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LEWIS W. GORDON

THE ODES OF HENRY PURCELL

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Editorial Note

The era of Henry Purcell, greatest composer of the Restoration, observed a three-fold division in music by distinguishing between the styles for church, theater, and chamber. The latter did not mean "chamber music" in the sense in which it is understood today but rather music composed for the princely chamber, the court.

In trying to give due recognition to the choral music of Purcell as one of the most significant contributions to the entire literature, we have attempted to follow this authoritative division by issuing individual studies dealing with the three respective segments of Purcell's work. His choral music for the church has been discussed in *The Anthems of Henry Purcell* by Franklin B. Zimmermann (Vol. XIII, Nos. 3 and 4, 1971); his choral music for the theater, in "Choral Music in Purcell's Dramatic Works" by Leonard Rumery (Vol. XXVI, No. 1, 1984); and his choral music for the court is the subject of this issue. In rounding out the picture of Purcell as a choral composer with a volume devoted to his odes, the survey extends into a domain which the seventeenth-century classification had not yet recognized: civic ceremony; and it is in the odes written for civic occasions that the genre received its finest works by Purcell. But while his last Cecilian ode shows the composer at his best, the sequence of his court odes offers a valuable account of the development that led his choral music to this level of mastery.

— A. M.

Origins

The musical ode of the Baroque era arose through a growing demand for celebration and pageantry which the literary ode could not fully satisfy. Yet the musical settings were necessarily dominated by the content and form of their texts, and a knowledge of the development of the literary form is essential to a fuller understanding of its musical counterpart.

The English literary ode was a product of the Elizabethan period and, like so many other artistic expressions of the time, reflects the Renaissance ideal of emulating Greek models. Two basic forms developed. The Greater or Pindaric ode, guided by a rather complicated metrical structure, was based on a strict strophic pattern designated as a triad. Each triad, in turn, consisted of a strophe and an antistrophe, similar in their arrangement of lines and metric feet and followed by a contrasting epode. The odes varied in length from one to many triads; however, most of them were on a large scale, exalted and impersonal in tone.

Few of the English poets proved equal to mastering the form, and during the first half of the seventeenth century Ben Jonson was apparently the only one to write successful examples.

> Jonson was the earliest Englishman to succeed in this; and he was also the only one to do so until the time of Congreve's effort some seventy-five years later.[1]

The Lesser or Horacian ode conversely had no set form but rather emphasized individual content. Constructed in comparatively simple meter, this more popular ode was distinguished by a certain lightness and polish. Though more intimate in nature, it maintained a measure of formality.

By the time musical odes began to gain importance, a hybrid form of literary ode had been established. In his *Miscellanies* of 1656, Abraham Cowley had presented several of Pindar's poems in what might best be described as pseudo-Pindaric style. Possibly unaware of the true structure of the Pindaric ode, Cowley inadvertently established a fashionable trend favored for over a century.[2] What he had created was a genre that, while

[1]Robert Shafer, *The English Ode to 1660* (Princeton: University Press, 1918), p. 106.

[2]See John F. Heath-Stubbs, *The Ode* (London: Oxford University Press, 1969), p. 40, "It would appear that Cowley was unaware of the true structure of the Pindaric ode."

comprising technical finesse by allowing for variation within stanzas of equal length, maintained the pomp and sweep characteristic of the Greater ode.

Various early forms foreshadow the genre of the musical ode proper. The earliest English example is a welcome song by Orlando Gibbons, "Do not repine, fair sun," composed in 1617 for the arrival of King James I in Edinburgh. In commenting on this work's form, Percy Young speaks of "a cross between a verse-anthem and a May-day madrigal."[3] Thomas Nabbes's "A Presentation Intended for the Prince his Highness on his Birthday, the 29 of May, 1638, annually celebrated" is a masque, composed for the eighth birthday of Charles II. The text of Nicholas Lanier's "A Pastorall Song, to the King on Newyearsday, Anno Domini 1663" (the music of which has not survived) suggests a simple song.

Matthew Locke has been credited with creating the prototype of the musical ode in his New Year's song of 1666, "All things their certain periods have."[4] This rather simple composition, in which verses alternate between one- and two-part settings before leading into a choral refrain, soon was followed, however, by the more sophisticated works of Henry Cooke, Pelham Humfrey, and John Blow, whose writings reflect the important impetus the development of the court ode was to receive through the restoration of King Charles II in 1680. Characteristic of a new, national fervor, the ode became identified with courtly festivities and took on a popularity that was to continue for approximately one hundred and fifty years.

English court odes were composed primarily to honor the incumbent monarch; only occasionally were they written for the queen consort or the younger members of royalty. Birthday and New Year's odes enjoyed the longest and most prolific history, whereas Welcome songs, usually celebrating the return of the king to London from a journey or summer residence, are found with some regularity only during the period 1680–87; they reappeared later (during the reign of William III) for isolated occasions.

The Cecilian ode honoring the patron saint of music, while beholden to the development of earlier court odes in structure, had its own history. Records indicate Cecilian odes were performed annually, with few exceptions, from before 1683 until 1703.[5] From 1684 on, their performances took place invariably on November 22 — St. Cecilia's Day — at Stationer's Hall, London. Probably from 1693 to 1703 annual performances were preceded by a special service held at St. Bride's Church, Fleet Street,

[3]Percy M. Young, *A History of British Music* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1967), p. 175.

[4]See Young's discussion, *Ibid.*, pp. 244–5.

[5]See John Hanley, *Music in Purcell's London* (London: Dennis Dobson, 1968), p. 116.

London. The performances invariably met with the greatest response, and "there is no doubt that they filled a very noteworthy place in the musical life of London."[6]

If royalty had its commemorative celebrations, so did the citizenry. Incidental odes were at times composed for school anniversaries or annual feasts, celebrated by such organizations as the Ironmongers' Company, and often the best composers, poets, and musicians were employed to write and perform them.[7]

The musical form of the ode actually developed from the sacred verse anthem, and it followed a similar pattern of growth. The Puritan suppression of church music had caused an estrangement from the earlier contrapuntal style that carried over into the Restoration period.

> . . . the interregnum had done its work; it was not now possible for a church composer to revive the secret of the old style.[8]

And so it was that, with the adoption of the concerted style, Charles II's interest in French court music produced a secularized anthem style at the Chapel Royal; it was described as "Frenchified" especially because of its Lullian overture and orchestral ritornelli.[9]

The new verse anthem, influenced above all by Italian opera, proved to be a logical vehicle for ode texts.

> Whether or not the King actually instituted the custom of composing odes, his approval of the anthems will have recommended that form for the ode.[10]

Yet the ode maintained its independence. Anthem texts, usually taken from the Book of Psalms, were treated so that each verse represented a distinct musical section. Repetition of text was uncommon. On the other hand, ode texts, usually at least twice as long, demanded an arrangement of sections that would accommodate entire stanzas in which concluding lines were often repeated for dramatic effect.

Of greater importance were other deviations from the style of the anthem. Wind instruments, especially trumpets, were often added to the

[6]Ernest Walker, *History of Music in England,* 3rd ed., revised by J. A. Westrup (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1952), p. 178.

[7]See Hanley's discussion of such celebrations in *Music in Purcell's London,* pp. 113–4.

[8]Walker, *History of Music in England,* p. 175. In the works of Blow and Purcell, the polyphonic anthem was to see a magnificent revival.

[9]See Franklin B. Zimmerman, "The Anthems of Henry Purcell," *American Choral Review,* Vol. XIII, No. 3, July, 1971, p. 7.

[10]Rosamond McGuiness, *English Court Odes: 1660–1820* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971), p. 78. The remark refers in particular to the court odes written by Henry Cooke for Charles II.

basic string ensemble to heighten the festive character. Solo songs played a larger role as a declamatory means for extolling the monarch's virtues. And choruses, while usually more massive, were set in a simpler chordal style.

> . . . even with the fusion of God and King, God commanded greater dignity of expression. There was no reason why the composers should trouble themselves in writing intricately woven contrapuntal choruses of distinguished musical merit when the massive sound of simple chordal ones accompanied by instruments or ones with a minimum of imitation would serve their end as effectively.[11]

Thus, odes were apt to represent a lesser musical quality. But a fundamental reason is the quality of the texts themselves. Eulogizing the history of England as well as the principle of absolute monarchy, poetry often disintegrated into purely obsequious writing. Only welcome songs and especially the Cecilian ode showed a higher caliber.

The musical ode finally reached a marked level of excellence in the works of John Blow and Henry Purcell. Following the tradition of earlier Chapel Royal composers, these most famous of Henry Cooke's "boys" were closely associated in their work. Each was influenced by the other in effecting modifications and developments of the ode form. Both enhanced the role of the solo ensemble and perfected the virtuoso song. But it was Purcell who raised the ode to perfection. His odes, like his anthems, reveal consistent artistic growth, unmarred by their perfunctory purpose. Each new ode reflects continuous progress in integrating a flawlessly delineated text into a complex combination of interwoven movements. Most notable in the development of the Purcellian ode is the emergence of the composer's individuality and his command of a large-scale musical form.

