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Silence as Sound: Handel's Sublime Pauses

ELLEN T. HARRIS

After starting off at a comfortable, celebratory lope, the “Hallelujah Chorus” slowly ratchets up the tension through increasingly dramatic juxtapositions of rhythmic motion and texture, climaxing after the “King of Kings” section in a full authentic cadence 14 measures before the end. The following choral peroration gradually speeds up the rhythmic motion, moving from quarter notes on “King of Kings” to 8th notes on “forever and ever” and to 16ths and 8ths on “hallelujah,” as the sopranos insistently proclaim the tonic note. The long tonic suspension, progressively shorter rhythms, and, often in performance, accelerating tempo drive the music into a whirlwind from which there seems no escape until, abruptly and without warning, the chorus and orchestra plunge into silence. No listener, even one not caught up in the preceding vortex, can fail to come to attention here. When the silence is fully embraced in performance and not rushed, it becomes a moment of huge anticipation, during which the whole audience tends to catch its breath and hold it expectantly, united with the performers in collectively preparing for the downbeat on the final “ha-le-lu-jah.” The release comes in a magnificently sustained plagal cadence that seems to ring the firmament (Ex. 1).¹

521

A version of this paper was presented at the symposium in honor of George Buelow and Malcolm Brown at Indiana Univ. on 16 October 2004.

¹ My exploration of silence in the music of Handel began with work on Handel's cantatas; one chapter of my book *Handel as Orpheus: Voice and Desire in the Chamber Cantatas* (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 2001), “Silence and Secrecy,” 171–209, is devoted to this topic. There was not space in that discussion to explore the antecedents of Handel's silences, nor to show how silences are used in Handel's mature work. This paper

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THE JOURNAL OF MUSICOLOGY

Although Handel regularly uses silence as an important and always arresting element of his mature style, the “Hallelujah Chorus” provides the most familiar example, one that many can readily recall by memory without hearing. Silence is rarely discussed in modern analysis as an element of Baroque music, and more general explorations of silence in music do not typically focus on interruptive silences such as that in the “Hallelujah Chorus,” but rather on such issues as preparatory silence before a piece begins, silence between movements, silence in individual parts, silence that results from articulation (as for example in the sharpened performance of dotted passages), and even music composed to depict silence.² In the discussion that follows, “silence” refers to places where a notated absence of sound (in later orchestral music, what is known as a “general pause” or G.P.) creates a rupture in the musical flow (in the full sense of being simultaneously “abrupt,” “disruptive,” and “interruptive”). Although the evocative use of silence in music has a history that reaches back many centuries, the idea that the expressive potential of silence was only developed in the Classical era continues to dominate musicological thought. For example, Enrico Careri, who writes persuasively and extensively about expressive musical silence, maintains its Classical origin: “Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven are the first to capitalize on the expressive potential of silence, the first to interrupt the sonorous flow where according to the rules one should not, creating delay, surprise, bewilderment.”³ And yet it can be shown not

522

aims to place the discussion in *Handel as Orpheus* in a more complete context. I have benefited from presenting portions of this paper as it developed in a number of locations: Lincoln Center (New York, 2002), University of Iowa (2002), Peabody Conservatory (2004), and Indiana University (2004). I am grateful to my audiences for perceptive comments and critiques.

² These are among the approaches taken, for example, by Lewis Jones in *Silence and Music and Other Essays* (Sussex: The Book Guild, 1992), and in Ursula Vaughan Williams, *Silence and Music* (London: Hutchinson, 1959). There are surprisingly few modern discussions of notated silence in music, especially of the Baroque; but for general background and categorization, see Anna Danielewicz-Betz, *Silence and Pauses in Discourse and Music* (Saarbrücken: Universität des Saarlandes, 1998), and conference proceedings of the symposium “Musique et Silence” (Univ. of Tours, 1994), published in *Les cahiers du CIREM*, no. 32–34 (1994): especially Eric Gaudibert, “Les silences: Essai sur les différentes catégories du silence musical,” 113–20, and Raphaëlle Legrand, “Pauses fonctionnelles et silences expressifs: Esquisse d’une typologie des silences dans la musique du baroque tardif,” 28–36.

³ “Haydn, Mozart e Beethoven sono stati i primi a capire le potenzialità espressive del silenzio, i primi a interrompere il flusso sonoro dove di regola non si dovrebbe, creando attesa, sorpresa, smarrimento” (Enrico Careri, “Sull’interpretazione musicale del silenzio,” in *Et facciam dolci canti: Studi in onore di Agostino Ziino in occasione del suo 65° compleanno*, 2 [Lucca: Libreria Musicale Italiana, 2003], 1080–81). Other important contributions by Careri to the history of silence include “Caratteri e funzioni della pausa nella musica strumentale di Schubert,” *Studi musicali* 32 (2003): 197–236, and “Pause, archetipi e rondò: da Haydn a Schubert via Mozart e Beethoven,” *Studi musicali* 30 (2001): 181–98.

HARRIS

EXAMPLE 1. Handel, *Messiah* (1741), "Hallelujah Chorus," mm. 88–94. Friedrich Chrysander, ed., *Händel Werke*; rev. Nicholas McGegan and Eleanor Selfridge-Field (Menlo Park, Cal.: Center for Computer Assisted Research in the Humanities, 1990), 330–31

88

ver, King of Kings, and Lord of Lords, Hal-le-lu-jah, Hal-le-
 ver, for e-ver and e-ver, for e-ver and e-ver, Hal-le-lu-jah, Hal-le-
 ver, and e-ver and e-ver, for e-ver and e-ver, Hal-le-lu-jah, Hal-le-
 ver, for e-ver and e-ver, for e-ver and e-ver, Hal-le-lu-jah, Hal-le-

THE JOURNAL OF MUSICOLOGY

EXAMPLE 1. (continued)

91

lu - jah, Hal-le - lu - jah, Hal-le - lu - jah, Hal - le - lu - jah.

lu - jah, Hal-le - lu - jah, Hal-le - lu - jah, Hal - le - lu - jah.

lu - jah, Hal-le - lu - jah, Hal-le - lu - jah, Hal - le - lu - jah.

lu - jah, Hal-le - lu - jah, Hal-le - lu - jah, Hal - le - lu - jah.

524

only that Handel's compositional practice equally captures "the expressive potential of silence," but that specific precursors to Handel's usage point to a still longer time frame for the practice of silence in music.

