

Project 1: Aria Decoration

Name: _____

“Dove sei, amato bene?”, from *Rodelinda*, Act I
 Music by G. F. Handel
 Libretto by Nicola Francesco Haym
 1719, first performance 1725

The art and craft of melodic paraphrase plays a prominent role in the performance of opera, a practice that arose early in opera’s history and continues to the present day. In the da capo aria, a centerpiece of Baroque opera, the vocal soloist provides expressive elaborations in the reprise of the lyric melody, ending with a short cadenza. These decorations may be extempore, but more often they are planned, and include motivic interpolations, trills and other ornaments, dissonant sighs, and the virtuosic cadenza at the notated fermata. For this paraphrase project, an aria from George Frederic Handel’s opera *Rodelinda* will serve as a vehicle for your melodic paraphrase. You can become familiar with typical decoration practices in the da capo aria by listening to various recordings that feature elaborated reprises. However, avoid recordings of this particular Handel aria to assure that your choices for decoration arise from your own interpretation of the text and the music.

Before undertaking the elaboration of your chosen aria, you must first become familiar with the harmonic context of the given melody by providing a complete harmonic analysis of the A section. This will clarify your choices for elaboration, and will prevent your decorations from obscuring or conflicting with the prevailing harmony.

You must then carefully consider the text. A general English translation of the Handel aria can be found on page two. However, you should provide a word-by-word literal translation in the score, to understand the meaning carried by each phrase and word. Also, be certain that you understand which syllables are stressed and which are unstressed. This knowledge of the text will inspire your choices, whether nesting melodic figures (a practice variously referred to as *passaggi*, *diminution*, or *division*), employing accented dissonance (the expressive sigh figure), or transforming the rhythmic profile with iambic or trochaic *notes inégales*.

Notes inégales (“unequal notes”) is a Baroque performance practice in which rhythms notated with even values (usually eighths or sixteenths) are performed instead in patterns of long and short.

For example, in the notated pattern



the sixteenth notes can be performed as is,

or in an iambic (short – long) manner, approximately as



or in a trochaic (long – short) manner, approximately as



These examples in dotted notation are only approximate; in fact, *notes inégales* often have more of a relaxed triplet feeling. The choice to use the iambic or trochaic feeling in different places is left up to the performer. To be clear: the rhythms are notated using the even note values, not the dotted values. In this project, you can simply write “Trochaic” or “Iambic” above the even eighths or sixteenths, where you would like the performers to apply *notes inégales*.

It has been the regular practice of the authors to arrange performances of the completed aria, with the entire class singing the solo vocal line, accompanied by an instrumental ensemble performing the basso continuo. This is often preceded by a diction coaching on the text. Here are some suggestions which will facilitate class performance:

- Decorations should be relatively simple, and should not include virtuosic elements such as trills or extreme ranges, which can be left for a true solo performance.
- Favor melodic figures that feature step motion, as these are the most easily sung.

All types of accented dissonance are available, and must play a part in your paraphrase. Accented dissonance is particularly expressive for instances of heightened emotion.

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Project 1: Aria Decoration (continued)

Strive to create a balanced narrative of rhythmic and decorative activity. Building momentum and dramatic content is often enhanced by allowing the decorative elements to begin very simply and build toward greater complexity. The performer's art dictates that a simple elaboration must occur in the first phrase of the reprise, to signal to the listener that a varied repetition as begun. But do not spend all of your capital at the outset. Let the unfolding of the melody build to the climactic cadenza in a process of gradual intensification.

