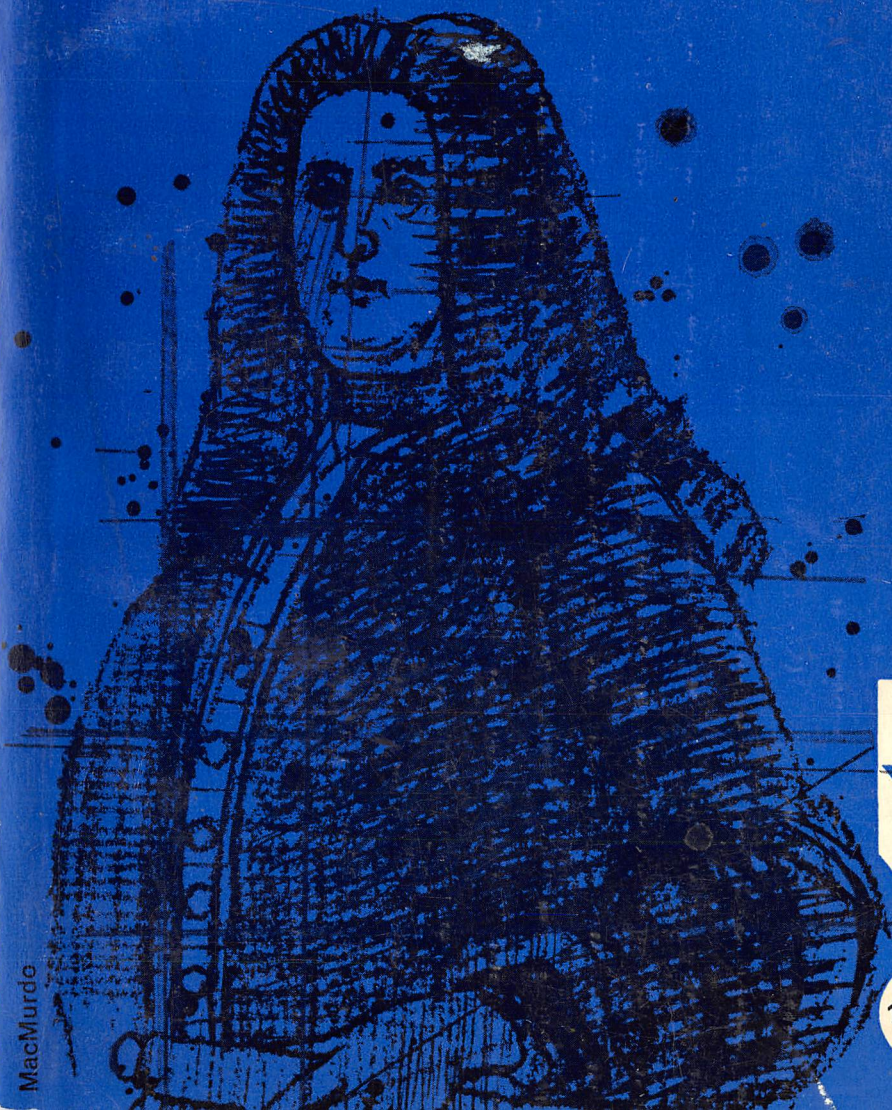
HANDEL

Stanley Sadie



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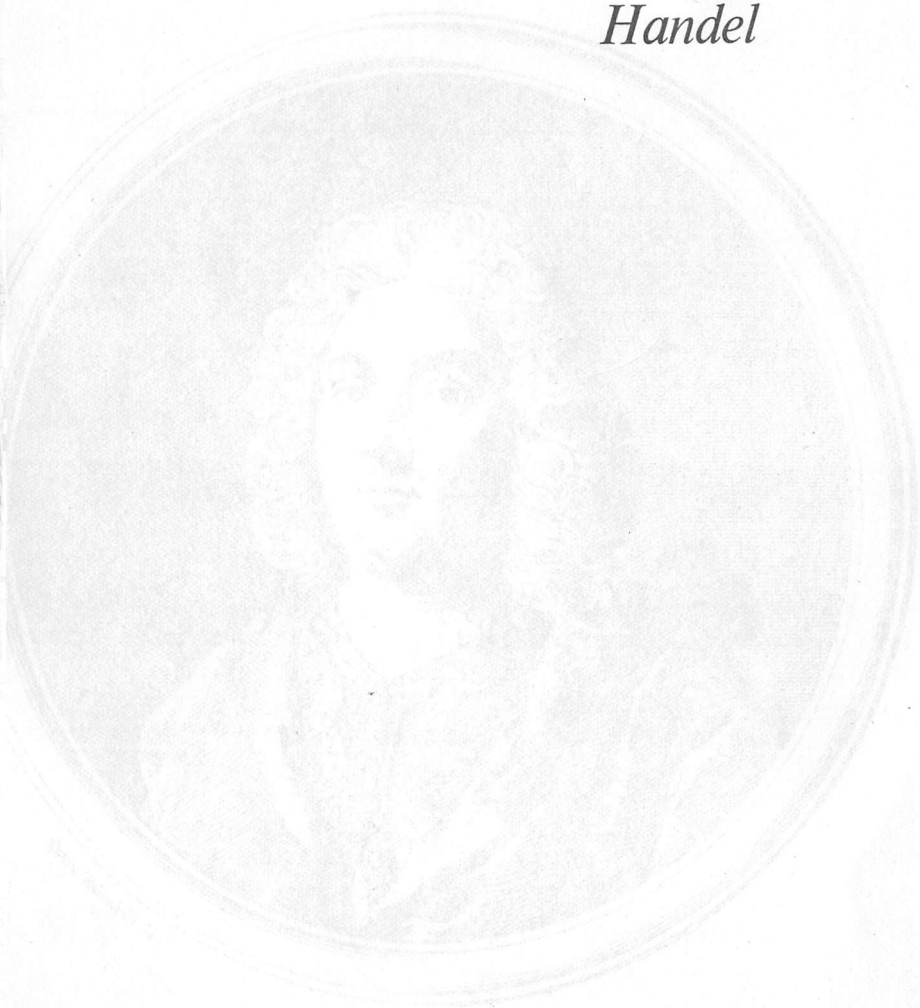
Handel



GEORGE FRIDERIC HANDEL

STANLEY SADIE

Handel

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Handel
by Stanley Sadie

Contents

In Germany

1685 was a vintage year for musicians. In February Handel was born; in March, J. S. Bach; and in October, Domenico Scarlatti. They came at an opportune time. Musical history shows a continuous alternation between periods of stylistic experiment and periods of established forms, and these three all attained musical maturity just as the idiom of the late Baroque emerged after a long period of uncertainty and experiment, at the right moment to bring it to full flower. But this does not mean that their own idioms were more than superficially the same. Bach's was that of a provincial German organist, Scarlatti's that of an Italian harpsichordist; only Handel's was in its day truly international. And this might seem doubly strange when we recall that Bach and Scarlatti were born into musical homes (their fathers were both composers) while Handel was not – though in fact his musical outlook became more international precisely because he did not have music brought to him but had to seek it out.

Handel's father, who has generally been portrayed as a hard, stern figure with a strong antipathy to music, was a barber-surgeon, though he came from a family of coppersmiths. He spent his entire life in Halle, a town in Saxony some twenty miles from Leipzig. When only twenty he had married the widow of the man to whom he had been apprenticed; she died in 1682,

and although sixty years of age he remarried in a few months, his second wife being thirty-two year old Dorothea Taust, daughter of the Pastor of Giebichenstein, a suburb of Halle. The first of their four children died at birth and the second, born on the 23rd of February 1685, was baptised the next day as Georg Friederich.

Among the appointments held by Handel's father was that of surgeon to Duke Augustus of Saxony. Augustus was the last Duke to maintain a court in Halle, for under the peace of Westphalia the town was to fall on his death under the domain of the Electors of Brandenburg. Augustus died in 1680, whereupon Halle lost some of its importance – as did Handel's father on the death of his employer, though in fact he was at times required to attend on the new Duke at Weissenfels, some twenty-five miles away.

The details of Handel's childhood and youth are still very obscure and are likely to remain so. Biographers have had to rely mainly on the book published in 1760 by the Rev. John Mainwaring, *Memoirs of the Life of the late George Frederic Handel* – the first biography of a composer ever published in book form. Mainwaring's information was mostly derived verbally from John Christopher Smith the younger, a pupil, friend and amanuensis of Handel in his later years. Unfortunately, at many points where the book can be checked against recorded fact, we find contradictions, which appear to have arisen either through Handel's deficient memory over a period of half a century, or in the two processes of verbal transference, or through the embroideries which even the most honest raconteur finds it impossible to avoid.

Handel's life, more than any other composer's, is surrounded by a haze of anecdotes. Most of those from his childhood stem from Mainwaring. The tale of the clavichord smuggled up to the loft behind the back of a music-hating father is unlikely to be literally true – and in any case the clavichord is so subdued an instrument that even if Handel had played one in his bedroom the solid walls of a seventeenth-century German house would have ensured its inaudibility in the next room. His earliest contacts with music were probably at the Lutheran Liebfrauenkirche in Halle's market place, at the Grammar School where his education started, and possibly at home if his mother or her sister Anna (who lived with the family) had any ability as domestic performers. But this last is rather unlikely, for old Handel,

Bartholomäuskirche, Giebichenstein, where Handel's parents were married

if his reputation is justified, would no doubt have forbidden music at home. It is quite possible, though, that his dislike of music may have been aggravated, if not actually started, by the prospect of his son's embarking on so unstable a career. It should not be thought that the occupation of musician was socially a bad one – indeed, a town organist was considered a most worthy and respectable member of the community – and the parental opposition to Handel's musical career was probably as much due to the greater stability of the proposed legal one as to any dislike or contempt for music. Moreover, it is impossible for a layman to assess artistic gifts in a child, and Handel's father must have felt perfectly reasonable fears – just as any father similarly placed could do today – that his son might turn out to be no more than an averagely competent musician with no chance of obtaining a really secure and worthwhile appointment.

Handel's father

It is to Mainwaring that we have to turn for the story of what was to be a decisive turning-point in Handel's musical studies. The tale is that Handel, at the age of six (though probably in fact between eight and eleven), followed his father's chaise on the road to Weissenfels and 'pleaded in language too moving to be resisted' to be allowed to accompany his father to the Duke's court, where his half-brother held an appointment. The Duke happened to hear him at the organ after service one morning and prevailed upon his father to allow him to be properly taught. Old Handel clearly had to consent but still, reasonably enough, insisted on the continuance of his ordinary education.

Returning to Halle, Handel was placed under Zachau, organist of the Lutheran church and an able composer. Zachau made an excellent teacher, for he gave Handel a solid foundation of technique in harmony and counterpoint, and he had a large, varied music library from which Handel could borrow and copy items. (A good library was less common then than now, for printing was expensive and most music was circulated only in manuscript copies.) According to Mainwaring, Handel had to write a service for Zachau every week for three years. None of these is known to survive, though no doubt Handel preserved the best ideas from them for later use. Handel once said that as a boy he wrote 'like the devil' for the oboe, and in fact his earliest surviving compositions are six trio sonatas for two oboes and continuo, said to date from 1696 – works full of vigorous and enterprising musical ideas.

The most puzzling of Mainwaring's stories concerns Handel's visit to Berlin with his father in 1698 to seek a new situation, a visit during which he met and impressed two Italian composers whom he was later to know in London, Giovanni Battista Bononcini and Attilio Ariosti. First, it seems decidedly curious that old Handel should have been seeking a musical post for his son at all – and even more curious when it is recalled that he had in fact died early the previous year. Second, his behaviour in refusing the Elector's offer to take the boy into his musical establishment and send him to Italy for training was very odd if he had in fact come to seek an appointment; and third, neither Bononcini nor Ariosti reached Berlin until after old Handel's death (Bononcini, in fact, did not arrive there for another five years). Unless some of the details of Mainwaring's account were dreamed up, it seems that Handel must have had two visits to Berlin – one before 1697 with his father and another after 1702

Domkirche, Halle

when he met the two Italian composers (though in this case the tale of his sitting at the harpsichord on Ariosti's knee, as a lusty youth of eighteen, begins to appear improbable).

Back in Halle, Handel probably assisted Zachau in his duties at the Liebfrauenkirche, but his first real musical appointment was at the age of seventeen, in 1702, when he succeeded Leporin as organist of the Halle Domkirche – a Calvinist cathedral, incidentally, though Handel was a Lutheran. He had previously deputised on occasion for the unreliable Leporin, and no doubt had made a good impression both as a musician and a responsible person. His duties included composing some of the music as well as organising its performance. But he was still not irrevocably committed to a musical career, for only a few weeks earlier he had matriculated at the University of Halle. Musical studies, however, must have occupied most of his time, and there is no record of his entering any specific faculty at the University. It was during this time that he made the acquaintance of Georg Philipp Telemann, a gifted and prolific composer four years his senior. Telemann passed through Halle, perhaps on his way to Weissenfels where some of his operas were produced, and the two musicians became lifelong friends.

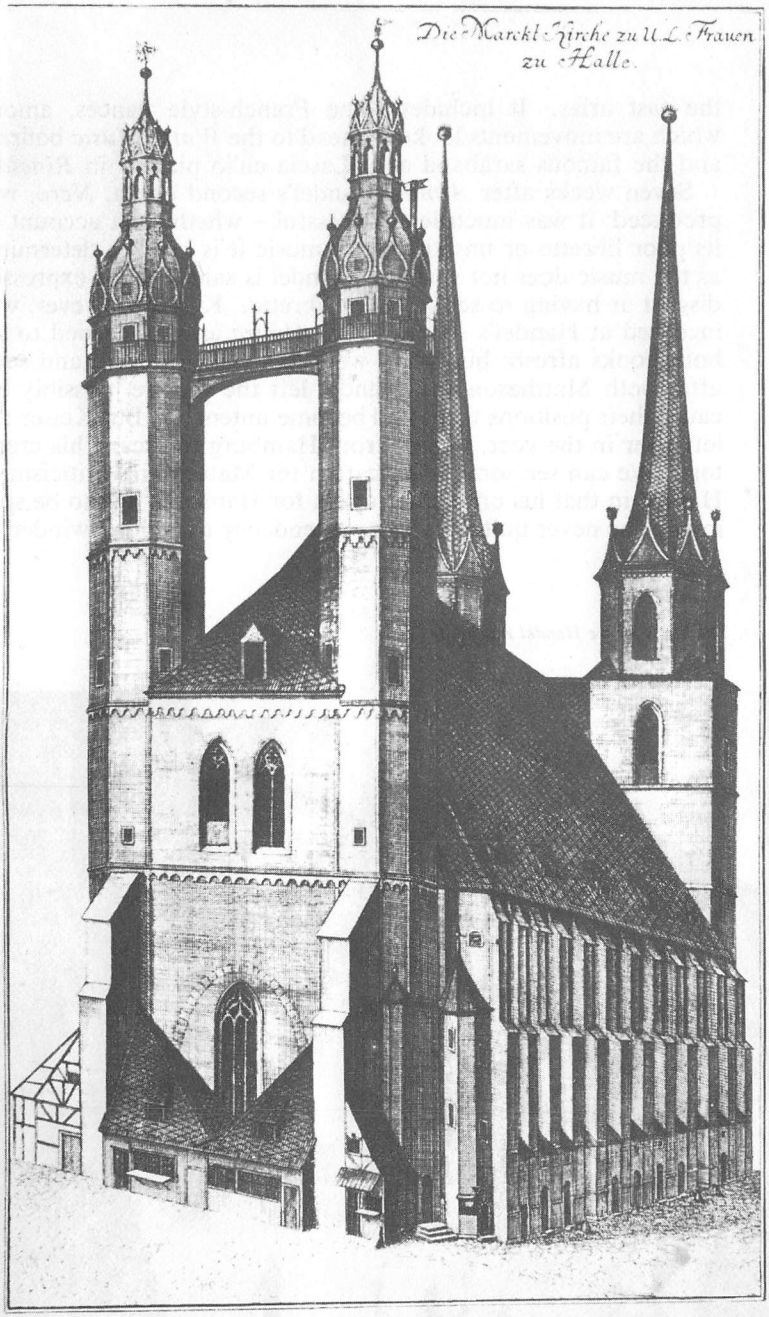
Handel had only held his appointment for about a year when he made a decisive move. The obvious place for him to go was Hamburg. A prosperous trading city left undamaged by the Thirty Years' War, Hamburg was easily the most important artistic centre of North Germany. It had a public opera house, where operas had been produced more or less regularly since 1678; the director when Handel arrived there was Reinhold Keiser, a very talented composer indeed if a rather dissolute man. But Handel's most important musical acquaintance in Hamburg was Johann Mattheson, whom he met soon after his arrival probably in the early summer of 1703. Four years older than Handel, Mattheson was an able if not outstandingly gifted composer and he later achieved pre-eminence among the many German writers on music. He has left in his writings some account of these early days in Hamburg – of the greatest interest, despite a rather biased outlook. He tells how he met Handel and introduced him to the musical circles in the city; how Handel dined regularly at his (Mattheson's) father's house; how Handel was strong in harmony, counterpoint and extemporisation, but weak in melody, and only composed 'long, long arias and interminable cantatas'; how Handel taught him counterpoint in

exchange for lessons in the 'dramatic style'; and how Handel, playing second violin in the opera orchestra, 'behaved as though he did not know how many beans made five, for he had a natural inclination to dry humour'. The two young composers became close friends and travelled together to Lübeck to compete for the post of organist, in succession to Dietrich Buxtehude, but they were evidently put off by one of the conditions involved – marriage to Buxtehude's daughter.

