

An analytical study of vocal technique in Handel's Messiah: a soprano perspective

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Abstract. This dissertation takes Handel's oratorio *Messiah* as its research focus and analyses the vocal techniques required in this work, aiming to explore key aspects of artistic expression and interpretation from both musicological and performance perspectives. The article systematically examines key technical and interpretative domains for the soprano, including the nuanced use of ornamentation and da capo conventions, diction and textual clarity, the historical and expressive use of vibrato, dynamic interaction with orchestra and continuo, and the realisation of Baroque Affekt through vocal colour and phrasing. To ground the theoretical discussion in practical reality, the study employs a detailed comparative case analysis of the aria "*Rejoice Greatly*", examining interpretations by sopranos Emma Kirkby, Kathleen Battle, and Renée Fleming. The case study critically evaluates how these performers balance Historically Informed Performance (HIP) principles with individual artistic expression across specific parameters: ornamentation in da capo sections, tempo and rhythmic flexibility, timbre and vocal production, and textual expression in relation to musical rhetoric. This dissertation contributes to a deeper scholarly understanding of Baroque vocal artistry and proposes a coherent, evidence-based framework for contemporary singers and educators.

Keywords: music performance, vocal technique, comparison of performance styles, case study

1. Introduction

Eighteenth-century British society experienced profound religious and cultural changes. With the rise of rationalism, traditional church music faced new challenges, and the function of music gradually expanded from purely religious ceremonies to the realm of public art. Performances of *Messiah* during this period often served a dual function: while some concerts retained the solemnity of the church, others embraced elements of public drama [1]. Meanwhile, the oratorio, a genre blending religious narrative with dramatic musical expression, quickly became popular in England, bridging the sacred and the secular.

George Frideric Handel stands as one of the most representative composers of this period. Heavily influenced by Italian opera and German Baroque music, he gradually turned to the creation of oratorios during his time in England. Composed in 1741, *Messiah* is a monumental work in the Baroque oratorio repertoire. It combines sacred texts with complex musical structures that tell the five parts of Messianic proclamation, birth and doctrine, crucifixion and death, resurrection and eternal life, and deification [2]. Completed in just 24

days, the work reflects Handel's virtuosity in fusing the Italian operatic style with the English choral tradition [3].

From a soprano perspective, *Messiah* presents unique challenges in terms of technique and interpretation. The arias "*Rejoice Greatly*", "*I Know That My Redeemer Liveth*", and "*How Beautiful are the Feet*" exemplify Handel's synthesis of medieval chant traditions, such as the marching movement, with Baroque virtuosity, such as ornate ornamentation.

This study focuses on the singing skills and performance practice of the soprano singing section in *Messiah*, examining five key aspects: ornamentation, diction, rhythmic processing, timbre shaping, and emotional expression. Through analysis of selected passages and representative performances, it seeks to establish a connection between historical authenticity and modern expression.

This article addresses two central questions: How can performers balance historical authenticity with personal artistic expression? And how does the soprano in Handel's *Messiah* express the unity of religious sacredness and Baroque dramatic tension through specific vocal techniques?

2. Vocal technique and performance practice

This chapter examines the singing skills and performance practice of the soprano in the *Messiah* and is structured into five parts.

2.1. Ornamentation and da capo

In music, ornamentation primarily serves to embellish the melody; however, in Baroque vocal works, ornamental tones are used as important expressive and rhetorical tools. The aria structure (ABA') is a typical example of ornamentation. In the return section, the singer is usually expected to add improvised or stylised ornaments to demonstrate their understanding of the work, the deepening of emotions, and technical control. Handel frequently uses this form in *Messiah*, giving the soprano singer considerable room for expression, while also placing higher demands on vocal technique.

From the perspective of historical style performance, the singer must respect Baroque traditions while also taking into account the expression of textual emotion and the sacred character of the music. Handel's music, heavily influenced by Italian opera, often uses complex melodies and ornamental passages to convey theological themes such as joy, hope, and revelation. The retrospective structure provides a space that is both regulated and open: in the first pass A, the composer presents the main theme, while in the retrospective (A'), the singer performs a personalised recreation "in style" according to the tradition of the time.

