2008

The Composing of "Musick" in the English Language: The Development of the English Cantata, 1700-1750

Jennifer Cable
University of Richmond, jcable@richmond.edu

Follow this and additional works at: http://scholarship.richmond.edu/music-faculty-publications

Part of the Composition Commons, and the Musicology Commons

Recommended Citation

Cable, Jennifer. "The Composing of "Musick" in the English Language: The Development of the English Cantata, 1700-1750." In *Genre in Eighteenth-Century Music*, edited by Anthony DelDonna, 257-74. Ann Arbor, MI: Steglein Publishing, 2008.

The Composing of "Musick" in the English Language: The Development of the English cantata, 1700–1750

JENNIFER CABLE

The cantata as cultivated by Alessandro Scarlatti and his contemporaries Alessandro Stradella and Giovanni Bononcini was the model for the early development of the English cantata, which remained a solo vocal genre in England throughout the eighteenth century, namely 1710–1800. By focusing on specific musical elements, such as cantata format (recitative-aria-recitative-aria or aria-recitative-aria), song forms, motivic use, textual content, instrumental requirements and performance venues, the evolution of the English cantata can be observed during the first half of the eighteenth century, developing from a simple imitation of the Italian form to a genre in its own right.[1]

The English cantata followed the early eighteenth century Italian model quite closely with regard to format and the use of the *da capo* aria or a through-composed ABA form. Of the early English cantata composers (1700–1710) whose works I have studied, only John Eccles used forms other than the standard *da capo, dal segno* or ABA. In addition to the *da capo* aria, the use of *secco* recitative was considered a critical component for a cantata composed in the Italian style. Further traits found in the early English cantata which can be traced to the Italian model include the anticipation of the vocal melody in the continuo prelude and the use of what Hugo Riemann termed *Devisenarie*, also called the 'motto aria'; more commonly known as the practice whereby the singer begins with the opening of the first phrase, followed by an instrumental ritornello, then sings the first phrase in its entirety.[2] Tonal areas were closely related between sections in both the Italian and the English cantata: most often dominant to tonic or mediant to tonic. Occasionally, submediant to tonic was used, as well as tonic to tonic. In general, these key relationships were repeated in English can-

---

1. The primary sources utilized for this study reside in the British Library (the Printed Music and the Music manuscripts and archives collections) and the Bodleian Library (the Harding Collection). I thank the following persons for their assistance in securing scores and other information on the English cantata: Linda Fairtile at the Parsons Music Library, University of Richmond; David Peter Coppen at the Sibley Music Library, Eastman School of Music; and Susan Eggleston Lovejoy at the Irving S. Gilmore Music Library, Yale University.

2. Jack Westrup, "Devisenarie," *Grove Music Online*, ed. L. Macy, (accessed 11 July 2007), http://www.grovemusic.com/.

tata composition throughout the first half of the eighteenth century. Composers periodically utilized uncharacteristic modulations within the B section of the *da capo* aria form. The B section could also develop melodic or rhythmic material from the A section. And finally, with regard to text, the topic of love was most often addressed, taking place within a pastoral setting. Before 1724, an English cantata rarely addressed topics beyond the pastoral. There were, of course, exceptions; for example, national pride is evidenced in Pepusch's cantatas *Island of Beauty* (1710) and *While pale Britannia pensive sat* (1720).[3]

Early composers of the English cantata often included descriptions such as "composed after the Italian manner" or "after the Italian stile" which referred to the use of *secco* recitative and the *da capo* aria. The phrase was added to the titles of English cantatas and operas beginning with Daniel Purcell's cantata *Love I defy thee* in 1708 and continued as late as the 1760s, though by that time the terminology was no longer applied to the English cantata. Ever the humorist, Henry Carey used the indication "high stile" and the pseudonym "Signor Carini" when intending to burlesque the Italian style.

