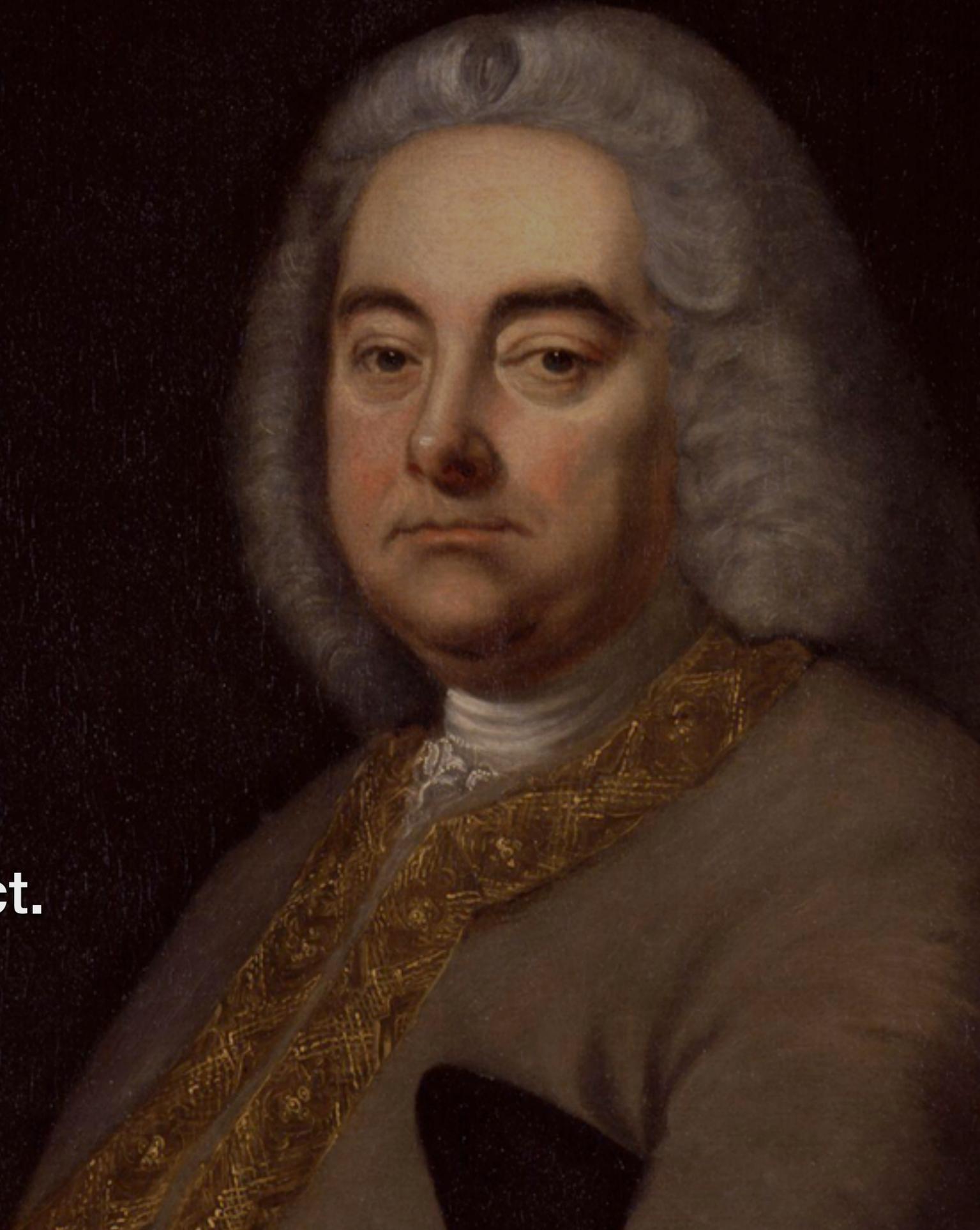


The British Muse

2 - Handel in England

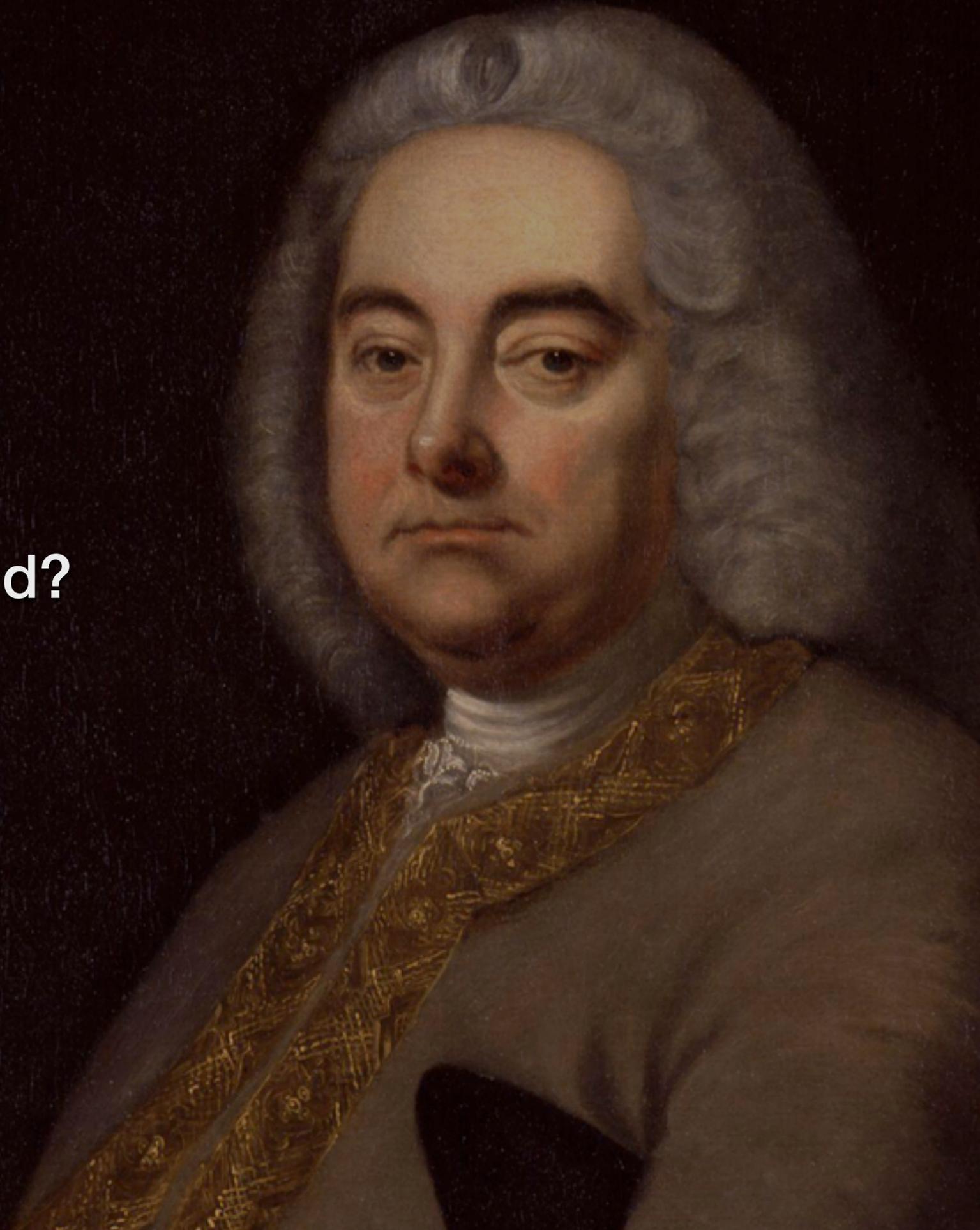
Handel was born the same year as Johann Sebastian Bach, and in the same general area of Germany.

But Bach never went much of anywhere, whereas Handel travelled far and wide—he even died a naturalized British subject.





But *why* did he wind up in England?



When Charles II — who had been restored to the throne of England in 1660 — died in 1685 without an heir, his brother James II became the king.



James was Catholic—the last such English monarch—and showed strong preferment to fellow Catholics.

He was suspected of aiming at restoring England to an all-Catholic country. This didn't sit well with Parliament. Thus he was deposed in the “Glorious Revolution” of 1688, which also established an English Bill of Rights.



His daughter, Mary, and her husband William became co-monarchs.

They ruled from 1689 to 1702, when William died.



William and Mary were childless.

When William died in 1702, the throne passed to Mary's younger sister, Anne.

She reigned until her death in 1714.



Although she had 17 pregnancies, none of her children survived to adulthood.

Upon her death, the throne passed to a distant relative, George, Elector of Hanover. Thus Anne was the last of the Stuart monarchs.

Thus begins the Hanoverian dynasty of British kings.



George I of England, Duke of Brunswick-Lüneburg and Elector of Hanover, just happened to be Handel's employer.



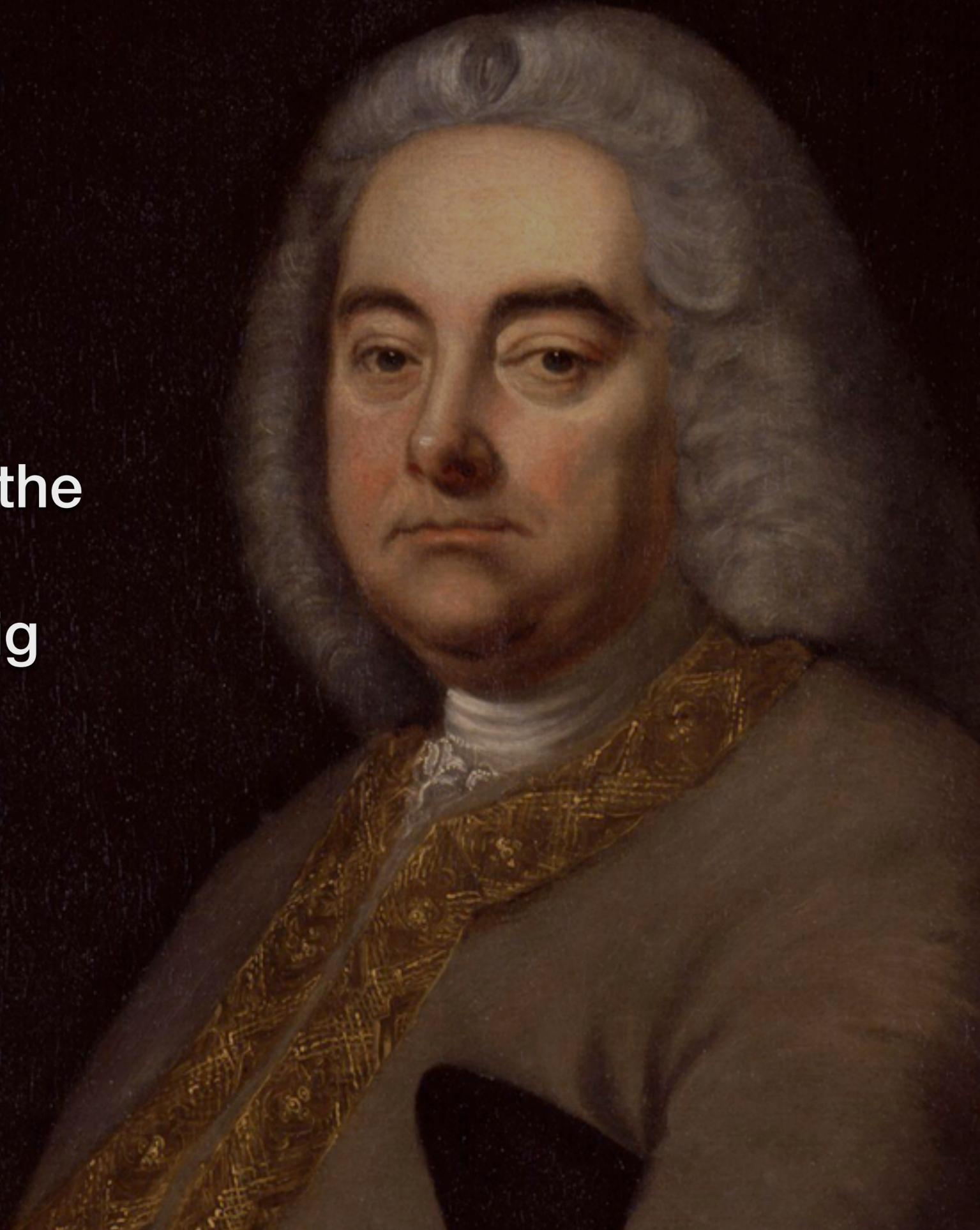
By the time his employer was crowned George I of England, Handel had already become a familiar figure in England due to several successful opera productions.

Now he became a naturalized citizen and spent the rest of his life as a British subject.

So it's fair to call him an English composer, even if he was born and raised in Germany.



As the quasi-house composer for the House of Hanover, Handel wrote a number of ceremonial works for big public occasions.





