

## CHAPTER 3

# Contextual In-Depth Knowledge as a Liberating Force in Artistic and Pedagogical Communication of Early Modern Material

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**Abstract:** How are essential parts of early modern material communicated in our present-day context? This chapter addresses the issue of how the historical is expressed in artistic contexts, and presents examples showing that this also applies in a pedagogical context. The argument asserts that in-depth study and knowledge result in greater freedom when making informed choices in relation to the material itself, and communicating it to students and audiences. Through various historical sources, in-depth analysis of text structure, rhetoric, and early modern references, this chapter presents a possible way forward. The case used is Henry Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas*, with libretto by Nahum Tate. This work is part of a larger whole in the author's doctoral dissertation. For the first time, a topomorphological analysis of the opera is presented, shedding light on rhetorical structures within the work, thus adding fascinating layers of meaning to the understanding of it. Using this material in pedagogical and artistic work expands the potential for interpretation. Bridging the gap between theory and practise enables us to access both a deeper and wider foundation for our pedagogical and artistic communication of early modern material.

**Keywords:** early modern, topomorphology, artistic and pedagogical communication, artistic integrity

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## Introduction

How do we experience the historical? Some would even say: Is it at all possible to encounter and learn about historical art and performance? This chapter addresses the issue of how we express the historical in artistic and pedagogical contexts. Starting with the question of the historical, employing in-depth analysis and central examples, I wish to lead the way towards a well-informed, embodied approach to artistic freedom and ways of learning.

Understanding historical material is always a complex issue. Philosophical questions regarding the possibility of ever approaching any material outside our own context, reality and time in history, cannot be entirely rejected without contemplation. However, such a point of view opposes the premise of historical musicology. Approaching the material completely out of its original context is not an alternative if we wish to relate to the historical part of this field of study. Traditionally, this has been based on a search for “authenticity” in historically informed performance, HIP.<sup>1</sup> However, authenticity is a problematic term and fallacy in itself, since the possibility of a truthful, authentic experience of the historical can never exist without also belonging to our present-day context and experience. Therefore, the fields of historical musicology and early modern<sup>2</sup> performance need to move beyond this, towards a “post-historically-informed” era (Friman, 2008).<sup>3</sup> Working within the fields of historical musicology and early modern music and text, history and context themselves become important angles of approach. In my experience as a performer and teacher, this also enriches my understanding, imagination and potential in terms of interpretation and immersing myself in

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1 Historically Informed Performance, HIP, is a term originating with the movement that started with Christopher Hogwood, founder of Early Music Consort (1967) and later the Academy of Ancient Music. The movement, spanning over five decades, focuses on a quest for authenticity in the performance of Early Music (Rile, 2014).

2 The term early modern is a general term often used in historical and literary contexts, but it is also applicable to historical music. It generally covers the period spanning from the 15th to the 18th century, making it a useful term in covering periods from the late Medieval, Renaissance, Baroque and Classical eras.

3 Term first found in the PhD dissertation of Anna Maria Friman, in which she defines the performance practice of Trio Mediæval as a part of a “post-historically-informed” era (Friman, 2008, p. 125).

the musical and textual artistic experience. My doctoral dissertation is entitled “Reconfiguring Dido: A Practical and Theoretical Investigation of the Changing Musical and Literary Representations of Dido, Queen of Carthage as the Basis for Character Interpretation in Henry Purcell’s Opera *Dido and Aeneas*”. This opera is a central work of its era, and I have been interested in it musically, and in terms of its content and literary references, for a long time. It is also a well-suited point of departure as an example of my approach and combined methodology. The focus of this chapter is in line with my dissertation project and an essential part of the premise of my studies, combining literary analysis, historical-musicological approaches and modern performance practise with a multisensorial, spatial and embodied approach to performance integrity and artistic communication. The overall aim is to illustrate through examples *how combining these approaches lays the groundwork for well-informed choices supporting an embodied understanding, resulting in artistic freedom and better communication*. This is relevant for performers, students and teachers, as well as researchers within related fields, encouraging a wider perspective and more integrated views on these topics.

This chapter will elucidate the process of in-depth study of sources and analysis of the material, and some of its contexts as a knowledge base for artistic integrity.<sup>4</sup> This, in turn, is also highly applicable to the pedagogical process of teaching historical material, and communicating it in a meaningful manner through an open-minded dialogue with students. Limited by the scope of this chapter and the nature of my approach, there is little room for a deeper focus on more specific pedagogical discourse. My goal here is to show how this approach is also highly relevant and applicable in a music pedagogical context, and I will thus refer to this when relevant throughout the text.

