



# CONCISE HISTORY OF WESTERN MUSIC

BARBARA RUSSANO HANNING

FIFTH EDITION

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5th edition

Barbara Russano Hanning



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*Chapter*

13

Opera and Vocal Music  
in the Late Seventeenth  
Century



# Prelude

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- Opera spread throughout Italy and to other countries
  - Italy: Venice remained principal center
  - Germany: imported Venetian opera, fused native styles into national German opera
  - France: resisted Italian influence, developed its own idiom
  - England: Commonwealth period against extravagant art; too weak to support opera on grand scale after the restoration



# Prelude (cont'd)

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- Vocal chamber music also flourished
  - influenced by language of opera
  - distinctive national styles developed



# Italy

- Opera, leading musical genre
  - Venice, principal Italian center; famous throughout Europe
  - late seventeenth century, well established in Naples and Florence
  - leading composer: Alessandro Scarlatti (1660–1725)
  - star singers, arias attracted the public
    - by 1670s, number of arias increased from twenty-four to sixty
    - forms: strophic song, ground bass, short two-part, and three-part arias



# Italy (cont'd)

- Opera, leading musical genre (cont'd)
  - arias reflected meaning of text through motives and accompaniment
  - da capo aria dominant form: ornamented and embellished by the singer
- da capo aria (ABA): “da capo” (from the head)
  - A section: small two-part form, each introduced by instrumental ritornello
  - *In voler ciò che tu brami*, from *La Griselda* (1720–21; NAWM 93), Scarlatti’s last opera
    - A section: features two vocal statements
    - B section: contrast of key



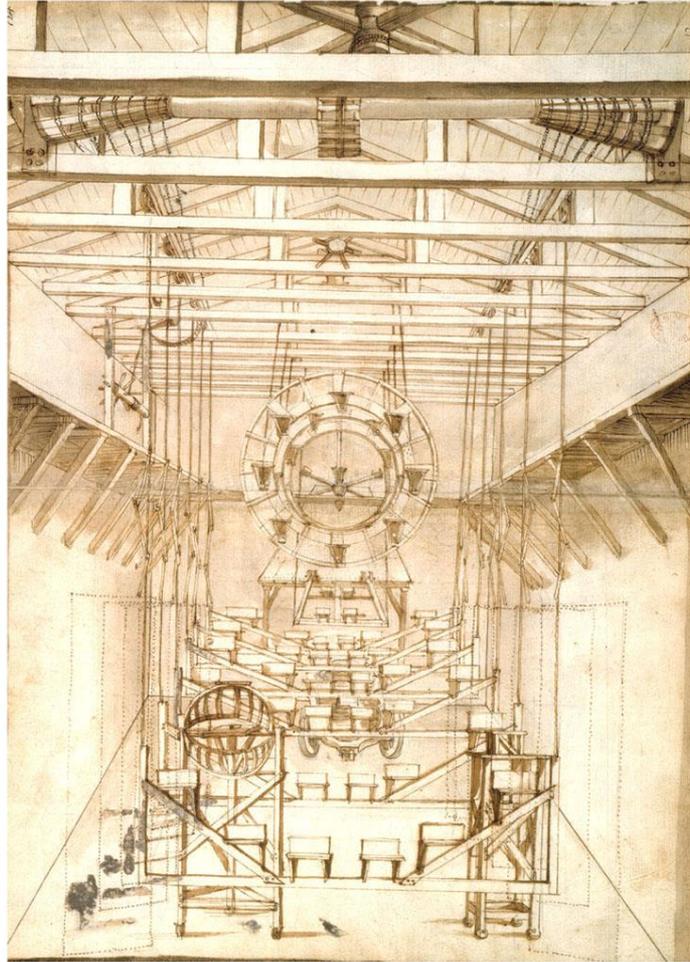
# Italy (cont'd)

## ■ Chamber cantata

- leading form of vocal chamber music
  - musical center, Rome
    - private parties for elite
    - elegance, refinement, wit
    - regular work for composers and poets; chances to experiment
  - many short, contrasting sections; alternating recitatives and arias
  - solo voice with continuo
  - text: pastoral love poetry, dramatic narrative or soliloquy

