

Hibernia long beheld, with Sorrow fillâ€™d,
 Her Poets and her Sons in Arts unskillâ€™d:
 Sons! dead to Fame, nor comely to the Sight, 15
 Their Customs wild, their Manners unpolite;
 Nor yet couâ€™d *Musick* boast persuasive Charms,
 To tempt one sprightly Genius to her Arms:
 The *Muse*, in mournful Pomp, laments her Case,
 Pale Grief and Anguish painted in her Face; 20
 To lonely Woods retire the tuneful Throng,
 Uncharmâ€™d by Sound, and negligent of Song:
 The silent *Lark* forgets to wake the Dawn
 With early Song, suspended oâ€™er the Lawn,
 On Earth he Pines, and droops his useless
 Wings 25
 With dumb Concern, and neither Soars nor Sings.

At length a *Swain*, long torturâ€™d with Despair,
 The Scorn of some inexorable Fair,
 Haunted each Grove, each dark Retreat of Grief,
 Bereft of Ease, and hopeless of Relief; 30
 Nightly he heard sad *Philomel* complain,
 And wishâ€™d to copy so divine a Strain,
 So clear, so soft the plaintive Warbler sung,
 The Groves, and Hills with plaintive *Echoes* rung.
 Her Notes so mournfully melodious flow, 35
 They calm his Soul, and mitigate his Woe,
 Distressful Passion both alike bewail,
 He sighs his Grief, she chants her piteous Tale.

Fain would he Sing; his Voice was still suppress
 By swelling Sighs, which struggled from his Breast. 40
 Despair, whose Sting can haughtiest Minds controul,
 Unstrings his Nerves, and quite unmans his Soul,
 Breathes a wild Horror into evâ€™ry Part,
 Restrains his Tongue, and preys upon his Heart.

But near the Grove, where comfortless he lies, 45
 The spiky Reeds in waving Clusters rise,
 He models one, and his Invention tires,
 Varying its Form as Art or Chance inspires:

Then gives it Breath to sing: With gentle Mirth
It strikes the Ear, as conscious of its Birth. Â
Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â 50
With sharpened Steel he lanc'd its tender Skin,
In order rang'd the opening Wounds are seen,
Wounds! less than he received, with piercing Smart,
In that soft Instrument of Love, the *Heart*:
To these his active Fingers he applies, Â
Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â 55
Which bid the changing *Musick* fall, and rise,
While in the Road of *Harmony* they guide
Each infant Sound, and order the Notes preside.

But order his Airs a gloomy Sorrow hung;
For still he lov'd, and Love distress'd he sung, Â
Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â 60
His Heart in every Accent seem'd to bleed,
And Grief harmonious trembled from the Reed.

And still the Tenor of *Hibernian* Strains,
Those pleasing Labours of enamour'd Swains,
From his a melancholly Turn receive, Â
Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â 65
The Airs are moving, and the Numbers grieve.

Musick thus wak'd to Life, fair Child of Love!
Time's ripening Touch, and growing Arts improve,
While to the feeble Voice of slender Reeds,
The manlier *Musick* of the *Fife* succeeds. Â
Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â 70
Alike in Form, but of a larger Mold,
More durable its Frame, its Tone more bold;
Now lively Numbers, born on willing Gales,
Flow to the Hills, and echo in the Vales;
The rural Throng now chearful croud around, Â
Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â 75
And catch, enamour'd, the inspiring Sound,
They walk and move with correspondent Mien,
And Dance exulting on the level Green:
No Secret now the raptur'd Heart conceals,
The conscious Maid her hidden Flame reveals Â
Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â 80
In glowing Blushes on her Cheeks they rise,
Burst from her Tongue, and kindle in her Eyes.

