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# Henry Purcell - Music for a While

## Context

- Written as incidental music for the play, Oedipus
- Baroque Era
- Second of four movements
- Features the character 'Alecto' who was a Fury in Greek Mythology

## Texture

- Accompaniment - LH harpsichord & bass viol
- Homophonic
- RH harpsichord provides some counterpoint

## Structure

Ground bass structure

- Chromatic notes
- Ascending before falling at the end
- Semitone intervals
- 3 bar longs
- Entirely quavers
- Based on arpeggio
- Octave drop on last two notes

## Tempo, Metre & Rhythm

- Dotted rhythms in vocal part & RH harpsichord
- 4/4 metre
- Mostly quavers & semiquavers
- Syncopation in bar 20
- Ground bass entirely in quavers
- Off-beat rhythms in bar 24

## Melody

Ornamentation

- Lower mordents
- Grace notes
- Trills
- Appoggiaturas
- Upper mordents

Passing notes

- Conjunct/Stepwise
- Vocal line range of a ninth (E to F)
- Descending sequences

## Performing Forces

- Melisma on words *'wond'ring'* & *'eternal'*
- Bass viol plays the **ground bass**
- RH harpsichord - realisation
- Soprano
- Continuo (**harpsichord & bass viol**)
- LH harpsichord plays the **ground bass**
- Syllabic vocal line

Word-painting

- Minor key suits the sombre nature of the words
- The word *'drop'* is repeated and descends
- *'Pains'* - dissonance
- *'Pains were eas'd'* - dissonance and resolution
- The word *'eternal'* is set to lengthy melisma

## Tonality & Harmony

- A minor
- Tierce de Picardie at bar 23
- Middle section moves through Emin, Gmaj, Cmaj, Amaj & Emin
- Perfect cadences
- Diatonic
- Suspensions