CHAPTER 14: BEARD'S VOCAL LEGACY

insert photo of the Memorial

BEARD'S EPITAPH IN *THE GENTLEMAN'S MAGAZINE*

Satire be dumb! Nor dream the scenic art
Must spoil the morals and corrupt the heart.
Here lies JOHN BEARD: confess, with pensive pause,
His modesty was great as our applause.
Whence had that voice such magic to control?
'Twas but the echo of a well tun'd soul:
Thro' life, his morals and his music ran
In symphony and spoke the virtuous man.
Go, gentle harmonist, our hopes approve,
To meet, and hear thy sacred songs above:
When taught by thee, the stage of life well trod,
We rise to raptures round the throne of God.

Ob. Feb. 5th 1791, Aetatis suae, 75

HIS MUSIC LIBRARY

Apart from the score of Scarlatti's *'30 Essercizi'* which Beard gave to the young Charles Wesley in 1763 it has not been easy to identify other music that he owned.[1] As I suggest (above) some of his Handel scores and manuscripts may have passed into Samuel Arnold's keeping when he was preparing his famous Handel edition in the 1780s and 1790s. Beard subscribed to the edition, as is revealed by the list of subscribers found tucked into one of the Library of Congress copies.[2] Samuel Arnold's library was sold at auction in May 1803.[3]

The parts from which Beard sang Boyce's *Court Odes* are all in the Bodleian Library, and so must have been gathered in after the performances by a tidy-minded composer. A part bearing Beard's name is included in the set of *Messiah* material presented to the Foundling Hospital under the terms of Handel's will in 1759. But the tenor solo copy does not appear to have been sung from, leading to the supposition that Beard continued to use his old copy for subsequent performances in the 1760s.

A copy that does contain evidence of having been used in performance is his copy of the tenor music in *The Foundling Hospital Anthem* (described earlier, in Chapter 7), which is now in the Library of the Royal College of Music (RCM 2254). Equally interesting is another manuscript at the Royal College of Music, which may well be Beard's own scrap-book of theatre music for a particular year's performances. This is a miscellaneous collection of music (RCM 2232) which has so far confused music scholars. Roger Fiske says: "harder to date is MS 2232 in London's Royal College of Music" before admitting that he cannot make sense of the strange mixture of music for plays and operas.[4] However, the volume makes a lot more

[1] Harry Diack Johnstone has kindly supplied me with a list of the music publications to which Beard subscribed.
[2] M3.H21, Copy 1 – see J.M. Coopersmith *The first Gesamtausgabe: Dr Arnold's Edition of Handel's Works* Notes, 1947 p. 282: "...Of those who actually knew Handel, the best-known are John Beard, Charles Burney..."
[3] J.M. Coopersmith *The first Gesamtausgabe: Dr Arnold's Edition of Handel's Works* Notes, 1947 p. 286, f/n 32
[4] R. Fiske, 'English Theatre Music in the Eighteenth Century', Oxford, 1973, p. 116

sense if it is seen as a collection of material useful to one particular person, at one particular time. Who could that person be?

A perusal of the music contained in the volume shows that it does not now contain precisely what is shown in the index, as some pages containing music for a certain *Oedipus* have been removed. What this music might have been is not clear, as the only performances of *Oedipus* that I have traced were three performances at Covent Garden in January 1755, when the Dryden play was advertised as 'not acted in 12 years'. Without these pages the first page of the volume is now numbered as page 21. But the volume does contain the following:

a) *Macbeth* music
Heckat air: 'O what a dainty Pleasure's this to sail in the Air'
Music when the cauldron is discovered
Heckat: 'Black Spirits and white, red Spirits and grey'

b) Overture to *The Fair Penitent*

c) The Address to Sleep, sung by Mr Beard in the Tragedy of *Tamerlane*

d) The Music in *Lethe*
Song: 'Ye mortals whom Fancies and Trouble perplex'
Song for the 'Fine Lady': 'The card invites, in crowds we fly'
Sung by Mr Beard in *Lethe*: 'Come mortals, come, come follow me'

e) The music in *The Provok'd Husband*
Song: for 'Miss Jenny'
Song: 'What tho' they call me Country Lass'

f) *The Devil to Pay*
Song for 'Jobson'
Song for 'Butler'
Song for Sir John Loverule: 'Ye Gods ye gave to me a wife'
Song for Sir John Loverule: 'Of all states in Life so various'
Song for Lady Loverule: 'Tell me no more of this or that'
Song for Sir John Loverule: 'Grant me ye Pow'rs but this request'
Song for Nell: 'My swelling heart now leaps with joy'
Song for Conjuror: 'My little Spirits now appear'
Chorus of Spirits: 'All this we will with care perform'
Song for Sir John Loverule: 'The Early Horn' *in full-score for Horn, Violin 1 & 2, Viola, Bass*
Song for Jobson: 'Of all the Trades from East to West'
Song for Jobson: 'I'll into my Stall, 'tis broad day now'
Song for Nell: 'Though late I was a Cobler's Wife'
Song for Nell: 'Ladies with an artful grace'
Song for Nell: 'Oh charming cunning man, thou hast been wond'rous kind'
Duet for Sir John & Nell: 'Was ever Man possest of so sweet, so kind a Wife'
Song for Lady Loverule: 'Let every face with Smiles appear'

The interest in this volume lies principally in the complete music for Beard's most frequently performed afterpiece – *The Devil to Pay*. The music for the song which he famously inserted into it in 1736, 'The Early Horn,' is unusually given in full-score – unlike the rest of the music. The only pieces of music which would not have involved Beard as a performer are:

b) the Overture to *The Fair Penitent*
e) the 2 songs in *The Provok'd Husband.*

Otherwise all of the music would have helped him in rehearsal, and on two occasions (c & d) he is named as the performer.