Handel earned his living in Hamburg by taking pupils (notably the son of the English Resident, Sir John Wych) as well as by playing in the opera orchestra during the season. It was at Easter the next year that he produced a setting of the *St. John Passion.* In this early work (Handel was still under twenty) his style seems nearer than at any other time to that of Bach. This is, of course, to be expected, for as yet he had hardly been subjected to the potent Italian influences which were to mould his style, and he was still working along the lines of Zachau's training in the idiom of a provincial German composer – an idiom which Bach was later to bring to full perfection.

During the summer of 1704 Handel worked on his first opera, *Almira.* Mattheson's opera *Cleopatra,* however, was the first production of the new autumn season. The two composers' friendship cooled rather at this time, partly, no doubt, because Mattheson became tutor to Wych's son and thereby deprived Handel of some useful employment. An open breach occurred in December. Handel now played the harpsichord at the opera when Mattheson, who was also a singer, was occupied on the stage: in the performances of *Cleopatra,* Mattheson, after dying on the stage, was accustomed to return to life as *maestro al cembalo,* but one night Handel refused to give up his place. In the resulting duel Handel's life was spared when Mattheson's sword broke on a providential button. A reconciliation was soon brought about, a few days before the production of *Almira* on the 8th of January 1705.

Almira was a success and had about twenty performances. It was sung partly in German and partly in Italian, not an uncommon practice at the time – the singers naturally preferred smooth Italian vowels for their expressive arias while the audience not unreasonably liked to be able to follow the plot. Although Handel was as yet unpractised in the Italian operatic style, *Almira* has some fine music already showing definite Handelian characteristics, notably the drive and momentum of



Liebfrauenkirche, Market Place, Halle

the fast arias. It includes some French-style dances, among which are movements looking ahead to the *Water Music* bourrée and the famous saraband aria 'Lascia ch'io pianga' in *Rinaldo.*

Seven weeks after *Almira* Handel's second opera, *Nero,* was produced: it was much less successful – whether on account of its poor libretto or unsatisfactory music it is hard to determine, as the music does not survive. Handel is said to have expressed disgust at having to set so bad a libretto. Keiser, however, was incensed at Handel's success with *Almira* and proceeded to set both books afresh; his works were less well received, and soon after both Mattheson and Handel left the theatre, possibly because their positions there had become untenable. But Keiser too left later in the year, fleeing from Hamburg to escape his creditors. We can see some justification for Mattheson's criticism of Handel in that his only other opera for Hamburg had to be split in two (he never quite overcame a tendency to be long-winded in

The house where Handel was born


IOANNES MATTHESON
Celsitudinis Imperialis Magni Russiæ Princ.
Supremi Holsatiæ Ducis
Legationum Consiliarius.
æt.
nat. Hamburg d. 28. Sept. A. 1681.

his vocal music): as the librettist wrote, 'Since the admirable music with which this opera is adorned has turned out to be rather long, and might put the audience out of humour, it has been considered necessary to arrange the complete work in two parts . . .' The two parts, *Florindo* and *Daphne*, were not produced until 1708, and none of the music has survived.

But by 1708 Handel was far from Hamburg. For a young, ambitious composer whose interests were dominated by opera there was only one possibility – to broaden his musical horizons with a visit to Italy, the home of opera and the fount of musical progress. His urge to go there may have been stirred up by the disreputable Prince Gian Gastone de' Medici, second son of the Grand Duke of Tuscany, whom he met during his early days in Hamburg. The circumstances surrounding the journey remain obscure. Possibly Gian Gastone or his brother, the Crown Prince Ferdinand, invited him and helped with the heavy costs of travelling; perhaps, as Mattheson stated, he travelled with a German, one von Binitz, who paid his expenses; or, as Mainwaring said, he may have 'resolved to go to Italy on his own bottom, as soon as he could make a purse for that occasion'. The one certainty is that sometime during 1706 Handel left Hamburg on the journey which was to have so profound an influence on the music he was to write.

Title-page of libretto of Almira

Der
In Crohnen erlangte
Glücks-Wechsel/
Oder:
ALMIRA,
Königin von Castilien/
In einem Sing-Spiel
Auff dem grossen Hamburgischen
Schau-Platz
Vorgestellet
Im Jahr 1704.

Gedruckt im selben Jahr

1. Templum Altonariense. 2. Novum Templum S. Michaelis. 3. Vetus Templum S. Michaelis. 4. Orphanotropheum. 5. Ad Spiritum. 6. Porta arenaria. 7. Templum S. Nicolai. 8. Coenobium S. Mar. Magdalena. 9. Curia. 10. Palatium Mercatorum, s. Boersa. 11. Templum S. Johannis. 12. S. Catharina. 13. S. Petri. 14. Templ. Cathedrale. 15. Porta Birckiana. 16. S. Gertrudis. 17. Templ. S. Jacobi. 18. Templ. S. Georgii in novo opere.

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M. G. Ringle Sculpt.

Mart. Engelbrecht excud. A. V.

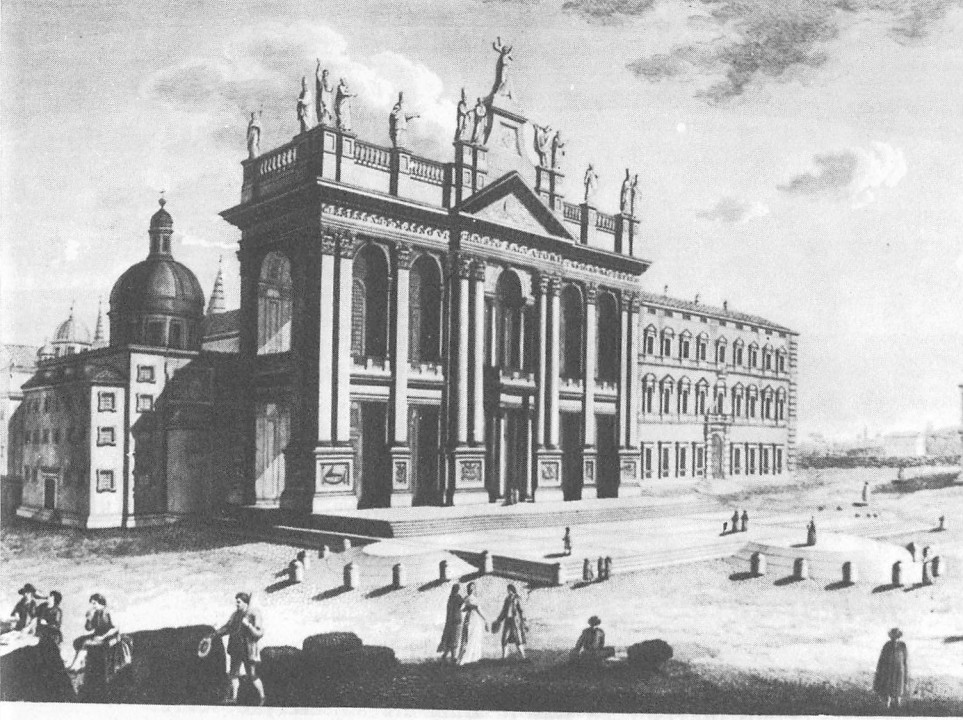
Cardinal Ottoboni

In Italy

The details of Handel's stay in Italy are still very obscure. We do not even know when he arrived in the country or left it, nor where he spent many months of the three years he was there. Possibly he was in Florence by the autumn of 1706, for Gian Gastone de' Medici was there until November. But our first positive knowledge of his presence in Italy comes from a diarist in Rome, who wrote on the 14th of January 1707: 'A German has arrived here, an excellent harpsichordist and composer. Today he showed his ability by playing the organ in the church of St. John [Lateran], with universal admiration.'

Handel's interest in Italian music centred on opera, so it is perhaps surprising that his first lengthy stay was in Rome. Opera at Rome had had a chequered career owing to Papal prohibitions, and during the time Handel was there it was rigorously banned. The Romans had a satisfactory substitute for it in oratorio, however, which differed very little from opera as regards musical style but was probably not staged.

Most of Handel's biographers have presumed that he did not stay long in Rome and had travelled to Florence by July. In fact, he was still in Rome then (two of the sacred works he wrote at this time are marked 'Rome, July 1707') and another reference exists proving that he was there at least up to the end of September. During his months in the city Handel made many

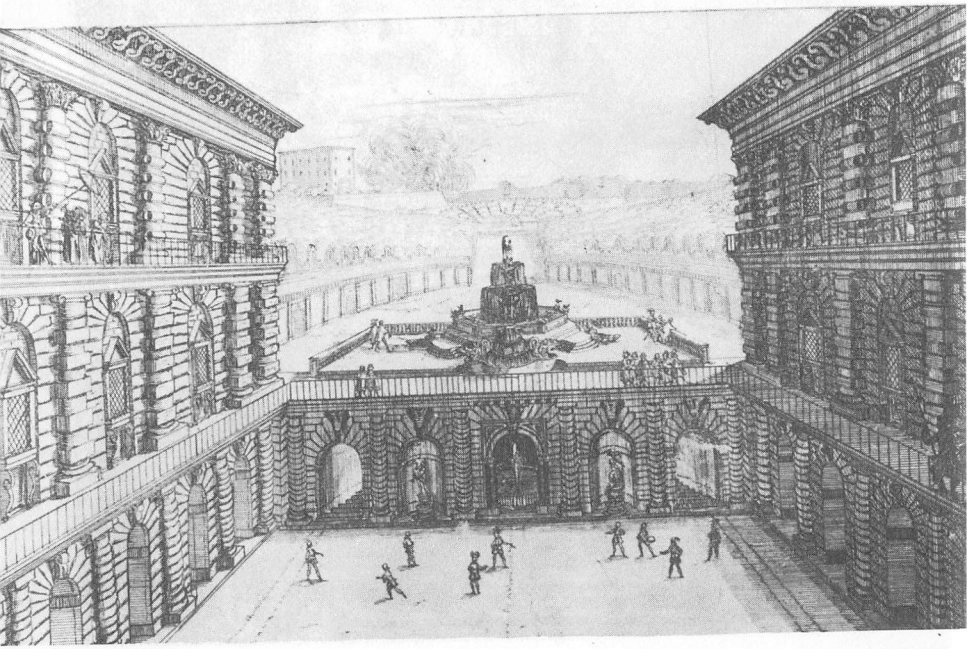


Church of St. John Lateran, Rome

important contacts. The leading musical patron there was the famous Cardinal Ottoboni, who surrounded himself with artists of all kinds and held regular concerts in his sumptuous palace. Many of the leading figures of Italian music appeared there, including Corelli as leader of the orchestra and Pasquini as harpsichordist. Alessandro Scarlatti, who sometimes took part in these concerts, was away from Rome most of the summer of 1707 (he had been in Florence the previous autumn, when Handel could have met him); Domenico Scarlatti, already renowned as a harpsichordist, may have been there, and the famous contest between him and Handel probably took place during this year. All through his years in Italy Handel was practising in the Italian style by writing cantatas, but his compositions of this time are not of very great importance except insofar as they look ahead to some of his later works – a *Nisi Dominus* completed in July, for example, contains ideas which came to fuller fruition in the famous coronation anthem *Zadok the Priest.* The *Nisi Dominus* is one of several items of Latin church music, some of them

recently shown to have been written for the Carmelite liturgy, but despite attempts at proselytisation Handel did not deviate from his Lutheran faith. During this stay in Rome he may have started work on a new opera, *Rodrigo*. A good deal of doubt surrounds this work. It is not mentioned in any lists of operatic productions at Florence, yet Mainwaring not only tells of its performance but adds that Handel was paid for it with a hundred sequins and a service of plate or porcelain (a cumbrous gift, one would think, for a composer travelling around in Italy). The fine suite of French-style dances in *Rodrigo,* which many years later Handel was to adapt as incidental music to Ben Jonson's *The Alchymist,* could well be taken to suggest an earlier origin in Germany. Moreover, if the work was performed in Florence in 1707, as is generally supposed, Handel would surely have been present: but he was in Rome at least until the end of September and in Venice for part of October and November. Much of *Rodrigo* is adapted from *Almira* and it does not survive in complete form.

View of the Florentine Court



The uncertainty concerning Handel's movements in Italy clears for a moment late in 1707. We know that he was presented to Prince Ernst August of Hanover in Venice; and we know that the Prince was in Venice only during October and November. Another of Handel's Venetian acquaintances was the English Ambassador, the Duke of Manchester. Both these distinguished noblemen are said to have issued invitations to Handel, and in due course he was to accept them both. Musically, Venice was a flourishing city. At the two main opera houses Lotti and Gasparini were in charge, and no doubt Handel learnt a lot about Italian opera during his stay there. Among the other Venetian musicians whom he may have met were the wealthy dilettante composer Tommaso Albinoni and the famous Antonio Vivaldi, who supervised the music at one of the girls' orphanages, the Pietà. It was at Venice, either on this visit or the next, that (according to Mainwaring) Domenico Scarlatti heard some astonishingly brilliant harpsichord playing at a masquerade and exclaimed 'It can only be the miraculous Saxon or the devil himself!' It is said that the two young composers, by now firm friends, travelled together to Rome sometime during the winter of 1707-8.

On his second visit to Rome Handel probably divided his time between the palaces of three cardinals – Ottoboni, Panfili and Colonna – and that of another Roman musical patron, Prince Ruspoli. For him Handel wrote his oratorio *La resurrezione*, which was performed on a magnificent scale during Easter 1708 with Corelli leading the orchestra. The music itself is highly operatic in style and at least three of the arias were re-used in his next opera, *Agrippina*. Indeed, one of them, Lucifer's highly dramatic 'O voi dell'Erebo,' had to be considerably toned down for its setting as 'Col raggio placido' in *Agrippina* (it was, incidentally, partly derived from an operatic aria by Keiser). A chorus in *La resurrezione* later appeared in revised form as an 'Air' in the *Water Music*.

Handel followed *La resurrezione* with an oratorio or serenata, to a libretto by Cardinal Panfili, *Il trionfo del tempo e del disinganno* (or *della verità*). This work was probably performed at Ottoboni's establishment, and it was its overture which gave rise to the story of Corelli excusing his inability to play in the French style – a story which has surely been taken far too seriously, for Corelli occasionally wrote in the French style himself. No doubt he was simply teasing the earnest young German.

← *View of the Piazza Navona, showing Cardinal Panfili's Palace (Piranesi)*

But it is interesting that the overture exists in two forms – one with a French-style slow introduction in dotted rhythm and one without. Another point of interest in *Il trionfo* is that it includes a 'Sonata' with a fully written-out solo part for the organ (the following aria also has an organ *obbligato*). If the sonata were

Arcangelo Corelli

in fact part of the original version it should probably displace Brandenburg Concerto No. 5 as the earliest piece written for solo keyboard and orchestra. In 1737 and again at the very end of his life Handel extensively revised *Il trionfo* for performance in London; these two are among the movements he omitted.

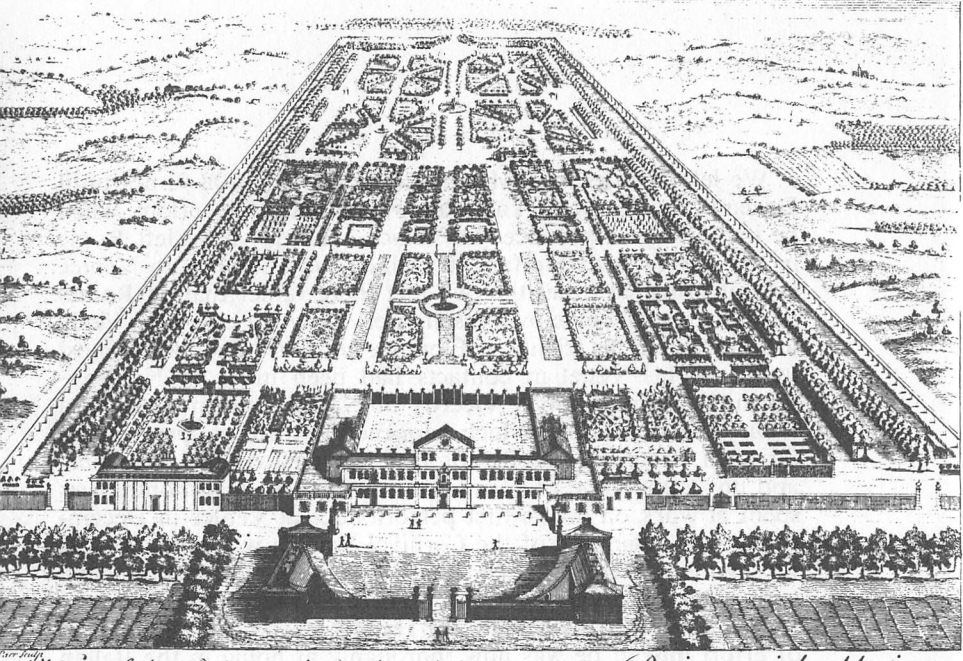
During his two stays in Rome Handel probably attended meetings of the select society of noblemen and artists called 'The Arcadian Academy'. He was not elected a member, a fact which seems to have distressed some Handel biographers – though the only musician members were three of the acknowledged senior composers in Italy and it would have been quite out of place to elect a visiting young German. He left Rome in May, bidding the city farewell in a cantata, and went to Naples, where he had completed the serenata *Aci, Galatea e Polifemo* by mid-June. This work (which musically speaking is in no way related to the English masque *Acis and Galatea* composed some ten years later) was almost certainly written for the wedding of a Neapolitan duke – the manuscript bears his name and he was married in July – though Mainwaring says it was composed at the request of a Spanish or Portuguese princess. It is music of an appropriately festive character; particularly notable are the two fine bass arias, written for a singer of enormous range, and the trios, where the music characterises the three participants in the kind of way we now tend to associate with Mozart's operatic ensembles but can find many times in Handel.