But secret Pleasures once disclosed to Sight,
Give Birth to fresh Successions of Delight.
On Objects new the restless Fancy strays, Â

85

And wants in the search of nobler Lays.
Extended Strings at length Experience found,
Start at the Touch, and tremble into Sound;
Of which a Vocal Multitude conspire,

In shining Order plac'd to form the Lyre: 90

And thus the Strings, as in a Choir combin'd,
Have each their parts of Harmony assign'd:

Some heav'nly Sounds transportingly create,
Like Echo some the heav'nly Sounds repeat,

Those plac'd above, rejoice in sprightly Tones, 95

Below the rough, hoarse Base, responsive, Groans.

If the judicious Artist bids them Play,
The dancing Cords in Silver Sounds obey,
But struck with Hands unskill'd, they spring to War,
Hiss out their Rage, and in harsh Discords jar.

100

Music henceforward more Domestick grew,
Courts the throng Towns, and from the Plains withdrew:

The Vagrant Bard his circling Visits pays,
And charms the Villages with venal Lays.

The solemn Harp, beneath his Shoulder plac'd, 105

With both his Arms is earnestly embrac'd,
Sweetly irregular, now swift, now slow,

With soft Variety his Numbers flow,

The shrill, the deep, the gentle, and the strong,

With pleasing Dissonance adorn his Song; 110

While thro' the Cords his Hands unweary'd range,
The Musick changing as his Fingers change.

The Croud transported in Attention hung,
Their Breath in Silence sleeps upon the Tongue,

The Wheels forget to turn, the Labours cease, 115

And ev'ry Sound but Music sinks to Peace.

So when the Thracian charm'd the Shades below,
And brought down Raptures to the Realms of Woe,

Despairing Ghosts from Labour stand releas'd,

Each Wheel, each Instrument of Torture ceas'd; 120

The Furies drop their Whips, afflictive Pain

With these he knew the listâ€™ning Soul to charm,
And evâ€™ry Torment of its Sting disarm, 160
Couâ€™d calm the harsh disturber *Care*, to ease,
With Fear delight us, and with Sorrow please;
Couâ€™d warm the kindling Soul with amâ€™rous Fire,
And Raptures, which he never felt, inspire.

While *Musick* thus its native Beauty shows, 165
And, from its living Spring delightful flows,
How does it raise! how gladden evâ€™ry Heart!
How far transcend the mimic Voice of *Art*!

So, when *Belinda*â€™s heavâ€™nly Beauties stand,
Wrought into Life, by *Kneller*â€™s magic Hand, 170
Her Face, her Shape, have all that *Art* can give,
Start from the animated Paint, and Live;
But, when the real Nymph, divinâ€™ly bright,
Arrayâ€™d in native Lustre, strikes our Sight,
Some nameless transport in our Bosom plays, 175
That Shade and Colour want the Force to raise.

Dubourg next sways the Soul with nicest Art,
And binds in airy Chains the captive Heart,
While from the vocal Strings, and shifting *Bow*,
At his nice Touch thâ€™ obsequious Numbers flow. 180
With easy toil he swells the Notes aloud,
Now on the Ear precipitant they croud,
Now, scarcely heard, they gradually decay,
And with melodious *Cadence* waste away,
While at his melting Falls, and dying Notes, 185
Around the Heart the liquid Rapture floats.

With martial Ardor if he boldly warms,
The animated *Hero* pants for Arms,
With guiltless Rage thâ€™ impetuous Spirit glows,
And prostrates *Legions* of imaginâ€™d Foes. 190

But, if to Mirth, a sprightly strain inclines,
With Humour fraught his quickening Genius shines,
Then, smiling Joys thro' every Aspect fly,
Glow in the Lips, and wanton in the Eye.

Next *Bocchi* Reigns, whom Art and Nature grace
To smooth the roughness of the sullen *Base*,
Directs his Notes distinct to rise or fall,
Tries every *Tone* to charm, and charms in all.

Th' awakened *Muse* thus rises, thus refines,
Improves with *Time*, and in Perfection shines;
The first rude Lays are now but meanly priz'd,
As rude, neglected, as untun'd, despis'd:
Dead (in Esteem too dead) the *Bards* that sung,
The *Fife* neglected, and the *Harp* unstrung.

