

## **The Works of John Eccles**

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Performance parts are available from the publisher.

A-R Editions, Inc., Middleton, Wisconsin  
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Printed in the United States of America

ISBN 978-1-9872-0896-2 (print)  
ISBN 978-1-9872-0897-9 (online)  
DOI <https://doi.org/10.31022/B241>  
ISSN 0484-0828 (print)  
ISSN 2577-4573 (online)

Ⓢ The paper used in this publication meets the minimum requirements of the American National Standard for Information Sciences—Permanence of Paper for Printed Library Materials, ANSI Z39.48-1992.

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# Preface

To English theatergoers in late-seventeenth- and early-eighteenth-century London, the music of John Eccles (ca. 1670–1735) would have been both familiar and welcome.<sup>1</sup> His career, like those of Daniel Purcell, John Weldon, and Gottfried Finger, flourished after the death of Henry Purcell in 1695, with some time being spent as house composer at the theater in Lincoln’s Inn Fields. These years saw him writing songs, act tunes, and other incidental music for the plays performed there and contributing to the 1701 competition managed by the publisher Jacob Tonson for the best setting of William Congreve’s masque, *The Judgment of Paris*. He was as happy at court as he was in the theater, and produced a number of odes during the reign of Queen Anne. But the audiences of the period favored what was new over what was old, and the popularity of Eccles’s music had long since faded by the time of his death in 1735. Nevertheless, his career spans one of the most interesting periods of English musical history, one during which the focus of musical production shifted from the court of the 1670s and 1680s to the increasingly mercantile, concert- and opera-sponsoring London of the eighteenth century. At the same time, English composition absorbed elements of both French and Italian music, including overture and dance forms of the former and aspects of harmony, texture, and sequential patterning from the latter.<sup>2</sup> These were elements with which London audiences had a conflicted relationship: on the one hand they desired them as fashionable and exotic, but on the other they were suspicious of things that were not “English.” Eccles himself had absorbed all these influences but was also capable of writing a good

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1. For an overview of Eccles’s career, see Stoddard Lincoln, “John Eccles: The Last of a Tradition” (Ph.D. diss., University of Oxford, 1963). More recently, Kathryn Lowerre has considered his compositions for Lincoln’s Inn Fields in *Music and Musicians on the London Stage, 1695–1705* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009).

2. On the period to circa 1690, see Peter Holman, *Four and Twenty Fiddlers: The Violin at the English Court, 1540–1690* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1993), 282–304, 331–58, 413–35. All other recent studies charting this stylistic trajectory have concentrated primarily on Henry Purcell: see, for example, Martin Adams, *Henry Purcell: The Origins and Development of His Musical Style* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 3–86; Peter Holman, ed., *Henry Purcell* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 32–37, 192–200; and Peter Holman, “Purcell’s Orchestra,” *The Musical Times* 137, no. 1835 (January 1996): 17–23. For a useful summary of genres and forms of instrumental and vocal music associated with the theater in Eccles’s lifetime, see Lowerre, *Music and Musicians*, 18–26 and 68–81.

“English” tune, a flexibility that placed him in a powerful position in the theater world and made his works among the most popular of the late 1690s.

## Eccles’s Life and Career

Thanks to the research of Peter Holman, we now have more information about Eccles’s early life than was known when this collected edition of his works was begun. He was born on 10 December 1670, and baptized on Christmas Day at St. Martin in the Fields, London.<sup>3</sup> Unlike many other English composers, Eccles did not begin his career as a chorister in the Chapel Royal but was trained by his father, or—perhaps more likely—his uncle, as a violinist. Consequently, we hear almost nothing of him until 1694, when his name is recorded as a musician (probably a violinist) in the King’s Band. He did not receive a salary, however, until 1696, when he took over Thomas Tollett’s duties as one of the king’s twenty-four musicians-in-ordinary.<sup>4</sup> From 1700 he was Master of the King’s Music, having replaced Nicholas Staggins, and became the only composer to serve in this post under four monarchs: William III, Anne, George I, and George II. Presumably because these court appointments rarely paid well (or promptly, or sometimes at all), Eccles devoted most of his energy during this early period of his career to writing for the stage. His theatrical compositions were first published in 1691, and in 1693 he began working for the United Company at Drury Lane. When the United Company split in 1694, Eccles followed the rebel actors—Thomas Betterton, Elizabeth Barry, and Anne Bracegirdle—to Lincoln’s Inn Fields. After the theater companies reunited in 1705, Eccles continued to write for the theater, but he must have felt keen disappointment when his ambitious 1707 opera *Semele* (possibly intended for the opening of the Queen’s Theatre in the Haymarket) was never performed. It is often stated that in the wake of this debacle, Eccles effectively retired from musical life; indeed, he seems to have spent much more time at his home in Richmond, Surrey, from this point onward. Nevertheless, as Holman has shown, he

