The Able Soul

An Honors Thesis (ID 499)

by

Ruth K. Fischer

Thesis Director

Dr. Daryl B. Adrian

Ball State University

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R.K.F.
L'ALLEGRO,
IL PENSEROSO,
ED
IL MODERATO.
In THREE PARTS.

Set to Musick by Mr. HANDEL.

LONDON:
Printed for J. and R. TONSON in the Strand.
MDCC XL.
[Price One Shilling.]

Title-Page of the Wordbook of L'Allegro, Il Penseroso, ed Il Moderato
As First Performed at the Theatre-Royal in Lincoln's Inn Fields
on February 27, 1740
From the Copy in the Collection of Gerald E. Coke, Esq.

Robert Manson Myers, Handel, Dryden,
& Milton: Being a Series of Observations...
Musick by Mr. Handel (London: Bowes and Bowes
in Convent Garden, 1956), p. 54.
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writes Frederic V. Grunfeld in *The Story of Great Music*, "survived the rough, violent world that was London Opera and theatre." Milton was politically active during a turbulent period of English history and served as Latin secretary to Oliver Cromwell.

Handel and Milton lived in London and thus became thoroughly familiar with the English countryside which inspired their love of nature and pastoral beauty. Through music and poetry they described their natural surroundings eloquently. In addition to an awareness of nature, both men exhibited a profound interest in Biblical themes and based their outstanding works on these concepts. Although tragically afflicted with blindness in later life, the poet and the musician continued to produce masterpieces motivated by courage and heightened awareness of sound. Finally, the artistry of Handel and Milton, tempered by similarities in musical education, environmental influences, and innate sensitivity to human consciousness, fused to produce "the abler soul" which touches the heart and unites all mankind in the apprehension of common experiences.

**Milton's Knowledge of Music**

Milton's comprehension of music was strongly determined by "English Music in the Seventeenth Century," states

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Sigmund Spaeth in his perceptive book, *Milton's Knowledge of Music.* During this period musical form was emerging in new directions. The Madrigal form was extremely popular in England throughout the Elizabethan period. Madrigals were unaccompanied vocal compositions for four or five voices composed in contrapuntal style. Inconsequential phrases were repeated in words that had minor significance creating a type of song similar to instrumental music (Spaeth, pp. 2-3). "Polyphony" was associated with instrumental instead of "vocal music . . . for these harmonies" were more euphonious when performed by instruments. Gradually the polyphonic style of the madrigal changed to the monophonic style of the Baroque period. This change influenced "English music," giving it "dramatic value" and led to the development of the recitative and opera. As the monadic school emerged, "a mutual intimacy arose" between music and poetry. "The music sometimes increased the effectiveness of words, the words often immortalized the music" (Spaeth, p. 8).

An interest in seventeenth century music was "general and spontaneous," consequently, men of various professions were not considered "well-educated" unless they possessed musical proficiency. Even amateurs wrote compositions, and "the art of improvisation was highly developed."

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The common people, for example, enjoyed "folk songs, ballads, glees, rounds, catches, and various styles of country dance" (pp. 5-6). A decided love of music also enriched the lives of many Puritans; and Cromwell himself possessed a fine organ and employed a musician. English Puritans, in fact, increased the interest in secular music through their criticism of church music (p. 10).

Music reached its climax in the seventeenth century from a period reaching back to the reign of Henry VIII. Gradually the formal influence of the Elizabethan period merged with the characteristics of the Baroque, producing an intimate relationship "between the sister arts, music and poetry" (p. 11). The general and enthusiastic support of music among the populace provided a "distinctly musical environment" for Milton.

Through the inspiration of his father, who was a musician, the English musical heritage was perpetuated in his home environment. Although a "scrivener by trade," Milton's father was a fine composer. His works were published in highly regarded "Elizabethan music books." The elder Milton's knowledge of "contrapuntal skill and ... melodic inventiveness," in fact, was greater than average (pp. 12-13). Milton acknowledges the fact that his father's musical skill influenced his "career as a poet" when he writes in the Latin Elegy Ad Patrem
Art Skilful to associate verse with airs
Harmonious, and to give the human voice
A thousand modulations, heir by right
Indisputable of Arion's fame.
Now say, what wonder is it, if a son
Of thine delight in verse, if so conjoin'd
In close affinity, we sympathize
In social arts, and kindred studies sweet?
Such distribution of himself to us
Was Phoebus' choice; thou hast thy gift, and I
Mine also, and between us we receive,
Father and son, the whole inspiring God (p. 14).