Of course, this could be a keyboard player's part, though the full-score of 'The Early Horn' might suggest otherwise. There is so much tenor music in it that it seems more likely that it belonged to a performer who played these roles. In the period in question there are only two possibilities: Beard and Lowe. *Lethe* was performed by Beard in April 1740, and again in January 1749 when Garrick revived it at Drury Lane. The other works were all in the Drury Lane 1748-9 and 1754-5 repertoires, whilst Beard was on contract at the theatre there, viz:

Drury Lane 1748-9

The Devil to Pay commencing 20th September 1748
The Provok'd Husband commencing 1st October 1748
The Fair Penitent commencing 22nd October 1748
Macbeth 28th October 1748
Tamerlane 4th & 5th November 1748
Lethe commencing 2nd January 1749

Drury Lane 1754-5

The Devil to Pay commencing 19th September 1754
Macbeth 24th September 1754
Lethe commencing 15th October 1754
Tamerlane 4th November 1754
The Fair Penitent commencing 6th November 1754
The Provok'd Husband 6th May 1755

Thomas Lowe was not in any performance of *Lethe* until it entered the Covent Garden repertoire on October 2nd 1759, proving that the book could not have been used at Covent Garden before that date. On October 2nd it was most likely to have been Lowe who played Beard's part as – although Beard was now working at Covent Garden too – it is clear that he didn't make his first appearance with the company until October 10th, when he appeared in the new production of *The Beggar's Opera* with Miss Charlotte Brent. However, there were no performances of *The Fair Penitent* this season.

Covent Garden 1759-60

The Devil to Pay commencing 24 September 1759
The Provok'd Husband commencing 1 October 1759
Lethe commencing 2 October 1759 – probably with Thomas Lowe as 'Mercury'
Tamerlane 5 November 1759
Macbeth 17 April 1760
[The Fair Penitent] no performance this season

So, the likelihood of this being a volume that Beard could have used, rather than Thomas Lowe, is quite high.

BEARD THE SINGER

Garrick wrote feelingly of the fact that an actor's artistry dies with him, and is not long remembered thereafter:

> But he who struts his hour upon the stage,
> Can scarce extend his fame to half an age;
> Nor Pen, nor Pencil, can the actor save;
> The Art, and Artist, share one common grave.[5]

The same is equally true of singers. But the music which Beard sang does live on. Some is forgotten, but the best of it is performed as much – if not more – than it was in his own day.

The music which is forgotten today is the ephemeral corpus of 'popular' ballads, which was the eighteenth century equivalent of 'pop' music today. I imagine that the best part of ours will be equally forgotten in two hundred years time (if not sooner!) Beard earned a living singing these songs, but would have been the first to admit that their life expectancy was extremely limited. There are occasional songs which have survived down to our age. Elizabeth Poston made a pretty arrangement of William Boyce's ballad 'By thy banks, gentle Stour'[6] in the 1950s, which is still performed today. She also resurrected other ballads that Beard may or may not have sung at the Pleasure Gardens, such as William Defesch's 'Polly of the Plain' and Michael Arne's 'The Lass with the delicate air'. Facsimile editions of eighteenth century song albums, such as Bickham's *The Musical Entertainer*, Thomas Arne's *Lyric Harmony* and *Vocal Melody*, and Boyce's *Lyra Britannica* make it possible to study – and recreate – these ephemeral works today.[7]

Elizabeth Poston was also one of the first editors to recognise the beauty of Boyce's serenata *Solomon*, before it was revived by the Early Music Movement in the 1980s. Her versions of the soprano air 'Tell me lovely shepherd' and the duet 'Together let us range' have been useful songs for young singers for fifty years or more. Other editors to rekindle interest in the music of this period are Ella Ivimey, who made useful arrangements of Pleasure Gardens songs, such as Michael Arne's 'Invitation to Ranelagh' (1948); and Maurice Bevan, who resurrected some of the lost cantatas of John Stanley and Thomas Arne in the late 1950s. Publishers have kept some of this music in print, mainly for teaching purposes; and we must be thankful for Schott's 'Voice and Recorder' series, and Stainer and Bell's slim volumes of 'English Solo Song', for preserving other music that Beard was the first to perform.[8]

The songs that were performed in the plays at Drury Lane and Covent Garden are largely forgotten, with the exception of Arne's songs for David Garrick's Shakespeare productions. These have not only survived, but have passed into a unique area of repertoire known as *Traditional Songs*. Arne would have been surprised to have found his tunes equated with 'folksong'; but he would have been delighted to know that the songs that John Beard sang as Amiens, in *As You Like It*, ('Blow, blow thou Winter Wind', 'Under the Greenwood Tree', and 'When Daisies pied'), and as Lorenzo in *The Merchant of Venice* ('Tell me where is fancy bred') were still being sung and loved two hundred and fifty years later. Most children of the mid-twentieth century would have sung these, as well as the songs from *The Tempest*

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[5] quoted in Benjamin Victor, 'The History of the Theatres of London...', 1771
[6] from Lyra Britannica, London, 1747, where the text is "On thy banks, gentle Stour".
[7] *Music for London Entertainment 1660-1800*, Macnutt, Tunbridge Wells, 1985, has produced many of these.
[8] for example: 'Georgian Songs', and volumes devoted to Arne and Boyce.

('Where the bee sucks' and 'Come unto these yellow sands') at some stage during their school days. Arne's songs for Milton's *Comus* and the *Masque of Alfred* never went entirely out of fashion either; the tenor arias 'Not on Beds of fading Flowers' and 'Now Phoebus sinketh in the West' and the mezzo aria 'Come calm content' were available in late Victorian editions, long before the Baroque revival stimulated interest in these works once again.