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3. Peter Holman, “New Light on John Eccles (1670–1735), Handel’s Court Colleague,” *Handel Institute Newsletter* 32, no. 2 (2021): 5; Holman, “Six Generations of Music and Scandal: New Light on the Eccles Family of String Players,” *The Viola da Gamba Society Journal* 15 (2021): 33–58.

4. ODNB, s.v. “Eccles, John (c. 1668–1735),” by David J. Golby.

# Introduction

## The English Court Ode

The performance of ceremonial odes to celebrate royal birthdays and other special occasions, to herald the New Year, and to welcome the return of the monarch became a part of English court life shortly after the Restoration of Charles II in 1660. The primary purpose of these musical events—alongside a rich array of painting, sculpture, poetry, masque, and ritual—was to contribute to the fashioning of the monarch’s public image as a figure representing power, stability, and splendor, a notion central to court culture across many parts of early modern Europe.<sup>1</sup> Court odes fulfilled this function through the combination of their famously effusive panegyric poetry with music emphasizing military pomp and virtuosic display.<sup>2</sup> The 1680s and early ‘90s are generally regarded as the high point of the genre, as exemplified by the seventeen court odes by Henry Purcell (1659–95), in which the form gradually took on an independent identity as a large-scale, multi-movement work requiring extensive performing forces.<sup>3</sup> Surprisingly, the reduction of the court’s musical establishment after the accession of William and Mary, which has been linked to a general decline in court music-making, is not reflected at all in the court ode—in fact, quite the reverse is true: as Peter Holman points out, the singers who lost their posts in 1690 continued

to be employed as soloists in ode performances,<sup>4</sup> and in the 1690s Purcell expanded the orchestration of his court odes by adding wind instruments and trumpets to the standard string ensemble.<sup>5</sup>

The heavy concentration on Purcell in scholarship on the court ode has led to the impression that the genre declined following his death in 1695, but Estelle Murphy has argued that the ode’s contribution to the fashioning of the monarch’s image remained important throughout the later Stuart and early Hanoverian periods and was particularly significant during the reign of Queen Anne (r. 1702–14), when it “experienced an unprecedented period of growth, encouragement and public promotion,”<sup>6</sup> which Murphy attributes to the new monarch’s “near obsession with ceremony.”<sup>7</sup> Indeed, the requirement for court musicians to supply odes annually for the New Year and royal birthdays was in no way curtailed after 1695, although Purcell’s extravagant orchestral forces were mostly replaced by a return to the standard four-part string ensemble. John Blow (d. 1708) continued his long-standing responsibility as composer of the New Year odes, while the birthday odes and music for other ceremonies were provided by several composers, including Daniel Purcell (d. 1717) and Nicholas Staggins (d. 1700). However, when John Eccles succeeded Staggins as Master of the King’s Music in June 1700, his new post seems to have come with a requirement to compose most of these ceremonial pieces. Blow, then in his fifties, seems to have retired from court life around 1701, so Eccles quickly became the principal contributor of both New Year and birthday odes, a role he retained until his death in 1735.<sup>8</sup>

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1. Estelle Murphy, “The Fashioning of a Nation: The Court Ode in the Late Stuart Period” (Ph.D. diss., University College Cork, 2012), 1.

