LISTENING GUIDE

Claudio Monteverdi (1567–1643)

Orfeo’s recitative, Euridice’s recitative, chorus of nymphs and shepherds, and instrumental ritornello from the opera Orfeo

Date of composition: 1607
Tenor and soprano solo, chorus, instrumental ensemble and basso continuo
Duration: 3:55

This scene comes from the first act of the opera, in which the love of Orfeo and Euridice is celebrated. In his lyrical recitative “Rosa del Ciel . . .” (“Rose of Heaven. . .”), Orfeo expresses his passion for Euridice and his happiness that she returns his feelings. Euridice, responding to Orfeo’s proclamation of love, affectionately pledges her heart to him in a declamatory passage (“Io non dirò . . .”—“I shall not say. . .”). A chorus of nymphs and shepherds follows with a celebratory dance (“Lasciate i monti. . .”—“Leave the hills. . .”), and the scene is closed by an instrumental ritornello (a short passage that appears in several places in a musical work).

Monteverdi uses a variety of musical means to depict this pastoral setting. Both Orfeo and Euridice sing in a free, expressive recitative. The melody imitates the rhythms and the inflections of speech and mirrors the meaning of the text. In Orfeo’s part, for instance, Monteverdi accentuates significant words such as “fortunato amante” (“happy lover”) or “Mio ben” (“My love”) by means of rising phrases and matches the musical rhythm with the rhythm of the words:

“fe-li-ci-si-me” (“happiest”) [♩♩♩♩♩♩]
“so-si-ri” (“I sighed”); “so-si-ri” (“you sighed”) [♩♩♩♩♩♩]

In Euridice’s recitative, the composer uses similar lively motives for the words “gioir,” “gioia,” and “gioia” (“rejoicing,” “rejoice,” “enjoys”); employs wide leaps to represent “Quanto” (“How much”); and provides the words “core” (“heart”) and “Amore” (“Love”) with soothing cadences.

The choral dance consists of two sections: The first, in duple meter, is based on imitative phrases that evoke the movement of dancers; the second provides a distinct contrast, because it is set in triple meter and its texture is completely homophonic. The instrumental ritornello that ensues is a faster dance, which adds variety and brings closure to this short and happy scene.

CD TIME LISTEN FOR

Orfeo

40 (1) 0:00 [soft arpeggiated chords in continuo]
Rosa del Ciel, vita del mondo, e degna
Prole di lui che l’Universo affrena,
O Rose of Heaven, life of the world,
And worthy offspring of him who rules the universe,

[voice becoming more animated]
0:25 Sol, ch’il tutto circondi e’tutto miri
Da gli stellanti giri,
Sun, you who surround and watch everything
From the starry skies,
Dimmi, vedesti mai
Di me più lieto e fortunato amante?
Tell me, have you ever seen
A happier or more fortunate lover than I?
[gentle cadence]

Fu ben felice il giorno,
Mio ben, [loving phrase] che pri ti vidi,
Blessed was the day,
My love, when first I saw you,

E più felice l’ora
Che per te sospirai,
And more blessed yet the hour
When first I sighed for you,
Poich’ al mio sospirar tu sospiressi.
Since you returned my sighs.

Felicissimo il punto
Che la candida mano,
Pegno di pura fede, a me porgesti.
Most blessed of all the moment
When you offered me your white hand,
As pledge of your pure love.

Se tanti cori avessi
Quant’ occh’ il Ciel eterno, e quante chiome
If I had as many hearts
As the eternal sky has eyes, and as many
Han questi colli ameni il verde maggio,
Have leaves in the verdant month of May,

Se tanti cori avessi
Quant’ occh’ il Ciel eterno, e quante chiome
If I had as many hearts
As the eternal sky has eyes, and as many
Han questi colli ameni il verde maggio,
Have leaves in the verdant month of May,

Tutti colmi sarieno e traboccanti
Di quel piacer ch’ oggi mi fa contento.
They would all be full and overflowing
With the joy that now makes me happy.

Io non dirò qual sia
In tuo gioir, Orfeo, la gioia mia,
I shall not say how much
I rejoice, Orfeo, in your rejoicing,

Che non ho meco il core,
Ma teco stassi in compagnia d’Amore;
For my heart is no longer my own
But stands with you in the company of Love;
Chiedilo dunque a lui, s’intender brami,
Ask of it then, if you wish to know,

Quanto lieto gioisca, e quanto t’ami.
How much happiness it enjoys, and how
much it loves you.

Lasciate i monti,
Lasciate i fonti,
Ninfe zezze e liete,
Leave the hills,
Leave the streams,
You charming and happy nymphs,

Nel tuo gioir, Orfeo, la gioia mia,
Ma teco stassi in compagnia d’Amore;
[“lui” emphasized]
But stands with you in the company of Love;

Chiedilo dunque a lui, s’intender brami,
Quanto lieto gioisca, e quanto t’ami.
Ask of it then, if you wish to know,
How much happiness it enjoys, and how
much it loves you.

