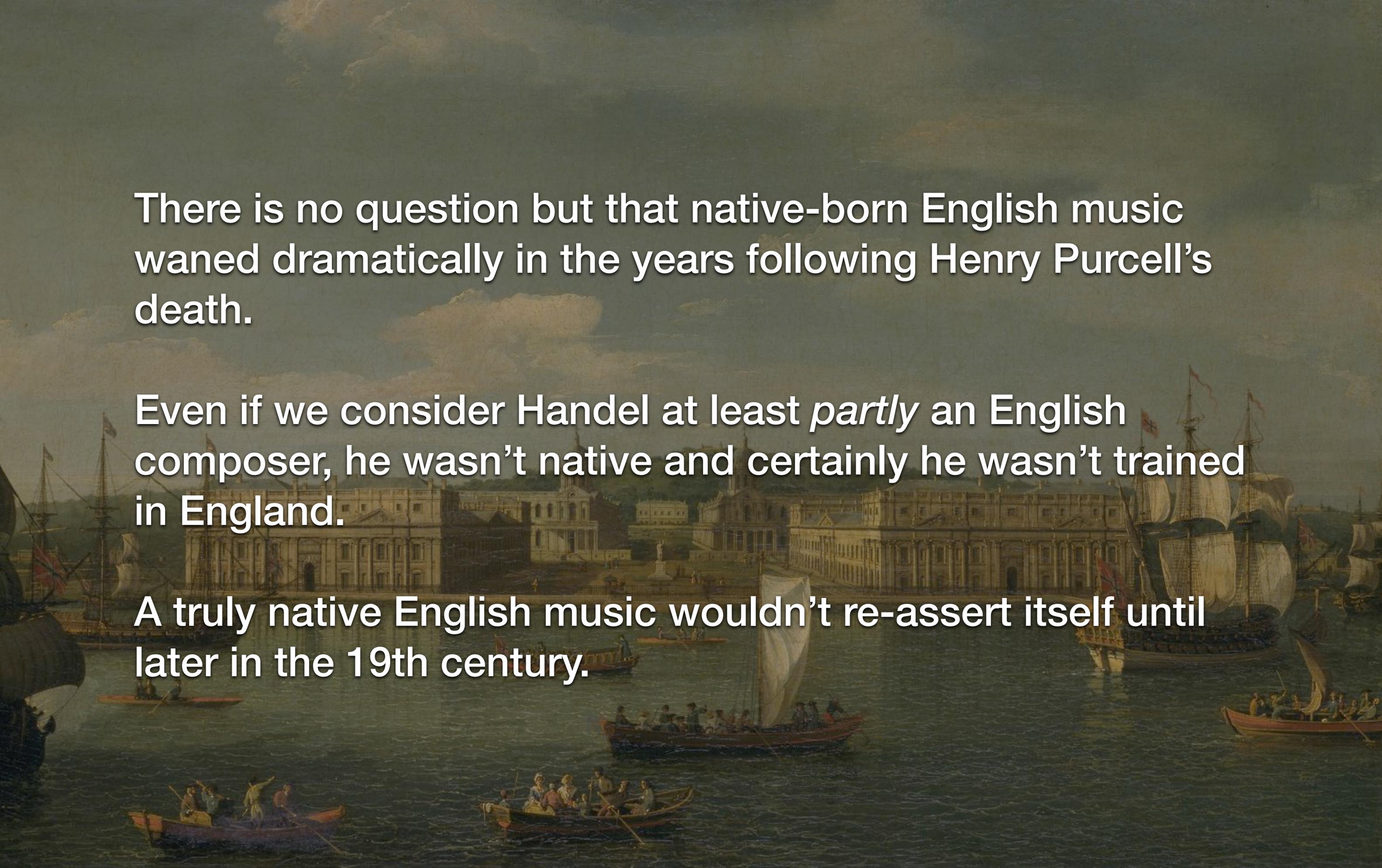


The British Muse

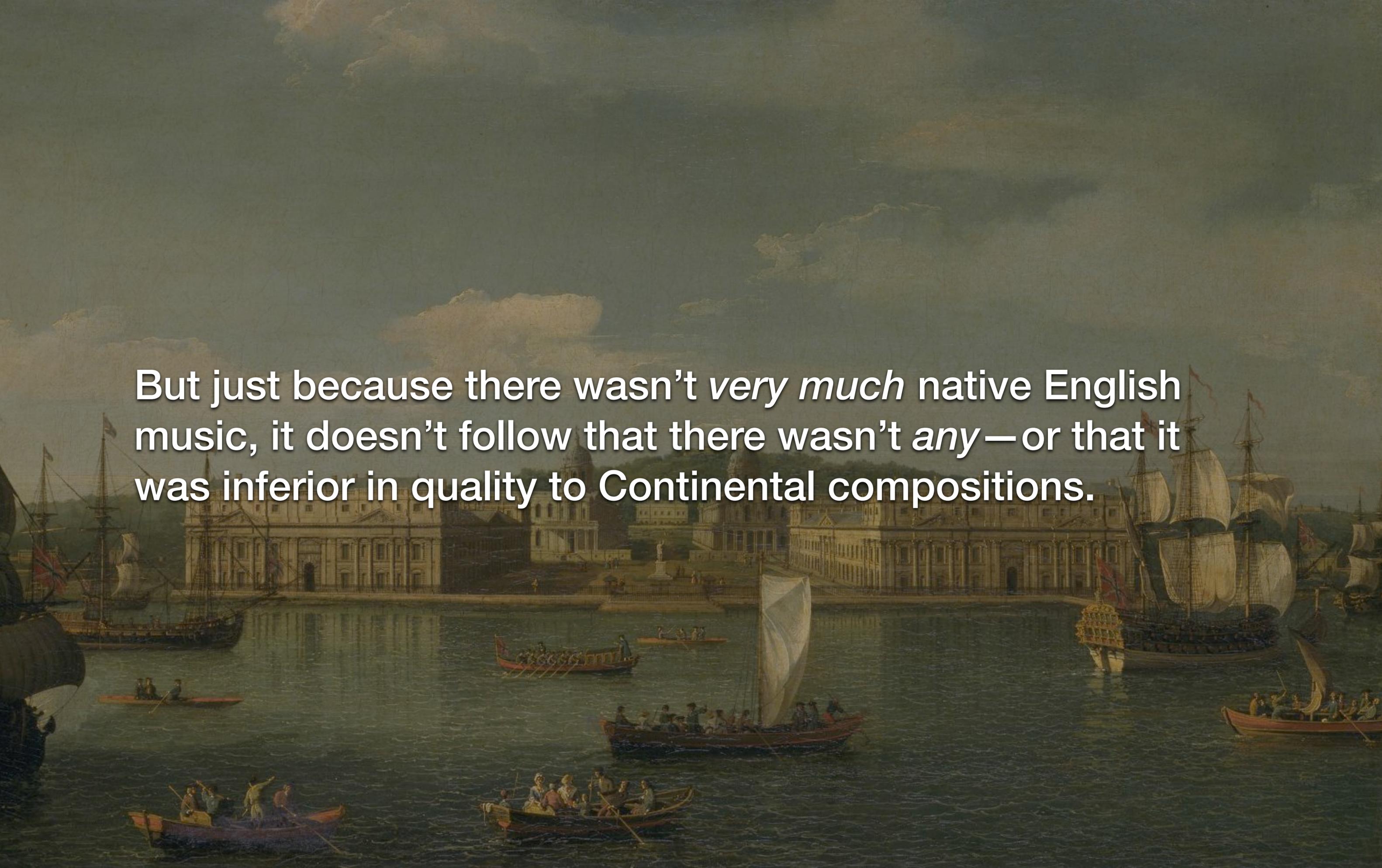
3 - Local Talent and Honored Guests



There is no question but that native-born English music waned dramatically in the years following Henry Purcell's death.

Even if we consider Handel at least *partly* an English composer, he wasn't native and certainly he wasn't trained in England.

A truly native English music wouldn't re-assert itself until later in the 19th century.

