

ABSTRACT

DISSERTATION: Solo Angel Roles in Vocal Music: Tracing the Use of Angel Roles from 1600 to the Present

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PAGES: 187

This study traces the use of solo angel roles in vocal music from 1600 to the present, focusing specifically on one to two works from each period that contain the most prominent angel roles. Each chapter centers on a particular period of time, analyzing the angel roles and seeking to find a relationship between the representation of the angel in vocal music and the religious and social climate of the era. The fascination with the spiritual and supernatural during the baroque era, as well as the Reformation and Counter-Reformation, affected the amount of angel solo roles. In the late-seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, many began to question traditional religious beliefs in the search for rational and scientific thought. The amount of sacred vocal music composed during this time suffered an overall decline, causing a corresponding decline in angel roles composed. The nineteenth century also witnessed a general decline in sacred choral works; however, movements such as German nationalism, romanticism, and historicism, as well as the influence of Felix Mendelssohn helped to revive interest in sacred vocal music. The twentieth century witnessed a renewed fascination with angels, causing a resurgence in the amount of musical angel roles, especially towards the latter part of the century.

The angel roles from the following works are studied in detail: Heinrich Schütz's *Weihnachtshistorie*, George Frideric Handel's *La Resurrezione*, Franz Joseph Haydn's *The Creation*, Felix Mendelssohn's *Elijah*, Sir Edward Elgar's *The Dream of Gerontius*, Arnold Schoenberg's *Die Jakobsleiter*, and Olivier Messiaen's *Saint François D'Assise*. The chapters include a brief historical background for each work, a description of the Angel's role within the work, and an analysis of its music. The final chapter gives a comparison of the musical elements of angels' music throughout the past four hundred years and affirms that the use of solo angel roles in vocal music reflects trends in society and religion.