

‘ if they will make a Subscription for him, I will send
 ‘ for a Brother of his out of *Holland* that is a very good
 ‘ Tumbler; and also for another of the same Family
 ‘ whom I design for my *Merry-Andrew*, as being an
 ‘ excellent Mimick, and the greatest Droll in the Coun-
 ‘ try where he now is. I hope to have this Entertain-
 ‘ ment in a Readiness for the next Winter; and doubt
 ‘ not but it will please more than the Opera or Puppet-
 ‘ Show. I will not say that a Monkey is a better Man
 ‘ than some of the Opera-Heroes; but certainly he is a
 ‘ better Representative of a Man, than the most artificial
 ‘ Composition of Wood and Wire. If you will be pleased
 ‘ to give me a good Word in your Paper, you shall be eve-
 ‘ ry Night a Spectator at my Show for nothing.

C

I am, &c.



N^o 29. Tuesday, April 3.

— *Sermo linguâ concinnus utraq; Suavior: ut Cbio nota si commissa Falerni est.* Hor.

THERE is nothing that has more startled our *Eng-
 lish* Audience, than the *Italian Recitativo* at its
 first Entrance upon the Stage. People were won-
 derfully surprized to hear Generals singing the Word of
 Command, and Ladies delivering Messages in Musick.
 Our Countrymen could not forbear laughing when they
 heard a Lover chanting out a Billet-doux, and even the
 Superscription of a Letter set to a Tune. The famous
 Blunder in an old Play of *Enter a King and two Fiddlers
 solus*, was now no longer an Absurdity; when it was im-
 possible for a Hero in a Desert, or a Princess in her Closet,
 to speak any thing unaccompanied with Musical Instru-
 ments.

BUT however this *Italian* Method of acting in *Reci-
 tativo* might appear at first hearing, I cannot but think
 it much more just than that which prevailed in our *Eng-
 lish* Opera before this Innovation: The Transition from

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an Air to Recitative Musick being more natural, than the passing from a Song to plain and ordinary Speaking, which was the common Method in *Purcell's* Operas.

THE only Fault I find in our present Practice is the making use of the *Italian Recitativo* with *English* Words.

TO go to the Bottom of this Matter, I must observe, that the Tone, or (as the *French* call it) the Accent of every Nation in their ordinary Speech is altogether different from that of every other People; as we may see even in the *Welsh* and *Scotch*, who border so near upon us. By the Tone or Accent, I do not mean the Pronunciation of each particular Word, but the Sound of the whole Sentence. Thus it is very common for an *English* Gentleman, when he hears a *French* Tragedy, to complain that the Actors all of them speak in a Tone; and therefore he very wisely prefers his own Countrymen, not considering that a Foreigner complains of the same Tone in an *English* Actor.

FOR this Reason, the Recitative Musick in every Language, should be as different as the Tone or Accent of each Language, for otherwise, what may properly express a Passion in one Language, will not do it in another. Every one who has been long in *Italy* knows very well, that the Cadences in the *Recitativo* bear a remote Affinity to the Tone of their Voices in ordinary Conversation, or, to speak more properly, are only the Accents of their Language made more Musical and Tuneful.

THUS the Notes of Interrogation, or Admiration in the *Italian* Musick (if one may so call them) which resemble their Accents in Discourse on such Occasions are not unlike the ordinary Tones of an *English* Voice when we are angry; insomuch that I have often seen our Audiences extremely mistaken as to what has been doing upon the Stage, and expecting to see the Hero knock down his Messenger, when he has been asking him a Question; or fancying that he quarrels with his Friend, when he only bids him Good-morrow.

FOR this Reason the *Italian* Artists cannot agree with our *English* Musicians, in admiring *Purcell's* Compositions, and thinking his Tunes so wonderfully adapted to his Words; because both Nations do not always express the same Passions by the same Sounds.