E in questi prati
Ai balli usati
Vago il bel pie rendete.
Practiced in dancing,
And in these meadows
Move your pretty legs.

Qui miri il Sole
Vostre carole
Più vaghe assai di quelle,
Here the Sun
Sees your dances,
More beautiful yet than those
THE BAROQUE ERA: 1600–1750

3:26
[same music]
Ond’ a la Luna
La notte bruna
Danzano in Ciel le stelle.

3:33
Instrumental Ritornello
Faster; recorders, strings, basso continuo

An Argument over the Future of Music

About 1600, composers and music theorists engaged in a furious debate over the direction that music should take. The most important figures were Giovanni Artusi, a prominent Italian music theorist, and the illustrious composer Claudio Monteverdi. They were on opposite sides of the debate. Artusi believed in the conservative Prima Pratica (“First Practice”), whereas Monteverdi was an adherent of the more progressive Seconda Pratica (“Second Practice”). Supporters of the Prima Pratica believed that all composers should adhere to the strict rules of composition adopted by the great composers of the late sixteenth century, (most notably Palestrina), regardless of the text they were setting. The slogan “Harmony is the ruler of the text” therefore became Artusi’s battle cry.

Monteverdi, however, believed that in passages with very expressive text, the rules could be broken to make the music more intense. He reversed Artusi’s slogan to claim that “Text is the ruler of the harmony.” In return, Artusi said that Monteverdi and other modern composers had “smoke in their heads” and that their compositions were “the product of ignorance.”

Opera in the Seventeenth Century

In Baroque opera, a distinction gradually arose between those portions of the recitative that were lyrical and songlike and those portions that were more straightforward and conversational. The lyrical part came to be known as aria, and the conversational part kept the old name of recitative. Arias were usually written in set forms, with a fixed pattern of repetition, whereas recitatives were freer in form and quite short.

The sparse accompaniment and flexible style of recitative made it ideal for setting dialogue and quick exchanges between people in the drama, while arias were reserved for contemplative or passionate moments when the composer wanted to explore the full emotional content of a situation. Recitative usually had simple basso continuo accompaniment; the arias were usually accompanied by full orchestra. The most common melodic forms for arias were ABA form (the B section providing a contrast) and ground bass form.
in which a single phrase in the bass is repeated over and over again while the voice sings an extended melody above it.

**Henry Purcell and English Opera**

While music flourished in Italy, the state of music in England was highly fragmented because of its unstable political situation. The royal family was under attack by those who wished to abolish its excesses and return British society to a purer, less materialistic state. The result of the conflict between the Puritans (Protestants who believed in focusing on religious truth rather than on “frivolous” things like music and art) and the Round Heads (loyal royalists) was the English Civil War, which raged from 1642 to 1649. It ended with the beheading of the constitutional monarch, Charles I, and the rise to power of the Puritan Oliver Cromwell. Under Cromwell, most musical positions were abolished, and theaters and opera houses were closed. In 1660, the son of Charles I returned from exile in France and assumed the throne as Charles II. His return, known as the Restoration, brought with it a rebirth of musical life in England.

The most talented English composer of the late seventeenth century was Henry Purcell, who lived from 1659 to 1695. He held the important position of organist at Westminster Abbey in London and was one of the most prolific composers of his day. In his short life, Purcell wrote a large amount of vocal and instrumental music, including sacred music for the Anglican church, secular songs and cantatas, and chamber music for various combinations of instruments, as well as solo harpsichord music. His best-known work is a short opera called *Dido and Aeneas*, written in 1689.

*Dido and Aeneas* is a miniature masterpiece. It is based on a portion of the great epic Roman poem, the *Aeneid* of Virgil. It tells the story of the love affair between Dido, Queen of Carthage, and Aeneas, a mythological Trojan warrior. Their affair ends tragically, however; Aeneas abandons Dido, and she commits suicide. There are three acts—with arias, recitatives, choruses, dances, and instrumental interludes, but the whole opera takes only an hour to perform. It requires only four principal singers and a very small orchestra of strings and harpsichord.

The most famous aria from *Dido and Aeneas* is Dido’s lament. Dido has been abandoned by Aeneas and has decided to kill herself. She expresses her determination, her grief, and the pathos of her situation in a deeply moving musical framework. The lament is a **ground bass** aria—that is, the entire melody is set over a repeated pattern in the bass.