[11] *Ibid.*, p. 80.

General Characteristics

Between 1680 and 1695 Henry Purcell composed one or even several odes per year (the only exception was the politically turbulent year of 1688). Of all the musical genres to which Purcell devoted his work, the ode was the only one to receive consistent attention throughout the entire span of his artistic productivity. Seventeen of the twenty-five odes attributed to Purcell were for the court.[12] Their numbers, listed by category, are as follows:

10 Birthday odes

6 Welcome songs

4 Odes for St. Cecilia's day

4 Incidental odes

1 New Year's composition[13]

With few exceptions, Purcell's odes adhere to a basic format and share common characteristics. They usually begin with a symphony, often in French overture form, and end with a relatively dramatic final chorus. Intermediate sections are given to solos, solo ensembles, choruses, and instrumental ritornelli. While the variety of scoring stresses sectional structure, the composer's intention that sections follow one another without significant pause can be readily gathered. Structural cohesion is also implied by occasional repetition of choruses and by the ritornelli that "round off" various portions of the odes.

Instruments are often used for obbligato parts, and purely instrumental interludes stand in lively contrast to the generally more homophonic choral sections. The total length of Purcell's odes rarely exceeds half an hour; a notable exception is his last ode for St. Cecilia's day, a work that easily doubles that size. The scores of all the odes call for a basic string ensemble of first and second violins with basso continuo, violas being required for all but six of the works. After 1687, trumpets, flutes, and oboes were usually included in the orchestration and used to single out specific movements.

[12]For a discussion of a twenty-sixth ode possibly composed by Purcell when he was about eleven years old, see the beginning of the next chapter.

[13]During Purcell's lifetime the annual New Year's odes were, with few exceptions, composed by John Blow.

Occasionally we find a division into three violin parts or the addition of drums, but here we are dealing with exceptions rather than the rule.

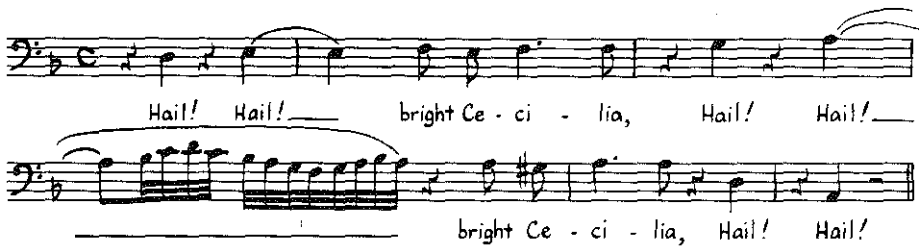
Purcell's vocal forces normally consist of a four-part chorus (SATB), rarely calling for divided parts; in only three compositions does a three-part ensemble serve the function of chorus. In every ode at least two verses are scored for soloists; duets occur with frequency, especially for first and second soprano parts. The composer's choices were obviously based on available singers.

Purcell's odes show a unified harmonic frame, beginning and ending in the same key, often C major or D major. Solo sections are apt to move to various closely related keys. In isolated instances sections are concluded in the relative major or minor key or on the dominant or subdominant.

The symphonies show some of the composer's finest instrumental writing. The allegro sections are based on short subjects suggesting canzona style and treated in free imitation. Eventually Purcell turned entirely to "canzona overtures," a favorite genre of Venetian opera and made up of an introductory slow section in duple meter and a faster section in triple meter. Occasionally there is a larger number of sections. Conclusions are often marked by the repetition of a final phrase or section, or by a pedal point driving to the final cadence. Ritornelli at times grow into lengthy movements, but normally they consist only of a few measures.

Declamatory solo sections serve a narrative role and combine natural stress of text accents with rapid runs and ornaments, especially at phrase endings and in singling out words of dramatic importance (Example 1). Dance-like solo sections, on texts of gaiety and liveliness, naturally favor major keys. Pastoral "ayres" with more lyrical melodies, on the other hand, are usually in minor.

EXAMPLE 1



An important share is allotted to the virtuoso song. It was a welcome vehicle for the skill of the facile soloists of the time, and its chief protagonist was the Reverend John Gostling, Purcell's regular bass soloist after 1684. Most of the odes written during Purcell's last decade contain at least one important bass solo, its florid melody often developed over an instrumental "ground."

The influence of the Italian canzonetta is noticeable in a number of Purcell's duets written in triple meter and ending with phrases in parallel thirds. Chorus, instruments, and soloists occasionally suggest a genuinely antiphonal texture.

While simple basso continuo accompaniment supports most solos and ensembles, fuller instrumental forces are at times added, here as well as in choruses. In the latter, doubling of voices *colla parte* may have been the rule. This assumption seems to be corroborated by the fact that those choruses that do include separate instrumental parts are truly "concerted" with contrasting material for voices and instruments.

Being occasional pieces, Purcell's odes were usually performed only once. A notable exception is the Cecilian ode of 1692, "Hail, bright Cecilia."

> The "Cecilian Ode" of 1692 was frequently performed, and must have been an especial favourite, if we may judge by the numerous manuscript copies of the score still in existence.[14]

The performers were as a rule musicians in the royal service. The singers and instrumentalists were taken from the Chapel Royal; trumpeters and drummers came from the royal regiment's military band. Soloists, whose names can be found on the manuscript scores, were well known at the time as principals in the Chapel Royal. Even the special odes for such events as the annual Yorkshire Feast employed a core of royal musicians, paid by the sponsoring organization for their services. Instrumentalists who played in the nearby inns sometimes augmented the orchestra.

Information about the size of performing forces is not available, but conclusions can be drawn from sacred music performances. Jeremy Noble, in discussing anthem presentations by the Chapel Royal musicians, writes:

> In 1678, when eight boys and sixteen men attended at Windsor, the number of strings was twelve, and this seems a . . . reasonable body for Purcell's four-part writing.[15]

While it is evident that such events as a coronation ceremony would require a substantially larger number, and Purcell's more expansive Cecilian odes probably also employed larger forces, the more intimate court odes, presented in the royal music room, probably involved a group similar to that of the normal anthem performance.

Instrumental ornamentation in Purcell's odes no doubt followed common performance practices of the time. Vocal ornamentation, however,

[14]William H. Cummings, *Purcell* (London: S. Low, 1911), p. 67.

[15]"Purcell and the Chapel Royal," *Henry Purcell: Essays on his Music*, edited by Imogen Holst (London: Oxford University Press, 1959), p. 65.

was quite another matter. Purcell tended to write out his ideas for embellishment rather than rely on the soloists for individual interpretation.

> Much of what looks like an excess of ornamentation in Purcell's vocal music, however, is nothing more than an attempt to render in notation what the voice actually does in practice.[16]

Purcell was, in fact, an accomplished singer who excelled in the art of ornamentation. From the performance of his 1692 ode, "Hail, bright Cecilia," a famous account has come down to us that states, "Tis Nature's voice" (the alto air in the work) "was sung with incredible graces by Mr. Purcell himself."[17]

[16]Arthur K. Holland, *Henry Purcell: The English Musical Tradition* (London: G. Bell and Sons, 1932), p. 121.

[17]*The Gentleman's Journal,* edited by Peter Anthony Motteux, November, 1692, p. 18.

Early Works

In 1679 Henry Purcell succeeded John Blow as organist at Westminster Abbey, and in the following year he assumed the responsibility of composing welcome songs annually for Charles II.[18]

William Cummings has mentioned the existence of an earlier work, possibly written by Purcell, "The Address of the Children of the Chapel Royal to the King, and their Master, Captain Cooke, on his Majesties Birthday, A.D. 1670."[19] The music is not extant, and it has been suggested that Cummings may have confused the work with one of Purcell's later odes.[20] Franklin Zimmerman offers caustic comment on the circumstances that may have surrounded the work:

> Alas! it is lost, and even though this manuscript, if it ever actually existed, may never come to light, it is tempting to speculate that such an address would have been in order, not only to wish the King 'many happy returns of the day,' but to bring to his attention the disgraceful state of the boys' clothing and equipment.[21]

Five welcome songs, marking the King's return to Whitehall after summer holidays in Windsor, Newmarket, or Winchester, were completed before the monarch's death in February, 1685. Four of them, as well as a marriage ode for Princess Anne and Prince George and a welcome song for the Duke of York, may be considered to form a group representing Purcell's initial period of ode composition. All six works are characteristic of an early style in the composer's work.

At this stage of his career, Purcell was not fully experienced in vocal writing, and transitions between different sections seem at times awkward. The greatest problem, however, was in the command of the ceremonious style called for by the genre.

[18]Normally, this task fell to the organist of the Chapel Royal. Percy Scholes offers a possible reason for this exception in his article "Purcell in Praise of Princes," *The Musical Times*, LVI (October, 1915), p. 591. "Perhaps Edward Lowe (then seventy years of age) was failing in health; he died two years later, when Purcell succeeded him."

[19]Cummings, *Purcell*, p. 20.