The poet must have heard discussions of musicians in
his home and perhaps participated in the music sessions
when he gained sufficient skill, singing or performing
on the organ. He studied books in his father's library,
and from Morley's, Plain and Easy Introduction to Practical
Music formed his opinions of "'proportion' of concord and
discord, and of 'descant' or 'measurable' music." He
was also influenced by the "Greek and Latin writers" on
the subject of "musical theory" (p. 15). As a student
at St. Paul, he was a "musician of at least intelligence
and appreciation, and probably of considerable skill,"
performing on the organ and perhaps other "instruments."
It is probable that his life-long "love of sacred music" was developed by the powerful tones of the organ and choir at St. Paul's Cathedral (p. 16).

His knowledge of musical harmony also began to influence other philosophies which Milton formulated as a young man, Spaeth perceives. While at Christ's College in Cambridge, Milton "was developing his theory of cosmography, which is influenced by the mystic element of harmony." This concept remained "with him throughout his life" -- an idea that never fluctuated, regardless of his "changing and discordant surroundings" (p. 17).

Associations with prominent intellectuals, artists, and musicians further stimulated Milton's creative powers. A close friendship based on "mutual admiration" developed between John Milton and the composer, Harry Lawes, acknowledges Spaeth. The poet's praise for Lawes' musical skill is expressed in a sonnet by Milton prefixed to the edition of his "Choice Psalms." Both artists united their talents to produce the masques Arcades and Comus for which Milton furnished the words, and Lawes composed the music. In the work Arcades, for example, Milton utilized his knowledge of the "music of the spheres" with high poetic effect, and his conception of "the Greek theory of music" is evidenced in this work (pp. 19-20).

During his sojourn in Italy, Milton was introduced
to many new concepts in the arts and sciences which increased his musical awareness. Since mathematics always interested him, particularly in regard to music, he may have had discussions on this topic with the astronomer, Galileo (p. 20). As a member of the "Academy of the Svogliati, a group of cultured gentlemen" he probably also engaged in musical discussions. His appreciation of the art of music must have been greatly enhanced through his acquaintance with Cardinal Francesco Barberini, "a patron of music," and the great singer, Leonora Baroni, to whom he wrote poetic tributes in three "extravagant Latin epigrams." Undoubtedly, his association with the composer and theoritician Giovanni Battista Doni served to increase Milton's comprehension of "contemporary Italian music." Milton must have been profoundly impressed by the performances of the great organist, Frescobaldi, who was a master of the fugue and improvisational skill. His "later writings" reflect a portrayal of the famous Italian performer and his art (pp. 21-22).

Milton's verbal tributes to Frescobaldi's artistry were undoubtedly motivated by the fact that the organ was his favorite instrument, also. As a performing musician, Milton had a profound knowledge of the organ, and thoroughly comprehended the potential of other musical instruments as well, Spaeth points out. It is not surprising that frequent
references to the organ are noted in "his poetry and his prose" for he idealized the organ and found it the most appropriate representation of the sublime in Nature. He conceived that "when the spheres add their music to that of the angel choirs in praise of the birth of the Savior, 'the bass of the Heaven's deep organ' is the foundation of the universal harmony" (pp. 28-29).

Milton's "technical allusions" to music and instruments in his writing are significant due to his precise knowledge. His instrumental references indicate an all-encompassing understanding "of the quality and effect of tones." Although he may not have heard an instrument, his imagination enabled him to realize the sound of a "contemporary instrument of a similar character," and this awareness always led to his consistent treatment of a particular instrument. The sound never changed in his mind, and it had an individual "function." Milton realized that particular "instruments" were suitable for "certain situations - produce certain effects" (p. 38).

The poet's imaginative perception of musical form and instruments is acknowledged by Henry Hadow when he writes in Milton's Memorial Lectures that Milton expresses one of the finest definitions of a "fugue ever written in Paradise Lost, Book XI:

The sound

Of instruments that made melodious chime
Was heard, of harp and organ, and who moved
Their stops and chords was seen: his volant touch
Instinct through all proportions low and high
Fled and pursued transverse the resonant fugue

(554-9.)

All the expressions are correct -- "volant," 'pro-
portions low and high,' 'transverse,' 'resonant.'" These
words create the vision of the entire "fugal form." They
are particularly admired since no scientific "treatise on
fugue" had yet been formulated. ⁴

In addition to an innate sense for musical form, Milton
possessed an extreme sensitivity to sound as reflected
throughout his writings. Milton's poetry is especially
adaptable to music due to his imagery of sound, observes
Cleanth Brooks and John Edward Hardy in The Poems of Mr.
John Milton. This point is illustrated by quoting various
lines from L'Allegro, Il Penseroso. A joy in "loud sound"
is allied "with the mood of L'Allegro - the lark startling
the dull night with his singing, the Cock's 'lively din,
etc. Il Penseroso . . . is fond of 'Silence' (l. 55) or
very soft and far-off sounds, 'the Belman's drowsie charm,'
the after-roar of the distant curfew bell . . . But in the
end L'Allegro asks to be 'Lap[ped] in soft Lydian Aires.'