**LISTENING GUIDE**

**Henry Purcell (1659–1695)**  
*Dido’s lament from the opera *Dido and Aeneas*  

Date of composition: 1689  
Voice, strings, and harpsichord  
Duration: 4:07

A short recitative (“Thy hand, Belinda . . .”) sets the stage for the emotional intensity of Dido’s aria. The recitative has a sparse accompaniment that moves steadily downward, reflecting Dido’s grief.

Immediately after this recitative, the ground bass for the aria is heard alone. It is worth looking closely at this phrase, not only because it occurs so many times in the aria (eleven times in all), but also because it is very carefully constructed, and the overall effect of the aria depends upon it.
The first important element of this phrase is its descent down the scale by half steps. This is called a **chromatic descent**. This falling line immediately establishes a sad mood, which continues throughout the piece.

The next thing to notice is the rhythmic shift in the fourth measure of the phrase. This is a very subtle shift, but it is very important; it gives the bass line extra interest.

Finally, the ground bass pattern that Purcell establishes for this aria is five measures long, which is quite unusual. Most musical phrases are made up of four or eight measures. But Purcell chose this irregular length deliberately. It sets up a tension in the music, which contributes to the overall sense of strain and grief. It also enables Purcell to allow the vocal line more freedom as it floats over the ground bass. Throughout the aria, the endings of the ground bass pattern and the vocal phrases sometimes coincide and sometimes are independent. As the intensity increases, the vocal line becomes freer and freer from the constraint of the bass pattern. At the end of the aria, the voice and the ground bass cadence together, and the orchestra provides a short conclusion that is in keeping with the overall mood of the piece.

There are few words in this aria, but, as in most opera arias, they are repeated for dramatic effect. Arias are designed not to convey information or to further the plot but to explore an emotional state. The aria lasts much longer than the opening recitative. It is worth listening to this piece several times to appreciate the skill with which Purcell created it.

**CD TIME LISTEN FOR**

**Recitative**

| 43 (4) | 0:00 | Thy hand, Belinda, darkness shades me, [slowly descending voice throughout the recitative] |
|        | 0:19 | On thy bosom let me rest. |
|        | 0:29 | More I would, but Death invades me: |
|        | 0:40 | Death is now a welcome guest. [minor chord on “Death;” dissonance on “welcome guest”] |
|        | 0:54 | [beginning of ground bass: quiet, slow, descending chromatic line heard throughout aria; note rhythmic shift at 1:06] |

**Aria**

| 44 (5) | 1:08 | When I am laid in earth, [ground bass pattern begins again on “am”] |
|        | 1:20 | May my wrongs create [no pause between these two lines] |
|        | 1:27 | No trouble in thy breast. [voice falls on the word “trouble”] |
|        | 2:02 | [repeat] |
| 45 (6) | 2:17 | Remember me, but ah! forget my fate. [much repetition; highly expressive rising lines; last “ah” is particularly lyrical] |
|        | 2:42 | [several repeats] |
|        | 3:30 | [cadences of voice and ground bass coincide] |
| 46 (7) | 3:32 | [quiet orchestral closing: conclusion of chromatic descent] |
|        | 4:02 | [final cadence with trill] |
fast scales, and double stops (playing more than one string at a time). He once wrote that the aim of his compositions was to “show off the violin.” He concentrated entirely on violin music, writing only sonatas and concertos. Corelli was one of the first composers to become famous exclusively for writing instrumental music, and his compositions were highly influential through the remainder of the Baroque era and for decades after.

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**LISTENING GUIDE**

**Arcangelo Corelli (1653–1713)**

*Trio Sonata, Op. 3, No. 7, for two violins and basso continuo*

Corelli composed two types of trio sonatas: (1) chamber (*da camera*) sonatas featuring a series of dances; and (2) church (*da chiesa*) sonatas divided into four movements: slow-fast-slow-fast. The sonata featured here is of the church type. It is written for two violins and basso continuo (chamber organ with cello). The basso continuo group is always present, supporting the two violins as well as supplying a third independent voice.

Notice how Corelli introduces slight changes throughout each movement while keeping the musical ideas very much the same. In this way, the movements are unified, yet continually evolving.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CD TIME</th>
<th>LISTEN FOR</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I. Grave</td>
<td>(“slow and serious”)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0:01</td>
<td>Motive (slow descending line):</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0:22</td>
<td>Motive is repeated at different pitch level (dominant key).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0:45</td>
<td>Accompanied duet (violins), imitation, similar motive but much longer. The interweaving of the violins creates many expressive dissonances.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:24</td>
<td>Slow cadence.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| II. Allegro | (“fast”) |
| 1:40 | Rapidly moving trio, fugal treatment. New motive has a “wedge” shape, ending with fast notes. Several short sections, based on “wedge” motive. |
| 2:20 | Cadence. |
**III. Adagio**

(“slow”)

[A *theorbo* (a long-necked lute) is added to the continuo group.]

2:30 Motive from first movement, in long notes. Imitation between two violins.

