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# The Origin and Development of the Italian Aria in the Baroque Period

Richard M. Houser  
*Central Washington University*

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The DEPARTMENT OF MUSIC  
CENTRAL WASHINGTON STATE COLLEGE

## presents in Graduate Recital

RICHARD HOUSER, baritone  
MRS. WAYNE HERTZ, piano

### PROGRAM

#### I

Si, tra i ceppi, from "Berenice".....George Frederick Handel  
O del mio amato ben.....Stefano Donaudy  
Tu lo sai.....Giuseppe Torelli  
Vittoria mio core.....Giacomo Carissimi

#### II

Plaisir d'amour.....Giovanni Martini  
Te souviens - tu?.....Benjamin Godard  
L'amour de moi (15th Century Song).....arr. Julien Tiersot  
Chanson Bachique, from "Hamlet".....A. Thomas

#### III

Von ewiger Liebe.....Johannes Brahms  
Du bist die ruh'.....Franz Schubert  
Adelaide.....Ludwig van Beethoven

### INTERMISSION

#### IV

Prologue: Si puo? from "Pagliacci".....R. Leoncavallo

#### V

Recitative: Be comforted  
Air: The Lord worketh wonders, from "Judas Maccabaeus".....  
George Frederick Handel

#### VI

Blow, ye winds.....arr. Celius Dougherty  
Sure on this shining night.....Samuel Barber  
What you gonna do when the meat gives out?.....arr. Celius Dougherty  
Life .....Pearl Curran

**Wayne S. Hertz Music Hall**  
**August 13, 1964**  
**8:00 P.M.**

**NOTE:** This program has been presented by Richard Houser in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master in Education degree with a major in Music Education.

THE ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE ITALIAN ARIA  
IN THE BAROQUE PERIOD

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A Covering Paper

Presented to

the Graduate Faculty

Central Washington State College

In Conjunction with a Graduate Voice Recital

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In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Education

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by

Richard M. Houser

August 1964

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THIS PAPER IS APPROVED AS MEETING  
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CONJUNCTION WITH A GRADUATE VOICE  
RECITAL FOR THE COMPLETION OF A  
THESIS.

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Wayne Hertz  
FOR THE GRADUATE FACULTY

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J. Haruda

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M. Pettit

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

The aria of the Italian opera which originated in the Baroque period became, and is still considered in modern times, one of the most treasured and accepted forms of music. It has become standard literature in the singer's repertory not only in the opera itself, but also on the concert stage throughout the world.

Like many other forms of art, the aria was not developed in a day, but through many years of trial and experimentation by composers who had the inspiration and insight to seek something new and place it before the public. Their conception of its style and form down through the years was a reflection of the social milieu of the time of which it was a part. Because of this "seasoning" of its form and style, and orderly growth through the years, it may be the reason why today it is considered as something with lasting quality and a high degree of aesthetic value.

#### I. DEFINITION OF TERMS USED

Aria. An elaborate and often lengthy solo song (sometimes for two solo voices) with instrumental accompaniment (1:49). The aria developed from the expansion of a single melody (2:340).

Recitative. A vocal style designed to imitate and to emphasize the natural inflections of speech. It is usually employed in connection with prose texts of a more or less narrative character, particularly in opera in which it served to carry on the action from one aria to another (1:629).

Arioso. A vocal style midway between recitative and aria, possessing something of the character of each (9:128).

Basso continuo (thorough - bass) (Figured bass). A method of indicating an accompanying part by the bass notes only, together with figures designating the chief intervals and chords to be played above the bass notes (1:745).

Monody. Accompanied solo song (10:130).

Homophonic. Indicated music for a principal melodic line supported to a greater or lesser extent by chords or chordal combinations, opposed to polyphonic (4:102).

Polyphonic. Consisting of two or more independently treated parts, contrapuntal (4:155).

Bel Canto. (beautiful singing) The term denotes the Italian vocal technique of the eighteenth century with its emphasis on beauty of sound and brilliancy of performance (1:82).

Strophic. A song where all stanzas are sung to the same melody, opposed to through-composed.



Through composed. Denotes songs in which new music is provided for each stanza, opposed to strophic (1:746).