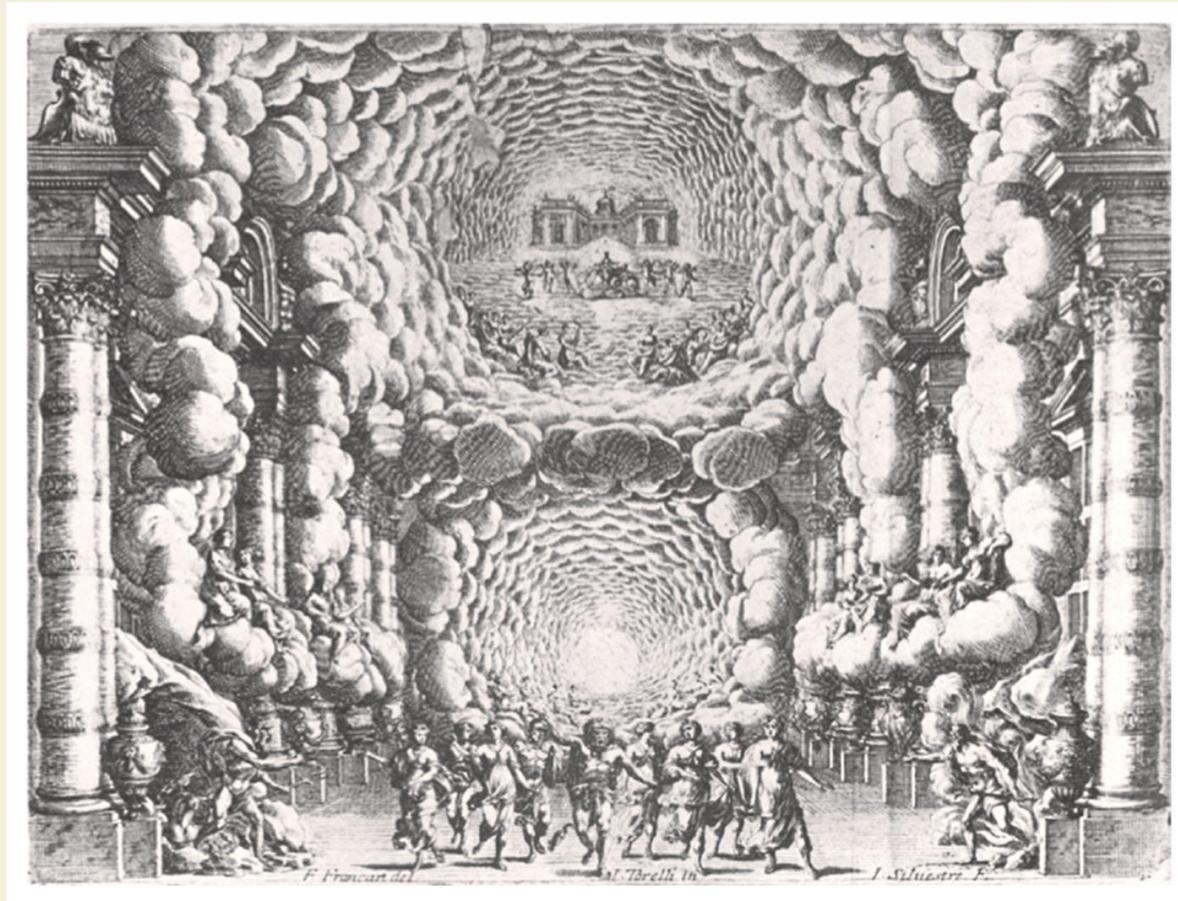


# F13-01a





# F13-01b





# Italy (cont'd)

## ■ Chamber cantata (cont'd)

- Scarlatti cantatas
  - more than 600 cantatas by Alessandro Scarlatti (1660–1725)
  - *Clori vezzosa, e bella* (Charming and pretty Clori, NAWM 92a), (1690–1710)
    - chamber cantata, two recitative-aria pairs
    - second recitative: wide harmonic range, chromaticism
    - diminished chords convey strong emotions, add bite to cadences



# F13-02





# Italy (cont'd)

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## ■ Chamber cantata (cont'd)

- most common form of Scarlatti's operas and cantatas: da capo aria
    - sustains lyrical moments
    - expressed single sentiment; contrasting middle section
- standard aria form in eighteenth century, opera and cantata
- great flexibility of expression