⁴William Henry Hadow, "Milton's Knowledge of Music,"
in Milton Memorial Lectures: 1908, ed. Percy W. Ames
And Il Penseroso's delight in retirement is increased by the loud sound of the winds outside (l. 126); 'the pealing Organ blow[ing] To the full voic'd Quire below.'

Milton's sense for sound increased with his blindness, indicates Spaeth. The later "poetical works" of Milton indicate a "preference for the description of audible impressions, a love of the sounds in Nature rather than its visible beauties, a sensitiveness of hearing rather than of sight" (Spaeth, p. 26). Similarly Handel's sense of sound was equally acute in his final years for he dictated his musical compositions to his secretary while blind.

Milton had firm convictions regarding the interplay of vocal and instrumental music. He believed, according to Spaeth, that instrumental music was important in its "relation to the human voice," and that its greatest purpose was to supply "rhythm, melody, and harmony for the voice." It is natural that he show preference for the voice as he was "primarily a poet, and secondarily a musician." He viewed "poetry in its essence" similar to song, and therefore he was most attracted to "music that could be combined with verse." During the seventeenth century, moreover, the "terms 'poetry' and 'song' were almost synonymous to classical writers."

Milton envisions "himself as a singer and his writings as a song." In this manner he refers to his finest literary achievements, *Paradise Lost* and *Paradise Regained*:

I, who erewhile the happy garden sung,

By one man's disobedience lost, now sing

Recovered Paradise to all mankind. 6

Song represented "melody . . . with or without words" to Milton, and thus the term "song" could apply "metaphorically to the sound of birds and even instruments." An extensive knowledge and understanding of music enabled Milton to "poetize" instrumental and vocal music. The expressive potential of musical instruments is imaginatively described when Milton refers to them as "organisms inspired with life of a universal reality, dead things 'pierced' with the 'inbreath'd sense' of the sphere-born harmonious sisters, Voice and Verse." He realized the technical formulas regarding instruments and voice could lead to a revelation of the "laws of Nature" and perhaps to "ultimate truth." Milton's understanding of the "art of music" reflects his entire "philosophy of life, a knowledge which assures him of the bond of union between the aesthetic and the ethical . . . a conviction of reality, and of the final purposes of God himself" (pp. 55-56).

Milton's further insights regarding music, mathematics,

and poetry are comprehensive in their scope, Spaeth observes. The "Pythagorean system of numbers" and "Greek theories of Music" provided technically significant concepts to Milton, and he utilized these ideas in reference to contemporary opinions. His interest in "measurable music," moreover, was inspired by his admiration for order and mathematics. "The Pythagorean system of numbers, the necessary relationships of concord and discord, the mysteries of 'proportion' in pitch and rhythm" absorbed his attention and are expressed in numerous "allusions" in his writings. Milton believed "number and measure" are important to music "because they give it objective reality and permanence. Without this mathematical foundation, music, as a science or even as a scientific art, could not exist. And since number and measure are universal, music is therefore an essential and inherent part of the universe." Similarly poetry, so closely allied with music is universal "not only through it's idealistic handling of the truth, but through it's dependence on number and measure as well." Milton's words express this concept in both Paradise Regained and Paradise Lost:

secret power

Of Harmony, in tones and numbers hit

By voice or hand, and various-measured verse.7

planets which move their starry dance in numbers that compute days, months, and years.\(^8\)

Other important associations were stimulated in Milton's reflections by the word motion, indicates Spaeth. The poet conceived it "as the actual motion productive of sound, as the vibration of a string, or of the air, or the whirling of the spheres." To illustrate, "The 'silver chime' of the 'crystal spheres' are said to 'move in melodious time,' and in Comus the song of the lady is described as due to "something holy" which "moves the vocal air."\(^9\) In another sense motion may also be numerically represented by rhythm, pitch organization, and harmonic "modulation." To Milton, the idea of motion was "all-inclusive" encompassing both the actual and theoretical (p. 60).