Royal Fireworks Music: Minuet

Martin Pearlman / Boston Baroque



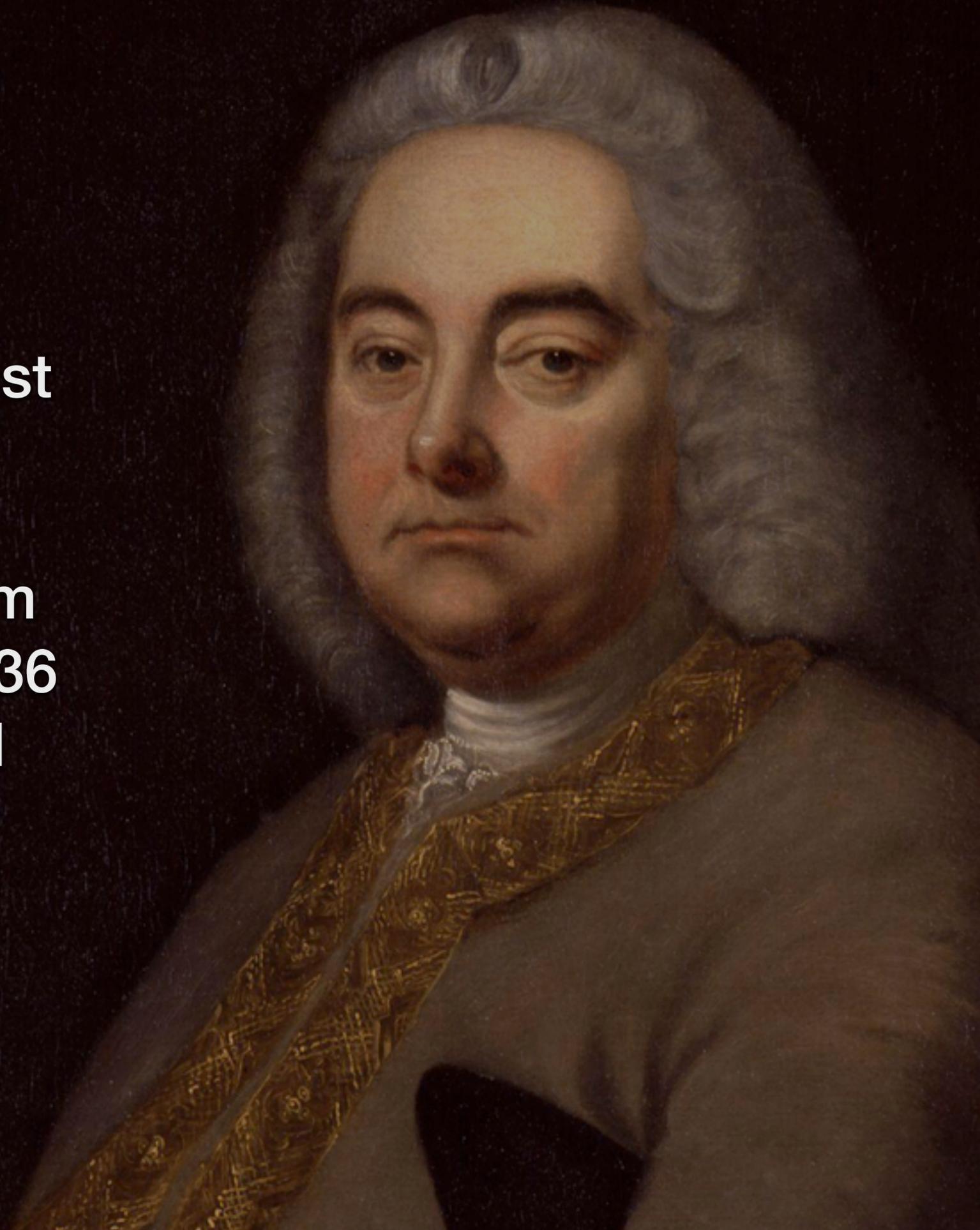
Handel wrote the Royal Fireworks Music for a performance in Vauxhall Gardens, London's public amusement park—predecessor to places like the Tivoli in Copenhagen, Coney Island in New York, or even the Santa Cruz Beach Boardwalk.

At the premiere, the fireworks ignited the stage, and a mad stampede followed.

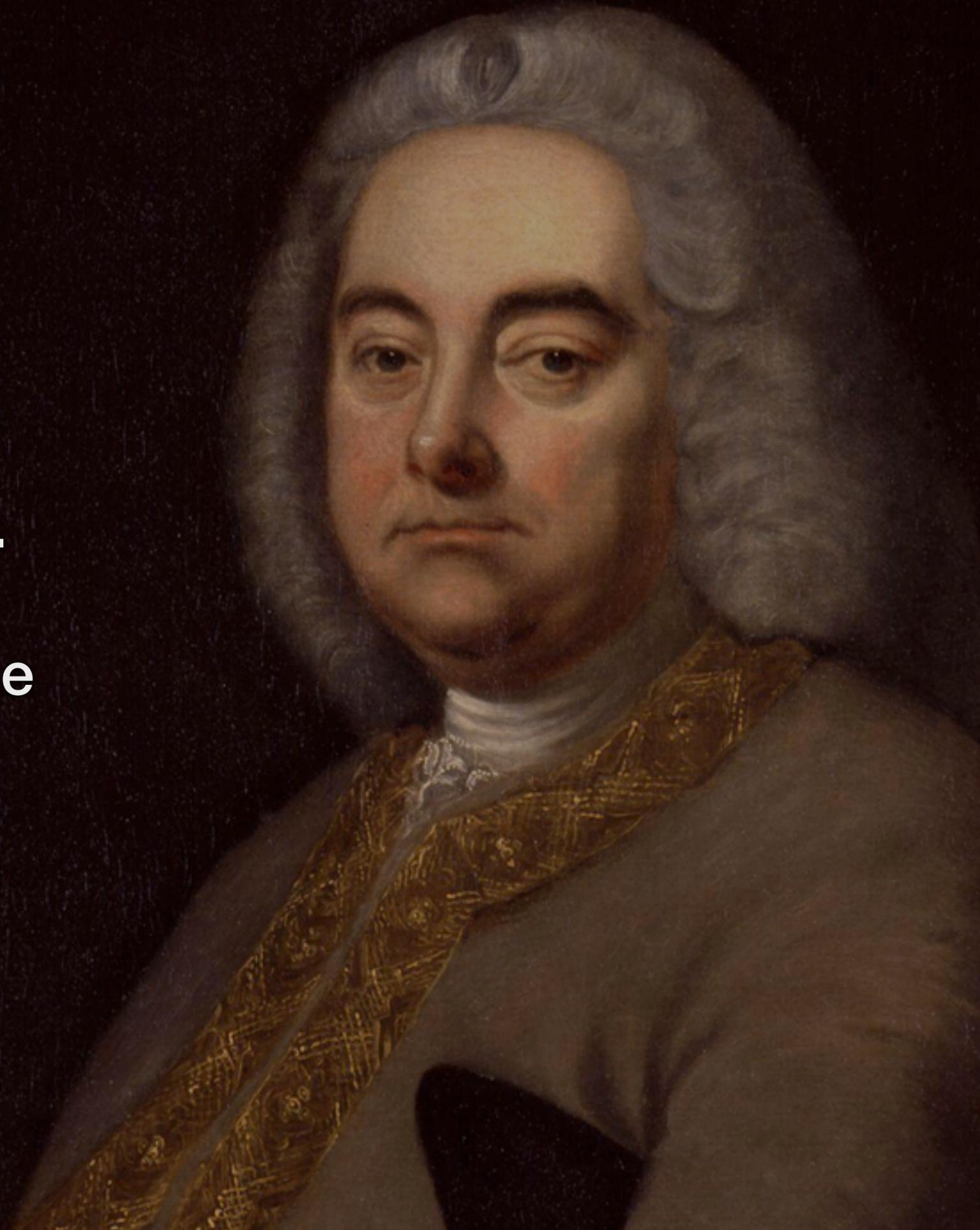


Handel's primary interest was Italian opera, as of the 1710s onward quite fashionable amongst the English.

Over about a quarter century from 1711 to 1738, Handel presented 36 operas at the King's Theater, and towards the end some in Covent Garden, still called the Royal Opera House.



Eventually he wound up not only composer, but also conductor, producer, and business manager. He was the first composer to become wealthy from the practice of music alone.



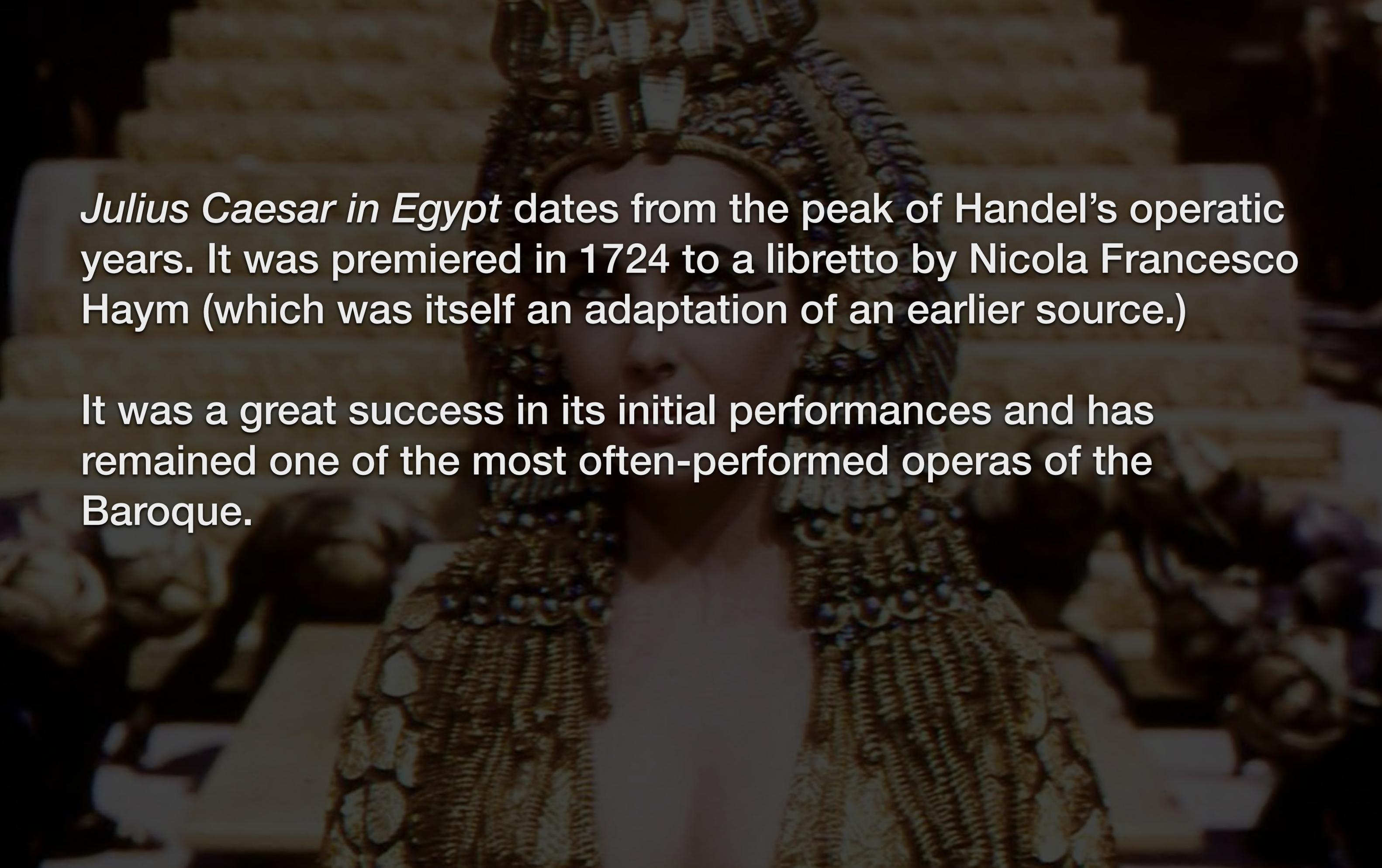
Opera seria, the Italian form of opera that dominated the theaters of the Baroque era, alternated recitatives with arias, with the occasional chorus or duet thrown in for added attraction.