In the first A section of "*Rejoice Greatly*" (e.g., bars 9–23), Handel writes numerous decorative sound patterns, such as fioritura, melisma, and coloratura, demonstrating his attention to expressive tension. However, in the da capo section (bars 66–106), the singer may add trills, appoggiaturas, and other ornamental techniques according to Baroque conventions. The author found that singers such as Kathleen Battle and Renée Fleming tend to add more ascending running notes to the word "shout" to depict the bright and energetic religious proclamation (e.g., bar 91 in Figure 1).

Figure 1. Handel, "Rejoice Greatly", bars 89-93

Musicologist Cyr argues that such ornamental sounds not only serve a decorative role but also carry theological significance: they concretise abstract religious emotions through sound, allowing the listener to "hear" the faith itself [4].

In contrast, "*I Know That My Redeemer Liveth*" requires a more restrained approach, as its lyrics express declarations of faith, emotional restraint, and firmness. Sustains are used in many places, especially on the word "liveth" and at the end of each phrase, creating a gentle melody and strengthening the sense of steadfast faith. Ornamentation here should avoid ostentation and instead enhance the warmth and piety of the statement "*I Know That My Redeemer Lives*" (e.g., bars 41-43 in Figure 2). This internalised vocal treatment embodies the Baroque concept of *Affekt*, in which each emotion corresponds to a specific musical expression, and the singer must convey the true meaning of the emotion within the style constraints.

Figure 2. Handel, *I Know That My Redeemer Lives*, bars 33-50

Appropriate ornamentation should not be added randomly. Firstly, the internal logic of the melody needs to be considered, and the new notes should not destroy the centre of gravity and coherence of the original melody. Secondly, the rhythmic density should be in harmony with the original style, avoiding dense sound groups. The sound pattern of ornamental sounds should be delicate and natural, and should be subject to semantic pressure. For example, adding a gentle glissando or tremolo to the word "peace" can reinforce the calm, sacred atmosphere, while adding a short staccato or echo at the end of the word "shout" can emphasise its declarative energy [5].

In terms of singing skills, the soprano will face several challenges when adding ornamentation in the da capo section. Firstly, breath management must be carefully planned in long phrases. Secondly, pitch and

rhythm stability must be maintained. Finally, coordination with the bass continuo or orchestra is essential. In live performances, added embellishments must maintain a tacit understanding with the accompaniment to avoid rhythmic conflicts. Therefore, ornamental details should be prepared in advance and refined during rehearsals. Singers should experiment with different ornamental groups to ensure they are clear, natural, and expressive. Importantly, textual clarity should not be affected by the accumulation of sound groups, and ornamental tones should elevate the text rather than obscure its semantics.

2.2. Diction and text clarity

Messiah is a theological oratorio, and its text is mostly derived from the Bible. Its vocal requirements involve not only the beauty of tone, but also the accuracy and expressive clarity of the text. Historically informed performance requires precise pronunciation and expressive rhythmic dynamics to ensure that artistic expression remains both clear and emotionally driven [6]. Therefore, accuracy of diction, coherence of speech, and rhetorical sensitivity to the text become indispensable technical elements when the soprano sings *Messiah*.

In "*Rejoice Greatly*", the word "Rejoice" is prone to blurred pronunciation due to the rapid scales and numerous coloraturas. From performances by singers such as Regula Mühlemann, it can be observed that a tight [r] attack supported by the power of a high-explosive breath gives the sound forward momentum, while the [jois] vowel must remain bright and full in the ascending decoration [7]. In the return section A', the word "greatly" is often decoratively prolonged. The singer must use the rapid retraction of the tongue while instantly gathering the airflow and passing it through the teeth, so as to maintain the instantaneous distinction between [t] and [l], preserving the linguistic balance of the phrase. The final consonant [n] in "Zion" is also important and should resonate clearly to maintain the solemn character of the sacred proclamation. At the same time, the clear pronunciation of consonants should not affect the melodic coherence. For example, the word "rejoice" in "*Rejoice Greatly*" requires the consonant [r] to be strong but not exaggerated, and the final [s] must be quick and clean so as not to interrupt the flow of subsequent notes.

Vowel control is particularly important in "*I Know That My Redeemer Liveth*", where vowel distortion can directly affect the aria's *Affekt*, as the melody emphasises the solidity of faith and introspection. The "I know" at the beginning of the work must convey certainty. In recordings by English soprano Lynne Dawson, the vowel [aɪ] is elongated and focused, and the consonants [n] and [oʊ] are clearly connected [8]. The ending "liveth" shifts to a lower vocal range, and in order to maintain the fullness of its timbre, she utilises chest resonance. In "that He shall stand", continuous vowels and consonants are concatenated and lead to a dull timbre; therefore, careful tongue positioning is required to maintain clarity between [æ] and [ʃ] and maintain the fluency of the language.