His thoughts and writings were influenced in other dimensions by the Greek modes. Milton considered them of great importance as they express human emotions. A study of "Greek philosophy and mythology" led Milton to believe in the "divine origin of music, or a harmony arising from creation itself, of a system of concords connecting Heaven, Earth, and the Spheres, and running through all Nature." He strived to develop the "poetical


\(^9\) Ibid., (C 247), p. 60.
possibilities of his material." His theory of music was mystic transcending "technical knowledge." To Milton "ultimate reality" was removed from science and "the reach of human understanding." His imagination enabled him to assimilate numerous ideas including motion, measure, number, the Greek modes, Greek philosophy and mythology, and create far-reaching analogies relating music to the universe. Since his view "transcends the laws and limitations known to man" it is best described as "metaphysical" (pp. 68-69).

Music represented the "idealization of harmony" to Milton, writes Spaeth. In Milton's view the harmony that existed throughout the universe might be attained by men (p. 84). As a devout Christian humanist he believed man's discord was due to lack of obedience to God, and that to achieve harmony man must follow the laws of Nature and God. His all-encompassing observations are summarized in these lines from At a Solemn Music:

That we on Earth, with undiscording voice
May rightly answer that melodious noise,
As once we did, till disproportioned Sin
Jarred against Nature's chime, and with harsh din
Broke the fair music that all creatures made
To their great Lord, whose love their motion swayed.
In perfect diapason, whilst they stood
In first obedience, and their state of good.
O, may we soon again renew that song,
and keep in tune with Heaven, till God ere long
To his celestial consort us unite
To live with him, and sing in endless morn of light!

Handel, the Musician

Handel's musical development paralleled that of Milton's in many respects. Although his family was not musical, Handel's theoretical training began early in Halle, Germany, his birthplace. His first and only instructor, according to Paul Henry Lang, was Friedrich Wilhelm Zachow, "an excellent, understanding, and solicitous teacher of both composition and performance." Zachow was also a comprehensive musician teaching Handel different instruments, including "harpsichord and organ," and establishing his firm foundation in "harmony, counterpoint, and choral writing, as well as in very imaginative orchestration."¹⁰ Zachow also stimulated Handel's interest in the musical styles of other countries and implanted a firm sense of discipline in his student. An excellent musical library, belonging to Zachow, was available for Handel's perusal and enabled him to gain a thorough understanding

¹⁰Paul Henry Lang, George Frideric Handel (New York: W. W. Norton, 1966), p. 12. (Subsequent references to this edition will appear in text.)
of "styles and techniques" (Lang, pp. 12-13).

His excellent early musical training stimulated Handel's great innate talent, and he desired to pursue music as a profession despite the fact that his father wished him to enter the field of law. Consequently, following the elder Handel's death, the young musician felt compelled to travel to Hamburg, the "operatic center of Germany," points out Lang. In that city Handel developed a wider musical horizon through the close companionship of Johann Matheson, "singer, composer, and conductor," who also introduced him to opera. Through the German influence, Handel soon became aware of his deficiency in writing melodies. In order to improve this ability, he utilized themes "borrowed from Corelli, Legrenzi, . . . Albinoni," and applied his outstanding contrapuntal skill to these melodies thereby evolving an "incomparable conciseness and plasticity of melodic design" (Lang, p. 31).

When German opera declined, Handel's prodigious creative talents required continued stimulation plus an opportunity for expansion, therefore, he emigrated to Italy where opera was rapidly developing.

As a vigorous plant that flowered and bore fruit, Handel's talent flourished in the fertile soil of musical Italy. His sojourn in Italy led to an increased understanding of contemporary music. Through a personal
the melodic line playing out symmetry against asymmetry."
When he assigned solos to different vocalists he frequently
"tightened the declamation to accord with the natural rhythm
and inflection of the text" (p. 66).

The study of "Italian Cantata," enhanced by these
innovations, enabled Handel to develop his "incomparable
art of creating mood" minus scenery. Moreover, his "poetic
imagination" was released from vocal traditions, and he
learned how "melody" can create a "mood" (p. 62). Eventually
Handel became accepted by the aristocracy as a great composer
and established an "international" reputation which Dryden
recognized (p. 64). Dryden's comments on Shakespeare in his
Essay on Dramatic Poesy likewise closely characterize Handel:
"All the images of Nature were still present to him, and he
drew them, not laboriously, but luckily; when he describes
anything, you more than see it, you feel it too."

Another important Italian influence on Handel was an
increased knowledge of instruments and their application.
He experimented with a more complex orchestra employing
"gamba, transverse flute, large lute, oboe and even trumpet."
Generally the "tone" of his instruments is that of chamber
music, but when "dramatic scenes" occur the entire "concerto
grosso" participates (p. 67).