# F13-03





# F13-04

**Section:**

A				B	A repeats
Ritornello	Sentence 1	Rit	Sentence 1	Sentence 2	Da capo
Dm	Dm→Gm	Gm	Gm→Dm	FM→Am	Dm
i	i→iv	iv	iv→i	III→v	i

**Key:**



# France

- Strong cultural traditions of dance and spoken theater
  - slow to adapt to Italian vocal styles
  - goal: naturalistic expression of human emotions
  - dance and political control
    - model of discipline, order, refinement, restraint
    - subordination of individual
    - ritualized demonstration of social hierarchy



# France (cont'd)

## ■ Opera

- Italian opera in France: political and artistic opposition
- 1670s, national opera established under Louis XIV (r. 1643–1715)
- Jean-Baptiste Lully (1632–1687)
  - born in Florence, completed musical and dance training in Paris
  - 1653: appointed court composer by Louis XIV
  - 1661: Superintendent of Music for King's Chamber
  - 1672, turned to opera; gained greatest fame
  - discipline as conductor, admired and imitated
    - uniform bowing, coordination of ornaments



# F13-05





# France (cont'd)

## ■ Opera (cont'd)

- major works: fifteen operas, fourteen comédies-ballets, twenty-nine ballets, numerous motets and other liturgical music
- influences on French opera
  - ballet: flourished since late sixteenth century
    - king's love of, and participation in, dancing
    - comédies-ballets by Lully, blended ballet and opera
  - classical French tragedy: Pierre Corneille (1606–1684) and Jean Racine (1639–1699)
    - strong tradition of French spoken tragedy
    - poetry and drama given priority on stage

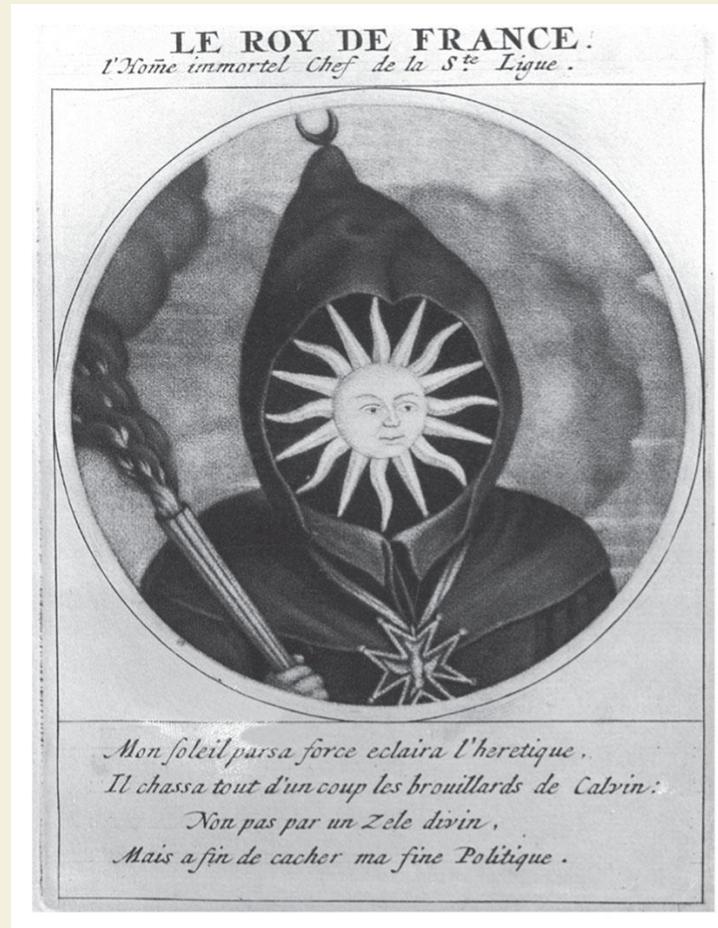


# F13-06





# F13-07





# France (cont'd)

## ■ Opera (cont'd)

- *tragédie en musique*: new synthesis, Jean-Baptiste Lully
  - 1672, royal privilege granted Lully exclusive right to produce sung drama in France
  - established the Académie Royale de Musique
  - later named *tragédie lyrique*
- Jean-Philippe Quinault (1635–1688): librettist, playwright
  - five-act dramas
  - combined ancient mythology, chivalric tales
  - frequent divertissements (diversions): dancing and choral singing interludes
  - texts overtly and covertly propagandistic