The research process will be demonstrated through a topomorphological analysis<sup>5</sup> of the overall structure of the opera *Dido and Aeneas*

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4 The term artistic integrity refers to the competence, experience and understanding that a performer personifies, and this is strengthened through well-founded choices, enabling the performer to “stand one’s ground” in explaining one’s artistic choices in terms of performance and interpretation. I see this as a liberating force providing both humility, confidence and artistic freedom resulting in a better communication.

5 Term explained in the context of analysis later in this article.

from around 1689, composed by Henry Purcell with a libretto by Nahum Tate. The same analytical approach will delve deeper into the aria “Dido’s Lament”. Further, I will combine this with analyses of structures and key signatures, to name a few examples. In accordance with current knowledge from historical research on the work’s time of origin, I will explain some possible interconnections, interpretations and inspiration for an embodied artistic approach to the material. Methodologically, I have worked for some time with this material from a literary perspective, drawing on the competence gained from my Master’s in English literature. I have also utilised a similar approach in both my Master theses, in English and music. This has now been further developed and widened methodologically in my PhD work, based on detailed reading, personal experience in singing, working with the material creatively, and a combination of all these methods. This can have clear implications for performers and pedagogues. Thus, the discussion in this chapter will explore some pathways towards finding new, meaningful ways of studying and approaching the artistic and pedagogical experience of the opera *Dido and Aeneas*.

## Past and present: A meaningful dialogue?

As an artist approaching historical material wishing to immerse oneself and perform the music, there can be many choices in relation to material, context and primary sources. However, the foundational knowledge for making good choices is not always present, and because it is time consuming and may seem dreary and less important, it is often the case that performers wish to be told what to do and given the material they are to work with. Choices are often not made consciously, or rather made by others, such as coaches, conductors, or based on a performance tradition already established as mainstream and acceptable. Support for the fact that such ideas are prevalent in the world of classical music and should be challenged is found, among others, in Austbø (2018) and Friman (2008).

I argue that there is a lot to be gained from doing the work oneself as a performer. Through my case study of *Dido and Aeneas* I will present the main aspects of the process of studying primary and secondary

sources, adding contextual historical knowledge, and combining this with an artistic sensibility, so as to build a solid foundation of knowledge for one's artistic choices. The essence of my argument is based on the premise that the integrity and ethics of informed choices lead to more complex and interesting artistic communication. The artist will also be prepared to stand one's ground and defend the artistic interpretation if challenged, and such integrity and independence of artistry is needed in the field of classical music in general and, more specifically, in early modern music. In the essay "On Quality in Musical Performances" [My translation, Norwegian title: "Om kvalitet i musikalske fremføringer"], Håkon Austbø discusses the challenge of traditional approaches to performance in classical music competitions. The measurable and objective criteria of accurate interpretation of the notated music with impeccable technique, following tradition and style, being in line with the composer's intent and displaying knowledge of the work's structure, are all favoured over a personal and unique interpretation (Austbø, 2018). He goes on to claim that there is often a price to be paid for being unique and presenting a personal interpretation. He sees this as a problem, as the survival and renewal of classical music depends on development and not just conservation. Leaning on tradition and objective criteria does little to promote a genuine and living artistic practise. As Nina Sun Eidsheim points out in her article "Sensing Voice":

What *is* familiar to those who study Western music is that which can be written down. Common methods of musical representation and analysis evidence Western culture's preoccupation with what notation can capture and preserve. [...] Consequently, the abstractly yet fixedly *notated* overshadows the concrete, ever-shifting *experience* of music. (Eidsheim, 2011, p. 134)

The point that the objective, notated and measurable dominate the musical experience, and that this fact must be challenged, might seem counter-intuitive to my case for studying material in detail. My argument is precisely that following tradition does not lead to renewal, however renewal will not stand its ground against high status and widespread tradition unless it is well founded. This foundation is built both through meaningful dialogue with the historical past and in embodied interaction

with the material in our present-day context. In her article, Eidsheim displays these two perspectives as opposing each other:

In vocal studies, this orientation plays out as a privileging of dramatic, structural and semiotic content (libretto, score), and sociohistorical context over the distinct quality, or timbre, of each individual voice in each performance of each work. Generally, Western music studies favor the idealized and abstract at the expense of the sensible, unrepeatable experience. (Eidsheim, 2011, p. 134)

I do not agree that there must necessarily be an opposition between the two. As previously stated, to renew the field one must have the integrity and ethos to be in dialogue with the past, while at the same time be aware, not to say, proud, of one's artistic uniqueness and interpretation. I fully endorse the multisensory approach favoured by Eidsheim, but in addition, I also see an inspiring potential in the unpredictable and unknown landscape in the intersection between the historical past, the performative present, and future artistic potential. To me, perspectives of content and context of historical material, and multisensorial, interpretative and unique performative artistic expression activate each other and result in greater artistic power and communication.

