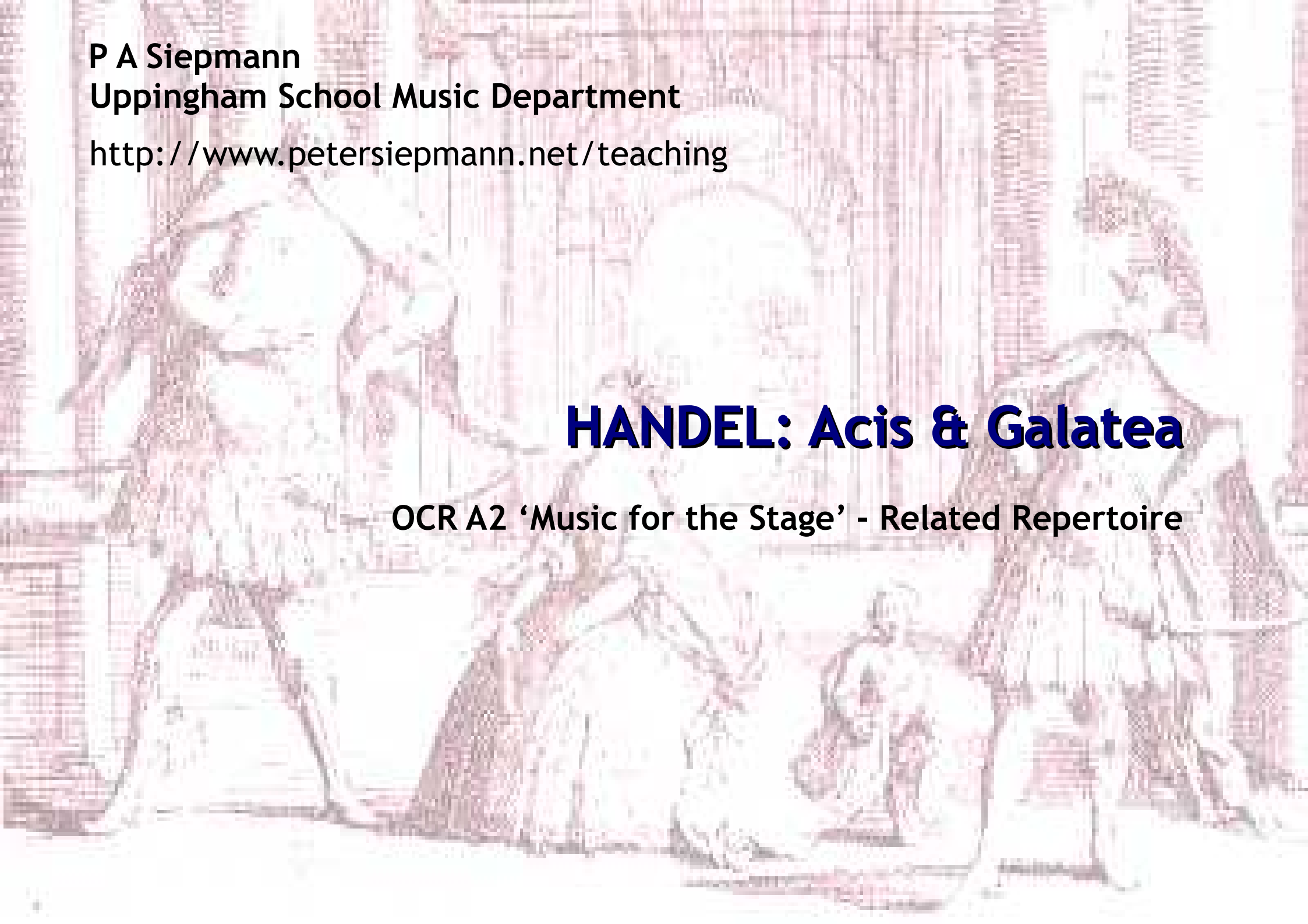


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HANDEL: Acis & Galatea

OCR A2 'Music for the Stage' - Related Repertoire





George Frideric Handel (1685 – 1759)

- Born and brought up in Germany (in the same year as JS Bach)
- Spent several years in Italy
- Settled in England

- Combined all three styles in his music

- Acis & Galatea is an English court masque, but demonstrates a distinctly Italian approach.
 - Italian “opera seria”
 - Noble, serious court opera
 - Heavy use of the ‘da capo aria’ – ABA

- Handel presented this more Italian style to the opera going public in London



Acis & Galatea (1718)

- Handel's first dramatic work in English (text by John Gay)
- His most popular dramatic work
- His only stage work to have never left the opera repertory

Characters

- Galatea - soprano
- Acis - tenor
- Damon - tenor
- Polyphemus - bass

Plot

- Galatea, a semi-divine nymph, is in love with the shepherd Acis. Acis's close friend, the shepherd Damon, provides counsel to the lovers as they pursue each other.
- In the second part (sometimes referred to as Act II), the chorus warns Acis and Galatea about the arrival of a monstrous giant, Polyphemus, who is himself in love with Galatea. Ultimately, Polyphemus murders Acis, and Galatea mourns the loss of her love but uses her divine powers to transform Acis's corpse into a beautiful fountain.



Case study 1: The opening

- Overture
- Chorus “Oh the pleasures of the plain”
- Recitative (Galatea) “Ye verdant plains”
- Aria (Galatea) “Hush, ye pretty warbling quire”

See worksheet

Case study 2: Opening Chorus of Act II

- Chorus “Wretched Lovers!”

Class discussion and analysis