Historically informed performance emphasises that words must not only be understood but also highly compatible with the mood of the music. This aligns with Baroque *Affekt* theory, which emphasises that music should evoke specific emotions through means such as speech speed, tempo, volume, and diction [9]. In "*How Beautiful Are the Feet*", for example, the vowels in "beautiful" should be full and smooth to reflect the divine beauty carried by the words, while the consonants [f] and [t] should be soft and precise. This delicate treatment embodies the use of sound to carry rhetoric and meaning [10].

2.3. Use of vibrato

The understanding of vibrato during the Baroque period differs significantly from modern musical practice. In Handel's work, vibrato functions as a subtle musical rhetorical device rather than a simple timbre decoration [11]. This requires the singer to exercise a high degree of vibrato control, adding, adjusting, or removing

vibrato when needed, so that the sound is closely integrated with the musical rhetoric. This view echoes Tosi's comparison of vibrato to architectural ornament: it should enhance the structure without overwhelming it [12].

In "*I Know That My Redeemer Liveth*", singers often begin "I know" with a pure, almost straight tone (for example, Amanda Powell's 2018 version with The Cleveland Baroque Orchestra [13]) to convey the firmness and quietness of the declaration of faith. When the melody moves to the B section, "And though worms destroy this body", the amplitude of tremolo is significantly increased, which reflects fragility and human mortality, before resolving into the brightness of "shall I see God". This progression illustrates how Handel expresses the profound transformation from the fear of death to the belief in resurrection through musical language. According to the *Affekt* theory of baroque musical emotion, this image of death is fully expressed through broken vibrato.

In "*Rejoice Greatly*", vibrato is more dynamic and rhetorical. Fast ascending ornamental passages are sung without tremolo to ensure that the outline of the notes is clear, highlighting the lightness and agility of the melody. When the music reaches a long stop or accent word, for example, in "Shout, O daughter of Jerusalem", Kathleen Battle's 1990 performance adds a pronounced vibrato to convey the unleashing of joy and enthusiasm [14].

From a technical perspective, vibrato depends on stable breath control and respiratory management. Vibrato that is too fast or too wide can make the timbre sound tense, while the complete absence of vibrato may result in a rigid tone. Therefore, singers must choose the use and type of vibrato according to the lyric content, musical syntax, and vocal range. Studies have shown that the use of 'selective vibrato' in historically informed performance singing (especially the delayed introduction of vibrato) enhances the listener's experience of emotional expression in Baroque music [15]. Early music singers used a lower frequency and narrower amplitude form of vibrato, which was more in line with the listener's expected perception of the Baroque style [16].

In performance practice, singers need to master vibrato control progressively, first stabilising the pitch with a straight tone, and then gradually adding vibrato of different speeds and amplitudes. At the same time, recording playback can be used to determine whether the vibrato is excessive or insufficient. Proper use of vibrato can better ensure the overall effect of the music and avoid excessive elaboration. When rehearsing with the accompaniment, special attention should be paid to the integration of vibrato and harmonic background to avoid auditory imbalance caused by the mismatch between vibrato frequency and harmony. In addition, prolonged use of wide vibrato will increase the burden on the vocal cords, and the singer should reasonably arrange the frequency and intensity of the vibrato during practice and performance to ensure the integrity of the performance.

2.4. Interaction with orchestra and continuo

The singing technique and instrumental collaboration of the soprano in Handel's *Messiah* demonstrate the unique dialogic art of Baroque music. In the process of interpretation, the interaction between the singer and the instrumental ensemble is far from a simple accompaniment relationship, but rather a subtle musical dialogue.

This collaborative relationship is particularly evident in the aria "*Rejoice greatly*". The brisk breakdown and fast tempo of the strings propel the entire section forward, and the singer needs to align with them through flexible breath control and precise rhythmic coordination. The two parts often form a decorative echo, imitating and complementing each other to create rich musical textures. The soprano needs to pay special attention to synchronising with the phrasing of the string group, keenly perceiving the changes in the bowing of the violin, and forming a delicate echo with the first violin in the treatment of decorative tones. The singer

must adjust the timing of the tremolo according to the harmonic rhythm of the bass continuo, especially in the da capo section, anticipating the crescendo of the strings and establishing tacit coordination with the ensemble during rehearsals.