2. For details of the typical sequence of events and rituals during these celebrations, see Rosamund McGuinness, “‘A Fine Song on Occasion of the Day Was Sung,’” *Music & Letters* 50, no. 2 (April 1969): 290–95, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ml/L.2.290>. (Note, however, that this article is based largely on accounts from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, which are much fuller than those from the seventeenth century.) For a catalog of surviving documentary evidence of the annual birthday celebrations during Queen Anne’s reign, including a list of music performed, see Olive Baldwin and Thelma Wilson, “Music in the Birthday Celebrations at Court in the Reign of Queen Anne: A Documentary Calendar,” *Handbook for Studies in 18th-Century Music* 19 (2008).

3. This view is expressed, for example, in Rosamund McGuinness, *English Court Odes, 1660–1820* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1971), 88–140; and Andrew Walkling, “Politics, Occasions and Texts,” in *The Ashgate Research Companion to Henry Purcell*, ed. Rebecca Herisson (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012), 209–16.

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4. Peter Holman, *Four and Twenty Fiddlers: The Violin at the English Court, 1540–1690* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1993), 432.

5. Details of the scoring of Purcell’s odes are included in the works list in *GMO*, s.v. “Purcell, Henry (ii),” by Peter Holman and Robert Thompson, <https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.6002278249>.

6. Murphy, “The Fashioning of a Nation,” 3–5 *passim*.

7. Estelle Murphy, “‘Inspire Us Genius of the Day’: Rewriting the Regent in the Birthday Ode for Queen Anne, 1703,” *Eighteenth-Century Music* 13, no. 1 (March 2016): 53, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1478570615000421>. Baldwin and Wilson suggest that the importance of such displays may have been heightened by the war with France, the Jacobite threat, and the question of succession, given Anne’s lack of an heir; see Baldwin and Wilson, “Music in the Birthday Celebrations at Court,” 1.

8. McGuinness, *English Court Odes*, 141–42.

# Wake, Britain, wake

**Tenor**

Wake, wake, wake, Brit-ain, wake, 'tis high time, 'tis high time\_ to wake, When

**Basso continuo**

5

might-

7

- y, when might-y ri- vals, Fame\_\_\_\_\_ and Fate, On this\_ great, great\_\_\_\_\_ con- junc- ture

6                      5    6            5                      6

                             ♭3    4            ♭3                      ♭5

11

wait, wake, wake, Brit-ain, wake, wake, wake, Brit-ain, wake, Hope and For- tune all\_\_\_\_\_ at

16

stake; There- fore, Brit-ain, wake, wake, Brit-ain, wake,                      If not for Fame,\_ for

20

safe- ty, if not for Fame,\_ for safe- ty, for safe- ty, for safe- ty, if not for Fame,\_\_\_\_\_

7            6                      7    8    6    7    8    [6]    9    8    6                      6            6

## Hark, how the Muses call aloud

Violin 1 or Flute 1

Violin 2 or Flute 2

Tenor 1

Tenor 2

Basso continuo

4

Vn. 1 or Fl. 1

Vn. 2 or Fl. 2

T1

T2

B.c.

7

Vn. 1 or Fl. 1

Vn. 2 or Fl. 2

T1

T2

B.c.

Hark, hark, hark, how the Mus-es call a- loud, To wel- come, to

Hark, hark, hark, how the Mus-es call a- loud, To wel- come,

wel- come, to wel- come Fa- ther Ja- nus home,

to wel- come, wel- come Fa- ther Ja- nus home,

hark, hark, hark, how the

hark, hark,

5  
4  
3

5  
4  
3

Detailed description: This is a musical score for a vocal and instrumental ensemble. The score is divided into three systems. The first system (measures 1-3) features two vocal parts, Tenor 1 and Tenor 2, and a Basso continuo. The second system (measures 4-6) includes two violin/flute parts, the two vocal parts, and the Basso continuo. The third system (measures 7-9) also includes the two violin/flute parts, the two vocal parts, and the Basso continuo. The key signature is one flat (B-flat major or D minor), and the time signature is 4/4. The lyrics are: 'Hark, hark, hark, how the Mus-es call a- loud, To wel- come, to Hark, hark, hark, how the Mus-es call a- loud, To wel- come, wel- come, to wel- come Fa- ther Ja- nus home, to wel- come, wel- come Fa- ther Ja- nus home, hark, hark, hark, how the hark, hark,'. The Basso continuo part includes figured bass notation: 5 4 3 and 5 4 3.

