

Explain how Handel achieves a sense of majesty in his setting of The King Shall Rejoice.

There are many factors that come together in Handel's *The King Shall Rejoice* to create majesty. This essay will include such musical aspects as; style and influences, texture, rhythm, the texts used, melody and instrumentation. There are five movements within Handel's *The King Shall Rejoice*; this essay will include examples from each movement.

Handel achieves a powerful and bright opening at the start of the first movement through a strong and steady tempo. The music is in four four time; this common time signature helps to emphasize the vocal line and the majesty of the words. The key signature of D major is used as the tonic from the start of the first movement; this key connotes strength, happiness, positivity and majesty.

Handel has many influences, mostly European. The influences that we can see coming through in Handel's *The King Shall Rejoice* to create majesty are, Italian, French and English. The sense of the dramatic in Handel's *The King Shall Rejoice* is an Italian influence on the piece. Italian opera was renowned for being dramatic and Handel incorporates this device successfully into his music.

The dotted quaver and semi quaver rhythmic motif that keeps appearing all the way through the five movements is an example of a French influence on Handel. An example of this is on the last beat of bar 22 in the first movement. This rhythm is commonly referred to as 'the French overture rhythm'. Hemiolas are another example of French, dance influences in *The King Shall Rejoice*. An example of a hemiola (where the music feels like it is in two four instead of three four, because the strong beat is every two beats instead of three beats) is in bars eighteen and nineteen of the second movement.

Another influence in the piece is English. This comes in the form of Purcell, the baroque composer who wrote anthems in the choral tradition. Purcell often wrote music to be performed in a church, as Handel was doing with '*The King Shall Rejoice*'. It is very important that Handel did write in a partly traditional English style because of the event he was writing for. A crowning is a very patriotic event and the music, above all, must have a grand, majestic, English feel to it.

Many musical devices are used within Handel's *The King Shall Rejoice*; these small details added to the music often convey ideas to the audience, such as the idea of the majesty of the occasion. Handel's use of rests within a certain phrase, gives the phrase the impression of short bursts of music, this device creates drama and also tension. An example of this would be in beats two and three of bars 34 and 35 of the first movement.

Handel writes using motifs (fragments of melodies) and then develops them. In some parts of the music we may hear a motif, for example the 'x' motif on the first two beats of bar eight in the first movement, and then on beats one and two of bar 16 in the first movement we hear a variation of the 'x' motif. This technique of repeating and slightly changing ideas shows the audience the importance and significance of the music and the majesty of the occasion.

Colourature is a device that emphasizes vocal music, as if it were coloured, by ornaments, runs or rapid passages, much like word painting. A good example of this is in bars thirty-six, thirty-seven and thirty-eight of the first movement. This is used to emphasize important words in the text, 'rejoice' in this case, and also to convey the right feeling. The quaver runs used in the alto two part, tenor, and bass make us not only hear the emphasis on the word rejoice, but **feel like** rejoicing. In much the same

way, melismatic writing emphasizes syllables as they are held over many notes, an example of this is in bar forty-two of the first movement.

Ornamentations such as trills are an example of virtuoso writing. They decorate the music and make it grander to emphasize the majesty of the occasion. Trills can also add to the tension of a passage of music, if the phrase is building up to a climax this can be aided by the use of trills. Suspensions and Anticipations in the music also add to the tension, drama and majesty of the piece, an example of a suspension is in bar thirty-seven and thirty-eight of the second movement.

The rhythms used in the music can communicate emotions from the composer. For example in the second movement, *Exceeding Glad Shall He Be*, Dance rhythms are used to tell us what a happy joyful and dance worthy occasion this crowning is! The texture is thinner, but also in three four time, which we know to be a dance time signature. Hemiolas, syncopation, antiphonal passages and French overture rhythms, all of these musical devices give the music it's own personality. Question and Answer phrases reiterate the light-hearted mood of the second movement, it is like the music has a personality, and is telling a story of the event.

In bars forty-nine and fifty of the first movement, we see scalic passages that are used to shift the key from A Major (the dominant) back to the D major (the tonic). Also in these two bars melisma is used on the last syllable of the word 'rejoice'. The scalic passages are ascending quaver runs. These two bars are perfect examples of devices used by Handel to fit the occasion and achieve a sense of majesty in his setting of *The King Shall Rejoice*.

The texts used in Handel's *The King Shall Rejoice* are from Psalm 21 in the 1662 prayer book translation. The words used in the piece are from the bible (a sacred/holy book), this adds to the sense of majesty within the music. The crowning took place in Westminster Abbey. Using texts from the bible was fitting of the venue, a church and therefore holy setting. The religious words, together with the venue of the occasion and musical devices used in the coronation anthem, all came together to achieve a sense of majesty for the crowning.

In the first movement (*The King Shall Rejoice*) the texture is thick and homophonic, the use of an organ accentuates this, as does the use of timpani tuned to D and A, this suggests that the music is ceremonial and adds to the majesty. The structure of the first movement is similar to that of a concerto movement, the opening ritornello has its own ideas, contrasted with different rhythms and textures to create a clear structure of its own. The second movement (*Exceeding Glad Shall He Be*) is a lot thinner in texture; harpsichords are often used in thinner textured parts instead of the organ. The thin texture in the second movement allows the continuo group to be heard clearly and contrasts well to give a different, but still majestic feel to the second movement.

In the third movement (*Glory And Great Worship*) the texture is homophonic; this conveys majesty, glory and a sense of the magnificent. Colouratura is used in the first three bars; the scalic ascending patterns in the strings not only embellish the D major chord, but also represent the King rising to heaven. At the end of the third movement the last two bars are Adagio, to proclaim majesty in the end of the movement. As well as this, the movement finishes on a Phrygian cadence which sets the stage for the tonic minor (B minor) used in the fourth movement.

The fourth movement (*Thou Hast Prevented Him With The Blessings Of Goodness*) is in the tonic minor, B minor, the only minor mode movement in the anthem. This movement has a fugal and often contrapuntal texture, an example of this is in bars twenty-three and twenty-four of the fourth movement. In the fifth movement (*Alleluia*) the texture is thick and contrapuntal, this heralds the end of the anthem and accentuates the name of the movement 'Alleluia', this word, meaning 'praise the lord' has a double meaning; the audience is encouraged to both praise god and praise the king. The word is repeated through out the movement for effect and emphasis of the majesty of the occasion and importance of the word.