When considering how to adapt the dramatic musical style of the Italian cantata to suit compositions intended for an English-speaking audience, the early eighteenth century English cantata composers encountered two significant obstacles: the lack of suitable texts and the presence of recitative. John Hughes was one of the first English poets to write texts specifically intended for use in the English cantata, quickly removing the first obstacle. Hughes, a strong supporter of the Italian musical style, sought to unite the arts of music and poetry so that the English public might equally appreciate both. Other poets whose texts were used in the early English cantatas were Henry Carey, William Davenant, and Abraham Cowley. Later English cantatas were set to texts by Hughes,

---

3. In *Island of Beauty*, Hughes's text for the first aria is as follows: "Britain hail, all hail to thee, | fairest Island in the Sea! | Thou my fav'rite Land shalt be. | Cyprus too shall own my sway and dedicate to me its Groves | yet Venus and her Train of Loves will with happier Britain stay." Hughes uses a contemporary setting, in this case the concern about civil war in England, juxtaposed with a reference to a well-known mythological character. Colley Cibber, who wrote the text for *While pale Britannia pensive sat* did not include any mythological references. Cibber's aria instead joyfully announces the arrival of King George I and is as follows: "No more Britannia, sigh no more, | the Royal George has touch't thy Shore | and brings thee Joys ne'er known before. | Thy Blessings now are all secure, | thy Sons transported shall agree | and thy defended liberty | shall like thy fame in arms endure."

Carey, William Congreve, Matthew Prior, Colley Cibber, James Blackley, Lewis Theobald, Joshua Gee, John Slaughter and John Hawkins, to name just a few.

The second obstacle, the recitative, remained a troublesome musical element, as it was not so easily, nor so swiftly, assimilated. To enlighten the public on the role of the recitative, John Hughes wrote in his preface to the first volume of Pepusch cantatas from 1710, that

> There is one thing in Compositions of this sort which seems a little to want explaining, and that is the *Recitative* Musick, which many People hear without Pleasure, the Reason of which is, perhaps, that they have a mistaken Notion of it. They are accustom'd to think that all Musick shou'd be *Air*, and being disappointed of what they expect, they lose the Beauty that is in it of a different kind. It may be proper to observe therefore, that the *Recitative* Stile in Composition is founded on that Variety of Accent which pleases in the Pronunciation of a good Orator, with as little Deviation from it as possible. The different Tones of the voice in Astonishment, Joy, Rage, . . . make a sort of natural Musick which is very agreeable; and this is what is intended to be imitated, with some Helps [*sic*], by the Composer, but without approaching to what we call a *Tune* or *Air*; so that it is but a kind of improv'd Elocution, or pronouncing of the Words in Musical cadences, and is indeed wholly at the Mercy of the performer to make it agreeable or not, according to his Skill or Ignorance.[4]

Despite Hughes's sincere attempts to clarify the need for and the purpose of the recitative, it continued to be an irritant to some well into the second half of the eighteenth century. Regardless of its favor or lack thereof, the recitative remained an integral part of the English cantata throughout the duration of the popularity of the genre.

Representative composers of the English cantata during the period 1700–1750 include Daniel Purcell, John Eccles, Johann Christoph Pepusch, John Ernst Galliard, Henry Carey, John Stanley and Thomas Arne. By referencing several excerpts from their cantata output one can outline the general development of the genre during the first half of the eighteenth century.

---

4. Johann Christoph Pepusch, *Six English Cantatas Humbly Inscrib'd to the most Noble the Marchioness of Kent* (London: Walsh and Hare, 1710), 2.

Daniel Purcell (1660–1717) had published at least three cantatas by 1710 including *Love I defy thee, By silver Thames's flowery side,* and *Far from the nymph whom I adore.* The first of these, *Love I defy thee,* with the text by John Hughes, is believed to be the earliest extant English cantata. Though various publication dates are given, September 1708 can be reliably documented from publisher John Walsh's music periodical *The Monthly Mask of Vocal Musick,* which contained the cantata.[5] The cantata is in an aria–recitative–aria format, with both arias set in the *da capo* form. The arias are of a similar length (thirty-nine and forty-five measures respectively), the first set in 12/8, and the second in 4/4. Each aria melody can be divided into two rhythmic patterns or cells which are used as structural elements. This practice is a trademark of Purcell's in his cantata composition and can be seen in the opening measures of the first aria in Example 1. The rhythm introduced in the first measure of the continuo line serves as a structural element throughout the aria and is repeated in the vocal entrance. The triplet figure, also found in the continuo prelude, is the second rhythmic-structural cell of the aria. In addition, the vocal line is set syllabically which is a prevalent compositional tendency for all composers of the English cantata during the opening decades of the genre. The exceptions are the few *fioreture* sections where Purcell employs word painting, using an expanded version of the triplet figure introduced in the prelude (see Example 2). A noteworthy element of the vocal line is the unaccompanied entry of the voice in both arias. And finally, as was common with English cantata texts, mythological characters are introduced into the story, along with a moral.