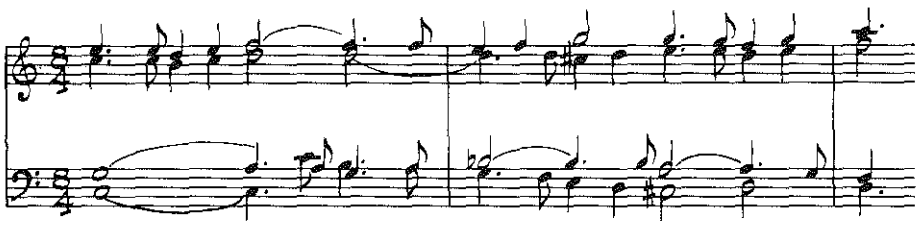
[20]See McGuiness, *English Court Odes*.

[21]Zimmerman, *Henry Purcell*, p. 29.

> The composition of these royal odes involved the acquisition of a more brilliant manner, for which Purcell's training had not fully prepared him.[22]

The composer's first ode for Charles II, "Welcome, viceregent of the mighty King," greeted the monarch on his return to Whitehall from Windsor on September 9, 1680. Here, as in the case of various other odes by Purcell, the poet of the text is unknown. The work is the composer's first conceived on a large scale. Though still representing a formative stage, his competence as an instrumental composer is already in evidence. The beginning of the French overture, for example, though not dramatically related to the rest of the ode, is of high musical interest (Example 2). One is reminded of the string fantasias the composer wrote earlier that summer. The vocal writing, by comparison, seems less confident, whereas the ritornelli are somewhat more demanding in harmony and structure — the composer's special involvement at this point in his career was in instrumental composition.

EXAMPLE 2



With the second welcome song for Charles II, "Swifter, Isis, swifter flow," composed for the King's arrival on October 12, 1681, after a stay at Windsor, we encounter a more substantial work. The text, whose author is again unknown, is superior to most of its kind.[23] For this ode Purcell enlarged his instrumental forces to include flutes, oboes, and third violins. His pleasure in the poet's imagery is particularly evident in the use of canonic imitation to emphasize such words as "follow," "pursue," or "flow."

The opening chorus shows a number of stylistic traits characteristic of Purcell's choral writing. The voices enter in a quasi-fugal manner but settle quickly into a homophonic texture. String writing introduces and ends the

[22]Jack Westrup, *H. Purcell: His Life and Times* (London: Macmillan, 1967), p. 172.

[23]Ralph Vaughan Williams, editor of this ode in the Purcell Society's *Complete Works*, Vol. XV, *Welcome Songs for Charles II and James II*, Pt. I, p. 24, has suggested that Charles II's return was from Newmarket. However, Zimmerman (*Henry Purcell*, p. 292 n.) offers the more logical explanation: "Since the text of the ode and Purcell's setting are concerned with an elaborate metaphor involving the river Isis (the higher reaches of the Thames), a return along the river from Windsor would seem more likely."

chorus, overlapping the first and last measures with independent melodic material and probably doubling the voices in the intervening measures: Purcell wishes to obtain a dramatic effect through grandiloquent openings and conclusions.

In 1682 Purcell composed two odes. The first, "What, what shall be done in behalf of the man?", may well have served a double purpose. Besides functioning as a welcome song for James, Duke of York, who arrived at court from Scotland on May 27, 1682, homage paid to Charles II in the text suggests that the work was also intended to celebrate the monarch's birthday, two days after James's—the future king's—arrival.

It is apparent that the composer chose to experiment with contrasting performance forces throughout this work. The opening vocal movement, which follows an overture with an interesting double fugue, grows in sonority as it moves from solo to duet and trio texture before concluding with a tutti chorus. Several verses ending with repetition of text lead to a rather lengthy passacaglia in which poetic reiteration is underlined by musical repetition. Constant change of vocal and instrumental ensembles results in an unusually active piece, best illustrated by the extended finale. The chorus, first in triple and then in duple meter, alternates with the alto soloist. This is followed by a short ritornello of flutes and violins. Then a twelve-measure soprano duet leads to a concluding chorus consisting of no less than eight sections alternately featuring voices and instruments.

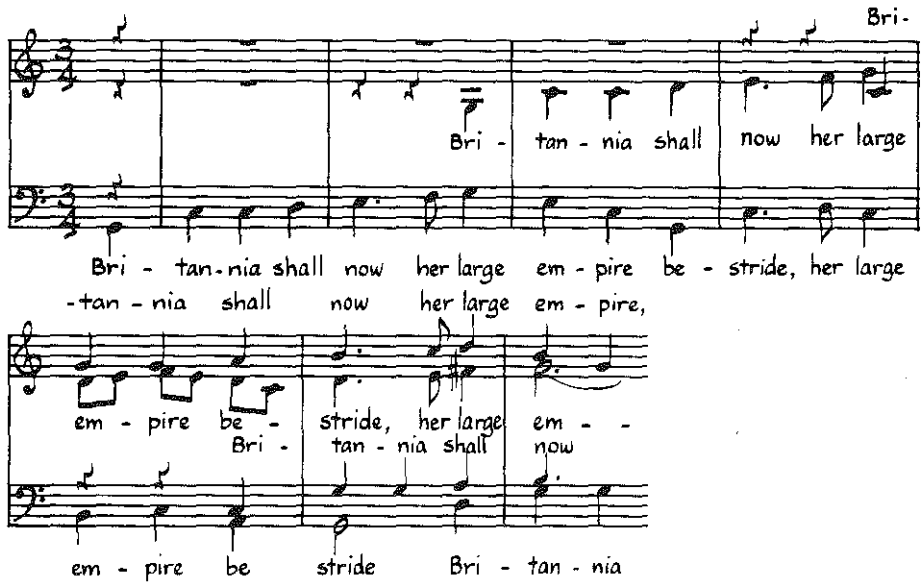
Approximately five months later, the ode "The summer's absence unconcerned we bear" celebrated Charles II's return from summer residence at Newmarket. The text, again by an anonymous author, refers to a growing sentiment among Englishmen in favor of Charles's illegitimate son, the Duke of Monmouth, as successor to the throne. The King's brother James, honored in Purcell's preceding ode, was feared because of his reputation as an avowed Catholic. Bold in its attempt to persuade the monarch to renounce his repudiation of Monmouth, the text declares:

And when late from your throne
Heavn's call you attend,
In peace let your crown on the
next head descend.
Let no sham pretences give birth
to a guilt
Which would injure the blood of
the Martyr was spilt.

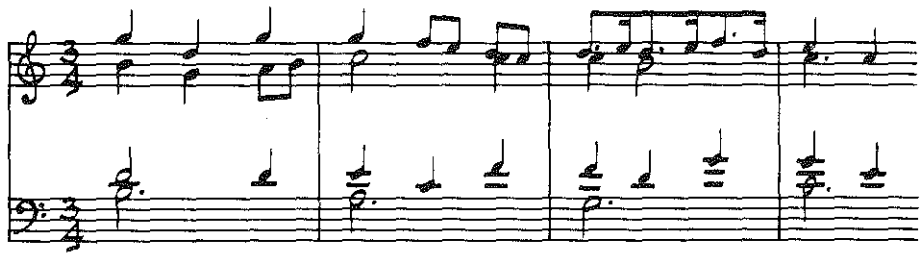
Several details distinguish this ode from the earlier ones. It is the most extensive of Purcell's welcome songs — a French overture, ending with a broad adagio passage, is balanced by a long final chorus, whose weighty character is in keeping with the text (Example 3). The work contains touches of Purcell's best quality. The ritornello after the chorus "Let no

sham pretences here" is highly eloquent with stately dotted rhythms and emphatic sequences (Example 4), and the alto solo "These had by their ill usage drove" presents a genuinely inspired treatment of the text. Its lyrical melody is supported by an undulating eighth-note movement in the bass. A refreshing naturalness of syllabic treatment is maintained throughout, except for a recurring melismatic passage reserved for the phrase "charmed in your soft embraces lay."

EXAMPLE 3



EXAMPLE 4



The year 1683 was Purcell's most prolific year for the composition of odes. Besides the traditional welcome song for Charles II, he wrote two Cecilian odes and one marriage ode. These four compositions represent milestones in Purcell's work in the genre, especially in their blending of declamatory style, polyphonic writing, and melodic originality.

On July 28, 1683, the Bishop of London presided over the ceremony of marriage between Prince George of Denmark and Princess Anne. Purcell's

ode for the occasion shows an emphasis on solos, solo ensembles, and ritornelli rather than on choruses. It is considerably shorter than his other works and requires no particular comment, but the ceremony and performance of the ode must have been highlights of the social season. The anonymous text refers to George's mother country and recent warfare there, and it prophesies a lineage of future kings and queens resulting from the marriage — a prophecy that was not to come true. The princess did become the first incumbent Queen of Great Britain, but because none of her children survived, she was the last Stuart ruler.

Purcell's next ode, another welcome song for Charles II, must have been a more pleasant task for the composer because the text suggested many dramatic possibilities. Performed some time in September, 1683, the ode begins with the exhortation:

> Fly, bold Rebellion, make haste and be gone!
> Victorious in counsel great Charles is returned . . . .

