



GF Handel: *Acis & Galatea* (1718)

<http://naxosmusiclibrary.com/catalogue/item.asp?cid=ACD22302>

CASE STUDY 1: THE OPENING SCENE

1. Listen to the opening sinfonia.
 - (a) Describe the instrumentation.
 - (b) Annotate your score (which shows the first four pages of this movement) to show each instance of Handel's use of repetition/echo and sequence.
 - (c) How would you characterise the texture and the harmony of this movement?

2. Listen to first chorus, "Oh the pleasures of the plain". As you listen, consider the following questions. You may find it helpful to note down your observations alongside the text, which is given below.
 - (a) How would you describe the harmonic style? What harmonic device does Handel use in the opening passage? What effect does this have?
 - (b) Describe the texture in as much detail as you can.
 - (c) In general, what style of word setting does Handel employ? Where/why does he deviate from this?
 - (d) What is the structure of this movement? Relate this to the historical/cultural background of the work.
 - (e) Within this structure, how is musical contrast achieved?

Oh, the pleasure of the plains!
Happy nymphs and happy swains,
Harmless, merry, free and gay,
Dance and sport the hours away.
For us the zephyr blows,
For us distills the dew,
For us unfolds the rose,
And flow'rs display their hue.
For us the winters rain,
For us the summers shine,
Spring swells for us the grain,
And autumn bleeds the wine.

3. Listen to and discuss Galatea's recitative, "Ye verdant plains", the score for which is overleaf.

4. In the aria that follows, "Hush, ye pretty warbling quire", Galatea asks that the birds stop their singing.
 - (a) How does Handel's music reflect this idea of bird song and the pastoral nature of the scene?
 - (b) Identify any examples of word painting.
 - (c) What is the structure of this movement? Within this structure, how is musical contrast achieved?



Recitativo.

Violino I.

Violino II.

Galatea.
(Soprano.)

Bassi.

PIANOFORTE.

Ye verdant plains and woody mountains, purling streams and bubbling fountains, ye painted glories of the field,
Du dunkler Hain, du farb'ge Fläche! Sprudelquell und Perlen - bü - che, du bun - te Herrlichkeit der Aun,

The first system of the musical score is in recitativo style. It features five staves: Violino I, Violino II, Galatea (Soprano), Bassi, and PIANOFORTE. The Galatea part has lyrics in English and German. The piano accompaniment consists of simple harmonic support.

vain are the pleasures which ye yield; too thin the shadow of the grove, too faint the gales, to cool my love.
reizlos ist mir dein Reiz zu schau'n; zu machlos, zu stillen trüben Muth, der Sehnsucht Qual, der Lie - be Glut.

The second system continues the recitativo style. It features three staves: Galatea (Soprano), Bassi, and PIANOFORTE. The Galatea part has lyrics in English and German. The piano accompaniment continues with harmonic support.

Prep question (essay or bullet points, as you prefer):

How does Handel represent drama in his music to *Acis & Galatea* (use examples from the opening scene)? In what ways is his approach similar to Purcell's in *Dido & Aeneas*, and how is it different? [20]