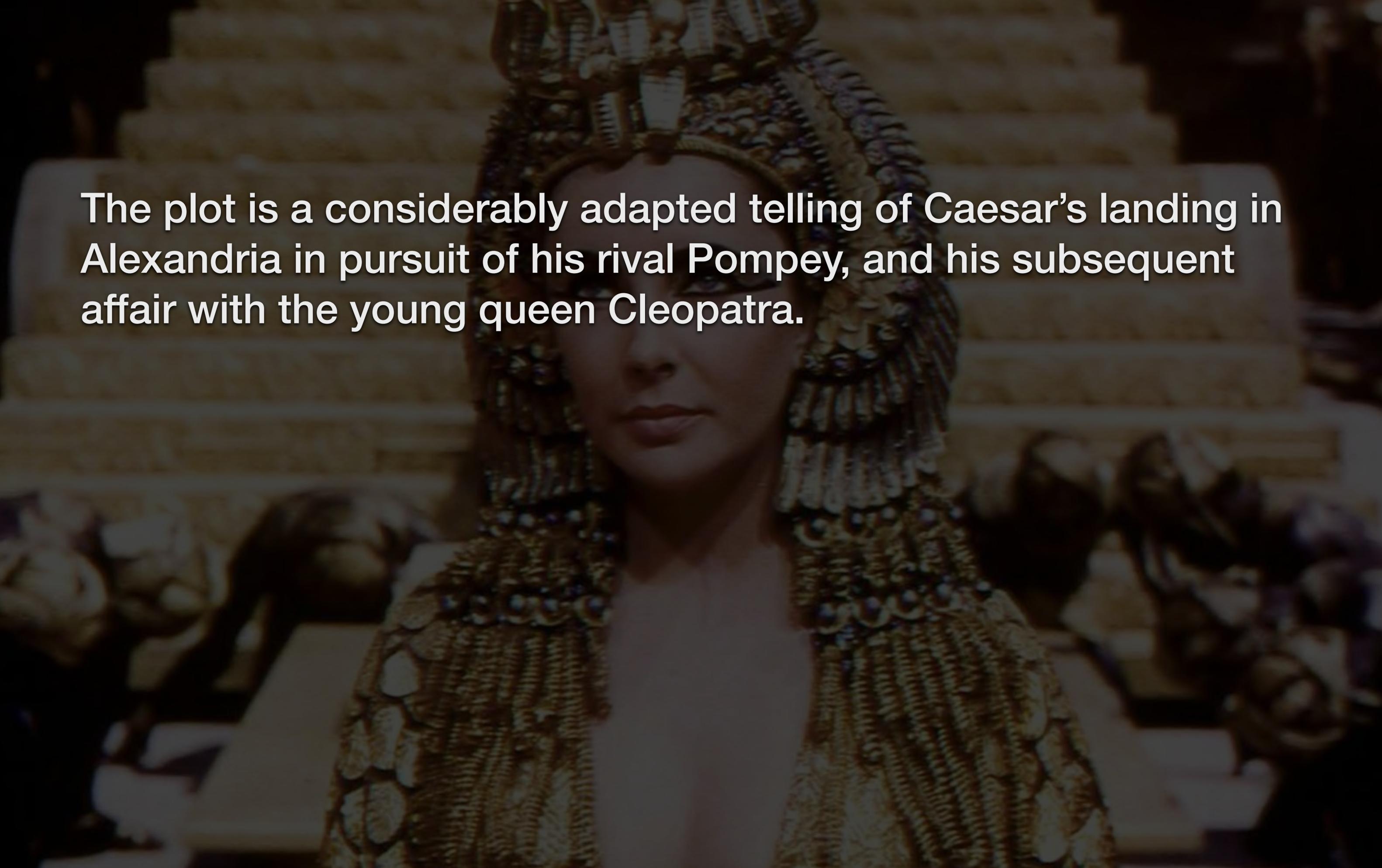
Giulio Cesare in Egitto: V'adoro, pupille

Renée Fleming / Orchestra of the 18th Century

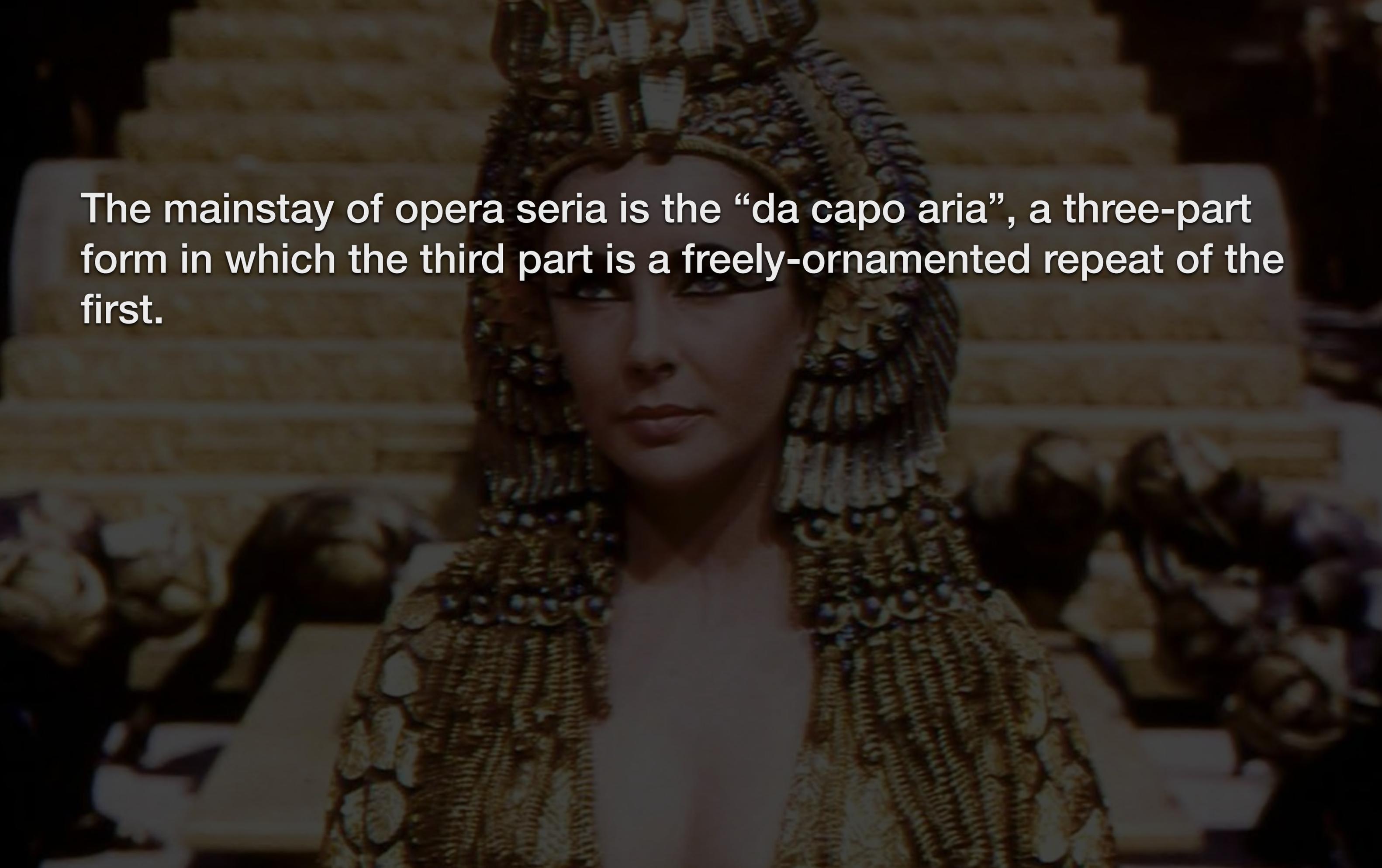
A woman in an ornate, gold-embroidered costume, likely a scene from the opera Julius Caesar in Egypt. She is wearing a large, circular, gold-embroidered headpiece and a matching bodice with intricate patterns. Her expression is serious and contemplative.

Julius Caesar in Egypt dates from the peak of Handel's operatic years. It was premiered in 1724 to a libretto by Nicola Francesco Haym (which was itself an adaptation of an earlier source.)

It was a great success in its initial performances and has remained one of the most often-performed operas of the Baroque.

A woman wearing an ornate, golden Egyptian headdress with a cobra-like emblem on top. She is looking slightly to the right. The background is a patterned fabric.

The plot is a considerably adapted telling of Caesar's landing in Alexandria in pursuit of his rival Pompey, and his subsequent affair with the young queen Cleopatra.

A woman is shown from the chest up, wearing an elaborate, golden Egyptian-style headdress (nemes) with a cobra (uraeus) on top. She is also wearing a matching golden necklace and a patterned garment. Her expression is neutral as she looks slightly to the right. The background is dark and out of focus, suggesting a stage or performance setting.

The mainstay of opera seria is the “da capo aria”, a three-part form in which the third part is a freely-ornamented repeat of the first.

DA CAPO ARIA

✻ The standardized form is:

1. Two poetic stanzas of approximately equal length and similar rhyme scheme.
2. Each stanza normally ends with a cadential *verso trunco* (with the accent on the final syllable)

DA CAPO ARIA: TEXT

Tetrameter: four beats to a line

Dactylic: composed of *dactyls* (long short short)

Fourth-syllable rhymes: a b a b

First-syllable rhymes: x y x y

Second-syllable rhymes: s s t t

Stanza 1 V'adoro, pupulle, saette d'amore
le vostre faville so grate nel sen

Stanza 2 Pietose vi brama il meso mio core
ch'ognora vi chama l'amato suo ben

I adore you, eyes, Cupid's darts | Your sparks are welcome in my breast.
My sad heart craves your mercy | forever calling you its dearest love.

DA CAPO ARIA

A Stanza 1	<i>a</i>
	<i>b</i>

A' Stanza 1 repeated with variance	<i>a'</i>
	<i>b'</i>

B Stanza 2	<i>c</i>
	<i>d</i>



da Capo

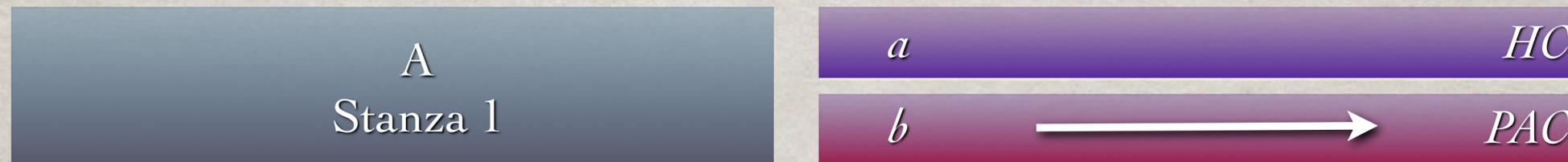
A Stanza 1	<i>a</i>
	<i>b</i>

A' Stanza 1 repeated with variance	<i>a'</i>
	<i>b'</i>

FIRST STANZA

Opening Ritornello

Usually self-contained with a full close in the tonic

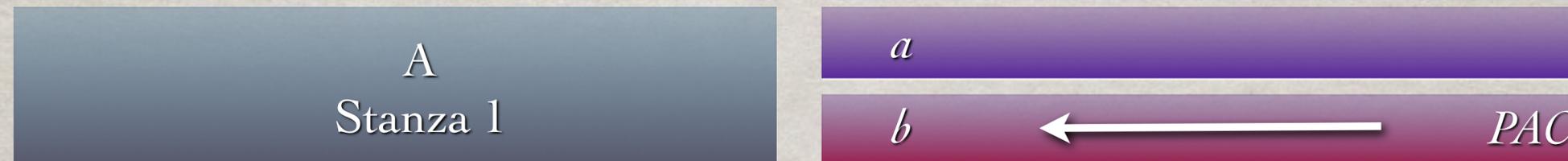


Moves harmonically from I to the standard secondary key (typically V)

FIRST STANZA REPEAT

Second Ritornello

Shorter, in the secondary key



*May begin in an entirely new key
Eventually moves back to the tonic
Sometimes may act developmentally*

THIRD RITORNELLO

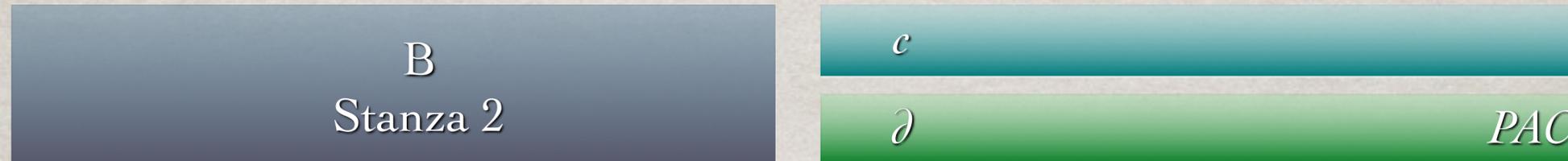
Third Ritornello

In the tonic key

Brings the section to a close

Will close the entire aria after the da Capo

SECOND STANZA



Often in a contrasting key or style

Generally stated only once, with or without internal repetitions

Can be dramatically different in key, tempo, and meter

Often ends in the minor or with a Phrygian cadence, preparing for the da Capo

DA CAPO

Opening Ritornello

May be omitted, or shortened

da Capo

A
Stanza 1

a

b

A'
Stanza 1 repeated with variance

a'

b'

Typically ornamented

Sections may be improvised, as long as they keep to the basic form

Cadenzas can occur, typically before the final b' statement.