Cavatina. A short solo song simpler in style than the aria and without repetition of words or phrases (1:125).

Da capo. Repeat from the beginning.

Ritornello. An instrumental interlude preceding or following after an aria (1:647).

Motto. The initial presentation of a musical motive, either with instrument or voice, before the beginning of an aria for the function of setting up the rhythmic and melodic pattern (6:132).

Stile rappresentativo. A term implying the style of recitative.

Parlando. In singing, an indication that the voice must approximate speech: in a way, "spoken speech", as distinguished from the "musical speech" of the recitative (1:554).

## II. STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

The purpose of this paper is to study and identify the pertinent factors that established the operatic aria as a vocal solo form, to discover how these factors were applied and developed by the various composers of the Baroque period, and to gain a perspective of its historical value in music.

## CHAPTER II

### HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

If one were to take a general survey of operatic history in the seventeenth century, it would be seen at once that the main line of its development lay in Italy. Even though later in the Baroque period other countries contributed much to the opera, Italy remained an influential power in its development (5:7).

In order to discuss the origin and development of the Italian aria, it is necessary to examine briefly the historical aspects and growth of some of the song forms of the Renaissance which existed prior to the aria and led up to its inception. In addition, it is necessary to discuss some of the views and trends which characterized the Baroque period in Italy. The latter is discussed later in this chapter. There is considerable evidence that there was a definite move towards homophonic concepts and monody which eventually led to the aria form by way of the opera.

The Baroque period is commonly accepted as being between 1600 and 1750 for most all countries in Europe except Italy. The sixteenth century of the Italian Renaissance saw the culmination of vocal polyphony reach a high degree of perfection, and because of this, it has

sometimes been referred to as "The Golden Age of Polyphony" (11:36).

Secular vocal music, long overshadowed by religious forms, greatly increased in importance. Italy, which became a leader in the music world during this period, contributed a great wealth of secular music in various forms, and led the way to monody. One of the most important forms to develop in the Renaissance and become an important link in the evolution of vocal music is the frottola, which originated in northern Italy from a dance form. It is a lyrical song, generally with the melody in the upper voice and an accompaniment of two or three lower parts which followed in chords rather than in contrapuntal style. The lower parts were either played on one or several instruments or else sung (11:43).

A form related to the frottola is the canzona villanesca or villanella which came from southern Italy about the middle of the sixteenth century. It is similar in style, but its texts were generally more refined and the music a little more sophisticated than the frottola. The frottola was often written and performed as a paradistic reaction against the sophisticated refinement of the Italian madrigal, an important sixteenth century form, first published about 1533 (13:171). The later development of the madrigal revealed a transition from polyphonic to homophonic treatment with more use of solo voices. It was

meant to be performed as a refined vocal chamber number with three or four and up to five voice parts. Extensive use of chromaticism was employed in the later madrigal and it became characterized by a new dramatic expression and a certain amount of virtuosity (11:44).

Claudio Monteverdi (1567-1643) is considered the most famous Italian composer in the development of this form.

Also worthy of mention in the move toward the monodic style is the canzonetta which also became an important link in the late sixteenth century. It is a short vocal piece written for only two or three voice parts in a rather light vein. It has much the character of a dance song with its lively rhythms and merry texts (1:120).

Toward the end of the sixteenth century the madrigal style was affected by two important factors which influenced composers towards the concept of monody. First, was the simple rhythm and chordal texture of the dance song, the villanella, and canzonetta; and second, the harmonic experiments that destroyed the balance of voices, as in polyphony, which led to the polarity of bass and soprano, as in accompanied solo singing. Both of these factors led to the disintegration of the madrigal and brought with it the "words over harmony" concept (6:33).

Solo singing with lute accompaniment had become a well established practice in the Renaissance period, but as will be seen later,

these songs should not be regarded as true monodies. This is mainly due to the style of accompaniment which was predominantly polyphonic in texture. As Bukofzer points out:

The early examples of solo singing lacked both the harmonically conceived melody and the supporting bass, designed from the outset to carry harmonies. Likewise absent were the affective approach to the word and virtuosic embellishments. Only the aggregate of these characteristics makes solo song a monody (6:25).

