



## ACT I Movements 1-6 (C minor)

### Overture

In the French style established by Lully.  
Slow, stately introduction with dotted rhythms.  
Fast section, beginning imitatively.

### Shake the cloud; Banish sorrow

*Urging Dido not be so depressed*

Aria – melodic, tuneful. Accompanied by basso continuo.  
Short lines of text set to short phrases – two/three bars long.  
Largely syllabic, apart from melismata (with dotted rhythms) on “shake” - “flow-”.

Role of the chorus: comments on the story, rather like the chorus of the ancient Greek tragedy.  
Strings join the accompaniment.  
Two two-bar phrases – homophonic, soprano melody  
On repeat – lengthened to three-bars through imitation (soprano-bass) – variation of texture. Effect of dialogue?  
Melisma on “grief” – illustrating its growing prevalence?

### Ah, Belinda

*Dido tells of her depression, but does not admit its cause*

Lament – features:       Ground bass (repeating bass pattern)  
                                  Bass figure usually descending and chromatic  
                                  Slow, triple metre

Purcell avoids the potential monotony of a ground bass by modulating to the dominant for bars 29-36, as well as overlapping the melodic phrases so the ends don't always coincide with the ends of the ground bass (see overleaf).  
Descending semitone figure – effect of sighing.  
Lombardic rhythms on “prest” – illustrate torment?  
Long, lingering, descending melisma on “languish”.  
Closing instrumental ritornello – imitative theme taken from the ground bass.

### Grief increases; When monarchs unite

*Belinda again urges Dido to confess the reason for her grief, suggesting it is Aeneas. The second woman explains the political advantage of such a union, and the chorus reaffirms this.*

After the long, languishing lament of the previous movement, the pace increases considerably:

- a short four bar recitative ← Belinda & Dido in conversation
- a short nine bar aria (highly disjunct)
- a short thirteen bar (4+4+5) chorus ← illustrates Purcell's flexible and unpredictable treatment of phrase lengths

### Whence could so much virtue spring

*Dido's love becomes apparent – she sings Aeneas's praises, but fears her affections are not reciprocated.*

- Dramatic, scalic melismata on “storms”,
- “fierce” (plus contrary motion quavers in the bass).
- Martial, (C major) dotted melisma on “valour”.
- Contrast with “Venus' charms” – chord IV (major chord with a peaceful affect) and “how soft” – accented dissonance (seventh).
- The response of Belinda and the Second Woman is gently mocking:
- accented appoggiatura give a jeering effect (“strong”, “woe”, “distress”).