The HIGH BAROQUE:

George Frederic HANDEL

(1685-1759)
George Frederic HANDEL

Born and dying in the same year as J. S. Bach, Handel’s career is the opposite of Bach’s: Handel is cosmopolitan while Bach is essentially provincial.

Handel achieves the pinnacle of success through his operas and later his instrumental music and oratorios for the English public.
Handel was a great keyboard virtuoso and improviser, and composed rapidly, though he frequently revised works.

Handel often "stole" ideas, both from himself and others. However, his "borrowings" are so often transformed beyond their origins as to make the whole modern concept of "idea theft" problematic.
George Frederic HANDEL

1706-10—travels in Italy:
Florence, Venice, Naples and Rome

Write cantatas in Rome for Cardinal Ruspoli, including the oratorio
*The Resurrection of Jesus* (1708) with a 45-piece orchestra lead by Corelli.

Handel’s travels to Italy are the musically shaping force of career.
In 1710 he is appointed Kapellmeister to Georg of Hanover, but goes to London “on leave” to pursue the writing of opera, such as *Rinaldo* in 1711.

Ordered back to Hanover in 1712, but goes to London again in 1713.
George Frederic HANDEL

In 1714 Georg, the Elector of Hanover becomes George I of England

Handel writes the “Water Music” for George I in 1717, and in 1721 is appointed Composer of the Chapel Royal
While gaining success as opera composer in England, by the late 1720s the English public is beginning to weary of the “foreign” Italian opera.
Handel continues to write opera, and in 1724 premiere of *Giulio Cesare in Egitto*. In early 1730s begins to write oratorios, as well as orchestral concertos for performances between acts of the oratorios.
George Frederic HANDEL

1737 Handel suffers a stroke

1741 premiere of his oratorio *The Messiah* in Dublin as a benefit for a charitable institution.

*The Messiah* is a flop in London, and not successful until the year of Handel’s death.
George Frederic HANDEL

1743 Handel has another stroke.

1749 *The Royal Fireworks Music*

1751 Glaucoma and cataracts cause Handel to lose his sight

Dies in 1759
George Frederic HANDEL

Life-size statue of Handel (1738) commissioned by entrepreneur Jonathan Tyers, who ran Spring Gardens at Vauxhall in London, from François Roubillac.

Since public life-size marble statues of living subjects were until this date undertaken only for monarchs, noblemen or military leaders, this figure made a considerable impact at the time.
Handel’s main musical venue was OPERA SERIA usually referred to as “drama per musica”

Dominant musical and theatrical form in Europe in the eighteenth century.
OPERA SERIA

The writer Apostolo ZENO (1668-1750) sets the style for 3-act libretti rather than the classical 5 acts.
Pietro METASTASIO (1698-1782), The most influential dramatic poet of the 18th century.
METASTASIO writes 27 librettos that are set into over 800 operas.
OPERA SERIA

Requirements of the OPERA SERIA LIBETTO

“THE THREE UNITIES”
Action should be limited to a single plot.

UNITY of ACTION
The action should take place within a short period of time, preferably 24 hours.

UNITY of TIME
The action takes place in **locations** that can be traveled to in the space of 24 hours

**UNITY of PLACE**
There is normally one set change in the middle of each act.
OPERA SERIA

Subject matter generally from ANCIENT HISTORY (Greeks and Romans) which is preferred to fables or myths.
“Good taste” rejects TRAGEDY as unworthy of the civilized state.

Librettists were expected to portray what SHOULD have happened rather than what actually DID happen.
DEATH onstage should be avoided

If that is impossible, it should be handled with dignity
The topic of **SUICIDE & DEATH in BATTLE** could be tolerated,

but **MURDER** could not.
Handel used three types of subject matter:

HISTORY (*Giulio Cesare*)

CHIVALRIC ROMANCE (*Rinaldo*)

CLASSICAL MYTH (*Deidamia*)
OPERA SERIA

Plots involve 8 or so characters whose entrances and exits are regulated so that the stage was never empty except between acts.
OPERA SERIA

Heroes and Heroines:
Usually 2 Pairs of Lovers
(female/male soprano and alto)

Prima Donna & Primo Uomo
Seconda Donna & Secondo Uomo
OPERA SERIA

Patriarchal Figures of Kings, Fathers, Generals (bass)

and Confidants & Servants (all voice types)
Act III ends with everyone on stage, to celebrate the *lieto fine* with a *duet* for the principal couple, followed by a *chorus* sung by all the characters.
OPERA SERIA

Libretto of the opera written in *free verse* for **RECITATIVE** for the **action of the plot**.
“Attendi
Cesare in disparte: indi lo guida.
In questi alberghi, e poi lo guida ancora
Colà nelle mie stanze, e a lui dirai
Che, per dargli contezza
Di quanto dal suo Rè gli si contende,
Pria che tramonti il sol Lidia l’attende.”
OPERA SERIA