## Historical sources: Do they matter?

In relation to *Dido and Aeneas*, when choosing a source for the musical and textual material, there are many factors to consider. It is not usual for performers to seek out all possible editions, prints and original sources of the score. At best, one seeks to find a critical score where the editor has done a thorough job. But there is often more than one version out there. How do you choose? And on what basis do you choose? The job of reviewing all available scores, and the research and researchers behind the work is a daunting task. Choosing the seemingly most acknowledged one, the more widespread one, or the one that sounds more definite (not leaving too many demanding choices) is tempting. In my work with various scores of *Dido and Aeneas*, it is clear that a score named "Norton Critical Scores", "an authoritative score", sounds well researched and

definite. The status of the publisher and editor is clear. However, I have delved into discussions of the research on this opera, and find that there is some debate among acknowledged scholars. Curtis Price (Purcell, 1986), Ellen Harris (Purcell, 1987), William H. Cummings (Purcell, 1995) and Margaret Laurie (Purcell, 1974) are all renowned, and to choose between editions edited by any one of them requires an in-depth understanding of their points of view on controversial issues, in terms of historical research on the opera, and the various manuscripts and original sources in existence.

The whole issue of finding the most “authentic” original version builds on the premise that there is one definite, original and authoritative version out there, defined sometime in the 1680s by Henry Purcell and Nahum Tate, and that the ultimate goal for any work with this opera and performance thereof, should do the “work” justice. This classical romantic idea of the “work” (Goehr, 2007) and performance is increasingly challenged in today’s world of classical music and opera, but the traditional approach is deeply embedded in tradition and culture and is still a given, although it is sometimes somewhat expanded.

A discussion of historical evidence shows that there are many good reasons for challenging the classical tradition in terms of work interpretation. There is an intimate and very interesting connection between acquiring knowledge embedded in the material itself, and the social, political and cultural context from which it came into being. The freedom of understanding and integrating the material on many levels can lead to meaningful artistic interpretation for performer and audience.

Tanja Orning, at the time of her postdoc at the Norwegian Academy of Music, states that “styles of the past are in themselves emptied of meaning” (Orning, 2018, p. 2, my translation).<sup>6</sup> I strongly disagree with this statement.

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6 Original Norwegian full quote: “Musikksosiologen Theodor Adorno beskrev materiale som noe som er i stadig dialog med historien og den sosiale konteksten. Samfunnet reflekteres implisitt i materialet fordi det filtreres gjennom komponistens erfaringer, og på denne måten vil materialet alltid ha en historisk dimensjon. I dette perspektivet er tidligere tiders stiler isolert sett tømt for mening. Et senromantisk tonedikt eller en sonate i neoklassisk stil skrevet i dag, kan være ypperlig utført stilistisk, men hvilken estetisk verdi det har for oss, er et annet spørsmål. Slike stiløvelser vil i ytterste konsekvens forbli kun stiløvelser fordi de ikke bringer inn en dialog med samtiden” (Orning, 2018, p. 2).

She explains that this is because styles of the past are not in dialogue with society today. In my opinion, her approach focuses on the “work” as a composition on a piece of paper, not the experience of music as it is performed. The performer is an artist communicating with the past in working with and performing the music. The audience is a part of this multisensorial experience of music performance, both parts being at once in the present and in dialogue with the past. I find this to be true of music of various styles from different times throughout history. Thus, this is a premise of my reason for engaging in a dialogue with historical material.

It is clear that the field of historical musicology focuses in large part on facts and details. Being able to document original manuscripts, first performances, performers, conductors, conventions of performance, playing technique, and so on, is important in that it sheds light on the context of the material we have today. However, this discussion can become immensely detailed, and building arguments to support a claim, theory or idea based on the knowledge we possess today can become a never-ending debate. This seems like discussion for its own sake. In my opinion, it is important to connect theoretical discussion to performance practise. But this is not a common practise everywhere. The gap between the field of musicology and performers is well established through, for example, Anna Maria Friman’s dissertation “Modern Performance of Sacred Medieval Music with Particular Reference to Women’s Voices” (2008), in which the research shows that there is not much communication between musicologists and performers in the field of early music. In an interview with musicologist Susan Boynton, Boynton makes the point that musicologists have the freedom to speculate without having to make definite decisions. This liberty is in contrast to performers, who have to decide when they perform (Friman, 2008, pp. 113–114). Although approaching the material, as well as purpose, for musicologists and performers are naturally different, I truly believe that understanding each other’s perspective, and learning from each other’s practise, can result in more meaningful research and more well-informed and creative artistic practise. There are already examples of successful collaboration between scholars and performers, however, I wish to make this more mainstream and embedded in music education and performance practice.