Poesy," The Best of Dryden (New York: Thomas Nelson
and Sons, 1933), p. 432.
Handel "absorbed and utilized" the Italian pattern, composing opera, oratorio, and cantatas, many of which were famous, summarizes Lang. He participated in the musical life of Rome, Venice, Florence, and Naples absorbing influences from the greatest contemporary composers. The Italian opera inspired his innate sense for drama and characterization. As an original creative artist, he desired to establish "his own laws" and live where his "religious and artistic views could remain private." In order to realize these goals it became necessary for him to leave Italy eventually and look to England (p. 106).

When music was under the influence of the Italian Opera in 1710, Handel arrived in London, according to *Grove's Dictionary of Music and Musicians*. He remained in the country permanently and became a naturalized citizen after George I, Elector of Hanover, became King of England. During his tenure in England, Handel composed prolifically since he was awarded a pension from Queen Anne and George I.¹²

*Rinaldo* was the first successful opera written in England by Handel, writes Lang. It became a tremendous success and established his reputation with the English public immediately (p. 120). He also created the English oratorio and brought it to a climax, points out Joseph

creativity and he wrote works that ignited the musical imagination of many great composers. Purcell, Arne, Handel, and Haydn dedicated their "art to Miltonic themes," writes Robert Myers in *Handel, Dryden, and Milton*. These works of art greatly enhanced dramatic performance in London during the eighteenth century. Handel was thoroughly familiar with setting great poetry to music for he was closely associated with the writings of poets as prominent as Milton, Dryden, Grey, and Congreve. The text of *Samson* was taken from John Milton. *Alexander's Feast* and *A Song for St. Cecelia's Day* are founded on the famous odes of Dryden and were two of Handel's greatest performances. It is not well known "that the text of *Acis and Galatea* was produced expressly for the composer by John Gay, that the text of *Haman and Mordecai* (later renamed *Esther*) was, ... 'writ by Pope,' and that the text of *Semele* was ... 'alter'd from the *Semele* of Mr. William Congreve.'"

"Musical historians, biographers, and aestheticians associated Handel with Milton." They agreed that Handel and Milton were united in their lofty treatment of epic themes from the Bible. In his "lengthy comparison" of


16 Ibid., p. 8.
Handel and Milton Dean Ramsey writes, "like Milton, he rises to the highest point of sublimity when he is engaged with expressing the worship of the redeemed above."\(^{17}\)

Handel's religious philosophies parallel Milton's by including the concept of "order in the cosmos," states Lang. Handel similarly leaned toward Deism in religion. He believed staunchly in the ultimate divinity of the individual human being, and that religion was an "attitude of the mind and heart." Like Milton, he sensed an order in the world directed by a greater power than man (p. 555). Although his belief was not a "metaphysical" one similar to Milton's he did agree with Milton and the Germanic view in "eternal law, eternal values, and eternal being" (p. 27).

In Handel's opinion, his greatest musical work was Samson, indicates Meyers. Describing this work in 1749, Thomas Newton observes, "That great artist has done equal justice to our author's L'Allegro and Il Penseroso, as if the same spirit possessed both masters, and as if the God of music and of verse was still one and the same."\(^{18}\)

A love for the English countryside was cherished by both Handel and Milton, therefore, it is natural that Handel should be motivated to write music for the "charming series

\(^{17}\)Myers, p. 78

\(^{18}\)Ibid., pp. 59-60.
of idyllic pastoral scenes" described in Milton's companion poems. 19

Overall Interpretation of Milton's and Handel's "L'Allegro and Il Penseroso"

Milton received his inspiration to write these poems from several sources, Hanford points out in A Milton Handbook. The chief poem which influenced Milton was the "piece prefixed to Burton's Anatomy of Melancholy, entitled, 'A Dialogue between Pleasure and Pain.'" Some of the concepts relating to pleasurable and painful melancholy closely resemble Milton's. A song, "'Nice Valour"' by Beaumont and Fletcher similarly describes Milton's "vain delights" that are banished and expresses the welcoming of "lovely melancholy." A lyric by Nicholas Breton also is considered a source for Milton's poems, and all three works use the "dancing octosyllabic measure of Milton's poems." 20

Critics are in agreement that these poems were written when Milton was a young man, sensitive to the satisfactions derived from Nature and books. For example, James Hanford writes that these poems were conceived during the "University epoch" of Milton's life when he was still under the influence

19 Myers, p. 49.
of the "Johsonian lyric tradition" and had "experimented in the octosyllabic couplet." His writing already exhibited exquisite expressions and "refinement of poetic feeling." These poems were written when Milton "indulged a dilletante enthusiasm for beauty in nature" and the numerous satisfactions of "music, books, society and self-pleasing reverie" without the interruption of his "moral idealism or his intense personal passion." 21 Lang expresses a similar view describing the poems as the "work of a pure poet, full of sensitivity, sympathy, admiration for the exuberance of nature, and tender feelings." Moreover, Milton is a youthful poet with a bright view of life. This poem is a creation of a "Spenserian poet" of exquisite perfection of "verbal finish and musical lilt" (p. 316).

