

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.

George Frederic HANDEL

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

George Frederic HANDEL

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

George Frederic HANDEL

While gaining success as opera composer
in England,
by the late 1720s the English public
is beginning to weary of
the “foreign” Italian opera.

George Frederic HANDEL

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.

OPERA SERIA

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



*Apostolus Zenus
Venetus Nob. Cretensis,
Historicus & Poeta Caesaris.*

The writer
Apostolo ZENO
(1668-1750)
sets the style for
3-act libretti
rather than the
classical **5 acts**

OPERA SERIA



Pietro
METASTASIO
(1698-1782),
The most
influential
dramatic poet of
the 18th century.

OPERA SERIA

METASTASIO

writes 27 librettos

that are set into over

800 operas

OPERA SERIA

Requirements of the
OPERA SERIA LIBETTO

“THE THREE UNITIES”

OPERA SERIA

Action should be limited to
a single plot.

UNITY of ACTION

OPERA SERIA

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

UNITY of TIME

OPERA SERIA

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

UNITY of PLACE

OPERA SERIA

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.

OPERA SERIA

“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.

OPERA SERIA

DEATH onstage should be avoided

If that is impossible,
it should be handled with dignity

OPERA SERIA

The topic of **SUICIDE &
DEATH** in **BATTLE**
could be tolerated,

but **MURDER** could not.

OPERA SERIA

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)

OPERA SERIA

Act III ends
with **everyone on stage**,
to celebrate the *lieto fine*
with a **DUET** for the principal couple,
followed **CHORUS**
sung by all the characters

OPERA SERIA

Libretto of the opera written in
free verse for **RECITATIVE**
for the **action** of the plot.

OPERA SERIA

“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

OPERA SERIA

“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.”

OPERA SERIA

“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**.”

OPERA SERIA

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.

DA CAPO ARIA

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



DA CAPO ARIA

The **B section** may embody a

CHANGE of AFFECT

with a different key,
contrasting style,
different meter,
different tempo

DA CAPO ARIA

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

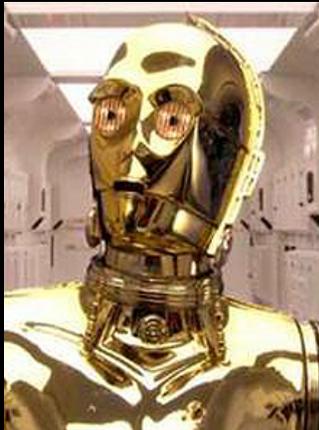
PLACE

Decorum on VIOLENCE

WRITE an OPERA SERIA

STAR
Combattimento dell'Astri
WAR

WRITE an OPERA SERIA



WRITE an OPERA SERIA

