



# Historically Informed Gardening

## The rhetorical garden? Part III

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If we are familiar with the concept of 'affect' in music, we will understand the way 18th-century gardeners thought. Music was supposed to capture the 'passions' or emotions of the listener, and the garden designer would have been trying to 'affect' the garden visitor in the same way. There are various ways this could be achieved, borrowing ideas from literature, painting

and poetry, which were all subject to the rules of rhetoric which would naturally have governed all artistic enterprises in the imaginations of classically-educated patrons.

For example, the garden might have a grand entrance, with a classical arch or elaborate wrought iron gates like a triumphal fanfare, but

it could also be approached surreptitiously, up a narrow path like a single thread of a theme which eventually leads us to the fully orchestrated sound on arriving at the end of the drive or path when the full vista is revealed. Alex James on Classic FM recently compared the extended opening of Handel's Zadok the Priest with the winding drive of a country house. The arrival at

Royal Garden of Herrenhausen, Hannover, Germany. Hannover Marketing & Tourismus GmbH







Topiary Hartwell 1738 by Nebot



Cliveden. anon. 1759

Performance had an important place in these gardens, which of course formed a backdrop for the owner to 'pose' in. Outdoor theatres and amphitheatres were constructed for ballets, masques, plays and other entertainments. Mock naval battles and water festivals known as 'naumachia' took place at

artificial lakes at Kenilworth (for Elizabeth I) and West Wycombe (1750s). At Cliveden, in 1740 the grass amphitheatre, which can still be seen, saw the first performance of Arne's masque 'Alfred', including 'Rule Britannia', during the period when the property was leased to Frederick, Prince of Wales.