Nothing is known for certain of Handel's whereabouts between July 1708 and December 1709. Probably he spent some more time in Rome, for it is likely that he met Agostino Steffani there during the winter or spring. Steffani, besides being a composer of considerable distinction, was both a diplomat and a priest; he had been Kapellmeister at the Hanover Court for some years and Handel may have met him there – our main source of information on the composers' relationship is a paragraph dictated by Handel to Sir John Hawkins and reproduced in Hawkins' *History of Music,* but unfortunately the recollections of the aged composer are irreconcilable with various other known facts.

It has been suggested that Handel spent some of these lost months near Lake Como at villages called Urio and Erba. In many ways this is prohibitively unlikely. Natural scenery had much less attraction for a man of culture in the eighteenth century than it has today – no doubt largely because there was so much more of it. (It is related that the poet Thomas Gray, on a

journey to Scotland, drew the blinds in his coach to obscure the disturbing sight of the Cumberland fells.) There was nothing in these villages, as far as we know, to attract a young German composer learning about Italian music, and the only reason for imagining that such visits took place is that there exist two works, a *Te Deum* marked 'Urio' and a *Magnificat* marked 'Erba', on which Handel later drew very extensively. Urio and Erba were in fact Italian composers, but some plausible arguments have been advanced (since almost completely demolished) that the two works are in fact by Handel and that the names refer merely to the places of their composition. The equally remote alternative has been offered in Erba's case that Handel may have stayed at the house of a man of that name.

This leads us to a subject which is bound to arise continually in any book on Handel – his 'borrowings' from other composers and his self-borrowings. One of the major tasks of future Handel research must be to provide a 'concordance', but although nothing like this has yet been published we know that countless movements in his works are derived, in part or in whole, from other composers. The arguments put forward in his defence – that it was a common and recognised practice to borrow in those days, and that he did not do it deliberately – are simply not true. The careful note-for-note borrowings we sometimes find could hardly be an accident, and direct plagiarism was considered no more justifiable then than it is today (though Handel was not the only guilty composer). But there is no point in taking up a high moral tone: one must simply face the fact that this was one of the ways in which he worked. It must also be recognised that the moral issue has changed, for the eighteenth-century artist was not seeking a form of individual expression like one of the nineteenth or twentieth centuries. It is certainly hard to imagine that his own conscience was much troubled over it, even if he often apparently tried to ensure that the borrowings passed unnoticed. The matter was never openly raised in his day, though in musical circles the position seems to have been more or less tacitly acknowledged. The English composer Boyce once said 'He takes pebbles and converts them into diamonds' – a fair comment on those cases where he chose an idea from some other composer and worked it in his own way. He began the procedure at an early age (though it is relatively infrequent before the 1730s) and continued it all his life. Most of the earlier examples were probably sub- or semi-conscious reminiscences,

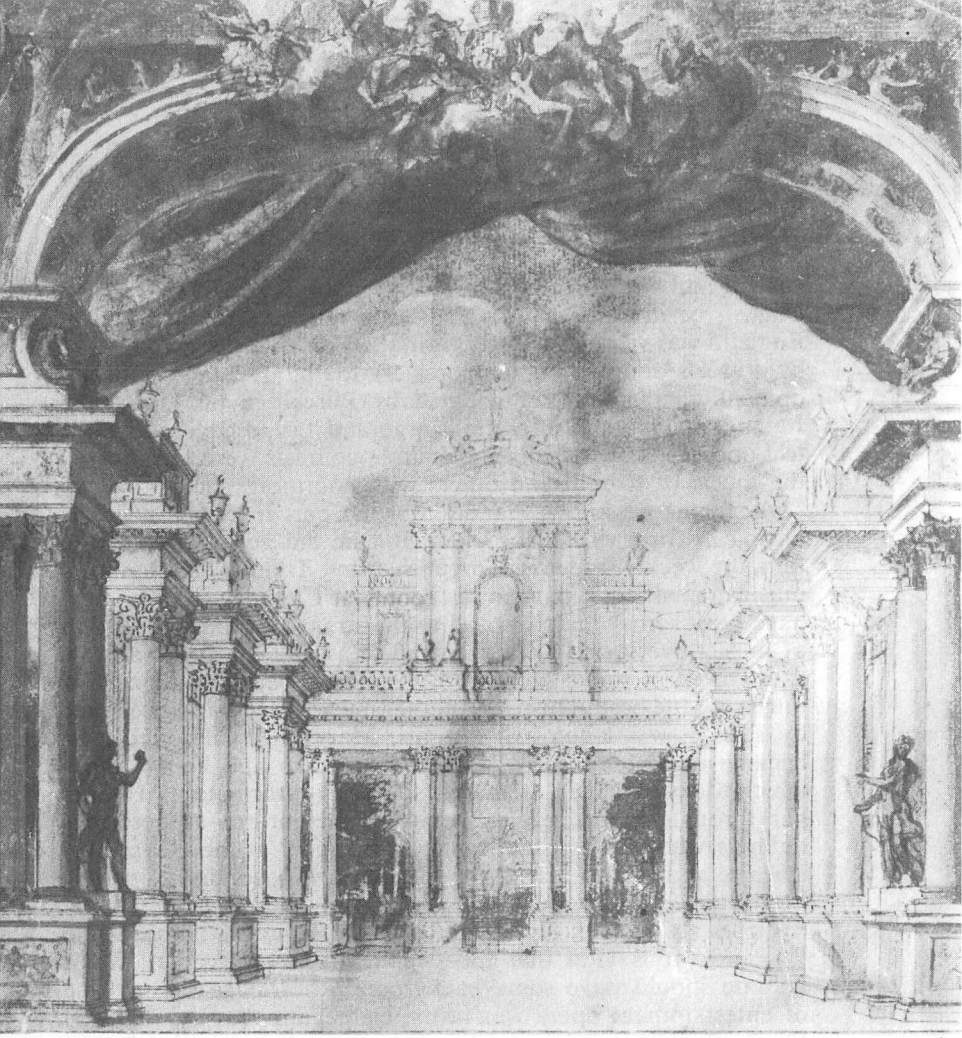


View of the Palace and Gardens belonging to his Britannick Majesty at Herrenhausen near Hanover

but the more substantial borrowings which he made at times of extreme stress in 1737 and after cannot be so easily explained. As Dent has convincingly suggested, Handel's mental condition may have made it very difficult for him to get started on a composition at such times, so he extended his earlier practice and borrowed other composers' beginnings or sometimes even whole movements. Moral considerations have led biographers to consider his flagrant borrowings and his self-borrowings as quite different in kind, though the causes are basically similar and it is unlikely that Handel differentiated so clearly between them – if all he sought was a 'jumping-off point' for a new movement, whether it was his own or somebody else's was irrelevant. The self-borrowings especially make a fascinating study – how anything from small harmonic or melodic ideas right up to whole movements recur time and again in his output, and how the same song was used with different words in utterly different situations without the least incongruity (as has been pointed out, the famous song 'Che farò' from Gluck's *Orfeo* would, musically speaking, be just as suitable for a loving reunion of Orfeo and Eurydice as for their tragic separation).

We left Handel somewhere in Italy during 1708-9; not until December 1709 do we know his whereabouts for certain, when he had an opera produced at Venice. He may have left Rome in the spring with Steffani, travelling *via* Florence to Venice (Mainwaring says that the two met there rather than at Rome) or he may have come by himself later. In either case he is likely to have visited his friends at Florence *en route*. One of the most useful of his Venetian contacts had been made in Naples – Cardinal Grimani, poet, Viceroy of Naples, and member of a noble Venetian family which happened to own an opera house. Grimani wrote the libretto for Handel's next opera, *Agrippina*, and no doubt some of Handel's time in these lost months was spent at work on it. Its first performance at Venice in December, at the beginning of the Carnival Season, was an enormous success; it was greeted with shouts of 'Viva il caro Sassone' and was given twenty-seven times. There is every reason why it should have been successful, for Handel clearly put a great deal of effort into it; he was now thoroughly at home in the Italian style and his sure melodic gift, coupled with bold and dramatic handling of both voices and orchestra, must have made *Agrippina* an exciting experience for the Venetians. It has a wide dramatic range: outstanding are Agrippina's passionate 'Pensieri, voi mi tormentate,' the beautiful 'Vaghe fonti' and delightful 'Bel piacer' (both adapted from *Il trionfo*) as well as several characteristically vigorous arias. Besides *Il trionfo*, Handel drew on *La resurrezione*, *Rodrigo* and *Aci* for *Agrippina*; and later in his life he was to draw on *Agrippina* for oratorios as well as operas. It is not surprising that the influence of Alessandro Scarlatti is detectable, for Scarlatti was Italy's leading operatic composer and Handel must have known much of his music including, probably, his important opera *Mitridate*, produced at Venice in 1707.

Handel's visit to Italy ended on this decisive note of triumph. He returned to Germany not as just another German composer to serve out his life at some minor court but as a recognised genius who had triumphed in the home of Italian opera. He travelled to Hanover, where in June 1710 he was appointed Kapellmeister to the Elector. Steffani, a previous Kapellmeister there, probably had some influence in the appointment, and two of Handel's contacts in Italy may also have helped (Prince Ernst August, the Elector's younger brother, and Baron Kielmansegg, Master of the Horse at the Court). Handel apparently made it a



Proscenium arch and stage setting at the Queen's (later King's) Theatre, Haymarket

condition of the appointment that he was to be free to travel and to perform elsewhere. He soon made use of this freedom and set out on his travels once more. Possibly he visited his mother at Halle; then he went to the Düsseldorf Court, where he had been invited by the Elector, for whom he played; and then, *via* Holland, he set out for England.

Handel arrived in London about the end of November 1710. As far as we know, he did not go in response to any particular

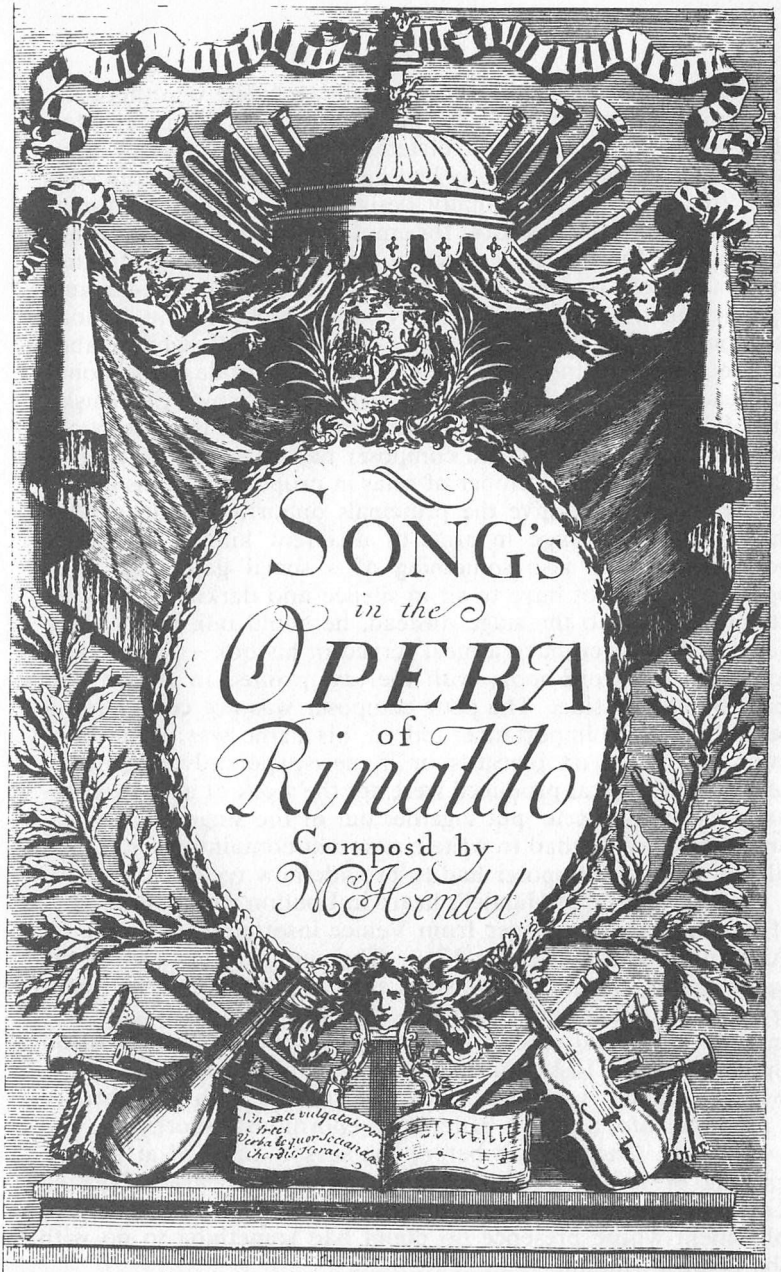
invitation, but he had met several Englishmen and had probably been urged to try his fortunes in London, one of the richest cities in the world, where Italian opera was still a novelty. London's first wholly Italian opera had been given earlier that very year; it had been preceded by operas in a mixture of Italian and English or in English with Italianate music. Musical taste in England was veering strongly from the French style (mainly used by Purcell and his contemporaries) to the Italian – a development, incidentally, anticipated by Purcell in his last years. Italian singers were attracting large and fashionable audiences to London's concert halls and Italian violinists were introducing the music of Corelli and others with enormous success.

As far as we know, Handel took no part in public concerts during his first visit to London. But he did go to some of the famous weekly meetings organised by Thomas Britton, the musical small-coal man, in his rooms at Clerkenwell. He must have been somewhat surprised at the strangely mixed collection of music-lovers who were prepared to ascend the steep, narrow stairs to sit in some discomfort listening to 'a noble concert of music . . . the best in town'. Another musical acquaintance made by Handel was a ten-year-old girl, Mary Granville, who later became one of his most faithful supporters and kept a diary which today provides a valuable source of information. He met her through Heidegger, a Swiss-born adventurer of notorious ugliness who was assistant manager of opera at the Haymarket Theatre and was to play an important part in London's operatic life in the following decades.

Opera, of course, lay at the centre of Handel's ambitions in England. It is vital that the twentieth-century reader of this volume should have some background knowledge of the kind of entertainment opera was in the eighteenth century, and that he should not imagine conditions to have been similar in any respect to those of today. Opera had arisen, early in the seventeenth century, as a courtly entertainment modelled on Greek tragedy. The plots were nearly always mythological. In the early days of opera, a serious attempt was made to match the music to the dramatic action and the meaning of the words, but by the beginning of the eighteenth century a number of developments had taken place which led away from dramatic realism. Ensembles and choruses had become very rare: the action was carried by the recitative and the musical interest lay in the arias, which were in *da capo* form and were immediately followed by the

exit of the singer, whether dramatically apposite or otherwise. The *da capo* form, in which the main part of the aria is repeated after a middle section with different words, is naturally very static, though psychologically less inept than its detractors suppose (the arias were normally designed to express emotional states, and an A - B - A form for emotional states is in fact quite true to life). But it is the element of exhibitionism which affected most adversely the dramatic truth of early eighteenth-century operas: the arias were used largely as a vehicle for the demonstration of vocal skill (particularly by the castrati) while elaborate sets and machinery – sometimes nearly as crude as the stone-to-bread machine in *The Rake's Progress* with which Stravinsky guys Baroque opera – were a fundamental part of the attraction. Moreover, the librettist and composer had to take care to give each singer the right number of arias in proportion to his or her importance, and to give the principals opportunities to exploit their expressive range in arias of different kinds. An opera performance was also something of a social gathering. The opera-goer did not have to sit in silence and darkness, with his attention glued to the stage; instead, he could talk freely, play cards, flirt or even have a meal served in his box – or he could follow in the word-book, with the text printed in Italian and English side by side. The poor composer was not considered a person of much importance: indeed, his name was usually not even mentioned on placards or in newspaper advertisements. Many of the operas produced were not the work of a single composer but a 'pasticcio' put together out of the singers' favourite arias; the librettist had to write a new text containing some kind of plot and the composer had to provide new recitatives.