“The knowledge the performers bring to their performances creates freedom and enhances their feelings of non-confinement, and that freedom opens up the creative process through which music can happen in an unrestrictive way” (Friman, 2008, p. 131). This quote is powerful in that it encompasses the ontological premise for my overall argument. Friman boldly states that knowledge leads to freedom, non-confinement and creativity for the performers. And she bases this on empirical data from her PhD research on her own performance, and from interviews with internationally renowned performers of medieval music, as well as established musicologists within the field. What this knowledge encompasses is different for each performer, but as I will show, a lot of knowledge is freeing rather than restricting, in terms of a creative and free performance.

The idea of historically informed performance, HIP, has since the start been almost obsessed with notions of authenticity: the premise of an authoritative original source in order to find the ideal performance with regard to how the original composer and listener might have defined it. As this goal is impossible no matter how you approach it, the premise is false and results in a restricted view, a museum-like approach, not at all in line with artistic creativity. However, historical context reveals an enormous amount of information about how the composers, writers, performers and audiences viewed the work and how they approached it. This knowledge supplies us with new ideas, possible interpretations and approaches, where there is not a definite right or wrong, but where the goal is for the work to be performed and experienced in a meaningful artistic manner for all involved. In this context, it is also highly relevant to include parameters such as modern or period instruments, baroque or modern pitch, use of vibrato and ornamentation, to name some relevant elements. An extensive investigation into such choices is important, but not the focus of this chapter. However, I find it necessary to mention this, and further discussions will be included in my PhD dissertation.

In both Harris (2018) and Price (1984), to name a couple of authoritative sources, there is a detailed account and discussion of surviving sources of librettos and scores of *Dido and Aeneas*. “The state of the surviving sources of *Dido and Aeneas* is the most deplorable of any of Purcell’s

major stage works” (Price, 1984, p. 239). The only source from 1689 (?) is Tate’s printed libretto including the prologue. However, the earliest surviving score is the Tenbury score MS1266 dating from 1750, lacking both the prologue and the chorus at the end of Act II. Without going into a detailed discussion of the variations and discrepancies between various surviving sources, it is clear that choices have to be made if the opera is to be performed. What sources to trust and what to do with missing sections are all important to consider. The debate among musicologists has been going on for decades, and we are left with several possible solutions, most of them argued by some to be the most historically correct. But again, the premise of seeking out an authoritative “authentic” version is perhaps not the most historically informed way of approaching the issue at hand, anyway.

Some of the missing sections in the preserved manuscripts have been “filled in” through different means at different times and contexts. In part three of her book, Harris (2018) writes about the performance history of the opera. Many alterations, variations, extensions and other changes and additions have been performed throughout history. They are products of their time, and in hindsight, many are considered to be “unhistorical”, far from the original and out of genre and style. Discussions on issues like these go deep into music philosophy and concepts of “authenticity”. I do not wish to be considered a purist, as my point of view is that interpretation and recontextualisation of a work will always be the only way to perform it, as it is impossible to truthfully recreate the past. However, the issue of how far away from the “work” we can go before it becomes a new work, is an interesting philosophical issue, with somewhat fuzzy logic. As Eidsheim states in relation to the recognition of various genres of music:

Musical genres are generally recognized within a few seconds, based on timbre: If the formal parameters of a genre are fulfilled but the timbral aspects are not, the status and intactness of the work in a particular instantiation – that is, the extent to which the work remains itself –are called into question. (Eidsheim, 2015, loc. 2883-2885)

Purcell’s *Dido and Aeneas* as a musical genre and musical work is recognised, among other parameters, by its timbre. If, for example, the

melody and text remain intact, but the instrumentation, style, vocal technique, etc. are altered, does the work remain itself? There are several interesting and, in my opinion, beautiful new, modern versions of, for example, “Dido’s Lament”. The melody is mainly the same, but the timbral aspects are altered.<sup>7</sup> In my view, this represents something new in the sense that the extent to which the work remains itself is called into question. This means that it is, to a greater extent, something new based on historical material, rather than actually being historical music. And the difference is crucial when working within the field of early modern music, as the historical is the premise, even though we recontextualise it and make it meaningful as an artistic expression and communication in our own time.