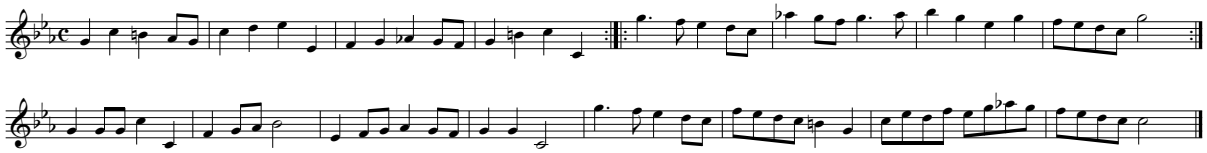
Arne has not been so successful where his serious operas, such as *Artaxerxes*, are concerned. This work is surely due for a revival, now that there are counter-tenors sufficiently able to undertake the two castrato roles of 'Artaxerxes' and 'Arbaces' in it. Hyperion Records has led the way with a fine 1995 recording, in which Beard's fine aria "Behold, on Lethe's dismal Strand" can be heard once again.[9] But there are two further airs of Arne's which will never fade from the repertoire, and with which Beard was closely involved from the outset: 'Rule Britannia' (from the masque of *Alfred*); and 'The National Anthem', which he performed as 'God bless our noble King, / God save great George our King' in the first performance at Drury Lane Theatre on September 28th 1745.

The after-pieces which kept Beard so busy in the theatre have supplied very few tunes that remained in the repertoire. But Pantomimes did rather better: Boyce's 'Heart of Oak' from *Harlequin's Invasion* (1759) has remained as a traditional tune beloved by military bands, even long after Garrick's words have been forgotten. Another traditional song which was first sung onstage by Beard was 'The Miller of Dee' from *Love in a Village* (1762). Although the tune was old (it occurs in *The Devil to Pay* and other ballad operas as 'The Budgeon is a fine Trade'), the words are presumably by Isaac Bickerstaffe. The song became lastingly popular, and even got into the National Song Book. Of course, the work which has survived best down to our day from the eighteenth century London theatre is *The Beggar's Opera*. This work by John Gay, with popular tunes arranged and orchestrated by Johann Christoph Pepusch, arose as a satire on the British political scene at the end of Robert Walpole's administration, but proved remarkably hardy. In fact, it was never out of fashion during Beard's life, even when its initial relevance had been long forgotten. But every age has altered and re-interpreted it to their own taste. Beard himself was involved in the first major overhaul, when he invited Arne to re-orchestrate it in a more contemporary 'galant' style for the famous 1759 Covent Garden production in which he starred with Charlotte Brent, and which broke box-office records by running for 40 nights between October 10th and December 3rd. At the beginning of the 20th century Frederick Austin had a similar success with his operetta-style of orchestral arrangements, in the production first seen at the Lyric Theatre Hammersmith in 1920, (transferring to the Kingsway Theatre in 1922) produced by Nigel Playfair and conducted by Eugene Goossens. He himself performed the principal role of 'Macheath', which he had now turned into a baritone role. Benjamin Britten turned it back into a tenor one for Peter Pears in 1948, and realised the traditional airs in his own distinctive style. Kurt Weill and Bertolt Brecht had gone even further in 1928 when they completely reinterpreted the story as a satire on the corruption of 1920s Germany in *Die Dreigroschenoper* (*The Threepenny Opera*).

All of this music reveals Beard as an easy communicator, with a gift for putting the text across naturally and convincingly. But it does not reveal much more about the quality of his voice, other than that he had a flexible and wide range. The song which he himself composed, *Cross Purposes*, takes him up to a high B natural once in every verse. The songs in *The Devil to Pay*, which he performed as many times – if not more – than *The Beggar's Opera*, demand a compass of very nearly 2 octaves in the Air 'Of all Comforts I miscarry'd', from a low C to a high B flat:

[9] Volume 33 of their *English Orpheus* series, CDA67051/2

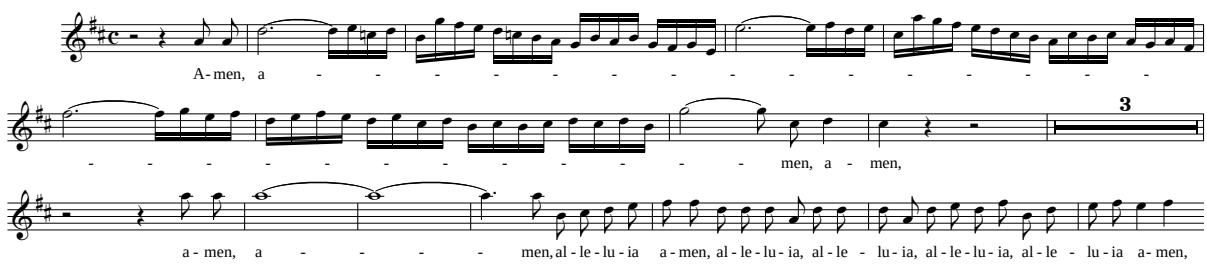
Air V. Of all Comforts I miscarry'd



It is Handel's Oratorios which give us the clearest idea of what Beard's voice was capable of performing. Boyce and Greene wrote equally well for him in their Court Odes, but these pieces are not known at all today, and are unlikely to be revived. Boyce's *Solomon* is becoming better-known as a result of Roy Goodman's fine 1989 recording for Hyperion Records. The aria from Boyce's *Secular Masque,* 'The Sword within the Scabbard keep', known as 'The Song of Momus to Mars', which was successfully performed by Beard at Boyce's Doctorate in Cambridge as well as at Drury Lane, re-emerged in 20th century song albums as a Baritone aria. His musical after-pieces, *The Chaplet* and *The Shepherd's Lottery*, are still awaiting rediscovery, and new performing editions. The Dirge in *Romeo and Juliet,* and the Masque *Peleus and Thetis* are in the process of being rediscovered, and can now be heard in a 1996 recording by Opera Restor'd, directed by Peter Holman.[10] Maurice Greene's solo music is still little-known, although his cantatas, his song collection *The Chaplet* (1738), and his settings for voice and keyboard of *Spenser's Amoretti* (1739) would be welcome additions to the modern-day tenor's repertoire.