In each of his early cantatas, Purcell used *fioreture* to highlight specific text. Though he used this type of word painting sparingly, the addition was effective, lending emphasis and musical definition when necessary. An additional note regarding the vocal settings of these cantatas regards the vocal ranges of each. Purcell tended towards a slightly expanded vocal range when compared to the cantatas of Bononcini, as well as those of his English cantata contemporaries, whose vocal ranges averaged an octave. Purcell's vocal ranges expanded to include a tenth as the norm rather than the exception.

John Eccles's (ca. 1668–1735) *The Rich Rivall,* alternatively titled *They say you're angry,* appeared in the *Monthly Mask* in March of 1709. This cantata

---

Example 1: Daniel Purcell, *Love I defy thee*, mm. 1–8

Example 2: Daniel Purcell, *Love I defy thee*, mm. 15–18

is significantly different from other early English cantatas, for Eccles chose not to employ what was one of the compositional hallmarks of the Italian cantata: placing the principal melody in either the continuo line or, if present, the obbligato instrument line prior to the vocal entrance. This compositional omission distinguishes Eccles from contemporaries Purcell and Pepusch, both of whom

used either direct musical quotes (Pepusch) or rhythmic quotes (Purcell) to tie the opening vocal line to the continuo prelude.

The Rich Rivall is set in the standard cantata format, with the first aria in *da capo* form, the second in binary form. The use of the binary form was unusual in an English cantata at this time, though that form would eventually be found in many English cantatas by the middle of the century. Eccles looked to history for his text, using the section "The Rich Rivall" from Abraham Cowley's (1618–1667) *The Mistress*, first published in 1647.[6] I have written at length regarding Eccles's choice of text for this cantata, examining my theory as to why Eccles overlooked contemporary poets and instead chose a small excerpt from a much older and longer text.[7] *The Rich Rivall*, when viewed as metaphor (whereby the "Rich Rivall" represents Italian music competing with Eccles for the favor of the English public, or the "fair one"), affords us a glimpse into Eccles's state of mind during a period when the popularity of Italian music was overshadowing the efforts of native composers.

The Rich Rivall is musically adventurous and adroit when compared to Purcell's more rigidly constructed cantatas. The first recitative, in A major and eight measures in length, introduces us to the lover's situation. In this recitative, Eccles combines the Italian *secco* style with musical elements which resemble the *arioso* style of Henry Purcell.[8] The first aria, "When next I see my fair one" is fifty-five measures in length and is set in a *da capo* form, yet contains elements of the restoration period multi-sectional song form, resulting in an ABCA form with intersecting motivic cells (melodic and rhythmic) across each section. The second recitative is only six measures in length yet contains expansive key movement, eventually preparing for the second aria (binary), which is in A major. In this aria, Eccles set the continuo in a dancing triadic figure and introduced the vocal line in an extended *Devisenarie* phrase structure (see Example 3).

---

6. Encyclopædia Britannica Online, s.v. "Cowley, Abraham," http://search.eb.com/eb/article-9026680 (accessed July 27, 2007).

7. Jennifer Cable, "The Composing of Musick in the English language: The English cantata 1700–1710" (lecture recital presented at the John Eccles and his Contemporaries: Theatre & Music in London, circa 1700 conference, Tallahassee, FL, February 27, 2005). See Cable, "After the Italian manner: the early English cantata," in *Stages Adorned*, ed. Kathryn Lowerre (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing, forthcoming).