## A historical case for appropriation and recontextualisation

As far back as 1700, opera *Dido and Aeneas* was included as an allegorical play-within-the-play in Gildon’s adaptation of Shakespeare’s *Measure for Measure*. This version was based on both Shakespeare’s original and Davenant’s reworking of the play from 1662. Rewriting famous plays was a common practise in seventeenth-century England, some reworkings being more popular than others. The opera was divided into four sections and placed between acts as a commentary on the plot and an allegory for the characters, being displayed for them onstage, so the opera became a part of the play, not just a musical interlude. This reveals the opera in a new light, adding layers of interpretation. As Price puts it:

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7 I would love to give several examples of this with analysis and comparisons, but it would be a step aside with regards to the focus and frame of this article, so it must be left for later publications. However, here are some links to examples on YouTube in terms of timbral and visual alterations and new interpretations:

Jeff Buckley: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sA5UAblOWY>

Annie Lennox and London City Voices: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f3DFaIovZxc>

Allison Moyet: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8EIrVGro3n8>

Director Andrew Ondrejcek with trans and queer lip-sync: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8EIrVGro3n8>

Purists may view the joining of the opera and play as a misguided conflation that saps the lifeblood of each, but I think the union provides a valuable, if indirect, insight into how the composer's near contemporaries may have interpreted the troublesome ambiguities surrounding Aeneas. (Price, 1984, p. 238)

Drawing on this argument, seeing the near contemporaries' treatment and interpretation of the material should also inspire us to be bolder in our recontextualisation. If they found it natural to adapt, edit and employ plays, operas, songs and poems in new contexts in order to become meaningful new artistic performances, why shouldn't we?

Another good example following a similar train of thought, is the issue of the missing dances. In various libretto and score sources, up to eleven dances are mentioned. However, in the oldest and most complete score in existence, there are only four dances specified in the musical score (Harris, 2018). However, Harris argues through historical references on performance conventions of the time, that several dances can be "hidden" in the score, for example through repetition of a choral movement or improvised, conjoined with the preceding music. And references in the libretto of two dances for guitar were almost certainly improvised. That is the reason for them not being notated in the score. They are both based on a repeating bass pattern, a chaconne and a ground, and such guitar pieces were common knowledge in terms of improvisation at the time (Harris, 2018, pp. 76–81). This attitude towards improvisation should remind us that improvisation was a natural and embedded practise and thus a part of the composition. What we can learn from this, is that we should adopt a similar attitude in recreating and performing this work. It is a collaborative practise and is created through the performance. At the same time, I would like to mention that in order to maintain the timbre of the opera, the nature of improvisation should be musically and stylistically in line with the notated score.

## Music and rhetoric

Moving on to musical and textual analysis, it is clear that an in-depth study and knowledge of the musical and textual material reveal the intimate interconnection between music and text. It will suffice here to

present some central examples. To begin with, the relationship between key signatures, characters and plot is an intricate one, on many levels.

From the beginning of the sixteenth century musicians tried to rekindle the Classical ties between rhetoric and music, and several late Renaissance theorists wrote at length about the different emotional qualities of the modes. In Purcell's time these ideas were taken up again, perhaps most passionately by Johann Mattheson of Hamburg. In *Das neu-eröffnete Orchestre* (1713), he attempts to broaden the doctrine of the affects to include tonality. [...] Purcell did not leave us with such a catalogue. But he did use certain keys in the theatre music with remarkable consistency. (Price, 1984, p. 22)

This foundation in classical rhetoric in relation to music is also central to my argument regarding textual analysis and topomorphology, to which I will return later on. But related to the music in *Dido and Aeneas*, there are manifold representations of these consistent uses of key signatures in line with Purcell's compositional style. Some of these typical collocations are also common among his predecessors and contemporaries, according to Price (1984, p. 23). The most obvious example is "Dido's Lament" in G minor, and Price states that this key signature had a traditional association with death for at least two generations of English theatre composers. Another important feature is that Dido as a character is always in tune with the established tonality of the scene, whereas Aeneas rarely is. This expresses his intrusion into her established life, and hints musically that he has not come to stay; he does not fit in. In addition, Price establishes the idea that a tonality, seemingly at variance with the usual scheme, can presage an otherwise unexpected horrific event (Price, 1984, p. 23). For more examples, see Figure 1 below.

An important premise in working with historical texts is that the texts are understandable and possible to interpret. As Roy Eriksen and Peter Young emphasise in *Approaches to the Text* (2014), historical texts communicate across time. "That there should be a division between these [historical texts from different times in history] causing communication break-down and preventing knowledge transfer is ahistorical and a fabrication of the biased mind" (Eriksen & Young, 2014, p. 10). At the same time, it takes great effort to truly interact with historical texts,

and the manner of studying them is also a historical and traditional practise.

Careful and philological study and *explication de texte* are indispensable tools when tackling texts that are no longer immediately open to be processed and digested by many scholars or the general reader. Patient and meticulous examination of the texts and the conventions and contexts that shaped them is to a large extent the fruit of the rigorous methods developed by Early Modern Humanists in their studies of the extant exemplars of the ancient world, texts both spiritual and secular. (Eriksen & Young, 2014, p. 10)

Combining these perspectives, namely meticulous studying and believing in the possibility of communication and knowledge transfer between texts of the past and our own time, the premise is established for a meaningful dialogue across history. This can result in new and creative perspectives based on old ones, and further, in meaningful artistic interpretation and communication. One such detailed and rigorous method of study is topomorphological analysis.

