STANLEY SADIE MEMORIAL LECTURE 2016

HANDEL AND LONDON’S PLAYHOUSE STARS

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30 October 1930 – 21 March 2005
JOHN BEARD
(C1717-1791)

Oil, c 1743. Thomas Hudson, Foundling Museum
CATHERINE CLIVE
(1711-1785)

Oil, 1740. Willem Verelst,
Garrick Club
SUSANNAH CIBBER
(1714-1766)

Oil, c. 1748. Thomas Hudson, National Portrait Gallery of London
GEORGE FRIDERIC HANDEL (1685-1759)

Handel holds an open copy of 'Messiah' with the end of the 'Hallelujah' chorus and the beginning of 'I know that my Redeemer liveth'.

Oil, c1750. Attrib. Francis Kyte, Foundling Museum
QUESTIONS TO INVESTIGATE

• What distinguished eighteenth-century stars of the playhouse from Italian opera stars?
• Why would Handel cast Beard, Clive and Cibber to sing his music?
• Can we recognize the imprimateur of a Playhouse star’s persona in Handel’s music?
QUESTIONS TO INVESTIGATE

WHAT DISTINGUISHED EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY STARS OF THE PLAYHOUSE FROM ITALIAN OPERA STARS?
“the Public sphere is conceived as a space for the communicative generation of public opinion, in ways that are supposed to assure (at least some degree of) moral-political validity.”

PERFORMANCE OF HAMLET, THEATRE ROYAL, BATH, ORCHARD STREET, C1775
PRINCIPAL PLAYER STAR PERSONA: WHERE PRIVATE MEETS PUBLIC

Live performance, creation of ‘line’

Memoirs, theatrical accounts

Booksellers, print sellers, portraits, ephemera

Coffee-houses, Taverns

Puffs, press reports
FIRST MALE SINGERS: ITALIAN VERSUS ENGLISH

Anton Maria Zanetti, Nel Catone in Utica / Farinello [Carlo Broschi]. Pen and brown ink, 1729. Fondazione Giorgio Cini
FIRST FEMALE SINGERS: ITALIAN VERSUS ENGLISH

Anton Maria Zanetti, *La Cuzzona* [Francesca Cuzzoni Sandonì]. Pen and brown ink, 1718-32. Fondazione Giorgio Cini

Jeremiah Davison, Oil, [Catherine Clive]. C1735. Longleat Collection
The Beau Monde adore an Eunuch Shrine,
Their Morning Pray’r, O Far-i-llo’s thine,
One G-d, one Songster, they alike partake,
But for the Songster, they’ll their G-d forsake

Where tyrants rule and slaves with joy obey
Let slavish minstrels pour th’enervate lay
To Britons far more noble pleasures spring
In native notes whilst Beard and Vincent sing
- Charles Churchill, The Rosciad (1761)
FIRST SINGERS: ITALIAN VERSUS ENGLISH

And poor S[a]nd[o]ni finds, when e’er ‘tis try’d,
That she’s all over pipe, from side to side;
Her body looks as from the fairies stole,
Enough of carcass to make one large hole;
Where he in love’s wide Bay of Biscay tost,
Hard plys the oar; but ne’er can touch the coast.

— The Contre Temps; or the Rival Queans (London, 1727), 11
FIRST SINGERS: ITALIAN VERSUS ENGLISH

Of all the Arts that sooth the human Breast,
Music (blest Power) the sweetest is confest;
Heightens our Joys, suspends our fiercest Pains:
This each One proves who hears thy heavenly Strains.
WHAT DISTINGUISHED EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY STARS OF THE PLAYHOUSE FROM ITALIAN OPERA STARS?

- Thrill of Performance restricted to audience of royalty and nobility
- No reportage on private life
- Personified in press only largely satire
- Identification of audience with the character and affect represented
- Exclusiveness of repertory to display connoisseurship
- Public access to “it” via performance
- Commodified private self, forged and traded within the public sphere
- Identification of audience members with the star player
- Inclusiveness of repertory to create collective identity
QUESTIONS TO INVESTIGATE

Why would Handel cast Clive, Beard and Cibber to sing his music?
HANDEL: OPERA VS ODE & ORATORIO

By Giovanni Michele Graneri, Royal Theatre of Turin. Oil, 1752. Museo civico d’arte antica 1752

Vocal performance with instruments. c.1740 Etching
WHY CLIVE?

- **FIRST SOPRANO** of London playhouses: “SWEET BIRD” of Drury Lane
- **By 1734 First comedienne**, declared enemy of Italian singers
- **By 1740 heroine in PATRIOT opposition stage works**


“There’s Beard, and there’s Salway, and smart Kitty Clive/ The pleasantest, merriest Mortal alive.”