3:00 New but similar idea, continuo begins.

3:23 Slight change of motive, violin duet.

3:39 Return to opening long-note idea of this movement.

4:06 Ending section with drawn-out cadence, ending low in register.

**IV. Allegro**

(“fast”)

[A very lively movement, highly imitative.]

Main motive:

4:31 Brief section with violins in dialogue.

4:44 Section repeated.

4:57 Slight change in motive, dialogue continues in lively exchange.

5:20 Section repeated. Quiet ending.

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**French Music**

During the seventeenth century, while England was still racked by civil war, France was ruled by one of the most powerful monarchs in European history. Louis XIV reigned for seventy-two years, from 1643 to 1715, and his tastes governed French life for the entire second half of the seventeenth century and well into the eighteenth. Fortunately, Louis XIV was an avid supporter of the arts, and French music flourished under his patronage.

Louis XIV loved to dance, and one of the most important influences on French music was dance. Dance influenced music in France in two ways. First, French opera included a great deal of ballet. Seventeenth-century French operas were splendid affairs, with elaborate scenery, large choruses, and frequent interludes for dancing. The most important composer of French opera was Jean-Baptiste Lully (1632–1687), the king’s music director. Lully’s ballet scenes were so popular that the dances from his operas were often played as independent suites. This popularity gave impetus to the second trend, which had begun late in the Renaissance: the use of dance forms as independent instrumental music.

There were many different kinds of French dance in the seventeenth century, each with its own meter, rhythm, and characteristic melodic style. The most important was the minuet, a triple-time dance in moderate tempo, but there were many more. Each had its own special character.

A series of dances for instrumental performance is known as a dance *suite*. Usually, all the dances in the suite are in the same key, so that there is unity among...
Like most late Baroque concertos, Vivaldi’s \textit{La Primavera} (“Spring”) has three movements: fast-slow-fast. Both of the fast movements are in ritornello form and are in a major key (E Major). The slow movement has a long, lyrical melody and is in E minor. In both of the outer movements, instruments from the orchestra join the soloist in some of the solo episodes, giving the impression of a concerto grosso. Both movements are also full of echo effects. The orchestra is made up of first and second violins, violas, cellos, basses, and a harpsichord. Like all the \textit{Seasons}, “Spring” is headed by a poem in the form of a sonnet. A sonnet has fourteen lines of poetry—eight lines followed by six lines that are divided into two groups of three. Vivaldi uses the first eight lines for the first movement and the two groups of three for the next two movements.

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THE BAROQUE ERA: 1600–1750

First movement
(First eight lines of the poem):

Spring has arrived, and full of joy,
The birds greet it with their happy song.
The streams, swept by gentle breezes,
Flow along with a sweet murmur.
Covering the sky with a black cloak,
Thunder and lightning come to announce the season.
When all is quiet again, the little birds
Return to their lovely song.

The first movement is written in the bright and extroverted key of E Major. The ritornello, which is made up of two phrases, is played in its entirety only at the beginning of the movement; in all its other appearances, only the second half of the ritornello is played. Between these appearances, the solo violin plays brilliant passages, imitating birdsong and flashes of lightning. Sometimes it plays alone, and sometimes it is joined by two violins from the orchestra.

CD TIME LISTEN FOR
Allegro [“Fast”]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>47 (12)</td>
<td>0:00</td>
<td>“Spring has arrived, and full of joy.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0:15</td>
<td></td>
<td>[Ritornello in tonic, first half, loud and then soft]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0:32</td>
<td></td>
<td>[Ritornello in tonic, second half, loud and then soft]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0:08</td>
<td></td>
<td>“The birds greet it with their happy song.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:08</td>
<td></td>
<td>[Trills; three solo violins alone, no basso continuo]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:16</td>
<td></td>
<td>“The streams, swept by gentle breezes, Flow along with a sweet murmur.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>1:41</td>
<td></td>
<td>[Quiet and murmuring]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:49</td>
<td></td>
<td>“Covering the sky with a black cloak, Thunder and lightning come to announce the season.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>1:49</td>
<td></td>
<td>[Fast repeated notes; flashing runs and darting passages]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:17</td>
<td></td>
<td>“When all is quiet again, the little birds return to their lovely song.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:25</td>
<td></td>
<td>[Ritornello in C# minor, second half, once only, loud]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:43</td>
<td></td>
<td>[Long, sustained, single note in bass; rising solo phrases, trills again]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:10</td>
<td></td>
<td>[Buildup to: Ritornello in tonic, second half twice, first loud and then soft]</td>
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Johann Sebastian Bach (1685–1750)

One of the most influential musicians of all time, and certainly one of the greatest composers in the history of music, was Johann Sebastian Bach. His mastery of musical composition is so universally acknowledged that the date of his death is used to mark the end of the entire Baroque era.