I am therefore humbly of Opinion, that an *English* Composer should not follow the *Italian* Recitative too fervilely, but make use of many gentle Derivations from it, in Compliance with his own Native Language. He may copy out of it all the lulling Softness and *Dying Falls* (as *Shakespear* calls them,) but should still remember that he ought to accommodate himself to an *English* Audience; and by humouring the Tone of our Voices in ordinary Conversation, have the same Regard to the Accent of his own Language, as those Persons had to theirs whom he professes to imitate. It is observed, that several of the singing Birds of our own Country learn to sweeten their Voices, and mellow the Harshness of their natural Notes, by practising under those that come from warmer Climates. In the same manner I would allow the *Italian* Opera to lend our *English* Musick as much as may grace and soften it, but never intirely to annihilate and destroy it. Let the Infusion be as strong as you please, but still let the Subject Matter of it be *English*.

A Composer should fit his Musick to the Genius of the People, and consider that the Delicacy of Hearing, and Taste of Harmony, has been formed upon those Sounds which every Country abounds with: In short, that Musick is of a Relative Nature, and what is Harmony to one Ear, may be Dissonance to another.

THE same Observations which I have made upon the Recitative Part of Musick, may be applied to all our Songs and Airs in general.

SIGNIOR *Baptist Lully* acted like a Man of Sense in this Particular. He found the *French* Musick extremely defective and very often barbarous: However, knowing the Genius of the People, the Humour of their Language, and the prejudiced Ears he had to deal with, he did not pretend to extirpate the *French* Musick, and plant the *Italian* in its stead; but only to cultivate and civilize it with innumerable Graces and Modulations which he borrowed from the *Italian*. By this means the *French* Musick is now perfect in its kind; and when you say it is not so good as the *Italian*, you only mean that it does not please you so well, for there is scarce a *Frenchman* who would not wonder to hear you give the *Italian* such a Preference. The Musick of the *French* is indeed very properly

properly adapted to their Pronunciation and Accent, as their whole Opera wonderfully favours the Genius of such a gay airy People. The Chorus in which that Opera abounds, gives the Parterre frequent Opportunities of joining in Confort with the Stage. This Inclination of the Audience to Sing along with the Actors, so prevails with them, that I have sometimes known the Performer on the Stage do no more in a Celebrated Song, than the Clerk of a Parish-Church, who serves only to raise the Psalm, and is afterwards drowned in the Musick of the Congregation. Every Actor that comes on the Stage is a Beau. The Queens and Heroines are so painted, that they appear as Ruddy and Cherry-cheek'd as Milk-maids. The Shepherds are all Embroider'd, and acquit themselves in a Ball better than our *English* Dancing-Masters. I have seen a Couple of Rivers appear in red Stockings; and *Alpheus*, instead of having his Head cover'd with Sedge and Bull-Rushes, making Love in a fair full-bottomed Periwig, and a Plume of Feathers, but with a Voice so full of Shakes and Quavers, that I should have thought the Murmurs of a Country Brook the much more agreeable Musick.

I remember the last Opera I saw in that merry Nation, was the Rape of *Proserpine*, where *Pluto*, to make the more tempting Figure, puts himself in a *French* Equipage, and brings *Ascalaphus* along with him as his *Valet de Chambre*. This is what we call Folly and Impertinence; but what the *French* look upon as Gay and Polite.

I shall add no more to what I have here offered, than that Musick, Architecture, and Painting, as well as Poetry and Oratory, are to deduce their Laws and Rules from the general Sense and Taste of Mankind, and not from the Principles of those Arts themselves; or in other Words, the Taste is not to conform to the Art, but the Art to the Taste. Musick is not designed to please only Chromatick Ears, but all that are capable of distinguishing harsh from disagreeable Notes. A Man of an ordinary Ear is a Judge whether a Passion is expressed in proper Sounds, and whether the Melody of those Sounds be more or less pleasing. C

Wednesday,