In "*I Know That My Redeemer Liveth*", the melody of the first violin is often intertwined with the soprano line. The singer needs to maintain unity of colour in the dialogue between the long note and the instrument, while the violin imitates the voice by controlling the brightness and dynamic changes (e.g. bars 18-26 in Figure 3).

Figure 3. Handel, *I Know That My Redeemer Lives*, bars 16-32

For example, in the sustained phrase "my Redeemer", the singer can control the natural change of dynamic intensity, "breathing" with the legato curve of the strings, and strengthening the emotional resonance between the voice and instrument. In addition, in passages with oboe, such as "*How beautiful are the feet*", the singer needs to adjust the vibrato frequency by mimicking the vibration frequency of the reeds to maintain the purity of the tone. When the trumpet enters the passage, the singer should adjust the vowel position in advance to adapt to the bright timbre of the brass and switch to straight notes in the strong section to maintain sound projection.

Figured bass plays an important role in emotional expression. In "*How Beautiful Are the Feet*", the basso continuo provides a solid foundation for the melody, and the singer needs to maintain continuity of breath resonance, allowing the sound to blend naturally with the harmonic pulsation of the harpsichord and cello to achieve a balanced harmonic effect.

In stage practice, performers need to communicate with the conductor and the bass continuo through small movements of their eyes and body, adjusting rhythm and timbre in real time to achieve coordination in sound, harmony, and rhythm. In the spatial interaction between voice and accompaniment, the soprano needs to appropriately reduce the volume when instruments play the phrase with a prominent rhetorical function, according to the logic of the text, so that the structure of both text and music becomes clearer. This dynamic balance requires the singer to possess a deep understanding of the overall effect of the ensemble and the relationship between music and text, as well as the ability to flexibly adjust volume and colour quickly.

2.5. *Affekt* and vocal colour

During the Baroque period, the Doctrine of the Affections was an important criterion for music creation and interpretation, emphasising the evocation of typical emotional states through specific musical vocabulary [17]. This theory derives from a combination of rhetoric and Cartesian philosophy of emotions, in which composers make music a persuasive emotional language through elements such as rhythm, tonality, interval, and timbre [17]. *Oxford Bibliographies* states that *Affekt* theory requires music to convey emotions as clearly as language, forming highly stylised emotional imagery such as joy, tranquillity, or solemnity [18]. In *Messiah's* soprano

section, this theory is realised through the meticulous control of dynamics and timbre: "*Rejoice Greatly*" relies on light and bright timbres to shape the joy of praise; "*I Know That My Redeemer Liveth*" conveys the steadiness and firmness of faith through a warm, focused, gradually spreading sound; "*How Beautiful Are the Feet*" relies on a steady, transparent voice to express peaceful, meditative imagery [8].

In specific singing practices, the implementation of *Affekt* relies on precise control over breath management, vowel grading, and resonant placement. For example, in "*Rejoice Greatly*", the rapid coloratura of the A section requires a high level of breath support to maintain vocal lightness and agility. In the return section A', the singer makes the riff more emotionally persuasive by expanding forward resonance and deepening vowel colour on "Zion". In "*I Know That My Redeemer Liveth*", the opening "I know" needs to convey firmness of faith with steady breath and restrained resonance, gradually strengthening the vocal space and dynamics in "that he shall stand", shaping the emotional transition from tranquillity to firmness. In "*How Beautiful Are the Feet*", the singer needs to maintain vocal support and even vowel extension at extremely low dynamics, so that "beautiful" and "gospel of peace" retain a gentle, stable timbre that matches their peaceful textual context.

Rhythmic flexibility is also an important part of *Affekt* expression. Singers can apply subtle timing adjustments within strict time signatures, bringing vocal expression closer to the natural accent and emotional flow of the language. For example, the slight delay before the ornamental note in "*Rejoice Greatly*" highlights the momentum of joy, and the extension of the vowel at the end of the sentence in "*I Know That My Redeemer Liveth*" creates a thoughtful sense of declaration. This emotion-driven subtlety requires the singer to perceive the syntactic centre of gravity accurately, enhancing the rhetorical effect of the expression while maintaining overall structural stability.

3. Case study

Building on the previous sections, this chapter shifts from theoretical exploration of vocal technique and the principles of Historical Performance (HIP) to stage practice through case and comparative studies.