Bach’s entire career was spent in one region of Germany. He moved from one small town to another as job opportunities arose. The last part of his life was spent in the somewhat larger town of Leipzig.
The preludes and fugues contrast a free type of music with a very strict type. The prelude (sometimes called “toccata” or “fantasia”) is a rambling, improvisatory piece of the kind that organists play to fill in time before, during, or after a church service. The fugue is a carefully worked out polyphonic composition that uses a theme (or “subject”) that occurs in all the voices, or musical lines, in turn. It begins with a single voice playing the subject unaccompanied. As the second voice brings in the fugue subject, the first one continues playing—and so on, until all the voices are sounding independently. A fugue may have two, three, or four voices. After visiting Frederick the Great, Bach wrote one fugue that had six voices.

Bach was a master of counterpoint, and the fugue is the most demanding type of counterpoint to write. (See Listening Guide below.)
Fugue

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0:00</td>
<td>First entry of fugue subject (dit diddle-DEE, dit diddle-DEE); instrumental effects created by different stops, one oboe-like, the other clarinet-like.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0:06</td>
<td>Second entry of subject (slightly lower).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0:17</td>
<td>Third entry (high); the other lines are still playing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0:26</td>
<td>Fourth entry.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0:37</td>
<td>Fifth entry (!) on pedals (in octaves).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0:46</td>
<td>Change of texture; intervening passage with sixteenth notes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0:59</td>
<td>Low entry; pedals return to accompany.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:16</td>
<td>High section with entries spaced out.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:29</td>
<td>Light section; no pedals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:50</td>
<td>Final entry on pedals; the big finale.</td>
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Bach's Keyboard, Instrumental, and Orchestral Music

During his years at the Cöthen court, Bach produced a large amount of music for solo keyboard, other solo instruments, and small orchestra. In this music particularly, Bach melded the characteristics of Italian, French, and German styles. Italian music had rhythmic drive and brilliance. French music favored dance forms and ornamentation. German music was serious and contrapuntal. Bach drew on all these elements to produce an individual style that was the high point of the Baroque era.

Bach wrote much solo music, perhaps inspired by the fine players at the prince’s court. There are suites and sonatas for solo violin and solo harpsichord, suites for solo cello, and a suite for solo flute. He also composed several sonatas and trio sonatas.

From the Cöthen years come a large number of orchestral compositions. These include some suites for orchestra, as well as several concertos, including the famous Brandenburg Concertos.

LISTENING GUIDE

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685–1750)
First Movement from Brandenburg Concerto No. 2 in F Major

Date of composition: 1721
Instruments: Solo recorder, oboe, horn, and violin; with strings and continuo
Tempo: Allegro
Key: F major
Duration: 5:12

Bach completed the six Brandenburg Concertos for the Margrave of Brandenburg in 1721. They show a fusion of national styles, as well as Bach’s brilliant mixture of melody and counterpoint. The Brandenburg Concerto No. 2 is in three movements (fast-slow-fast), with contrasting solo and ripieno (full ensemble) groups. Bach explores coloristic possibilities within the solo group.
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(recorder, oboe, horn, and violin) in various combinations—solos, duets, trios, and quartets. Although this piece is often played with flute and trumpet, the word “flute” usually meant recorder in Bach’s time, and an early manuscript copy of the score calls for “either trumpet or horn.”

The first movement features three rhythmic motives, which combine to form the ritornello:

a. mixture of eighth notes and sixteenth notes:

```
\[\text{Recorder, Oboe, Violins}\]
```

b. eighth notes, chordal:

```
\[\text{Horn}\]
```

c. sixteenth notes, running:

```
\[\text{Continuo}\]
```

The ways in which these ideas are combined, re-combined, sorted and re-sorted, and moved from one instrument to another, and the ways in which Bach organizes his harmonies and textures are nothing short of astounding.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CD</th>
<th>TIME</th>
<th>LISTEN FOR</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>[opening section]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(17)</td>
<td>0:00</td>
<td>Ritornello (Tonic: F Major), motives “a,” “b,” and “c” together.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0:20</td>
<td>Violin solo.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0:25</td>
<td>Ritornello.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0:31</td>
<td>Duet (violin and oboe).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0:37</td>
<td>Horn solo.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0:41</td>
<td>Duet (recorder and oboe), followed by horn.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0:51</td>
<td>Duet (horn and recorder).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0:57</td>
<td>Continuation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II</td>
<td>[second section]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(18)</td>
<td>1:12</td>
<td>Solo quartet, accompanied by continuo, based on “c.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1:22</td>
<td>Sequences (fragment of “b”), horn answered by oboe; harmonic modulation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1:40</td>
<td>Dynamic “echoes” (loud sections followed by soft); based on “a” and “c.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III</td>
<td>[episode]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(19)</td>
<td>2:07</td>
<td>Continuing to modulate, steady eighth notes in bass, reaching:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2:22</td>
<td>Ritornello B♭ major.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2:32</td>
<td>Duet (recorder and violin), joined by oboe and horn.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(20)</td>
<td>2:53</td>
<td>Ritornello, C minor; motive “c” now prominent on top.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3:03</td>
<td>Another harmonically unstable section.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3:16</td>
<td>More sequences between horn and oboe, modulating to:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3:24</td>
<td>G minor, ritornello.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3:35</td>
<td>Constant changes of texture and harmony (basses get motive “a”!); cadence.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
LISTENING GUIDE