So it is to Handel that we must turn to learn about Beard's voice, and to discover how its tessitura, its flexibility, and its tonal quality has informed all music for the tenor voice that has been modelled on the Handel format, such as Haydn's two great oratorios *The Creation* and *The Seasons*, and - later still - the oratorios of Mendelssohn.

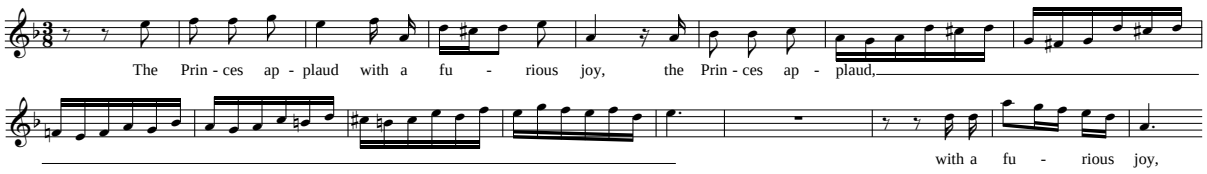
Handel quickly realised what the nineteen-year-old Beard was capable of singing, and wrote music for him that must have fitted his voice like a glove. After requiring him to sing an aria adapted from a castrato show-stopper in *Parnasso in Festa* in the Wedding Anthem *Sing unto God* (1736), he never demanded such elaborate coloratura from him again. Much of the original pitch is retained in the hurried arrangement, rendering this aria a not very satisfactory mutation into a tenor piece.[11] Realising that this kind of vocal writing would not work down an octave at Beard's pitch, he was careful to write a more controlled 'fioritura' for him in future *Allegro* movements. There are still many vocal runs in these later arias: one only has to think of 'Every Valley', 'The Enemy said "I will pursue"', and 'Why does the God of Israel sleep' to remember that Beard must have had a flexible voice. But vocal lines such as this passage from *Sing unto God,* with its extraordinarily long phrases, consistently high tessitura, and rapid passage-work, never occur later in music specifically designed for Beard's voice:



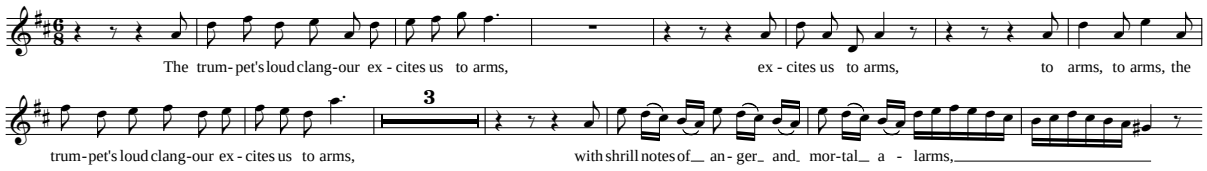
[10] Hyperion Records CDA66935

[11] However I myself had success with it in concerts with The London Bach Society, conductor Paul Steinitz, which were the first performances in modern times, & subsequently recorded on *EMI* Record CSD 3741 in 1973.

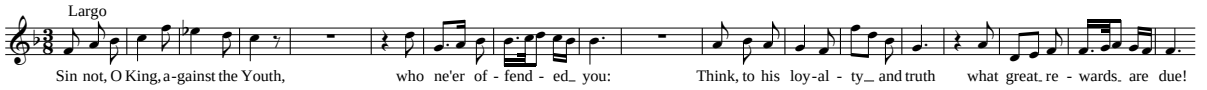
In contrast, the first oratorio to have been specifically conceived with him in mind - *Alexander's Feast* in February 1736 when he was aged 21 - has attractive vocal runs that are designed to illustrate the text and further the mood of the music rather than show off the voice:



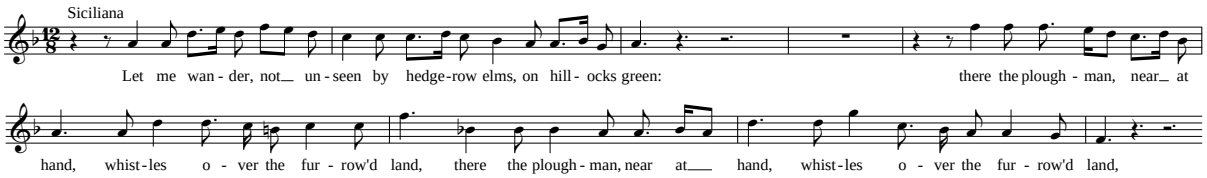
John Hawkins had been right when he talked of Beard having a 'firm voice' which was capable of 'an articulate utterance of the words, and a just expression of the melody'. These are features which are particularly noticeable in the music Handel wrote for him. He was capable of more than what Burney wrote about his rival Thomas Lowe: that he could only be safely trusted with a ballad. Some of the most effective music which Handel was to write for Beard was extremely 'firm' and military in nature. *Judas Maccabaeus* is full of such numbers, and 'Sound an Alarm' and 'Call forth thy Powers' are some of the finest. But as early as 1739 this style of aria was provided for Beard in the *Ode on St Cecilia's Day*:



The variety of aria types which Handel wrote for Beard in these early years was extremely wide, ranging from extrovert *Allegro* numbers like these, to simple and sensitive melodic numbers. *Saul*, which was premiered at the time of his first wedding in January 1739, contains this lovely *Largo* for Beard's character of 'Jonathan':



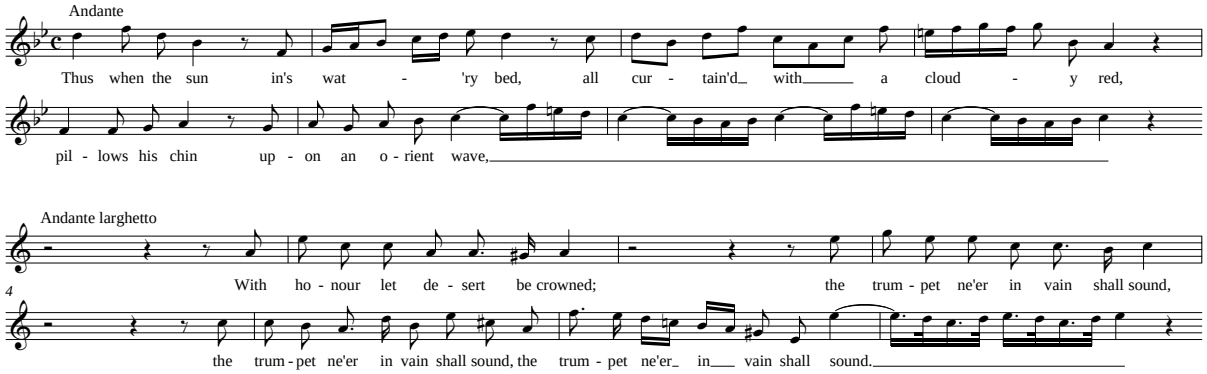
Handel also wrote charming *Sicilianos* for him, such as 'Your charms to ruin led the way' in Samson. *L'Allegro ed il Penseroso* (1740) contains one of the best of them. In this music one can sense that Handel was showing that he could write popular melodies as well as Arne could. Possibly as a result of Arne's recent success with the music for Milton's *Comus (1738)* Handel turned to an easy Vauxhall-song style himself for many of the airs in this setting of Milton's short poems. 'Let me wander not unseen' was to remain in Beard's repertoire to the very end, as Arne incorporated a version of it, to Bickerstaffe's new words, into the ballad opera *Love in a Village*. In May 1767 this work was to be Beard's swansong in the theatre.



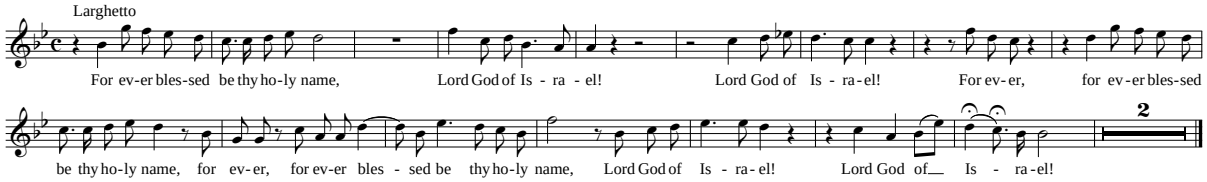
In addition to these lilting melodies, set in compound time, Beard was also given some fine slow movements in common time. This group of arias includes some of the best known of

Handel's arias for the tenor voice, such as 'Total eclipse' (*Samson* 1743), 'Where'er you walk' (*Semele* 1744), and 'Waft her Angels' (*Jephtha* 1752)

At the end of the oratorios in which John Beard had been entrusted with the title role Handel often wrote a different kind of *Andante* aria: one of great emotional depth, and with a finely controlled mood set to music with long arching phrases. 'Thus when the Sun' (*Samson* 1743), 'With honour let desert be crown'd' (*Judas Maccabaeus* 1747) and 'For ever blessed be thy holy name' (*Jephtha* 1752) are such numbers, in which the hero considers the whole sequence of events that have just unfolded. They reveal the greatness of Handel's skill and soundness of his theatrical judgement; but also show that he believed that Beard was equipped to do them justice:

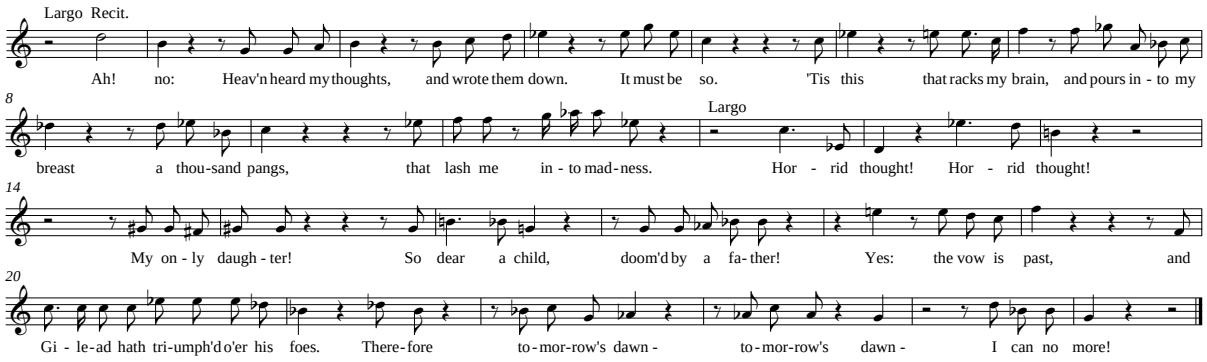


The aria 'For ever blessed be thy holy name' is the last one for Beard's character of 'Jephtha' in Handel's last, completely original, oratorio. Thus it could be the last new piece which he wrote for the singer. It is a simple melody, set well within his comfortable range of low C to high A, and, within its modest length of 18 bars, points the way ahead with remarkable foresight to the style of Mendelssohn's tenor arias in *St Paul* and *Elijah*:

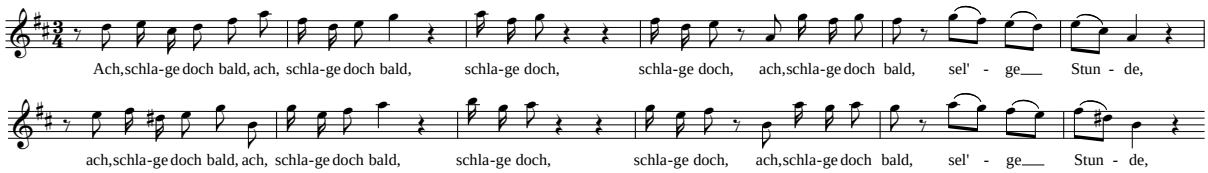


The final and most remarkable body of music that Handel was inspired to create by Beard's highly charged singing was the dramatic accompanied recitative or *accompagnato*. These dynamic movements carry the drama forward with music that is immensely responsive to the changing nature of the text. They vary from being heightened *recitativo secco* to being mini-scenas with an ever-changing arioso feel. In movements such as 'My griefs for this' (*Samson*), 'So will'd my father, now at rest' (*Judas Maccabaeus*), and 'Ah, whither is she gone, unhappy fair?' (*Semele*), Handel pushed the conventions of baroque opera further forward towards the through-composed, monodic operas of the nineteenth century.

The finest of them all is 'Deeper and deeper still' (*Jephtha*) which charts a wide range of emotions in its restless harmonic and rhythmic shifts; and which is a striking psychological study of a man - literally - at his wits' end:



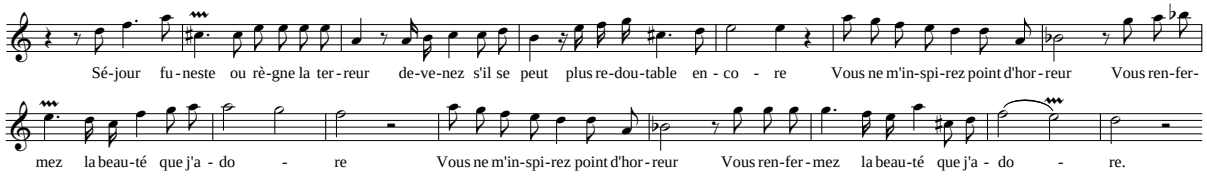
This passage reveals, yet again, that Beard possessed a strong, thrilling top to his voice. This is confirmed by other contemporary sources, including Charles Burney, who knew him well, and who wrote the title role in his *Robin Hood* for his voice in 1750. Handel, it will be seen, always saved the high notes for the musical climax, - as here at "that lash me into madness". He did not squander the high notes unnecessarily; and in this his vocal writing differs from that of his contemporary J.S. Bach, whose tenor soloists floated their high notes, and could sing arias with a higher overall tessitura than these of Handel. One only has to think of the tessitura of Bach's Evangelists in the two Passions, or such arias as 'Benedictus' (*B Minor Mass*) and 'Erwäge' (*Johannes Passion*) and – in the following extract - 'Ach, schlage doch bald' (*Cantata 95*) to realise that Handel was writing for a different, more theatrical, voice:



Handel had not always had tenors like this. In fact, there is evidence that the tenors that he first encountered in England, at Canons, the palace of James Brydges, Duke of Chandos, sang with a tessitura that ran up from the tenor range into the falsetto of the counter-tenor one. The Chapel Royal records of the day do not always specify whether a singer was truly a tenor or a countertenor. For example, Thomas Bell shared a place as 'Countertenor' at the Chapel Royal with Thomas Gethin, who was clearly a tenor.[12] Richard Elford's name appears in a Tenor partbook of the period, but he sang the Alto solos in Croft's *Odes*, and in Handel's *Utrecht* Jubilate and *Caroline* Te Deum.[13] This flexible voice is shown most clearly in Handel's Cannons anthems, and in the original version of *Acis and Galatea*, whose choruses (sung one to a part by the soloists) require three tenors with an additional falsetto range. This is seen most clearly in the solo for Galatea 'Must I my Acis still bemoan', with the accompaniment of a male chorus, 'Cease Galatea, cease to grieve' (no. 22 in Peters Edition no. 3633).

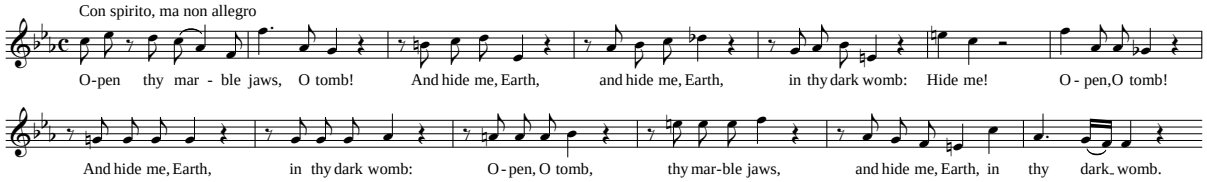
This was a voice that had been known to Purcell at the end of the seventeenth century, and for which he had composed in works like *The Fairy Queen*. It lingered longer on the mainland of Europe. Much of the solo writing by the French court composers Rameau, Mondonville and Boismortier makes the same vocal demands. For example, the role of 'Don Quichotte' in Boismortier's *Don Quichotte chez la Duchesse*[14] (1743) which was written for the singer Bérard lies somewhere between the countertenor range and that of a very high tenor:

[12] Burrows, 'Handel and the Chapel Royal', Oxford, 2005, p. 579
[13] Burrows, 'Handel and the Chapel Royal', Oxford, 2005, p. 583-4
[14] J.Bodin de Boismortier 'Don Quichotte chez la Duchesse', ed. Roger Blanchard, Paris, 1971, pp. 46-7



But this is clearly not written for a similar voice to John Beard's. However, French music continued to require tenors capable of singing music that remained this high, and in the nineteenth century a high type of French tenor was required by a new generation of composers. Rossini is the best known one to take his French tenors up stratospherically high, and make it difficult for certain works to be successfully revived today. But other contemporary composers, such as Meyerbeer and Auber, took advantage of this facility, which was best displayed by the singer Adolphe Nourrit (1802-39) who created roles in *Moise*, *La Muette de Portici*, *Count Ory*, *Guillaume Tell*, *Robert le Diable*, *La Juive* and *Les Huguenots* between 1827 and 1836.

Beard, by contrast, had a solid middle and lower register to his voice. His arias frequently demonstrate that this had an almost 'baritonal' quality to it. The fact that his theatrical roles included so many 'hearty' characters – which we, today, would associate with the baritone's traditional province - such as soldiers, sailors, highwaymen and squires, leads to the assumption that his middle-range was as full and solid as his top was bright and ringing. Just one example will suffice to demonstrate this: and it is taken once again from his greatest Handel role, 'Jephtha', whose six arias and ten recitatives (*secco* and *accompagnato*) cover the widest range of moods that Handel ever wrote for a character in his oratorios:



THE MESSIAH

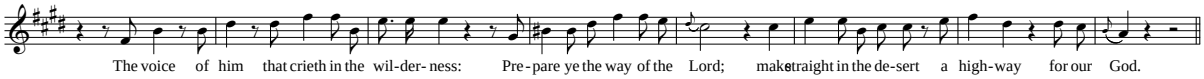
The most lasting testimonial to Beard's vocal skill is the tenor music in the greatest of all Handel's oratorios, *Messiah*, which was written for his voice in 1741. He did not take part in the premiere in Dublin on April 13th 1742, as we have seen in earlier chapters; but he did give the London premiere on March 23rd 1743. In Dublin the local tenor soloist, James Bailey, was not sufficiently able to sing the aria 'Thou shalt dash them', so Handel wrote a substitute recitative which was sung, on this occasion only, by William Lamb.[15] The original tenor music underwent very little alteration once it entered Beard's repertoire, and many scholars have remarked on the fact that, whereas Handel recomposed the solo music for his soprano, contralto/castrato, and bass soloists, the most significant alteration he made to the tenor arias was to delete one bar of orchestral music in the opening and closing ritornellos of 'Every Valley'.[16] Such was his confidence in Beard's performance that he gave him the soprano aria 'Rejoice greatly' to sing on an occasion when a sudden crisis with his sopranos demanded

[15] "It can be clearly seen that it was a matter of a makeshift never required again". Jens Peter Larsen, 'Handel's Messiah, origins, composition, sources', London 1957, republished New York, 1972, p. 238. See also: Watkins Shaw, 'A Textual and Historical Companion to Handel's Messiah', Novello, Sevenoaks, 1965, p. 110-1
[16] Jens Peter Larsen, *op. cit.*, p. 216

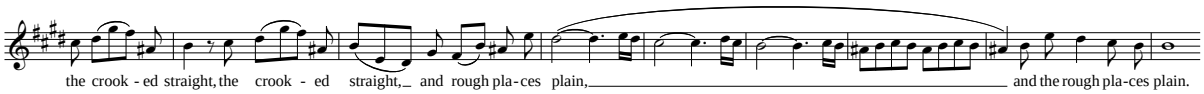
that it was reallocated. He also added a short aria for him, 'Their sound is gone out', when he restructured the middle of Part 2 in c. 1743.[17] At some stage, possibly in the mid-1750s, the alto/tenor duet 'O Death, where is thy sting' was reduced from 41 bars long to 24 by means of a simple, internal cut. This was probably occasioned by a need to shorten the work to suit the London theatre audience.[18]

Beard's contribution to the 30 performances of *Messiah* that he gave with Handel between 1743 - 59 only varied in accordance with the number of soprano soloists Handel had engaged. When there was only one performer he sang all of the music which was originally composed for the tenor voice. When there were two, the second soprano robbed him of 'He was cut off' and 'But thou didst not leave his soul in Hell' which, as can be seen by the fact that they are written in the manuscript in the tenor clef, were originally intended for a male singer.[19]

The arias and *accompagnatos* reveal that Beard's strengths were once again uppermost in Handel's mind when he was composing the music in the summer of 1741. He wrote *Messiah* and *Samson* in one famous stretch, from August 22nd to October 29th. As Beard was chosen for the title role in *Samson* it is clear that Handel wrote the *Messiah* music for the same tenor voice. Handel used Beard's sturdy delivery of extrovert text, and ability to create a mood, by giving him the opening vocal music. 'Comfort ye' is a dramatic accompanied recitative or *accompagnato* in the manner of 'Deeper and deeper still', although the emotion is not so personal or highly charged. However, it concludes with an arresting pronouncement of Isaiah's prophecy which would have made his audience sit up and pay attention:



The aria 'Every Valley', as has already been mentioned, is an *Allegro* movement featuring many shapely vocal runs. The highest note in this opening pair of movements is G sharp: well within Beard's limits. It is reached via a leap, in a section of vocal writing which is descriptive of the "crooked ways" being "made straight":