8. Richard Goodall, *Eighteenth-Century English Secular Cantatas* (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc. 1989), 127.

Example 3: John Eccles, *The Rich Rivall*, mm. 1–16

Example 3: John Eccles, *The Rich Rivall*, mm. 1–16

German expatriate Johann Christoph Pepusch (1667–1752) was one of the most prolific contributors to the early eighteenth century English cantata, composing over twenty extant cantatas for solo voice, continuo and, in many cases, obbligato instruments.[9] Twelve of the cantatas were published in groups of six, the first set in 1710, the second in 1720 (at which point the first set was re-issued). Both sets appeared in print once more, ca. 1730. Hughes tells us in the preface to the 1710 volume that these were the first cantatas composed of this kind by Mr. Pepusch.

Close resemblances to the Italian cantata model are immediately apparent in Pepusch's first volume of cantatas: all follow the standard cantata format with the arias set in a *da capo* form except for the first aria in *The Spring* which is through-composed. Using sustained harmonies and delayed cadences, Pepusch modeled his recitatives directly on the Italian *secco* style.[10] The majority of key relationships within the cantatas are also closely related to those of the Italian cantata model: dominant or mediant to tonic for the recitative to aria progression. Text similarities exist as well, for many of the cantatas address the highs and lows of love within a pastoral setting. Though Hawkins linked Pepusch's English cantatas to the Italian cantatas of Scarlatti, Burney thought otherwise, saying that

---

9. Rice has credited Pepusch with composing nearly forty English cantatas. See Paul Rice, *The Solo Cantata in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Michigan: Harmonie Park Press, 2003), xiii.

10. Goodall, *Eighteenth-Century English Secular Cantatas*, 130.

Pepusch's English cantatas more closely resembled those of Gasparini.[11] Either way, Pepusch followed the Italian cantata model in several significant ways. First, he presented thematic material at the opening of the aria. Next, he often began the vocal line with a short statement of the theme which was then repeated and subsequently expanded (*Devisenarie*). Pepusch's cantatas also featured motivic development and made use of melodic and harmonic sequences in both vocal and instrumental lines. Also noteworthy, though not directly tied to the Italian cantata model, are the observations that all of the cantatas but one (*The Island of Beauty*), include an obbligato instrument and all have vocal ranges that tend to average an octave, though the extremes of range exceed that distance, generally stretching up to a tenth.

Pepusch also composed four extant Italian cantatas, of which I have analyzed two: *Fonte adorato* and *Crudel ingrata*.[12] When comparing Pepusch's English cantatas to those in Italian, additional compositional traits are revealed. Pepusch set the English texts in terms of one or two notes-per-syllable. In his Italian cantatas, Pepusch is generally more expansive with regard to his syllable-to-note ratio, particularly in the cantata *Crudel ingrata*. His use of word painting through *fioreture* passages in both types of cantatas, though modest, is at times quite vivid and moving. *Fioreture* passages in *Crudel ingrata* in both the vocal and the instrumental lines are longer and more florid than any in the English cantata volume of 1710.

The cantatas in Pepusch's first volume were intended to be performed by amateur singers though evidence exists indicating early English cantatas were also performed in public by professional singers. Verification of this assertion may be discerned from knowledge that Pepusch's future wife, opera singer Margarita de L'Epine, who sang an English cantata at Drury Lane during the

---

11. Sir John Hawkins, *A General History of the Science and Practice of Music* (London: author, 1776; reprinted in 2 vols., New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1963). 831. In speaking of Pepusch's English cantatas (both volumes) Hawkins writes, "The several compositions contained in these two collections are evidently in the style of the Italian opera, as consisting of airs intermixed with recitative; and he must be but very moderately skilled in music who cannot discover between them and the cantatas of Alessandro Scarlatti a very near resemblance." See Charles Burney, *A General History of Music*, 4 vols. (London, 1789; reprinted in 2 vols., New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1957), 988.

12. Johann Christoph Pepusch, "Fonte adorato" and "Crudel ingrate," in *Before 1720 Manuscript Collection, Chandos Music Manuscripts*, vol. iv, pp. 6–13 and 44–49, British Library, London, England. Both cantatas bear the designation Shelfmark Add 62102.