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685–1750)  
*St. Matthew Passion* (excerpt)  

Date of composition: c. 1727  
Soprano, tenor, and bass voices, chorus, orchestra, and basso continuo  
Duration: 8:07

This excerpt from Bach’s *St. Matthew Passion* shows the composer’s mastery at achieving a fusion of seriousness and expressiveness suitable to the biblical text. The role of narrator for the Gospel story is performed by the “Evangelist” (tenor), who sings in recitative with a simple continuo accompaniment. The words of Jesus (bass) are “haloed” by lush string accompaniment. The chorus portrays the responses of the twelve disciples. This happens most effectively when Jesus predicts that one of them will betray him, and they ask, “Lord, is it I?” (If you listen very carefully, you will hear eleven questions. The voice of the twelfth disciple—Judas—is missing.)

A soprano soloist begins this excerpt in an aria that beautifully reflects the theme (Jesus as the sacrifice for all) that is ultimately the focus of the entire work. The section is rounded off in peace and contemplation by the plain but moving harmonies of the final chorale.
### CHAPTER 6

#### LISTENING GUIDE

**Johann Sebastian Bach (1685–1750)**
**St. Matthew Passion (excerpt)**

Date of composition: c. 1727
Soprano, tenor, and bass voices, chorus, orchestra, and basso continuo
Duration: 8:07

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**Bach’s Vocal Church Music**
During Bach’s stay in Leipzig, he wrote hundreds of cantatas for church services, as well as some important sacred vocal pieces. These include motets, Passions, and the Mass in B Minor, which is regarded as one of the greatest traditional Mass settings that has ever been composed.

Bach wrote two Passions for the Lutheran churches of Leipzig. (A third is rumored to exist but has never been found.) A Passion is a musical setting of the story from the Gospels of the death and resurrection of Jesus. Bach based one setting on the account in the Gospel of St. John, and the other setting on the account in the Gospel of St. Matthew. Although Bach’s musical legacy is full of masterpieces, the *St. Matthew Passion* is universally regarded as one of the monumental musical masterpieces of all time. It is a huge composition, lasting some three hours, for solo singers, two choruses, one boys’ choir, two orchestras, and two organs. It runs the gamut of human emotion, from grief to awe to despair to spiritual transcendence. With this work alone, Bach shows us how music can reflect and deepen the meaning of human existence.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>IV</th>
<th>[closing section]</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(21)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4:24</td>
<td>Surprise! Everyone in unison on motive “a”; back to home key of F major.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4:35</td>
<td>Another surprise! One last harmonic excursion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5:02</td>
<td>Return to original texture.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5:07</td>
<td>Return to original key and ritornello.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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*Student CD II, 1*  
*Complete CD II, 22*
THE BAROQUE ERA: 1600–1750

CD  TIME  LISTEN FOR

1  [22]  0:00  [orchestral introduction]

Soprano

2  [23]  0:31  Blute nur, blute nur
Blute nur, du liebes Herz,
[repeat text four times; answering phrases on flutes and violins; motion throughout in orchestra]
1:19  [orchestral interlude]

3  [24]  1:51  [change of key, similar accompanying figures as A section]
Ach! ein Kind das du erzogen,
das an deiner Brust gesogen,
droht den Pfleger zu ermorden,
denn es ist zur Schlange worden;
[repeat, varied]
2:21
3:00  [orchestral passage from beginning]

4  [25]  3:32  Blute nur, du liebes Herz . . . [repeated exactly as beginning]
[orchestral closing passage]

Evangelist

5  [24]  5:00  [simple basso continuo accompaniment]
Aber am ersten Tage der süssen Brot
taten die Jünger zu Jesu
und sprachen zu ihm:
[repeat, varied]
5:36  [recitative]
Er sprach:

Chorus

5:10  [noble, serious tone]
Wo, wo, wo willst du, dass wir dir bereiten, das Osterlamm zu essen?
Wo willst du, dass wir dir bereiten das Osterlamm zu essen?
Where, where, where will you have us prepare for you to eat the Passover?
Where will you have us prepare for you to eat the Passover?