Antecedents for Handel's use of musical silence include two traditions that were of particular importance to his stylistic development: the madrigal, which provides the most important precedent in vocal music for the idea of word-painting to depict silence, and Corelli's trio sonatas, which offer, I believe, Handel's immediate model for a codified system of notated silences. By focusing on these two specific traditions, I do not mean to imply that they represent the only or earliest examples of musical silence before the 18th century. A comprehensive study of notated silence would need to consider music of the Renaissance in which silence may be used to demarcate sections or important text phrases, as for example in "Quam pulchra es" by John Dunstable (d. 1453), where a preceding measure of silence sets off the entrance of the beloved's voice, or "Ave Maria . . . virgo serena" by Josquin des Prez (d. 1521), where long silences before and after the final petition to the Virgin ("O mater dei") have the effect of putting this concluding, homophonic address in neon lights. An instance of silence as a form of word-painting from as early as the 14th century may be found in the ballade "Armes, amours/O flour" written by Eustache Deschamps and composed by F[ranciscus?] Andrieu on the death of Guillaume Machaut in 1377. Its refrain ends with the text "la mort MACHAUT, le noble retorique," and after the word "mort" (death), and again after the name of the composer, silence slices through the four-part system to depict the loss of Machaut's voice, of his noble rhetoric (Ex. 2). Notwithstanding my emphasis on the madrigal school and Corelli, it is also not the case that silence is absent in other repertoires of the 17th century. In particular, opera played a significant role in the exploration of silence as an expressive device, as in Monteverdi's famously fragmented setting of Octavia's "Addio Roma" from *L'incoronazione di Poppea* (1642), "A-, a-, a-, addio Roma, a-, a-, addio patria, a-, amici, amici, addio," where each dash indicates a notated silence throughout the system. All these precedents variously influenced the developing idea of silence in music.

Nevertheless, despite Renaissance and earlier examples (such as the 14th-century lament for Machaut), a strong tradition of word-painting silences in music emerged only at the end of the 16th century with Italian madrigals whose settings might depict or imply a cessation of sound. "Sospirava il mio cor" by Carlo Gesualdo (c. 1560–1612), from his Third Book of Madrigals (1595), provides a good example: The verb "sigh" is broken with a rest (a musical sigh), the noun "sigh" is

THE JOURNAL OF MUSICOLOGY

EXAMPLE 2. Andrieu, "Armes amours" (1377), mm. 38-53. Willi Apel, ed., *French Secular Compositions of the Fourteenth Century*, *Corpus Mensurabilis Musicae* 53/1 (American Institute of Musicology, 1970), 3

38

duel, plou - rés, car c'est bien drois,
li - que, Car l'on plour - ra en Fran - ce, en Ar - tois

526

43

La mort Ma - chaut, le no - ble re - thou - ry -
La mort Ma - chaut, le no - ble re - to - ri -

48

que.
que.

followed with a short rest throughout the system, and the verb “expire” is followed with a longer rest (Ex. 3).

By the middle of the 17th century, silence also began to play an important role in the growth of an instrumental music independent not only of text but also of specific meanings based on function, such as a march or dance, and aimed at the same kind of emotional logic as vocal music.⁴ A defining moment in the development of an expressive instrumental style came in the sonatas of Arcangelo Corelli (1653–1713), whose music was published, widely disseminated, and imitated, especially in England. Handel’s access to Corelli was not limited to published music; he knew the composer personally in Rome in 1707. Corelli led the band at the houses of Handel’s Roman patrons: Cardinals Pamphili and Ottoboni, and the Prince Ruspoli. He certainly played in the performances of Handel’s *Il trionfo del tempo ed il disinganno* (1707) and *La resurrezione* (1708), and probably performed with Handel as well in a number of his cantatas.⁵ Not surprisingly, Corelli’s music indelibly influenced the younger German’s style. Among many other important musical contributions, he was one of the first to include dramatic silences in instrumental compositions and was apparently the very first instrumental composer to use silence as a regular element of his style.⁶ He employs silence in three distinctive and markedly different ways, each of which resonates with sound while bridging, suspending, or propelling the harmonic motion. Corelli’s practice derives in large part, necessarily, from vocal traditions, and we can recognize vocal instances similar to Corelli’s boundary, pre-cadential, and interruptive silences in the examples from Dunstable, Josquin, and Monteverdi mentioned above. More striking than the mere existence of such resemblances, however, is his systematic and non-textual incorporation of silence into the musical fabric.

Corelli uses silence to demarcate formal and harmonic boundaries. In his Trio Sonata op. 1 no. 6 (1683), for example, notated silence

⁴ I am indebted to the work of Gregory Barnett on music and rhetoric and, in particular, to a paper he presented at the Annual Meeting of the Society for Music Theory (2002): “*Sonata Poetica*: Musical Style, Convention, and the Rhetoric of Affect.” I am grateful to Professor Barnett for sharing this work with me before publication.

⁵ Corelli’s performance in *Il trionfo* is famous for an anecdote according to which Handel became enraged when Corelli could not (or did not) execute the French overture in the correct style and was thus prompted to rewrite the overture in the Italian style. See Anthony Hicks, “Handel’s Early Musical Development,” *Proceedings of the Royal Musical Association* 103 (1976–1977): 80–90. For Pamphili’s patronage of Handel, see Hans Joachim Marx, “Händel im Rom—Seine Beziehung zu Benedetto Card. Pamphilj,” *Händel Jahrbuch* 29 (1983): 107–18. For further bibliography on Handel in Italy, see Harris, *Handel as Orpheus*.

⁶ Barnett, “*Sonata Poetica*,” has found a single earlier example of interruptive silence: the opening of a slow movement in Maurizio Cazzati’s op. 15, Sonata à 6 (1654). Otherwise, examples of “abruptio” begin to appear with regularity in the time of Corelli.

THE JOURNAL OF MUSICOLOGY

EXAMPLE 3. Gesualdo, "Sospirava il mio cor" (1595), mm. 1-8, Anibale Bizzelli, ed., *Madrigali 3* (Rome: Istituto italiano per la storia della musica, 1957): 24

Per u - scir di do -
So - spi - ra - va il mio co - re
Per u - scir di do -
So - spi - ra - va il mio co - re

528

lo - re so - spi - ra - va il mio co - re Per u - scir di -
Per u - scir di do - lo - re
lo - re so - spi - ra - va il mio co - re Per u - scir
So - spi - ra - va il mio co - re Per u - scir di do - lo -
So - spi - ra - va il mio co - re Per u - scir di do -

HARRIS

EXAMPLE 3. (continued)

6

do - lo - re Un so - spir che di-cea l'a - ni - ma spi - ro Quan -

Un so - spir che di-cea Quan -

di do - lo - re Un so - spir che di-cea l'a - ni - ma spi - ro Quan -

re di do - lo - re Un so - spir che di-cea Quan -

lo - re Un so - spir che di-cea Quan -

Sospirava il mio core
Per uscir di dolore
Un sospir che dicea:
"L'animo spiro!"