The method entails studying the design and distribution of topoi (that is “places” and “themes”) within the structure (*morphê*) of a text – hence *topomorphology*. In other words, in the analysis of written compositions topomorphology considers the spatial relationships and the shape of segments within a text as an aid to interpretation [...]. (Eriksen, 2001, p. xiv)

Through topomorphology, layers of meaning embedded by the author in the textual structures can be revealed. It is based on classical rhetoric, and it is evident that this manner of structure was pervasive in early modern writing. I have also found evidence of such structures in Tate’s libretto for *Dido and Aeneas*. As such analysis of the textual material has not been previously applied, this is also one of my new contributions to historical-musicological research on this material. My interest in such analysis is not only for its own sake, although the knowledge revealed is fascinating in itself. The goal is always to apply it in a performance context in our own time.

In Figure 1, below, the macro level of the topomorphological structure of the opera is illustrated. Due to the limitations of the present text, some central examples must suffice. A detailed and more extensive analysis will be material for my upcoming PhD dissertation. A central element is the continuous repetition of the word “fate” in the libretto, appearing at central points throughout the plot. Fate, or destiny, is in many ways the essence of the opera, but most of all, the essence of the character Dido. It is the very last word of her emotional aria at the end of the opera. Being aware of such structures and the importance of rhetorical and topomorphological devices in early modern times, reveals layers of meaning that can add to our interpretation today. We are not governed by these structures, as I see it. On the contrary, they are an aid in finding new interpretations through a dialogue with the past. Adding layers of knowledge and understanding is empowering, in that all the choices we unconsciously make in studying and performing are brought to the fore. As a performer, then, it is now natural to make conscious choices based on a combination of extensive knowledge and artistic sensibility. And I argue that this results in a performance with integrity and artistry, communicating with the audience. And, in extension, it is an important foundation for teaching and guiding students in manoeuvring such historical material, be it in theoretical or practical studies.

In many ways structured as a classical Aristotelian tragedy, the action and development progress with a clear structure, reflected in both libretto and music. Another centrally placed and repeated word is “flame”. In Act I it represents Dido’s love and desire, in Acts II and III it refers to Carthage going up in flames as the witches plot the destruction of Queen Dido and her kingdom. At the end of Act III it refers to Dido’s death. Layers of meaning in central words like these are rhetorical devices intentionally embedded to support structure and affect us on a subliminal level, as well as being explicitly apparent. They also function as foreshadowing on a subtle level, as multiple meanings of the same word portend upcoming events. More examples are illustrated here in Figure 1. All related incidents and topics are colour coordinated, so that the connections will be as clear as possible.

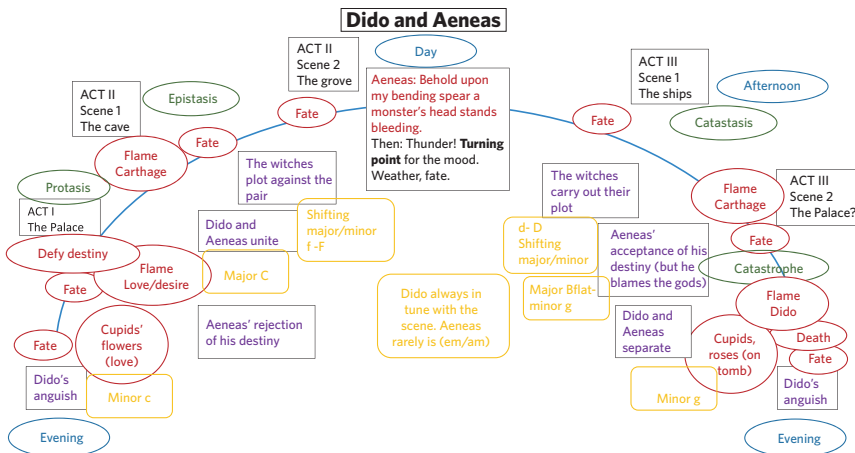


Figure 1. Dido and Aeneas: Illustrated Topomorphological Macrostructure (my own illustration)