The deliberate renunciation of the polyphonic style of the Renaissance period brought to prominence the solo melody with a chordally conceived accompaniment. The rise of the basso continuo in the last quarter of the sixteenth century led to the final establishment of this harmonic conception of music and was to be a most important factor in the development of the aria (7:42).

Another assertion which tends to support this belief states:

Claudio Monteverdi (1567-1643) was instrumental in developing the late madrigal from a polyphonic a cappella style to an accompanied solo with basso continuo. The solo madrigal as well as other solo types, . . . led to the seventeenth-century aria (9:34).

## I. THE BAROQUE PERIOD

In Italy, the beginning and end of the Baroque period differed somewhat from that of other countries in Europe. The Baroque era for Italy seemed to have begun from ten to twenty years earlier, and has

generally been divided into three major sub-periods overlapping to some degree. The first period, the early Baroque, ranged from 1580 to 1630, the middle Baroque from 1630 to 1680, and the last period or late Baroque from 1680 to 1730 (9:43).

In order to have a clearer understanding of the influences and trends which figured in the development of the aria, a brief characterization of the three periods will serve to note their differences with regard to style. In early Baroque the opposition to counterpoint prevailed. The interpretation of the words in free rhythm was realized in the recitative. With this, there appeared a desire for dissonance. The harmony was experimental and chords were not yet tonally directed, bringing about a lack of sustained movement; and, consequently, forms were on a small scale and sectional. The period also began to see the differentiation of vocal and instrumental idioms, with vocal music being primary (6:17).

The most important feature in the middle Baroque was the bel canto style in the cantata and opera, and with it the distinction between recitative and aria. This distinction was brought on by a reaction against the tediousness of the recitative. The aria was coordinated with, rather than subordinated to, the words (9:45). The modes were reduced to major and minor, and vocal and instrumental music were of equal importance (6:17).

In the late Baroque period the aria reached a high degree of organization and stylization (7:186). Other music as well as the aria had a fully established tonality, that is, a tonal system with a tonal center created by chords grouped around a common keynote. Forms in this era grew to large dimensions and vocal music was firmly established (15:240, 241).

The Baroque period was the age in which the opera, as we know it today, was conceived and developed to a highly accepted form of entertainment. The aria itself was conceived as a vehicle for expressing musically this new concept of drama.

The schools of opera such as the Florentine, Roman, Venetian, and Neapolitan operas that existed in Italy during the Baroque period, can roughly be sub-divided and placed in the three main periods outlined and discussed previously. The Florentine school, where opera had its beginning, belongs to the early Baroque period, whereas the Venetian opera flourished during the middle Baroque. It could be said that Roman opera bridged the two periods in the years from 1620 to 1650 (15:221). In the late Baroque, the style of the Neapolitan school prevailed.

## CHAPTER III

### THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE ARIA

It has been seen from the previous chapter that the trend towards solo song with accompaniment developed from the earlier Italian forms in the Renaissance. And it was a treatise by Galilei, to be discussed later, which brought to a head the movement toward true monody. The new forms of solo songs that developed in Italy were strongly influenced by those composers who were instrumental in bringing about the rise of the opera. The first operas had their roots in the monodies written at the end of the sixteenth century. These had two main styles: the first tending towards stile rappresentativo or recitative, the second towards that of the early type of operatic aria (14:293).

The emergence of the recitative, and a little later the aria, in the first part of the seventeenth century has often been regarded as the most important turning point in the entire history of music (6:25). These two forms were to become a new mode of expression through musical drama which has survived to this day.

#### I. EARLY BAROQUE

Composers, forms and styles. About 1580 a group of men known as the Florentine Camerata (Society) began meeting for the purpose of



reviving the classic drama of Greek tragedy. They felt that Greek tragedy was essentially a lyric art which demanded, in moments of great emotional stress, instrumental accompaniment as well as dramatic declamation to bring out the text. Among these men was the virtuoso singer Giulio Caccini (c. 1545-1618), the poet Rinuccini (1562-1612), the singer-composer Jacopo Peri (1561-1633), the composer Emilio de ' Cavalieri (c. 1550-1602), and Vincenzo Galilei (1520-1591) who was a composer, lutenist and theorist. It was Galilei, who in 1581, published a treatise which attacked the elaborate polyphonic and imitative style of the Renaissance - "because it can neither render words clearly nor express with sufficient subtlety or force the emotions of the text" (8:128, 129). In the place of the old style, Galilei advocated a style consisting of a single vocal line that follows closely the natural accents and inflections of the text, supported by a series of simple instrumental chords. Also, from Galilei's treatise, the singer is expected to deliver the vocal line with great feeling and, if they are not actually written down, to improvise ornaments on the more important words (8:129).