Emotional moments of reaction or reflection are in *rhymed verse* as a DA CAPO ARIA
“V’adoro pupille,
Saete d’Amore,
Le vostre faville
Son grate nel sen:

Pietose vi brama
Il mesto mio core,
Ch’ogn’ora vi chiama
L’amato suo ben.”
V’adoro pupille,
Saete d’Amore,
Le vostre faville
Son grate nel sen:

Pietose vi brama
Il mesto mio core,
Ch’ogn’ora vi chiama
L’amato suo ben.”
When a character sings a Da Capo aria, the character MUST LEAVE THE STAGE

“EXIT ARIA”
OPERA SERIA

The general format is RECITATIVE...ARIA

But...
recitatives can follow recitatives,
and
arias can be back to back.
The DA CAPO aria is TERNARY form A-B-A Based on two sections of poetry
DA CAPO ARIA

A  V’adoro pupille,
    Saete d’Amore,
    Le vostre faville
    Son grate nel sen:

B  Pietose vi brama
    Il mesto mio core,
    Ch’ogn’ora vi chiama
    L’amato suo ben.

*Da capo al Fine*
DA CAPO ARIA

‘A’ text stated 2 times before ‘B’ section

| A A’ | B |

da capo
The B section may embody a CHANGE of AFFECT with a different key, contrasting style, different meter, different tempo.
The B section was often more lightly accompanied (B. C. only) ending on a HALF CADENCE in preparation for a return (da capo) to the tonic key of opening ritornello.
GIULIO CESARE (1724)

Libretto: Nicola Francesco HAYM
Based on Giacomo Francesco BUSSANI

First Performance:
King’s Theatre, Haymarket, London
February 20, 1724
GIULIO CESARE (1724)

CAST:

GIULIO CESARE | alto castrato | Senesino
CLEOPATRA     | soprano      | Francesca Cuzzoni
CORNELIA      | contralto    | Anastasia Robinson
SESTO         | soprano      | Margherita Durastanti
TOLOMEO       | alto castrato| Gaetano Berenstadt
ACHILLA       | bass         | Giuseppe Maria Boschi
NIRENO        | alto castrato| Giuseppe Bigonzi
CURIO         | bass         | John Lagarde
GIULIO CESARE (1724)

OVERTURE:

French Overture
Minuet
Chorus “Viva il nostro Alcide!”
GIULIO CESARE (1724)

Giulio Cesare: 
“Presti omai l’ Egizia terra”
GIULIO CESARE (1724)

Giulio Cesare:
“Presti omai l’ Egizia terra”

CAVATINA
(‘A’ section of a Da Capo Aria)
GIULIO CESARE (1724)

SECCO RECITATIVE

Giulio Cesare, et al:
“Curio, Cesare venne…”
GIULIO CESARE (1724)

DA CAPO ARIA

Giulio Cesare:
“Empio, dirò tu sei”

‘RAGE’ ARIA
‘EXIT’ ARIA
GIULIO CESARE (1724)

DUET

Cornelia, Sesto:
“Son nata a lagrimar”
GIULIO CESARE (1724)

RECITATIVE - DA CAPO ARIA

Giulio Cesare, Cleopatra:
“Dov’è, Niren, l’anima mia?”
“V’adoro pupille”
GIULIO CESARE (1724)

RECITATIVE - DA CAPO ARIA

Recitative: “Dov’è, Niren, dov’è?”
Sinfonia, section 1 [ritornello to aria]

Recitative interruption: “Cieli, e qual delle sfere”
Sinfonia, section 2 [ritornello to aria]

Recitative interruption: “Giulio, che miri?”
Aria ‘A’: “V’ adoro pupille”
Aria ‘B’: “Pietose vi brami”

Recitative interruption: “Non ha in cielo”
Aria ‘A’: “V’ adoro pupille”
GIULIO CESARE (1724)

ACCOMPANIED RECITATIVE DA CAPO ARIA

Cleopatra, Giulio Cesare:
“Voi, che mie fide ancelle”
“Da tempeste il legno infranto”
GIULIO CESARE (1724)

LIETO FINE:
Duet & Chorus

Cleopatra, Giulio Cesare & Cast:
“Caro! Bella! Più amabile beltà”
“Ritorni omai nel nostro core”
WRITE an OPERA SERIA

Three Unities of

ACTION
TIME
PLACE

Decorum on VIOLENCE
WRITE an OPERA SERIA

STAR WARS

Combattimento dell’Astri
WRITE an OPERA SERIA
WRITE an OPERA SERIA