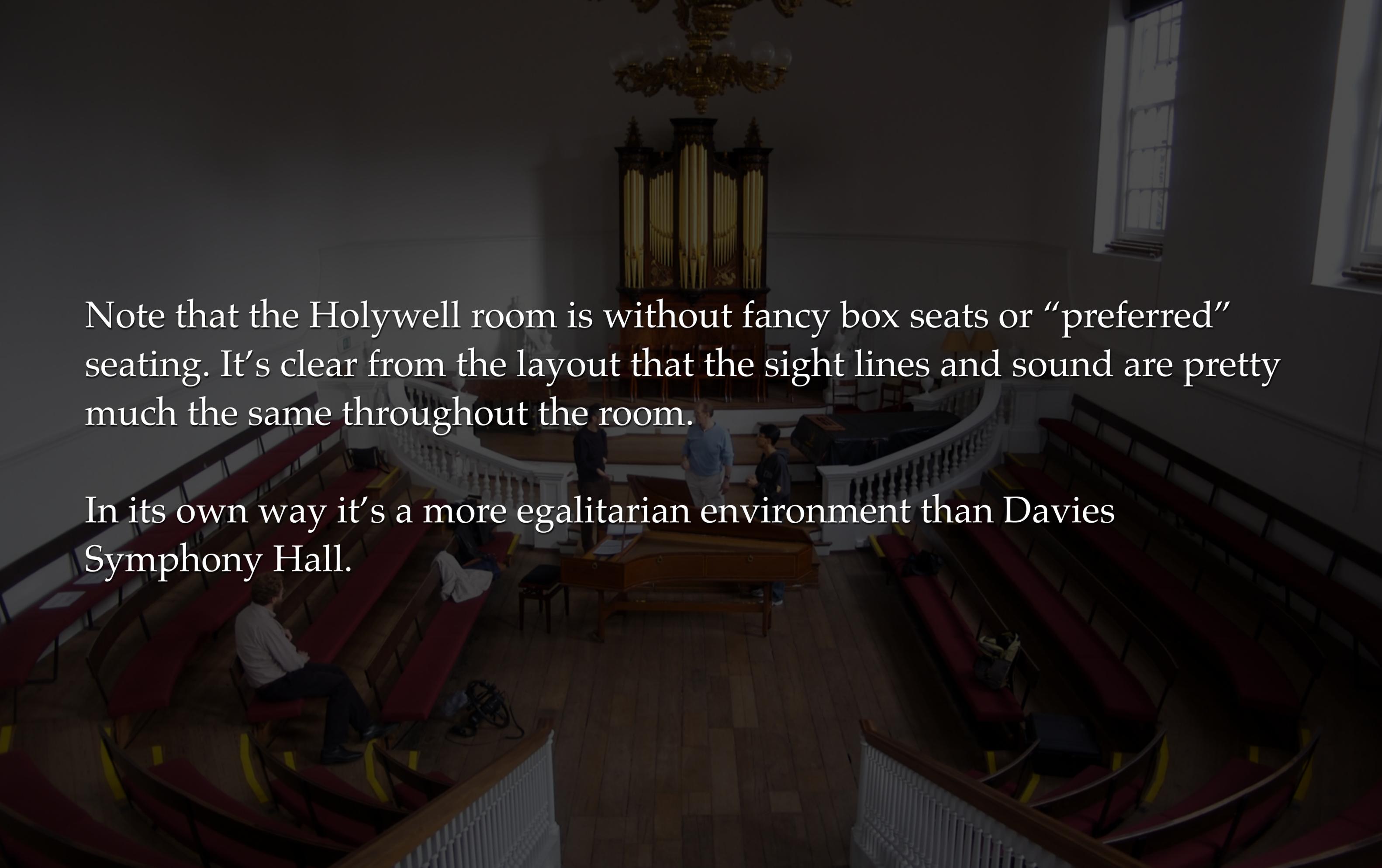
A detailed historical painting of a harbor scene, likely from the 17th or 18th century. The foreground is filled with numerous small boats, including rowing boats and a larger sailing vessel with a single white sail. In the middle ground, several large, multi-masted sailing ships are visible, some with their sails partially set. The background features a grand, classical-style building complex with multiple domes and columns, situated on a hillside overlooking the water. The sky is filled with soft, dramatic clouds, and the overall color palette is muted, with earthy tones and a sense of atmospheric perspective.

But just because there wasn't *very much* native English music, it doesn't follow that there wasn't *any*—or that it was inferior in quality to Continental compositions.

The image shows the interior of the Holywell Music Room, a historic concert hall in Oxford, England. The room is characterized by its tiered wooden seating with red cushions, arranged in a semi-circle. In the center, a large wooden harpsichord is positioned on a raised platform. Behind it, a grand organ with multiple pipes and a decorative facade stands prominently. The walls are white, and a large, ornate chandelier hangs from the ceiling. Several people are visible, some standing near the harpsichord and others seated in the audience. The overall atmosphere is that of a well-preserved, historical musical space.

It is England's honor to be the home of the world's first dedicated concert hall: the Holywell Music Room, opened in Oxford, England in 1749.





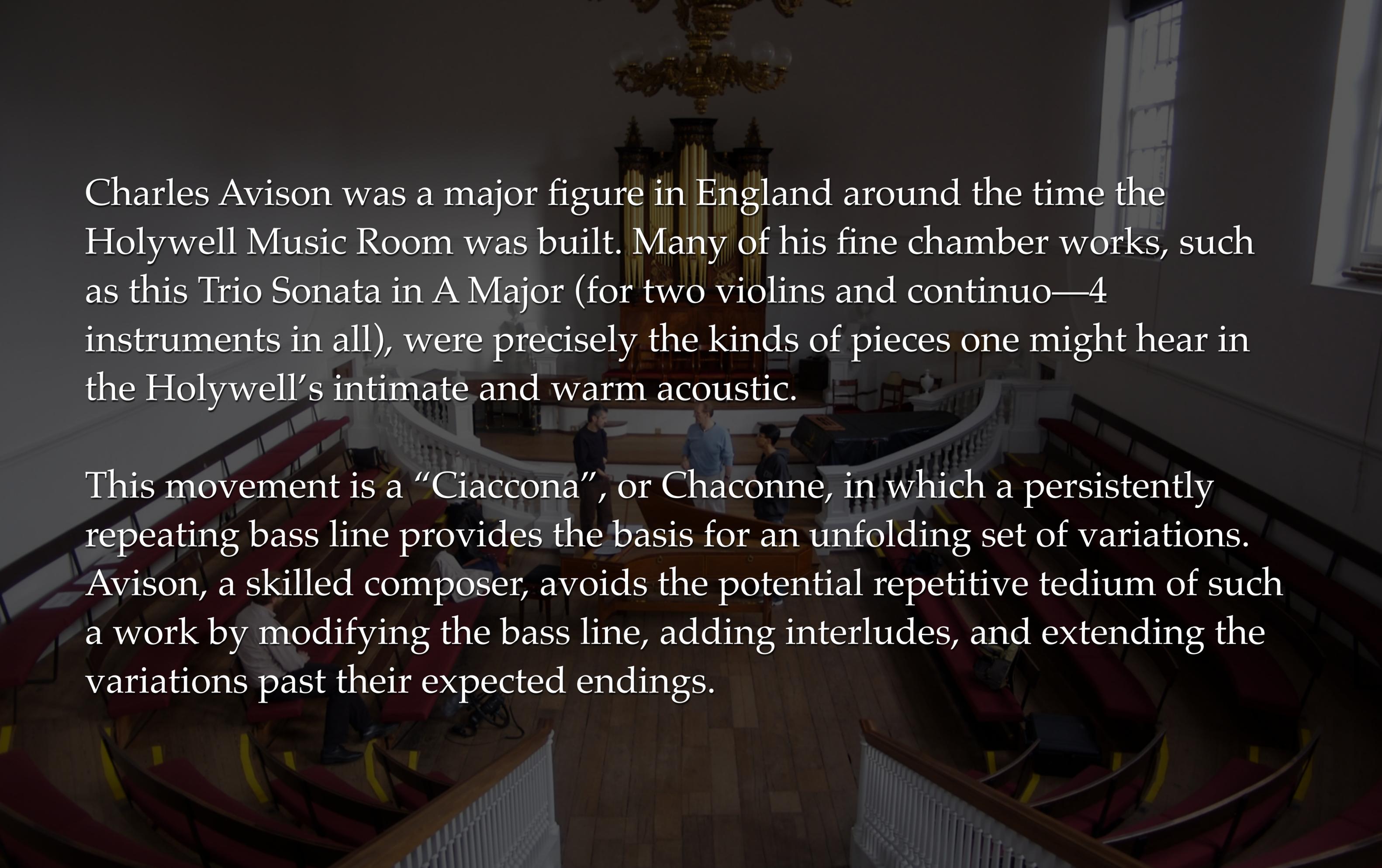
Note that the Holywell room is without fancy box seats or “preferred” seating. It’s clear from the layout that the sight lines and sound are pretty much the same throughout the room.

In its own way it’s a more egalitarian environment than Davies Symphony Hall.