F13-08



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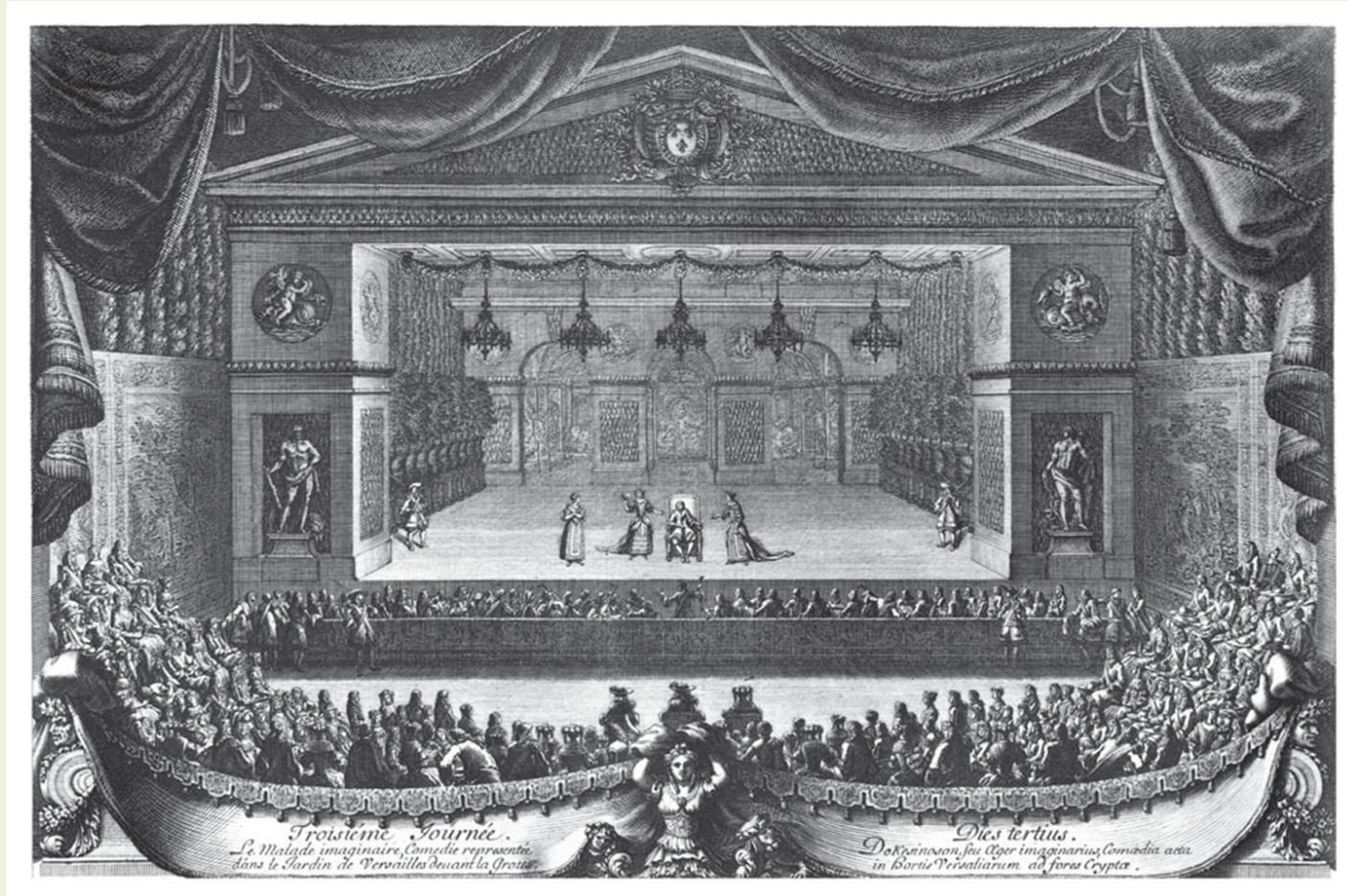
# France (cont'd)

## ■ Opera (cont'd)

- French overture
  - marked the entry of the king
  - two sections, each played twice
    - homophonic, majestic, dotted rhythms
    - faster second section, fugal imitation, returns to first section
    - overture to Lully's *Armide* (1686; NAWM 85a)
- divertissement at center of every act (NAWM 85b)
  - extended episodes: spectacular choruses, string of dances
  - colorful costumes, elaborate choreography