Over the past decade, the authors have employed a number of arias for such projects, in addition to the present aria. Any number of suitable melodies are available from the Baroque opera repertoire. We offer a few here:

G. F. Handel, "Alma mia," from *Floridante*, Act I

G. F. Handel, "Lascia ch'io pianga," from *Rinaldo*, Act I

H. Purcell, "Fairest Isle," from *King Arthur*, Act V

Here is the Italian text with a translation:

A section	<i>Dove sei, amato bene? Vieni, l'alma a consolar. Sono oppresso da' tormenti, ed i crudi miei lamenti sol con te posso bear.</i>	Where are you, my beloved? Come and comfort my heart. I am oppressed by torments and the cruelties of my laments I can bear with you alone.
B section		

Here is the process for this project:

1. Sing through the A section of the aria, to become familiar with the undecorated melody.
2. Provide complete harmonic analysis of the A section, to understand the harmonic context for the vocal melody.
3. Notate your decorated reprise and cadenza on the blank staff provided. Underlay your decorated melody with the text, indicating groups of notes taken by one syllable with a slur. If you employ *notes inégales*, notate even sixteenth notes and indicate their performance as Trochaic or Iambic, for a gentle triple realization.

Project 1: Aria Decoration (continued)

“Dove sei, amato bene?”
Rodelinda, Act I

G. F. Handel

instrumental introduction

basso continuo

da capo reprise with elaboration

Elaboration

A section

Bertarido
(alto)

Do - ve se - i, a - ma - to be - ne?

bc

4 2 6 6 6 6 6

Project 1: Aria Decoration (continued)

13

Elaboration

Bertarido

Vie - ni, l'al - ma a con - so - lar, _____

6 6 4 - 3 4 3 6 6 6 4 - 3 6 6 7 # 6

17

Elaboration

Bertarido

a con - so - lar! Vie - ni, vie - ni,

bc 6 # # 6 6 4 - 3 6 6 4 6 4

(continued on next page)

Project 1: Aria Decoration (continued)

22

Elaboration

Bertarido

bc

a - ma - to be - nel

Do - - - ve se - i?

4 2 6 6 6 7 6 5 4 - 3

26

Elaboration

Bertarido

bc

do - - ve se - i?

Vie - ni, i'al - ma a - - con - so -

6 7 6 5 6

(continued on next page)

Project 1: Aria Decoration (continued)

Cadenza

31

Elaboration

Bertarido

bc

lar!

Vie - - - - ni,

6 4 6 4 2 6

Elaboration

Bertarido

bc

The image shows a musical score for a piece titled 'Elaboration' and 'Bertarido'. The score is written for three parts: a vocal line (labeled 'Elaboration'), a piano line (labeled 'Bertarido'), and a bass line (labeled 'bc'). The key signature is one sharp (F#), and the time signature is 3/4. The vocal line begins with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp. The piano line begins with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp. The bass line begins with a bass clef and a key signature of one sharp. The lyrics are: 'vic - ni, l'al - ma a con - so - lar!'. The piano part includes a 6/4 time signature change and a 6/5 time signature change. The bass part includes a 6/4 time signature change and a 6/5 time signature change.

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Project 1: Aria Decoration (continued)

Bertarido

38

B section

Sono op - pres-so da' tor - men - ti, ed i

bc

6 6 6 6 6 6 4 3 (Fine.) 6 7 7 4 3 6

Bertarido

46

cru - di miei la - men - ti sol con te pos-so be - ar; sono op - pres - so da' tor - men - ti, ed i

bc

6 # 4 - 3 4 6 6 6 4 - 5 6 6 6

Bertarido

52

D.C. al Fine

cru - di miei la - men - ti sol con te pos-so be - ar, sol con te pos-so be - ar.

bc

6 6 4 3 6 6 # 6 #

Our studies of elementary counterpoint and harmony have been limited to two and four voices respectively, each of which provide a practical introduction to the elementary materials and techniques of music. These textures are the bedrock of most music theory teaching, and they represent the foundation for understanding compositional practice over the centuries. With this foundation firmly established, exploring other textural possibilities can be readily undertaken.

Three-part textures are a mainstay of music from the Renaissance to the present day. While the four-part model is most frequently employed in the study of harmony, as this texture regularly provides complete triads and seventh chords, vocal and instrumental pieces having only three voices are common in the literature, with vocal motets from early music and Baroque trio sonatas as prime examples. Imitative works such as inventions and fugues also frequently make use of this texture.