## 1. Overture

Violin 1

Violin 2

Viola

Basso continuo

4

Vn. 1

Vn. 2

Va.

B.c.

8

Vn. 1

Vn. 2

Va.

B.c.

Figured Bass notation in B.c. part:

- System 1: [6], 6, #3, [4], 6, #3
- System 2: 6, [6], [5], 7/5, #3, #3



## 9. Great Queen, go on

Chorus

Violin 1

Violin 2

Viola

Soprano

CHORUS  
Countertenor

Tenor

Bass

Basso continuo

5  
4  
3

4

Vn. 1

Vn. 2

Va.

S

CHORUS  
CT

T

B

B.c.

Great Queen, go on, go on, go

Great Queen, go

Great Queen, go on, go on, go on, go on, go on, great Queen, go

on, go on, go on, great Queen, go on, great Queen, go on, great


on, go on, go on, go on, go on, great Queen, go on, go on, great Queen, go

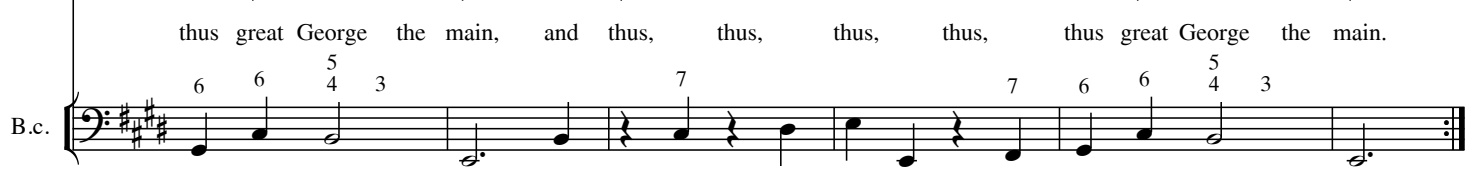
Great Queen, go on, go on, go on, great, great Queen, go on, go on, go on, go on, go

6

Detailed description: This is a musical score for a chorus piece. It features eight staves: Violin 1, Violin 2, Viola, Soprano, Countertenor, Tenor, Bass, and Basso continuo. The music is in 4/4 time and begins with a 'Chorus' section. The vocal parts (Soprano, Countertenor, Tenor, Bass) have lyrics: 'Great Queen, go on, go on, go' and 'Great Queen, go'. The Basso continuo part includes fingering numbers 5, 4, and 3. A second system of the score starts at measure 4 and continues the vocal lines with lyrics: 'Great Queen, go on, go on, go on, go on, go on, great Queen, go' and 'on, go on, go on, great Queen, go on, great Queen, go on, great on, go on, go on, go on, go on, great Queen, go on, go on, great Queen, go'. The Basso continuo part in the second system includes a fingering number 6.

27

B. 

B.c. 

(32) Ritornello

Vn. 1 


Vn. 2 


Va. 

B.c.  [attacca]


### 9. Her pow'rful foes she thus alarms

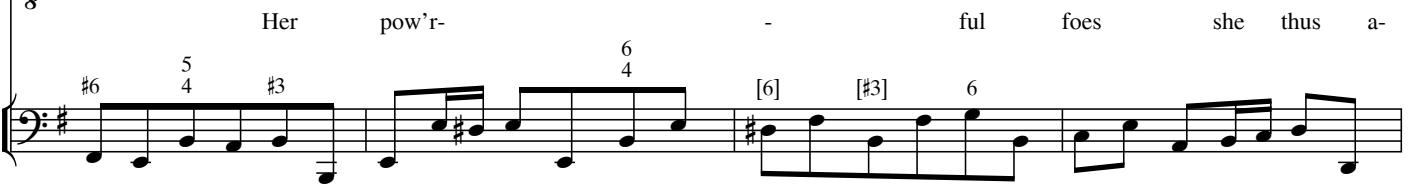
[Solo]

High Tenor 

Basso continuo 

5



Basso continuo 

9



Basso continuo 