The first music of Handel's heard in London was an aria from *Agrippina,* which a singer from Venice inserted in an opera by Alessandro Scarlatti late in 1710. The youthful manager of the opera house, Aaron Hill, was not slow to commission an opera from the brilliant young German who had been such a success in Italy; a libretto was hastily produced by Giacomo Rossi on the story (after Tasso) of Armida and Rinaldo, and the opera, written within a fortnight, was staged on the 24th of February 1711. *Rinaldo,* as it was called, was enormously successful, and was put on fifteen times before the season finished at the beginning of June. Heading the cast was the castrato Niccolò Grimaldi, known as Nicolini, an actor and singer of great accomplishment whose presence no doubt had something to do with the opera's triumph.



London Printed for J Walsh Servant in Ordinary to her Britanick Majesty, at ye Harp & Hoboy in Katherine Street near Somerset House in ye Strand, & J Hare at ye Viol & Flute in Cornhill near the Royall Exchange.

Musically speaking, *Rinaldo* deserved its success. Handel was clearly determined to startle the London audience, and he certainly did so: the arias are on a consistently high level, with plenty of opportunity for dramatic colouring and descriptive tone-painting (the most obvious example of the latter being in the scene where live sparrows were released on the stage!). As usual, a number of arias were taken from earlier works, notably the famous saraband-like 'Lascia ch'io pianga.' In another aria Handel astonished the audiences with his brilliant harpsichord playing (as was customary, he directed the performances himself from the harpsichord). The only unfavourable reaction to the opera came from *The Spectator*. Addison and Steele were quick to point out the absurdities of Italian operatic conventions, as they had good, and hardly disinterested, reason to do – Addison's English opera *Rosamond*, indifferently set to music by Thomas Clayton, had recently been a conspicuous failure, while Steele had interests in the playhouse.

The opera season finished in June. Handel had spent little time at his duties in Hanover and made haste back to Germany, though he was much pressed to return to London as soon as possible. On his way back he visited the Düsseldorf Court, where he apparently stayed longer than he should have done, for the Elector sent a note to Hanover apologising for having detained him.

After London, life in Hanover must have seemed a trifle dull to Handel – there was no opera, and his main occupation was to produce chamber duets for Princess Caroline. We know from one of his letters that he was studying the English language, and it is certain that he planned to return to London even if he had not yet decided about settling there permanently. As far as we know, he remained in Hanover until autumn 1712, apart from a visit to Halle, where he attended the christening of a niece and saw his mother. After little more than a year at Hanover, he applied for permission to go to London again, and his request was granted 'on condition that he engaged to return within a reasonable time' (Mainwaring). Handel arrived in England late in the autumn of 1712 and from then on made London his home.

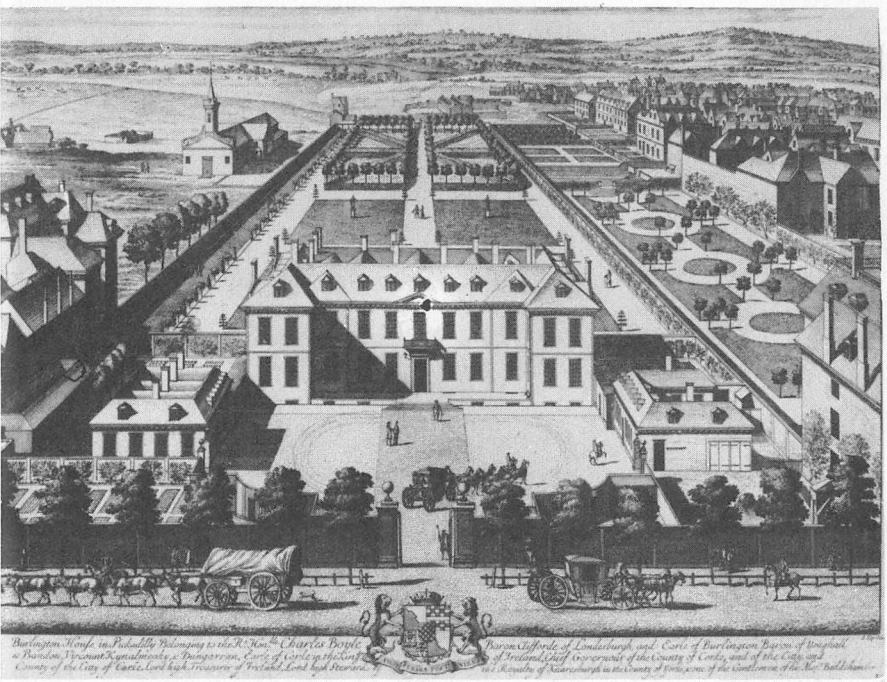
← *Title-page of first edition of* Rinaldo

FRANCESCO GEMINIANI.

In England

Back in London, Handel went to stay at the town house of a Mr. Andrews. He was not forgotten; for although he had missed an entire season at the opera, *Rinaldo* had been given eight performances earlier in the year. A new work – *Il pastor fido,* also to a text by Rossi – was completed in October and ready for performance the next month. Nicolini, the leading castrato, and Boschi, the outstanding bass for whom Handel had written in *Aci* and *Rinaldo,* were now back in Italy, so the cast was considerably weakened: moreover, the scenery and costumes were dull and the opera shorter than usual. Despite a long and interesting overture, the music was not Handel at his best (much of it was taken from earlier works), and in all these circumstances the opera's relative failure is not surprising. It ran for four opera nights (performances at this time were on Wednesdays and Saturdays) and was put on twice more later in the season. The immediate successor was *Dorinda,* a pasticcio put together by Haym from various Italian operas, which fared no bettter.

Before the end of the year Handel had completed his next opera, *Teseo,* to a libretto by Haym. With the advantage of new scenery incorporating elaborate machines, *Teseo* was much more of a success; its music, if not on the consistently high level of *Rinaldo,* has many good items (notably a beautiful farewell duet) and the plot, with the familiar rivalry between a wicked sorceress



Burlington House, Piccadilly

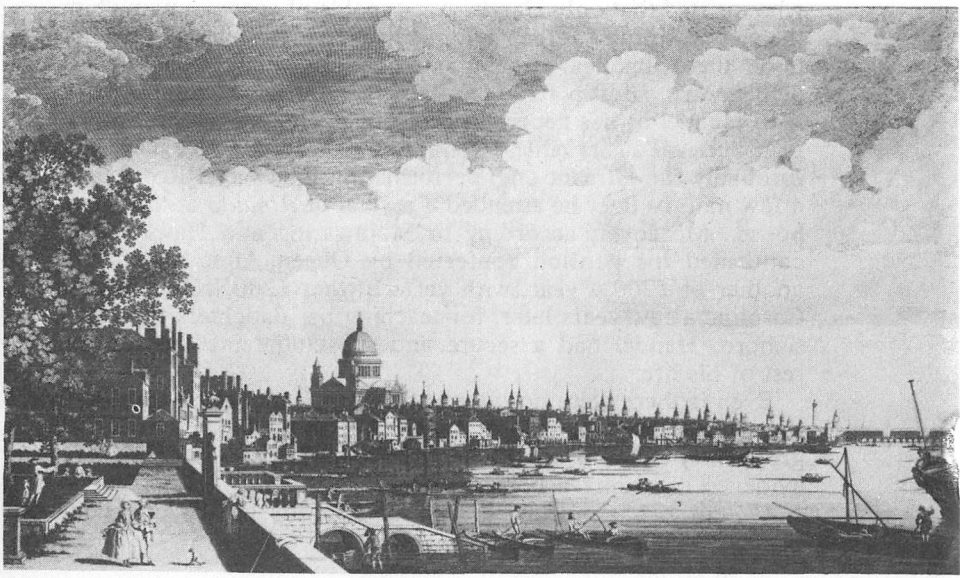
and a virtuous maiden, gave Handel plenty of opportunities for dramatic characterisation. *Teseo* had ten performances on the eleven opera nights immediately following its first production, in January 1713, and another three performances later in the season. It survived a number of vicissitudes, notably the absconding of the opera house manager with the takings after two performances, whereupon Heidegger became manager. The elaborate sets were not an unmixed blessing: at one performance the singers were 'hindered by some unforseen Accidents at that time insurmountable', but apparently the faults in the 'Flights of the Machines' were quickly put right.

The libretto of *Teseo* was dedicated to the Earl of Burlington who, though only about eighteen, was a leading patron of the arts. Around this time Handel was invited to live at Burlington House (in Piccadilly, on the site of the present building of the same name housing the Royal Academy). Here the young Earl and his mother entertained many of London's leading literary figures, notably Pope, Gay and Arbuthnot. Handel lived at Burlington

House for some years and later gave Hawkins an account of how he spent his days there. Hawkins relates that 'his mornings were employed in study, and at dinner he sat down with men of the first eminence for genius and abilities'. In the afternoons he often went to St. Paul's, being very fond of the organ recently built there by Father Smith, and in the evenings he would retire to the Queen's Arms Tavern for more music with members of the choir unless he were required for one of the evening concerts at Burlington House. He may also have attended some of the public concerts which abounded in London, though there are no records of his having performed at any of them.

At this time Handel was coming into favour at Court, partly, perhaps, through Lady Burlington, who was a Lady of the Bed-Chamber. Queen Anne must have been rather pleased at having in London a truant musician from the hated Hanoverians. Handel supplied her with a *Birthday Ode,* which was performed in February 1713: this was his first major attempt at setting English words, and elements of Purcellian influence can be found both in the music and the manner of setting. His other major English work of the same year, the *Utrecht Te Deum and Jubi-*

View of the Thames (Canaletto)



late, also has a connection with Purcell. Handel wrote the *Te Deum* at the beginning of the year, considerably before the Peace of Utrecht was signed, and added the *Jubilate* in time for the celebrations in July. No doubt he had heard the Purcell setting of 1694, which was regularly given at St. Paul's; he closely followed its general style, though the actual influence of Purcell's idiom is small. For the next thirty years Handel's and Purcell's settings were alternately performed in the cathedral on important occasions. With his music accepted at both Court and St. Paul's Handel was almost becoming an honorary Englishman, and his acceptance of a pension of £200 a year from Queen Anne rather suggests that he had by now decided to settle in England.

Just over a year later, in August 1714, Queen Anne died and George I, Elector of Hanover, was proclaimed king. Handel was clearly in an embarrassing predicament: he had overstayed the 'reasonable time' of his leave from Hanover and was likely to be out of favour with the new King. The traditional story, stemming from Mainwaring, is that the King forgave him on the occasion of the first performance of the *Water Music,* when he found himself being serenaded from a neighbouring barge during a water party on the Thames. Another story of the reconciliation, related by Hawkins, is that the King wished to hear the brilliant young Italian violinist Francesco Geminiani, who insisted that only Handel was capable of accompanying him (he was notorious for the rhythmic licence of his playing); whereupon the King heard them and overlooked the truant's misdemeanours. But in fact George I may not have been as angry with Handel as has generally been suggested, for within a week of his arrival at St. James's Palace he heard a Handel *Te Deum* (probably the Utrecht one) performed in his Chapel Royal, and a few months later he attended a revival of *Rinaldo* at the opera house. Moreover, according to Mainwaring and Hawkins, he confirmed the pension conferred by Queen Anne and added another of £200 a year; with yet a further £200 from Princess Caroline a few years later, for teaching her daughters the harpsichord, Handel had a secure and substantial income for the rest of his life.

Even if there were no quarrel between Handel and the King, the stories about the *Water Music* and about Geminiani in all probability have some truth behind them. There is documentary evidence regarding a performance of the *Water Music,* but in 1717, not 1715, and it does not refer to any breach or recon-

ciliation between Handel and the King. The 1715 water party may well have taken place too – such parties were not uncommon in eighteenth-century London – and it is worth noting that the *Water Music* does in fact consist of three distinct suites in the French style, in different keys (F, D and G), which may well have been composed for different occasions. (This point, incidentally, is far too often overlooked today, and even in the rare complete performances of Handel's original version the movements are usually jumbled up irrespective of key.) A prominent figure in all these happenings was Baron Kielmansegg, who had befriended Handel many years earlier: the Baron held an important position at Court (as did his wife – an unofficial but generally acknowledged one as a royal mistress) and he probably organised the water parties and the joint appearance of Geminiani and Handel. Geminiani dedicated a set of trio sonatas to him in 1716.

Handel's next major composition was the opera *Silla,* written in 1714-15, a short work and, as far as can be judged from the surviving portions, not especially distinguished. It never achieved a public production but may have been staged privately at Burlington House. Handel was no musical spendthrift and drew on the best items for his next opera, *Amadigi.* The libretto of *Amadigi* seems to have been by Heidegger, who dedicated it to Lord Burlington, mentioning in his dedication that the music was written at Burlington's home. Nicolini was now back in London and sang in *Amadigi,* another important part being taken by the English singer Anastasia Robinson (whose marriage to the Earl of Peterborough was kept secret for no less than thirteen years, after which her morals were belatedly vindicated). *Amadigi* was staged at the end of May 1715: although the season was extended well into July (and then only ended because of the Jacobite troubles) a mere seven performances were given as the run was several times interrupted – by the King's birthday, illness among the singers and excessively hot weather. Musically, it is notable for some deeply expressive writing, for Handel's human insight was gaining fast. Much attention was attracted by the opera's spectacular staging – the set even included a so-called 'practicable' fountain, with real water.

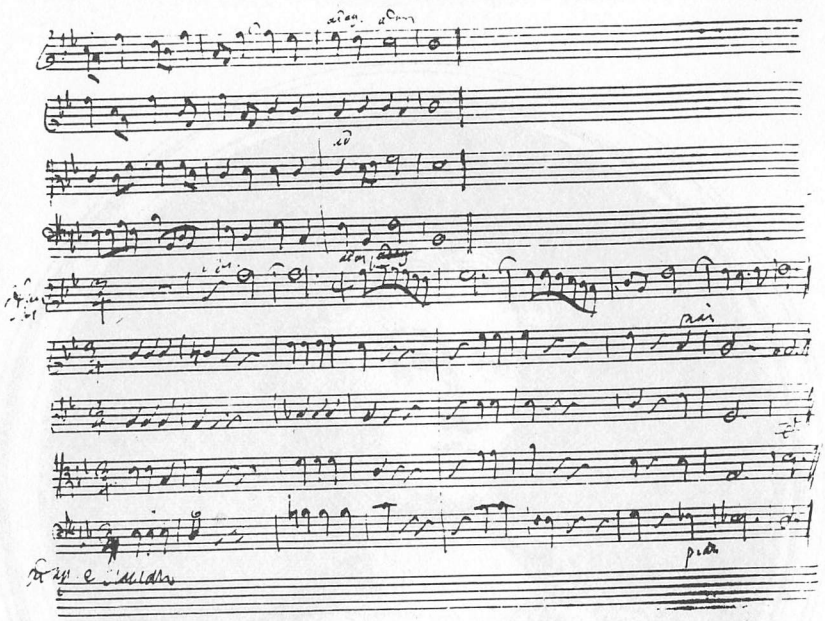
The Jacobite troubles persisted long enough to delay the start of the next season. The theatre did not open until February 1716, and then mainly for revivals, *Amadigi* being among them. A few days before the season finished the King, who often

attended incognito with one of his mistresses, left London on a visit to Hanover. Handel was one of the many Germans in London who followed him. While in Germany, he travelled on to Halle to visit his mother, and he also gave some help to the needy widow of his old teacher, Zachau. Probably on a commission from Princess Caroline, he went as far as Ansbach; there he met an old university acquaintance, Johann Christoph Schmidt, whom he persuaded to come to London as his secretary. The two men became firm friends and Schmidt's son, the John Christopher Smith mentioned earlier, eventually succeeded his father and was a great help to Handel in his last years.

It is generally believed that while in Germany Handel reverted to the German style of composition in a new Passion setting, to words by Barthold Heinrich Brockes. In fact, there is no special reason to doubt Mattheson's story that the work was composed in London and posted to Hamburg in a very close-written score – wherever he was when he wrote the *Brockes Passion,* as it is called, it is not surprising that he should revert to a German style for this most German of forms. Brockes' poem was also set by Keiser, Telemann and Mattheson, and some years later Handel set some of his shorter poems. Handel's Passion was performed in Germany, and his operas too were becoming known there – *Amadigi* and *Agrippina* were given at Hamburg in the following years, the former in a German translation.

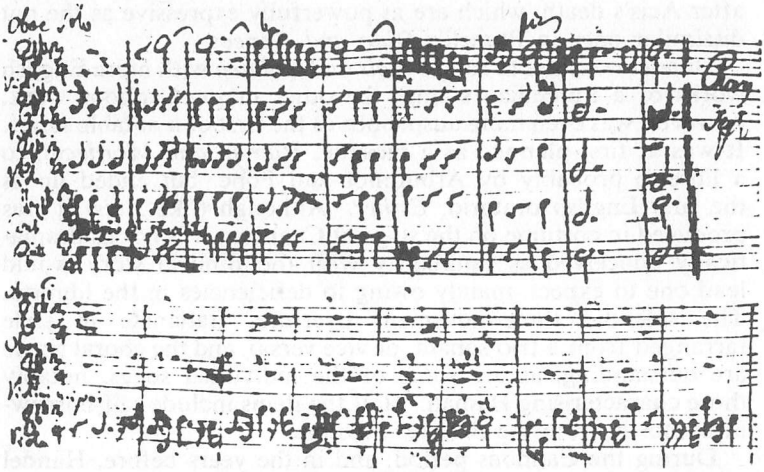
George I returned to London in January 1717; Handel was probably back by then, supervising the *Rinaldo* and *Amadigi* revivals at the King's Theatre early in the year and preparing a new scene to add to *Amadigi.* We cannot be sure where he lived immediately on his return – there are no references to his presence at Burlington House – but by September he was ensconced at Cannons, near Edgware in Middlesex, one of the greatest houses in all England. This splendid Italianate palace had been built in 1713 by James Brydges, later the Duke of Chandos, with 'much more of art than nature, and much more cost than art' (Mainwaring). Brydges had been Paymaster-General to the army and had certainly not been one of the losers in the recent wars: indeed, an enquiry had been held with regard to an odd £35m. which had been mislaid, and Brydges was far from exculpated. Anyway, posterity need not regret the percentage he evidently levied on every soldier's pay. He appointed the learned Dr. Pepusch in charge of the music of his chapel and some time during 1717 invited Handel to live at Cannons. By September

MRS. ANASTASIA ROBINSON.
AFTERWARDS COUNTESS OF PETERBOROUGH.