In this project, we bring together a number of techniques explored earlier in our studies: melody harmonization with a tonicizing bass line, and the creation of vocal and instrumental melody using the technique of paraphrase. Here, each of the three voices exhibits a distinct rhythmic behavior: the vocal melody comprises primarily quarter-note motion (as is typical of chorale melodies), the harmonic bass subdivides the beat with eighth notes, and the instrumental accompanying melody is a florid line in sixteenths.

This layered rhythmic texture is encountered frequently in the repertoire, as represented here by two “model” works drawn from Cantatas by J. S. Bach. In the Easter Passion Cantata, *Christ lag in Todesbanden*, BWV 4, Bach recasts the original 16th-century Dorian chorale tune as an E minor melody. For the third verse of this Chorale Cantata, Bach sets the undecorated tune in a trio texture with violins and continuo. **Example 1 (a)** illustrates a measure of the instrumental introduction and **(b)** the first line of the text.

Example 1. Trio introduction (a), and first line of text (b)

(a)

(b)

Example 2 (next page) illustrates an alternative vocal/instrument trio drawn from the fourth movement Aria in J. S. Bach’s “Coffee” Cantata, BWV 211. Here, the trio comprises flute, soprano and continuo in a triple meter setting with florid beat subdivision in with both duplets and triplets.

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Project 2: Vocal/Instrumental Trio (continued)

Example 2. Trio introduction (a), and first line of text (b)

(a)

Flute

Soprano

Continuo

(b)

Ei! wie — schneckt der Cof - tee sü - - Be, — lieb - li - cher als tau - send Küß - se, —

4 2 5 5 6 5 # 4 # 6 6 6 #6 6 7 7 # 6 6

Example 3 (next page) illustrates the working method for this project.

- A chorale cantus is given.
- After determining a harmonic path and the internal cadences, write the bass line of a tonicized harmonization. No inner voices are necessary.
- When the harmonic framework is completed, the given cantus is transposed down the octave to act as a tenor line (as in the first Bach model in **Example 1**). This tenor line will be notated in bass clef, to clearly represent the sounding register as the countering lines are paraphrased.
- Write a note-against note soprano to act as a frame for the instrumental “obligato” line. The choice of instrument can be one of the common Baroque preferences for this line: violin, oboe or flute. The obligato line will partake of chord tones indicated by the figured bass, and should be conceived as a vocal line with step motion predominating. Chords do not need to be complete, as the lowest voice will function as a continuo bass, with a chording instrument supplying the complete chord. Avoid doubling tendency tones on the metric beat (although this may happen within the beat). Avoid successive parallel octaves or fifths. Direct fifths and octaves may occur at this level, as they will receive greater decoration in subsequent steps. Outer-voice sixths and tenths yield the most mobile lines and free the instrumental melody to decorate with minimal hindrance.
- When your three-voice, note-against-note counterpoint is complete, melodic paraphrasing may begin. Attend to the top voice first, employing mostly four- and five-note instrumental idioms that express the prevailing harmony, making use of occasional three- and four-note vocal idioms when necessary or desirable. Changes of register can be employed to increase the range of this florid melody. Take care to guard against parallel perfect intervals, and always remember that the bass will be decorated (and can correct parallels that have resulted from your paraphrase). Be ever mindful of the cantus. This voice will not be decorated, and it acts as a regulator of the counterpoint. Continually proof your paraphrasing against this undecorated line.
- When the instrumental soprano is completed, attend to the bass. Subdivide the bass with spondaic or trochaic rhythms, employing chordal extensions, interpolated chords, and tone repetitions. Include additional figured bass notation for any new weak-beat chords.