Earlier that year a plot to assassinate the monarch and his brother James on the London road by Rumbold's Rye House in Essex had been uncovered and two of the conspirators were hanged. Popularly referred to as the Rye House Plot, the incident had stirred national sentiment. The text, whose author is again unknown, therefore served in part as a thanksgiving for the King's deliverance from violence.

> Join all to rejoice
> With welcomes redoubled to see him appear
> Who brings mercy and peace . . . .

From a literary as well as a musical point of view, this work is much more impressive than earlier works of the kind. Its scope is larger, and its solos are more eloquent. Purcell employs unusual combinations of voices here. The opening verse, "Fly, bold Rebellion," is scored for a solo ensemble consisting of first and second alto, tenor, and first and second bass. The finale, written for a seven-part solo ensemble and followed by a chorus, also in seven parts, contains an interesting example of a theme placed against its own inversion. It is characteristic of the ease with which Purcell had now begun to handle complex means of composition.

Years of Growth

Henry Purcell was the first to compose elaborate works for the St. Cecilia celebrations traditionally held on November 22. He took up this type of ode with the composition of three works written within a two-year period. Considerable confusion exists over the exact dates of these works and their performances. Apparently, two of the settings were composed and performed for the celebrations in 1683 and 1684. A third, motet-like arrangement was definitely completed in 1683, but its unusual character suggests a somewhat different purpose.

The latter composition is a Latin hymn to St. Cecilia entitled "Laudate Ceciliam." The words are possibly taken from an Italian model. Somewhat archaic in style, the work may have been intended either as a study or for use in the Queen's Roman Catholic Chapel. It is scored for three men's voices — alto, tenor, and bass — three-part string ensemble (without viola), and continuo. Written in C major throughout, this short piece receives a certain structural unity through reiteration: The opening symphony is later repeated, and the initial chorus serves also as the finale; a basic rhythmic pattern recurs through the entire work.

"Welcome to all the pleasures" was the first of Purcell's works representing what was to become a conventional style of the Cecilian ode. Entitled "A musical entertainment perform'd on November xxii. 1683," a printed copy signed by Purcell is preserved in the British Library. The poet is not mentioned, but William Husk credits Christopher Fishburn with the authorship.[24]

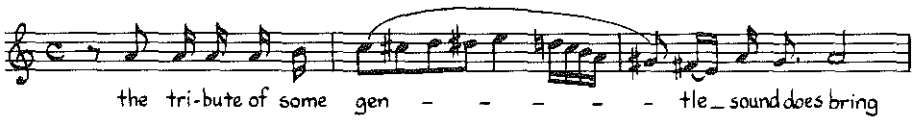
The choruses are noteworthy for their charm and sprightliness. The final chorus, with its Latinized praise to Cecilia, ends in a joyous confirmation of the tonic key complete with an octave skip up and down in the basses. The key of E major is prompted by Purcell's obvious desire to provide a bright ending for a work written in the minor mode. Yet a similar situation exists in the next two works.

Purcell's third Cecilian ode, "Raise, raise the voice," has also been associated with the year 1683 (the dating is based on reports of manuscripts now missing), but several scholars, including Godfrey Arkwright, editor of the ode in the Purcell Society's *Complete Works*, doubt this date. Since another ode was performed that year, 1684 seems a more logical choice. Husk again suggests Fishburn as author of the text. The lively work, scored for three-part chorus without altos, offers passages of particular lyric

[24]*An Account of the Musical Celebrations on St. Cecilia's Day* (London: Bell and Daldy, 1857), p. 13.

interest, as is shown in the setting of the word "gentle" in the soprano air "Mark how readily the pliant string" (Example 5).

EXAMPLE 5

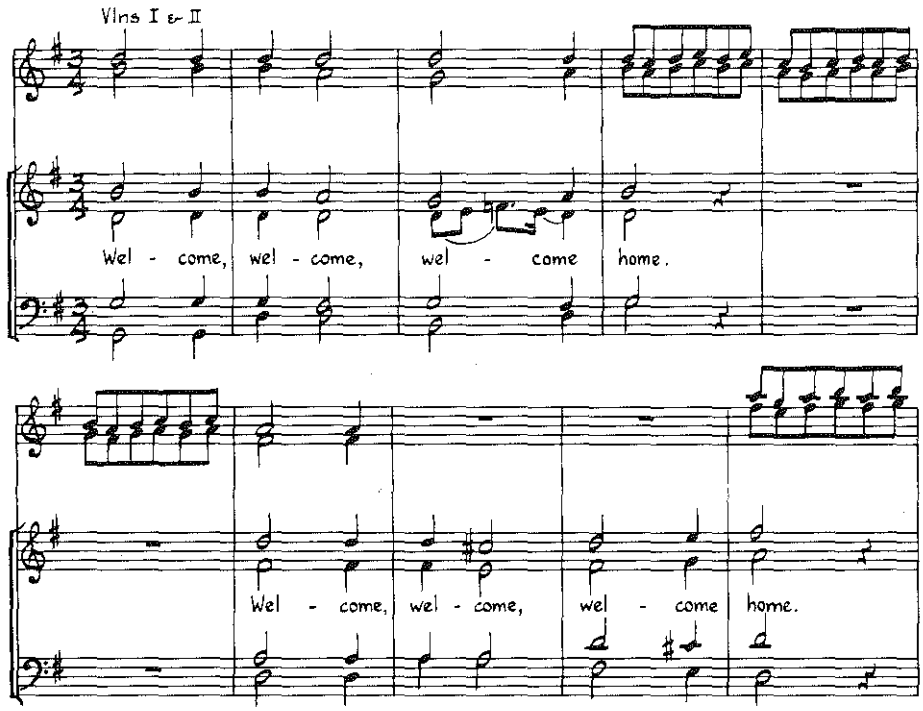


Purcell's final welcome song for Charles II, "From those serene and rapturous joys," was performed on September 25, 1684, after the court's return from Windsor. The text by Thomas Flatman emphasizes the pleasures of country life,

Where Kings forget the troubles
of their reigns,
And are almost as happy as
their humble swains.

The most notable musical feature of the work is the more independent role of the instruments in choral movements (Example 6). The tenor air, "Welcome, more welcome does he come," with its somewhat grotesque likening of the return of the King to the resurrection of Lazarus, is striking for its modulation-filled ground bass.

EXAMPLE 6



Charles II died on February 6, 1685, and was succeeded by his brother James II. We are uncertain about the function of Purcell's three odes for the new monarch. Their headings in the manuscript sources show them to be welcome songs although all were evidently performed on October 14, the King's birthday. An explanation is offered by Percy Scholes:

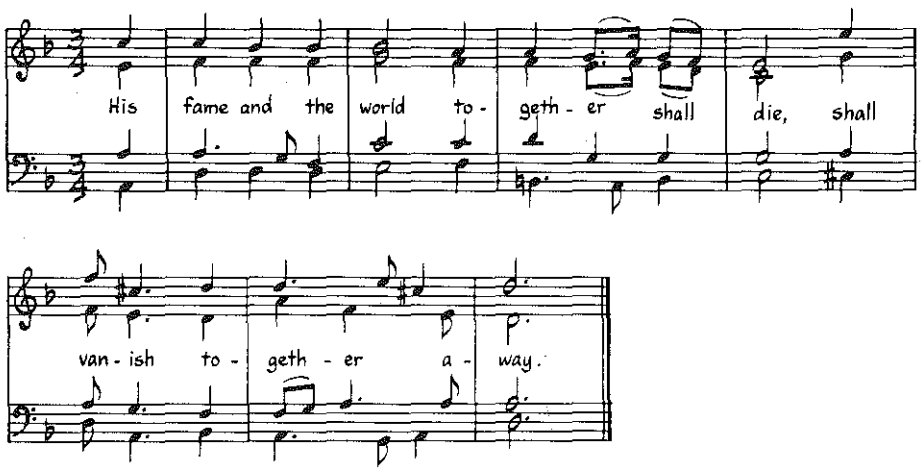
> The odes to James seem to have been birthday offerings: his anniversary was on October 14, and thus it is likely that the welcome home from his summer progress was combined with birthday celebrations . . . .[25]

The three compositions have common characteristics; above all, they are considerably longer than the earlier works. The last two add the viola to the orchestra, and from here on the instrument has a permanent role in the scores of Purcell's odes.

The first ode for the new monarch, "Why, why are all the Muses mute?", was performed on the King's fifty-second birthday. It "was based on a dull poem in which James II is hailed as Caesar and his virtues enshrined in euphemistic phraseology."[26]

The rather lengthy work does not end in the conventional sense of sweep because of its concluding words with which the new King's eventual death is anticipated (Example 7). The opening is also somewhat unusual; the first symphony is preceded by a choral movement introduced by a duet for alto and bass, "Caesar for milder virtues honoured more," which deserves attention for its ingratiating lyrical melody, quite unlike the rest of the ode (Example 8).