Peri and Caccini, both excellent singers, were the most active musical members of the Camerata. Peri is credited with composing the first opera, Dafne (1597), now lost. This score undoubtedly

contained the new style of singing, however, with the exception of two fragments which did survive, neither serves to give too much of an idea of its monodic style (7:45).

Perhaps the earliest remaining examples of Florentine monody are found in Caccini's Nuove musiche, published in 1601, but actually written about 1588. The music in this collection consists of arias (strophic) and madrigals (through-composed) for solo voice with accompaniment of a lute or other stringed instrument employing a figured bass. Grout makes this comment:

The music is in the stile recitativo ("reciting style") which, unlike the stile rappresentativo ("theatre style") of the operas, permits a more symmetrical organization of phrases and a certain amount of text repetition and vocal embellishment - in other words, a free arioso type of melody. The arias have simpler and more regular rhythms than the madrigals (7:46).

The origination of the aria form was beginning to show in these new works by early Baroque composers, although it was far from being the aria as it is known today.

Soon after Dafne, the first opera, Peri and Caccini in 1600, both set music to a poem of Rinuccini's Euridice. The action in both of these operas is carried on by solo voices in the new Florentine theatre style, or stile rappresentativo, which consisted of a melody line supported by a ground bass. They were not so formal as an aria or

even an arioso, and the recitative was not at all like those of the eighteenth and nineteenth-century Italian opera, which employed many repeated notes at very rapid tempos. The operatic monody of Peri and Caccini are different. As Grout points out:

Its basis is an absolutely faithful adherence to the natural rhythms, accents, and inflections of the text, following it in these respects even to the extent of placing a full cadence regularly at the end of every verse--an insistent and annoying mannerism. It presents no organized independent melodic structure, and when considered apart from the words appears almost meaningless. It is there solely to provide a background of sustained sound to add the ultimate fulfillment of musical delivery to a poetic language already itself more than half music (7:53).

After the establishment of the opera in Florence, the short lived Mantua opera became known with the performance of Monteverdi's first opera, Orfeo in 1607. Monteverdi accepted the stile rappresentativo of the Florentines and at the same time realized the dramatic possibilities of the closed forms, such as the strophic aria, the dance song, instrumental interlude, the madrigal, and other forms (6:58). The aria Possente spirito in Act III of Orfeo is a good example of the florid vocal style of the sixteenth century. There are five strophes each with a different set of embellishments of the melody, and each accompanied by different instruments. The technique of having instruments "compete" or concertize with the voice was employed by Monteverdi and was

later to become an important style of the late seventeenth- and eighteenth-century vocal music. The da capo aria (three part form) which became very highly developed in the Neapolitan school can be seen in Act II in miniature form (7:65). In Monteverdi's second opera, Ariana, performed at Mantua in 1608, the aria Lasciatemi morire! contained the characteristic features of the aria form with all the dramatic and expressive elements. The first arias of Monteverdi were primarily responsible for the decline of the solo madrigal for which he was also famous (9:52).

Where Peri and Caccini, both amateurs, had lost themselves in dry and tedious recitatives, Monteverdi, a professional musician, knew how to give both force and beauty to his music, and to create an emotional atmosphere by skillful modulations and mixing the timbres of instruments for effects (13:210).

The first secular opera at Rome, F. Vitali's Aretusa (1620), marked the beginning of Roman opera. This opera showed no advance over the earlier works of Peri and Caccini. The first signs of departure from the Florentine ideal can be found in the works of Domenico Mazzocchi of the Roman school (7:69). In 1626 the preface to Mazzocchi's opera La Catena d'Adone (The Chain of Adonis) spoke for the first time of the tediousness of the recitative. This attitude soon

became widespread. As Sachs explains:

The melodic qualities of the recitative could not be much enhanced without jeopardizing its speech-like qualities, and thus a splitting into two opposite forms was the natural way out. Melodic singing consolidated more and more in the well-wrought form of the aria, and recitativic singing became an even quicker parlando without melodic ambitions (13:224).