(a) Brockes Passion: *Handel's manuscript*

two of the *Chandos Anthems* were written and another two were in process of composition; the remainder followed in the course of the next two years. One must not look here for music of profound religious significance, comparable with Bach's cantatas. First, one has to take account of the fundamental differences between the Protestantism of Leipzig and that of London; and second, one must remember that Handel was producing music to order for 'Princely Chandos', music which had to reflect the pomp and splendour of its surroundings, just as Lully's religious music had reflected the majesty of *Le Roi Soleil.* Bach's cantatas would have been even more incongruous at Cannons than Handel's anthems at the Thomaskirche. But within the framework of Handel's sturdy if somewhat worldly Anglicanism they cover a wide expressive range. It is unfortunate that their length, as well as the resources they call for (though considerably less than full chorus and orchestra), debar them from a place in the standard cathedral repertory today.



(b) Brockes Passion: *J. S. Bach's manuscript copy*

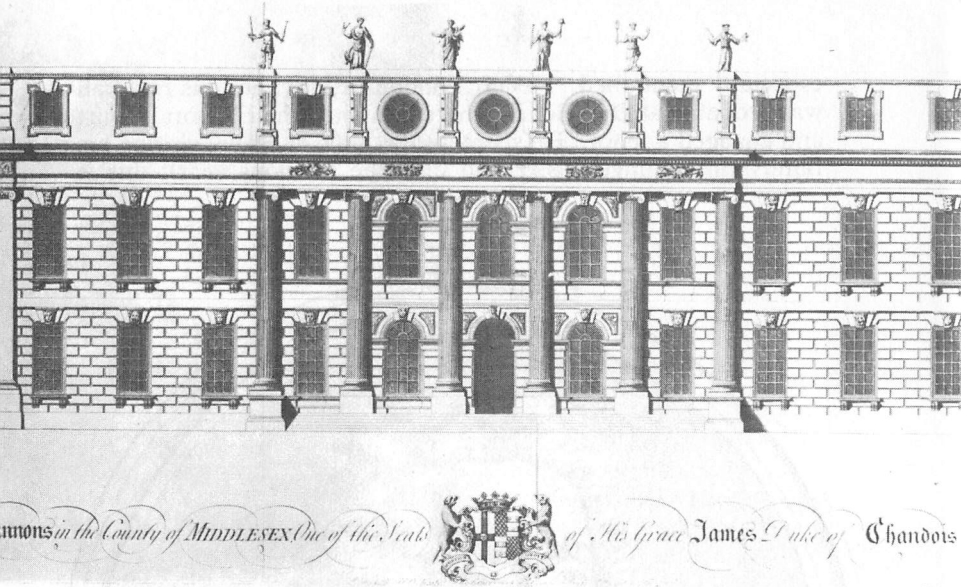
Opera in London was for the moment dead – there were no performances at all, apart from some English operas at the small theatre in Lincoln's Inn Fields, from the close of the 1716-17 season for nearly three years. While living at Cannons (or possibly at his new patron's town house in Albemarle Street) Handel produced two important works with something of the dramatic character of opera but without its conventions. The first of these is *Acis and Galatea,* in the English masque form, to a libretto by Gay, after Congreve. The music is quite different from the Italian *Aci, Galatea e Polifemo,* though the story is of course the same. *Acis and Galatea* includes some of Handel's happiest, most sparkling and relaxed music, and many of the songs are often heard out of their context today – the sensuously beautiful 'Love in her eyes sits playing', for example, or that grotesque declaration of love by 'the monster Polypheme', 'O ruddier than the cherry'. No less outstanding are the trio 'The flocks shall leave the mountains' or the choruses, especially those

after Acis's death, which are as powerfully expressive as the not dissimilar ones in Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas.*

Handel was later to follow *Acis and Galatea* with more English works of a Purcellian stamp; the other major Cannons work, however, was even more auspicious as the first of a notable series. It was at first planned as a masque, *Haman and Mordecai,* to a libretto probably by Arbuthnot and Pope, but ended up as the first English oratorio, *Esther.* Although (like *Acis*) it was produced in costume on the stage at Cannons, it is not as dramatically conceived as familiarity with the Biblical story would lead one to expect, mainly owing to deficiencies in the libretto. The splendid three-movement overture, Italianate in style (arranged from a trio sonata, or vice versa), and the choral finale are outstanding, as are some of the individual songs, notably those characterising Haman. Half the items include self-borrowings, mostly from the *Brockes Passion.*

During the Cannons period, and in the years before, Handel by no means neglected instrumental music. As harpsichord teacher to two princesses (and no doubt to several other young ladies of high social position) he naturally composed some music for the harpsichord. His first book of suites was published late in 1720 – the works had previously circulated in a 'pirated' edition issued in Amsterdam, and Handel wrote in a preface of the 'surrepticious and incorrect Copies of them which had got Abroad'. Since 1800, Handel's keyboard works have failed to hold the same place in general esteem as those of Bach or Domenico Scarlatti; one fancies that his best harpsichord music was either improvised or too difficult to be suitable for publication. But the music of the suites (which, incidentally, are by no means as stereotyped in design as Bach's) is full of characteristic energy, harmonic strength and melodic interest, even if some movements fall below the general level and a few require playing of a panache which only Handel himself could supply. It should be remembered that they were originally written primarily for teaching purposes. Among the other instrumental music Handel was writing at this time are some of the concertos which later appeared as Op. 3 (the so-called 'Oboe Concertos') and some of the solo and trio sonatas of Opp. 1 and 2. None of these was published in England for several years, though Dutch editions of the two sets of sonatas appeared early in the 1720s.

Two Handelian fables are worth a brief mention here. First, he is said to have composed *Esther* on the organ at Whitchurch



View of Cannons, near Edgware

Parish Church. The Duke of Chandos did in fact build this church, but if Handel had composed at the organ (a most unlikely supposition) it would have been on a smaller one in his own room or the one in the Cannons chapel which was moved to Gosport when the mansion was pulled down. Second, 'The Harmonious Blacksmith' of Edgware, whose 'air' appears in the harpsichord suites: he never existed, of course, and was not even invented until about a hundred years after his famous air and variations first appeared in print.

Meanwhile, opera remained in abeyance; but it was far from forgotten. The early eighteenth century was a period of unbridled commercial venture (including the South Sea Bubble), and during the spring of 1719 a sort of private company was formed to organise opera in London. Following the French Academie Royale de Musique, it was called the Royal Academy of Music. The King, who promised a grant of £1000 a year, headed a distinguished list of guarantors which included many leading names in London society, such as the Dukes of Newcastle, Manchester and Chandos and the Earl of Burlington. Handel was instructed by Newcastle, the Lord Chamberlain and Governor of the Academy, to go to Italy, Germany or elsewhere to engage suitable singers, the famous castrato Senesino being

especially mentioned. He left London in May, and his first call was probably at Düsseldorf, where he visited the Electoral Court and engaged a tenor. He spent a short time at Halle, visiting his family (his younger sister had died the previous year); this is

GIOVANNI BUONONCINI

the occasion on which Bach is said to have come to Halle from Cöthen (about twenty miles) to see Handel, whom he just missed. Handel has been criticised for making no effort to meet his greatest contemporary; but whereas Bach set out to meet a composer whose stature was universally acknowledged, Handel can have felt no special interest in just one of the many Kapellmeisters of provincial Germany whose music he had almost certainly never heard and whose reputation was that of an overelaborate contrapuntist and a clever improviser of fugues.

Handel's main port of call was the Dresden Court, where there was a particularly fine operatic establishment. A correspondent at the court wrote that he seemed a little mad, but no doubt his situation was embarrassing, as he was accepting hospitality from the Elector while planning to lure away his best singers. Apparently he succeeded in sowing sufficient discontent to make the Elector glad to release the singers from their existing contracts, and Handel signed new ones with the soprano Durastanti, the bass Boschi (both of whom he had known in his Italian days) and several others. It is not altogether clear whether Senesino (whose real name was Bernardi) was engaged by Handel or by post from London. Handel was a salaried employee of the Royal Academy, as Master of the Orchestra, but it was evidently thought that the services of other composers would be necessary, so steps were taken to invite Bononcini from Rome and to commission the Neapolitan composer Giovanni Porta to write the first opera.

Handel arrived back in England towards the end of 1719, probably returning to Cannons. He found himself on the threshold of a new and important stage of his career – and one might wonder whether he felt any happier about the operatic prospects than a commentator in *The Theatre*, who wrote in March 1720: 'At the Rehearsal on *Friday* last, Signior NIHILINI BENEDITTI rose half a Note above his Pitch formerly known. Opera Stock from 83 and a half, when he began; at 90 when he ended.'

FRANCESCO BERNARDO SENESINO.

The Academy Operas

The story of Handel's life in the next years is little more than the story of opera in London. He was director of the opera orchestra and his whole life centred around the King's Theatre in the Haymarket. We do not know where he lived at the beginning of the 1720s – perhaps in lodgings or with one of his patrons (not Burlington, for Bononcini was his guest from 1720). But in 1723 he was able to buy his own house, newly built in Brook Street, where it can still be seen today, as the London offices of a clothing manufacturer.

On the 2nd of April 1720 the Royal Academy of Music opened, Porta's *Numitore* being the opera given on that auspicious occasion. After a brief run it was succeeded by Handel's *Radamisto,* his first opera for five years. This was clearly regarded as the main event of the season and an enormous crowd struggled to fight their way into the theatre. Although several of the singers engaged by the Academy had not yet arrived, the cast was quite strong, including Durastanti, Benedetto Baldassari (the tenor from Düsseldorf, whose extra semitone had boosted the opera shares!) and Anastasia Robinson. The opera was a tumultuous success and had ten performances before the season finished at the end of June. Its general musical level is very high. Haym's libretto was a particularly good one and even if the story, with its customary mixture of love and politics, was con-

ventional, it at least gave rise to a number of situations which spurred Handel to produce appropriately dramatic music.

In the summer of 1720 the main topic of conversation among Londoners was the bursting of the South Sea Bubble, an event which momentarily eclipsed the operatic activities. Handel was one of the many thousands who had invested substantially in it, but among the more fortunate ones in that he was far from ruined. During the summer months he probably worked on future operas for the Academy and put the finishing touches to some of the music mentioned in the previous chapter, such as *Esther* and the *Chandos Anthems* – one of the anthems was heard at the opening of the new Cannons chapel at the end of August. He also took the trouble to obtain a copyright for the publication of his music, in an attempt to avert the piratical methods of the London publishers. The fourteen-year copyright was first used for *Radamisto,* issued at the end of the year by Meares, who lavished especial care on the publication even to the extent (unusual in the eighteenth century) of getting Handel to correct proofs. Early in autumn the great Senesino arrived, soon followed by Bononcini. Senesino's arrogance of manner caused a good deal of offence, but it was willingly tolerated for the extraordinary purity, expressiveness and power of his singing. Bononcini, on the other hand, was a man experienced in court society, with a good idea of what was required of him both socially and musically.

Bononcini's first opera given in London was *Astarto,* which opened the second Academy season during November and first brought Senesino before the English public. *Astarto* was even more successful than *Radamisto* and it started the pointless and unnecessary division of the public into factions favouring Bononcini or Handel. The feud continued a long time – it was not until five years later that Byrom produced his famous epigram:

Some say, compar'd to Bononcini,
That Mynheer Handel's but a Ninny;
Others aver, that he to Handel
Is scarcely fit to hold a Candle:
Strange all this Difference should be
'Twixt Tweedle-dum and Tweedle-dee!

Today we remember Handel as one of the greatest of all composers while his rival is virtually forgotten. It may perhaps seem

Caricature of Senesino, Cuzzoni and Berenstadt in a Handel opera, probably Flavio

that the music-lovers of eighteenth-century London were grossly lacking in discrimination, but in fact there is a good deal of truth in the last two lines of Byrom's epigram, for Handel and Bononcini were writing in precisely the same musical language and there can be few music-lovers today who could tell one from the other in certain types of operatic aria. As composers, they each had their own characteristics: while Handel had greater dramatic power and harmonic range, and used the orchestra with more freedom, Bononcini had a simple and pleasing melodic vein and an exact knowledge of how best to exploit his singers.

Astarto was the principal success of the 1720-1 season, but *Radamisto* was put on in revised and augmented form at the end of December for seven more performances. The cast was radically altered to include Senesino, Boschi and several other new singers, while Durastanti exchanged the part of Radamisto for that of his wife (though her appearances were curtailed by the birth of a child in March). *Arsace,* by Orlandini and Mattei, was staged in February and in April a new work appeared, *Muzio Scaevola.* Its first act was written by Mattei (the leading cellist at the opera, generally known as Pippo), the second by Bononcini

and the third by Handel. It has often been thought that this seemingly curious arrangement was designed to place Handel's and Bononcini's music in juxtaposition; in fact it is much more likely that a new opera was wanted more quickly than any single composer could be expected to complete it. The news of the birth of a son to the Princess of Wales reached the public during the first performance of *Muzio Scaevola* and seems to have attracted rather more attention than the music; nevertheless, the opera had a further nine performances. The only other novelty of the season was Bononcini's *Ciro,* produced in May.

The Academy's affairs were none too prosperous, and a number of calls had to be made on the guarantors during the summer of 1721. In November the new season opened; among the revivals were *Muzio Scaevola* and *Radamisto,* the latter having half-a-dozen performances. Handel finished his next opera, *Floridante,* at the end of November, and it was first performed a few days later. *Floridante* has generally been called a failure by Handel biographers, but it seems to have been a remarkably healthy one: it had nine consecutive performances to start with, then a further six later in the season and seven more the following December. Musically, too, it has been charged with inferiority, but it has a good deal of Handel in his most energetic vein as well as some fine expressive arias.

Early in 1722 Bononcini had two notable successes, with *Crispo* produced in January and *Griselda* (generally regarded as the best of his operas) in February. His position seems to have advanced considerably during this year, and in the summer he had the distinction of being commissioned to write the funeral anthem for the Duke of Marlborough.

The exciting event of the 1722-3 season was the arrival of Francesca Cuzzoni. The Academy had tried to engage this famous soprano in 1720 but did not succeed until two years later, with the promise of a fabulous salary, probably of £2000 for the season plus the proceeds of a benefit performance. She arrived at the end of 1722; Sandoni, the second harpsichord player at the opera, had been sent to Dover to meet her and he married her *en route* to London. One must suspect him of a sound business sense, for her attractions (other than vocal) were markedly limited and her character appears to have been very much as one might expect from a highly successful prima donna.

During the summer Handel had completed a new opera, *Ottone,* with Cuzzoni in mind for a principal part. The opera

Frontispiece to score of Tamerlano

was produced in January 1723; her presence was an enormous attraction and the work was another triumphant success. Half-guinea tickets for the second performance were being offered at two or three guineas, and *Ottone* ran for eleven nights before a new opera by Ariosti was put on. Cuzzoni revived it again for her benefit and two further performances were given in June. She had been less keen when introduced to the music, even refusing to sing her first aria, but by threatening to throw her out of a window Handel evidently prevailed. The aria in question, 'Falsa imagine,' possibly seemed to her too straightforward for her first appearance on the London stage; but Handel had not miscalculated, and this simple but beautiful song was exactly what the situation called for. Later in the opera he took the opportunity to exploit her dramatic powers more fully. *Ottone* has many fine arias and Burney wrote that it had 'scarce a song which did not become a national favourite'. During the rehearsals of his next opera, *Flavio,* Handel again had trouble with a singer – this time an English tenor, by name Gordon, who threatened to jump on the harpsichord. 'Let me know when,' Handel is said to have replied, 'and I will advertise it, for more people will come to see you jump than to hear you sing.' Following new operas by Bononcini and Ariosti, *Flavio* was staged in May, a week after its completion. It is shorter than most Handel operas and lacks the splendours of *Ottone,* but was well enough received to run to the end of the season.