13 April 1706 performance of Farquhar's *The Recruiting Officer*.[13] Unfortunately, neither the cantata nor the composer has been identified. Vocal students also performed English cantatas: a 1720s edition of Pepusch's cantata *Alexis* credits a student of L'Epine's as performing the composition. The fact that the English cantata was performed by professional, amateur and student alike ostensibly confirms Malcolm Boyd's assertion that English cantatas were composed for a "broader based aristocracy" rather than intended only for a select few.[14]

Pepusch's cantata volume of 1720 departs from the simplicity of the earlier volume.[15] Principally, the changes appear in the arias: though all are *da capo,* the vocal lines are more florid. Sections are taken out of tempo so to emphasize the text, along with the singer's technical ability. In the final two cantatas in particular, Pepusch composed obbligato parts for trumpet and strings that appear almost orchestral in scope and sound. This may account for some of the additional volume of the second book—the first was thirty-one pages, the second forty-six. It would seem that, though these cantatas were still most likely designed for the amateur singer, that individual "had already begun to embrace the florid school of singing"[16] due to the popularity of Handel's music during this same period.

Another German expatriate, John Ernst Galliard (ca.1687–1749), published a volume of English cantatas in 1716. In this volume, *Six English Cantatas after the Italian manner,* Galliard set four texts by Hughes and one each by Congreve and Prior. As expected, the texts remain rooted in an Arcadian setting, often referencing mythological figures and addressing the complications of love. Each cantata in this volume is set for voice and continuo and nearly all follow the standard cantata format. For the most part, the second recitatives are either the same length or shorter than the first (the former a common occurrence with the texts of Hughes specifically). Also, nearly all of the arias are in a *da*

13. Goodall, *Eighteenth-Century English Secular Cantatas*, 119.

14. Malcolm Boyd, "English secular cantatas in the eighteenth century," *The Music Review* 30, no. 2 (May 1969): 85–97.

15. Johann Christoph Pepusch, *Six English Cantatas for one Voice...Four for a FLUTE and two with a TRUMPET and other Instruments...Compos'd by J.C.Pepusch...Book the Second* (London: Walsh, 1720). Although I worked from the original 1710 and 1720 Pepusch cantata volumes, a facsimile reprint edition containing both volumes was published by SPES in 1982. Note that the Preface to volume one which is included in the SPES edition is not the original Preface written by John Hughes. I believe it instead to be the Preface to Galliard's 1716 volume of cantatas.

16. Rice, *The Solo Cantata,* xiii.

capo form. The exceptions are two through-composed arias and one in a binary form. Though Galliard rarely anticipated the vocal melody in the continuo prelude, the vocal melody is often connected to the continuo introduction by either rhythmic or melodic cell repetition. Galliard's cantatas from 1716 are similar to the Pepusch 1710 volume in that the cantatas themselves are, though charming and accessible, not particularly complicated and are suitable for performance by not only the professional musician, but also the amateur. The ranges are such that they do not exceed a twelfth and the relatively few *fioreture* sections are brief as much of the vocal movement is syllabic.

Henry Carey (1687–1743) composed over fourteen cantatas, two of which will be examined here. The first, *I go to the Elisian Shade* was published in 1724 in *Cantatas for A Voice with Accompanyment… The Words and Musick by Henry Carey*, while the text of the cantata appeared earlier, in Carey's *Poems* of 1720. Though Henry Carey labeled *I go to the Elisian Shade* a "cantata," it bears little resemblance to other English cantatas of the time. In the 1720s and 30s, Carey composed several "mad" songs, inspired by and modeled after the mad songs of Henry Purcell, John Eccles and others. *I go to the Elisian Shade* falls into this category. Mad songs are identified by several musical and textual characteristics. Most notably, they are comprised of texts in which the protagonist incrementally loses her sense of reality; the music frequently shifts between metered song and recitative; each musical section is fairly short; and sections which contain *fioreture* are taken at a very fast tempo. Purcell's *Mad Bess* no doubt inspired *I go to the Elisian Shade*, as both reflect upon the singer's wish to go to Elysium where she will escape her misery and madness, and joy will fill her heart and soul. The form of the mad song/cantata can be seen in the following table and though it appears to be a work of some length, each section is, in fact, quite brief:

Table 1. Form of mad song/cantata

Recitative	
Aria	Allegro
Recitative	
Aria	Lento
Recitative	Includes a metered section in 3/4
Aria	Affettuoso
Short metered section I	Vivace and when coupled with section II (immediately following) indicates the protagonist's descent into madness
Short metered section II	Prestissimo

> Recitative
> Very short metered section III
> Recitative
> Aria

In the musical examples 4 and 5, note Carey's use of *fioreture* (Example 4) and the extremes of range (Example 5) in the vocal line. These musical characteristics differ significantly from their counterparts in the works discussed previously. Carey's talent in composing dramatic music is evident in even these brief excerpts.

The tragical tale of the Mare is a comedic cantata which burlesques the "high stile" of Handelian composition. Carey subtitles the work "Compos'd in the high Stile" and signs his aforementioned pseudonym, Signor Carini. This charming work for voice and continuo first appears in the cantata collection of 1724 and is mentioned here in order to draw attention to the richly humorous text, set in a recitative–aria format with the vocal melody forecast in the continuo prelude. The cantata is a delightful send-up, given the seriousness of the music coupled with the mock disaster of the text, complete as follows:

> Recitative: Unhappy me! What shall I do? My poor Dear Mare, has lost her Shooe; and I've no money to buy new. Some Drunken Rascal, in the Night, has torn her Saddle, out of Spight; 'thas ruin'd and undone me quite! But what does most my Soul Assail; is that in Fury of his Ale, the Cursed Dog, has Lop'd her Tail.

> Aria: O Mare! O Mare, well mayst though Grumble, thy Shooe is lost and though must Stumble. Surely the Fellow's Brains were Addle, that cropt thy Tail and tore thy Saddle.[17]

The tragical tale represents a notable departure from the standard fare of cantata texts. It was reprinted in the *Three burlesque cantatas* collection of 1741, by which time all three of the cantatas contained in the volume stood apart in distinct relief from what one would expect in a cantata text, focusing instead on contemporary issues and social satire, and referencing real life incidences that

---

17. Henry Carey, *The tragical tale of the Mare* from *Cantatas For A Voice with Accompanyment. . . . The Words and Musick by Henry Carey* (London: author, 1724), 11–13.

Example 4: Henry Carey, *I go to the Elisian Shade*, mm. 92–102

would have been thoroughly understood by contemporary audiences. It might also be appropriate to reflect here on another point: the use of terminology to define a genre. Vocal works such as *The tragical tale* and *I go to the Elisian Shade* were called cantatas even if they were constructed of a single recitative and aria or set in the format of a mad song. Carey published a volume of newly composed cantatas in 1732 which contained six cantatas, one which Carey identified as a

Example 5: Henry Carey, *I go to the Elisian Shade*, mm.80–91

Pi - ty my pain ye gen - tle swains, gen - tle swains

pi - ty my pains, pi - ty my pains pi - ty my pains ye gen - tle swains

mad song and a second which carries numerous mad song compositional traits.[18] In this volume he continued to compose dramatic vocal lines, some of which require a substantial vocal technique given the level of difficulty. Five of the six texts were by Carey, and with characters by the name of Slandretta, one can see that, at least in Carey's cantatas, we have surely left the bucolic setting behind.

John Stanley (1712–1786) began publishing English cantatas in 1742 and continued composing in the genre until 1784, two years before his death. Op. 3, *Six Cantatas for a Voice and Instruments*, published in 1742 with five texts by Sir John Hawkins and one by Foster Webb, continues the tradition of the standard English cantata topics and characters.[19] Though roughly two-thirds of

---

18. Henry Carey, *Six CANTATAS Humbly dedicated to the Rt. Honorable SACKVILLE Earl of THANET. . . . The words and Music by H. Carey* (London: author, 1732).