FINAL RITORNELLO

Final Ritornello

*In the tonic key
Brings the entire aria to a close*

FIRST RITORNELLO

Opening Ritornello

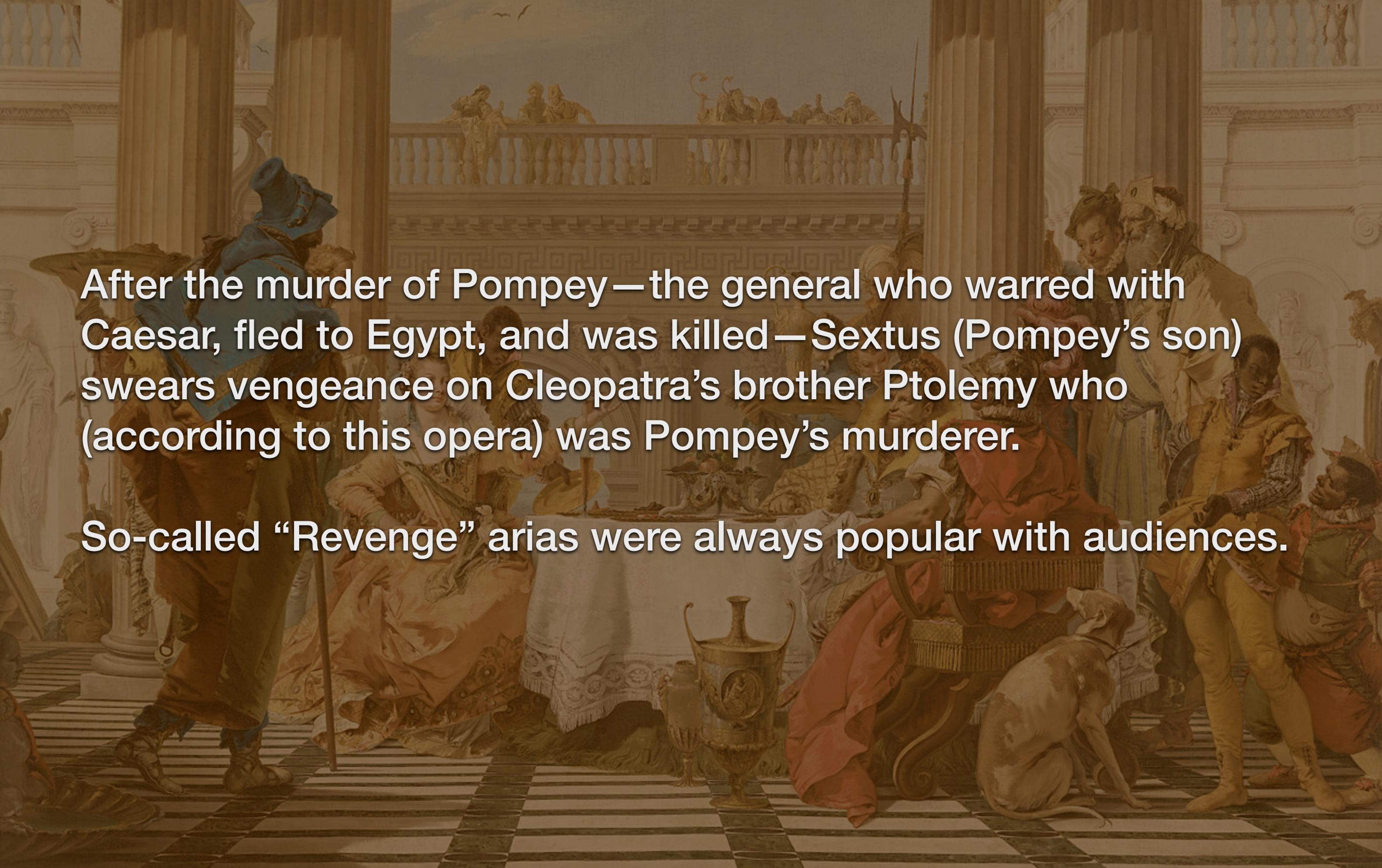
F Major

Self-contained with a full close in the tonic



Giulio Cesare in Egitto: La Justizia

Lorraine Hunt Lieberson / Nicholas McGegan / Philharmonia Baroque



After the murder of Pompey—the general who warred with Caesar, fled to Egypt, and was killed—Sextus (Pompey’s son) swears vengeance on Cleopatra’s brother Ptolemy who (according to this opera) was Pompey’s murderer.

So-called “Revenge” arias were always popular with audiences.

R

1

1

1

R

2

da Capo

- ~ Structure of this *da Capo* aria:
 - ~ Stanza 1 is sung three times, each time with a slightly different melody.
 - ~ Stanza 2 is sung once.
 - ~ Ritornelli (instrumental) separate each section.
 - ~ The *da Capo* opens with an abbreviated ritornello.

R

1

1

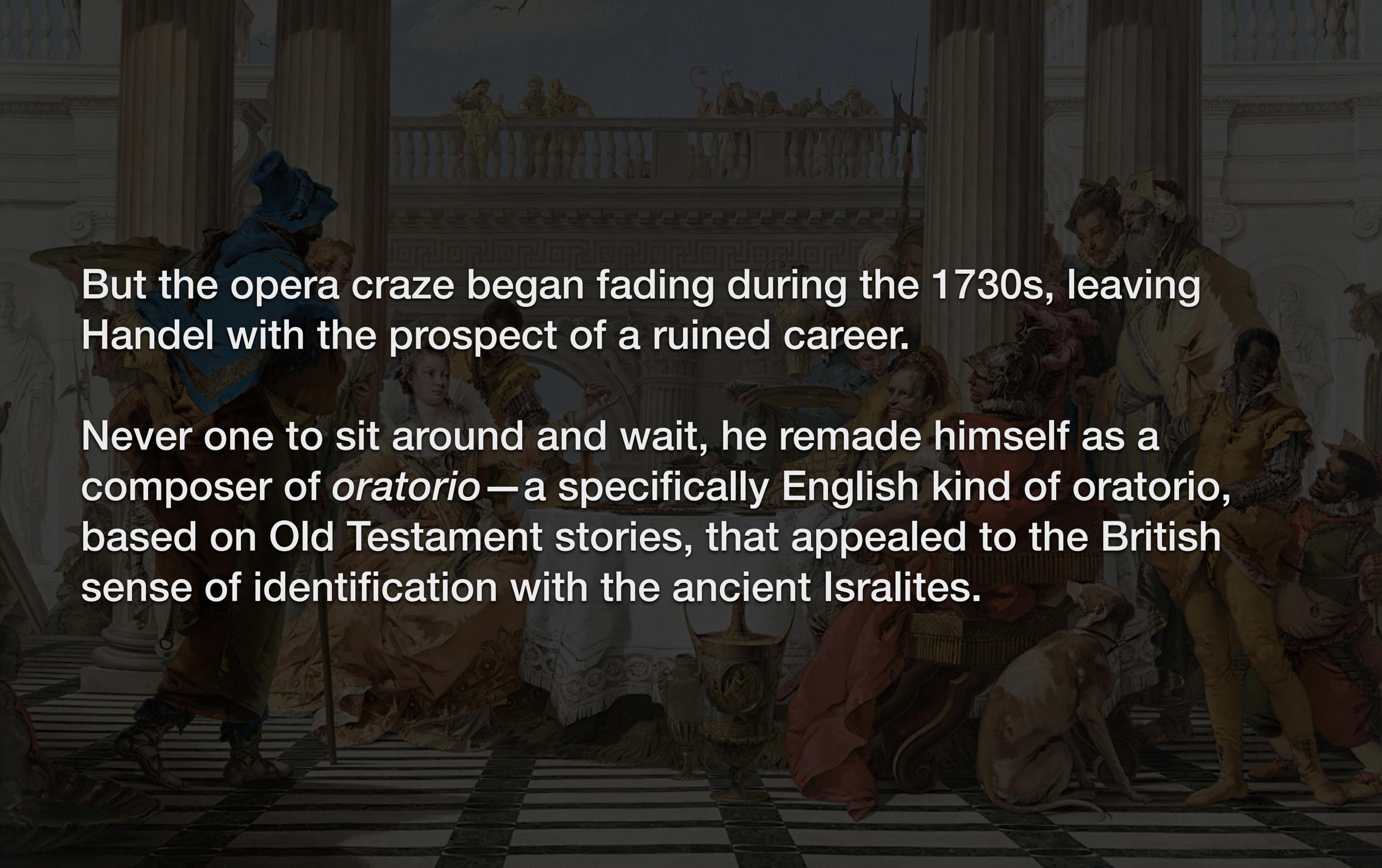
1

R

2

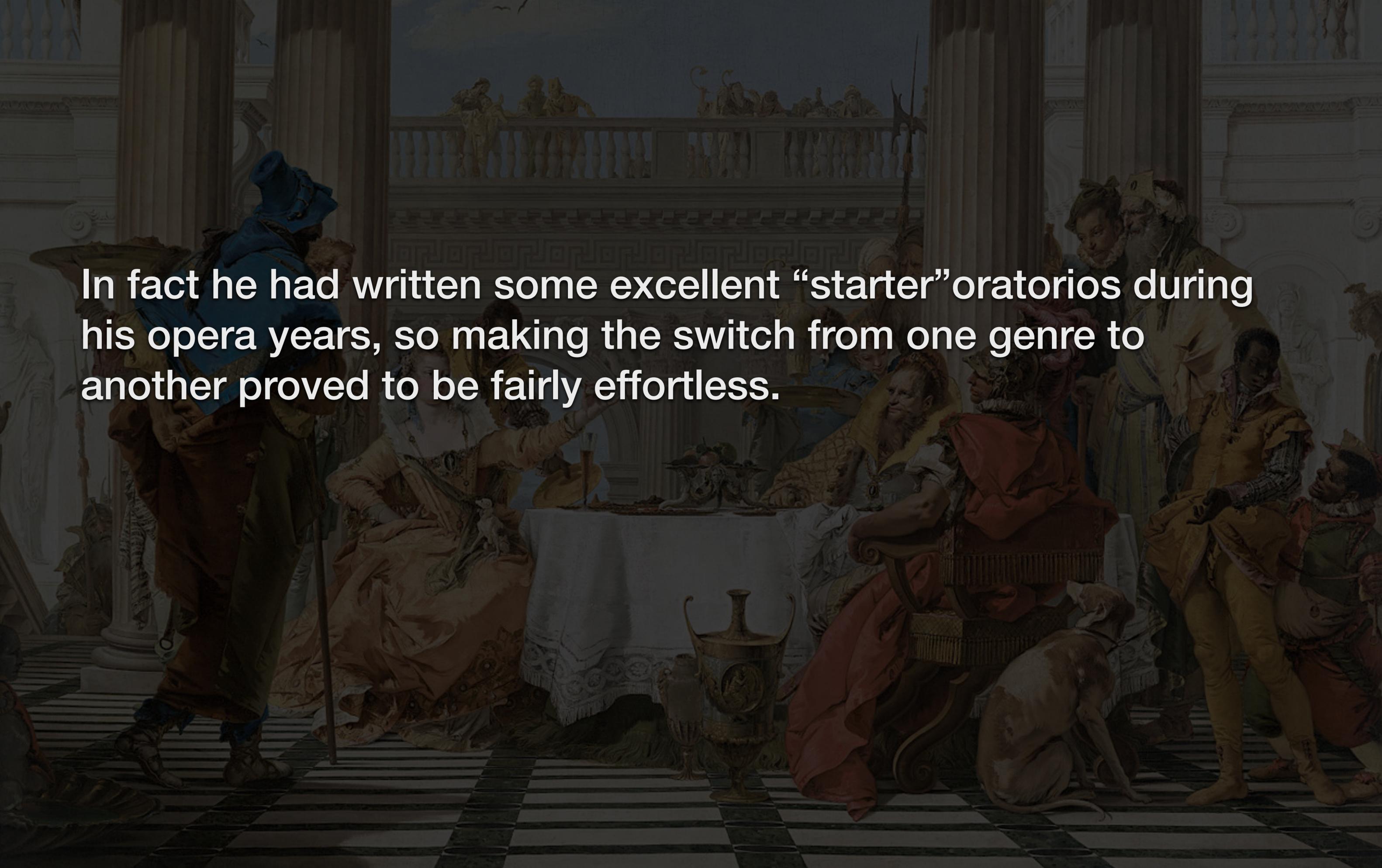
da Capo

Ritornello



But the opera craze began fading during the 1730s, leaving Handel with the prospect of a ruined career.

Never one to sit around and wait, he remade himself as a composer of *oratorio*—a specifically English kind of oratorio, based on Old Testament stories, that appealed to the British sense of identification with the ancient Israelites.



In fact he had written some excellent “starter” oratorios during his opera years, so making the switch from one genre to another proved to be fairly effortless.



Acis and Galatea HWV 49

Robert King / King's Consort



Handel wrote *Acis and Galatea* in 1718, for James Brydges, the future Duke of Chandos.

Acis and Galatea is a stepping stone to English oratorio, although overall it's probably best considered a short, pastoral chamber opera.

Galatea is a sea nymph.



She's very pretty.

Acis is a flute-playing shepherd.

He's very pretty.



They're in love...



Unfortunately, along comes Polyphemus.