**Charles Avison:
Trio Sonata in A Major, Op. 7 No. 6: Ciaccona**

Gary Cooper
Avison Ensemble

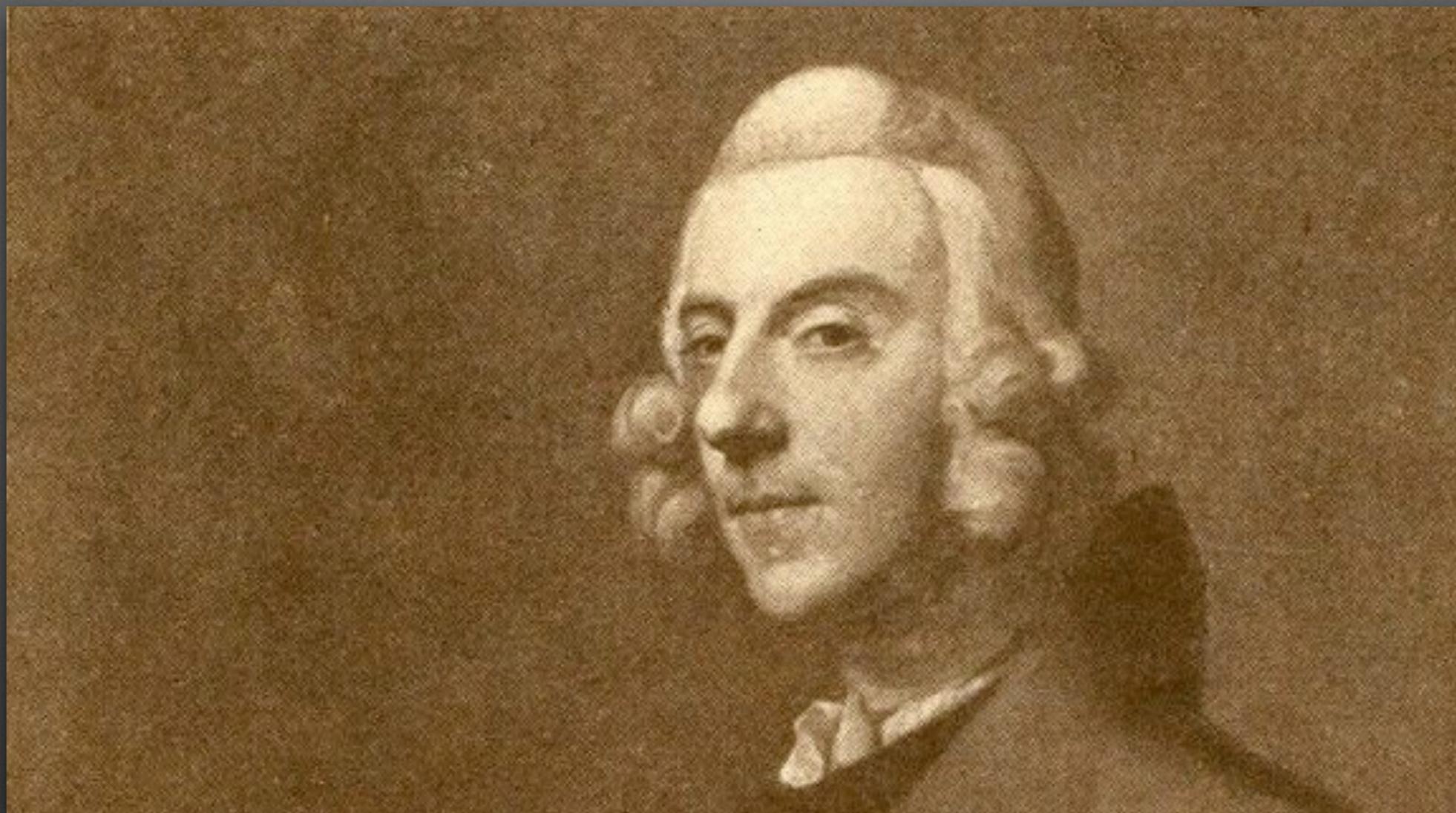
The background image shows the interior of a church, likely Holywell Music Room. In the center, there is a large, ornate pipe organ with multiple pipes and a decorative top. The organ is set on a raised platform. In the foreground, there are rows of wooden pews with red cushions. A few people are visible in the middle ground, standing near the organ. The lighting is somewhat dim, and the overall atmosphere is quiet and historical.

Charles Avison was a major figure in England around the time the Holywell Music Room was built. Many of his fine chamber works, such as this Trio Sonata in A Major (for two violins and continuo—4 instruments in all), were precisely the kinds of pieces one might hear in the Holywell's intimate and warm acoustic.

This movement is a “Ciaccona”, or Chaconne, in which a persistently repeating bass line provides the basis for an unfolding set of variations. Avison, a skilled composer, avoids the potential repetitive tedium of such a work by modifying the bass line, adding interludes, and extending the variations past their expected endings.

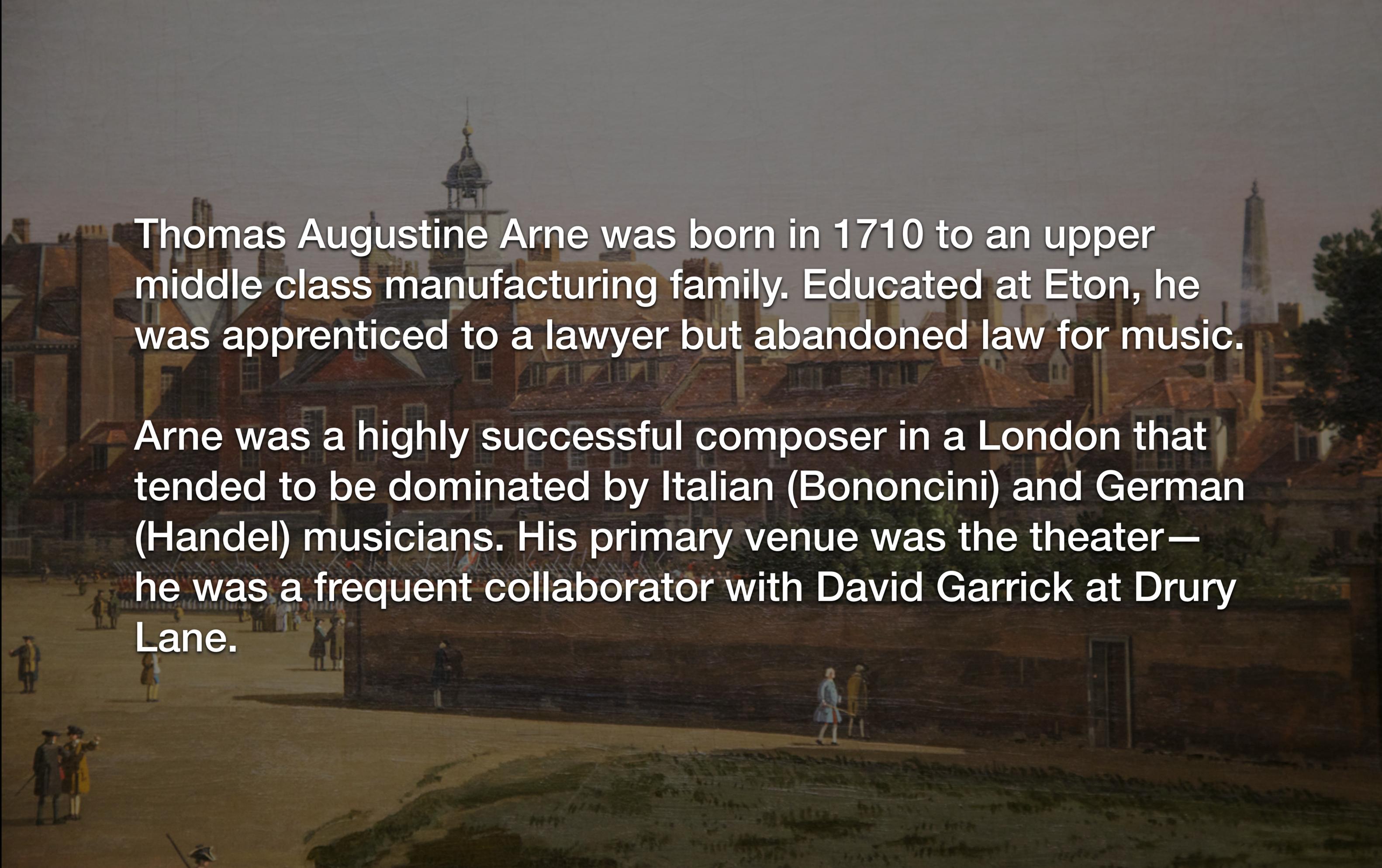
A photograph of a church interior, likely a performance space. The room features a large, ornate organ with gold pipes at the far end. In the center, a wooden harpsichord is positioned on a raised platform. Several people are present: one person is seated on a red-upholstered bench in the foreground, and others are standing near the harpsichord. The church has white walls, a wooden floor, and a large chandelier hanging from the ceiling. The text "Illustrations of Classical Era London by Canaletto accompany the performance." is overlaid on the image.

Illustrations of Classical Era London by Canaletto accompany the performance.



Thomas Arne (1710–1788)
Clavier Concerto In A Major: Minuet

Paul Nicholson / Parley of Instruments
Illustrations: Paintings by Watteau and Fragonard

A historical painting of a London street scene, likely from the 18th century. The scene shows a wide, unpaved street with several figures in period clothing. In the background, there are numerous brick buildings with gabled roofs and a prominent church spire with a dome. The overall atmosphere is that of a busy, old city.

Thomas Augustine Arne was born in 1710 to an upper middle class manufacturing family. Educated at Eton, he was apprenticed to a lawyer but abandoned law for music.

Arne was a highly successful composer in a London that tended to be dominated by Italian (Bononcini) and German (Handel) musicians. His primary venue was the theater—he was a frequent collaborator with David Garrick at Drury Lane.

Arne was neither so vigorous as Purcell, nor had he the magnificent simplicity, and lofty grandeur of Handel: but the ease and elegance of his melodies, and the variety of his harmony, render his compositions attractive in the highest degree: and we may justly be proud of his name, as an honour to English music.