19. Sir John Hawkins wrote the preface to Stanley's Op. 3. I mention the preface here due to remarks that Hawkins makes regarding the continuing favor of Italian art and culture by the English public. Hawkins notes in the third paragraph, that "it were, however, to be wish'd, that our Partiality for the Italians went no farther than their Language; or to speak in plain Terms, that we were influenced in preferring them in all Works of Genius

the arias in Op. 3 are *da capo*, the other third provide a glimpse into the future of the English cantata genre. For example, the cantata *Teach me Venus* from Op. 3 best illustrates the course of English cantata composition following the period in which Henry Carey was most active. This cantata retains characteristics of the Italian cantata such as anticipating the vocal melody in the continuo prelude, use of *Devisenarie*, referencing mythological characters, and the use of recitative and *da capo* aria. However, Stanley also departs from the Italian model. In the first aria, he introduces a 6/8 meter for the B section, further distinguishing that section from the 3/4 of the A section; in the recitative that separates the first and second aria, Stanley removes us from the realm of the mythological and, contrastingly, introduces a contemporary situation, one in which a moral is clearly stated; and finally, the second "aria" is a binary, strophic song form. These additions, coupled with the earlier efforts of Carey, evidence that the English cantata is no longer a simple shadow of the Italian cantata, but a genre in its own right.

It is enlightening to contrast Stanley's Op. 3 with his Op. 8, a second set of cantatas published in 1748.[20] In Op. 8, Stanley continues the practice of anticipating the vocal melody in the opening prelude and the doubling of the voice with the obbligato instruments. He also employs the motto aria practice on two occasions. Noteworthy differences from Op. 3 are the inclusion of accompanied recitative and the noticeable lack of arias set in a *da capo* form. Instead, Stanley uses binary, rondo, through-composed songs and single section repeats for his arias.

Finally, brief mention must be made of Thomas Arne (1710–1778) who composed English cantatas beyond the mid-century mark. Arne's early cantatas were similar to the English cantata standard with regard to vocal range (now expanded to between a tenth and a twelfth) and with limited coloratura. Although beyond the scope of this essay, it must be mentioned that by 1755, Arne's can-

---

to our Countrymen, by other Motives than those of Custom and Fashion; for, in short, whatever Advances they may have made in Arts and Sciences, whatever great Men they have formerly produced, the present Productions of that Country, as well as the Reason of Things, sufficiently prove, that Italy is no longer the School of Arts, or the Residence of the Muses. See *Six Cantatas for a Voice and Instruments: Set to Musick by John Stanley, MB* (London: by author, 1742).

20. John Stanley, *Six Cantata's for a Voice and Instruments, Set to Music by John Stanley MB* (London: author, 1748).

tata compositions were increasing in vocal demands and complexity as he began to compose for the professional singers of the pleasure gardens of Vauxhall, Ranelagh and Marylebone.

Conclusion

Changes which occurred to the English cantata during the first fifty years of its composition can be summarized in clear terms. The first and perhaps most profound change involved the *da capo* aria, which was an important component at the outset of the English cantata yet became increasingly obsolete after 1750. In its place came through-composed ABA forms, binary forms, either with or without repeats, rondo-type airs (such as a motivically developed ABACA form), strophic songs, or single short airs.

Secondly, the English cantata, which was initially performed by amateur and professional alike, transformed into a more complex composition. As vocal challenges and technical demands increased, the cantata evolved into a work specifically intended for the vocal abilities of professional singers, such as the performers at the pleasure gardens. Though the genre never completely left the hands of the amateur, cantata composition explicitly designed for the expertise of the singers who performed at the pleasure gardens represented a significant change from the role that it had filled for nearly fifty years—as a vehicle for at-home music making.

Regarding the continuo line, English cantata accompaniments developed outwardly, so to speak, as the instrumental lines increased in either complexity or simplicity. Those that were written for several obbligato instruments took on an orchestral quality, while later cantatas that were written for voice, continuo, and a single obbligato instrument (often unidentified) could be performed by voice and keyboard alone, with the obbligato line reserved for the right hand of the accompanist. In many cases, this obbligato line doubled the voice and provided filigree between the vocal statements. Generally, parallel third movement, and call and response interaction between voice and instruments, was reserved for works with larger instrumental forces.

