

8. How is madness presented in the music?

- What makes "Mad Songs" into "Mad Songs"?

When I sing Purcell's music, it is clear that this is an intricate mix where text, notes and action work closely together. The text, in its dramatic context, was what Purcell had to base his music on, and in a way confirm with musical tools. This is the case in both "From Rosy Bowers" and "Let the Dreadful Engine", where Purcell uses music to illustrate d'Urfeys stories. Music is a good way of emphasizing the meaning of the text, where one can express the text in a different way than to recite it. This is one of the reasons why we can find many examples of madness illustrated in song, but it is not always understood that it is madness being portrayed without the dramatic context. Dramatic context here meaning the storyline of the play, the time the music and text is written in and how the composer and writer defines madness. None of the signs of madness that I want to show are tantamount to madness, but together they create an impression of madness that I, and other performers, can easily understand.

When I look for commonalities in songs about madness, I would say that the most obvious aspect is the sense of unpredictability and rapid shifts in the state of mind of the character. In Purcell's music I have found several pieces, both within the category "Mad Songs" and other categories, where he writes with changing emotions and styles. Unpredictability as a musical tool is therefore not tantamount to madness, but is something that in the right context creates an atmosphere that makes you perceive it as madness. In the pieces "From Rosy Bowers" and "Let the dreadful engines", d'Urfey and Purcell includes a very large range of emotions, which often contradict one another. First, it can be the greatest pleasure in the world before it suddenly goes into a heart-breaking pain and sorrow. The major shifts in style and emotions are reflected in both the melodies and the harmonies that are used. (Appendix part 1, Example 2)

As previously mentioned, the text of these "Mad songs" is characterized by large shifts in emotion and theme. The way Purcell illustrates this is through word painting and rhythm. Examples of these are suspensions that creates a friction on one particular word (Appendix part 1, Example 3 and 4), or that he highlights special parts of the text by, for example, dividing words and phrases with pauses to create tension (Appendix part 1, Examples 5 and

6). The illustrations of the text are often written in an exaggerated and overly clear way, which also can be said is something that characterizes madness.

The musicologist Curtis A. Price has written about a theory that Purcell used specific keys to highlight certain emotions. Price believes that Purcell used G Minor to portray death and the erotic, F Minor was the key of fear, C Minor to accentuate the feeling of something mysterious, melancholic or serious. E Minor was the key he used in order to bring out the divine and religious beliefs. If he would write a fanfare of trumpets or something that was triumphant he used the C and D Major (Price, 1984). As Price himself writes, one cannot know with certainty whether Purcell wrote in this way deliberately or whether it was coincidence, but it is not hard to find evidence that the specific keys were used to show the same feelings in different pieces (Holman, 1995).

In several places in "From Rosy Bowers" and "Let the dreadful engines" one can find similarities in Prices theory and the way these pieces are written. C and D Major is used to show pleasure and/ or triumph (Appendix part 1, Example 7 and 8), C Minor is used to accentuate melancholy (Appendix part 1, Example 9 and 10). He also uses G Minor, with accidentals and not a key change, to underline Altisidoras thoughts when she sings that she would rather die than live in this terrible grief (Appendix part 1, Example 11). As previously mentioned, one cannot know with certainty whether this was a conscious choice or not, but given that this is something that repeats itself not only in the "From Rosy Bowers" and "Let the dreadful engines" but also in other pieces by Purcell, I believe that it is something he consciously used to define a state of mind in the different parts of the text. When listening to for example these two pieces, it is not difficult to imagine the feelings he wanted to portray, using the specific keys he chose.