# F13-09





# France (cont'd)

## ■ Opera (cont'd)

- dances arranged as independent instrumental suites; new suites composed
- adapting recitative to French
  - Lully followed French actors' declamation
  - bass more rhythmic, melody more songful
  - *récitatif simple*: followed contours of spoken French
    - shifting metric notation: duple and triple
  - *récitatif mesuré*: more deliberate accompaniment motion
  - lyrical moments cast as airs; syllabic, tuneful, not virtuosic



# Ex13-01

## a. Simple recitative

33 Armide  
qui me fait hé - si - ter? qu'est-ce qu'en sa fa - veur la pi - tié me veut

36  
di - re? Frap - pons ciel! qui peut m'ar - ré - ter? A - che

39  
vons... je fré - mis! ven - geons - nous... je sou - pi - re!

*What makes me hesitate? What in his favor does pity want to tell me? Let us strike . . .  
Heavens! Who can stop me? Let us go on with it . . . I tremble! Let us avenge . . . I sigh!*

## b. Measured recitative

64  
Puis - qu'il n'a pu trou - ver mes yeux as - sez char - mants, qu'il m'aime au

65  
moins par mes en - chan - te - ments, que s'il se peut, je le ha - is - se.

*Since he could not find my eyes charming enough, let him love me at least through my  
sorcery, so that, if it's possible, I may hate him.*



# France (cont'd)

## ■ Opera (cont'd)

- monologue, Act II, scene 5, of *Armide* (NAWM 85c)
  - mixture of styles creates drama
  - orchestral prelude: dotted rhythms
  - measures of 4, 3, and 2 beats intermixed: accented syllables on downbeats
  - anacrusis to strong beats; dramatic rests follow each line
  - measured recitative leads to an air

## • Lully's influence

- composers imitated his method of scoring
- string orchestras
  - created first large ensembles of violin family
  - model for the modern orchestra
  - Vingt-quatre Violons du Roi (Twenty-Four Violins of the King)



# F13-10





# France (cont'd)

## ■ Opera (cont'd)

- 1648, the Petits Violons (Small Violin Ensemble), created for Louis XIV
- by 1670s, term “orchestra” used
- king kept stable of wind, brass, timpani players
  - military and outdoor ceremonies

## ■ Church music

- second half of century, borrowed Italian genres
  - wrote in distinctively French styles
- motets on Latin texts
  - *petit motet*: sacred concerto for few voices with continuo



# F13-11





# F13-12





# France (cont'd)

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## ■ Church music (cont'd)

- *grand motet*: soloists, double chorus, orchestra
  - correspond with large-scale concertos of Gabrieli and Schütz
  - featured several sections in different meter and tempos
  - Lully's *Te Deum* (1677, NAWM 86)
  - Michel-Richard de Lalande (1657–1726): Louis XIV's favorite sacred composer



# England

## ■ Musical theater

- masques
  - favorite court entertainment since Henry VIII
  - shared aspects with opera
  - long collaborative spectacles, not unified drama
  - appealed to all segments of society
  - shorter masques produced by aristocrats, theaters, public schools
- Cromwell's Puritan government prohibited stage plays
  - policy allowed first English "operas"
  - mixtures of elements: spoken drama, masque, dances, songs, recitatives, choruses



# F13-13





# England (cont'd)

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## ■ Musical theater (cont'd)

- after Restoration in 1660
  - French music and court ballet increasingly influential
  - failed attempt to introduce French opera
  - only two continuous sung dramas met success
    - John Blow's *Venus and Adonis* (ca. 1683), Henry Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas* (1689)
- Henry Purcell (1659–1695)
  - entire career supported by royal patronage
  - organist at Westminster Abbey
  - wrote enormous amounts of music in almost all genres
    - focus on vocal music



# F13-14





# England (cont'd)

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## ■ Musical theater (cont'd)

- greatest gift: English song that sounded natural and expressive
- buried in Westminster Abbey
- *Dido and Aeneas*
  - first known performance in exclusive girl's boarding school
  - masterpiece of opera in miniature
    - four principal roles, three acts, one hour in length
    - elements of English masque, French and Italian opera
  - French elements
    - overture, homophonic choruses in dance rhythms
    - solo singing and chorus lead to dance