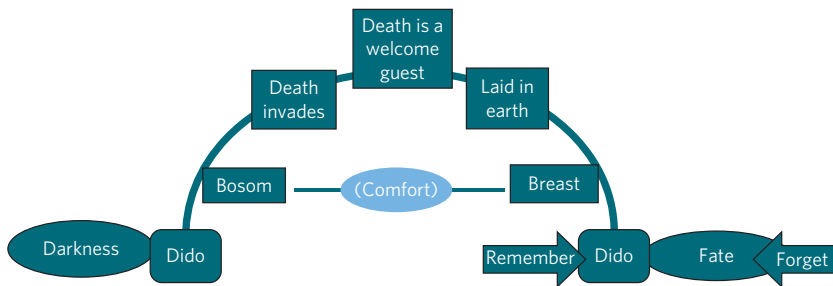
As mentioned, structures are found on macro, meso and micro levels in the libretto and music. I will present a more detailed approach through a similar analysis of “Dido’s Lament”, her final aria when she dies at the end of the opera:

Thy hand, Belinda, darkness shades me,  
 On thy **Bosom** let me rest,  
 More I would but **Death** invades me.  
**Death** is now a Welcom[sic] Guest,  
 When I am laid in Earth [may] my wrongs Create  
 No trouble in thy **Breast**  
 Remember me, but ah! Forget my **Fate**.

The colour coding is not symbolic, but purely a practical matter to represent different effects. The colours illustrate important structures that are purposefully distributed in the poetic lines, in order to create a structure that can influence from an explicit to a subliminal level. The purple words refer to Dido herself, the subject of the text. With all these repetitions and references to herself in this short text, it is evident that she is the focal point throughout the text. Green refers to the synonyms breast and bosom and occurs in a circular mirrored pattern. The red words are all the repetitions of death, beginning with death as an invasion, moving towards acceptance.



This is ordered in a chiasmic centripetal structure, a symmetric, circular pattern. The brown words are synonyms for errors, problems and their consequences. The grey words are centripetal, meaning that they are in the very middle, and deal with Dido being at peace with her fate. The blue words are clear antitheses, opposites. All these rhetorical devices are well-known structures, emphasising the message and strengthening the emotional nerve of the aria. The last word, fate, is marked in yellow. Fate is a central word throughout the plot and distributed evenly and at central points in the libretto, as shown in Figure 1. It is very fitting that this is Dido's very last word. An illustration of these same points is found in Figure 2.



**Figure 2.** Dido's Lament: Illustrated Topomorhological Structure (my own illustration)

An analysis such as this provides the singer with a very detailed structure of the poetic message in the text. I note that these textual focal points are in line with the musical phrasing and accompaniment. "Dido's Lament" in G minor is structured around a ground bass pattern, and in addition it is one of very few vocal pieces with independent string accompaniment. The ground bass pattern is made up of a descending tetrachord but has distinctive features.

First, it is five bars in length, in itself antithetical to regular phrasing, but even more important to its profile is the chromatic descent through the upper fourth of the scale and the cadence by leap to the lower octave (in G minor). These two distinct parts of the ground, the chromatic descent and cadence [...] divide it equally into two balanced halves. (Harris, 2018, p. 133)

As Harris explains, the combination of a regular structure contrasted by irregular features results in a more intricate musical structure. It builds

a tension which supports the content of the words. The aria also has a lack of full tonic resolution in the sung melody and accompanied harmony, which is withheld until the end. “The chromatic transformation only occurs in the instrumental postlude where, as Dido expires, the full-octave chromatic G minor scale finally is given, not in the bass, but in the treble [...]. This is certainly one of the most sublime moments in the opera” (Harris, 2018, p. 137). She goes on to explain: “One senses a meaning in these structures that rises above technique. [...] And as Dido completes her requests, the vocal line coincides with the fate motive for the first time – Dido and her fate finally touch, and she dies” (Harris, 2018, p. 138). She concludes: “Purcell yokes the disparate elements of his craft (often miraculously) to a single purpose – the composition of music that rises above simple accompaniment of the text to become the active embodiment of the drama” (Harris, 2018, p. 139). Clearly, the music itself embodies the drama. Such an analysis of the enactment of music and text reveals crucial information when interpreting material and character. And as the music is an embodiment of the drama, the performer’s individual interpretation based on this knowledge can become a present embodiment of the character and the opera in a present-day performance.<sup>8</sup> Combined, all this knowledge supplies the performers with competence and an understanding of the interconnections of textual and musical messages, that add to the understanding and interpretation of the scene and the character. This aids in placing emphasis on certain words and musical phrases, supporting the emotional and embodied communication in the performance.