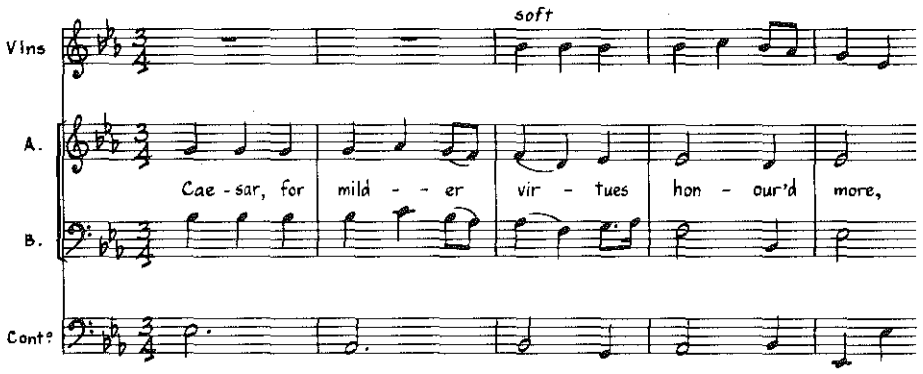
EXAMPLE 7



[25]"Purcell in Praise of Princes," p. 592.

[26]Holland, *Henry Purcell,* p. 157.

EXAMPLE 8



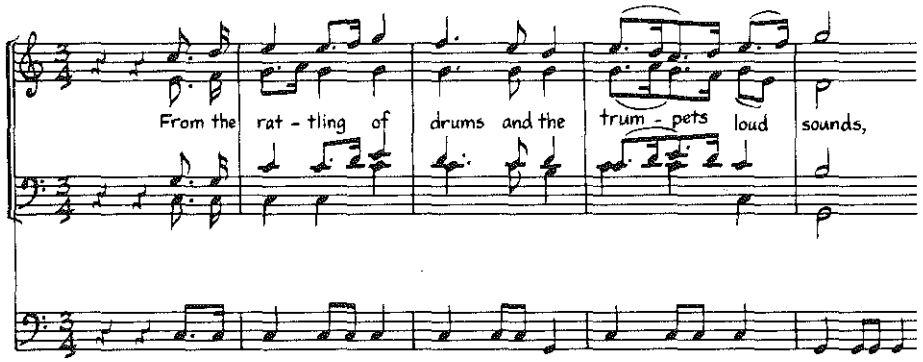
The text of Purcell's second ode for James II, "Ye tuneful Muses," performed in the fall of 1686, is essentially an appeal to music in honor of the monarch's return:

Try ev'ry strain
Excite ev'ry vein,
Tune all your strings to celebrate
His so much wish'd return.

The instrumental sections of the work are of consistent quality. The symphony's fugal section is finely wrought, and the ritornello following the alto solo, "With him he brings the partner of his throne," is marked by a certain dignity of expression.

The ode also contains naïve but apt passages of purely musical imagery. On the words "Tune all your strings" the violins sound tones of open strings as if in tuning. In the solo and chorus settings of the words "From the rattling of drums" the composer uses reiterated tonic and dominant harmonies imitating the sounds of drums (Example 9).

EXAMPLE 9



More ingenious is Purcell's use of a popular ballad melody throughout the ode. The tune had appeared in a contemporary broadside entitled "The Popish Tory's Confession, or An Answer to the Whig's Exhaltation," as well as in other contexts. First appearing in the fugue of the opening symphony, it is later used as the bass line for the alto solo "Be lively then and gay!". When the chorus enters, the melody is heard as the treble line in a violin obbligato. In its final appearance, a ritornello, it returns to the bass with a new countermelody added above.

"Sound the trumpet, beat the drum" is the last of Purcell's odes for James II. The trumpets and drums, of which the text speaks, are not to be found in the orchestration; yet they exist: In the opening verse they are imitated in the alto and bass solo parts; drum patterns are also suggested by the strings. The text, while conventional, in fact challenged the composer's best efforts. The instruments have gained further prominence; there are greater contrasts between different movements; the overall effect is one of breadth and splendor. This is particularly evident in the finale which contains a declamatory chorus over a moving bass line. Most unusual is the inclusion of a second symphony. Written as a chaconne, this extensive movement occupies a central position in the ode. In many ways the work marks a decisive step in the composer's ode compositions.

In Purcell's creative development this ode stands as the first of its kind, representing his attainment of a new style, identifiable with that of many of his later works.[27]

[27]Zimmerman, *Henry Purcell*, p. 146.

Technical Mastery

On June 30, 1688, English Protestant leaders, fearful of James II's overt Catholicism and the succession of a Catholic heir, planned a coup d'état by which William III of Orange would take the throne, and because of the threat of an impending invasion, there was no celebration or performance of an ode on October 14 of that year. The "Glorious Revolution" ended without bloodshed in London on December 19; James II fled to France four days later. It is doubtful whether festivities were held that tumultuous New Year's Day, and, so far as we can ascertain, no ode was composed for the occasion. The crown had been refused by Mary, the deposed King's Protestant daughter, and William was offered the lesser title of regent by the provisional government. On February 13, 1689, however, the crown was accepted by William as King and Mary as Queen.

The King had no special fondness for music. "William's attitude towards any but martial music, when not apathetic, was negative."[28] Mary was apparently much more interested in the muse, although "her taste does not seem to have been one of any great depth."[29]

During the reign of William and Mary, poets and composers continued to furnish the court with a full complement of odes. John Blow, besides regularly supplying the New Year's compositions, shared duties with Nicholas Staggins in the less grateful task of composing birthday odes for William. Purcell was more fortunate in his assignment to entertain the Queen with odes whose texts, while at times far-fetched, were more appropriate: "The 'gentle Queen' was universally beloved."[30]

Six odes were composed for the Queen's birthday on April 30 in the ensuing years until the time of her death in March, 1695. While the composer's odes for Mary are characterized by an especially sympathetic quality, they above all show a more mature style. Purcell had by now achieved considerable technical mastery of the genre and a fine balance of Italian, French, and English influences. The works are permeated by the composer's imaginative strength and his sense of dramatic expression.

This is clearly borne out in all details. The overtures, on a grander scale, follow either the Italian or French models, with themes of great vitality that lend themselves well to motivic development. Ritornelli, consistently of high quality, are often subtly organized. The orchestra has

[28]Zimmerman, *Henry Purcell*, p. 184.

[29]McGuinness, *English Court Odes*, p. 130.

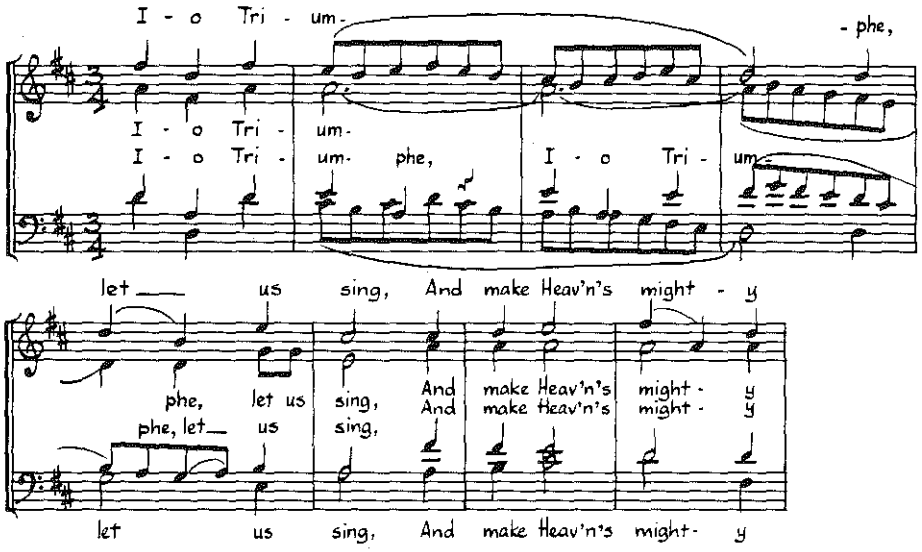
[30]Holland, *Henry Purcell*, p. 157.

grown conspicuously, including flutes, oboes, and trumpets besides the usual complement of strings and basso continuo;[31] and all instruments enjoy an active and often prominent role. Corresponding gains mark the vocal parts. Songs are generally longer, more challenging, and more refined; some are dramatically more expressive. The same situation holds for the solo ensembles.

Most obvious, however, is the development of choral writing. The choruses immediately impress the listener through their bold melodic material and the quality of massiveness and brilliance. Prevalent in them is the use of ground bass and of antiphonal writing between voices and instruments.

Purcell's first birthday ode for Mary, "Now does the glorious day appear," was performed before both the King and Queen at Whitehall. While the text by Thomas Shadwell is of poor quality, the choral writing is a most impressive feature of the ode and proves Purcell's ability to mold an inferior text to his own standards. "Here is the work of a composer who knew exactly what he wanted to do and did it without fumbling."[32] The final chorus especially, preceded by a ritornello in rondo form, is remarkable for its incisiveness (Example 10). The work's overture is the longest in all of Purcell's odes, and, as in other compositions involving large opening movements, Purcell balanced this overture against an extended final chorus.