The moods these poems express depict the pleasures L'Allegro derives from joyful activities, and the profound inner satisfactions Il Penseroso experiences from contemplative pursuits so eloquently described by Ezra Pound in Hugh Salwyn Mauberly as "the obscure reveries of the inward gaze" (l. 25-26). 22 In discussing the poems in Lives of the Poets, Samuel Johnson believes the plan of

21 Hanford, p. 149.

the author is to show "how, among the successive variety of experiences every disposition of mind takes hold on those by which it may be gratified."

The meaning of tone as reflected in the companion poems is similarly interpreted by two writers. "The poems," states Professor Tillyard, "are characterized by a 'subtle friendliness of tone, and Milton displays in them a perfect social tone.'" Milton, writes Robert M. Adams, concentrates on the comprehending mind and the tone it reflects, whether cheerful or contemplative. The poems are in "shaded contrast." They do not represent black gloom and unlimited cheerfulness. Rather they represent reflection in a "half-light."

Detailed information revealing the manner in which Milton unites these contrasting moods is expressed by Brooks and Hardy. Since Milton chose "the obvious contrast between mirth and melancholy" to preserve "unity in variety" it was necessary for him to associate them as closely "as possible in their effect on the mind. For


Where I may oft out-watch the Bear.
In contrast the cheerful man returns from the country
and Milton writes:

Towred Cities please us then,
And the busie humm of men . . .27

The most important device which unites the opposites
is the symbolism involving light, acknowledges Brooks and
Hardy. The poem deals with the chronology of the happy
man's day and the thoughtful man's day. "Milton's light
symbolism comes in naturally (and apparently inevitably),
for the clock of the day is the sun; and the allusions
to morning, noon, twilight, and moonlight provide Milton
with all the opportunities he could wish to develop his
symbolism of light and shade."28 In addition, "The
sequence of the poem" with its reference to Plato,
'Gorgeous tragedy,' Chaucer, and the other 'great Bards'
emphasizes the light accorded to the 'inward eye'" and
thus provides an awareness that the blackness of the
goddess ends in brightness . . . a brightness in reality too
intense for human sight." In this manner, the pensive man
perceives the "daylight of the senses."29

These poems are admirably suited to a musical setting

27Brooks and Hardy, pp. 136-137.
28Ibid., pp. 138-140.
29Ibid., pp. 143-144.
observes James Hanford when he points out that the most objective "interpretation" views the two poems as "contrasting movements in a musical composition." The titles suggest "directions" that lend themselves to music, an art the poet understood thoroughly.  

In addition to the musical requirements of the poetry, the change of mood provides variety. Therefore, it was natural for the librettist, Jennens, to effectively use about one-third of the original poems selecting and interweaving the most appropriate lines from both (Lang, p. 317). The "attractions" of L'Allegro and Il Penseroso described in the poems are alternately expressed in an "elevated dialogue" throughout the libretto.

Handel composed the musical portion of the libretto during "the great frost of 1740," nevertheless, Myers emphasizes, "there is no touch of winter in its merry strains." The musical adaptation of Milton's poems received unanimous praise by the critics for they apprehended the affinity between the two great artists.

"Milton's exuberant heaping of image upon image," the immediate awareness that concentrates many meanings into one, are characteristics Handel reflects, enthusiastically writes Lang. Handel's interpretation of the words expresses

30Hanford, p. 150.
31Myers, pp. 53-55.
technique." This led to the development of a texture of two principal contours, melody and bass, with the intervening space being filled in by improvised harmony." A third innovation is described by Apel as that of "contrasting effects." These are created by the alternating of chorus, solo instrument with orchestra, or voice with instruments.  

One of the most significant changes of the Baroque period was the "simplification of the harmonic system" and the "establishment of major-minor tonality" believes Machlis. The introduction of a key center or "do" enabled all chords to "function in relation to that key center." An important technical advance was discovered in the seventeenth century: "by slightly mis-tuning the intervals within the octave - and thereby spreading the discrepancy evenly among keys - it became possible to play in every major and minor key." This change is called "equal temperament" enabling composers to have greater flexibility of expression and to also use "dissonance" for emotional intensity and color."  