My heart sighed
In order to escape from suffering
A sigh that said:
"My soul expires!"

529

separates the first section from the modulatory middle section and the middle section from the final section in the home key (Ex. 4). In typical fashion, both silences follow a cadence to a scale degree other than the tonic as they bridge a harmonic shift.

In op. 1 no. 9 (1685), Corelli inserts pre-cadential silence between the dominant chord and a marked *adagio* passage leading to a temporary tonic or final tonic cadence (see Ex. 5). Such silences may sometimes signal a cadenza (similar to the designation *adagio* before a cadence in Handel's arias, where the orchestra inevitably drops out, clearly indicating a cadenza), but this performance practice in the trio sonatas cannot be assumed in all cases. In fact, performing the silence often seems the better solution, especially when the silence itself functions like a cadenza by suspension of the dominant as a long, anticipatory upbeat to a final, cadential phrase which leads to the tonic.

Corelli also incorporates "interruptive" silence, heightening the sense of retarded or impeded motion in an ongoing harmonic progression at the opening of slow-tempo movements. This occurs, for example, in op. 2 no. 7 (Ex. 6).

THE JOURNAL OF MUSICOLOGY

Two of Handel's earliest compositions from Italy (1707) demonstrate how he not only absorbed these separate vocal and instrumental traditions but significantly stretched and intensified them as part of his standard musical language. In the *Salve regina*, for example, Handel sets the word "suspriamus" in the madrigal tradition with rests between

EXAMPLE 4. Boundary silence: Corelli, op. 1 no. 6 (1683), *Allegro*, mm. 35–69. J. Joachim and F. Chrysander, eds., *Les Oeuvres Arcangelo Corelli* (London: Augener, 1952–65) 1: 39

530

35

42

49

5
4 3 p 5
4 3

THE JOURNAL OF MUSICOLOGY

EXAMPLE 5. Pre-cadential silence: Corelli, op. 1 no. 9 (1683), *Allegro-Adagio*, mm. 24-54. *Les Oeuvres Arcangelo Corelli 1*: 55

24

5 6 #5 6 #

532

29

Adagio

6/4 # 6 6/4 5 # 6 6/4 5 6 4 4

35

Allegro

#

HARRIS

EXAMPLE 5. (continued)

40

45

533

50

Adagio

silence an essential attribute. In one cantata, for example, the singer describes the pain of Phyllis's "inconstant soul" until "his tears of grief welling up with sorrow, /he fainted exhausted, and in fainting was silent" (*Fra pensieri*). In another the singer berates "inconstant Thyriss," saying, "I am often betrayed, and I do not deny that I dislike the treachery, yet I am silent and forgive you" (*Manca pur quanto sei*). In one text the singer declares that since fatal destiny demands he keep his love silent, he vows to be "silent in suffering my death" (*Se per fatal destino*).

THE JOURNAL OF MUSICOLOGY

EXAMPLE 6. Interruptive silence: Corelli, op. 2 no. 7 (1685), *Adagio*, mm. 1–10. *Les Oeuvres Arcangelo Corelli* 1: 98

Adagio

Violino I

Violino II

Violone e Cembalo

6 5 4 3 2 5 9 6 5 6 6

6 5 4 3 2 3 9 6 5 6 6 6 7 6 7 6 6

534

In another, the singer cautions himself to be silent, saying that “to reveal my love is not allowed” (*Stelle, perfide stelle*).⁷

Not surprisingly, given the frequent emphasis on silence in the texts, Handel’s early cantatas provide a rhetorical lexicon of silence: words broken by rests (rhetorical “suspirsto”), words followed by silence (rhetorical “abruptio”), and disjointed speech broken by silences (rhetorical “dissolutio”).⁸ Handel breaks the words “tremoli” (quivering), “sospir”

⁷ See “Texts and Translations of the Continuo Cantatas,” in Harris, *Handel as Orpheus*, Appendix 2, 297–366.

⁸ George J. Buelow, to whom this paper is dedicated, has made significant contributions to our understanding of rhetoric and music in the Baroque era. See especially his “Rhetoric and Music: Baroque; Musical Figures; Affects,” in *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, 2nd ed. (New York: Grove’s Dictionaries, 2000), hereafter *NG II*; see also “The ‘Loci topici’ and Affect in Late Baroque Music,” *Music Review* 27 (1966): 161–79; “Music, Rhetoric, and the Concept of the Affections: A Selective Bibliography,” *Notes* 30 (1973): 250–59; and “Johann Mattheson and the Invention of the ‘Affektenlehre,’” in George J. Buelow and Hans Joachim Marx, eds., *Johann Mattheson: New Studies of His Life and Times* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1983), 393–407. For a recent discussion of rhetoric and silence, see Legrand, “Pauses fonctionnelles et silences expressifs,” cited

HARRIS

EXAMPLE 7. Handel, *Salve regina* (1707), "Ad te clamamus," mm. 13–33. *Händel Werke* 38: 137

13

E - vae, ex - u - les fi - lii E - vae ad te cla -

20

ma - mus ex - u - les fi - lii E - vae, ad te sus - pi -

27

ra - mus ge - men - tes et - flen - tes ad te

535

above, n2. Patrick Macey's "Josquin and Musical Rhetoric: *Miserere mei, Deus* and Other Motets," in Richard Sherr, ed., *The Josquin Companion* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2000), 485–530, provides a good summary of the first systematic listing of musical-rhetorical figures in Joachim Burmeister's *Musica poetica* (1606), including "aposiopesis: a general pause in all voices" (491).