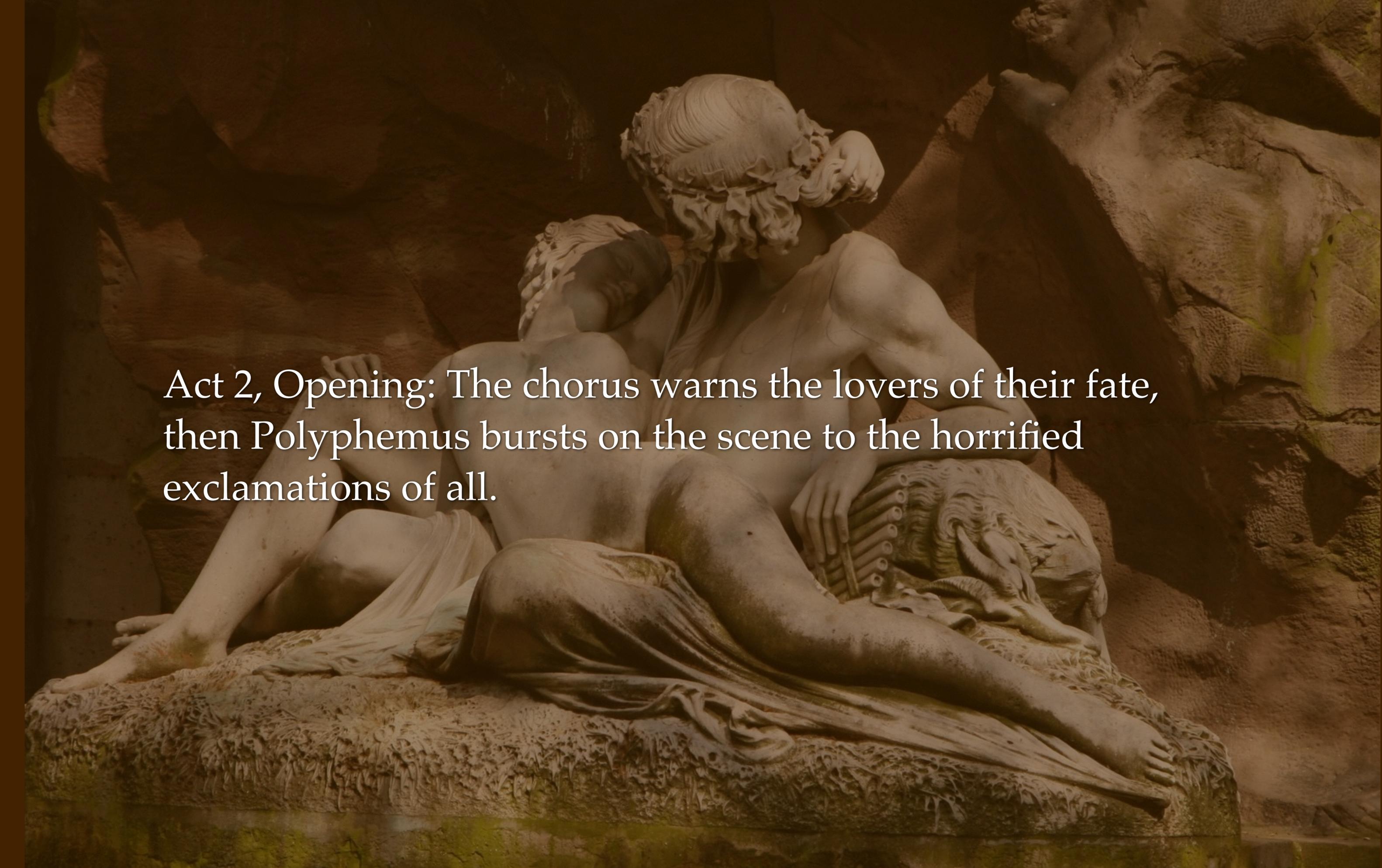
He has a **thing** for Galatea.

And he's a big, mean **giant**.

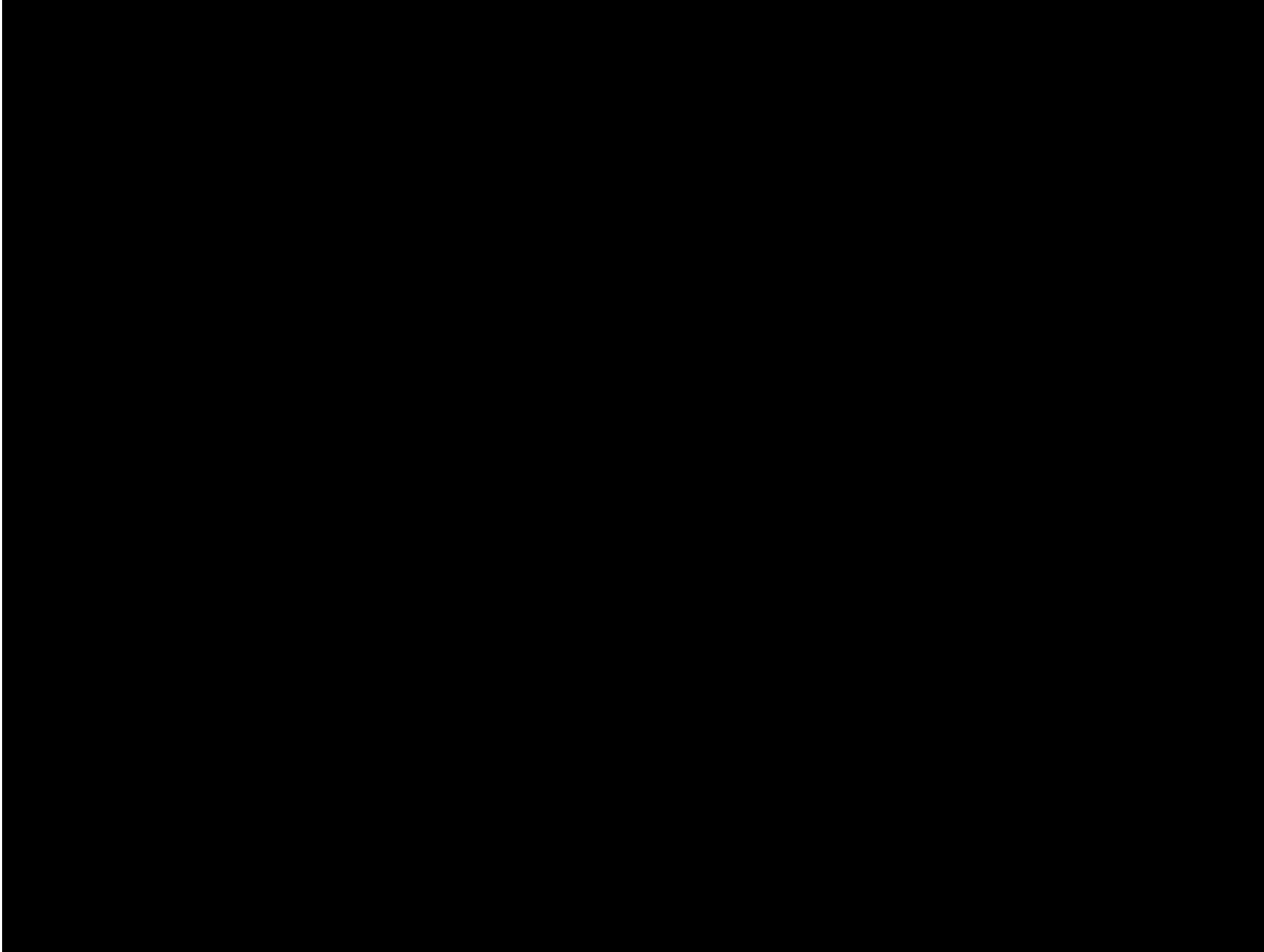
With poor negotiating skills.

Sayonara, Acis!



A detailed marble sculpture depicting the scene from the play 'The Cyclops'. Polyphemus, the Cyclops, is shown in the foreground, reclining on a rocky ledge. He has a large, prominent horned head and is holding a large, curved object, possibly a tibia or a piece of wood, in his hands. His body is muscular and hairy. Behind him, Galatea, the nymph, is shown in a state of distress, her head buried in his chest. She has long, flowing hair and is wearing a draped garment. The background consists of rough, textured rock formations, suggesting a cave or a rocky shore. The lighting is dramatic, highlighting the figures against the dark background.

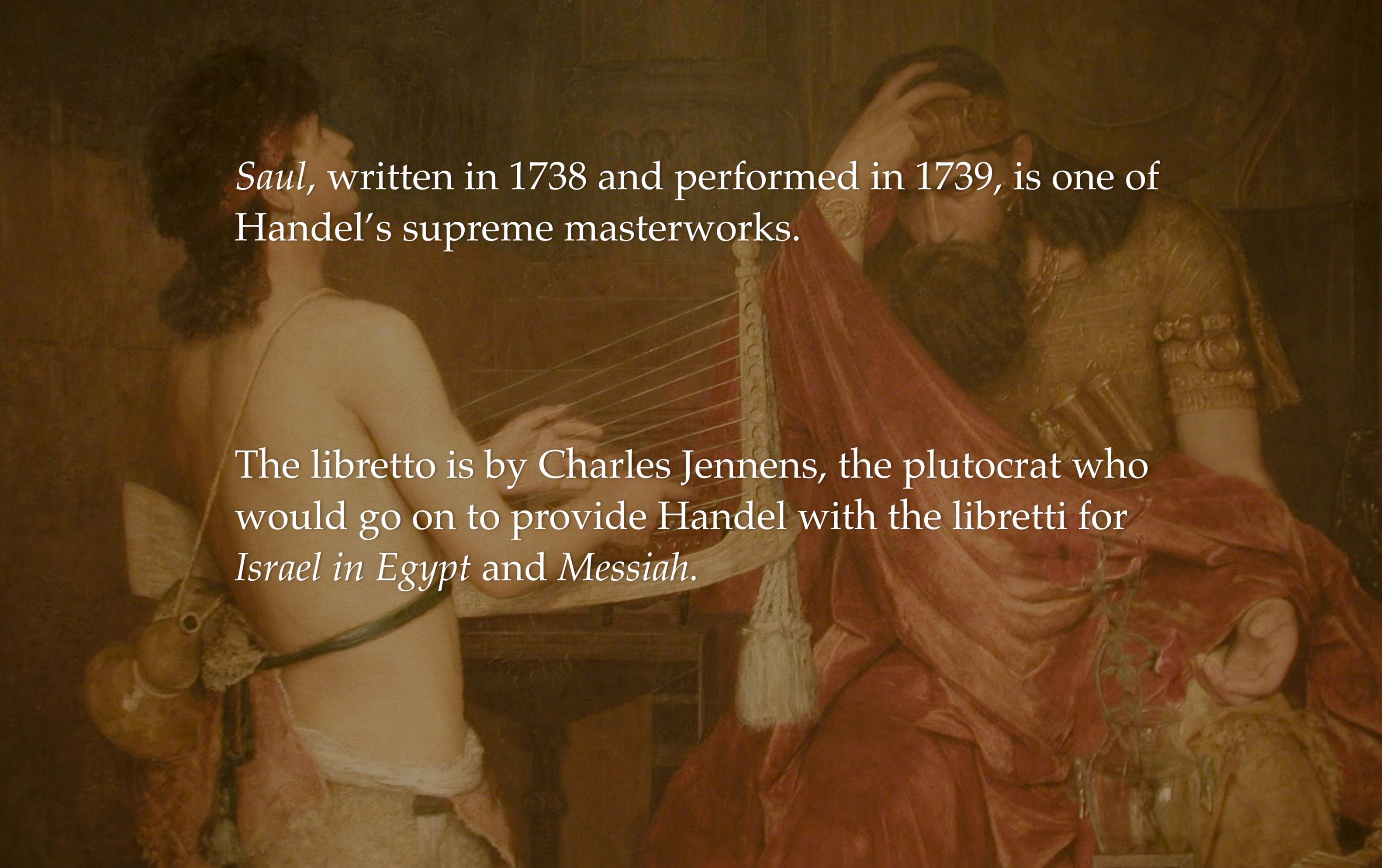
Act 2, Opening: The chorus warns the lovers of their fate, then Polyphemus bursts on the scene to the horrified exclamations of all.





