

10. Conclusion

In the second chapter I stated my research question:

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

I also introduced some working questions that would help me navigate through the information that existed and my own findings:

- 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?

I would like to start by answering the working questions, before concluding on the main research question.

Where did the composers and writers get their inspiration for the “Mad songs” from?

I managed to find the answer to this through historical documents and information gathered from people such as C. A. Price (Price, 1984) and P. Holman (Holman, 1995). As far as I can tell it is very likely that they found their inspiration from the mental institution of Bedlam. This information ended up playing a bigger role in the research than I had expected it to, and it really helped with the analysis of the pieces and recording.

What musical and literary tools did Henry Purcell and Thomas d'Urfey use to show madness in their pieces?

This question was answered through a thorough analysis of the music and text of “From Rosy Bowers” and “Let the Dreadful Engines”. The main musical and literary tool I found Purcell and d'Urfey used the most was unpredictability. As I also state in chapter 8 “How is madness presented in the music?”, the unpredictability with the context, text and the visual means used in a performance is what makes the listener perceive it as madness. One of the musical or literary tools alone is not necessarily perceived as madness.

How does one prepare to sing such a song in modern times?

I prepared by reading, writing this research and making up my mind on what I believed

madness to be. What I discovered early on in the process of making my own recording was the value of making my own choices. I took all the information I have gathered over the duration of writing this research exposition, and I put it together in a recording that I feel I can stand for. It has my musical and staging choices in the forefront and I am happy with the way I prepared and implemented the historical knowledge and my modern life.

Finally, I would like to conclude on my main research question:

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

As I have already stated in this research exposition, madness is something that is perceived very differently from person to person. However, I would say it is possible to portray madness in a performance without being in a state of madness if you follow the musical and literary tools I have written about. These tools, with either a 21st century or 17th century societal and historical context, will help greatly in a performance of this music.

After doing this research, I feel I know the “Mad songs”, Purcell and d’Urfey, and myself a whole lot better. It has made me realise how much time and work actually goes into knowing a piece and its context fully. This kind of in depth study is not something that, time-wise, can be done for every genre, project or concert I am a part of. But, it is good to know that I can do it if I need or want to, and that the resulting performance will benefit from an in-depth study.