BRITTEN, THE BEACH BOYS, AND BEYOND
HIGH MALE VOICES IN THE LATE TWENTIETH CENTURY

Dr. Freya Jarman, University of Liverpool
f.jarman@liverpool.ac.uk
TERMINOLOGY

- falsetto
  - head voice
  - falsettone
  - falsettist
- modal register
- haute-contre
- tenore (contr)altino
- male alto / male soprano
- countertenor
  - “true” countertenor
- castrato
  - “natural” or “endocrinological” castrato
Two-sex model
(Laqueur, 1990)

“men and women were increasingly seen as 'naturally' and predeterminedly different, and their characteristics those of ‘opposite sexes’”
(Hitchcock and Cohen, 1999)

1800

Rousseau, *Dictionary of Music*:
‘horrid custom’ (1768)
(Taylor, 2002)

Aureliano in Palmira
(Rossini, 1813)

Il Crociato in Egitto
(Meyerbeer, 1824)

Pride and Prejudice
(Austen, 1813)

Decline of castrato

1830s

1831: Gilbert Duprez’s
*do di petto*

I puritani (Bellini, 1935)

Castrato virtually off stage

Soprano heroine

Tenor hero

Single-couple narrative
PHASE 1: ON THE RISE

1948 Formation of the Deller Consort
1960 Britten, *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*
1962 Four Seasons, *Sherry and 11 Others*
1962 Beach Boys, *Surfin’ Safari*
1965 Bernstein, *Chichester Psalms*
1966 Beach Boys, ‘Good Vibrations’
1970 Andrew Lloyd Webber, *Jesus Christ Superstar*
1973 Britten, *Death in Venice*
PHASE 2: DISCO QUEERS THE PITCH

1975 Bee Gees, *Main Course*

1978 Sylvester, ‘You Make Me Feel (Mighty Real)’

1984 Bronski Beat, ‘Smalltown Boy’

1985 Divine, ‘Walk Like A Man’

1987 The Communards, *Red*

1989 Jimmy Somerville, ‘You Make Me Feel (Mighty Real)’

1990 Jimmy Somerville, ‘To Love Somebody’
PHASE 0: A BACKSTORY

1924- Rudy Vallee

1929 Nick Lucas, ‘Tiptoe Through The Tulips’

1931- Bing Crosby

1940s The Ink Spots

1968 Tiny Tim, ‘Tiptoe Through The Tulips’