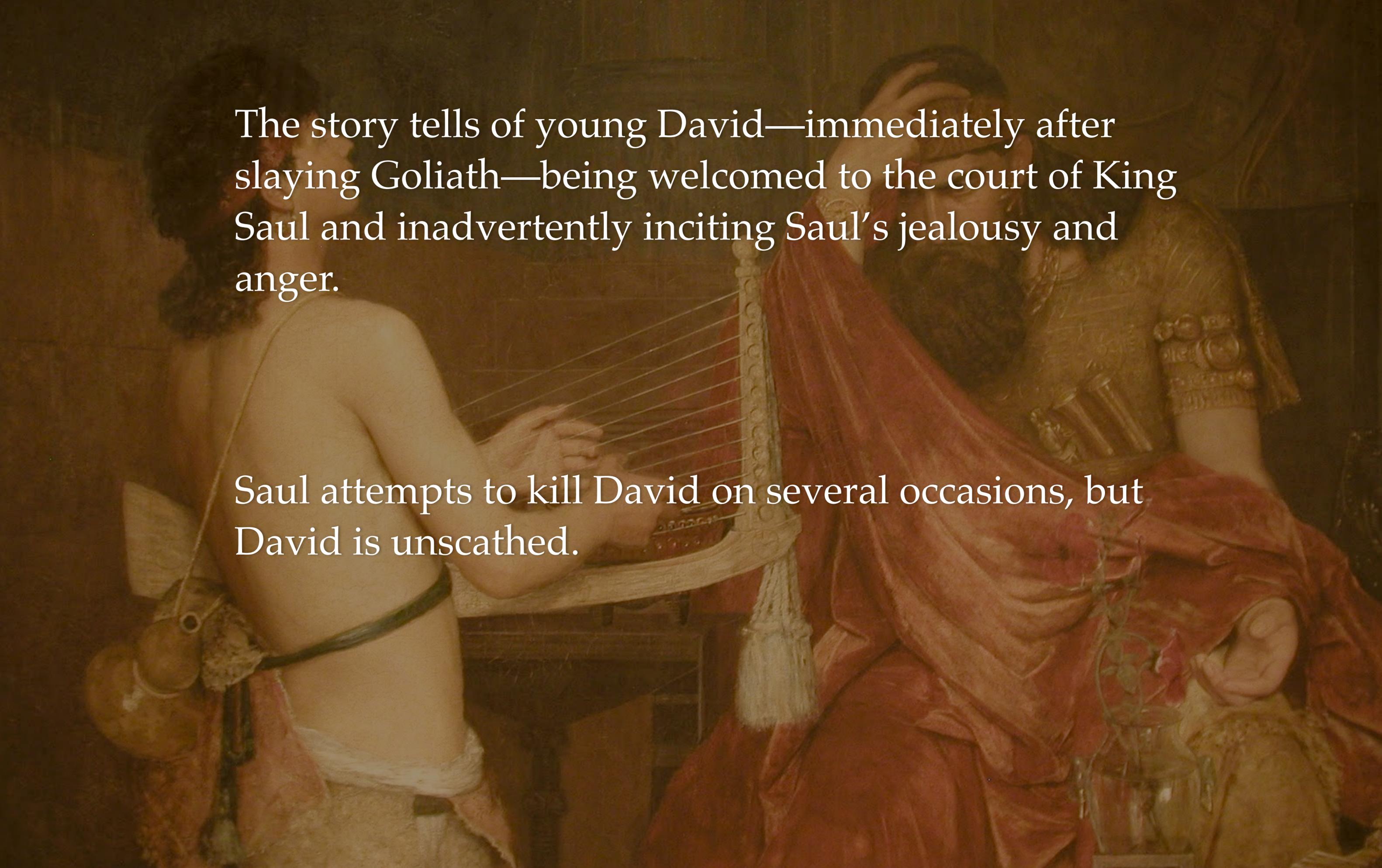
Saul, HWV 53

John Eliot Gardiner / English Baroque Soloists



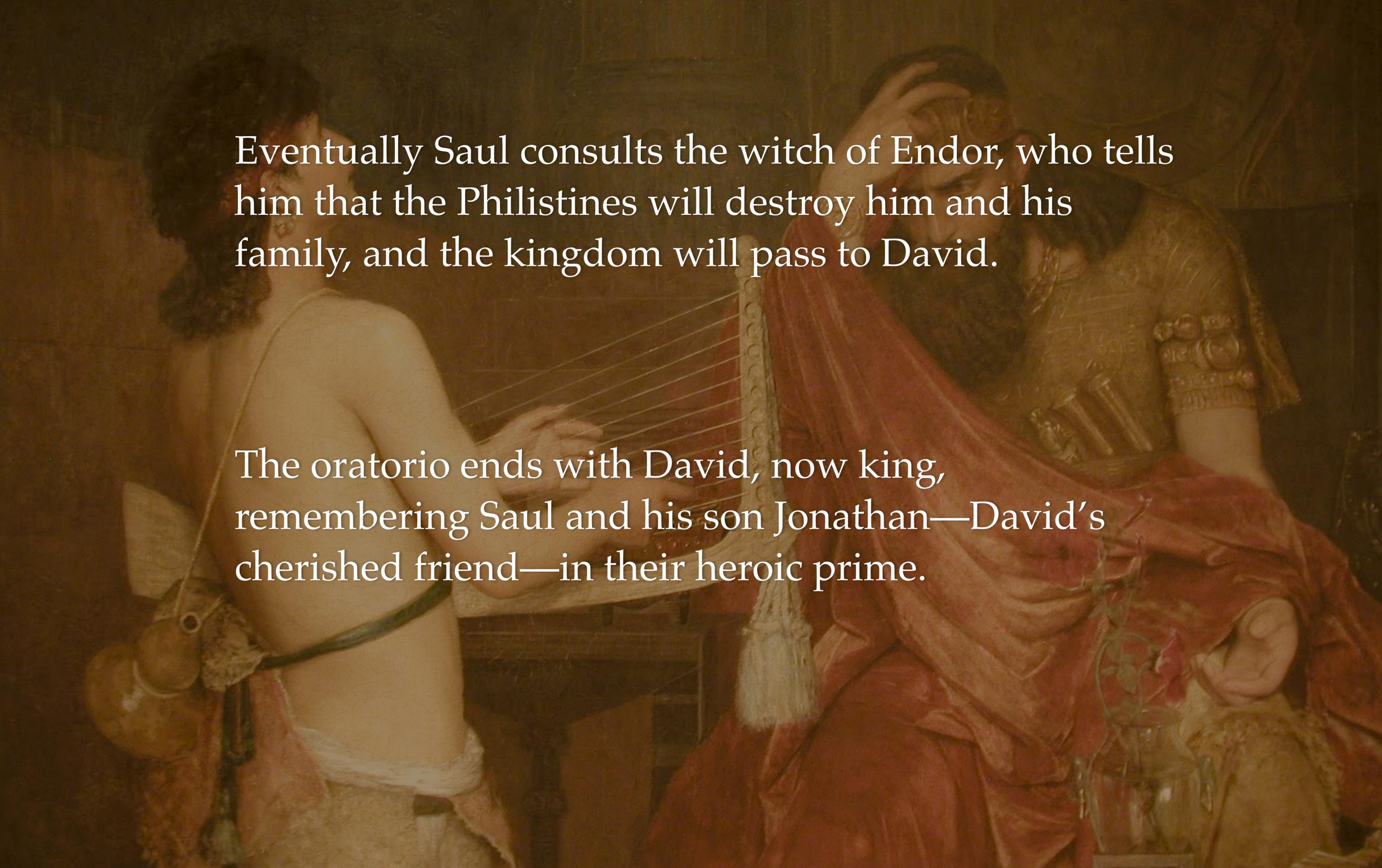
Saul, written in 1738 and performed in 1739, is one of Handel's supreme masterworks.

The libretto is by Charles Jennens, the plutocrat who would go on to provide Handel with the libretti for *Israel in Egypt* and *Messiah*.



The story tells of young David—immediately after slaying Goliath—being welcomed to the court of King Saul and inadvertently inciting Saul's jealousy and anger.

Saul attempts to kill David on several occasions, but David is unscathed.

A painting depicting King Saul in a red robe, looking distressed with his hand to his head, and a woman playing a harp to soothe him. The scene is set in a dimly lit room with stone walls. The woman on the left is seen from the back, wearing a simple, light-colored garment with a dark sash and a necklace of circular pendants. She is playing a harp. King Saul, on the right, is seated and wearing a rich, red robe with gold jewelry, including a large bracelet and a ring. He has a long, dark beard and is looking down with a pained expression, his right hand resting on his forehead. The overall mood is one of sorrow and despair.

Eventually Saul consults the witch of Endor, who tells him that the Philistines will destroy him and his family, and the kingdom will pass to David.

The oratorio ends with David, now king, remembering Saul and his son Jonathan—David's cherished friend—in their heroic prime.



From Scene I: David enters Saul's court:

A "Symphony" on the carillon.

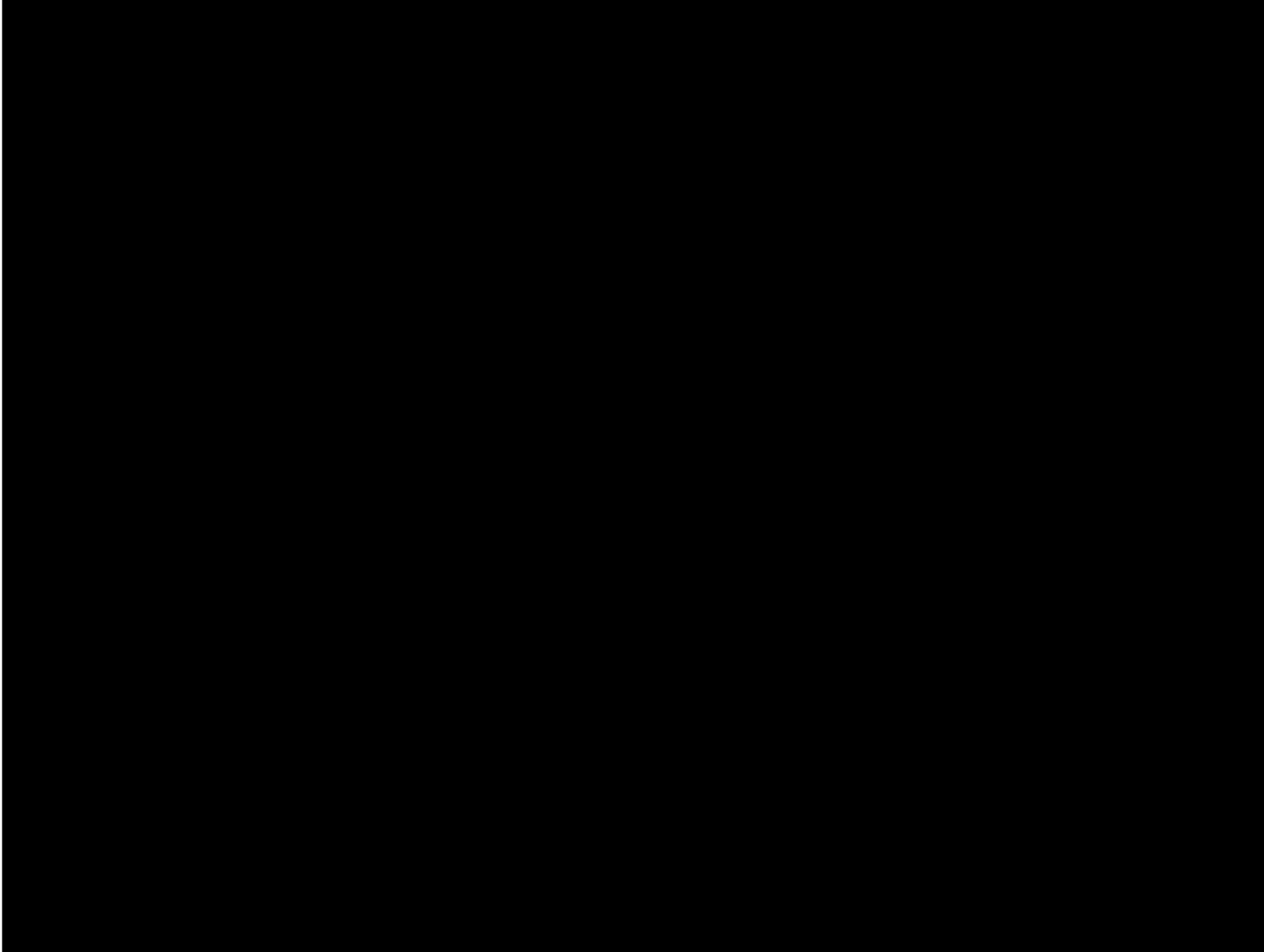
Recitative: A maiden announces his David's arrival.

Chorus: The female chorus praises David's courage.

Recitative: Saul expresses his displeasure.

Chorus: The entire court praises David all the more.

Aria: Saul undergoes an emotional meltdown.





Israel in Egypt, HWV 54

John Eliot Gardiner / English Baroque Soloists

An astonishing amount of Handel's music is not actually his own. He was an all-time champion of adapting other people's music and passing it off as his own.

We have a word for that today: *plagiarism*.

Although modern-day apologists have turned themselves inside out in their attempts to soften the sting of that charge, the simple fact is that Handel was roundly criticized for his "borrowings" during his own lifetime.

It has been said that he generally improved on the plagiarized material
—and in some cases he did.

Other times, he just took the thing wholesale.

All in all, it remains a sticky subject for historians and music lovers.

Handel went to work on *Israel in Egypt* immediately after completing *Saul*.

