

September 15th, 1691

“My only friend is the lady in the cell opposite me. I think her name is Sarah. All she does is sing, and comb her long black hair. We have never spoken a word.”

December 28th, 1691

“Sarah keep asking about her baby. Finally, one of the nurses could not take it anymore. She screamed at her that the baby was dead by her own hand. Sarah had burned him.

I do not belong here.”

March 12th 1692

“She keeps staring at me. The only good thing about having Sarah as my opposite, is that she is pretty. The visitors are more interested in her than in me...”

1. Introduction - Madness in music

These diary entries could have been from someone in the mental institution of Bedlam. Or by the journalist Nelly Bly who went undercover in the Women's Lunatic Asylum on Blackwell's Island at the end of the 19th century. The patients Bly met, would not have been very different from the ones one could observe in Bedlam in the 17th century. The three entries above are in fact my own, as I attempted to get in the mind-set of the desperation, loneliness and fear that could have given inspiration for the music and the texts produced around the theme of madness in this time. In the 17th century, madness was a relatively common theme to use in entertainment such as poetry, theatre, music and other forms of entertainment. There was something fascinating about the uncontrollable nature of madness, and there were several writers and composers who dealt with this subject. In this study, I have chosen to highlight two "Mad songs" by Henry Purcell and Thomas d'Urfey. With this I want to see if I, a relatively sane person, can portray madness convincingly. Feelings such as love, hate, envy, sadness and happiness are feelings most of us have felt in our life, but madness is maybe a state that is exclusive to some people. Can I then portray this convincingly?

My motivation for writing this research paper is a personal interest in the area. As a singer there have been times where I have struggled with technique and performance. When I discovered Purcell's music I quickly found the solution to many of the problems I experienced, and I have learned a lot through Purcell's music and d'Urfey's texts. I therefore wanted to go deeper into the theories and thoughts behind the music and text, so that I can better understand the material that have helped me, and that I have learned so much from. This paper will therefore be focused on the road to a better performance. How can one use the text, music and historical context of the time it was written as well as the time I will be performing it in, to inform the performance?

The theoretical part of this research exposition will start with an introduction of the institution of Bedlam, the likely source of inspiration for "From Rosy Bowers" and "Let the Dreadful Engines". Then I will continue with a chapter about how madness and the perception of madness has changed throughout history, before a brief introduction on Purcell and d'Urfey. After this the section of my own research will follow, with an analysis of the text and the music in "From Rosy Bowers" and "Let the Dreadful Engines", before saying something about the general signs of madness in this music. Lastly, I will show how I made the

connection between the historically informed way of performing and the modern way including a recording of “From Rosy Bowers”, and the exposition will end with my conclusions.