So when the *Thrush* exalts his chearful Throat,
To glad the Fields with many an artless Note,
With rude Delight the Listener's Breast he warms,
Wild though he sings, his sylvan Wildness charms;
But if the warbling *Nightingale* prepares
Her softer Voice, that melts with thrilling Airs,
The Winds are hush'd, still Silence reigns around,
And listening *Echo* dwells upon the Sound;
Harsh seem the Strains which gave Delight before,
And far excell'd, those Strains delight no more.

The pausing *Muse* now shuts her venturous Wings,
And, anxious of Success, distrustful sings;
O! might her Lays to thy Esteem succeed,
For whom she tun'd her artless Voice and Reed,
Thy Smiles would swell her Heart with honest Pride,
Approved by thee she scorns the World beside.

NOTES:

Title *Mira* Laetitia Van Lewen (1709-1750) married Pilkington in 1725, noted for her exceptional singing voice. Several other pieces in his *Poems on Several Occasions* are dedicated to her.

Epigraph From *Stheneboea*, a play fragment by Euripides (c. 480-c. 406 BC), given in ancient Greek. Translation from C. Collard, et al, eds., *Euripides: Selected Fragmentary Plays* (Liverpool UP, 2009),

fragment 663, p. 88.

13 *Hibernia* *Irland (Oxford Classical Dictionary).*

31 *Philomel* *A nightingale (OED).*

51 *its* *Emended from "it's," a printer's error.*

66 *Numbers* *â€œVersesâ€œ (QED).*

70 *Fife* *â€œA small shrill-toned instrument of the flute kindâ€œ (QED).*

77 *Mien* *â€œThe look, bearing, manner, or conduct of a person, as showing character, moodâ€œ (QED).*

103 *Bard* *Turlough Oâ€™Carolan (1670-1738, also Terrence Oâ€™Carolan), blind Irish composer and harpist; renowned for his improvisational verse (Brittanica).*

117 *the Thracian charmâ€™d the Shades below* *A reference to Orpheus, mythological Greek poet and musician of Thracian origin. After the death of his wife, Eurydice, at the suggestion of the gods, Orpheus descended to the underworld and charmed Hades and Persephone with his song (Oxford Classical Dictionary).*

121 *Furies* *Also called Erinyes; Greek spirits of punishment, avenging wrongs done to kindred (Oxford Classical Dictionary).*

131 *Albionâ€™s Isle* *Britain (Oxford Classical Dictionary).*

133 *Viner* *William Viner (1650-1716), English violinist, composer and Master of the State Music in Ireland from 1703 until his death (Dictionary of Irish Biography).*

138 *wooe* *Alternate form of "woo;" to court a person, typically a woman (QED).*

156 *Nicholini* *Nicolo Grimaldi (1673-1732), Italian opera singer, alto castrato (The Harvard Biographical Dictionary of Music).*

160 *its* *Emended from "it's," a printer's error.*

161 *Care* *â€œA burdened state of mind arising from fear, doubt or concern about anythingâ€œ (QED).*

169 *Belinda* *The main character in Alexander Pope's popular mock-heroic poem *The Rape of the Lock* (1714); based on Arabella Fermor (1696-1737), who was renowned at the time for her beauty.*

170 *Kneller* *Sir Godfrey Kneller (1646-1723), English portrait painter. One of the three known portraits of Arabella Fermor is attributed to him.*

177 *Dubourg* *Matthew Dubourg (1703-1767), English violinist, preternaturally gifted and was appointed Master of the State Music in Ireland in 1728, a position he held until his death (Dictionary of Irish Biography).*

195 *Bocchi* *Lorenzo Bocchi (d. 1725), Italian cellist; he is believed to be responsible for introducing the cello to both Scotland and Ireland (R. Cowgill and P. Holman, eds., *Music in the British Provinces, 1690-1914*, p. 4).*

SOURCE: *Poems on Several Occasions* (Dublin, 1730), pp. 3-25. [\[Google Books\]](#)

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