

## Performing Forces

Music for a While' was written for voice (most usually a *tenor*) and *continuo*.

### Soprano:

- The vocal line is mainly *syllabic* following speech rhythms.
- There are paired slurrings (e.g. in bar 5 on the words 'for' and 'a').
- There are *melismatic* moments (e.g. bar 10 on the word 'wond'ring').
- There are many examples of *word-painting* in this *aria*. *Word-painting* is the technique of writing music that reflects the literal meaning of a song. For example: The word 'eternal' in bar 20 is set to a lengthy *melisma* with repetitive alternating notes showing the everlasting atmosphere of this word.

### Harpsichord:

The right hand of the harpsichord part is an elaborate realisation and is highly decorative and embellished with frequent *dotted rhythms* and *ornamentation* such as upper and lower *mordents*, *grace notes* and *appoggiaturas*. At the time, this would have been *improvised* by the player rather than being notated. Chords are frequently *arpeggiated* or spread rapidly from the lowest to highest note (e.g. bar 13). The left hand of the harpsichord plays the ground bass.

### Bass Viol:

The ground bass is also played by the bass viol. This is a bowed, fretted, stringed instrument used during the Renaissance and Baroque periods.

## Structure

This piece follows a *ground bass* structure. This is a short, recurring melodic pattern in the bass part that acts as the principal structural element, whilst melodic parts above change.

## Melody

- The soprano line has a range or compass of a ninth.
- The music is mostly *conjunct* (stepwise).
- The ground bass plays *arpeggios* throughout. It is three bars long and consists entirely of *quavers*.
- *Passing notes* are frequent. For example, the E and C on beat 4 of bar 5 are non-harmony notes and do not belong to the chord but link to notes from the chord.
- There are some *descending sequences* (e.g. bar 20).
- There is extensive use of *ornaments* in both the soprano line and the right hand of the harpsichord: *Trills* (bar 13), *Appoggiaturas* (bar 35), *Grace notes* (bar 6), *Upper mordents* (bar 22), and *Lower mordents* (bar 1).

## Tonality

- The music is in A minor (ending on an A major chord - Tierce de Picardie).
- The tonality, however, is sometimes ambiguous.
- The central section modulates to closely related keys. These include E minor (bar 14), G major (bar 16), C major (bar 21), A major (bar 23), E minor (bar 27).

## Tempo, Metre and Rhythm

- There is no tempo indication but a slow tempo would be appropriate for this piece.
- The metre is 4/4 quadruple time.
- The piece uses a wide variety of rhythms but quavers and semiquavers are the most predominant. There is only occasional syncopation (e.g. bar 20).

## Texture

- The texture is melody and accompaniment/melody-dominated homophony.
- The accompaniment is provided by the ground bass in the left hand of the harpsichord and the bass viol.
- The right hand of the harpsichord is an elaborate realisation and provides some counterpoint with the vocal line.

## Harmony

- Chords are diatonic and functional.
- Perfect cadences are achieved from the chord V at the end of the ground to the chord I at the start of the next playing of the ground bass (e.g. bars 3–4). This is a I–V–I cadential 6–4.
- Suspensions are used very occasionally. For example, there is a 4–3 suspension in bar 3 beat 4 1/2 in the harpsichord part.
- Dissonances are infrequent but examples can be seen on the word 'pains' in bar 12/
- Another type of dissonance used is false relation, which can be seen in bar 1 with an F# in the ground bass and a F ♮ in the harpsichord.