The technical discoveries of the Baroque period naturally led to the "doctrine of affections," an aesthetic theory that music "portrays emotions," writes Willi Apel.  

35 Apel, p. 77.  
37 Apel, p. 19.
The doctrine reached its height in the eighteenth century, but its roots were planted in the "Greek ethos," informs Frederick Dorian. Throughout the ages music was influenced by this concept since "musical expression of human emotions" is the ultimate height of "interpretation." Words often help to unify the feelings of the composer and performer and thus evoke a similar emotion in the listener.\(^{38}\)

Changes also occurred in rhythm, melody, and dynamics during the Baroque period, points out Machlis. Rhythm, as expressed in steady pulsation or animated dance forms, "per- vaded the musical conception of the Baroque and helped it capture the movement and drive of a vibrant era." Melody was characterized by "the principle of continuous expansion." A movement depicting a "single affection" would begin with a "striking musical figure" and the melody would extend its "spacious curves outlining a style of grand expressiveness or pathos." The emotions were heightened by "wide leaps" and the employment of half-tones or chromatic tones. A single syllable was extended in an"expressive melodic line," and this treatment of a word was called "melismatic." The contrast between loud and soft musical passages known as "ter- raced dynamics" imbued the music with "monumental simplicity."\(^{39}\)

\(^{38}\)Frederick Dorian, "Rococo and Enlightenment," The History of Music in Performance (New York: W. W. Norton, 1942), pp. 138-139.

\(^{39}\)Machlis, pp. 356-357.
Other distinguishing features are variations in musical form, the addition of "ground bass" and an increased significant function for musical instruments. "Two-part or binary (A-B) form evolved during the Baroque period." Binary form refers to a musical idea which is stated in a chosen key and comes to a definite ending in another key. A second section follows which utilizes the same or related material beginning in the newly established key and ends in the original key. Ternary form is an extension of binary form. The second section commences with different melodic material in another key.

The term "ground bass" refers to a repeated melody in the bass over which the "upper voices pursue their independent courses." As the bass repeats its phrase "some aspect of melody, harmony, and/or rhythm would be changed." Thus the "Baroque musicians" evolved an effective form of "variation and embellishment over the ground bass."^40

During the Baroque period instrumental music assumed a position of importance equal to vocal music. An increasing "interest" in instruments led to the "development of new instruments" and improvement of older ones. The more "resonant" violin replaced the "reserved viol." Composers wrote new music for "trumpet, trombone, flute, oboe, and

^40 Machlis, p. 358.
January 19, 1740 and completed the composition in "twenty-two days." The first performance was held "at the Theatre-Royal in Lincoln's Inn Fields" on February 27, 1740. The composition was so well-received it was performed five times during the first season. 42

A careful study of the score, L'Allegro, Il Penseroso, Il Moderato, reveals the genius and ingenuity which enables Handel to combine the Baroque techniques discussed in the highest expression of art. 43 He closely follows the words in Milton's poems, and uses them for a springboard from which his musical imagination soars. Handel employs a small orchestra, vocal soloists consisting of soprano, contralto, tenor, bass, and chorus. The movements provide variety and are sometimes connected by similar themes.

An immediate dramatic effect is created in the opening L'Allegro recitative when the solo tenor proclaims Milton's words, "Hence loathed Melancholy" (l. 1; sc. 3). 44 The soloist relates Melancholy's birth, "Of Cerberus and blackest Midnight born/In Stygian cave forlorn" (ll. 2-3; sc. 2-3). Handel's

42 Myers, pp. 53-55.

43 George Friedrich Handel, L'Allegro, Il Penseroso, Il Moderato, ed. James S. Hall, Martin V. Hall, Hallische Handel-Ausgabe, ed. (Barenreiter: Kassel, 1965), Ser. I, Vol. XVI. (All page references to score will appear in text and be preceded by "sc.")