3.1. Research aims and methodology

The purpose of this case study is to analyse the unique interpretations of the aria "*Rejoice Greatly*" in the oratorio *Messiah* by sopranos representing different performance styles, and to explore how they balance divine faith, Baroque dramatic tension, and personal artistic style. It is hoped that this study will deepen understanding of the stylistic and technical requirements of the work, while emphasising the balance between HIP principles and the freedom of performance.

The method combines critical listening, score analysis, and stylistic comparison, supported by relevant academic literature on HIP practices. The analysis focuses on specific technical dimensions—wording and textual clarity, ornamentation, dynamic shaping, sound colour, and *Affekt* implementation—as well as the broader question of how each performer's stylistic choices relate to Handel's compositional intentions. Recordings by three sopranos are analysed in detail, and their treatment of aria technique and expressiveness is evaluated in relation to historical stylistic conventions and modern aesthetic sensibilities.

3.2. The reason for the choice of the singing section and the audio version

The aria "*Rejoice Greatly*" from *Messiah* was chosen as the focus of this case study because it embodies the most representative stylistic and technical challenges of Handel's soprano writing. The aria requires the soprano to execute complex coloratura passages with flexibility and clarity while maintaining a bright,

buoyant tone. It relates closely to two core issues: balancing sacred character with dramatic tension, and balancing historical style with personal interpretation. The vocal requirements of the chorus, which include the difficult coloratura technique, are extremely dramatic, vividly expressing the typical emotion of "joy" in the Baroque period, and showing the diverse emotional expressions of *Affekt* theory in practice. Its da capo form provides ample space for ornamentation and improvisation, allowing performers to express unique interpretations through the recreation of their personal style, providing research space for the author and providing important research value for exploring the application of Historically Informed Performance (HIP).

This study analyses recordings of "*Rejoice Greatly*" by Emma Kirkby, Kathleen Battle, and Renée Fleming, whose interpretations represent distinct stylistic approaches. Emma Kirkby, as a representative of the HIP style, reflects clear HIP characteristics: light and clean timbre, restrained use of vibrato, and emphasis on emotional rhetoric and textual expression [19]. Kathleen Battle's recordings combine some HIP elements with modern bel canto techniques, featuring a brilliant and agile voice, clear diction, and a balance of historical style and personal lyrical expression [14]. Renée Fleming's version embodies modern bel canto: a full, rounded timbre, continuous vibrato, and dramatic dynamics characteristic of contemporary operatic interpretation [20]. Together, these three versions illustrate differing vocal aesthetics and interpretive concepts, offering valuable material for comparative research.

3.3. Analysis and comparison of the singing version

3.3.1. Ornamentation in the da capo sections

In all three recordings, the treatment of ornamental tones in the return section reflects each performer's understanding of the work. Emma Kirkby's rendition closely follows HIP tradition, with ornaments that are extremely restrained and rhetorical [19]. She maintains the melodic line in section A and almost maintains the original melody in the return section, using very little vibrato, usually only adding some leaning tones as embellishments, and only using a small tremolo for the modification of the long note. This approach allows the rhetorical function of music to be fully presented, reflecting jubilant emotions without excessive display.

In contrast, Kathleen Battle's return section includes richer ornamentation. Long notes almost always employ sustained vibrato, and the improvised cadenza in the extension of the high notes in the middle section (B section) spans a wider range, making the work sound bright and brilliant [14]. Her approach highlights personal artistry. Renée Fleming's 2005 version exemplifies the dramatic tendencies of modern bel canto [20]. In the return section, she is accompanied by a wide and large vibrato, giving the music a strong personal expressiveness and dramatic tension. However, the final phrase includes relatively restrained coloratura additions, and the decoration is more restrained, but some leaning sounds are added, and these ornamental sounds are almost progressive, without much span. These differences reveal contrasting aesthetic orientations behind the treatment of decorative tones: Kirkby's simplicity highlights HIP's rhetorical consciousness, while Battle seeks a balance between historical style and personal artistic expression, and Fleming foregrounds the dramatic tendencies found in modern bel canto.

3.3.2. Speed and rhythmic flexibility

In terms of tempo and rhythm, the three singers demonstrate a clear evolution from rigorous historical style to free romantic expression. Emma Kirkby's interpretation strictly follows the rhythmic norms of the Baroque period, and the overall tempo is stable in the moderate range (approximately 92 BPM), and only the text accent, such as "daughter of Zion" (1'32), is slightly elastic (tempo rubato), highlighting the expressiveness of the dotted rhythm. This restrained variation maintains the rhythm of the music and is in line with the aesthetic proposition of the HIP movement for "measured expression" of Baroque rhythm.