—William Stafford, 1830

The Galant Style in England

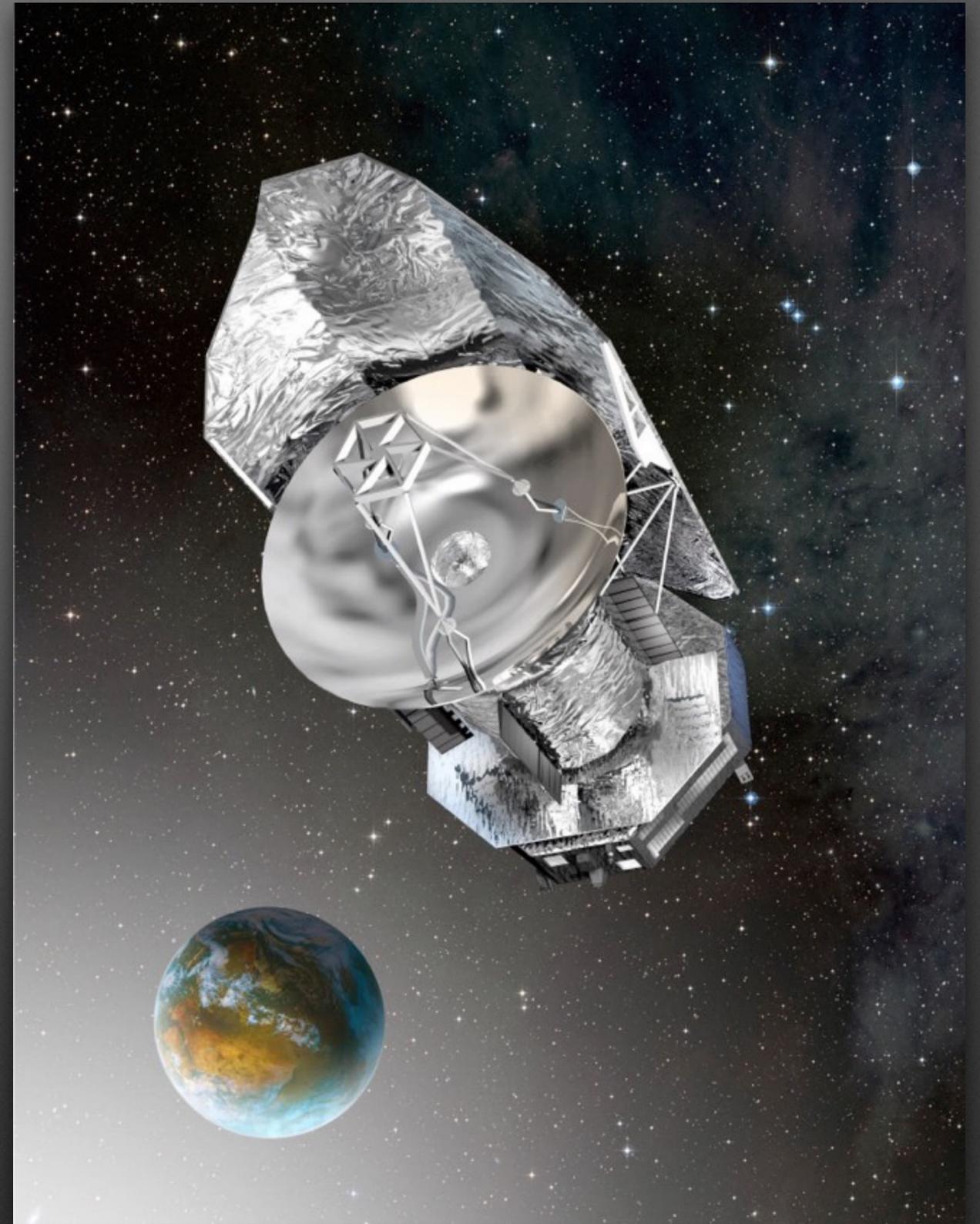
- The *Galant Style* had spread throughout Europe by the mid-18th century. English composers embraced it with the same enthusiasm as their Italian, German, and French counterparts.
- The galant style is characterized by clear phrases, “hummable” melodies, flowing harmony, and an avoidance of counterpoint.

Post-Handel England

- G. F. Handel died 1759.
- The Classical Style was well established by the time he died, and English composers (such as Arne) were generally up to date with their Continental counterparts.

Sir William Herschel

1738–1822



About Herschel

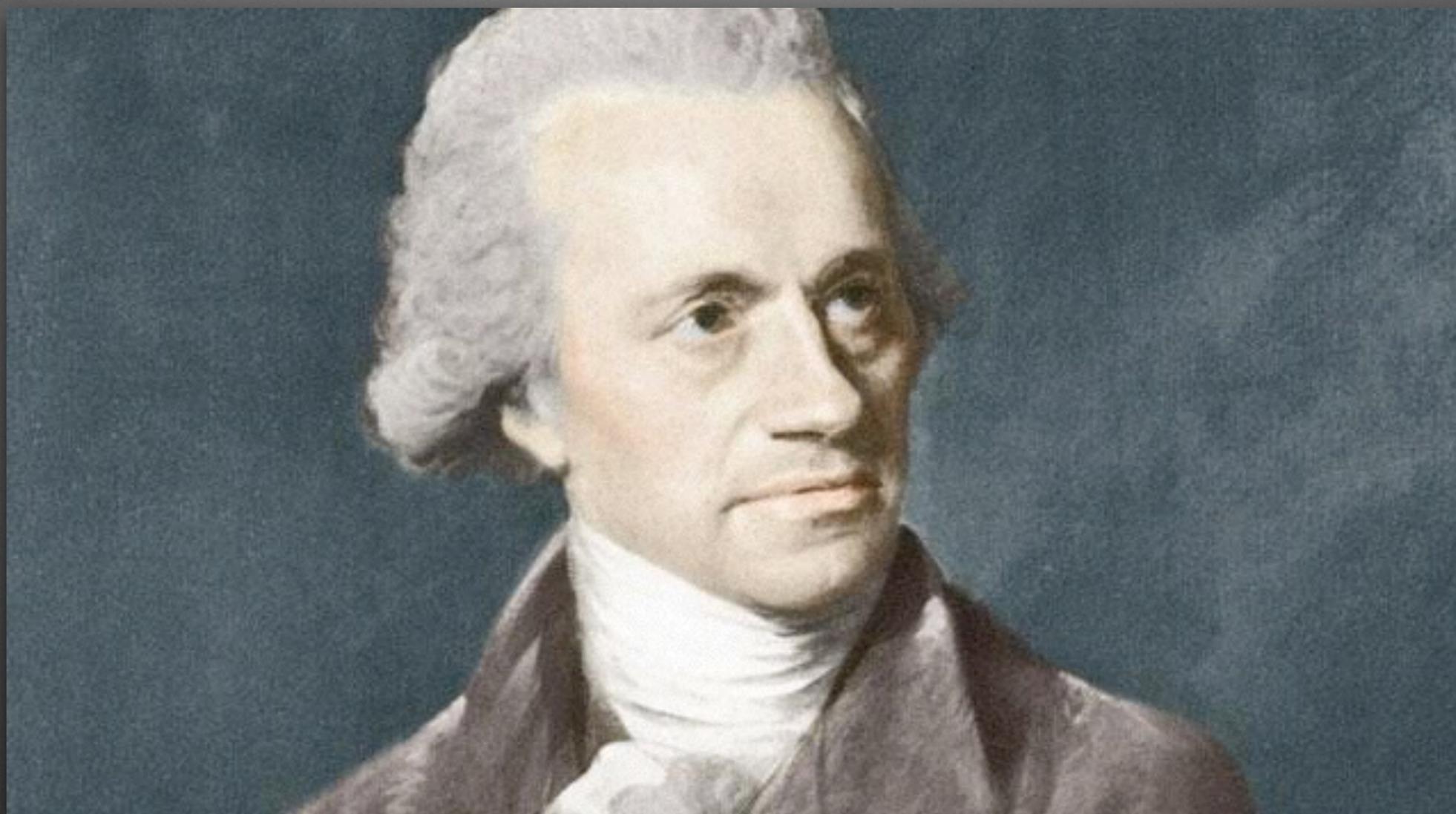
- The acclaimed astronomer—discoverer of the planet Uranus—and the obscure composer are one and the same person.
- German birth: Friedrich Wilhelm Herschel
- Began life as a musician.
- Wrote 18 symphonies between 1760 and 1766.

Musical business carried on as usual. All my leisure time was given to preparing telescopes and contriving proper stands for them. I kept a regular account of any experiments of polishing

William Herschel, 1777

No More Music

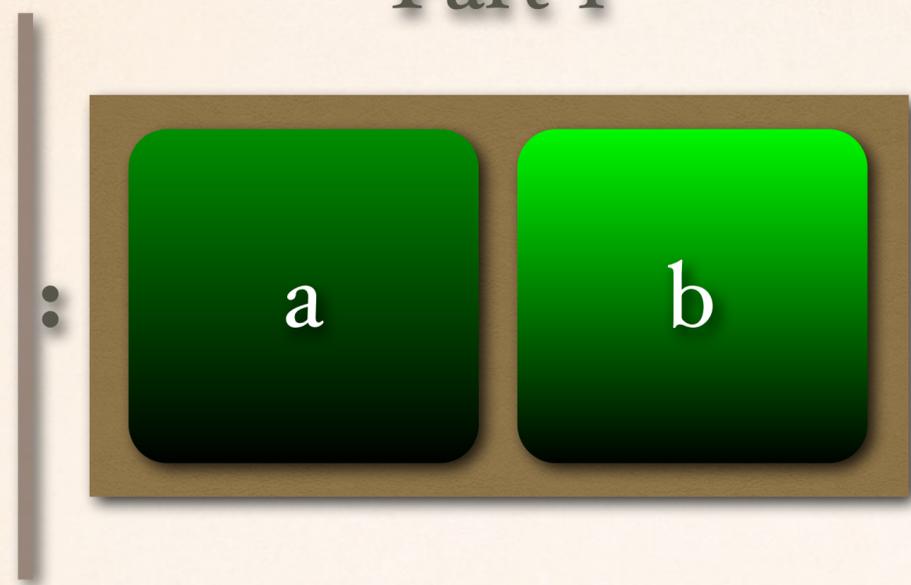
- In 1782 King George III awarded Herschel an annual stipend of £200 so he could devote himself to astronomy.
- Herschel's last symphony is dated to about 1764. Some chamber works date from as late as 1767.
- A few vocal works might have been written after 1767.