Musically, La Catena d'Adone is important in the aria's development for its distinction between recitatives and arias, the former becoming less significant musically, while the aria begins to be organized into clear-cut sections and to have a distinct melodic contour (7:70).

It could be said that the first chapter of operatic history had been closed when Stefano Landi, another Roman composer, performed his Sant' Alessio in 1634. While Florentine and Mantuan operas were basically mythological subjects, Sant' Alessio was the first opera to be written about the inner life of human character. The aria of Alessio shows a clear conception of form and tonality in the modern sense (7:70). In addition, melodious da capo arias were included in distinct ABA form. The aria was fast becoming a separate entity which could be used for many purposes and effects in opera, referred to later in the chapter.

## II. MIDDLE BAROQUE

Composers, forms and styles. Opera, up to this point, was performed primarily for court entertainment and for that reason was kept somewhat refined and sophisticated (7:84). In Venice, however, in 1637, one of the biggest events in the history of opera had occurred. The first public opera house had been opened and opera was no longer exclusive property of the courts. From that decisive event, and from the last operas of Monteverdi, Venetian opera can be dated. Venetian opera was in many respects much more classical than the earlier Florentine, Mantuan, and Roman operas, although the latter was still going strong in the early part of the middle Baroque. As Sachs points out:

The typically classical longing for sharply outlined forms led to a distinct separation of recitatives and arias, to a liking for clear-cut folksongs, and to a re-awakening, genuinely Italian delight in beautiful singing (13:226).

The last point to which Sachs refers was brought about mainly in a reaction against the monotonous recitative of the Florentines and resulted in the origination of the bel canto style. This in turn was one of the factors that led to a definite separation between the recitative and the aria. The music in the aria was coordinated with, rather than subordinated to, the words. With the aria a distinct type, the recitative began to assume a more rapid and less melodic character known as

recitativo secco, or "dry" recitative (9:45). It was narrow ranged, sharply accented, irregularly punctuated, semi-musical speech, with many notes sustained only by occasional chords (7:80).

The emergence of the bel canto took place between 1630 and 1640 with Luigi Rossi (1598-1653) in Rome and Francesco Cavalli (1602-1676) in Venice, marking a new period in Italian music. In the bel canto style, Bukofzer explains, "the melody assumed a lilting flow, not impeded by the coloraturas of the singer although florid sections continued to be employed for certain words. Bel canto melodies were more highly polished and less ostentatiously affective than those in the monody" (6:118).

The tendency to emphasize the aria at the expense of the recitative became obvious, although suggested in earlier Roman operas, in the operas of Rossi. In his Il Palazzo incanto (1642) and L'Orfeo (1647) the arias hold the main interest and are clearly defined from the recitative, although recitative and arioso are not clearly distinguished (6:128). Eurydices aria Mio ben employs melismatic figures above an ostinato descending bass figure. The score of Orfeo contains a wide variety of aria forms and types, such as da capo arias, arias with ostinato bass, two-part arias, buffa arias, and many ensembles (7:74, 78).

Cavalli, of the Venetian school, in his early opera Nozze di Teti, made use of the strophic aria form in the lilting rhythm of a stylized dance. The bel canto aria appears well established in his opera Didone (1641) (6:129). Despite the presence of well-marked arias and distinct sections of recitatives, the formal separation of the styles is by no means complete in the operas of Cavalli (7:95).

The comic opera or opera buffa had its start in the Roman school. It is important in the development of the aria as it is possible to observe clearly some of the standardized forms into which the aria, in both serious and comic opera, was settling down during the last half of the seventeenth century. La Tancia by Jacopo Melani performed in 1657 at Florence is a good cross-section and example of aria forms that were being established. Grout has divided these forms into three groups:

1) Strophic songs, in which the solo part may be either literally repeated for each stanza or more or less varied. The style in many of these is comparatively light and simple. . . There is usually an orchestral ritornello or a short section of recitative between the stanzas.

