are reflected in the music of each country.

### III. Master organists: Frescobaldi and Sweelinck

- A. Formal plans that did not depend on a text allowed instrumental music to expand to substantial compositions.
- B. Written examples demonstrated what a virtuoso performer could do in improvisation.
  - 1. The music of Girolamo Frescobaldi is a good example of how this works.
    - a) Two genres associated with him are the *toccata* and *partite*.
    - b) His partite, or variations, were inventive works that evince years of improvisation.
  - 2. Jan Pieterszoon Sweelinck was another famous composer chiefly known for improvisation.

### IV. The chorale partita and chorale concerto

- A. Sweelinck taught a number of Germans, and his interest in variations carried through in the genre known as chorale variations.
  - 1. The melody of the chorale is present throughout, but moves into different voices.
  - 2. Polyphonic treatment was one possibility, which became recognized as a genre called chorale partita.
    - a) Sweelinck's pupil, Samuel Scheidt, was an early practitioner of the chorale partita.
  - 3. The Lutheran chorale concerto was a vocal counterpart to the chorale partita that mixed instruments with voices. Two proponents were Michael Praetorius and Johann Hermann Schein.
    - a) Schein was a civil servant who wrote sacred and secular music.
    - b) Praetorius also composed pieces for voices and instruments together, as well as instrumental ensemble music and five treatises.

### V. Germany, the Thirty Years War, and Heinrich Schütz

- A. The Thirty Years War severely weakened Germany as a power. This caused necessary adaptations to the courtly arts, most clearly seen in the career and compositions of Heinrich Schütz (1585–1672).

1. Recognized early as an exceptional singer, Schütz received musical training in Kassel.
  2. In 1609, the man who had discovered Schütz's talent enabled the composer to travel to Italy to study with Giovanni Gabrieli.
- B. Schütz returns to a Germany at war
1. After a second trip to Italy, Schütz returned to war-torn Germany.
  2. With many of his musicians drafted in the army and budgets thinned, he turned to a leaner style, seen in his *Kleine geistliche Concerte*.
  3. With the peace treaty signed in 1648, Schütz's patron became one of the most powerful Protestant princes in Germany, and as a consequence, Schütz's fortunes improved.
- VI. Italian oratorio and cantata
- A. Carissimi: oratorio and cantata
1. The chief Italian composer of oratorios during Schütz's lifetime was Giacomo Carissimi.
  2. Carissimi taught many foreigners, including Christoph Bernhard and Marc-Antoine Charpentier.
  3. *Jepthe* is Carissimi's most famous oratorio.
  4. The cantata was the solo successor to the madrigal.
- VII. Barbara Strozzi: performer and composer
- A. The genre of cantata spread to northern Italian cities, such as Bologna and Venice.
- B. In Venice, Barbara Strozzi, a composer who had studied with the opera composer Cavalli, published eight books of madrigals, cantatas, and arias.
1. That she was able to publish so much as a woman testifies to her reputation as a noteworthy composer.
  2. Her *Lagrime mie* is an exemplary cantata.
  3. Special conditions allowed some women throughout music history to pursue careers as composers, but these are mostly the exceptions.
  4. Several women composed in northern Italy during the sixteenth century, but only Maddalena Casulana published.
  5. Slightly later, women such as Strozzi and Francesca Caccini published works in Italian.
- VIII. French opera: *tragédie lyrique*
- A. Musical style in the seventeenth century differed substantially in France from that in Italy.
1. The French determined quality in terms of "taste." Royal authority determined royal taste, which governed all.
  2. Opera took a while to become accepted in France, in part due to a tradition of fine spoken drama. The *dramma per musica* seemed silly and excessive.
- B. The first operas officially presented in France were performed by Italian musicians who were loyal to Cardinal Mazarin.
1. French opera was bound to French politics, which evolved around Louis XIV.
  2. The most important composer of French opera was the Italian Jean Baptiste Lully.

- a) Lully essentially held a monopoly on French opera.
- b) With his royal support, Lully defined an art form and ultimately a national identity.