# England (cont'd)

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## ■ Musical theater (cont'd)

- Italian elements
  - several arias, three ground bass
  - Dido's lament, *When I am laid in earth* (NAWM 89b), descending tetrachord
- English elements
  - use of dance for dramatic purposes
  - solos and choruses in style of English air
  - *With drooping wings* (NAWM 89c), closing chorus, word painting
- English recitatives
  - draws on English and French precedents
  - melodies flexibly molded to accents, pace, emotions of English text



# Ex13-02

Dido

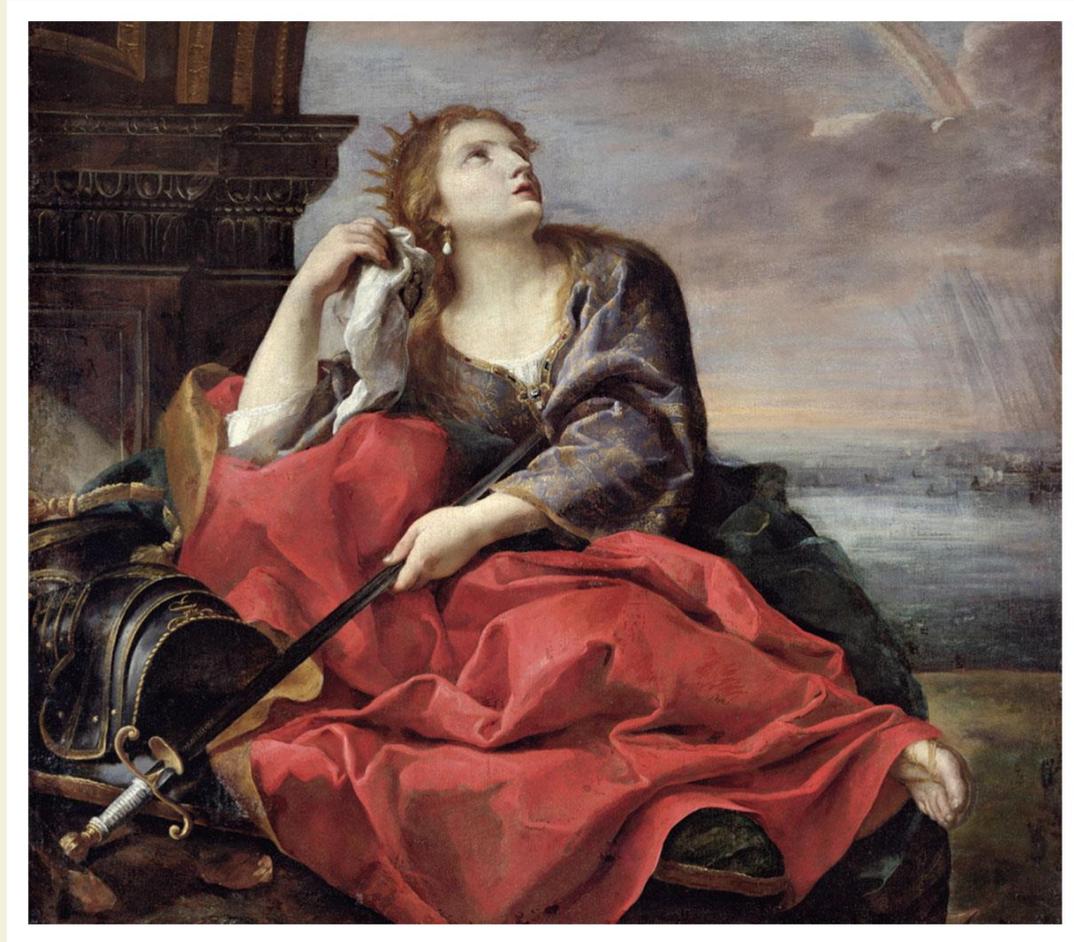
When I am

7  
laid, am laid in earth, may my wrongs create No

12  
trou - ble, no trou - ble in thy breast, 1. When I am



# F13-15





# England (cont'd)

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## ■ Musical theater (cont'd)

- *Thy hand, Belinda* (NAWM 89a): slow, stepwise descent with chromaticism

- dramatic opera, semi-opera

- spoken play with overture, four or more masques or substantial musical episodes
- *The Fairy Queen* (1692)

