In this research paper I explored seventeenth century music history through a European historical perspective. I am extremely grateful that I had the opportunity to utilize Fondren Library’s large variety of musical, historical, and literary resources. I would truly not have been able to gain the historical, cultural, and political context of one of Henry Purcell’s most widely known works if it were not for Fondren Library’s many resources.

Deciding on a research topic for Baroque Music History, I was originally fascinated by English composer Henry Purcell. Fondren’s digital subscriptions allowed me to delve deeper into his works and explore my topic. After reading The New Grove Dictionary’s Henry Purcell entry online, I was immediately drawn to the English semi-opera genre. Fondren’s resources proved instrumental in helping me explore this genre, allowing me to research through JSTOR. JSTOR had a variety of relevant journal articles on topics ranging from Purcell’s opera orchestra to music publication in Restoration England. In addition to expanding my knowledge of the context and conventions surrounding Purcell’s compositional process, this research familiarized me with some of the most well-known Purcell scholars such as Bruce Woods and Curtis Price.

I became fascinated in the Purcell research written by Woods and Price and was elated when I located their books in the Fondren catalogue. Because of Fondren’s resources I explored Purcell’s innovative use of orchestration through Wood’s Purcell: An Extraordinary Life, examine his unique harmonic language in Price’s Henry Purcell and the London Stage, and experience Purcell’s text setting rhythmic patterns in Price’s Purcell Studies. These Purcell sources were later supplemented by The Ashgate Research Companion to Henry Purcell and Robert Etheridge Moore’s Henry Purcell and the Restoration Theatre.

After learning more about Purcell’s compositional techniques I decided to narrow my focus to one of his semi-operas. I focused on his second to last semi-opera The Fairy Queen because of its
connection to Shakespeare’s *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*. However, given it is not commonly performed, I had never had the opportunity to see a production of *The Fairy Queen*. I wanted to get an overall impression of the work before I fully committed to the topic. So, I decided to search for the production on Fondren’s website in the hopes of locating at least a few recordings. Fondren, again, went above and beyond what I required for my research. After locating various CD recordings through the catalogue I consulted the music research guide on the Fondren webpage. I was thrilled to find links to the Rice subscription for music and video streaming on the Naxos music library and Medici TV. Rice’s subscription to Medici TV proved fundamental for my research. Through Medici TV I located a 2009 Glyndebourne Music Festival full production of *The Fairy Queen* as well as an interview of those involved with the production. After watching the full production I was certain that I wanted to research this semi-opera.

Once my topic was solidified I found a variety of primary and musical sources in Fondren. These included musical scores to *The Fairy Queen* (and Purcell songs “Celebrate this festival” and “Come, ye sons of art”) and the libretto to *The Fairy Queen*. I was also thrilled to locate primary information regarding the opera’s reception in Fondren’s microfilm collection. I read about this semi-opera’s reception, using one of Fondren’s microfilm readers, in *The Gentleman’s Journal, or The Monthly Miscellany* articles from the 1600s.

After I studied the primary musical sources, I was eager to discover how *The Fairy Queen* functioned in the genre of opera. This led me to Fondren’s music history books such as *A History of English Opera* and *The Rise of English Opera*. These even included perspectives from different musicological decades. For instance, I compared Edward J. Dent’s *Foundations of English Opera: A Study of Musical Drama in England During the Seventeenth Century* (1928 edition) with the more recent *Studies in Seventeenth-Century Opera* (2010). These broad opera historical resources expanded the lens
of my paper. For instance, Andrew R. Walkling’s article “Performance and Political Allegory” in *Studies in Seventeenth-Century Opera* exposed me to allegory in opera. This ignited my curiosity of allegorical elements in Henry Purcell’s works. I then decided, given the facts that some of Henry Purcell’s other operas contained allegorical elements and allegory was common at the time, to look for allegorical elements in *The Fairy Queen*.

I pursued the topic of allegory in literature and theater by finding, in the Fondren collection, two books that were referenced in *Studies in Seventeenth-Century Opera*. These books (Perez Zagorin’s *Ways of Lying: Dissimulation, Persecution, and Conformity in Early Modern Europe* and Maureen Quilligan’s *The Language of Allegory: Defining the Genre*) were fundamental for my research. These unexpected resources gave me useful tools and insights for analyzing allegory.

After looking through these books I thought it would be helpful to research past representations related to the story of the *Fairy Queen*. I located resources not only on allegory in Edmund Spenser’s *Faerie Queene* but on Shakespeare’s *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*. This gave me a richer background in literary and theatrical traditions surrounding Purcell’s *Fairy Queen*. I was able to explore interpretations of Shakespeare’s works as well as the context of music in English theater and court masques. Because of these resources I was able to draw parallels between Purcell’s story, Shakespeare’s theatrical conventions, and Spenser’s allegorical elements. Fondren’s breadth of resources allowed me to not only broaden my paper’s musical and literary contexts but its historical context. By perusing Fondren’s extensive collection of historical resources I also gained a wealth of information regarding monarchs William and Mary, London in 1600, and Queen Elizabeth.

I am truly grateful for Fondren library’s breadth of historical, musical, and literary resources. Without Fondren’s variety resources I would not have been able to achieve this greater level of understanding and immersion in *The Fairy Queen* or develop my research skills as an aspiring musicologist. I am thankful for and continually amazed by Fondren’s ability to provide Rice University
students with access to materials from such an astounding variety of disciplines, scholars, places, and formats.