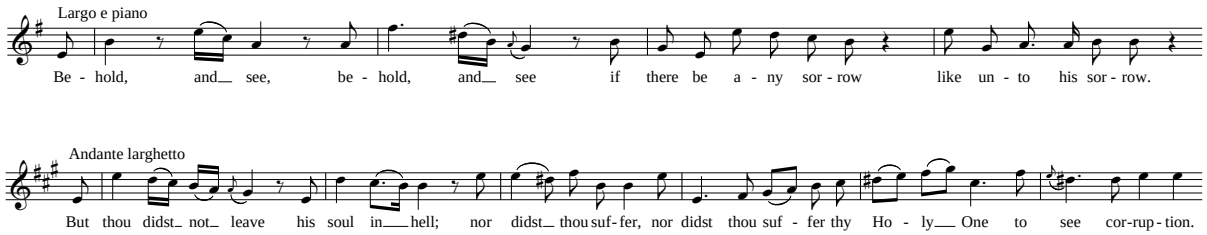
The next music for the tenor, in Part 2, is an *accompagnato*, 'All they that see him laugh him to scorn', in which the strings' dotted rhythm is descriptive of the lashes at Jesus' scourging, but in the line of recitative lying above this the tenor is simply required to sing firmly. Then come the four Passiontide movements, 'Thy rebuke', 'Behold and see', 'He was cut off' and 'But thou didst not leave his soul in Hell', which give the singer the biggest opportunity in the work to convey a changing pattern of moods. These begin with a deep sympathy for the 'suffering servant', and build with confidence to a major-key acceptance that the sufferings were undergone to save us all from corruption. The tempo moves forward correspondingly from Largo to Andante larghetto; and the second and fourth numbers are in the style of the

[17] Jens Peter Larsen, 'Handel's Messiah, origins, composition, sources', London 1957, republished New York, 1972, p. 233; and Watkins Shaw, 'A Textual and Historical Companion to Handel's Messiah', Novello, Sevenoaks, 1965, p. 113-4

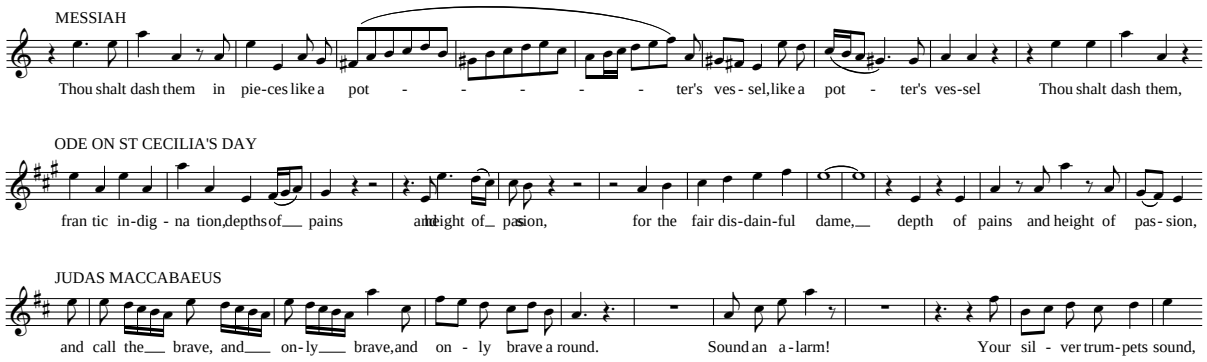
[18] Larsen suggests that it may have been made "at a very early date – perhaps having in mind the less competent Dublin soloists. ...It can hardly be doubted that [Handel] used the shortened form in his last years". *op. cit*. p. 240

[19] Jens Peter Larsen, *op. cit*., p. 226-7

Andante arias (mentioned earlier) which contain music of great emotional depth, and in which the finely controlled mood is set to melodies with long arching phrases:



The highest note for the tenor has still only risen to a G sharp by this point. Handel reserved the top A – the highest note that he gives to Beard in the oratorios – for the extrovert aria, with highly effective short runs, that is the nearest thing to a 'Rage' aria that the tenor gets in this work. 'Thou shalt break them' contains only two written top A's (though there is scope for a third in an optional final cadence at bar 65) which are approached by a leap, in the same manner that Handel approaches them in 'military' arias like 'Sound an alarm' (*Judas Maccabaeus*) and 'Sharp violins proclaim' (*Ode on St Cecilia's Day)*:



Apart from the duet in Part 3, and some *secco* recitatives, that is all the music that Handel provided for the tenor soloist in *Messiah*. But he must have been happy in his choice of soloist as Beard only failed to sing the work for him on two occasions (apart from the Dublin premiere), when his private circumstances prevented him from joining Handel at Covent Garden on March 23rd 1749 and April 12th 1750.

It was his voice that dictated the way that Handel would write these arias. Tenors that have come after him must have had cause to thank Beard for having had such a useful range, with a flexibility which is functional rather than showy, and with an ability to supply some effective top notes at climactic moments. Haydn, who heard Handel's oratorios in London in the 1790s wrote for a voice like this as the singers that he heard - Thomas Norris and Samuel Harrison - were Beard's immediate successors. Mendelssohn seems to have developed his tenor arias from Handel movements like 'For ever blessed be thy holy name' (*Jephtha*) rather than from the Bach arias that he had got to know through his revival of the *Matthaus Passion* – even though Elijah's Bass aria, "It is enough', is clearly modelled on Bach's 'Es ist vollbracht'.

As Mollie Sands has said, "English tenors should regard John Beard as their patron saint, the founder of their race. It was Mr Handel who first put tenors on the musical map, and John Beard was Handel's first tenor".[20]

[20] Mollie Sands, 'Invitation to Ranelagh', London, 1946, p. 50