## ■ Ceremonial and domestic music for voice

- occasional music

- large works for chorus, soloists, orchestra
  - ceremonial or state occasions, commissioned by royal family
  - *Ode for St. Cecilia's Day* (1692), Purcell



# England (cont'd)

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## ■ Ceremonial and domestic music for voice (cont'd)

- vocal solos, duets, trios: published for home performance
  - catch: round or canon, humorous or ribald text, all-male gatherings
- church music
  - principal genres of Anglican church: anthems, services
  - verse anthems for soloists with chorus by Blow, Purcell
  - nonliturgical sacred texts, one or more voices, for private devotional use



# England (cont'd)

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## ■ Public concerts

- 1670s London
  - middle class interested in listening to music
  - large number of excellent musicians; supplemental income
  - public concerts spread to the Continent
    - Paris 1725, major German cities 1740s



# Germany

## ■ Opera

- opera in Italian central to musical life
  - Italian composers, opera careers in Germany
  - German composers took up the genre
- opera in German
  - 1678: first public opera house in Hamburg, Germany
  - Venetian librettos translated or adapted
  - Italian style recitative; eclectic arias
  - French style airs and dances
  - short strophic songs, popular style of northern Germany



# Germany (cont'd)

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## ■ Opera (cont'd)

- Reinhard Keiser (1674–1739): foremost prolific German opera composer
- Georg Philipp Telemann (1681–1767)
  - 1722–1738: directed the Hamburg opera
  - prolific composer: over 3,000 vocal and instrumental works, every genre and style of the era
  - more widely published and popular than J .S. Bach
  - *Paris Quartets* (1730): also referred to as suites, sonatas, concertos
    - versatility of structure and instrumentation
    - three instruments and basso continuo



# Germany (cont'd)

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## ■ Lutheran vocal music

- two conflicting church tendencies
  - Orthodox Lutherans: favored choral and instrumental music
  - Pietists: distrusted high art in worship
  - distinct genres: elaborate works for public worship, devotional songs for private use
- chorales: new poems and melodies
  - private devotions at home
- concerted church music, sacred concertos
  - concerted vocal ensemble, biblical text
  - solo aria, Italian style, strophic, nonbiblical text



# F13-16





# Germany (cont'd)

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## ■ Lutheran vocal music (cont'd)

- chorales set in concertato medium, or simple harmonies
- today referred to as cantatas
- Dieterich Buxtehude and Johann Pachelbel (1653–1706): sacred concertos for chorus, solo voice, orchestra

## • Buxtehude

- organist at Marienkirche in Lübeck
- *Abendmusiken* public concerts at Marienkirche
  - *Wachet auf*: sacred concerto
  - series of chorale variations



# Postlude

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- Recitative and aria most characteristic seventeenth-century style of vocal music
  - Italian recitative: several different varieties
  - French: accommodated patterns of French language
  - da capo aria most important
    - explored particular affection
    - suited to expressions of religious piety



# Postlude (cont'd)

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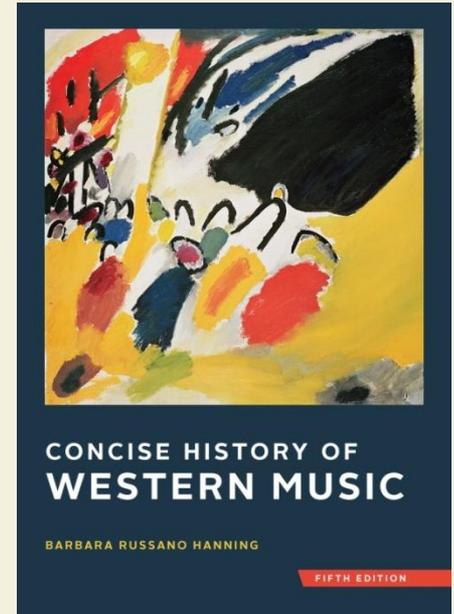
## ■ Important composers (cont'd)

- Alessandro Scarlatti: most forward-looking trends in Italy
- Lully: monopoly over musical stage in France
- Purcell: synthesized French and Italian elements with English styles
- German composers drew on French and Italian styles, blended with German traditions



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This concludes the Lecture Slide Set  
for Chapter 13

by

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