Later English cantata composers returned to earlier song forms: the mad songs of Henry Purcell, multi-sectional songs, and binary forms. In addition, the use of the term "aria" was slowly replaced in the scores of English cantatas with the word "air". By the 1740s, if any identification was indicated at the beginning of an aria-like section (beyond tempo and dynamic markings) it was

"air". This practice began as early as 1720 with Pepusch's second volume, though the term "aria" continued to be used in newly composed material well into the 1730s. And lastly, textual content began to shift away from the standard pastoral setting to a more contemporary story line. One of the earliest instances of this that I have located is a reference to Bononcini's opera *Camilla* in Pepusch's cantata *Alexis*, published in 1710. Later examples can be found in the cantatas of Henry Carey.

The consideration of alterations which took place to the English cantata during its first fifty years of development, leads naturally to the question "What did not change?" The principal format for the English cantata remained recitative-aria-recitative-aria or aria-recitative-aria throughout the first half of the eighteenth century. With very few exceptions, the recitative continued to be titled as such and was *secco* in nature well into the 1750s. Though textual content began to include contemporary references, this change was slow to take hold. Even in the cantatas of Arne and Stanley, textual content retained the Arcadian focus, in particular the pastoral landscape, the presence of mythological figures and the inescapable desire for love. And finally, some composers retained the compositional practice of building the vocal melody upon the opening continuo or obbligato melody. For example, John Stanley utilized this practice throughout the 1740s. However, the use of *Devisenarie*, or the 'motto aria' appeared less often in later years. Stanley set arias using the 'motto aria' practice only once in Op. 3 and twice in Op. 8.

One must consider that the early English cantata composers were attempting to adapt the standardized Italian cantata format into a musical work which would highlight an English text, provide the sort of dramatic expression that the Italian model was able to do, and prove popular to an English-speaking public. The English cantatas of Purcell and Galliard, along with Pepusch's 1710 volume, reinforced the Italian cantata traditions while assimilating those traditions into the English genre. Pepusch then began to expand his compositions in complexity and instrumental scope in his second volume of 1720. Henry Carey, John Stanley and Thomas Arne individually contributed to developments in the genre from 1720 onwards. Other composers who made contributions to the English cantata genre, whether large or small, were Daniel Purcell (in his 1713 volume of cantatas), Richard Leveridge, George Hayden, William Boyce, Maurice Greene and Howard Samuel. The genre continued to develop following 1750 with the works of Arne, William Hayes, Thomas Linley Jr. and James Hook, composers

who continued to utilize the genre, in one form or another, until the 1790s, when interest in the English cantata began to wane. The Italian cantata also fell from favor by the end of the eighteenth century, for Burney reports in *A General History of Music* that cantatas were no longer on programs, as "opera scenes, or single songs, now supply the place of cantatas in all private concerts. . ."[21]

I would like to offer a final note regarding the programming and performance of the English cantata on modern recital programs. This sadly neglected music has long been in the shadow of other solo vocal works of the period, most notably works by Scarlatti, Bononcini and Handel. In his *A General History of the Science and Practice of Music*, Hawkins was highly critical of several of the English cantata composers, characterizing them as second rate. As a result, their work has been left to gather dust on library shelves. From a pedagogical standpoint, many English cantatas offer an appropriate beginning to the study of the cantata genre for the young English-speaking singer, particularly in areas concerning language comprehension, vocal range, cantata length and *fiorature* demands. English cantatas also offer a challenge to the mature singer, providing ample opportunity for period ornamentation and dramatic expression. To be sure, many eighteenth century English composers wrote songs or cantatas that, either subtly or outright, reflected the vogue of Italian vocal music in London, yet within the English cantatas we have the opportunity to access a distinct "national" voice. These worthy works aptly illuminate the development of vocal chamber music in England during the first half of the eighteenth century, allowing us a glimpse of how English song developed during a time when Italian song forms had the public ear.

21. Burney, *A General History,* 638.