Evangelist

5:36  [recitative]
Er sprach:
He said:

Jesus

6  [27]  5:39  Gehet hin in die Stadt zu einem und spricht zu ihm:
Der Meister lässt dir sagen:
Meine Zeit ist hier,
ich will bei dir die Ostern halten mit meinen Jüngern.
Go to the city to a certain man and say to him:
The Master says to you:
My time is here,
I will keep the Passover at your house with my disciples.
CHAPTER 6

Evangelist
[recitative—simple basso continuo accompaniment]

6:08
Und die Jüngern taten, wie ihnen Jesus befohlen hatte, und bereiteten das Osterlamm.
And the disciples did as Jesus had commanded, and prepared the Passover.
Und am Abend setzte er sich zu Tische mit den Zwölfen, Und da sie assen, sprach er:
And at evening he sat at the table with the twelve, and as they ate, he said:

Jesus
[accompanied recitative]

6:32
Warlich, ich sage euch: Truly, I say to you:
Eines unter euch wird mich verraten.
One of you will betray me.
[“halo;” dissonance and intensity on “betray”]

Evangelist
[recitative]

6:50
Und sie wurden sehr betrübt Und haben an, ein jeglicher unter ihnen, und sagten zu ihm:
And they became very troubled and they spoke, each one of them, and said to Him:

Chorus
[fast, panicky music]

7 (28) 6:59

Chorale
[calm setting of final chorale]

7:11
Ich bins, ich sollte büssen, an Händen und an Füssen gebunden in her Hölle; Die Geiseln und die Banden und was du ausgestanden, das hat verdienten meine Seele.
I should bear all of it, my hands and feet tethered in the bonds of Hell; the scourges and shackles that You endured so that my soul might be delivered.

George Frideric Handel (1685–1759)

Although Handel’s life overlapped Bach’s almost exactly, their careers were remarkably different. As we have seen, Bach lived a quiet, busy life in one small region of Germany. By contrast, Handel traveled extensively and became an international celebrity. Although the central musical genre of the Baroque era was opera, Bach wrote no operas. Handel’s career was built on the nearly forty operas he wrote, mostly for the London stage. Bach was a family man; Handel never married.

Handel was born in Halle, a small town in Germany. His family was not musical, and his father wanted him to study law. He was so obviously gifted in music, however, that he was allowed to study with the music director and organist of the local church. He learned to play the organ, the harpsichord, and the vio-
section. This kind of aria is known as a **da capo** (“from the beginning”) aria, because after the B section, the composer has simply to write the words “da capo” in the score to indicate the return to A. The singer is expected to improvise embellishments for the repeat of the A section.

Handel composed *Giulio Cesare* (*Julius Caesar*) in 1724, at the height of his involvement with opera. This opera is based on the story of Caesar and Cleopatra in Egypt, in which Caesar falls in love with Cleopatra and joins forces with her against Ptolemy, King of Egypt. In the end, Ptolemy is defeated and Cleopatra is crowned Queen of Egypt.

The excerpt we shall study comes from the third act of the opera, during a temporary setback for Caesar. After a shipwreck, he is cast up on the shore where his army has been defeated in a battle. He laments his defeat, the loss of his troops, and his separation from Cleopatra. In Baroque operas, it was conventional for the principal singing roles to be sung by high voices (see box on p. 153). So here the role of Caesar is sung by a woman.

Handel deliberately manipulates the conventions of opera seria in order to inject more drama and realism into the situation. What the audience would expect at this point in the opera is a recitative followed by an aria. What Handel does is to begin the scene with “breezy” music: the strings play melodic figures that seem to “float,” anticipating Caesar’s words later in the scene when he calls upon the breezes to soothe him. Then comes **recitative accompagnato**, recitative that is accompanied by the orchestra to create a more dramatic effect. Finally, the aria starts, with its “breezy” music. All goes conventionally for a while; the A section of the aria continues. Then comes the B section (“Dite, dite dov’è,”—“Tell me, tell me where she is”). But at the point where everyone in the audience would expect the return of the A section (remember, the standard format is ABA), Handel interposes another accompanied recitative (“Mà, d’ogni intorno,”—“But all around me”), which dramatically reflects Caesar’s state of mind in his unfortunate situation. It is as though Caesar’s reflections are suddenly interrupted by the terrible sight of his surroundings. Handel breaks through the operatic conventions of his time to make his music correspond naturally to the psychological realism of the scene.

