

2. Research question

How can one, convincingly, portray madness in a musical performance without actually being in a state of madness?

To be able to answer my research question in a satisfactory way, I also used some working questions to help me navigate and structure the research. The questions are:

- Where did the composers and writers get their inspiration for the “Mad songs” from?
- What musical and literary tools did Henry Purcell and Thomas d'Urfey use to show madness in their pieces?
- How does one prepare to sing such a song in modern times?

Within the category of “Mad songs”, there are several different pieces of Purcell and d'Urfey one can choose from. When I started the research, I chose to compare, analyse and prepare the pieces “From Rosy Bowers” and “Mad Bess/Bess of Bedlam”. After writing the analysis of both pieces, I came to the conclusion that they were too similar, and that I would not be able to show different aspects of madness in the music, text and performance. I therefore chose to replace “Mad Bess/Bess of Bedlam” with “Let the Dreadful Engines”. Both “From Rosy Bowers” and “Let the Dreadful Engines” are from “The comical History of Don Quixote”. By choosing these pieces I was able to compare the differences and similarities in the way madness is presented in the music between the genders. I have, however, only recorded “From rosy Bowers” to demonstrate my findings.

My main sources for this research have been “Henry Purcell and the London Stage” by Curtis A. Price, “Madness in Civilization: A Cultural History of Insanity from the Bible to Freud, from Madhouse to Modern Medicine” by Andrew Scull and “The Baroque Composers - Henry Purcell” by Peter Holman. I have also used secondary sources to support the statements and theories that you will read about in this research paper. These sources are disclosed in the bibliography.

In this research paper I will discuss various aspects of the 17th century perception of insanity. I therefore wish to shine a critical light on my own analysis of the text and music in the pieces I

have chosen. This is because it is likely that the perception of madness in the 17th century was different from how we view madness today. This means that I may have overlooked important descriptions of madness, and on the other hand I could have said that something is madness when in fact it was not perceived as such in the time it was written.

During the analysis, I will be referring to different examples. These are small excerpt from the scores illustrating the musical and textual tools I discuss. These excerpts can be found in appendix part 1, as well as be heard in the recordings disclosed on the research catalogue in chapter 9. The scores in their entirety can be found in appendix part 2.