Example 2. (page 4, measures 11-13)
music of dignity and majestic beauty. A slow Largo in triple
meter provides stately rhythm. Minor keys are selected to
express poignant melancholy. D minor tonality is established
at the outset through the descending leap of an octave D in
the cellos and basses whose low notes produce deep sonorous
instrumental color. A solo violin and soprano sing Milton's
great tribute to the "Goddess sage and holy/Hail divinest
Melancholy" (ll. 11-12; sc. 11-12). The long dotted eighth
note followed by a short sixteenth note immediately establishes
the dignity of Milton's goddess. Milton's expressions, "Whose
saintly visage is too bright/To hit the sense of human sight,"
(ll. 13-14; sc. 11) refers to the inward illumination Il
Penseroso experiences from contemplative pursuits. The inten-
sity of this vision is "too bright" for human eyes to experi-
ence. Milton's blindness was a tragic circumstance in his
later life. Handel portrays the deep significance of this
inner illumination when he places the last syllable of the
word "human" on a low A and then leaps an octave to a high A
to complete the word "sight." The soprano singing in unison
with the solo violin expresses this melodic leap, and the
truth of Milton's words is fully revealed (example 3).

Handel introduces the words "Hail divinest Melancholy"
in the solo voice commencing on a very high A in the treble
cleff and then outlines them in a descending melody. This
phrase is marked by a long dotted eighth note followed by
a short sixteenth note.

Example 3. (page 11, measures 7-9)
The rhythmic and melodic progression add great power to the declamation. Increased emphasis is created through the alternation of soprano soloist and orchestral instruments in euphonious harmony (example 4).

Handel employs the melisma with skillful understanding depicting the word "solitary." He places an extended melodic passage on the syllable "ta." The soprano melody descends, then rises an interval of a diminished fifth, drops a minor second and rises again until it reaches its height before the final syllable "ry" is pronounced. A consciousness of rising is thus emphasized through the contrasting movement of the melodic line. In this manner the word "solitary" is defined musically, and it has
profound significance (example 5).

Example 4. (page 12, measures 17-20)

Example 5. (page 13, measures 34-38)
The movement closes with an orchestral ritornello or interlude which expresses the thematic phrases sung by the soloist. The instrumental color in minor tonality provides another dimension for the melody and enriches the conception of "divinest Melancholy."

Grunfeld, in *The Story of Great Music*, views Baroque art as "beauty compressed but almost breaking the bonds of control." Handel breaks the "bond of control" by the spontaneous merriment which explodes in the L'Allegro Air and Chorus "Haste thee nymph" (sc. 14-21). The key is in a major tonality (F Major) which Handel chooses to express bright moods. Feelings of joy are portrayed by instruments that have a high range—violins, oboe, and cembalo. A lively (Allegro) tempo of four rapid beats to the measure is established by all instruments playing short, staccato notes in unison with a loud forte sound. Thus the mood of L'Allegro is established instantly (example 6). Following the orchestral introduction, a declamatory statement by the tenor soloist imitates the staccato phrase of the instruments. Alternating musical passages performed by soloist and orchestra sustain the cheerful "affect."

Rapid sixteenth note patterns scored for solo tenor and violins project humor in the words "cranks, becks, Laughter, and sport." Milton's statements, "Such as hang

45Grunfeld, p. 4.
on Hebe's cheek/And love to live in dimple sleek" (ll. 29-30; sc. 15) are almost visually apprehended through a descending melody composed of repeated, slurred, short sixteenth notes followed by longer dotted eighth notes performed by unison violins and solo tenor (example 7).

Example 6. (page 14, measures 1-4)

An exuberant spirit is projected by the tinkling sound of the cembalo playing phrases throughout the movement. Felicity is intensified through the rich harmonic and
such as hang on Hebe's check, and love to live in dimple sleek; and

Example 7. (page 15, measures 19-22)
rhythmic texture resulting from the union of chorus, orchestra, and soloists. A master stroke is illustrated by Handel's treatment of the phrase, "And Laughter holding both his sides (l. 32; sc. 20-21). Sopranos and tenors sing the syllable "hold" in imitation of each other in a rapid rhythm, while basses sing "hold" in a tempo which is twice as slow. The repetition of "hold" sounds like "ho ho ho" when pronounced on short, quick notes. Laughter thus emerges from the chorus in various rhythmic patterns, and this delightful effect impells the listener to laugh out loud (example 8).

One of the most charming musical dances flows from Handel's pen in the Air and Chorus, "Come, and trip it as you go/On the light fantastic toe" (ll. 33-34; sc. 22-26). A cheerful spirit bursts forth through the resonant high sounds of the violins, oboes, and high tenor voice. The tinkling delicate harpsichord notes breathe merriment in all the musical expressions. The form is a Menuet in a graceful tempo established by a duple beat, each beat being subdivided by a background of three eighth notes (6/8 time). Handel uses sixteenth notes in gay melodic patterns which make one's feet itch to dance. A fine example of interpretative style is noted in Handel's employment of a melisma on the word "go." He combines a repeated pattern of sixteenth notes climbing upward on successive pitches and culminates