THE JOURNAL OF MUSICOLOGY

EXAMPLE 8. Handel, Trio Sonata in F (HWV 392) (1707), *Allegro*, mm. 39–52. *Händel Werke* 27: 111–12

39

536

41

44

46

HARRIS

EXAMPLE 8. (*continued*)

537

or “sospirando” (sigh or sighing), and “inciampa” (stumbling) with rests, all of which can be explained by word-painting. In addition, however, he also breaks such words as “pain” (*pena*) or “lover” (*vago*) when emphasizing the emotional turmoil these things cause (see Ex. 9). Similarly, Handel not only follows such words as “death” (*morte, moro, morir*) and “stop” (*ferma, fermati*) with notated silence through the system, but he also uses rests to depict wrenching emotion in situations where the specific words themselves, such as “alone” (*solo*), “you” (*tu*), and “leave” (*parto, partir*), would not call for the depiction of silence except that speech itself has become impeded (see Ex. 10).⁹

⁹ I am grateful to Massimo Ossi for sharing with me his paper “Monteverdi as Reader of Petrarch” before its forthcoming publication as part of the proceedings of a Petrarch conference at Duke Univ. in honor of the historian Ronald Witt in *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies*, which clarified for me the use of rhetorical “dissolutio.” Ossi discusses Monteverdi’s use of “dissolutio” in his setting of “Vago augelletto” from the Eighth Book of Madrigals, *Madrigali guerrieri et amorosi* (1638). Disjointed speech (“parlar disgiunto”), which leads naturally to silences rhetorically and musically (often unrelated to the specific word that precedes it), is found frequently in the madrigals of Monteverdi’s Eighth Book. It also underscores Monteverdi’s setting of “Addio Roma,” mentioned above.

bonds [silence] But what then? [silence] But what then? [silence] I have returned into bondage, into bondage [silence] But what then? [silence] I have returned into bondage, I have returned, [long silence] I have returned into bondage"). Here the question "But what then?" suggests a natural pause in the voice, but Handel extends the silence throughout the score. The silences then begin to infect the speech of the singer at nongrammatical points, creating silent gaps in the setting after the words "bondage" and "bonds," as well as after the question each time it is repeated, until the singer can no longer say the phrase "I have returned into bondage" without breaking the line. This final silence, the longest in the aria, serves structurally as a pre-cadential cadence, but its specific placement, as I have previously argued, indicates "a deep-seated difficulty with expression and a momentary inability to continue" (Ex. 11).¹⁰

The power of silence in music lies in its irregularity—the absence of sound within a sounding structure. Hildebrand Jacob, writing in London in 1734, praises these silent interruptions in music for their potency, stating that

A Break, or Pause in Poetry is sometimes more significant than any Thing, that might have been said; so in Music, a Rest in its proper Place has often a wonderful Effect, and from the Beauty of its Surprise, makes the Suspension of the Harmony itself agreeable.¹¹

539

Others, however, perceived only the rupture and irregularity, perhaps none so strongly as Handel's close friend and Hamburg colleague, Johann Mattheson.

In what is often described as the first extended example of music criticism, Mattheson in 1725 devoted 43 pages of his music journal *Critica Musica* to a discussion of a single work, a Saint John Passion, which according to Mattheson had been composed 20 to 30 years earlier by a composer he chooses not to name but whom he describes as famous.¹² As a result, the authorship of this composition remains very

¹⁰ Harris, *Orpheus*, 177.

¹¹ Hildebrand Jacob, *Of the Sister Arts; an Essay* (1734), facs. ed., Augustan Reprint Society, no. 165, Introduction by Niklaus R. Schweizer (Los Angeles: William Andrews Clark Memorial Library, 1974), 25.

¹² Johann Mattheson, *Critica Musica* (Hamburg: Auf Unkosten des Autoris, 1722–1725; facs. ed.: Amsterdam: Knuf, 1964), 13 (1725): 11–29 and 33–56; references to dating and the attribution to a famous composer are on p. 11. Buelow's work has also illuminated our understanding of Mattheson as a theorist and composer, and as an influence on Handel. In addition to studies of his cited above in n8, see "Mattheson's Concept of Moduli and Handelian Compositional Process," *Göttinger Händel Beiträge* 3 (1989): 272–78.

much contested to this day.¹³ Originally attributed to Handel, it was for years excluded from the canon but is now being cautiously reconsidered. Luckily, the importance of Mattheson's analysis to this discussion lies in its identification of flaws and improprieties in the score rather than in the question of authorship. If the Passion was composed by Handel in 1704 in Hamburg, it would represent his earliest surviving major work, earlier than his first opera, *Almira*, completed late in the same year. If the work is not by Handel, it nonetheless represents the style of music he would likely have heard in Hamburg at that time.

Mattheson excoriates the Passion for a host of reasons, mostly having to do with text-setting, including appropriate accentuation and expression, word and text repetition, and choice of texture and instrumentation. He also repeatedly blames the composer for incorrectly breaking the vocal line with rests (even though, since the accompaniment continues, no complete silences are thereby created). For example, he writes of word repetitions and line breaks in an arioso for Pilate, "Nehmet ihr ihn," that one can only imagine it the way the composer set it if one supposes that Pilate stutters or has something in his throat that prevents him from continuing ("Take ye him [break], take ye him and crucify him, and crucify him, for I find [break], for I find no fault in him, for I find [break], for I find no fault in him [break], for I find no fault in him").¹⁴ Mattheson deems that "such things are not musical."¹⁵ He

541

¹³ Scholars have passed the work around like a hot potato, trying not to have the attribution of the heavily criticized composition stick to their guy. In addition to Handel, the St. John Passion has been attributed variously to, among others, Reinhard Keiser, Georg Philipp Telemann, Georg Böhm, Christian Ritter, or Mattheson himself, who is viewed on one hand as humbly criticizing his own early work while on the other hand having the temerity to refer to himself as a famous composer. Needless to say, there is an extensive literature. Bernd Baselt, "Händel und Bach: Zur Frage der Passionen," in Walther Siegmund-Schultze, ed., *Johann Sebastian Bach und Georg Friedrich Händel: zwei führende musikalische Repräsentanten der Aufklärungsepoche* (Halle: Wissenschaftliches Kolloquium der 24. Händelfestspiele der DDR, 1975), 58–66, suggests Mattheson's authorship. Earlier, Werner Braun ("Echtheits- und Datierungsfragen im vokalen Frühwerk Georg Friedrich Händels," in *Händel-Ehrung der deutschen demokratischen Republik, Konferenzbericht* [Leipzig: Deutschen Verlag für Musik, 1959], 61–68) allowed that Handel could have been the author. In 1905, E. D. Rendall ("Is Handel's 'St. John Passion' Genuine?" *Zeitschrift der Internationalen Musikgesellschaft* 6 [1905]:143–49) had suggested Keiser or Telemann, although Telemann was not in Hamburg during the years 1701–4 but in Leipzig (Braun, "Echtheit," 62). Harald Kümmerling ("'Difficile est satyram non scribere' oder: 'Über eine gewisse Passion eines so genannten weltberühmten Mannes,'" in Günther Massenkeil, ed., *Beiträge zur Geschichte des Oratoriums seit Händel* [Bonn: Voggenreiter, 1986], 57–69) suggests Böhm. Hans Joachim Marx ("... eines welt-berühmten Mannes gewisse Passion': zur Herkunft der Händel zugeschriebenen 'Johannes-Passion,'" *Musica* 4 [1987]: 310–316) dismisses the claim for Böhm and suggests Ritter, but Friedhelm Krummacher ("Christian Ritter," in *NG II*) is skeptical.