2) Through-composed arias. These show a wide variety of types, both serious and comic, but all have a broader formal pattern and are less regular in melodic and rhythmic structure than the strophic songs. They consist of a number of sections, each ending with a full cadence. . . and separated by orchestral ritornellos . . . of thematic material. Sometimes, however, the second section may be more contrasting, followed by a repetition of the first, resulting in a three-part form . . .



Arias of this second group represent the main channel of development of operatic style in the later seventeenth century. In the course of time the formal scheme is expanded. The orchestra enters into the accompaniment proper as well as the ritornellos, concertizing instruments appear, a fully developed da capo form gradually replaces the simple two-part structure, and eventually a number of stereotype develop-arias of definite categories, each distinguished by certain stylistic procedures and appearing in the opera in a more or less rigidly fixed order of succession. This final degree of stylization, however, is not achieved until the early part of the eighteenth century.

3) Arias over an ostinato bass. Most arias of this group are serious in mood and belong to a recognized group known as the Lamento . . . They are most often in triple metre, with slow tempo, and the usual bass figure is the passacaglia theme consisting of a diatonic or chromatic stepside descent of a fourth from the tonic to the dominant, or some variant of this (7:81-82).

In the Venetian school, of which Monteverdi had become a part, he too, had discarded the endless flow of the early recitatives and mythological subjects for more dramatical contrasts (13:225). In his two Venetian operas, Il ritorno d' Ulesse in patria (The Return of Ulysses to His Country, 1641) and L' incoronazione de Poppea (The Coronation of Poppea, 1642) Monteverdi once again returned to modern concepts keeping up with latest developments, In Il ritorno the recitative frequently gives way to short arias, mostly in triple meter and strophic form. There are several arias on a ground bass and elaborate coloraturas for the parts of the gods and goddesses (7:87). From a dramatic viewpoint Poppea may be considered a model of the new class

of operas. Prunieres describes them as follows:

The action is spread over a great number of scenes which are divided into three acts. Arias and songs succeed each other, linked together by ariosi and recitatives with such skill that the impression remains, not of a mosaic of separate pieces, but of a homogeneous whole (12:209-10).

Marc' Antonio Cesti (1623-1669), another outstanding composer in the Venetian era, brought to music a more highly developed sense of melodic form than his predecessors (12:213). He endowed his arias with a solemn hymn-like tone in the tradition of the bel canto style. The majority of his aria forms were of the strophic type although he wrote many basso continuo arias which outnumbered those with obbligato accompaniment. Many of Cesti's arias contained a motto beginning, its primary function being that of setting the rhythmic and melodic pattern of the aria. Also, it was used to establish the dramatic situation in that the first words summarized the whole aria text (6:132). Cesti's most famous work was Il pomo d'oro (The Golden Apple) in which he includes a number of da capo arias.

Although the arias became to be the best-known parts of an Italian opera, they were, in fact, the final contribution to the operatic form in Venice. Originally they were additions to the story told musically by means of the new declamatory style of singing (16:51). But in the Venetian era they had become well established da capo and

strophic forms, distinctly separate from the recitative. While the recitative carried the story and the dramatic action, the aria became important as a medium for static display and served as sort of a momentary delay or interruption of the action in the drama. The artistic perfection, however, of the aria and of the distinction between aria and recitative was yet to come.

### III. LATE BAROQUE

Composers, forms and styles. As discussed in Chapter II, around the year 1680 marked the turning point in the history of music which coincides with the beginning of the late Baroque period. It is characterized by the establishment of the system of chordal relations between a tonal center (the tonic triad in major or minor) and the other triads of the diatonic scale which brought the feeling of one certain key. It was also characterized in Italy by rise of the Neapolitan school in opera.

In this regard Bukofzer states:

It is precisely the use of tonality in the late Baroque that connects this period more closely than any other with the living musical repertory of today . . . It emerged at approximately the same time in the Neapolitan opera . . . (6:219).

At this time the center of operatic activity passed from Venice to Naples. Prunieres describes the conditions that prevailed during the

early part of the period in the following passage:

About 1690 we see the triumph of melodic plasticity. Beauty of proportion is now the main consideration, little importance being attached to the quality or even the sense, of the text. What counts is the virtuoso's entry and display. Should any piece in the score not please him, he simply replaces it by another from his repertory (12:217).