Cuzzoni's appearances had ensured the Academy's prosperity for the time being, for during 1723 a dividend was declared and £1000 was spent on re-decoration of the opera house. Bononcini seems to have been temporarily out of favour: he is said to have been kept from returning to Italy only by a pension of £500 a year from the Duchess of Marlborough (falsely rumoured to be conditional on his writing no more operas for the Academy). But it was a new Bononcini opera, *Farnace,* which opened the 1723-4 season, though its run was short, *Ottone* succeeding it very soon for a further half-dozen airings. Next came an Ariosti opera, but the big event of the season was another Handel opera, *Giulio Cesare.*

With Cuzzoni as Cleopatra and Senesino as Caesar *Giulio Cesare* was another triumph, with twelve successive performances and several revivals in later seasons. It is one of the few Handel operas to hold the stage today, being frequently given in Germany but usually in a form very far from the original. The

ATTILIUS ARIOSTI

story's familiarity is undoubtedly one of the factors governing its continued popularity, though its music is generally on a high level with some outstandingly beautiful arias for Cleopatra (notably the seductive 'V'adoro pupille'). Caesar has a splendid aria in Act I with horn *obbligato* – the latter introduced, with characteristic irrelevance, because Caesar refers to being 'hunted' by his enemies. His great moment in the opera is the soliloquy over the tomb of his murdered rival. It was at a performance of *Giulio Cesare* that Senesino made himself rather a laughing-stock when, after singing the words 'Caesar does not know what fear is', he displayed abject terror as a piece of scenery fell down; and about the same time he was subjected to a horsewhipping from the Earl of Peterborough for insolence to Anastasia Robinson. Among the London public were many who pointed to the degeneracy of an age where such people were popular idols. Heidegger, the opera house manager, was also in disfavour in some quarters over the Ridottos and Masquerades of doubtful moral character which he organised.

The 1723-4 season finished with a new Bononcini opera and a pasticcio. During the summer Handel worked on *Tamerlano,* which opened the next season at the end of October and ran for nine nights. There were three new singers in the company, one of them a tenor, Borosini (who, one of the gossip papers somewhat ambiguously reported, 'was never cut out for a Singer'). Tenors rarely had important parts in opera at this time and Borosini must have been exceptional to be given such a large one. As the tyrant Bajazet he had some splendid music to sing, including a moving recitative and aria on his deathbed. There is also a beautiful love duet, written for Cuzzoni and Senesino.

Tamerlano was succeeded by Ariosti's *Artaserse,* which ran during December, and a revival of *Giulio Cesare.* During February another new Handel opera appeared – *Rodelinda,* one of his finest, which filled the theatre for nearly two months. The plot has a slight resemblance to that of *Fidelio* – there is a dungeon scene for the hero (played by Senesino), who also has one of Handel's most popular operatic arias, 'Dove sei'. The impressive sequence of angry arias in Act I should also be mentioned; anger was an emotion Handel always depicted effectively. In the customary way, *Rodelinda* was soon published, both in score and an arrangement for the many amateur flautists who wished to remind themselves of the favourite songs. London's music publishers were a sharp, business-like lot, and they usually brought

out at least the popular arias from an opera within a few weeks of the first performances. *Rodelinda's* publication is of special interest as the score was issued by subscription, like many in the eighteenth century, with a list of the subscribers printed in the front. Handel followed this procedure ten times altogether and although the lists tell us about only a particular section of his public they are of considerable interest. The one in *Rodelinda* includes composers (Loeillet, Galliard and Carey), organists, members of the Chapel Royal and various figures in London's artistic life, such as Dr. Arbuthnot and the theatre manager John Rich. Another subscriber, for three copies, was the Philarmonica Club, one of the musical clubs holding regular meetings in London. Many musical societies in the provinces appear on Handel's later subscription lists.

Publicity was as important in the eighteenth century as it is now to someone in the public eye. Cuzzoni had set a fashion by appearing in *Rodelinda* wearing a brown silk gown trimmed with silver, shocking the older ladies but successfully inviting imitation by the younger ones; in August she again attracted much attention by the infallible means of having a baby. As she was brought to bed she sang a song from *Ottone,* 'La speranza' (which in fact comes from the second soprano part, not the one she had created). During the summer the Academy directors took a very foolish step. Earlier they had sown dissension by having two principal composers, around whom factions had formed: now they engaged another soprano, Faustina Bordoni, without a thought for the consequences of having two prima donnas.

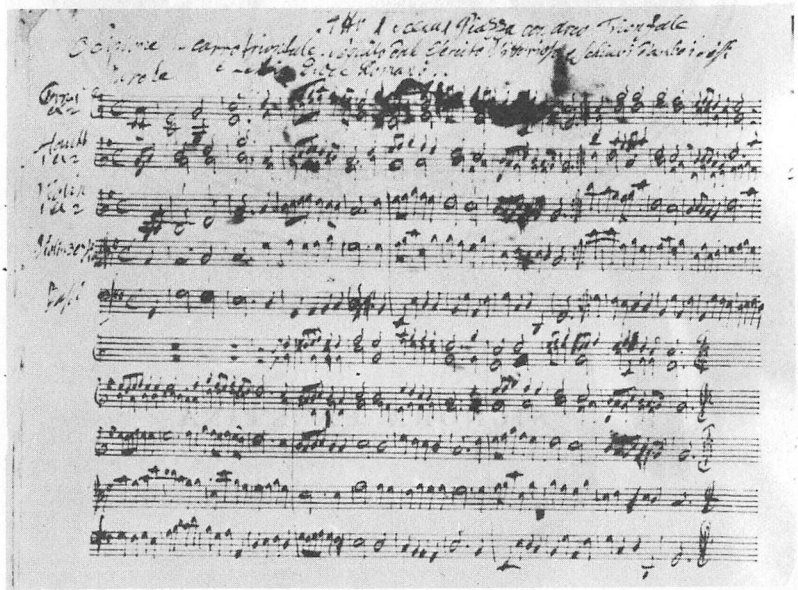
The 1725-6 season started late in November, at first only with revivals. The first novelty, Handel's *Scipione,* was not produced until March, when it ran for thirteen nights: today it is remembered principally for its famous march, which is said (without authority) to have been written in the first place for the Grenadier Guards and later incorporated in the opera. *Scipione* was quickly followed by *Alessandro.* With Faustina newly arrived in London (at a salary of £2500 a year), Handel and his librettist were faced by a diplomatic problem – to give the two sopranos parts of precisely equal importance. In the new opera, both ladies are in love with the hero, Alessandro; they have a duet together, in which neither part can be said to be the more prominent; they have exactly the same number of arias; and each of them has a duet with Alessandro (taken by Senesino). Unfortunately, only

FRANCESCA CUZZONI SANDONI.

SIGNORA FAUSTINA.

one of them can marry him in the end. With the added attraction of two sopranos, the opera was so prodigious a success that eleven performances were given between the first night on the 5th of May and the end of the season on the 7th of June, breaking the usual rule of twice-weekly performances. The planned final performance had to be cancelled as Senesino was taken ill, and he went off to Italy to recover his health, not returning until the end of the year and thus delaying the opening of the following season until January 1727. An Ariosti opera was the first production; then, at the end of the month, came Handel's *Admeto,* which occupied the theatre right up to April, with nineteen performances. The plot, based on the story of Alcestis, gives plenty of scope for dramatic treatment, especially in the contrast of character between the two principal women, played by Cuzzoni and Faustina – always a favourite with Handel. A notably impressive moment is the opening of Act II, where a French-style overture with a fine chromatic fugue sets the atmosphere for Hercules' visit to Hades to rescue Alcestis. In

Handel's manuscript of the March in Scipio



his comments on *Admeto* Burney wrote with justice of the music painting 'the passions in all their various attitudes'.

After brief revivals of *Ottone* and *Floridante,* Bononcini's last London opera, *Astianatte,* was staged in May. The season ended in June under something of a cloud, for at the last performance of *Astianatte* Cuzzoni and Faustina, their passions inflamed by pamphlets published in the preceding months as well as catcalls and hissing, actually came to blows on the stage. The fashionable public with its violent partisanship was as much to blame as the two ladies themselves, but the 'most horrible and bloody battle' (as it was once called), in the presence of Princess Caroline, only helped to bring the Royal Academy into disrepute.

By this time Handel had clearly decided that England was to be his permanent home. He applied for naturalisation and became a British subject in February 1727. At once he was appointed to the honorary post of Composer to the Chapel Royal, for which aliens were ineligible. Among the visitors to London during the year was a musician from Germany, who may have toyed with the idea of following Handel's example – Johann Joachim Quantz, the famous flautist employed by Frederick the Great. He later wrote an account of his impressions of opera in London, particularly of the orchestra, which he thought 'made an extremely good effect'. Like other commentators on the rival sopranos, he found Cuzzoni the more tender and expressive, Faustina the more powerful and brilliant and the better as regards stage presence and acting ability.

Just after the end of the opera season George I died at Osnabrück while on a visit to Germany, and on the 15th of June George II was proclaimed king. Handel was commissioned to write four anthems for his coronation. The most famous of them is *Zadok the Priest,* in which he showed his incomparable mastery of ceremonial music: the anthem has been heard at every English coronation since. A huge crowd attended Westminster Abbey to hear the rehearsal, for which the choir numbered between 40 and 50 and the orchestra 160, according to a newspaper report.

It was a revival of *Admeto* that opened the Academy's ninth season, at the end of September 1727, and an opera by Ariosti (his last) followed soon after. Handel's next new opera, appropriately on a patriotic subject, was produced in November and ran for a little over a month. It was *Riccardo I, Rè d'Inghilterra*; musically it is notable for its opening storm scene and unusually

colourful orchestration. But by this time Italian opera in London was sharply on the decline. No doubt this was largely due to the behaviour of the singers, but the public may well have been beginning to tire by now of this extravagant and artificial novelty. Mrs. Pendarves, the inveterate friend and supporter of Handel (whom we met earlier under her maiden name of Mary Granville) wrote to her sister:

> *I doubt operas will not survive longer than this winter, they are now at their last gasp; the subscription is expired and nobody will renew it. The directors are always squabbling, and they have so many divisions among themselves that I wonder they have not broke up before . . .*

Alessandro was revived in December, but as no newspapers with advertisements survive for January or February 1728 we have only Burney's uncertain authority for the revival of *Radamisto* (perhaps an attempt to recall the glories of the Academy's early days). It was at the end of January that the *Beggar's Opera* was produced at the Lincoln's Inn Fields Theatre. Though not the first ballad opera, it was a particularly good one and came at an opportune moment. It was full of political and social satire, the tunes were simple and catchy, and it filled an obvious need, especially for the large sections of the public which could not understand Italian and found the music of Handel and his operatic colleagues too complex, formal or elaborate.

Handel must have seen the trend of taste clearly enough, but had to continue his duties at the Royal Academy, composing and producing operas. *Siroe,* to a libretto by the famous Metastasio modified by Haym (who had arranged most of Handel's recent ones), was first performed in February and played until the end of April, presumably to sparse houses. As in *Rodelinda,* there is a moving dungeon scene for the hero. It was succeeded by *Tolomeo,* a shorter opera than most of Handel's and not one of his best, though it has a fine overture and a dramatic scene where Tolomeo takes poison (but does not, of course, die). It ran for seven nights; then came three performances of *Admeto,* after which the doors of the Royal Academy finally closed. During April the twenty-first and final call was made upon the guarantors, who over the nine seasons had paid about £185 each, probably for two seats at each of nearly five hundred performances (the original guarantee was £200, but one dividend

had been paid). It had been hoped that the amount guaranteed would last fourteen years, but the combination of a fickle public with temperamental and expensive singers proved too much. There was no 1728-9 opera season; Senesino, Cuzzoni and Faustina departed for Italy; and there ended one phase – and began another – in Handel's career.

Subscribers' list from the score of Admeto

A

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Mr. Farley of Exeter has had Notice given him to prepare for his Tryal for re-printing Mift's Journal of the 24th of Auguſt, at the next Aſſizes there, which begin the 4th of next Month.

A few Days ſince died Mr. Rhodes, a noted Attorney of New Inn.

Mr. Handel, who is juſt returned from Italy, has contracted with the following Perſons to perform in the Italian Opera's, viz.

Signor Bernachi, who is eſteem'd the beſt Singer in Italy.

Signora Merighi, a Woman of a very fine Preſence, an excellent Actreſs, and a very good Singer, a Counter-Tenor.

Signora Strada, who hath a very fine Treble Voice, a Perſon of ſingular Merit.

Signor Annibal Pio Fabri, a moſt excellent Tenor, and a fine Voice.

His Wife, who performs a Man's Part exceeding well.

Signora Bartoldi, who has a very fine Treble Voice; ſhe is alſo a very genteel Actreſs both in Men and Women's Parts.

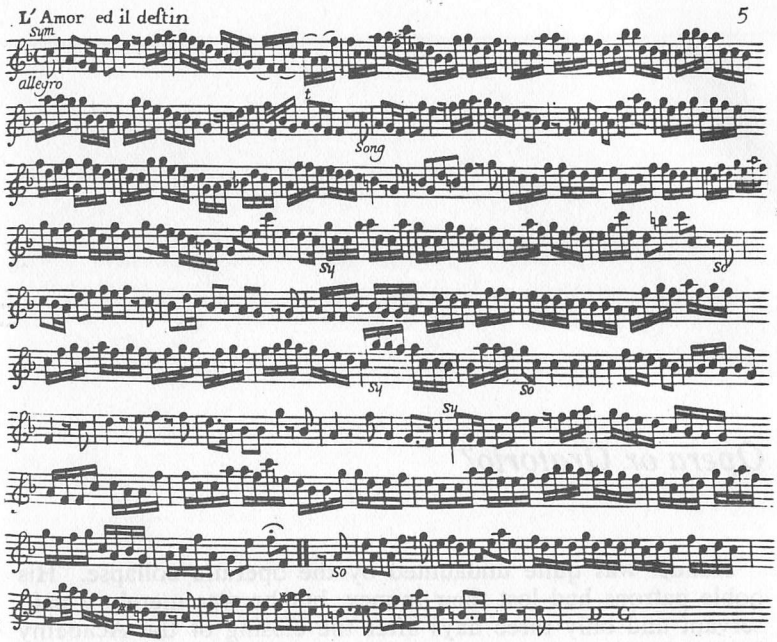
A Baſs Voice from Hamburgh, there being none worth engaging in Italy.

On Monday laſt a Trial came on at the Court of Common Pleas, between a Perſon that was taken into Cuſtody for getting a Baſtard Child, Plaintiff, and the Churchwardens of the Pariſh of St. Anne's, Defendants; and after the Examination of ſeveral Witneſſes, it ap-

Opera or Oratorio?

Handel was quite undaunted by the operatic collapse. His noble patrons had lost their money, but he was merely a paid servant and only three days after the closing of the Academy he could invest £700, following it a few weeks later with another £400. A typical composer of his age, he was prepared to produce whatever music was required of him, but, like Mozart, opera was his central interest – and unlike Mozart, who was always looking for someone to commission an opera, he could now afford to act as his own impresario. No doubt he felt that he could manage the affairs of the opera house much more successfully than the Academy directors had done.

So after the end of the last Academy season Handel, in partnership with Heidegger, took a five-year lease on the King's Theatre in the Haymarket. Early in 1729 he went on a 'talent-spotting' trip to Italy and Germany, where he engaged some new singers. Senesino, it seems, had quarrelled with him – no doubt the two were heartily tired of one another – so Handel found another castrato, Bernacchi, who had appeared in London many years earlier in *Rinaldo*. For his leading soprano he engaged Strada del Pò, who had a fine voice but an appearance and stage manner which later earned her the charming nickname of 'The Pig'. He also signed on two more women and a tenor, Fabri, evidently a better musician than most operatic singers,



A page from the flute arrangement of Partenope

as well as a German bass whom he heard at Hamburg. The total cost of salaries for the first year was close on £4000. Handel's exact Continental itinerary is uncertain, but we know that he spent some time in Halle, seeing his aged mother, now blind and infirm, for the last time. She died at Halle in December 1730.

Handel got back to London in June 1729. Preparations went ahead for the opening of the new 'Academy' (the old name stuck – as, incidentally, did the old 'Royal bounty' of £1000 a year). Handel and Heidegger decided to run the operas on a subscription system, like most of London's concerts, offering fifty performances a season for fifteen guineas. During November Handel completed *Lotario,* which opened the new Academy at the end of the month. The singers had a mixed reception: Strada and Fabri were generally approved but Bernacchi, at least to start with, proved a disappointment to the audiences used to Senesino. Nor did the work itself prove particularly popular.

Even Burney admitted that Handel 'seems to have been less fertile than usual', though in fact *Lotario* has a number of good arias, especially those written for Fabri. As an emergency measure to revive the shrinking audiences Handel put on the perennial favourite, *Giulio Cesare,* but soon he had ready a new opera, *Partenope.* The libretto, by Stampiglia, was better than many he set, and he produced a work on a generally higher level than *Lotario,* with considerably more concerted numbers than usual. But again it was not particularly well received. Next they tried *Ormisda,* probably a pasticcio ('very heavy [compared] to Mr. Handel's', wrote Mrs. Pendarves), and a revival of *Tolomeo,* which finished the season.