## Mind and body

Another important contextual point is the question of Dido’s death. How does she die? In the classical sources from Greek and Roman

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8 The nature of this article is to supply examples of analysis and encourage the use of this in an individual artistic interpretation. There is no room for detailed explanations and suggestions for how a singer might make use of this in an interpretation in terms of musical score analysis with emphasis and use of phrasing, emphasis, articulation, diction, vibrato, gestures and so on. Such level of detail is material for my upcoming PhD dissertation.

mythology, such as Homer and Ovid, she commits suicide, stabbing herself with a dagger. However, there are no references to this either in the libretto or the score. Dido dies from grief in Purcell and Tate's version. To us, this might seem a bit odd. However, when investigating historical sources for theories of acting, the idea that the body reacted physically to emotions to such an extent that one could die from grief, was a generally accepted belief of the time. Moreover, today it is medically recognised as broken heart syndrome and can even lead to a heart attack and death.<sup>9</sup> Ideas of the direct connections between thought, emotion and body are well explained in historical sources (Roach, 1993). I find it particularly interesting that these early modern ideas, oftentimes rejected as superstition and outdated concepts of the body, to some extent can be rediscovered, understood and supported through modern cognitive research and philosophy of the embodied mind (Lakoff & Johnson, 1999, 2008). In my PhD research, I go further into detail in these matters.

My point in this detail on Dido dying from grief, is that such knowledge unquestionably adds new perspectives to the interpretation of the character Dido. Relating emotionally to literally dying from grief differs fundamentally from being desperate and killing oneself. Awareness of this demands new decisions regarding interpretation and performance. Conscious thoughts and reflections on Dido's psychosomatic state will, in various ways, affect the interpretation and performance of the aria. The multisensorial approach as described by Eidsheim (2015), and the ontological premise of the embodied mind as discussed by Lakoff and Johnson (1999) fit together perfectly. My view is that performers must awaken to the fact that music performance involves all senses and the whole body for both performers and audiences. It is not simply a case of auditive practice. Our experience of reality comes through the senses, so an awareness of a multisensorial approach is crucial in relating to the historical material and the practice of music as experience. We can then make it come alive for both performers and audiences today.

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9 <https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/broken-heart-syndrome/symptoms-causes/syc-20354617>

These premises are ideal as a foundation for working with the historical in a pedagogical context, be it music history, studying an instrument, or working with performance training with students. As a teacher, the goal is to enable the students to become independent and apply their knowledge and competence in a meaningful manner. Supplying them with a broad foundation to be able to reflect upon issues relating to the connection between past and present, can supply them with a tool they can apply again and again.<sup>10</sup> Reminding students of the importance of integrity and reflecting upon the complexity of the issues presented in this chapter, gives them the ability to become involved with the given material on a more tactile, multisensorial and experiential level, hopefully aiding them towards a deeper and more meaningful understanding that will come alive in practise.

## Enacting the past through contemporary unrestricted recontextualisation

Throughout this chapter I have argued that through studying historical and contextual information, it is possible to reveal various relevant and interesting perspectives on the material being studied, in this case Purcell and Tate's opera *Dido and Aeneas*. I have given some examples of different approaches, revealing issues of importance in terms of providing a more complex basis for interpretation. As a performer internalising and processing this information, it alters my perspectives and my interpretation, shaping my idea of the character Dido. More knowledge leads to more conscious choices being made throughout the process, emboldening integrity and artistry. In turn, this will also be part of a unique artistic interpretation and performance, resulting in a more complex message in artistic communication.<sup>11</sup> Building on historical ideas of communication

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<sup>10</sup> I would like to bring in further examples on what this might offer practitioners, students, or educators with a description of a practical approach and how this has been used in practise. However, that reaches beyond the scope of this chapter, and must be left for later publications.

<sup>11</sup> Given the nature of the essay, I have chosen to explain this in more general examples. Going into details on how this can be realised in my own artistic process, or in others', is not possible within this text's limitations. I therefore make the conscious choice to leave this for my PhD dissertation.

on all levels from the subliminal to the explicit, the premise that knowledge transfer across history is possible and meaningful is central. These ideas are also in line with contemporary concepts of embodied and multisensorial viewpoints (Eidsheim, 2015; Lakoff & Johnson, 1999) regarding singing and human communication. As such, this approach has the potential to inspire a free and creative recontextualisation that will become more than a mere historically informed performance. The initiative behind the argument presented here originates from my long-term ambition to contribute to change and renewal in the field of early modern performance in order to better synthesise theory with performance. Therefore, I encourage both the historical-musicological field and performers to bridge the gap and become familiar with present-day discourse on these related topics in research and performance traditions. This explains the need for my detailed analysis and dealings with historical matters, as well as emphasising its relevance for performers, and the practical and artistic value of the approach. Bridging the gap between historical musicology and contemporary concepts of performance and interpretation of early modern repertoires, this approach can create a meaningful interaction between theory and artistic practise. The performance, then, becomes, as Friman puts it beautifully, “an act of simultaneous preservation and re-creation” (Friman, 2008, p. 132).

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