C. Drama as court ritual: Lully's *Atys*

1. Lully's *tragédie lyrique* was an outward expression of the grandeur and authority of the state.
2. The opening *ouverture* sets the tone with majestic dotted rhythms, followed by a section in a different meter that is polyphonic (and imitative). This is called a French overture.
  - a) It includes choral pageantry and suites of dances.
    - (1) The king himself took part in these dances.
  - b) Ceremonial music was accompanied by *Les vingt-quatre violons du Roi*.
    - (1) The scoring was typically for five parts.
3. The lead singers in *tragédie lyrique* were typically actors, not professional singers like castrati, because of the disdain for virtuoso singing.
4. The subject of *Atys* relates a love triangle, and recent research suggests it mirrored an actual situation at court involving the king, the queen, and the future queen.
5. The soliloquy beginning the third act illustrates Lully's adherence to speech patterns, eschewing elaborate vocal display.
6. Dance remains an important element. The middle of this act contains a famous sleep scene, based on dancelike phrases, which moves from pleasant and dreamy to scary. The orchestral and chorus paint a picture of a nightmare.

D. Jean-Philippe Rameau

1. The operas of Lully's greatest successor, Rameau, followed many aspects of the older composer's works.
2. Rameau's style is not drastically different from that of Lully, simply more of each element: richer harmony, sumptuous sonority, thicker texture, rhythmically and rhetorically more heroic, and a mastermind of genre.
3. Rameau's complexity was not welcomed by all Frenchmen, and tensions arose in the press on each side (Lully vs. Rameau).
4. Nonetheless, Rameau was seen as Lully's successor and the primary composer of French operatic style.
5. Later in the century, the *Querelle des Bouffons* caused debate over the suitability of Italian opera in France and which style was better.

IX. "Agréments" and "doubles": The art of ornamentation

- A. The French style of *agréments* can be clearly demonstrated in the instrumental works of François Couperin.
- B. A gigue from his fourteenth *ordre* (set, longer than a suite) makes a nice comparison for Bach's French Suite in G Major.
- C. Couperin's piece is not called "gigue," even though it is in the meter for a gigue. It is a character piece, and Couperin's musical markings direct it to be tender.

- D. Couperin used specifically composed embellishments.
- X. English music: masques and consort music
  - A. Like the French, English audiences preferred spoken drama to Italian opera.
  - B. They also disliked virtuoso vocal display.
    - 1. The chief theatrical entertainment of the Jacobean period was the *masque*.
    - 1. Instrumental music was valued highly in England. Jacobean consort music was among the earliest instrumental chamber music.
    - 2. At the Restoration of Charles II, French music became the dominant influence on the English court because Charles had spent his exile in France.
    - 3. Restoration culture thrived on luxurious living, often to the point of licentiousness.
    - 4. Theaters were revived, and productions contained many musical numbers.
      - a) Restoration masques were more elaborate than earlier ones.
      - b) Some interludes even had their own plots, almost to the point of being one-act operas.
      - c) These semi-operas were essentially *tragédies lyriques* or *comédies-ballets* (depending on the subject) adapted to English tastes.
  - C. Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas*
    - 1. Purcell was a musical genius who wrote for all genres available to him.
    - 2. He was organist at Westminster Abbey and the Chapel Royal, for which he composed.
    - 3. He also wrote for the theatre.
    - 4. *Dido and Aeneas* is his only stage work meant to be sung throughout.
    - 5. The plot for *Dido and Aeneas* comes from Virgil's *Aeneid*.
      - a) English is difficult to set to music because the accentuation patterns do not lend themselves to music.
      - b) *Dido and Aeneas* is a synthesis of Italian and French styles.
      - c) Group activities (dances, choruses, instrumental numbers) are French.
      - d) Solo singing is Italianate (including recitatives and madrigalisms).
    - 6. It includes three pieces set to ground basses, for which Purcell had a particular affinity.
    - 7. Dido's *Lament*, a famous aria at the end of the work, is based on the descending tetrachord, encountered earlier in Monteverdi's music.
    - 8. Purcell's stage music was soon forgotten, not rediscovered until the nineteenth century.