

Foreword

John Eccles was first and foremost a composer for the stage. He made his mark with the setting of a dialogue in the play *The Richmond Heiress* by Thomas D'Urfey in 1693, the singing debut of the actress Anne Bracegirdle. This was such a success "that he soon became one of London's most popular theatre composers....Mrs Bracegirdle....thereafter sang only his music.." ¹ Eccles also wrote for Mrs Bracegirdle the song *I burn, my brain consumes to ashes*, which occurs in the second part of D'Urfey's *Don Quixote*, and which became a standard for the so-called 'mad song'. Her performance of this song was so celebrated that verses were written in praise of it, and were set by Purcell and others.

Over the next 12 years Eccles produced the incidental music for nearly thirty plays, as well as a number of masques and operatic pieces. He also wrote an opera *Semele*, with libretto by Congreve. It has been suggested² that Congreve may have intended the work for the opening of the Haymarket Theatre in 1705, but this was not to be. Eccles finished the score by 1707, but by this time Italian opera had become the rage, and *Semele* was never performed.

Eccles collaborated with Henry Purcell to provide the music for several plays including *The Richmond Heiress* and *The Comical History of Don Quixote* (parts i and ii), and was responsible for setting texts by Dryden, Shadwell (the poet laureate) and other noted writers for the stage. Much of the music for parts 1 and 2 of *Don Quixote* was published in London in 1694: the present edition is based on this print.

Sleep, poor youth comes from the first part of *Don Quixote*, and is one of the greatest examples of Eccles' artistry in word setting, and of his beautiful, eminently singable melodies.

Editorial

As much as possible, this edition presents the music as it appears in the printed volume referred to. The original time signatures and keys are shown; the original spelling has been retained, but some punctuation has been added. Where changes have been made they are noted in footnotes. Editorial ties or slurs are shown bracketed. In continuo figures ♯ signs have been substituted for # where appropriate. Editorial accidentals are shown small; all other editorial additions are shown in square brackets []. An upper stave has been provided for the continuo, and this is editorial: the intention here is not to present a full realisation, but to provide keyboard players with a guide on which they can elaborate as they wish. An additional score with figured bass only is provided. The keyboard player may use whichever is preferred; the singer using the other.

Cedric Lee,
Richmond, 2006

¹ Stoddard Lincoln: 'John Eccles' *Grove Music Online* ed. L. Macy [Accessed 7 June 2006]
<<http://www.grovemusic.com>>

² loc.cit.