- Henry Carey, ‘The Beau’s Lamentation for the Loss of Farinelli’ 1738
“Milton Revival” Thomas Arne’s Comus (1738) and Handel

Comus: for Earl of Bridgewater as Lord President of Wales

4 March 1738: Susanna Cibber (the lady, speaking) Clive, Beard, and Cecilia Arne

In Propria Persona Clive role: ‘Euphrosyne’
WHY BEARD?

• Handel tenor 1734-1737
• From 1737: London’s principal payhouse tenor
• Clive’s singing partner - hero in Patriot opposition stage works
• From 1739: scandalous marriage to Lady Henrietta Herbert = income loss
May all English lads like you, Boys, prove on shore, true hearts of gold; To their king, and country, true boys, And be neither bought, nor sold.

Mr. Beard in the Character of a Capt. of a Man of War.

Let the landmen, without party Act like brethren, of the flood, To one cause, alone be hearty, And be that, for Britain's good.
Song “In the Character of a Captain of a Man of War [Admiral Vernon]” sung by John Beard, Drury Lane, 25 March 1740

A Song on the taking of Porto Bello
Sung by Mr. Beard

Come, my Lads with Souls befitting, let us never be dismay'd; Let's revenge the wrongs of Britain, and support her injur'd Trade. The true Spirit of the Nation. In our honest Hearts we bring; True, though in an humble Station, To our Country and our King.

Spain, no longer shall atone, Boys. The free Ocean as her own. For the Time at last is come, Boys. We've their Top-sails lower'd down. Though in Politicks contending, Round & Round they veer about. All their Shifts and Manifesting, We will with our Broadside rout.

3 Hark! the Britsh Cannon-thunders, See my Lads, Six Ships appear. Every Briton acting Wonders, Strikes the Southern World with Fears. Porto Bello saw'd in Story. Now at last submits to Fate; Vernon's Courage gains us Glory. And his mercy proves us Great.

Flute.

May all English Lads like you, Boys. Prove on shore true Hearts of Gold. To their King and Country true, Boys. And be neither bought nor sold. Let the Landsmen without Party. Act like Brethren of the Flood. To one Cause alone be hearty. And be that for Britain Good.

4 Then thro' all the mighty Ocean, Th' English Crew shall Honour find. Far as Wave can feel a motion. Far as Flag can move with Wind. The Insubbing Monarchs shewing More Regard, shall humble be; This Old Truth of Britons knowing. As they're brave, they will be free.
WHY CIBBER?

• 1732-1736 Rivalled Clive as first soprano of London playhouses
• 1736-1738 top ranked tragedienne
• From December 1738: slide, celebrity to notoriety: retires for three and a half seasons
“Between five and six in the Evening, he let down the Turn-up Bed softly, she laid herself upon it, upon her Back, and pulled up her Clothes; her Body was bare. He unbuttoned his Clothes, hung his Bag-wig upon a Sconce, let down his Breeches, took his privy Member in his Hand, and lay down upon her Tryal a Cause for Criminal Conversation (London, 1739), 15.
QUESTIONS TO INVESTIGATE

• Can we recognize the imprimateur of a playhouse star’s persona in Handel’s music?
Political context

Persona: line, skill-set, reputation

topos linked to affect (e.g. siciliano)

representation
“The accompanied Recitative ... I think one of the greatest Beauties in varied Composition... of all whom I ever heard I must give the Palm in this interesting Part of Music to Mr Beard. No Man is so perfectly articulate in the Pronunciation of the Words; none feels so strongly the Passion they meant to Express; nor does any that I ever heard convey that Sensation so powerfully to an Audience.

I have seen this Performer so strongly moved by the Part he was to sing in some of the Musical Pieces, which approach to the dramatic Manner, as the best of our Actors in the most interesting Scene of Tragedy; and while he has surprised every body by going beyond not only what an Audience is used to, but even expects in Performances of that Kind, the Judges have been charmed with that which those of more limited Capacity have not known what to make of.”

London Daily Advertiser Wed 4 March 1752
MUSIC EXAMPLE:
ODE FOR ST CECILIA’S DAY HWV 76

- 1736: Handel sets Dryden’s Alexander’s Feast
- Most successful English-language work before 1740
- 1739: Handel sets Dryden’s Ode for St Cecilia, led by Beard

St Cecilia. Mezzotint. c1682-1725
MUSIC EXAMPLE: TENOR, RECITATIVE

ODE FOR ST CECILIA’S DAY HWV 76

FROM HARMONY, FROM HEAV’NLY HARMONY,
THIS UNIVERSAL FRAME BEGAN.