**LISTENING GUIDE**

*George Frideric Handel (1685–1759)*  
*Giulio Cesare, Act III, Scene 4*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CD</th>
<th>TIME</th>
<th>LISTEN FOR</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(29)</td>
<td>0:00</td>
<td>[Orchestral introduction] “Breezy” music</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Recitative**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TIME</th>
<th>PLAY</th>
<th>TRANSLATION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 0:46 | Dall’ ondoso periglio  
salvo mi porta al lido  
il mio propizio fato.  
Qui la celeste parca  
non tronca ancor lo stame  
a la mia vita! | From the dangerous sea  
my lucky destiny safely  
takes me to the beach.  
Here heavenly fate has  
not yet cut the thread  
of my life! |
Today, Handel’s popularity rests mainly on his oratorios. Even in his own time, the oratorios appealed to a very wide public. Why have they always been so popular? First, and most important, the words are in English. Even in the eighteenth century, much of the audience for Italian operas couldn’t understand Italian. Second, oratorios are based on stories from the Bible (mostly the Old Testament) which were familiar to
LISTENING GUIDE

George Frideric Handel (1685–1759)
“Halleluyah” Chorus from Messiah

Date of composition: 1741
Chorus and orchestra
Duration: 3:49

The “Halleluyah” chorus comes as the climax of Part II of Messiah. In it, Handel displays extraordinary ingenuity in combining and contrasting all the possible textures available to him: unison, homophony, polyphony, and imitation. In setting the word “Halleluyah” itself, he also uses a tremendous variety of different rhythms. Finally, much of the strength of the movement comes from its alternation of blocks of simple tonic and dominant harmonies, as well as its triumphant use of trumpets and drums. The jubilant feeling is immediately evident and is a direct reflection of the text: “Halleluyah” is a Hebrew word that means “Praise God.”

The text itself is treated in two ways:

1. Declamatory statements (e.g., “For the Lord God omnipotent reigneth”) characterized by long note values and occasional unison singing.
2. Contrapuntal responses (e.g., “forever and ever, halleluyah, halleluyah”), characterized by faster notes, and offering musical and textual commentary on the declamatory statements.

The “Halleluyah” chorus falls into nine relatively symmetrical sections, each featuring a single texture or combination of textures.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CD TIME</th>
<th>LISTEN FOR</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8 (33) 0:00</td>
<td>Instrumental opening (“pre-echo”).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Homophony**

[Two phrases, each with five statements of “Halleluyah.” Notice the changing rhythms.]

0:07  First phrase, tonic.
0:16  Second phrase, dominant.

**Unison**

[With homophonic “halleluyah” responses: “For the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.”]

0:25  First phrase, dominant.
0:37  Second phrase, tonic.

**Polyphony**

9 (34) 0:49  Statement by sopranos, tonic.
0:56  Statement by tenors and basses, dominant.
1:05  Statement by tenors and altos, tonic.
1:14  Short instrumental interlude.
THE BAROQUE ERA: 1600–1750

Homophony

[With noticeable change in dynamics: two phrases, one soft (piano), one loud (forte).]
1:16 pian: “The kingdom of this world is become..."
1:27 forte: “...the kingdom of our God and of His Christ.”

Imitation

[Four entries, “And He shall reign forever and ever.”]
1:43 Tenors in counterpoint with basses.
1:49 Altos in counterpoint with basses and tenors.
1:55 Sopranos in counterpoint with all other voices.

Unison

[Three declamatory statements (“King of Kings and Lord of Lords”) against homophonic responses (“forever and ever, halleluyah, halleluyah”), each at a different pitch, moving higher and higher.]
11 [36] 2:01 Sopranos and altos, answered by other voices.

Polyphony

[Two statements of “And he shall reign forever and ever,” against contrapuntal responses (“and he shall reign...”).]
2:42 Basses, dominant.
2:48 Sopranos, tonic.

Unison/Homophony

[Combination of unison and homophonic textures—“King of Kings”... (“forever and ever”) “and Lord of Lords”... (“halleluyah, halleluyah”).]
2:54 Tenors, answered by other voices.

Homophony

[Statements by all voices.]
3:03 “And He shall reign forever and ever.”
3:10 “King of Kings and Lord of Lords” (twice).
3:19 “And he shall reign forever and ever.”
3:26 [Final statement of “King of Kings and Lord of Lords.”]
3:26 Tenors and sopranos, answered by other voices.
3:34 Pause; one final drawn-out homophonic statement: plagal cadence (IV–I).

Handel was also an accomplished composer of instrumental music. His two most famous instrumental suites are the Water Music and Music for the Royal Fireworks.

Handel’s music is less complex than that of Bach, with more focus on melody than on counterpoint, and he deliberately appealed to a wider audience than had been traditional. Music was becoming less the preserve of the wealthy and more the delight of everyone who cared to listen.

An English writer in the eighteenth century complained that the opera house was more of a social than a musical event: “There are some who contend that the singers might be very well heard if the audience was more silent, but it is so much the fashion to consider the Opera as a place of rendezvous and visiting that they do not seem in the least to attend to the music.”