Kathleen Battle adopts a more flexible, faster tempo, while maintaining the basic tempo framework (around 112 BPM). The lyrical passages are significantly slowed down (approximately 97 BPM), and the singing is enhanced through this romanticisation, while the upbeat "Rejoice" section is moderately accelerated to create excitement, reflecting her balance of historical style and modern expressiveness. She appropriately broadens the coda to ensure the full expression of emotions. At the end of the aria, she further expands the tempo, providing ample space for her improvisational cadenza. This reflects her boldness and personal control over rhythmic pacing.

Renée Fleming employs an exaggerated ritardando at the end of each phrase, emphasising the exaggerated expression of emotion, and this large tempo fluctuation breaks through the conventional treatment of the Baroque period, presenting a typical modern opera interpretation style. The different interpretations of the three vividly reflect the collision between historical restoration and personal artistic freedom.

3.3.3. *Timbre and vocalisation*

Timbre and vocalisation are important factors in determining the stylistic orientation of "*Rejoice Greatly*". Emma Kirkby produces a light, transparent timbre with HIP's characteristic straight sound and high-pitched resonance. Vibrato is used sparingly and selectively at rhetorical high points. The overall sound is pure, light, and bright, retaining the rhetorical function of the music.

In Kathleen Battle's recordings, the sound is sonorous and warm, supported by flexible and stable breath control. This gives the timbre both dynamic and rhetorical clarity. Her vocal style is particularly dexterous in the light coloratura; the melodic lines are smooth and full of lustre, and the singing of the coloratura passages shows great clarity.

Renée Fleming's interpretation demonstrates the fullness and richness of modern bel canto. The vibrato is wide and continuous, adding a grand soundstage and rich, dramatic tension to the work. However, in tone-dense coloratura passages, this sound thickness sacrifices some of the agility and clarity between adjacent notes. In summary, the interpretations of the three reflect different understandings of timbre functions: Kirkby reinforces the language with minimalist timbres, Battle retains rhetorical clarity in warm tones, and Fleming reinvents the expressive style of the work with the fullness of modern bel canto.

3.3.4. *Textual expression and musical rhetoric*

Textual expression and phrase rhetoric are at the heart of the emotional communication of "*Rejoice Greatly*". Emma Kirkby's treatment is close to the Baroque idea that "music is speech", treating every word as a rhetorical element. She emphasises the consonants of "greatly" in "*Rejoice Greatly*", giving them a clear sense of explosion, and shapes the ascending melody on words such as "shout" to maintain a sense of hierarchy under continuous repetition.

In Kathleen Battle's version, the vowels are full and mellow in tone. She also strengthens consonant articulation, enhancing clarity. This integrates well with her slightly faster tempo and helps maintain textual definition.

Renée Fleming's treatment leans towards the modern bel canto tradition. She emphasises the smoothness and roundness of the musical lines, placing vowels in the dominant position of timbre presentation. She pays less attention to the detailed pronunciation of the [t] consonant in "daughter", resulting in softer diction, and often creates a *messa di voce* arc with strong, sustained high-pitched lines. When singing emotionally prominent words such as "shout", she uses a fuller timbre and large dynamics to create dramatic tension, integrating the text into the dramatic sound line, and reflecting the concept of lyric service and emotional expression.

4. Conclusion

This study systematically discusses the musical style and singing skills in Handel's *Messiah*, combining theoretical analysis with performance practice. It explores the different choices of soprano singers in dealing with technical elements such as embellishments, breath control, and timbre shaping through a comparative analysis of Historically Informed Performance (HIP) theory and modern interpretive versions.

The case studies show that Emma Kirkby's interpretation strictly follows the principles of HIP, focusing on text clarity and rhetorical expression; Kathleen Battle balances historical style with modern bel canto techniques; and Renée Fleming emphasises dramatic emotional presentation. These differences reflect the tension between historical authenticity and artistic individuality in Baroque musical interpretations.

As a major Baroque work by Handel, *Messiah* stems from this dialectical unity of tradition and innovation. This study not only deepens the understanding of Baroque vocal art but also provides contemporary singers with an interpretive framework with both historical roots and creative space.

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