

"I been silent so long now it's gonna roar out of me like floodwaters and you think the guy telling this is ranting and raving my God; you think this is too horrible to have really happened, this is too awful to be the truth! But, please. It's still hard for me to have a clear mind thinking on it. But it's the truth even if it didn't happen."

Chief Bromden, One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest.

This seemingly innocuous, tiny three-letter word MAD has plagued mankind from the first day it was spoken into existence. While enduring this last year gives us no newer or truer claim on the word than our forebearers, madness has come to each of us on a personal level. This recital is a little mass for madness and the viewer is completely free to interpret this as an absolute reflection of this performer's current state of mind.

Henry Purcell is no stranger to writing music for a crazy cast of characters. In 1692, Purcell set parts of John Dryden's reworking of Sophocles's *Oedipus* to music, producing one of his best known pieces "Music for a While". While the text and vocal line of "Music for a While" is beautiful and haunting, it is Purcell's use of one of the key techniques of the early baroque that can drive the listener to point of madness: the ground bass. A short, recurring melodic pattern in the bass line is the driving force here while the singing voice declaims in music the powerful message - *Music for a while, shall all your cares beguile.*

Another popular music style of the 16th and 17th centuries was the English lute song. Its structure and execution are simple; consisting of a composition for solo voice on a strophic text evoking the serious and playful themes of love and loss accompanied by lute. The poetry of the lute songs were borrowed from standard poetry, written by professionals and amateurs, and in many cases were most likely written by the composer as we find in Thomas Campion's "Fire, fire". The personal nature of the poetry; the graphic images of burning, desire, and scorching against the pitiless pleas for raw, physical relief; and the bare, vulnerable performing force of voice and lute create an intimate scene in which the audience is suddenly the voyeur of a private moment.

Around the same time as Purcell, John Eccles was writing incidental music for Thomas D'Urfey's 1694 *Comical History of Don Quixote*, a three-part dramatization of Cervantes' impulsive, rash, wind-mill chasing knight of a bygone era. However, Don Quixote is not the orator of the enraged speech in "I Burn, I Burn". The mad-song, a popular genre of the baroque, is sung by Marcella, and is described in the libretto as "a young, beautiful Shepherdess that hates Mankind". Eccles' musical setting of her scorn and rage is a dramatic operatic work in and of itself. The unmetred recitative passages,

the jumps in range and expression, and the sporadic jolts in tempo are merely musical tools used to depict the wide range of emotions that everyone experiences when we are beyond upset. If you find yourself unable to relate to the line “*And mourn now the Fate, Which myself did create, Fool that consider’d not when I was well*”, please tell me your secret.

A dear friend of the word MAD is the word PANIC, and we get that delightful word from the half-goat, half-man Greek god, Pan, whose stentorian voice would often drive humans to flee in unreasonable terror. He had a similar effect on the ladies. In the myths surrounding his pursuit of female companionship, Pan would chase an unwilling nymph to her destruction, death, or transformation into a tree, flower, constellation — or in Syrinx’s case, river reeds.

Mythology was a popular topic for French cantatas in the late Baroque. Michel Pignolet de Montéclair was a theorist, teacher, and composer heavily immersed in the operatic scene in Paris. *Pan et Syrinx* is an opera *en miniature*. Ovid’s simple tale of Pan and Syrinx is transformed into a playful, sensuous drama delivered by an omniscient and opiated narrator — *Let the amiable tones which you produce give rise to love’s best flames. Let the shepherdess become more tender and the shepherd more contented.*

Confitebor tibi Domine. I find great kinship with David, the author of the psalms. From the accounts of his life, David was a life-long musician from his humble days as shepherd soothing his flock with a simple harp to the great king leading hymns of praise with his voice. The summer before I moved to Boston, I fell in love with Monteverdi’s setting of Psalm 111 during a concert given by Third Coast Baroque in Chicago. During a very exciting class field trip across the Cambridge Commons to Harvard’s music library, I found the score and started working on it. This piece of music moved with me to new city, stayed by my side through anxiety, and it survived my good intentions and best laid schemes. The *Confitebor tibi Domine* is my friends and family at home, the kindred spirits here in Boston, and those who I have yet to meet.

Adulations and Indebtedness

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