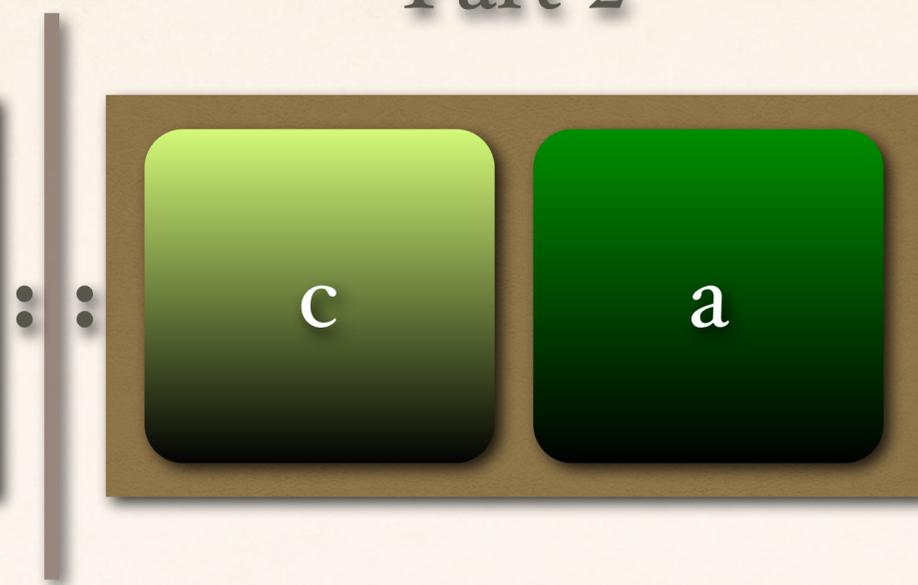
Symphony No. 8 in C Minor: II

Matthias Bamert / London Mozart Players

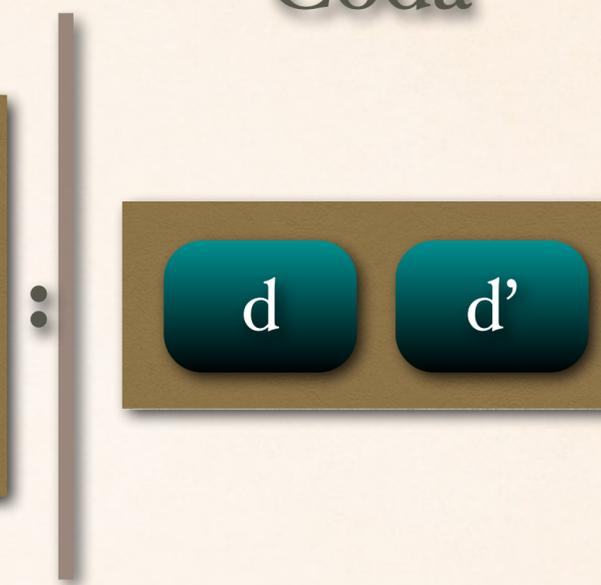
Part 1



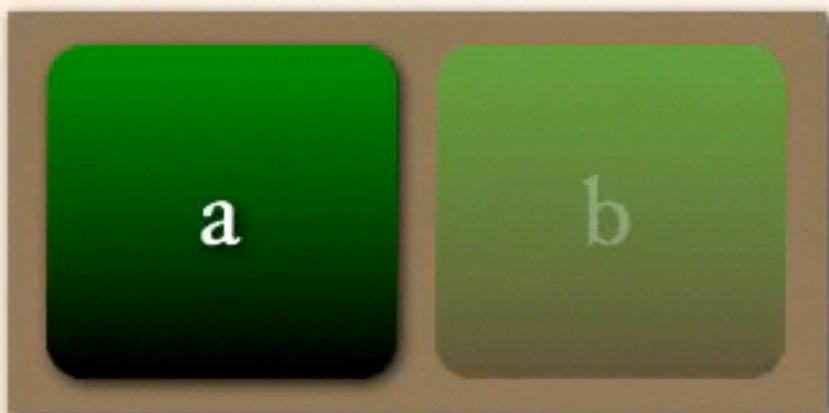
Part 2



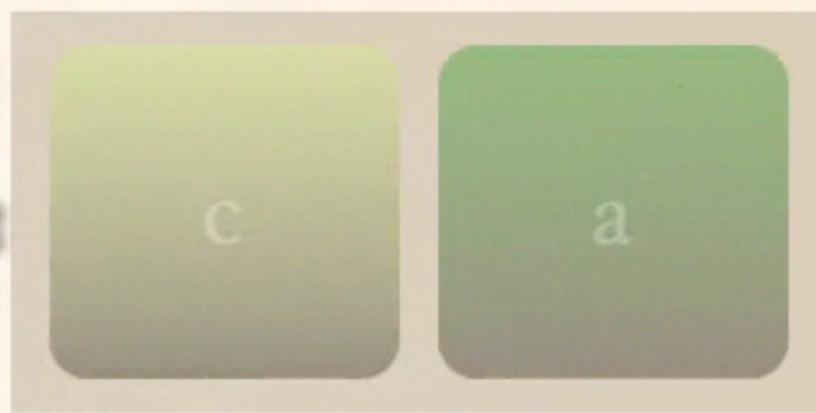
Coda



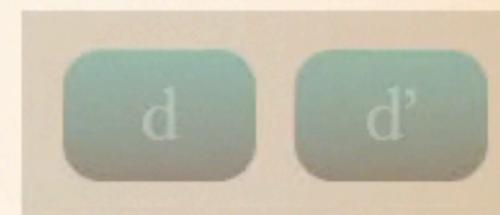
Part 1



Part 2



Coda



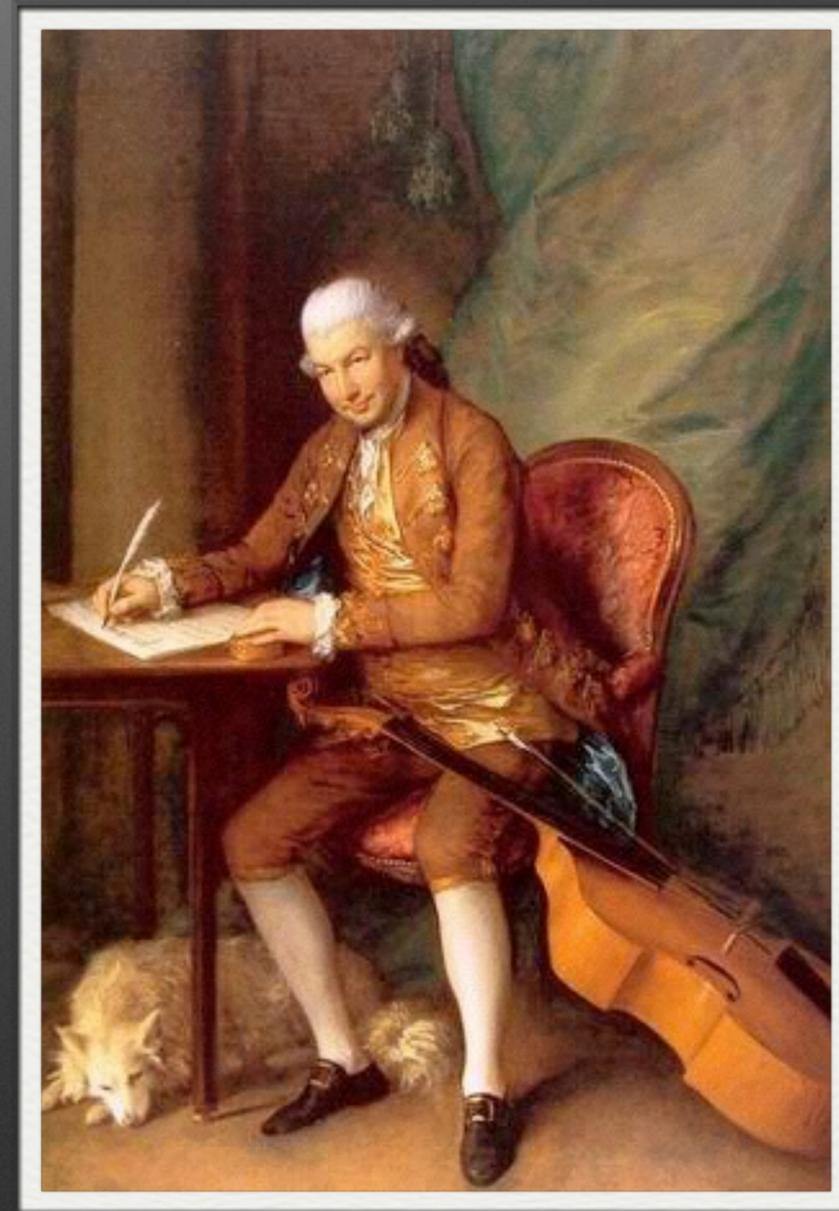
English Classicism

- Two of J.S. Bach's students were particularly influential in the spread of the Classical style in England, beginning in the 1760s.
- Both had settled in London, and together they formed a concert series that became a mainstay of London life for several decades.