¹⁴ "Nehmet ihr ihn hin und kreuziget ihn, denn ich finde keine Schuld an ihm."

¹⁵ In answer to the student's question about whether such use of rests can be justified, Mattheson answers: "Auf keine andre Weise, als wenn man supponiren wollte,

THE JOURNAL OF MUSICOLOGY

complains of the opening aria for soprano (in the character of a penitent), “Unsre Bosheit,” that although the rest following the word “Gerechte” (righteous one) is acceptable because there is a comma, the break should be shorter since the punctuation is not final. However, he judges that there is no excuse for the break after “Knechte” (soldiers’), which is no more than decorative “wallpaper” (*Tapet*), because “Knechte” is a possessive that must be followed immediately by its object¹⁶ (“He feels our sins without number, He the holy one, the righteous one [comma], more than the evil soldiers’ [break] flogging and scourging”).¹⁷ In an *accompagnato* for Jesus, “Du hättest keine Macht,” Mattheson complains of one rest that cuts off the verb from the body of the sentence that there is no good reason thus to hinder understanding and leave the verb in the lurch¹⁸ (“Thou couldst have no power against me, except it were from above [break] from above given thee”).¹⁹

Handel’s silences, as in the aria “Ho fuggito,” increasingly cause exactly the kind of syntactical disjunction Mattheson rejected. Whereas early in Handel’s career his silences often involved the depiction of a word, a grammatical pause, or an emotionally expressive text, his more mature music displays a perceptible shift away from simple word-based (madrigalistic) and grammatical gestures toward intensifying rhetorical silences. A fine example occurs in the cantata *Siete rose*, composed about the same time as *Ho fuggito*. Handel sets the title aria with multiple breaks in the vocal line of the A section in this *da capo* design (“You are

542

Pilatus hätte gestottert, oder, es wäre ihm eben etwas in den Hals gekommen, da durch er verhindert worden, weiter zu reden. Diese Dinge aber sind nicht musicalisch” (24).

¹⁶ The student asks Mattheson about the pauses after “der Gerechte” and “Knechte.” Mattheson responds: “Bey dem ersten stehet zwar ein comma.” He distinguishes, however, between a “comma perfectum” and a “comma pendulum,” the comma after “der Gerechte” being of the latter, shorter type: “ein comma pendulum aber höchstens nur mit einer kleinen Zwischen-Pause, z. E. mit einem Suspir, bemerket werden dürffe.” He concludes that “this answers the first part of your question” (Dieses dienet zur Antwort auf den ersten Theil der Frage) and continues: “Bey dem andern, da das Wort, Knechte, aufs Tapet kömt, ist auch nicht einmal der Schatten einer Entschuldigung zu finden, warum daselbst abgebrochen werden sollte: denn es ist der genitivus, dem sein nominativus, falls er nicht vorhergegangen, unzertrennlich folgen muss” (16–17).

¹⁷ Unsre Bosheit ohne Zahl

Fühlt der Heiland, der Gerechte,
Mehr als selbst der frechen Knechte
Peitschenstreich’ und Geisselqual.

¹⁸ The student asks whether he should not emulate the use of rests in this *accompagnato*, as he finds the setting of “von oben herab” very musical. Mattheson responds “In my opinion, absolutely not” and explains: “Solches ist lange nicht von der Wichtigkeit, dass man darüber dem Verstande zu nahe thue, und das verbum concludens im Siche lasse” (26).

¹⁹ “Du hättest keine Macht über mir, wenn sie dir nicht wäre von oben herab gegeben.”

roses [break] covered with dew [break] beautiful lips of my beloved [break] . . .”). In the B section these breaks expand into notated silences throughout the score (“Always dear [silence] whether laughing [silence] or talking [silence] or silent [break!] you set aflame [interrupted word followed by a break] you set aflame my heart”). Cases of ungrammatical fragmentation throughout the aria (separating modifier from subject and verb from object) depict the lover’s bursts of happiness, each phrase its own frisson of delight, and Handel’s decision not to set the word “silence” with silence emphasizes his increasingly text-based rather than word-based practice (Ex. 12). Such notated silences, most often in the manner of Corelli’s three instrumental-rhetorical types, went on to become a hallmark of Handel’s mature vocal style, playing a critical role in his settings of emotionally charged texts. Three examples will suffice to illustrate the growing similarity in Handel’s approach to silence to Corelli’s model.

Boundary silence finds a particularly graphic representation in the aria “Son confusa pastorella” from Handel’s opera *Poro* (1731). Erisena, sister to King Poro and beloved of General Gandarte in Poro’s army, has unwittingly revealed secrets and spread false information that puts both her brother and her beloved in danger. Left alone, she exclaims that she is lost and overwhelmed. Her aria expands on this feeling as she describes herself as a confused shepherdess lost in a dark wood, where the slightest noise terrifies her and makes her turn pale.²⁰

In the conventional *da capo* pattern with two complete settings of the first stanza in the A section, one would usually expect the first setting in major key arias to cadence in the dominant prior to a short ritornello and an eventual return to the tonic in the course of the second setting.²¹ In “Son confusa pastorella,” there is at first no musical indication of any but the typical pattern. Handel begins the aria with a drone bass and a pleasant melody in triple time, thereby setting up the pastoral image of simplicity. But the music soon begins wandering harmonically and rhythmically through unexpected and complicated byways, illustrating the plight of the shepherdess, and Handel concludes

²⁰ See Ellen T. Harris, ed., *The Librettos of Handel’s Operas*, 13 vols. (New York: Garland, 1989), 6: 228–29. Text and trans. from the original libretto (A section only) read as follows:

Son confusa pastorella,	I’m like the rural Nymph dismay’d,
Che nel bosco a notte oscura	Lost in the Woodlands Midnight Shade;
Senza face, e senza stella	Who sees no Star or Taper’s Ray,
Infelice sì smarri.	To guide her thro’ the dreary Way.

²¹ Ellen T. Harris, “Harmonic Patterns in Handel’s Operas,” in Mary Ann Parker, ed., *Eighteenth-Century Music in Theory and Practice: Essays in Honor of Alfred Mann* (Stuyvesant, N.Y.: Pendragon, 1994), 77–118.