WHEN NATURE UNDERNEATH A HEAP
OF JARRING ATOMS LAY,
AND COULD NOT HEAVE HER HEAD,

THE TUNEFUL VOICE WAS HEARD FROM HIGH:
"ARISE! YE MORE THAN DEAD."

THEN COLD, AND HOT, AND MOIST AND DRY,
IN ORDER TO THEIR STATIONS LEAP,
AND MUSIC’S POW’R OBEY.
CATHERINE CLIVE AS MILLIMANT, WILLIAM CONGREVE, WAY OF THE WORLD (1740)

sung by Clive, Benefit performance

17 March 1740

“If such Arts” by “Miss prudely Crotchet” [satire of Clive], in Edward Phillips, The stage mutineers (1733)

If such Arts you Men will use, Sir, With Self-Interest in your View, Can of Folly you accuse her Who pursues her Interest too?

G.F HANDEL, SONG “LOVE’S BUT A FRAILTY OF THE MIND” HWV 218

Love’s but the frailty of the mind
When 'tis not with ambition joined;
A sickly flame, which if not fed expires,
And feeding, wastes in self-consuming fires.

'Tis not to wound a wanton boy
Or am'rous youth, that gives the joy;
But 'tis the glory to have pierced a swain
For whom inferior beauties sighed in vain.

Then I alone the conquest prize,
When I insult a rival's eyes;
If there's delight in love, 'tis when I see
That heart, which others bleed for, bleed for me.

If such Arts you Men will use, Sir,
With Self-Interest in your View,
Can of Folly you accuse her
Who pursues her Interest too?
HANDEL: OPERA VS ODE & ORATORIO

By Giovanni Michele Graneri, Royal Theatre of Turin. Oil, 1752. Museo Civico d’Arte Antica 1752

Vocal performance with instruments. c.1740
Etching
He was despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. (Isaiah 53:3)

He gave his back to the smiters, and His cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: He hid not His face from shame and spitting. (Isaiah 50:6)

"Woman! Thy sins be forgiven thee!"

[true?] Thomas Davies, Memoirs (1780)

Reverend Patrick Delany, Profesof the life of david Garrick ssor of Oratory and History at Trinity College, and the chancellor of both Christ Church and St. Patrick’s Cathedrals
Now tuneful as Apollo’s lyre,
She stands amid the vocal choir;
If solemn measures slowly move,
Or Lydian airs invite to Love,
Her looks inform the trembling strings,
And raise each passion, that she sings;
The wanton Graces hover round,
Perch on her lips, and tune the sound.
At his return to London in 1741-2 ... he immediately recommenced his oratorios at Covent-Garden. Sampson was the first he performed. ... This return was the era of his prosperity.
SAMSON: COMUS, CLIVE, BEARD, CIBBER

- **Clive as Euphrosyne** “Goddess of Mirth” reigns over realm; Dalila “Dominion of Love”
- **Beard**: crushed by establishment; emphasis on recitative
- **Cibber**: Micah, adapted chorus, sentimental heroine “deep pathos with an unwavering, focus on virtue and empathy” (Jonathan R. Lee, 2013)
'MY GRIEFS FOR THIS'

Samson

Accompanied refrain: "MY GRIEFS FOR THIS"

My griefs for this forbid mine eyes to close, or thoughts to rest.

But now the strife shall end; me overthrown, Da-gon pre-

sumes to enter lists with God; who thus provok'd, will not con-

nive, but rouse his fury soon and his great name as-

Da-gon shall stoop, ere long be quite de-
EUPHROSYNE VS DALILA

‘To fleeting Pleasures’, Samson

To fleeting pleasures make your court,
No moment lose, for life is short!
The present now’s our only time
The missing that our only crime.

How charming is domestic ease!
A thousand ways I’ll strive to please.
Life is not lost, though lost your sight;
Let other senses taste delight.

‘Come, come bid Adieu to Fear’, Comus

Come, come bid adieu to fear
Love and Harmony reign here
No domestic jealous jars
Buzzing slanders, words of wars
In my Presence will appear
Love and Harmony reign here.
MICAH AS SENTIMENTAL HEROINE

YE SONS OF ISRAEL, NOW LAMENT,
YOUR SPEAR IS BROKE, YOUR BOW'S UNBENT.
YOUR GLORY'S FLED,
AMONGST THE DEAD
GREAT SAMSON LIES,
FOR EVER, EVER, CLOS'D HIS EYES!
(ISRAELITES):
WEEN, ISRAEL, WEEP A LOUDER STRAIN;
SAMSON, YOUR STRENGTH, YOUR HERO, IS SLAIN!