Johann Christian Bach

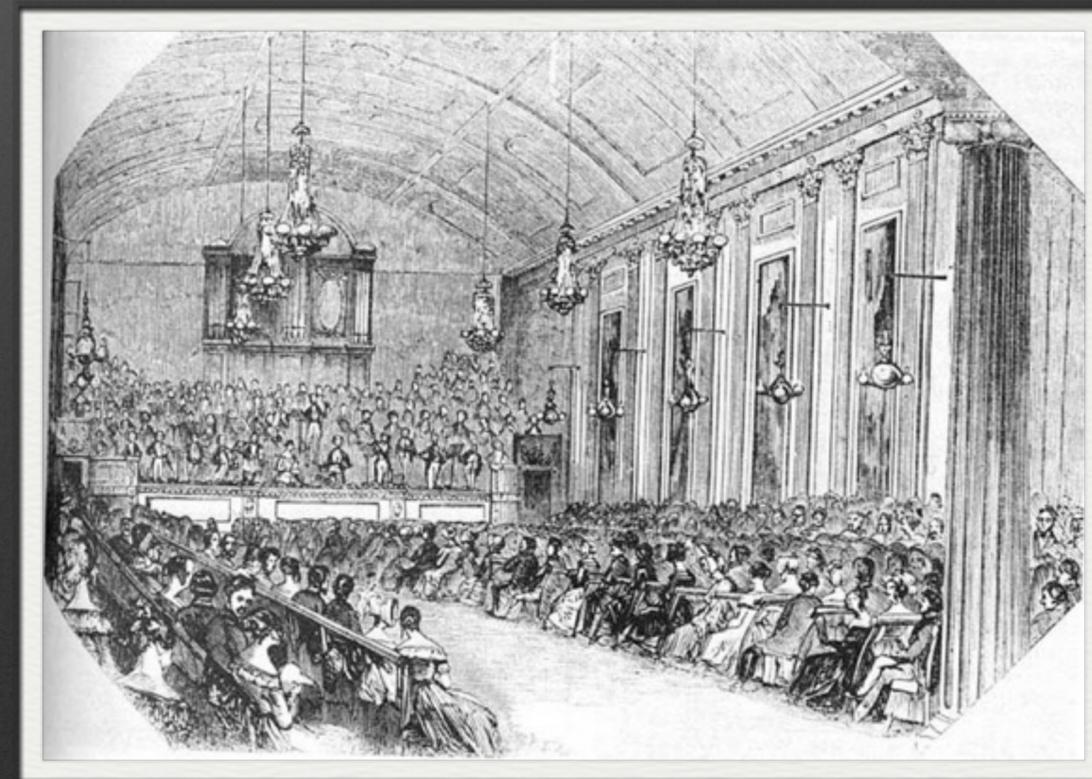


Carl Friedrich Abel





The Hanover Square Rooms

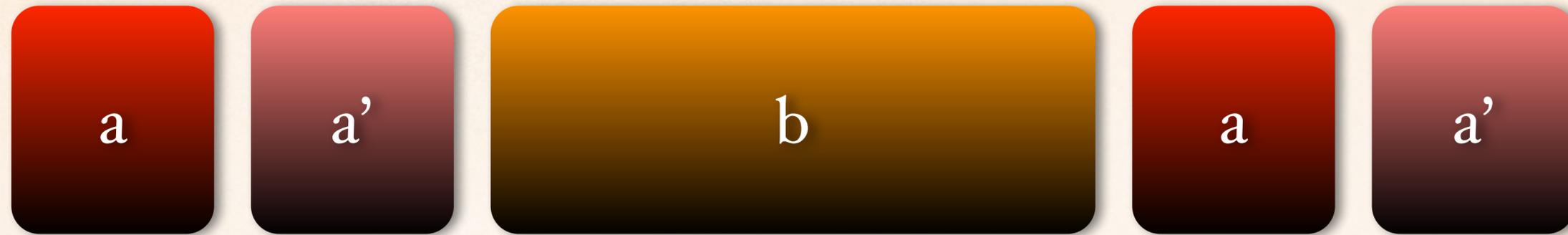




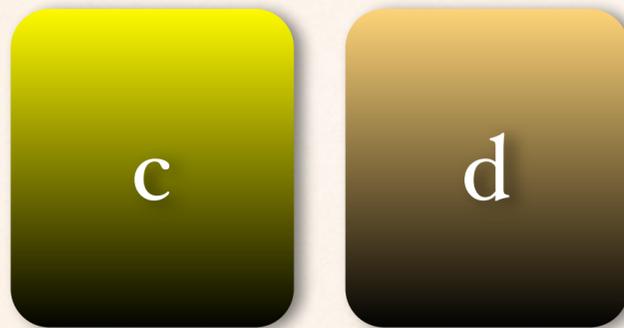
Carl Friedrich Abel
Symphony in B-flat Major, Op. 17 No. 3: III

Anthony Halstead / Hanover Band

Minuet

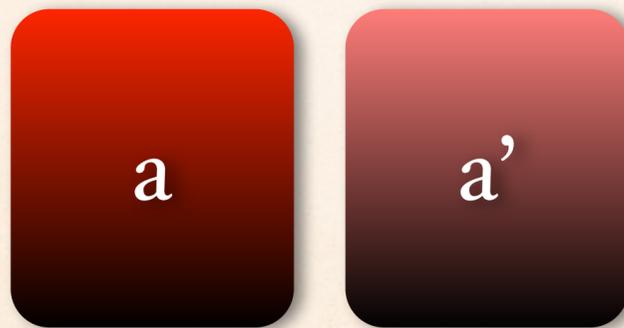


Trio



Transition

Minuet

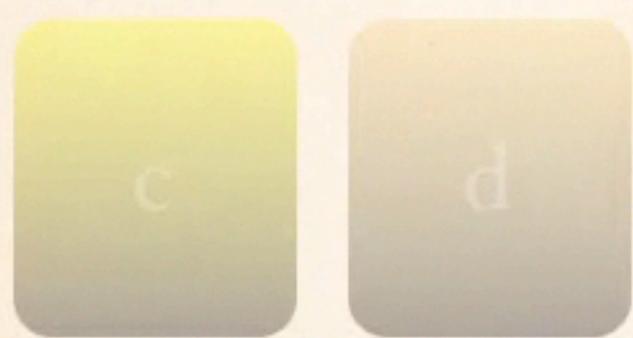


Coda

Minuet



Trio



Transition

Minuet



Coda

Haydn in England

- Haydn's patron Nikolaus Esterházy died in 1790. Nikolaus's successor Paul Anton was indifferent to his father's musical establishment and dismissed the lot except for Haydn, who was kept on his salary and allowed a generous pension.
- Haydn was free to go where he wished, and after considering a number of offers, he accepted a partnership Johann Peter Salomon to travel to England and put on a series of concerts featuring new works of his own.

Haydn in England

- In London he was treated like a rock star: wined, dined, constantly in the news.
- He had a wonderful time on his first visit, hob-nobbing with royalty and the aristocracy, amassing quite a fortune from his concerts, and even having a passionate affair with a younger English widow.

Haydn in England

- He left England in 1793, but returned the following year for another year and a half.
- Despite many earnest entreaties to remain in England, he returned to Vienna for good in 1795, having written 12 symphonies, several sets of string quartets, choral works, occasional music, and even a full-scale opera during his English sojourn.

The “London” Symphonies

- The 12 so-called “London” symphonies (“Salomon” symphonies in England) are Haydn’s noblest achievement in a genre that he had been highly influential in bringing to maturity.
- We’ll hear excerpts from the first set of London Symphonies, (#s 93 through 98) accompanied by paintings of 18th-century London (and England.)