EXAMPLE 10



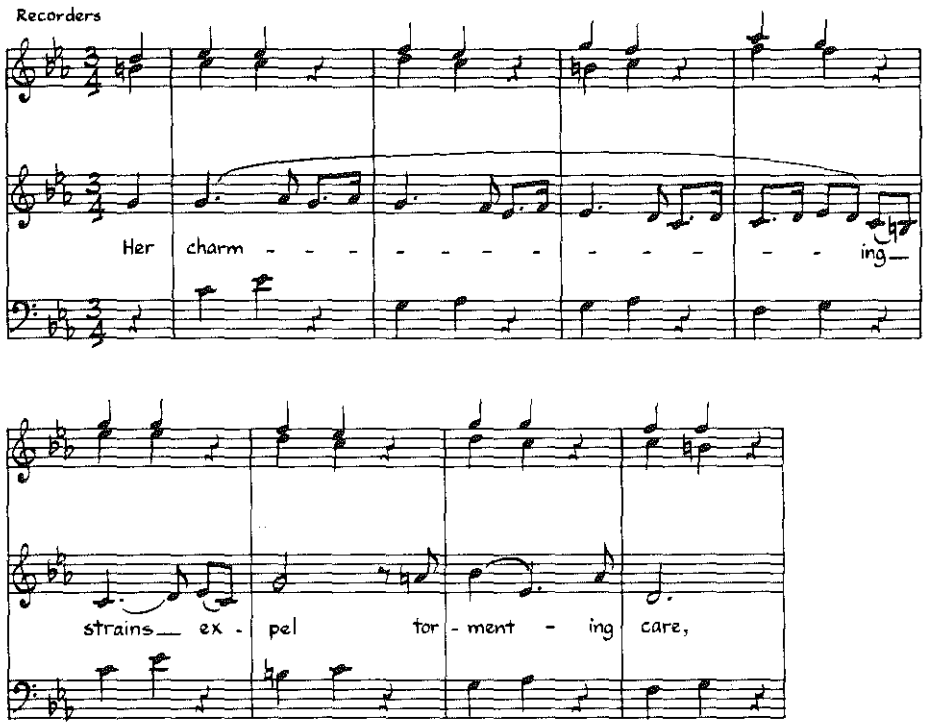
[31]Henry Davey, in his *History of English Music*, p. 329, erroneously states in a discussion of odes for James II that "trumpet solos became a special feature of Purcell's works." The composer's odes did not require trumpet parts until 1690.

[32]Westrup, *H. Purcell*, p. 183.

The same year Purcell wrote another composition for a special occasion. "Celestial Music" was performed at Mr. Louis Maidwell's School on August 5. The actual reason for its performance is uncertain. Purcell's residence was very near the school, and it is quite possible that he was requested by the schoolmaster, as a personal favor, to furnish a work for some commemorative occasion. The text was evidently written by one of Maidwell's students.

The work is dignified though subdued in comparison with earlier odes. Its prevalent tonality of C major changes to C minor for the alto verse, "Her charming strains expel," a long solo built over a four-measure ground bass and accompanied by two recorders (Example 11). The overture is borrowed from the composer's anthem "My heart is inditing," suggesting that Purcell spent relatively little effort in producing the ode.

EXAMPLE 11



As he had in the previous year, Purcell composed two odes in 1690. The first, "Of old when heroes," is more commonly known as "The Yorkshire Feast Song." It was commissioned at a cost of one hundred pounds by a society known as the "Nobility and Gentry of the City and County of York" and performed on March 27 at "Merchant Taylor's Hall." The great customary banquet to which the Yorkshire gentlemen repaired "after a solemn service" received the following notice in the

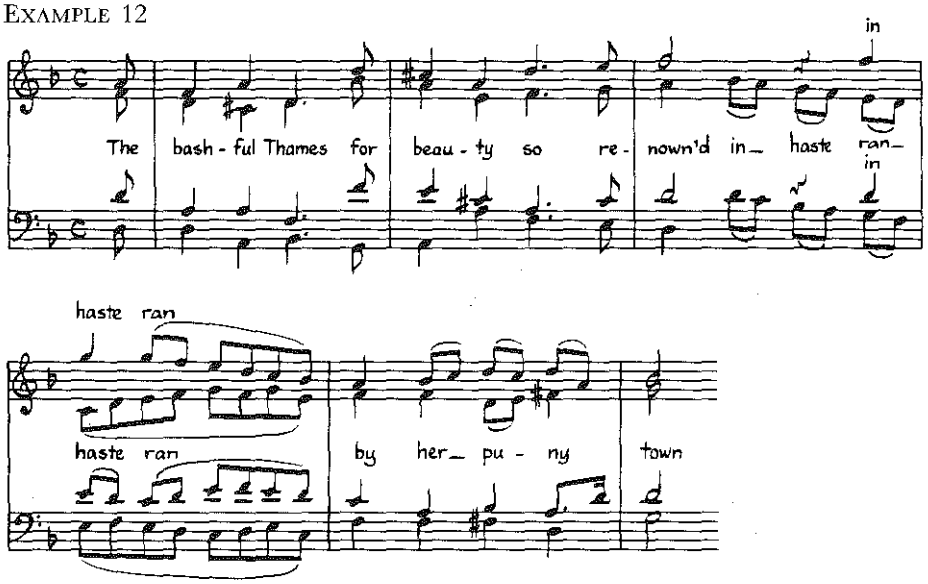
London *Gazette* in 1690:

> The Annual Yorkshire Feast will be held . . . with a very splendid Entertainment of all sorts of Vocal and Instrumental Musick.[33]

The text by Thomas D'Urfey combines elements of local and national pride, tributes to William III, and comments on the latest political events. "D'Urfey's rhymes and metre are by no means impeccable. But his grasp of the nation's mood could not be improved upon."[34] Purcell rose to the occasion and, provided with adventuresome words, produced a work of pomp and circumstance with trumpet fanfares and festive declamatory recitatives — "a magnificent occasional piece."[35] The music became very popular at the time and portions of it were later printed in *Orpheus Britannicus.*

"The Yorkshire Feast Song" contains some unusual features. Its movements are to be performed as separate entities rather than in continuous sequence. There are no ritornelli, but the opening symphony is resumed later in the work. "The bashful Thames," a famous piece, takes on the nature of a true *a cappella* madrigal (Example 12).

EXAMPLE 12



Purcell's other ode for 1690, "Arise my Muse," also on a poem by Thomas D'Urfey, celebrated Queen Mary's twenty-eighth birthday. The composer's decision not to set the final fifteen lines resulted in a conclusion acclaiming William rather than Mary.

[33]Hanley, *Music in Purcell's London,* p. 114.

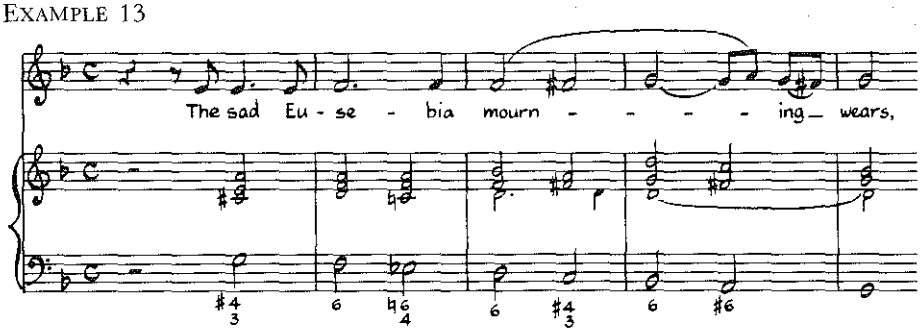
[34]Zimmerman, *Henry Purcell,* p. 184.

[35]Holland, *Henry Purcell,* p. 162.

The Queen cannot have been pleased, for the piece ends comically, with the chorus exhorting William to "Go on, go on, illustrious man" (ad infinitum), just after she has been portrayed entreating him to stay at home.[36]

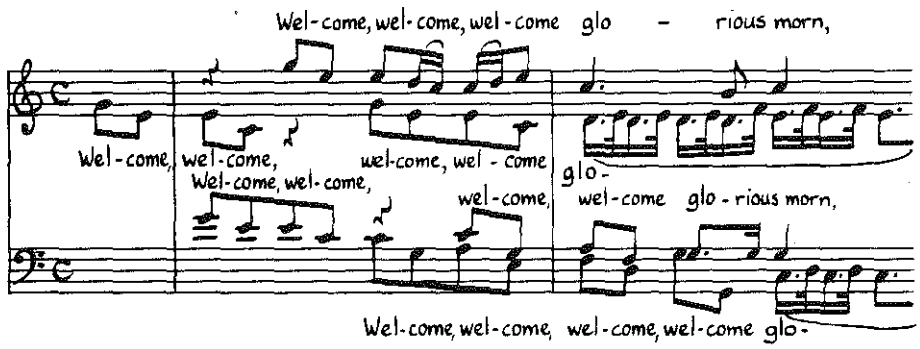
As in the composer's other ode of the same year, trumpets and the key of D major characterize a setting of baroque magnificence. The finale is the finest example of the work's quality. In a veritably operatic farewell scene, the alto solo, "But ah, I see Eusebia drown'd in tears," with its fine pathos (Example 13), is answered by the D-major splendor of the chorus which dominates the character of the scene and brings the ode to a close.