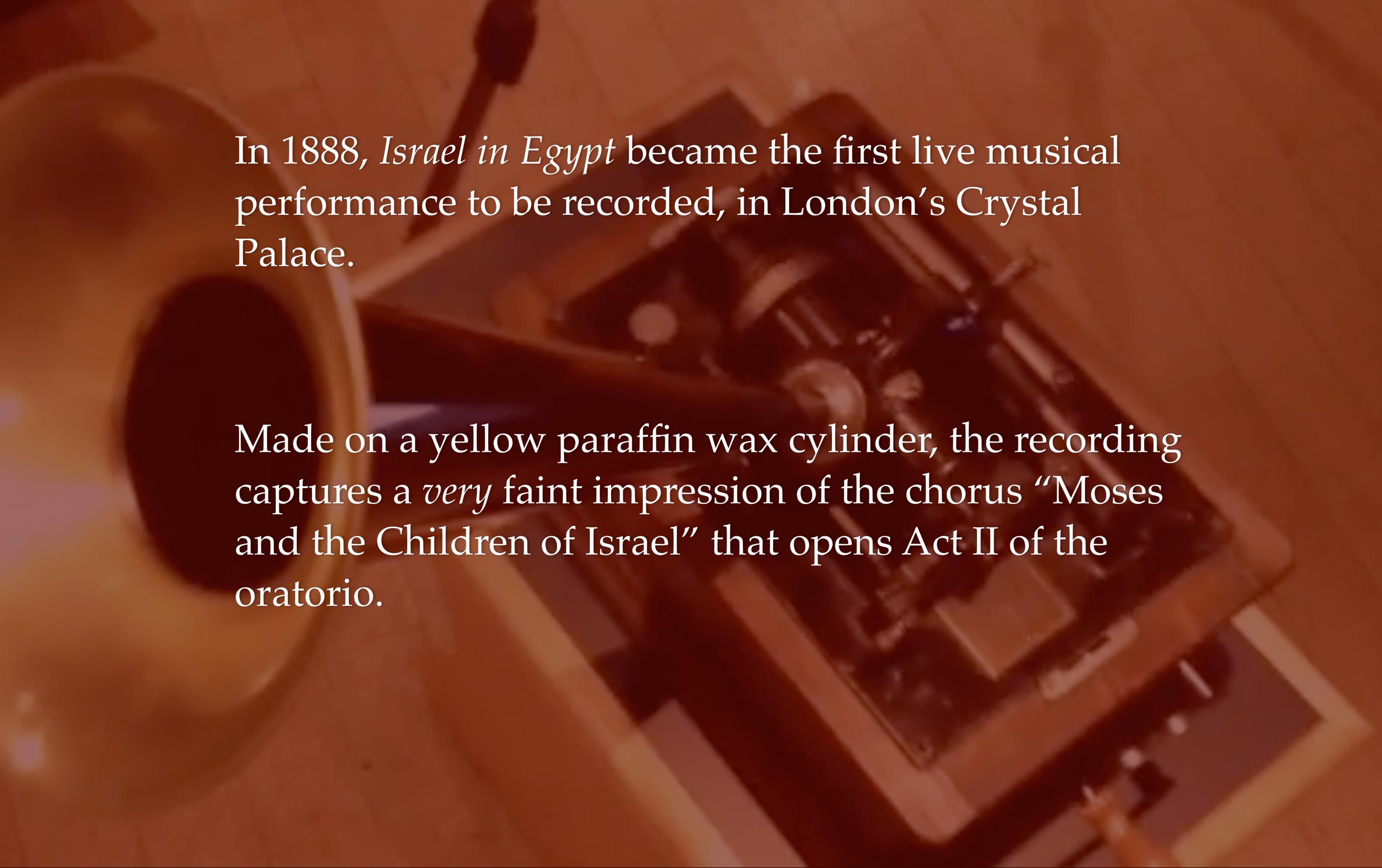
It contains the largest number of “borrowings” of any Handel oratorio—reworkings of music by Krell, Urio, Stradella, and others.

Although the librettist has never been established beyond doubt, most scholars credit it to Charles Jennens.

Israel in Egypt wasn't all that successful at its premiere.

Over time, however, it established itself firmly as one of the most commonly performed and familiar Handel oratorios.

Like *Messiah*, the libretto of *Israel in Egypt* is made up entirely out of passages from the Bible.



In 1888, *Israel in Egypt* became the first live musical performance to be recorded, in London's Crystal Palace.

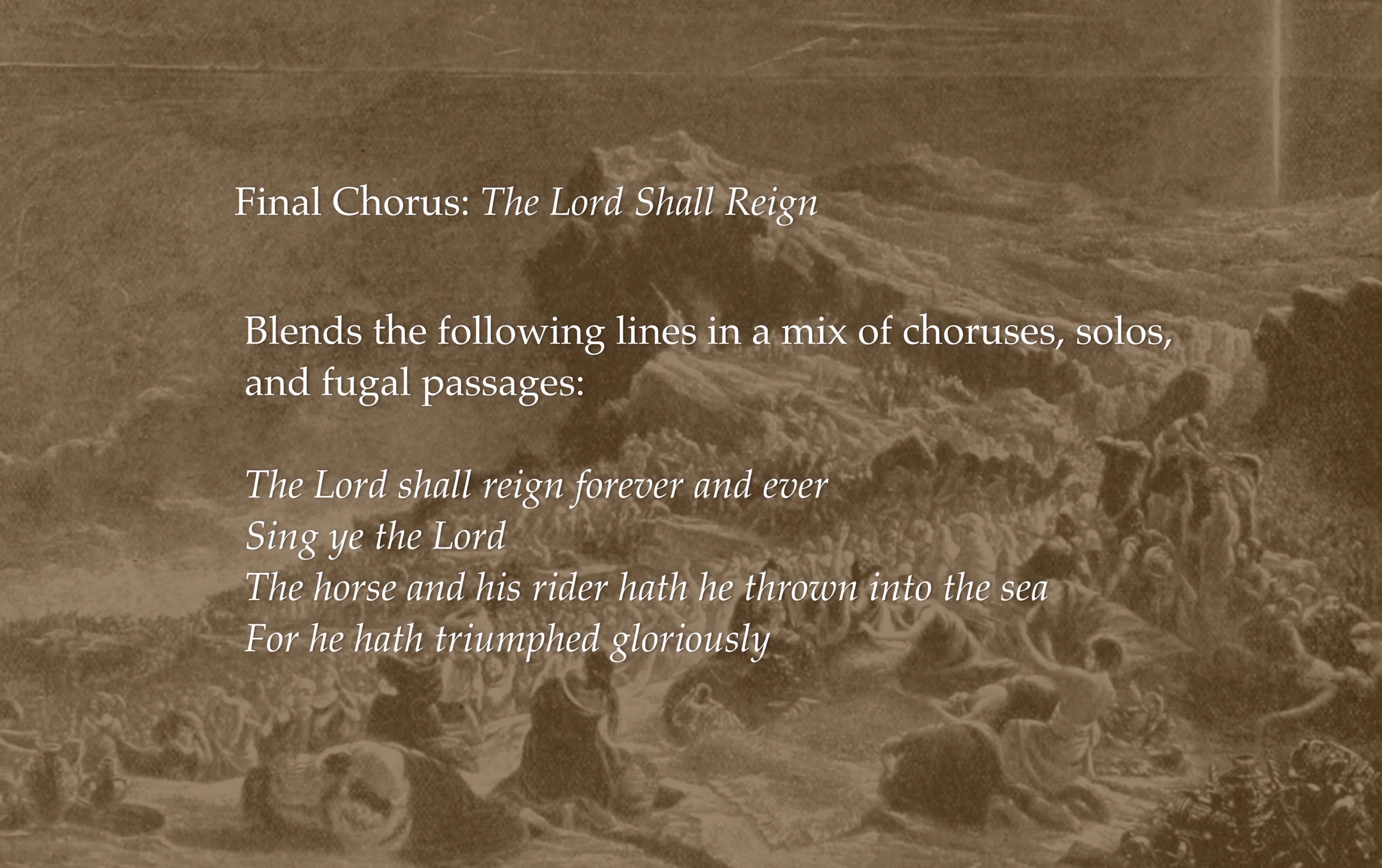
Made on a yellow paraffin wax cylinder, the recording captures a *very* faint impression of the chorus "Moses and the Children of Israel" that opens Act II of the oratorio.

Here's a bit of the recording...



And here's a modern recording of the same passage...





Final Chorus: *The Lord Shall Reign*

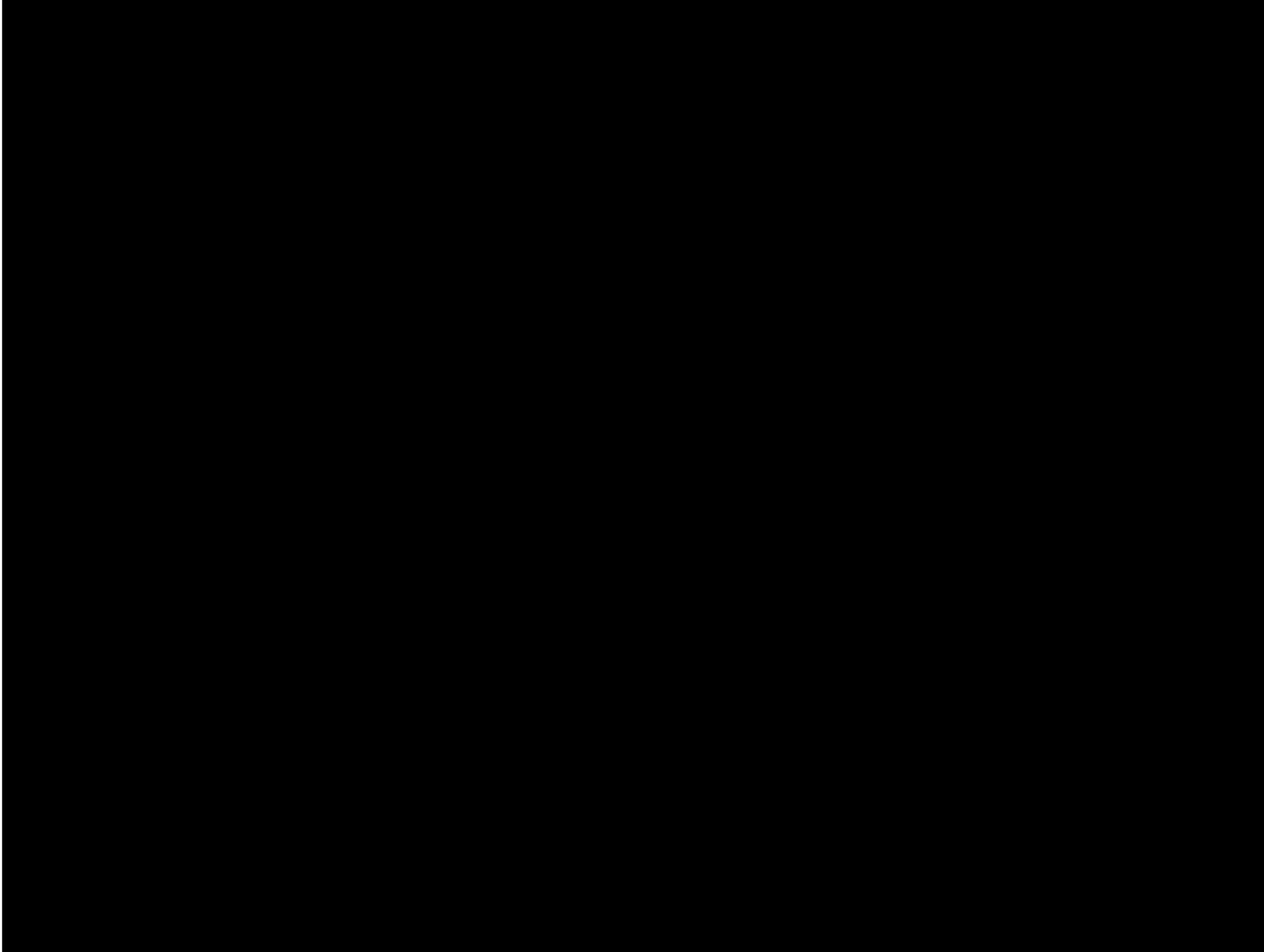
Blends the following lines in a mix of choruses, solos,
and fugal passages:

The Lord shall reign forever and ever

Sing ye the Lord

The horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea

For he hath triumphed gloriously





Messiah, HWV 56

Robert Westenber / Musica Sacra

Messiah is an atypical Handel oratorio.

The libretto consists of Bible passages that support the notion of a savior, or Messiah.



Messiah trivia:

The work was premiered in Dublin.

The London premiere wasn't successful.

The story about the King standing up doesn't appear to be true.

Messiah became popular in the 1750s.

Messiah was an Easter staple; only in the mid-19th century did it become winter fare.



The “Universal Spectator” review of the London première:

“How will this appear to After-Ages, when it shall be read in History, that in such an Age the People of England were arriv’d to such a Height of Impiety and Prophaneness, that the most sacred Things were suffer’d to be us’d as publick Diversions, and that in a Place, and by Persons, appropriated to the Performance not only of light and vain, but too often prophane and dissolute pieces?”

Part 1: *There Were Shepherds, and Glory to God*

Secco Recitative: *There were shepherds*

Accompanied Recitative: *And lo! The angel...*

Secco Recitative: *And the angel said unto them*

Accompanied Recitative: *And suddenly....saying*

Chorus: *Glory to God*



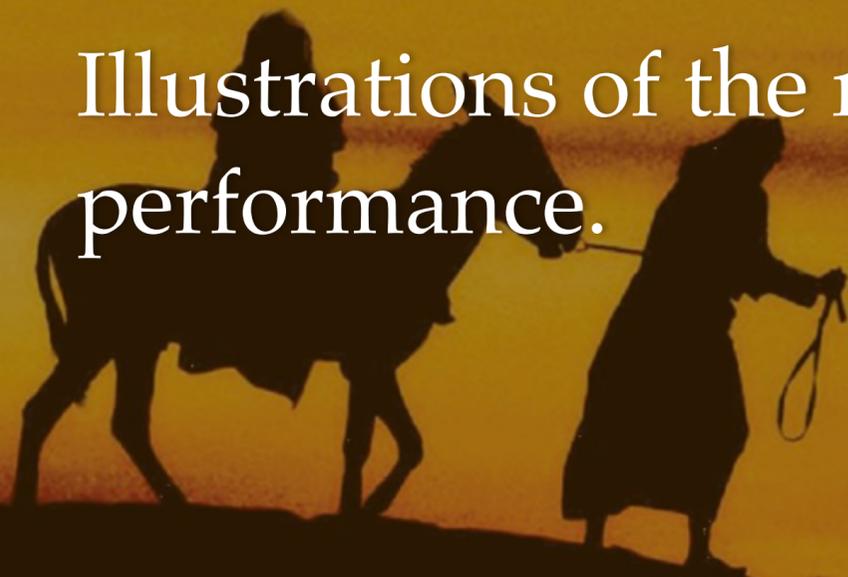
Recitative Part 1 (*Secco*)

There were shepherds abiding in the field,
keeping watch over their flock by night.