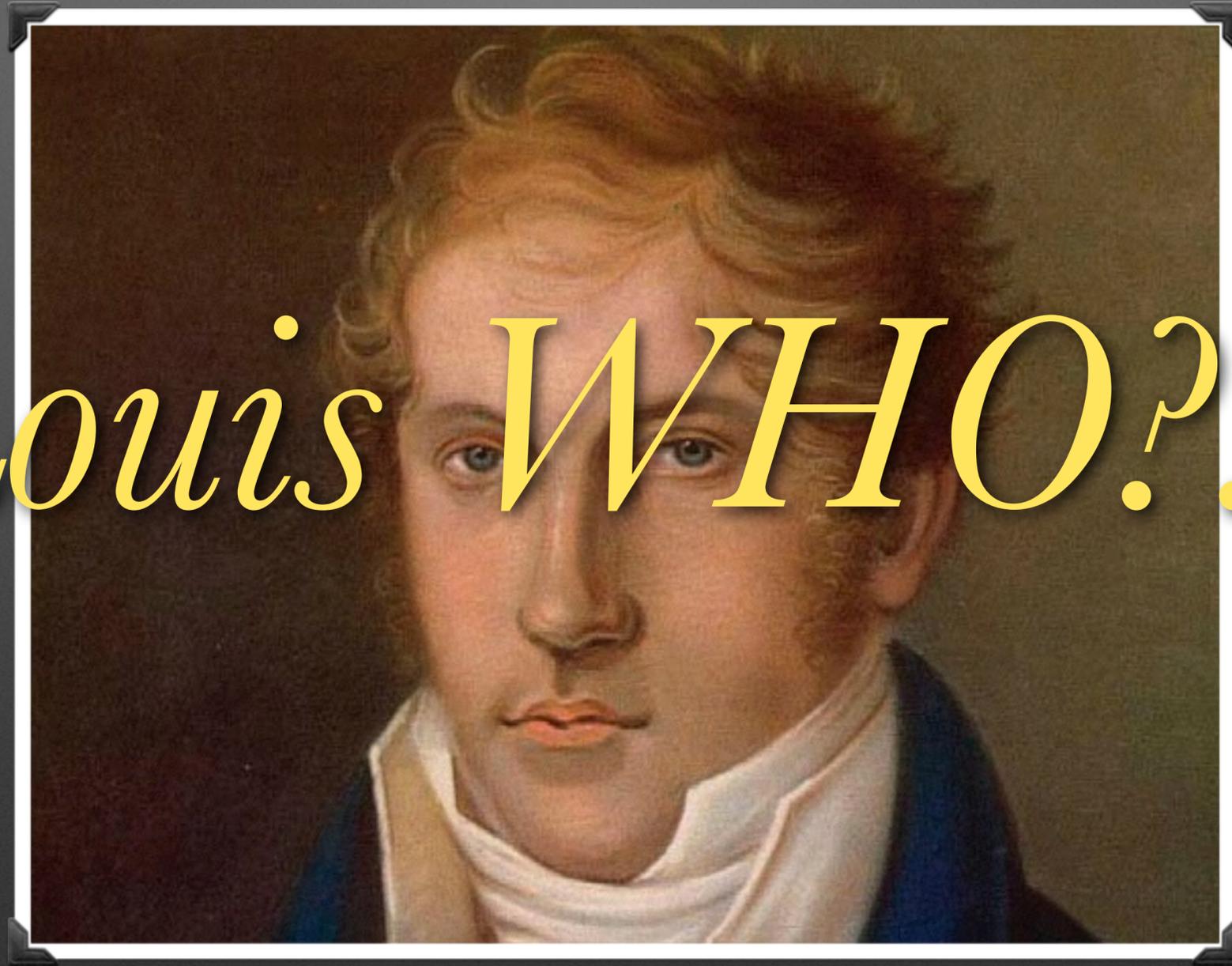
Louis Spohr

- 1784 – 1859
- First-class composer, violinist, conductor.
- Considered leading composer of his generation, equal to Beethoven.
- He spent a great deal of his career in England, where he conducted the Philharmonic Society (not to be confused with the modern-day London Philharmonic.)
- Spohr is one of the first conductors to stand on a podium and use a baton.



The judgment of posterity can be harsh ...

Louis WHO???



No Fair

- Spohr wasn't a salon composer or an empty note-spinner.
- His music is immaculately crafted and superbly balanced.
- Emotionally it runs lukewarm — which accounts for much of his posthumous obscurity.



Clarinet Concerto No. 1 in C Minor: III

Michael Collins / Robin O'Neill / Swedish Chamber Orchestra

Reprise

Part 1

Part 2

Part 3

Transition

Excursion 1

Part 1

Part 2

Part 3

Transition

Reprise

Part 1

Part 1

Dissolve

Transition

Excursion 2

Part 1

Part 2

Part 3

Transition

Reprise

Part 1

Part 1

Dissolve

Coda

Reprise

Part 1

Part 2

Part 3

Transition

Excursion 1

Part 1

Part 2

Part 3

Transition

Reprise

Part 1

Part 1

Dissolve

Transition

Excursion 2

Part 1

Part 2

Part 3

Transition

Reprise

Part 1

Part 1

Dissolve

Coda

Mendelssohn in England

1829–1847



Mendelssohn in England

- England was practically a second home for Felix Mendelssohn. Following his first visit in 1829, he became a favorite composer and frequent house guest of Queen Victoria. Mendelssohn conducted the Philharmonic Society, taught and played organ, and composed numerous large-scale works for English audiences.
- His *Scottish Symphony* in A Minor, for example, is dedicated to Queen Victoria.
- But his English *magnum opus* is undoubtedly the oratorio *Elijah*, written for the 1847 Birmingham Festival.



Elijah, Op. 70

Paul McCreesh / Gabrieli Consort

From the very first you have taken such a friendly interest in my “Elijah”, and thereby so stimulated my desire and courage to complete it, that I must write and tell you of its first performance yesterday. No work of mine ever went so admirably at its first performance, nor was received with such enthusiasm by both the musicians and the audience, as this oratorio. It was quite evident at the very first rehearsal in London that they liked it, and liked to sing and play it; but I confess, I was far from anticipating that it would have such vigour and attraction at the first performance.

—Felix Mendelssohn to his brother Paul, August 26, 1846

Elijah is not only the sacred work of our time, but it is a work for our children and for our children's children.

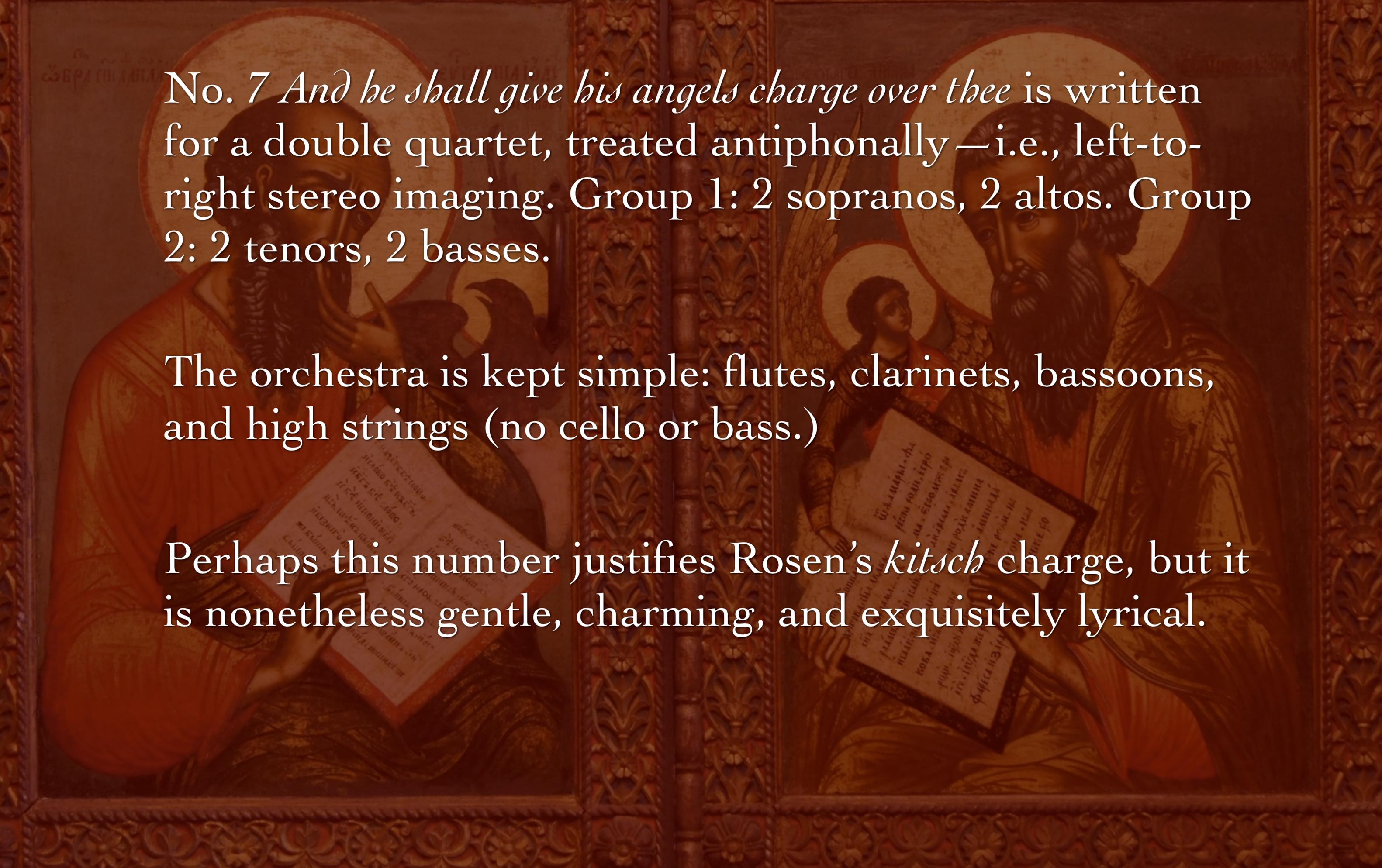
—Henry F. Chorley, 1847

There is no falling off in the great popularity of *Elijah*. This need not be regretted so long as it is understood that our pet oratorio, as a work of religious art, stands together with...the poems of Longfellow and Tennyson, sensuously beautiful in the most refined and fastidiously decorous way, but thoughtless. That is to say, it is not really religious music at all.