Clearly all was not well with the opera, so Handel set about improving his company and, with the help of Francis Colman, British Envoy at Florence and a staunch Handelian, he managed to re-engage Senesino. The second season under Handel's management started with a group of revivals, then a pasticcio (*Venceslao*) for which Handel wrote the recitatives. (The assemblage of an opera from the works of several composers and the addition of recitatives by another may seem an inartistic procedure today, but Handel was a man of his time and had no reason to feel himself above such a standard practice.) His next new opera was *Poro,* to a libretto adapted from Metastasio. Perhaps Senesino's return caused a momentary change in Handel's fortunes; at any rate, *Poro* had a longer run than any other new opera for some time, occupying the stage for the whole of February and March 1731, with a total of sixteen performances. Handel again provided splendid arias for Fabri, in the part of Alexander, and the lovers Poro and Cleofide (Senesino and Strada) have two fine duets in Handel's best 'pathetic style' as well as admirable solo arias. Handel was in one of his happiest veins here, and the opera is full of music of an immediately attractive tunefulness. The season finished with two revivals – *Rinaldo,* Handel's first London opera, which had not been staged for fourteen years and needed a good deal of revision, and *Rodelinda.* To make up for having given two performances short of the guaranteed number during the previous season, Handel and Heidegger put on a couple of extra ones this time.

Although the company was depleted by the loss of Fabri and Merighi, the tenor and contralto, *Poro* was among the revivals which started the 1731-2 season. The first novelty was *Ezio,* which 'did not draw much Company', despite some notable bass

arias for a new singer, Montagnana. It had only five performances, all but one of them, incidentally, attended by the King. By the last of these Handel had almost finished work on his next opera, *Sosarme*; another revival of *Giulio Cesare* served as a stop-gap until the new work was ready for staging in mid-February. Viscount Percival recorded in his diary 'I went to the Opera Sosarmis, made by Hendel, which takes with the town, and that justly, for it is one of the best I ever heard.' Today one would not perhaps place it among the best of Handel's operas, though it has a splendid second act where Handel's invention really takes fire. It ran until the end of March, when an Ariosti opera and *Flavio* were revived.

During 1732 a number of events took place which had a decisive effect upon the future of English opera and English oratorio, as well as upon Handel's later career. In February, on Handel's forty-seventh birthday, Bernard Gates (Master of the Children of the Chapel Royal and a keen Handelian) gave the first of three performances of *Esther* at the Crown and Anchor Tavern, under the auspices of one of the music clubs which met there; Handel was almost certainly present as a guest. (It has been suggested that it was intended as a birthday treat for the great man, though in fact the concert was one of a regular series so it seems rather improbable.) No doubt encouraged by the success of Gates's private performances, a group of London musicians then put on a professional one, at York Buildings, in April.

For Gates's boys and an amateur orchestra to recreate themselves with his music was one thing, but for his professional rivals to make money out of it was another. Handel's reply came quickly, before the pirated performance even took place, announcing his own at the opera house 'By His Majesty's Command' (the King had not in fact commanded it; this was simply a formula which could be used at this theatre). The early Cannons presentations of *Esther,* and the Gates ones, had been on the stage, and it may have been Handel's intention in these revivals to give it as a kind of sacred opera. It is at this point, Burney tells us, that the Bishop of London intervened to prohibit the staging of a work on a sacred subject. So an *N.B.* to Handel's advertisement said: 'There will be no Action on the Stage, but the House will be fitted up in a decent Manner, for the Audience. The Musick to be disposed after the Manner of the Coronation Service.' For this performance Handel revised the score thoroughly, adding

several new items – a sure answer to pirated performances – and he made use of his Italian singers (whose English pronunciation evidently caused both irritation and amusement).

No sooner was *Esther* established at the opera house – it had six performances, all crowded – than the same thing happened with *Acis and Galatea.* In the previous year *Acis* had been given at the Lincoln's Inn Fields Theatre for a benefit concert (presumably with Handel's consent). Thomas Arne, father of the composer, now decided to include it in his season of English opera at the Little Haymarket Theatre. Across the road at the King's Theatre, Handel followed *Esther* with a pasticcio opera, *Lucio Papirio,* but that soon failed and once again he turned his attention to confounding the pirates by producing a thoroughly revised version of *Acis* which made Arne's outdated. Artistically, Handel's 1732 version was far from an improvement: not only was it done in a mixture of Italian and English, using parts of the early serenata *Aci, Galatea e Polifemo* (so that the Italian singers could not again make fools of themselves), but it was expanded to unsuitable dimensions both in length and in the number of performers used. Moreover, while Arne's production

The Crown and Anchor Tavern, as it appeared in the mid-nineteenth century

was described as 'the first Time it ever was performed in a Theatrical Way' (except, probably, at Cannons), the advertisements for the Handel version said 'There will be no Action on the Stage, but the Scene will represent, in a Picturesque Manner, a rural Prospect, with Rocks, Groves, Fountains and Grotto's; amongst which will be disposed a Chorus of Nymphs and Shepherds, Habits, and every other Decoration suited to the Subject.' Handel's intention was to make his performance as different as possible from Arne's, and to crush his rivals by offering a bumper evening's entertainment far beyond their resources. He succeeded, and *Acis* was well received at its four performances at the end of the season.

It was later this year that the dramatist Aaron Hill wrote a letter to Handel which could have been of major importance in the history of English music, proposing that Handel should work towards the foundation of true English opera. (He had made a similar suggestion twenty years earlier in his dedication of the *Rinaldo* libretto, which he had helped to prepare.) We know nothing of Handel's reactions on receiving this letter, but we do know that he never acted upon it. Only a few days earlier he had completed a new Italian opera, *Orlando*: clearly this was still the form that interested him most. He did not turn his back on English works altogether, following up *Esther's* success with two more oratorios in a few months; but he failed to follow up the success of his so-called 'Pastoral Opera' *Acis and Galatea,* thus missing a fine opportunity to found a school of serious English opera. This of course is now a matter for profound regret, but we can not blame him for failing to see the matter as we do today or as Aaron Hill did in 1732; Handel was not considering the future of an art-form but the more immediate problems of earning money and satisfying his public.

So it was Italian opera once again in the autumn, but varied this time by four more performances of *Acis and Galatea.* The season's operatic novelties were *Catone in Utica,* probably arranged from an opera by Leonardo Leo which Handel is said to have seen during his last Italian trip, and *Orlando. Catone,* which opened the season, was not very successful, but *Orlando* was – in his opera diary Francis Colman called it 'extraordinary fine & magnificent'. The plot is rather weak and relies on a magician to intervene whenever the situation gets out of hand; but nevertheless Handel produced much splendid music including two very exceptional scenes for Orlando himself – one a mad

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Yeſterday *South Sea Stock* was 99, 99 1 8th, to 1 4ths. *South Sea Annuity* 110 to 1 8th. *South Sea Bonds* 2 l. 12 s. *Bank* 148 1 half to 5 8th. *Bank Circulation* 7 l. 5 s. *Million Bank* 112. *India* 177 3 4ths, 178 1 half, 178 1 4th. *India Bonds* 6 l. 6 s. *Royal Aſſurance* 99 3 4ths. *London Aſſurance* 13 1 half. *York Buildings* 7 1 half. *African* 42. *Three per Cent. Annuity* 97 1 4th to 3 8ths. *Engliſh Copper* 2 l. 10 s. *Welſh Copper* 1 l. 17 s. *Three 1 half per Cent.* 3 Prem.

By His MAJESTY's COMMAND.

AT the KING's THEATRE in the HAY-MARKET, on Tueſday the 2d Day of May, will be performed,

The SACRED STORY of ESTHER:

AN

ORATORIO in ENGLISH.

Formerly compoſed by Mr. HANDEL, and now reviſed by him, with ſeveral Additions, and to be performed by a great Number of the beſt Voices and Inſtruments.

N. B. There will be no Action on the Stage, but the Houſe will be fitted up in a decent Manner, for the Audience. The Muſick to be diſpoſed after the Manner of the Coronation Service.

Tickets will be delivered at the Office in the Opera houſe, at the uſual Prices.

Never Perform'd in Publick before,

AT the Great Room in Villars-ſtreet York-Buildings, To-morrow, being Thurſday the 20th of this Inſtant April, will be perform'd,

ESTHER an ORATORIO:

OR,

SACRED DRAMA.

As it was compoſ'd originally for the moſt noble James Duke of Chandos, the Words by Mr. POPE, and the Muſick by Mr. HANDEL.

Tickets to be had at the Place of Performance at 5 s. each. To begin exactly at 7 o'Clock.

scene where he imagines himself in Hades, crossing the river Styx (there is a famous but very brief passage in 5/8 time), and another near the end where, his fury spent, he declines into untroubled sleep.

The day after *Orlando's* run finished Handel put the final touches to a new oratorio, *Deborah*. Possibly the choice of subject was dictated by his wish to outdo Maurice Greene, once a friend but now a despised enemy, who had set it the previous year. With a poor librettist (Samuel Humphreys) and two-thirds of the music taken from previous works, it is not surprising that *Deborah* is one of his less successful oratorios, though it abounds in splendid choruses. There is a clear distinction of style between those for the Israelites and those for the Baalites – the former are the more noble in style, but Handel always had a soft spot for heathens and usually found pleasing tunes for them. *Deborah's* first performance, although given on a Saturday (one of the opera nights), was not included in the subscription and tickets were much more expensive than usual. The price increase was probably justified by the 'new and particular Manner' of the illuminations and the employment of nearly a hundred musicians (found 'excessive noisy' by at least one member of the audience); but the public was touchy about price increases at the moment. Walpole's hated Tobacco Excise Bill had just been defeated and the conjunction of events gave rise to a popular epigram:

Quoth W[alpole] to H[andel] shall we two agree,
And Join in a Scheme of *Excise*. H. *Caro si.*
Of what Use is your Sheep if your Shepherd can't sheer him?
At the Hay-Market *I, you at* We[stminst]er? W. Hear him.
Call'd to Order the Seconds appear'd in their Place,
One fam'd for his Morals, and one for his Face;
In half they succeeded, in half they were crost;
The Tobacco *was sav'd, but poor* Deborah *lost.*

It was at this time that Handel's unpopularity came to a head. For us today, it is very hard to see into his character – harder, indeed, than for any other composer of comparable stature; but it is at least clear that his manner could often be gruff and overbearing, even in 'polite Company'. One can imagine all too easily how the typical elegant, urbanely civilised gentleman of eighteenth-century London must have reacted to him. So the attempt early in 1733 to put Handel in his place should


Mr. AARON HILL.
Ætatis Suæ 24 Ao. Domi 1709
H.Hulsbergh. Sculp.

CARLO BROSCHI,

DETTO FARINELLI.

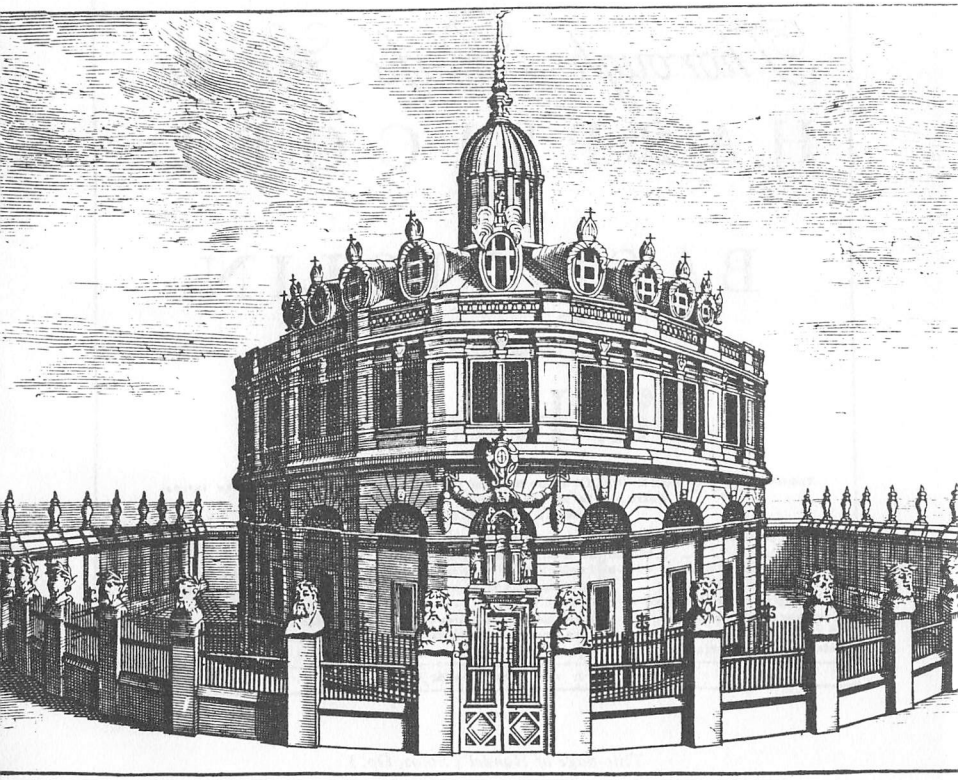
not come as a surprise. 'There is a Spirit got up against the Dominion of Mr. Handel', starts a letter from the Earl De La Warr to the Duke of Richmond inviting him to join a large and influential group of noblemen intent on founding a rival opera organisation to thrust down the domineering Saxon. Frederick, Prince of Wales, in opposition to the king here as in everything else, was a leading spirit, and another was the Earl of Burlington, Handel's former patron. As soon as the opera and oratorio season was over, this powerful group engaged all Handel's singers except Strada and sent to Italy for Cuzzoni and Farinelli, the most famous of all castrati, as well as the composer Porpora, one of the foremost figures among Italian operatic composers.

With this unpleasant situation brewing, Handel went off to Oxford in July for Act Week, taking with him a large company of musicians. The Oxford Act was an assembly held primarily for the conferring of degrees; it had lapsed for some years and the 1733 revival was in fact the last. It is possible that Handel was invited to take an honorary doctorate in Music, and many reasons have been put forward to account for his not doing so: that he was told that it would cost him £100; that he had already declined an offer from Cambridge, where Greene was Professor and a Doctor of Music; and that he was too modest – though this last seems more than a trifle unlikely. He is said to have written to a German friend eleven years later that he declined the offer because he was overwhelmingly busy. Handel's takings during his week in Oxford were rumoured to be 'upwards of £2000', out of which he had heavy expenses to pay. The more conservative members of the University looked at the proceedings askance, to put it mildly – Thomas Hearne wrote of 'Handel and (his lowsy Crew) a great number of forreign fidlers'. *Acis and Galatea* was given in Christ Church and sacred music in St. Mary's, but the main events were the performances in the Sheldonian Theatre of *Esther, Deborah* and a new oratorio, *Athalia,* almost certainly written specially for Oxford. The audience, on occasion, numbered nearly four thousand. Handel continued the practice, which he had started in London a few months earlier, of playing organ concertos in the intervals: Arne and the violinist Festing are said to have been present on one occasion and stated afterwards that they had never before heard such playing, improvised or 'premeditated'.

Athalia represents an important step forward in Handel's use of oratorio form, for it has a much more highly developed dramatic sense than its predecessors. This is forcibly demonstrated early in Act I, in the song 'Tyrants would in impious throngs', where the chorus burst in with indignant cries of 'Tyrants!' The tyrannous Athalia (to whom they are referring) is treated with a tragic grandeur not far removed from Racine (on whose *Athalie* Humphreys based his libretto): she first appears in deep anxiety after a dream, with an accompanied recitative in F minor, and not even the smooth, comforting choruses of the Baalites can set her mind at rest. Tension increases during the second act, where she is in more vengeful mood and the legitimate religious party at first display fear, then confidence in the future. In Act III Joas is proclaimed king to the enthusiasm of the chorus, and Athalia and her false priest both have splendid airs reflecting their attitudes to their forthcoming fate.

One might perhaps have expected Handel, with powerful enemies to his operatic ventures, to persevere with oratorio and its kindred forms and to forget about opera, at least for the time being. But that would be to reckon without his pride and determination on one hand and his deep love of the stage on the other. So he came back to London full of operatic plans and did not return to real oratorio for another five years.

The Sheldonian Theatre, Oxford



SOLOS

For a

GERMAN FLUTE

a HOBOY *or* VIOLIN

With a

Thorough Bass for the

HARPSICORD

or

BASS VIOLIN

Compos'd by

Mr. Handel.

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A Compleat Set of all his Operas in Score	14	1	0
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Note: *This is more Correct than the former Edition.*

Title-page of Handel's Solos, Op. 1

Handel v. The Nobility Opera

In the twentieth century, the age of the radio, the gramophone and cheap music publishing, there are many composers with true international reputations based on a world-wide knowledge of their works. The situation was very different two hundred years ago. In the eighteenth century, communications were slow and uncertain; a composer's reputation could circulate by word of mouth or very occasionally through whatever of his works were published. If a composer like Hasse or Vinci, say, were highly esteemed in London musical circles, it was not through the few arias which might have been heard at the opera house, nor because of the book of flute sonatas one could buy at Mr. Walsh's music shop, but more likely because travellers from Naples or Venice had reported upon the success enjoyed there by his latest opera. Such composers as Telemann and Rameau, whose music was immensely popular in their home countries, were practically unknown even in as large and flourishing a musical centre as London. (One might also cite J. S. Bach, but his music was not successful in a worldly sense even in his home town.)