Project 2: Vocal/Instrumental Trio (continued)

Example 3. Creating a vocal/instrumental trio

(a) The given chorale cantus

(b) Bass line and figured bass harmonization

(c) Cantus transposed into the tenor line (in bass clef)

(d) Note-against-note soprano, as frame for obbligato line

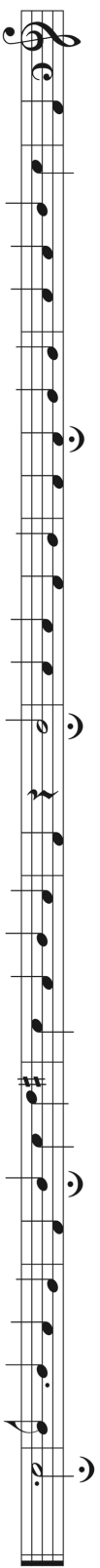
(e) Melodic paraphrase for the soprano obbligato line

(f) Elaboration of the bass, with figures as needed

Project 2: Vocal/Instrumental Trio (continued)

If you wish to incorporate an instrumental introduction, the Bach Cantata movements provide elaborate examples. In the case of this exercise, a simple tonic prolongation will suffice. A closing coda can be created in the same manner or by using a cadential extension with a pedal extension. Instrumental interludes between lines of text are frequently included by Bach but are not necessary here.

In this project, your Vocal/Instrumental trio will be based on the chorale tune, “Nun sich der Tag geendet hat” by Adam Drieger (17th c.):



Both the original German text by Johann Friedrich Hertzog (17th c.) and the English translation can be used. You may wish to substitute another text with a similar syllabic meter of 8.6.8.6, also known as Common Meter.

*Nun sich der Tag geendet hat
Und keine Sonn mehr scheint.
Schläßf alles, was sich abgemant'
Und was zuvor geweint.*

Now that the day has reached its close,
The sun doth shine no more,
In sleep the toil-warn find repose
And all who wept before.

(continued on next page)

Project 2: Vocal/Instrumental Trio (continued)

Note-against-note harmonization

The musical score for Project 2: Vocal/Instrumental Trio (continued) shows a vocal line in treble clef and an instrumental line in bass clef. The key signature is one sharp (F#). The time signature is common time (C). The vocal line contains a melody with a fermata on the eighth measure. The instrumental line is empty.

The musical score for Project 2: Vocal/Instrumental Trio (continued) shows a vocal line in treble clef and an instrumental line in bass clef. The key signature is one sharp (F#). The time signature is common time (C). The vocal line contains a melody with a fermata on the eighth measure. The instrumental line is empty.

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Project 2: Vocal/Instrumental Trio (continued)

Three-voice note-against-note framework, with cantus in tenor

Musical staff system for Project 2: Vocal/Instrumental Trio (continued). The system consists of two staves, a treble staff (top) and a bass staff (bottom), both with a common time signature 'C'. The staff is divided into four measures by vertical bar lines. The first measure contains a single note on the treble staff, and the second measure contains a single note on the bass staff. The third and fourth measures are empty.

Musical staff system for Project 2: Vocal/Instrumental Trio (continued). The system consists of two staves, a treble staff (top) and a bass staff (bottom), both with a common time signature 'C'. The staff is divided into four measures by vertical bar lines. The first measure contains a single note on the treble staff, and the second measure contains a single note on the bass staff. The third and fourth measures are empty.

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Project 2: Vocal/Instrumental Trio (continued)

The completed vocal/instrumental trio, with soprano obbligato line and basso continuo

Three staves for the completed vocal/instrumental trio. The top staff is a soprano line with a treble clef. The middle staff is a Tenor line with a bass clef. The bottom staff is a Continuo line with a bass clef.

Three staves for the completed vocal/instrumental trio. The top staff is a soprano line with a treble clef. The middle staff is a Tenor line with a bass clef. The bottom staff is a basso continuo line with a bass clef and a 'bc.' label.

Project 2: Vocal/Instrumental Trio (continued)

A musical staff system consisting of three staves. The top staff is a Treble clef staff, the middle staff is a Bass clef staff, and the bottom staff is a Bass clef staff. The staves are empty, with no notes or markings.

A musical staff system consisting of three staves. The top staff is a Treble clef staff, the middle staff is a Bass clef staff, and the bottom staff is a Bass clef staff. The staves are empty, with no notes or markings.