Sachs also describes this period very vividly in the following:

The recitative, once the backbone of the opera as the carrier of all dramatic and epic phases, lost more and more of its character, descended to an unemotional, hasty, matter-of-fact parlando with a few routine chords on the harpsichord--the so-called recitativo secco, or 'dry' recitative--and was eventually left to the haphazard improvisation of the singers themselves. The aria, in the da capo form ABA, was given almost exclusive rights--so much so that contemporaries sneeringly spoke of the Neapolitan opera as a "bundle of arias"; and with the undramatic stress on well-wrought, lyrical, and heavily ornamented melodies, the interest inevitably shifted to the sensuous beauty and acrobatic virtuosity of the voice--the bel canto--and to the singers themselves, castrati and divas who, incredibly arrogant, imposed their will and whim on conductors, stage-directors, and the very composers (13:242).

The aria, especially the da capo, became highly developed and attained great perfection during the Neapolitan period. Grout explains the essential features of the Neapolitan opera with the following three points:

(1) the variety and degree of stylization of aria types, (2) a corresponding looseness of structure in the opera as a whole, and (3) the importance of the singer not only as an interpreter but also as a creative partner of the composer (7:185).

The arias became classified according to various types each having distinct characteristics.

Aria cantabile; relatively slow expressing tender feeling with simple through-bass accompaniment. Melody was so contrived as to afford frequent opportunities for the singer to improvise with ornamentation (3:197).

Aria de portamento; also in slow tempo, but rhythm more strongly marked than Aria cantabile. Its melody was more symmetrical, and was interspersed with sustained and swelling notes allowing few opportunities for embellishments. The melody, flowing and graceful, expressed dignity rather than passion. The accompaniment was a simple thorough-bass, with one or two violins used for the ritornelli (3:197).

Aria di mezzo carattere; capable of expressing greater depths of passion than either of the above two. It was usually andante in tempo with the second part sung a little faster than the first and a return to original tempo at the da capo. Its accompaniment was rich and varied which included a full string band (3:197).

Aria parlante; was declamatory in character and therefore better adapted for the expression of deep passion or violent motion of any kind. The accompaniments exhibited a great variety of instrumentation and sometimes very elaborate (3:197).

Aria di bravura, or d'agilita; usually allegro and filled with brilliant and rapid passages patterned to display the utmost powers of the singer (3:198).

Aria a'imitazione; many varieties of descriptive pieces, such as war-like airs with trumpet obligato, hunting songs with horn accompaniment, echo songs with obligato flute passages or vocal trills suggestive of the warbling of birds (9:47).

Aria all' unisono; the instruments supported the voice in unisons or octave (9:47).

Aria concertata; similar to the aria di mezzo carattere or parlante with usually a more elaborate accompaniment (9:47).

Aria senza accompagnamento; an aria without accompaniment (9:47).

Cavatina; is distinguished from all other types by the absence of a second part and its attendant da capo. It is rather short simpler in style than the aria, with no repetition of the words (3:198) (1:125).

Alessandro Scarlatti (1660-1725) is considered by most musicologists to be the founder of the Neapolitan school. Although not one of his 114 operas exist in complete form today, his opera style brought two important innovations to the forefront: (1) the development of continuo-homophony, and (2) the transfer of the concerto style to the aria. He is also responsible for the standardization of the da capo aria form. The separation between secco recitative and aria became absolute with the former being given a more elaborate accompaniment (6:24). The secco recitative, accompanied only by the continuo, carried the details of the dramatic plot and in effect became the means of expounding the dramatic element. The aria, on the other hand, concerned itself with the character's emotional reaction to the drama or his reflections about it. It was musical rather than dramatic, often impeding instead of furthering the progress of the plot.

In the later operas of Scarlatti, notably Tigrane (1717) and La Griselda (1721), the arias were often set in concerto style. Melodies, instrumentally conceived, were characterized by strict and concise rhythm figures with running passages in the bars and rapid harmonic changes. The secco recitative was often replaced by an orchestrally accompanied recitative and here developed the antiphonal interplay between voice and orchestra which heightens the musical interest of the recitative (15:241).