THE JOURNAL OF MUSICOLOGY

EXAMPLE 12. Handel, "Siete rose" (c. 1714), mm. 3-7 and 13-15. *G. F. Handel: Cantatas, 121-22*

3

Sie-te ro - se ru - gia - do - se bel-le lab - bra - del mio

This system shows the vocal line and piano accompaniment for measures 3 and 4. The vocal line begins with a quarter rest, followed by a quarter note G4, an eighth note A4, and a quarter note B4. The piano accompaniment consists of a bass line with a quarter note C3, a quarter note D3, and a quarter note E3, and a treble line with a quarter note G4, a quarter note A4, and a quarter note B4.

5

ben, sie-te ro - se ru - gia - do - se bel - le lab - bra del mio

This system shows the vocal line and piano accompaniment for measures 5 and 6. The vocal line continues with a quarter note C5, an eighth note B4, and a quarter note A4. The piano accompaniment features a more active bass line with eighth notes and a treble line with chords.

544

7

ben. Sie - te ro - se Sem-pre

This system shows the vocal line and piano accompaniment for measures 7 and 8. Measure 7 contains the vocal line and piano accompaniment. Measure 8 shows the vocal line with a quarter rest and the piano accompaniment continuing. A double bar line separates the two systems.

14

ca - re se ri - de - te, se par - la - te, se ta - ce - te, ac - cen -

This system shows the vocal line and piano accompaniment for measures 14 and 15. The vocal line has a quarter note G4, an eighth note A4, and a quarter note B4. The piano accompaniment features a complex bass line with eighth notes and a treble line with chords. A double bar line separates the two systems.

the first setting of the opening stanza in an unusually distant region, the minor subdominant. Here the music simply stops. Only after a long pause does the second setting start up again in the home key (Ex. 13).

In addition to offering an especially expressive use of Corelli's boundary silence, the example from "Son confusa pastorella" adds to Handel's depiction of the text's metaphor. Just as the knotty harmony and rhythm of the preceding passage graphically depict the physical difficulty of finding one's way, the silence, in my view, illustrates that Erissena's terror has momentarily frozen her ability to speak (or think) and offers a clear stage picture of the theatrical moment as the confused and lost "shepherdess" stops dead, needing to pull herself together before setting out bravely once again. By painting a physical pause implied yet not described in the text, Handel moves beyond the use of formal boundary silence to dramatic expression.

Pre-cadential silence, used to such good effect in the cantata *Ho fuggito* and later in the "Hallelujah Chorus," became a standard gesture in Handel's vocal music, and as these two examples indicate, the technique yields widely different emotional effects. The familiar "Where'er you walk" from *Semele* (1744) offers another case in point. In this aria, Jupiter overtly describes the Arcadian pastoral landscape he has created in order to divert Semele in his absence. In a deeper, emotional sense, however, he also expresses his own intense feelings of love for her, so that it is ultimately unclear whether Jupiter has consciously and deliberately created an artificial paradise or whether his own powerful attraction has sparked his imagination to view all of nature gathering to Semele's side: "Where'er you walk, cool gales shall fan the glade; trees where you sit, shall crowd into a shade." In the A section of this *da capo* aria, Jupiter sings the phrase "trees, where you sit, shall crowd into a shade" four times. The last time, just before the close of the section, he stops on the dominant after the first half of the phrase, ending on the word "sit." As the score falls into an anticipatory silence, Jupiter, the way I imagine it, loses himself in the image of his beloved. Only after two and a half marked beats of rest at the *Largo* tempo can he pick up the thread and finish the sentence, cadencing to the tonic. It is worth noting that the pause not only suspends the dominant into a seemingly timeless chasm but also interrupts the sentence between the subject "trees" and the verb "shall form," just the kind of ungrammatical pause that so exercised Mattheson. Unfortunately, performers often shy away from such silences, either shortening them or eliding them with a cadenza. In this case, adding a cadenza is particularly odd, as it would come on the word "sit"; but making either adjustment to the composed pre-cadential silence of this aria would, in my view, diminish if not destroy the effect of Jupiter being struck dumb with love (Ex. 14).

THE JOURNAL OF MUSICOLOGY

EXAMPLE 13. Boundary silence: Handel, *Poro* (1731), "Son confusa pastorella," mm. 19–73. *Händel Werke* 79: 90

19

pp

Son con - fu - sa pa - sto - rel - la, che nel bo - sco a

Detailed description: This block contains the musical score for measures 19 through 26. It features a vocal line with lyrics, a piano accompaniment in the right hand, and a bass line. The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 3/4. The piano part begins with a *pp* dynamic marking. The lyrics are: "Son con - fu - sa pa - sto - rel - la, che nel bo - sco a".

546

27

not - te o - scu - ra, sen - za fa - ce, sen - za stel - la, in - fe - li - ce

Detailed description: This block contains the musical score for measures 27 through 34. It continues the vocal line with lyrics, piano accompaniment, and bass line. The lyrics are: "not - te o - scu - ra, sen - za fa - ce, sen - za stel - la, in - fe - li - ce".

HARRIS

EXAMPLE 13. (continued)

35

si suer - ri, in - fe - li - ce, in - fe - li - ce che nel bo - sco a _

547

43

_ not-te o - scu - ra, sen - za fa - ce, e sen - za stel - la, in - fe - li - ce _

THE JOURNAL OF MUSICOLOGY

EXAMPLE 13. (continued)

51

— si suer - ri, — che nel bo - scue a not - te go - scu - ra, — sen - za

548

58

fa - ce, sen - za stel - la, in - fe - li - ce si suer - ri;

HARRIS

EXAMPLE 13. (*continued*)

66

son con - fu - sa pa - sto - rel - la, che nel bo - sco a

549

In Handel's last oratorio, *Jephtha* (1751), the searingly emotional text motivates an extraordinary use of notated silence engaging all three of Corelli's types. The biblical story tells of Jephtha's vow to God that if he is successful in battle he will sacrifice whatever or whomever first greets him on his return. Following his triumph, it is his beautiful daughter, Iphis, his only child, who runs out to meet him. When his family members learn the content of his vow, they are thrown into the deepest emotional states. His wife, Storgè, rails out immediately, "First perish thou and perish all the world." In the following aria, "Let other creatures die!" her rage preempts the orchestra as she launches into song without any introductory ritornello. Her passion only begins to subside as she describes her daughter, "so fair, so chaste, so good," which leads to a pre-cadential silence that is all the more powerful for the aria's explosive beginning. The silence separates the subject from the verb of the final, emotional phrase (lest the blood of the daughter "so fair, so chaste, so good" [silence] be by "a father's hands embued").

