Pre-RCM Listening Assignment

“Laschia Ch’io Pianga” from Rinaldo by G.F. Handel

Sung by Joyce DiDonato

Leave me so that I may cry at my cruel fate

and so that I may sigh at (my lost) liberty

Grief may shatter these bonds

of my sufferings out of pity alone

G.F. Handel was a very famous German composer from the Baroque era. His most well-known music, operas and oratorios, were written for orchestra and voice, but he also composed a great deal of highly regarded piano music.

An opera is very similar to our modern musical theatre: It has staging, a plot, speech-like sections (recitative), and sections which are sung (arias). Many people say they “don’t like opera”, but most of those people have never actually seen an opera! They’ve only heard bits and pieces of arias, and they find the singing style a little bit strange because it’s out of context. If you don’t particularly enjoy this piece of music, I would recommend exploring whole operas like Don Giovanni or Carmen because they’re very exciting!

Lascia Ch’io Pianga is an aria from the opera “Rinaldo”. Arias are beautiful, elaborate songs which characters usually sing in response to an emotional event in the story. In the recording which you’ve listened to, the performers are not playing the whole opera, only the aria, so that is why there aren’t any costumes or staging.

1. Would you say the music sounds happy or sad? Fast or slow? Simple or complex?

2. Do you recognize any instruments here that were also in Vivaldi’s “Spring”?

3. What images do you think of when you hear this music? Maybe you hear certain parts of music that remind you of sounds you might hear in nature, or of a character, or of a colour. Listen creatively!