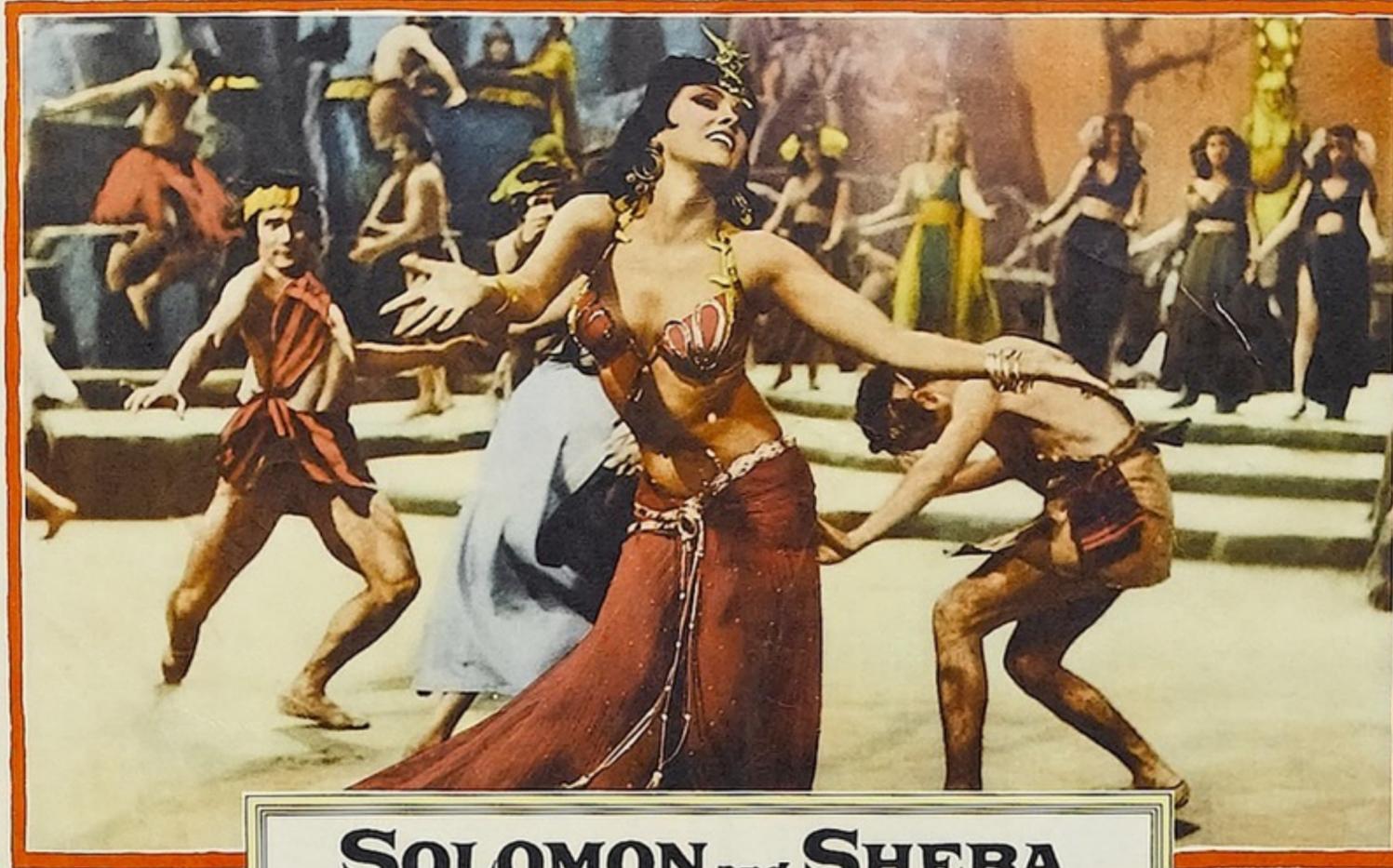
Part 2: *Hallelujah* Chorus

Mozart arranged and re-orchestrated *Messiah* for Vienna performances in 1789. This is that adaptation, performed by Sir Charles Mackerras conducting the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra and Chorus.

Illustrations of the resurrection accompany the performance.



EDWARD SMALL presents
YUL BRYNNER · GINA LOLLOBRIGIDA



SOLOMON and SHEBA

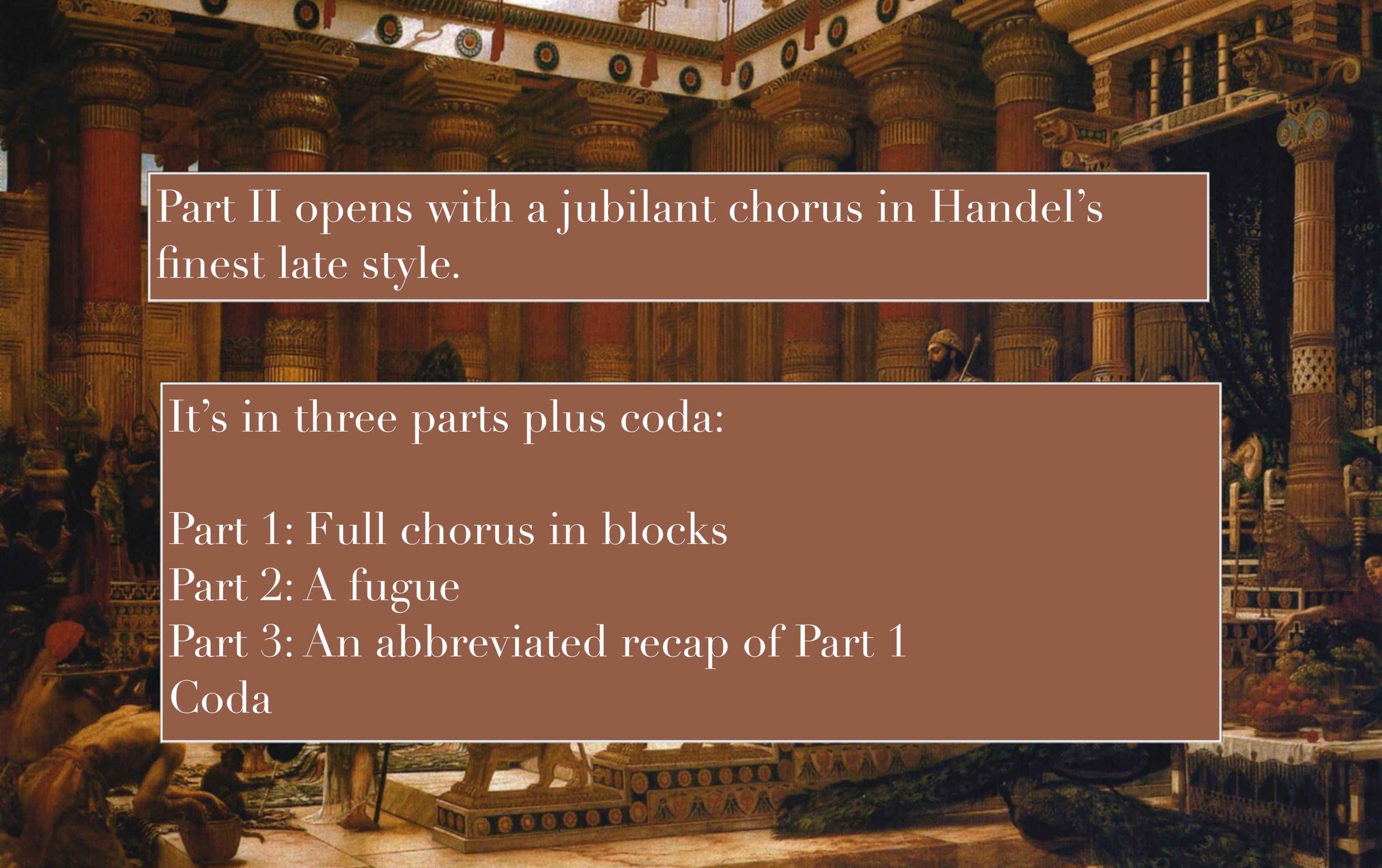
Solomon, HWV 67

Paul McCreesh / Gabrieli Consort



Solomon is a late Handel oratorio, composed in 1748 and first performed in Covent Garden in 1749.

It appears to have been in celebration of the end of the War of the Austrian Succession, with Solomon treated as a faultless, benevolent ruler—despite the contradictions in the historical record.



Part II opens with a jubilant chorus in Handel's finest late style.

It's in three parts plus coda:

Part 1: Full chorus in blocks

Part 2: A fugue

Part 3: An abbreviated recap of Part 1

Coda

a b

a b b c

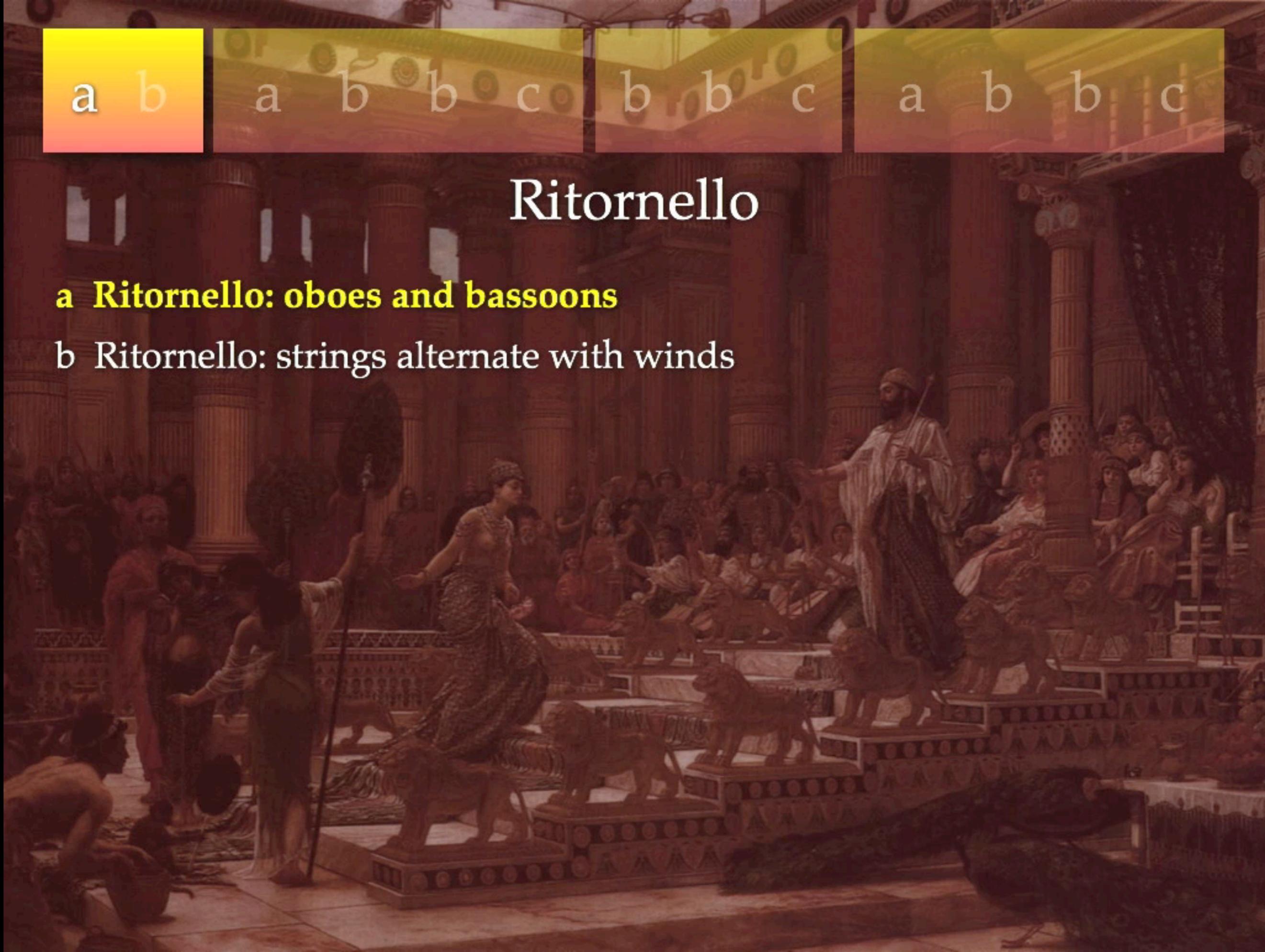
b b c

a b b c

Ritornello

a Ritornello: oboes and bassoons

b Ritornello: strings alternate with winds



John Taylor, incidentally, went completely blind himself.

Karma.

He died in 1772.



Handel died in 1759.

**He is buried in Westminster
Abbey.**

**His feast day in the Episcopal
Calendar is July 28.**