To relate the high degree of organization and of stylization which the aria reached in this period, Grout has this to say:

There were other conventions as well, notably the one which decreed that practically every aria must be in the da capo form. Even the order and distribution of the different types were prescribed: every performer was to have at least one aria in each act, but no one might have two arias in succession; no aria could be followed immediately by another of the same type, even though performed by a different singer; the subordinate singers must have fewer and less important arias than the stars; and so on (7:186).

As has been mentioned before there had developed a certain looseness of structure in the opera as a whole during this period due to the over concentration on the aria. The name attached to this type of opera in which arias were literally patched together and altered in haphazard fashion was the pasticcio opera. Sometimes the scores of several different composers and librettos of as many librettists would be

patched together and produced as one musical score (7:188). As a result the aria became the center of the opera and was the vehicle for which the singer was glorified. The opera was seldom performed the same way twice.

Unquestionably one of the greatest composers of Italian opera in the late Baroque is George F. Handel (1685-1759) who wrote between 1712 and 1741, thirty six operas in London (1:511). With few exceptions, Handel's opera arias follow the da capo form, but within this framework, several types exist. In many of his arias the main principle was the musical development of one or two basic motives, by voice and instruments jointly, in a continuous flow and organized by clear key schemes and systematic use of sequences. Handel was not an inventor of forms and styles in opera; he merely accepted the forms he found but filled them with his own ideas (7:171).

The da capo aria reached its highest point of development in the works of Johann Hasse (1699-1783) an Italianized German. Another Italianized German, contemporary with Hasse was Karl Graun (1704-1759) whose opera Montezuma appears significant in the development of the Cavatina, defined earlier in the chapter. The cavatinas in Montezuma are in two-part form without repeats. In the eighteenth century the cavatina was used in opposition to the aria as an aria in shorter and simpler form (7:213).



Thus, during the Baroque period, the aria had had its beginning and developed into a highly accepted form of music. Not only was the aria restricted to use in the opera, but as well became equally famous in oratorio and cantata works of the Baroque and later periods.

## CHAPTER IV

### SUMMARY

Although vocal solo singing with accompaniment had become a well established practice prior to the aria, it was not until about 1600 that true monody, a harmonically conceived melody with the emphasis on the text, had begun to take roots. The early style of accompaniment was predominately polyphonic and the text of the soloist was often lost in the interwoven pattern of counterpoint. In monody, the solo melody was supported with a chordally conceived or harmonic accompaniment; the melody line thus having the opportunity to carry the text with a great deal more clarity.

The Camerata scholars, in their lust for the revival of Greek drama, invented a new concept of solo singing, that which would deliver a text with clarity and feeling on a single vocal line with instrumental accompaniment. Peri and Caccini, both members of the Camerata, each wrote an opera using the same libretto in 1600 employing the new concept of monody, the stile rappresentivo or recitative. The aria had not yet been born as the earliest operas consisted wholly of recitative structure. The arioso, another step towards the aria, was developed to add emotional stress and give impetus to certain sections in the opera.

In 1626, Mazzocchi of the Roman school for the first time, spoke of the tediousness of the recitative. Thus, in the course of time monody singing in the opera split into two opposite forms. The recitative remained so as not to jeopardize the speech-like qualities needed for the story and the melodic and flowing line of the aria became an established form. The aria developed rapidly into different types such as the strophic type, light and simple with orchestral retornelli between stanzas. The through-composed arias, a later development, show a wide variety of types, the main one being the da capo which resulted in the popular ABA form.

In the last two operas of Monteverdi in the early 1640's, the aria begins to take on its own identity from the recitative. At this time, the tradition of bel canto style became predominate in arias of the Venetian era and later the Neapolitan school.

The aria became so popular in the Neapolitan period that whole operas consisted of nothing but arias sung by the ever important virtuosos of the day. The aria was developed and expanded into large ABA forms which allowed latitude and flexibility on the part of the singer for improvisation. Many types, each having distinct characteristics from those expressing deep passion to those requiring orchestral imitation to describe the drama, were developed.

Some have said that the aria reached its highest development toward the end of the Baroque period and this may be so. However, it was only the beginning, for it was used extensively in the later periods and has been handed down to present times, still a mainstay in opera.

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