In contrast, Jephtha cannot manage an aria but rather pours out his anguish in one of Handel's most wrenching accompanied recitatives, "Deeper and deeper still." In the first part of this movement Jephtha argues with himself about whether the vow must be carried

THE JOURNAL OF MUSICOLOGY

EXAMPLE 14. Pre-cadential silence: Handel, *Semele* (1743), "Wher'er you walk," mm. 9-19. *Händel Werke* 7: 137

9

where - 'er you walk, cool gales shall fan the _ glade;

550

11

trees, where you sit, shall crowd in - to a _ shade, _____

HARRIS

EXAMPLE 14. (continued)

13

trees, where _ you _ sit, _ shall crowd _ in -

16

to _ a shade.

f

f

f

f

4 6
2

Fine

THE JOURNAL OF MUSICOLOGY

through, but he concludes "it must be so." The silence that follows allows his resolution to settle in his own ears (and those of the audience); it also forms the boundary between the debate of the first part, beginning in F# minor and cadencing to C minor, and the *concitato* second section in A♭ major that leads directly to a *largo* cadence in G major, where Jephtha tries to absorb the "horrid thought" of fulfilling his vow. This section is also followed by a boundary silence before the final (third) section, where the key of G major (representing the vow²), having been initially resisted with tonalities a half-step below and above, is reinforced. Jephtha focuses on the image of his daughter, his voice trailing off until he can no longer speak ("I can no more").

Iphis herself reacts to the news that she will be a sacrificial victim with stoic humility, praying "Accept it, Heav'n, a grateful victim, and thy blessings still pour on my country, friends, and dearest father." Her following *largo* aria, "Happy they!" (referring to her country, friends, and father), begins with short phrases separated by rests in the manner of Corelli's slow-movement "interruptive" silences: "Happy they! [silence] this vital breath [silence] with content [silence] I shall resign [silence]." The interruptive opening, coupled with the lack of any accompaniment save doubling violins, strikingly underscores the isolation of this very young woman, as well as the intensity of her internal struggle to maintain her poise. The effect is heartbreaking (Ex. 15).

In his critique of the unattributed St. John Passion, Mattheson never cites a pause or break that creates the kind of silence found in Handel's mature style. Nevertheless, he frequently condemns the use of rests as ungrammatical and incorrect. His criticisms would only have increased, one senses, if the breaks had actually created a complete interruption in the musical fabric. However, if one returns to the texts of the passages singled out for criticism by Mattheson for their use of rests and reads them aloud dramatically, the pauses have an effect similar to those in Handel's mature music. Even more interestingly, in my view, they resemble the performance practice of the great Shakespearean actor David Garrick (1717–79).

Before Garrick's theatrical innovations, audience members frequently sat on the stage, actors wore their own contemporary dress, and the text was declaimed with accompanying, often word-based, gestures. In the 1740s Garrick moved theatrical performance from the gestural to the mimetic by restricting stage seating, incorporating appropriate costumes and makeup, and speaking the text with realistic emotion. This last alteration involved the use of unexpected silences, causing consternation among audiences used to a more formal style of presentation. Correspondence from audience members in regard to Garrick's

HARRIS

EXAMPLE 15. Handel, *Jephtha* (1751), "Happy they," mm. 1-17. *Händel Werke* 44: 168

Largo, e piano *tr* $\frac{8}{8}$

Violino I

Violino II

Viola

IPHIS

Bassi

Hap - py - they! this vi - tal breath with con -

553

5

Violino I

Violino II

Viola

IPHIS

Bassi

tent I shall re - sign with con - tent, this vi - tal breath with con -

THE JOURNAL OF MUSICOLOGY

EXAMPLE 15. (*continued*)

10

tent I shall re - sign, this vi - tal breath with con - tent I shall re -

4+

2

554

14

sign.

Fine

playing of Hamlet in 1742–43 illustrates a striking similarity between his and Handel’s practice and between the responses of Garrick’s auditors and Mattheson’s critique.

One of Garrick’s correspondents begins “I take the liberty to send you a few remarks upon your manner of playing, which, excellent as it

is, may receive, perhaps some improvement from what I am now going to mention. . . . Your chief mistake is a want of attention to the proper stops and pauses: which, however inconsiderable it may seem, is a gross neglect, and would hardly be excused in a reader of ordinary judgment." He concludes a long list of alleged errors with a rule that will prevent future errors: "Never disjoin the verb from the accusative case, or from the concluding members of the sentence which it governs."²² Another writer offers exactly such an example of an "injudicious" pause in the line "I think it was to See—My Mother's Wedding," to which Garrick responds tellingly by distinguishing between a "stop" and a "suspension."

I certainly never *stop* there, (that is close the *sense*) but I as certainly *suspend* my voice, by which your ear must know that the sense is suspended too; for Hamlet's grief causes the break, and with a sigh he finishes the Sentence—"my mother's Wedding." I really could not from my feelings act it otherwise.²³

As Handel's music for England, beginning with his cantatas, specifically notates the kinds of pauses that Garrick would later insert as a matter of performing practice to increase the tension and emotional impact of his characterizations, the question may be asked whether Handel's music might have been an influence. Handel was a (if not the) dominant figure in London theater when Garrick was starting out, and in time the two men frequently performed in opposition to one another at competing houses, both in London and in Dublin. In later years the playwright Richard Brinsley Sheridan (1751–1816) frequently included references to Handel (and Handel's music) in his plays. In an early play, he had a character (in the role of a theater producer) quip that offstage gunshots were inspired by a "hint I took from Handel."²⁴ Although Handel's use of the large artillery kettledrums from the Tower of London was sometimes equated with gunfire,²⁵ Sheridan's claim of influence was clearly tongue in cheek. Even a facetious declaration,

²² James Boaden, ed., *The Private Correspondence of David Garrick with the Most Celebrated Persons of his Time* (London: H. Colburn and R. Bentley, 1831–32), 109–10.

²³ Boaden, *Garrick Correspondence*, 136.

²⁴ The line comes from Sheridan's *Jupiter*, a revised version of Nathaniel Halded's *Ixion*; correspondence dates this dramatic effort to about 1771 (Cecil Price, ed., *The Dramatic Works of Richard Brinsley Sheridan*, vol. 2 [Oxford: Clarendon, 1973], 795). Sheridan later revised this text for use in *The Critic* (1779), in which Handel's music is specifically called for: the minuet from *Ariadne* in act 2 and, in the finale, the "procession of all the English rivers . . . begins with Handels water musick—ends with a chorus, to the march in Judas Maccabaeus" (*The Dramatic Works*, 2: 529 and 550). See also Percy M. Young, *Handel* (New York: Pellegrini and Cudahy, 1949), 110.