EXAMPLE 13



For the Queen's next birthday celebration (1691) Purcell was given a text which Zimmerman rightly describes as delightful.[37] This composition, "Welcome, welcome glorious morn," adheres to the composer's new massive choral style (Example 14). Throughout, the writing is strong and highly original, as may be seen, for example, in the overture which opens in the manner of the old brass *toccata* in the various instrument groups. A canzonetta-like duet for alto and bass, an energetic bass solo with jagged rhythmic patterns, and a sweeping bass duet stand out among the solo sections.

EXAMPLE 14



[36]Zimmerman, *Henry Purcell*, p. 185.

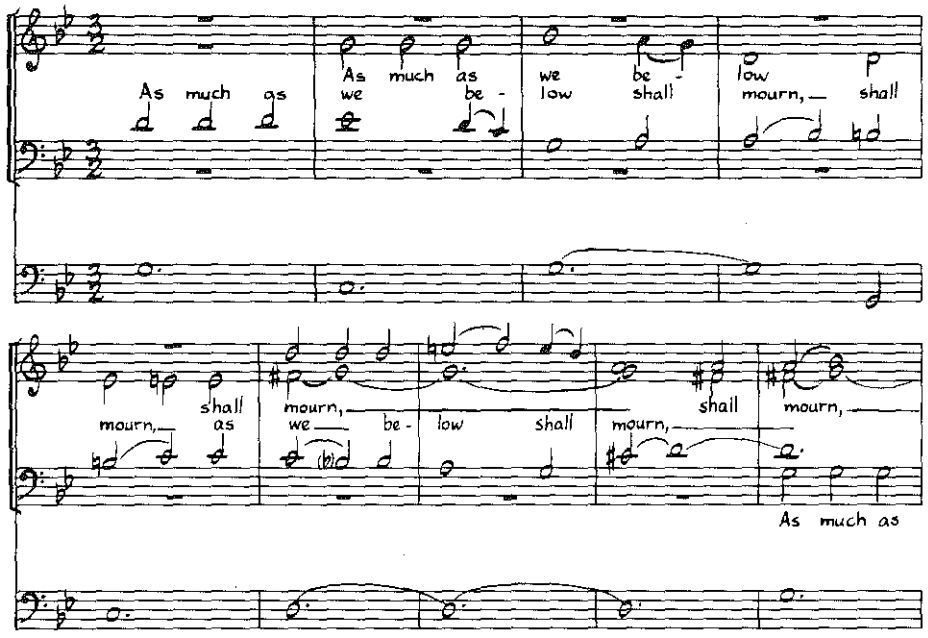
[37]*Ibid.*, p. 197.

Sir Charles Sedley provided the text for Queen Mary's birthday ode of 1692. The poem, "Love's goddess sure was blind," is far better than the average ode text, and Purcell was highly successful in conveying its mood. The soprano solo, "May her blest example chase Vice," has a well-known history. Its bass line is adapted from a Scottish melody, "Cold and raw," which was popular at the time. The Queen, who liked the tune, had challenged Purcell by requesting it. Sir John Hawkins, who may well have heard the story from the Reverend Gostling's son, writes:

> Mr. Gostling and Mrs. Hunt sang several compositions of Purcell, who accompanied them on the harpsichord: at length the Queen beginning to grow tired, asked Mrs. Hunt if she could not sing the old Scots' ballad, "Cold and raw." Mrs. Hunt answered yes, and sang it to her lute. Purcell was all the while sitting at the harpsichord unemployed, and not a little nettled at the Queen's preference of a vulgar ballad to his music; but seeing her majesty delighted with this tune, he determined that she should hear it upon another occasion: and accordingly in the next birthday song, viz, that for the year 1692, he composed an air to the words, "May her bright example," the bass whereof is the tune to "Cold and raw". . . .[38]

Of much greater musical interest is the finale of the ode. Based on a text that speaks of the Queen's eventual death, the composition turns to a plaintive setting for solo quartet and chorus that suggests the level of Purcell's writing in *Dido and Aeneas* (Example 15).

EXAMPLE 15



[38] *A General History of the Science and Practice of Music*, Vol. IV (London: T. Payne and Son, 1776), pp. 6–7 n.

Superior and Perfunctory Works

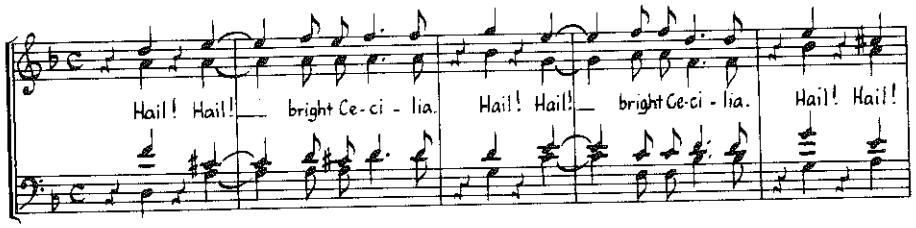
With the other ode written in 1692, "Hail, bright Cecilia," we reach the final phase of Henry Purcell's ode composition. The poet was Dr. Nicholas Brady, Minister at St. Katherine Cree and Chaplain to the Queen, and he provided a text particularly well suited to Purcell's writing. Towering over the other works the composer wrote in that genre during his last four years, the famous Cecilian ode in turn influenced the last royal odes for Queen Mary, both of them superior compositions in their own right.

The composer's last ode to St. Cecilia was unquestionably a popular work. It was performed twice on November 22, 1692, with Purcell evidently taking the alto solo, "Tis Nature's voice," and performances thereafter are recorded in numerous sources. "It was apparently recognized at the time as one of its composer's masterpieces, and it has always remained one of his most famous works."[39]

"Hail, bright Cecilia" is the largest of all the composer's odes. The work is scored for strings, recorders, oboes, trumpets, drums, and continuo. The overture is extended to five movements, the second of which is a lively double fugue.

The choruses are of the highest caliber. The magnificent opening chorus (Example 16) is taken up again in the finale in greatly enlarged form. Beginning with instrumental fanfares punctuated by choral shouts of "Hail," the concluding movement turns to a fugal section for six-part chorus followed by a solo quartet and a return of the tutti. The section "Soul of the world" includes a particularly exciting passage where instrumental tremolo combines with strong declamation in the chorus stressing a diminished seventh chord. It is "one of Purcell's most majestic, most ingenious, and most inspired choral movements."[40]

EXAMPLE 16



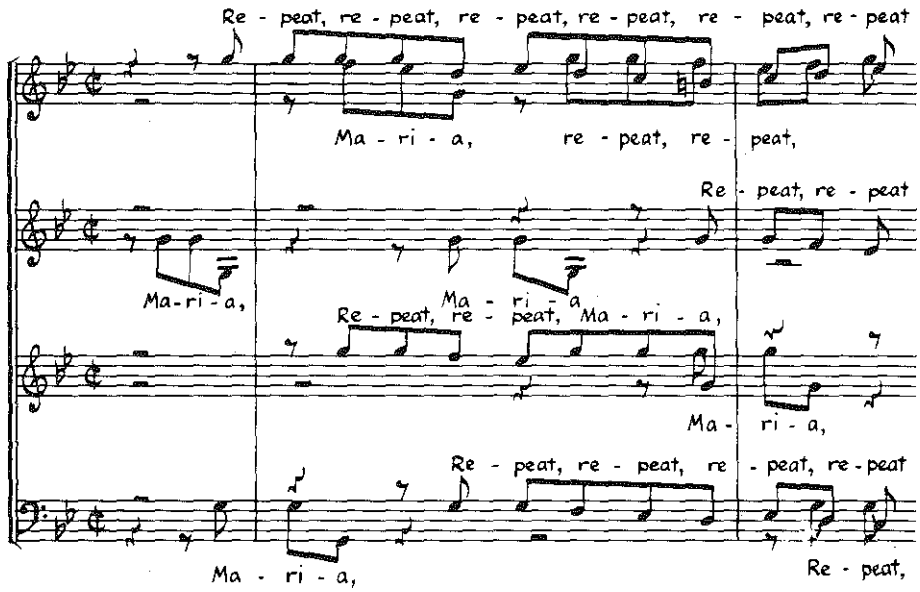
[39]Walker, *History of Music in England*, p. 206.

[40]Westrup, *H. Purcell*, p. 191.

Perhaps the best song in the work is the bass solo "Wondrous machine." In this aria, written on a ground bass, two oboes accompany the soloist in extolling the sound of the organ. With its expansive melody the piece is a fine example of the composer's ability to create the noble effects that characterize the entire work.