— George Bernard Shaw, from a review of May 11, 1892

Mendelssohn is the inventor of religious *kitsch* in music.

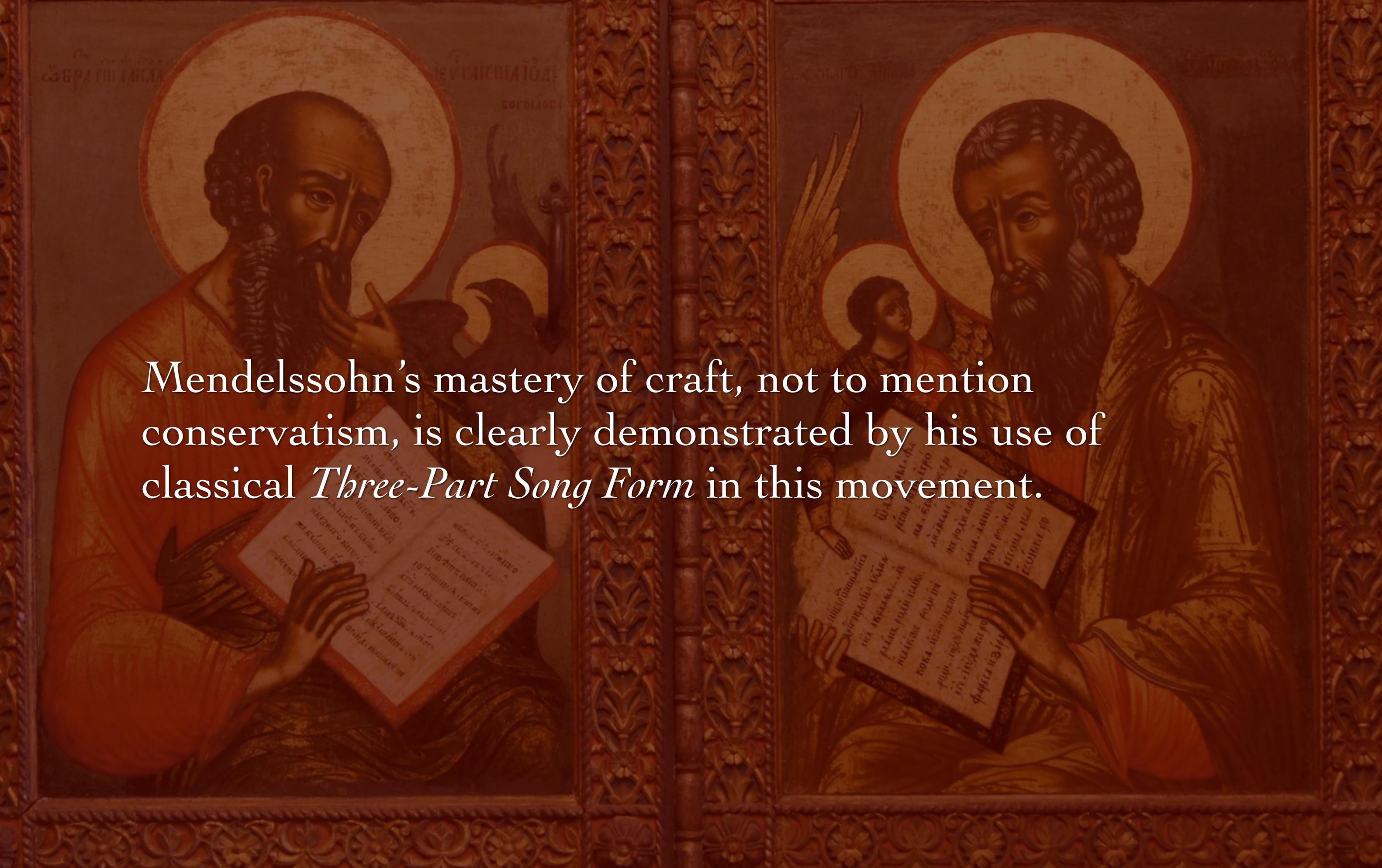
—Charles Rosen, *The Romantic Generation*



No. 7 *And he shall give his angels charge over thee* is written for a double quartet, treated antiphonally—i.e., left-to-right stereo imaging. Group 1: 2 sopranos, 2 altos. Group 2: 2 tenors, 2 basses.

The orchestra is kept simple: flutes, clarinets, bassoons, and high strings (no cello or bass.)

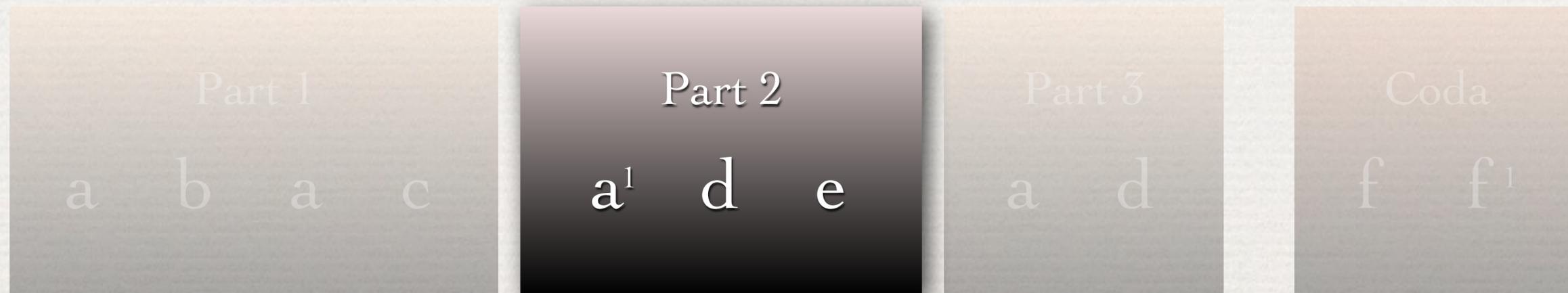
Perhaps this number justifies Rosen's *kitsch* charge, but it is nonetheless gentle, charming, and exquisitely lyrical.



Mendelssohn's mastery of craft, not to mention conservatism, is clearly demonstrated by his use of classical *Three-Part Song Form* in this movement.



Part 1: a *double period*; two pairs of phrases — each pair itself a *period* (question-answer) — in which pairs form a larger *period*, the second pair completing the idea begun by the first pair.



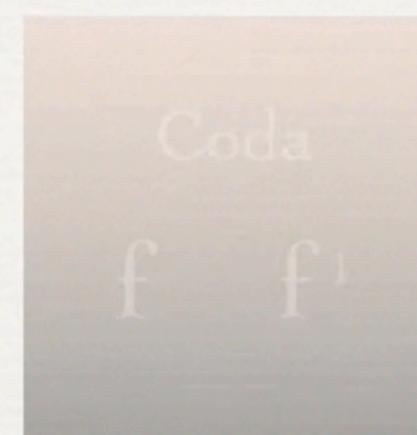
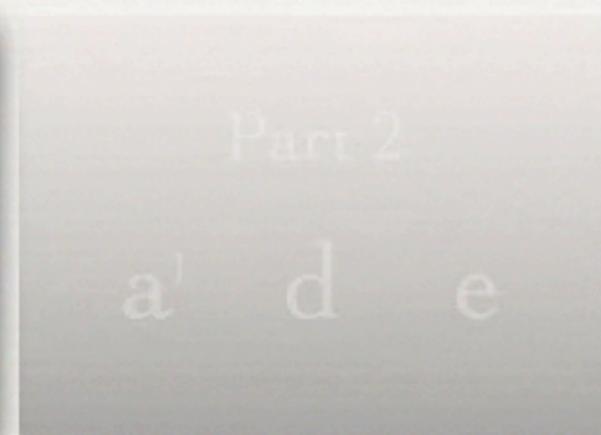
Part 2: a *phrase group*; in this case three phrases are joined together harmonically and melodically to form one complete idea.



Part 3: a *contrasting period*; the second phrase completes the idea begun by the first. Part 3 begins as a return to Part 1, thus rounding off the form.



Coda: a less structured passage; in this case a phrase repeated with some slight variance.



- a** Sop/Alt *For he shall give his angels charge over thee;*
- b** Ten/Bas *That they shall protect thee in all the ways thou goest;*
- a** Sop/Alt *For he shall give his angels charge over thee;*
- c** All *That they shall protect thee in all the ways thou goest.*



Elijah was written for gigantic forces: over 300 singers in the chorus, an expanded orchestra including a number of exotic brass instruments, and a magnificent, earth-shaking pipe organ.



In 2012 the period-instrument specialist Paul McCreesh performed *Elijah* with as close to those original forces as he could get, and rattled the roof of Royal Albert Hall with the results.

Fortunately, it was recorded — even if a mere recording couldn't possibly capture the full grandeur.



The final chorus, *Lord Our Creator*, gives us the full Mendelssohnian monty.

A grandiose choral opening is followed by a massive, Handelian fugue.