THE JOURNAL OF MUSICOLOGY

however, indicates Handel's important status; otherwise there would be no reason for the joke. Garrick, whose career was built in direct competition with Handel's and was at first under his shadow, was more likely than Sheridan to have been seriously influenced by him.

Critics and supporters of silence in music and theatrical declamation actually had much in common. Both considered the use of silence as interruptive; however, those who censured it saw only error whereas those who praised it viewed silence as a bold stroke and, citing the classical authority of pseudo-Longinus, referred to the use of silence as sublime. In his treatise *On the Sublime*, which took English society by storm in the first half of the 18th century, Longinus had written of the sublime character of silence:²⁶

Well, I have written elsewhere to this effect: "Sublimity is the echo of a noble mind." Thus, even without being spoken, a simple idea will sometimes of its own accord excite admiration by reason of the greatness of mind that is expressed; for example, the silence of Ajax . . . is grand, more sublime than any words.²⁷

556

Longinus declared that the sublime revealed itself in its passion and strength without strict adherence to rules: "I readily allow, that Writers of a lofty and towering Genius are by no means pure and correct, since whatever is neat and accurate throughout, must be exceedingly liable to flatness."²⁸ Therefore the sublime artist can be recognized, as was Handel by his first biographer, John Mainwaring, through his "bolder strokes and rougher dashes which genius delights in" but which "depart from the common rules" and thus disturb "the lovers of elegance and correctness" who are "shocked with every defect of this sort."²⁹ Mainwaring further concludes that the best description of Handel's genius can be found in Longinus's characterization of Demosthenes, "every part of which is so perfectly applicable to HANDEL, that one would almost be persuaded it was intended for him":³⁰

²⁵ This was apparently the case in *Judas Maccabaeus* (an oratorio written in 1746 but continually performed even after Handel's death). See Otto Erich Deutsch, *Handel: A Documentary Biography* (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1955; repr. New York: Da Capo, 1974), 640.

²⁶ Longinus was translated by William Smith in 1739 and by 1757 was into its fifth edition. See Peter Kivy, "Mainwaring's 'Handel': Its Relation to English Aesthetics," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 17 (1964): 170-78; also Samuel H. Monk, *The Sublime* (Ann Arbor: Univ. of Michigan Press, 1960).

²⁷ Longinus, *On the Sublime* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1965), 109.

²⁸ *Dionysius Longinus on the Sublime*, trans. William Smith, 2nd ed. (London, 1743), 78-79, as cited by Kivy, "Mainwaring's 'Handel'," 175n23.

²⁹ Mainwaring, *Handel*, 161, 163.

³⁰ Mainwaring, *Handel*, 193.

Whereas *Demosthenes* adding to a continued Vein of Grandeur and to magnificence of Diction . . . such lively Strokes of Passion, such Copiousness of Words, such Address, and such Rapidity of Speech; and, what is his Masterpiece, such Force and Vehemence, as the greatest Writers besides durst never aspire to; being, I say, abundantly furnished with all these divine (it would be Sin to call them human) Abilities, he excels all before him in the Beauties which are really his own; and to atone for Deficiencies in those he has not, overthrows all Opponents with the irresistible Force, and the glittering Blaze, of his Lightning.³¹

Indeed, it is probably no coincidence that Charles Avison's description of Handel from 1753 closely parallels this exact passage from Longinus :

Mr. HANDEL is, in Music, what his own DRYDEN was in poetry; nervous, exalted, and harmonious; but voluminous, and, consequently, not always correct. Their abilities equal to every thing; their execution frequently inferior...so both their characters will devolve to latest posterity, not as models of perfection, yet [as] glorious examples of those amazing Powers that actuate the human soul.³²

Handel's introduction of expressive silences into his music contributed significantly, I believe, to his identification with the sublime. His practice grew from multiple roots. His earliest music incorporated descriptive silence based on a vocal tradition of depicting words related to silence with silent pauses, and increasingly he allowed for grammatical breaks in his vocal line. In addition, as I have previously suggested, the cantatas formed a bridge to the consideration of musical silence as expressive rather than semantic or grammatical. Further, as I propose here, Handel's management of this shift can be linked to his transference of rhetorical silences in instrumental music (back) into a vocal idiom. In particular, his mature practice closely parallels the systematic, threefold use of silence by Arcangelo Corelli. The extended silence in "Son confusa pastorella" comes at the boundary between the two settings of the first stanza of the aria following a cadence in a subsidiary key; the silence at the end of "Where'er you walk," creating a suspension of the dominant, functions structurally as a pre-cadential silence while simultaneously expressing the depth of Jupiter's passion; and the fragmentation at the opening of "Happy they," which graphically depicts Iphis's struggle for emotional control, adheres to the pattern of interruptive pauses at the opening of Corelli's slow-tempo movements.

557

³¹ *Dionysius Longinus on the Sublime*, 83–84, as quoted in Kivy, "Mainwaring's 'Handel,'" 172–73.

³² Charles Avison, *Reply to the Author of Remarks on the Essay on Musical Expression in An Essay on Musical Expression*, 3rd ed. (London: Lockyear Davis, 1775), 217–18.

THE JOURNAL OF MUSICOLOGY

The measured suspension of sound became an increasingly important part of Handel's musical language, and throughout his finest and most mature works, as in *Jephtha*, he frequently expressed the most potent emotions by rending the musical fabric with silence. His progression from descriptive word painting and grammatically correct pauses, to rhetorical silences and eventually to expressive text setting released from a strict association with the single word may turn out to be one of his greatest legacies, and not just to music. The musical depiction of overwhelming emotion that fragments and inhibits normal speech with silent pauses certainly anticipated, and perhaps influenced, the later, pathbreaking work of Garrick on the London stage. Further, the bold, notated silences likely contributed to the aesthetic judgment of his music as "exalted and harmonious." Longinus called the "silence of Ajax" in Homer's *Odyssey* "more sublime than any words." Similarly, Handel's audacious and rule-breaking silences offer one salient reason why his music was considered—not perfect, but—sublime.

ABSTRACT

558

The notated absence of sound creates some of the most dramatic and compelling moments in Handel's mature music. Handel's practice can be traced to the word-based silences of the madrigal on one hand, and the rhetorical silences found in Corelli's trio sonatas on the other. By transferring Corelli's systematic use of silence to vocal music, Handel moved beyond word-painting to expressive text-setting. Some critics condemned these silences, which prove strikingly similar to the emotional pauses introduced later by Garrick into his theatrical roles, as incorrect. Others considered them sublime.