Purcell's last two birthday odes for Queen Mary represent the high point of the composer's court odes. The first, written on a poem by Nahum Tate, "Celebrate this festival," was performed in 1693. The ode marks a complete reversal from the preceding, relatively subdued birthday ode. A work of festive energy, this lengthiest of the composer's royal compositions is characterized by a bright C major and by brilliant trumpet scoring. In keeping with this character is an eight-part choral texture (Example 17). The overture, borrowed from "Hail, bright Cecilia," consists of that work's first two movements.

EXAMPLE 17



There are also moments of repose, such as the mezzo-soprano solo "Crown the altar," which is set to a text pleading for peace, undoubtedly in reference to William III's engagement in battle campaigns — an aria that is singularly appealing for its dignified quiet mood.

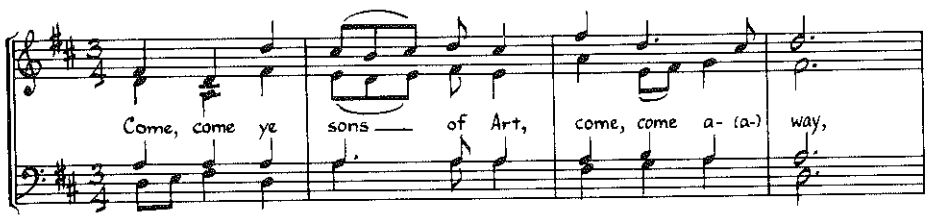
The year 1694 proved the most productive one for Purcell's choral writing; he composed three odes as well as his *Te Deum* and *Jubilate.* "Light of the world," the composer's only New Year's ode, set to words by Matthew Prior, is no longer extant. It may never have been performed, but

we know that Blow's ode "Sound the trumpet," on a text by Peter Motteux, was presented that year. "Some event must have changed the original plans to perform Prior's ode, for we learn from Motteux . . . that he had to write his ode in a short time . . . ."[41]

Purcell's second ode for that year, "Great parent, hail," was composed for a special commemoration at Trinity College, Dublin, on January 9. This additional responsibility, so close to New Year's Day, may, in fact, have interfered with the performance of the now lost work. The commemorative ode, which was probably performed in Christ Church, was commissioned for the school's centenary celebration of Founder's Day. Its poet, Nahum Tate, was a graduate of the college and Poet Laureate of the court. The ode is on the whole perfunctory. One of its flaws seems to be the composer's choice of words and phrases for repetition which are of a certain disservice to the work's overall conception.

"Come ye sons of art away" was Purcell's last birthday ode for Queen Mary. She died on December 28, 1694, eight months after this work's performance. The poet is not named in the manuscript, but there are notable similarities between the verse lines of this and other odes by Nahum Tate.[42] In spite of the mediocre text, Purcell produced what is perhaps the finest of his court odes. The work is characterized by the concerted sound of trumpets, strings, and voices. The opening solo and chorus are set to a graceful dance rhythm (Example 18).

EXAMPLE 18



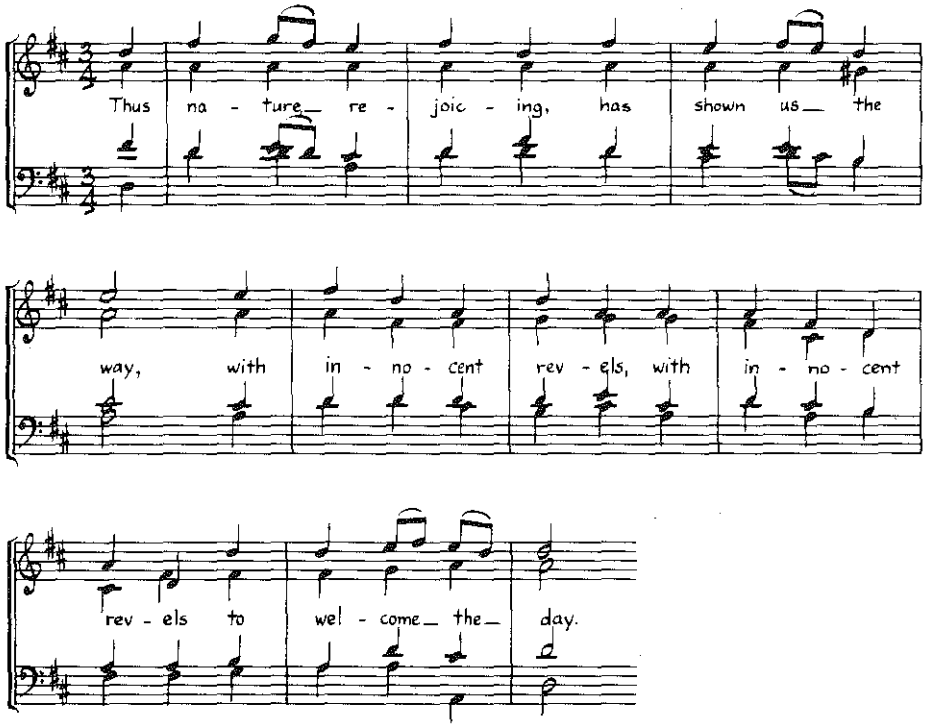
As in the last ode for James II, "Sound the trumpet, beat the drum," Purcell imitates the trumpet in the vocal writing, and brilliant effects are achieved by the two alto voices in the famous duet entitled, like the coronation ode, "Sound the trumpet." The final chorus is representative of Purcell's finest achievements as an ode composer; it "ends in a blaze of glory"[43] (Example 19).

[41]McGuinness, *English Court Odes,* p. 52.

[42]See McGuinness's discussion in *English Court Odes,* fol. 52.

[43]Westrup, *H. Purcell,* p. 189.

EXAMPLE 19



It is somewhat indicative of the genre that Purcell's series of ode compositions ends with a lesser work. Shortly before his death on November 21, 1695, the composer was again requested to provide a royal ode. "Who can from joy refrain?" was composed for the Duke of Gloucester's sixth birthday on July 24, 1695. The Duke, a sickly child, was the only offspring of Anne to survive birth and died at the age of eleven.

Like some of Purcell's earlier odes written for unusual occasions, the composition, probably on a text by Nahum Tate, might be called perfunctory. The text and music were obviously set to extol the boy's pathetic interest in military things.

> The ostentatious military tone of the text was compatible with the almost abnormal preference of the little one for all things military. The composer accommodated these tendencies: sounds of trumpet and vocal pyrotechnics predominate.[44]

This martial emphasis is also evident in the instrumental interludes — much more numerous that in other odes.

[44]Reinhold Sietz, *Henry Purcell: Zeit, Leben, Werk* (Leipzig: Breitkopf und Härtel, 1955), p. 84.

When Henry Purcell died four months later, he had left among his works a repertory of odes composed for courtly festivities, celebrations of St. Cecilia, and civic commemorative events. Though superior to similar compositions by contemporaries, most of them have been forgotten. This fate should not be accepted as deserved. On a par with Purcell's finest works are his six birthday odes for Queen Mary and, above all, his last Cecilian ode, "Hail, bright Cecilia": in his odes, as in his other works, we can follow the unfolding of a unique composer's style and genius.

Selected Modern Editions

Come, ye sons of art. SATB. Mainz: Schott #10302

Come, ye sons of art. Arranged for SSA. London: Novello #07.0355.

Ode for St. Cecilia's Day (1683: *Welcome to all the pleasures*). SATB. New York: C.F. Peters #E 1062.

Ode for St. Cecilia's Day (1692: *Hail! bright Cecilia*). SATB. Mainz: Schott #5920.

Welcome to all the pleasures. (*Ode for St. Cecilia's Day* — 1683). SATB. Paris: Calliard #R61.

EXCERPTS

"The bashful Thames," from *The Yorkshire Feast Song*. SATB. Boston: E.C. Schirmer #2229.

Two choruses from *Queen Mary's Birthday Ode* (1694: *Come ye sons of art away*). SATB. New York: Marks #445.

The Author

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The American Choral Directors Association, founded in 1959, is a non-profit professional organization whose active membership is composed of 11,000 choral musicians from schools, colleges and universities, churches, community and industrial organizations, and professional choirs. Its general purposes are to foster and promote excellence in choral music, including performance, composition, publication, study, and research.

Through its fifty-two state and seven divisional organizations, as well as on the national level, the Association sponsors workshops, conventions, and festivals where ideas are shared and explored, problems discussed, and music is heard. Its publications program includes monographs on various specialized subjects of interest to choral directors, state and division newsletters, and the monthly *Choral Journal,* which contains articles, reviews of books, recordings, and music, as well as notices of choral activities throughout the nation.

Active membership in American Choral Directors Association is currently available at $25.00 per year. For further information, write the American Choral Directors Association, P.O. Box 5310, Lawton, Oklahoma 73504.

Through affiliation with The American Choral Foundation, ACDA members may obtain regular membership in the Foundation, including a subscription to the AMERICAN CHORAL REVIEW, for a reduced contribution of $13.50. ACDA members interested in joining the Foundation are asked to make application directly to the Foundation at 130 West 56 Street, New York, New York 10019, being sure to identify themselves as ACDA members.