Handel's reputation by the 1730s was truly international, in this eighteenth-century sense. In France, where the musical *lingua franca* was different from those of Italy and Germany, his music was not frequently performed, but his name was known

and highly respected. In Italy, too, where younger operatic composers were already beginning to move towards a lighter, simpler style, his music was revered – from a distance. But to German and Austrian music-lovers Handel's music spoke the language of international musical culture, and his operas were often given, especially at such centres as Hamburg and Brunswick, where they were sometimes staged within a few months of their London premières. In England, no one would have thought of doubting his position as the greatest composer of his day. The old disputes about Handel and Bononcini – which in any case were at least as much concerned with personalities as with purely musical ability – had long since been resolved in Handel's favour; and in 1732 Bononcini, after a period of relative obscurity, had left England in some disgrace when it was found that he had passed off a Lotti madrigal as his own to the Academy of Ancient Music. Handel may not have been universally liked, but his musical stature was fully recognised; he was often referred to as 'the great Mr. Handel', and Prévost (visiting England) stated that 'Everyone agrees that he is the Orpheus of his age'.

While vocal music was always Handel's chief interest, he produced a good deal of instrumental music in the popular forms of his time. Three sets of works were published in England about 1733. His Op. 1 comprised twelve 'Solos' for various instruments and continuo – some were for recorder, some for the newer 'German' or transverse flute, some for oboe and some for violin – though in accordance with eighteenth-century practice it was open to performers to use any instrument of appropriate compass. Handel's solos had been published in Amsterdam about ten years earlier, with two different sonatas in the twelve, and copies of this edition must have been on sale in England before the Walsh publication appeared. (Walsh printed from the same plates with a few alterations, adding a note 'This is more Corect than the former Edition'.) Handel wrote several solos besides the fourteen which appear in the Roger and Walsh publications including three for flute, issued by Walsh in 1730, and the so-called Op. 1 No. 13 in D, for violin – this last a work of real beauty and strength, one of the most perfect of Handel's smaller-scale works. The wind solos are generally speaking somewhat slighter than the violin ones, but they are pleasing music well designed for the instruments.

Handel's Op. 2 comprised six trio sonatas, for two violins or flutes and continuo. As in Op. 1, Handel's style is to some extent

Carestini

indebted to Corelli, who exercised a profound influence on virtually all early eighteenth-century composers of chamber music for strings. Handel's Op. 2 sonatas (which had also been published earlier in Amsterdam) contain a good deal of music occurring in other works – one has movements in common with *Esther* overture and an organ concerto, while two are related to *Chandos Anthems*. The works grouped as Op. 2 in the German Handel Society edition – again, like Op. 1 – do not correspond with the

original Op. 2 but include some other sonatas found in a manuscript in Dresden: possibly the finest of them all is No. 8 in G minor, one of the Dresden sonatas, though the two preceding ones (both also in G minor) should be mentioned, as should No. 3 in F, which has a chromatic coda to its second movement reminiscent of Purcell. It is perhaps opportune to glance ahead a few years at this point to mention Handel's second trio sonata publication, the seven sonatas of his Op. 5. They are in the 'chamber sonata' rather than the 'church sonata' tradition, including many dance movements; seemingly put together in some haste, they are largely made up of self-borrowings and are considerably less important than Op. 2.

Last in this group of publications comes the set of six concertos published as Op. 3, often called the 'Oboe Concertos'. There is every reason to believe that these were mostly written by about 1720 – indeed, many of the movements were certainly written by then, as some appeared in his keyboard music or such other early works as the *Brockes Passion,* the *Chandos Anthems* and even the opera *Amadigi.* The first issue of Op. 3 contained a different No. 4 from the one now generally known, so in fact there are seven concertos belonging to the set. The music itself is mainly representative of Handel in an extroverted, *Water Music*-like mood; the emotional range is less wide than in the later Op. 6 concertos and the music is in general less finely wrought, but in broad designs using contrasts of instrumental colour Handel produced characteristically exhilarating works. The five-movement No. 2, ending with a gay gavotte, is perhaps the happiest, but it is run close by No. 4 (that is, the No. 4 of the second edition, the one better known today), which is simply an inter-act overture from *Amadigi* with two movements added. Easily the weakest is No. 6, a piece obviously put together in a hurry to make up the number: it has only two movements, one taken from *Ottone,* the other one of the many versions Handel made of a 3/8 movement in D minor which appears in *Il pastor fido,* an organ concerto and a harpsichord suite.

We must return now to London's troubled operatic scene in the autumn of 1733. Handel's season opened on the King's birthday, the 30th of October, with a pasticcio: the whole court, including the Prince of Wales, attended. To replace Senesino, Handel had engaged a new castrato, Carestini; he still had Strada and brought back Durastanti (now far from her youth) – the rest were 'all scrubbs', according to one lady who had 'just come home from

a dull empty opera'. *Ottone* was revived, then another pasticcio (probably mainly by Hasse, now the husband of Faustina). Meanwhile Handel had ready a new opera, *Arianna in Creta.* But before he staged it the 'Nobility Opera' opened their house, in the last days of 1733, with Porpora's *Arianna in Nasso.* A month later Handel followed with his *Arianna,* a work designed to show the merits of Carestini – Act II opens with a long and effective scene for him where, as Theseus, he has a dream followed by a fight with the Minotaur. The beautiful minuet ending the overture became Handel's most popular single movement in the eighteenth century. Carestini was a success, but factions and politics interfered too much with the serious business of art. Neither opera organisation prospered: the King often sat in the half-empty Haymarket Theatre, and at Lincoln's Inn Fields the Nobility Opera was hardly better attended despite the added attraction of Cuzzoni.

The series of operatic productions was suspended in March, when Princess Anne was married to the Prince of Orange. To celebrate the event Handel put on *Il Parnasso in Festa,* a serenata (whose music was drawn mainly from *Athalia,* as yet unheard in London) on a subject appropriate to the occasion. Handel also wrote the wedding anthem. Soon operas were resumed, and then both sides turned to oratorio: Mrs. Pendarves went to hear Porpora's *Davide e Bersabea* and wrote to her sister that 'some of the choruses and recitatives are extremely fine and touching, but they say it is not equal to Mr. Handel's oratorio of Esther or Deborah'. Handel ended his season with a radically revised version of *Il pastor fido*; he continued performances well into July, probably for the benefit of Princess Anne, who arrived on a visit from Holland at the beginning of the month. These were the last operas Handel was to give at the Haymarket; his five-year agreement had expired and Heidegger now decided to let the Nobility Opera have use of the theatre. Handel promptly arranged to present his operas at Covent Garden, and the King at first managed to divert the £1000 annual subsidy to him rather than give it to its rightful recipients at the official opera house.

During the summer Handel, with the strain of competition perhaps affecting his health, went to Tunbridge Wells to take the waters. Back in London by the autumn, he played over some of his new opera, *Ariodante,* to the King, who 'express'd great Satisfaction with the Composition'. Handel had some new re-

AT the KING's THEATRE in the HAY-MARKET, this preſent Saturday, being the 26th Day of January, will be perform'd a new Opera, call'd

A R I A D N E.

Pit and Boxes to be put together, and no Perſons to be admitted without Tickets, which will be delivered this Day, at the Office in the Hay-Market, at Half a Guinea each.

GALLERY Five Shillings.

By His MAJESTY's Command,

No Perſons whatever to be admitted behind the SCENES.

To begin at Six o'Clock.

Not Acted this Seaſon.

By the Company of Comedians,

AT the Theatre-Royal in COVENT-GARDEN, this preſent Saturday, being the 26th Day of January, will be preſented a Comedy, call'd

Æ S O P.

Written by the late Sir JOHN VANBRUGH.

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From the Daily Journal, *26 January 1734*

cruits to his company – an English tenor John Beard, who later was to prove of sterling value in oratorio, and the French dancer Mlle. Sallé. For her benefit Handel added a prologue called *Terpsichore* to *Il pastor fido,* consisting mainly of ballet music in the light and gay French style which she must have been used to. Despite his German and Italian training this style came easily to Handel, and his ballet music here and in the two succeeding operas is tuneful and pleasing. But the Nobility Opera had a much more powerful attraction: their new leading man was the great Farinelli. Of his singing, Prévost could write 'Imagine Senesino's art combined with Carestini's, and a voice more beautiful than those two together', while Rolli found him a revelation, writing that until he heard Farinelli he had 'heard only a little of what human song can achieve'. The Nobility Opera started their season with *Artaserse,* by Hasse and Farinelli's brother, Broschi, and then (it seems) staged Handel's *Ottone* – there was no copyright law to prevent them, and the

work showed Cuzzoni to good advantage, having been written for her London début. Handel followed his augmented *Il pastor fido* with a revival of *Arianna* and then a pasticcio, *Oreste,* to which he added a few new numbers. *Ariodante* had the first of its ten performances early in January 1735. It is a story of treachery and madness set in medieval Scotland, but there are two happy and attractive scenes with ballet and chorus to end the first and last acts.

In March, with the coming of Lent, oratorios started up once more, now sometimes with two organ concertos, which Mrs. Pendarves described as the finest things she ever heard in her life. But still Handel failed to bring in the audiences, so strong was 'the Disgust taken against him', as one journalist put it. When the oratorios finished (including *Athalia,* given in London for the first time) Handel had a new opera ready, *Alcina,* and even if it was not a success sufficient to make up the season's prodigious losses, it was success enough to be given eighteen performances between the middle of April and the close of the season at the beginning of July. Mrs. Pendarves attended a rehearsal and found *Alcina* 'so fine' that she 'had not words to describe it', and the *London Daily Post* expected it to 'exceed any Composition of Mr. Handel's hitherto performed'. There can be no doubt that *Alcina* stands very high among Handel's operas. The plot is a conventional one, about a sorceress and a faithless lover who returns to his heroic beloved. But even so the situations in which the characters find themselves sparked off Handel's genius: the arias for Alcina, the sorceress, are on the lofty, powerful level which Handel always attained for his angry or frustrated women, whether heroines or villainesses, while quite another side of human emotion is explored in the famous 'Verdi prati' (which Carestini at first refused to sing), in which the hero Ruggiero bids farewell to the green meadows, where he has spent so many happy hours of enchantment, to return home with his rightful lover. Mlle. Sallé again appeared in *Alcina,* but her popularity had by this time faded and at one performance she was even hissed off the stage.

Carestini left Handel's company at the end of the season, and Handel – in no mood to run off to Italy in search of another castrato – decided against having a new opera season in the autumn. Perhaps his ill health played a part in the decision, for he again had to spend some time drinking the waters at Tunbridge Wells. About this time he became acquainted with

Charles Jennens, collaboration with whom was later to have such fruitful results. Jennens sent a libretto for an oratorio which Handel, his inclinations still towards opera, shelved; but he wrote a polite letter of thanks, telling Jennens that there was 'no certainty of any Scheme for next Season, but it is probable that some thing or other may be done'.

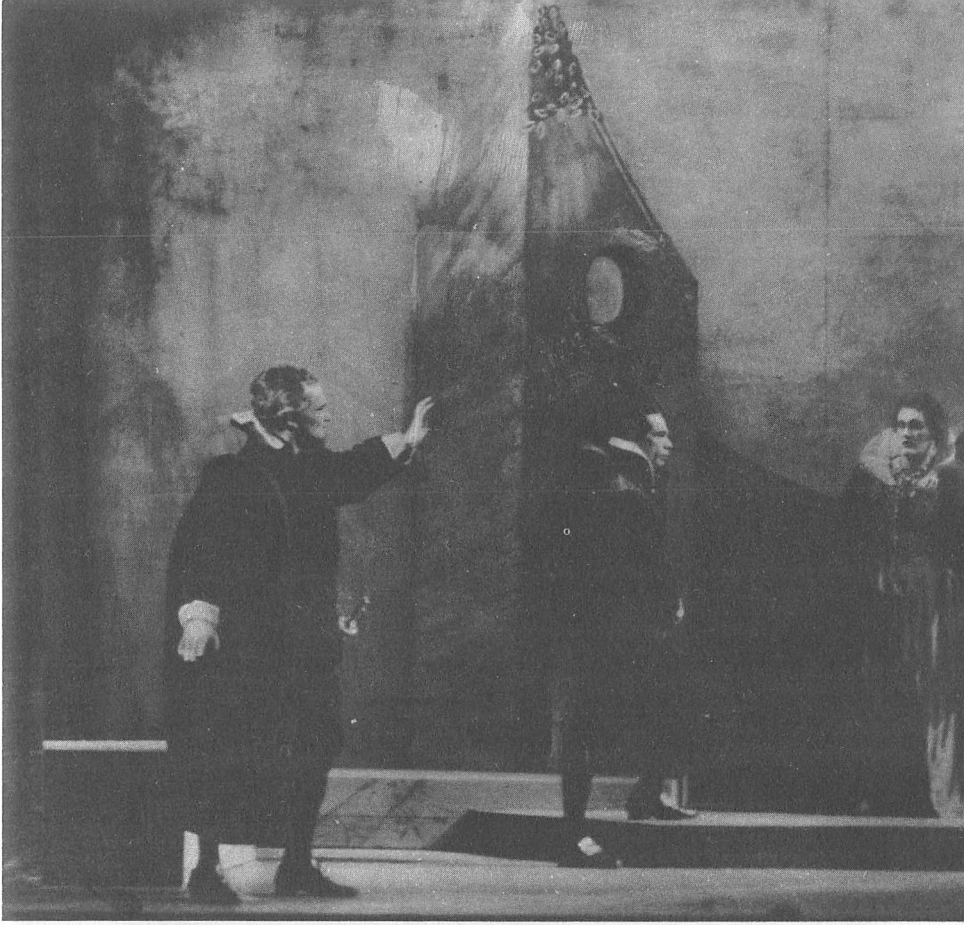
Something or other was in fact done, but not until the early days of 1736; during the autumn Handel's only connection with opera was to sit in the Haymarket Theatre listening to a work by Veracini,

> *. . . in great eminence and great pride in the middle of the pit, . . . in silent triumph to insult this poor dying Opera in its agonies, without finding out that he was as great a fool for refusing to compose, as Veracini had shown himself by composing . . .*

But the writer here, Lord Hervey, was wrong, for Handel was by this time at work on *Alexander's Feast,* to a libretto by Dryden adapted by Newburgh Hamilton. It was completed in January 1736 and first performed in February with great success – 'Never was upon like Occasion so numerous and splendid an Audience at any Theatre in London', reported the *Daily Post.*

Though giving no opportunities for drama or characterisation, Dryden's Cecilian Ode which formed the basis of *Alexander's Feast* is one of the finest English texts Handel ever set, in its overall design and the wide range of its expressive potentialities. With his appetite for opera frustrated by events, Handel seems to have had his interest aroused when Hamilton sent him the text (which he had altered very little), and *Alexander's Feast* contains music of great melodic charm and often real splendour. Darker colours occasionally appear – in the section on the fate of Darius, for example, or in the sombre middle section of the famous song 'Revenge, Timotheus cries'; but the prevailing atmosphere is best seen in the smooth melodies like 'With ravish'd ears' and choruses such as the seven-part 'The list'ning crowd', with its simple but effective blocks of choral sound against moving string parts, 'The many rend the skies' (on a ground bass) and most of all in the magnificent 'Let old Timotheus', where the four lines of text are first presented separately to different melodic ideas which are then woven together with great ingenuity and stimulating musical effect.

Frontispiece to the score of Alexander's Feast *(Houbraken and Gravelot)*



Scene from Alcina *(Handel Opera Society, London)*

After *Alexander's Feast* Handel performed two of his other English works, but soon had an opportunity to return to opera. At the end of April the Prince of Wales was to marry a German princess; his quarrel with Handel seems to have been hastily patched up, for it was arranged that an Italian opera season should be put on – by Handel at Covent Garden, not the Nobility Opera at the Haymarket – in honour of the occasion. Handel again supplied the wedding anthem. The wedding was in fact solemnised sooner than expected, only two days after the young lady's arrival (there was a water party the day before, no doubt with Handel's music); the new opera, *Atalanta,* was not quite ready in time and *Ariodante* was accordingly revived for two

nights. *Atalanta* had the first of its eight performances on the 12th of May 1736. Written with wedding celebrations in mind, it is by nature a light and festive work: it had some particularly elaborate scenery, with a Temple of Hymen, a triumphal arch, and the names Fredericus and Augusta in transparent letters; during the final chorus there were even some fireworks. The overture has substantial borrowings from Telemann's *Musique de Table,* one of the richest stores Handel plundered. (We are in fact just approaching the worst period of his borrowings.) Handel's company had lately undergone some changes. The new castrato was a soprano, Conti, a promising young singer but hardly comparable with Farinelli, whose charms, however,

Caricature of Cuzzoni, Farinelli and Heidegger (Goupy)

were now beginning to wear off as far as the English public were concerned. Strada was still the prima donna, the young Englishman Beard (who had been a great success in *Alexander's Feast*) was the tenor, and the basses were both Germans, Reinhold and Waltz (the latter is said to have been Handel's cook).

Despite the success of *Alexander's Feast,* Handel could still not tear himself away from Italian opera. He started *Giustino* in August and *Arminio* in September, finishing them – in the opposite order – during October. Clearly he had what could

Gustavus Waltz

almost be described as a psychological compulsion to go on producing operas; it seems that the pressures on him were so intense that reasoned judgment was impossible, for if he were being honest with himself he must have realised that opera could not be a financial success under present conditions. The 'confirmed opinion' in London, according to one music-lover, was that the coming winter would 'compleat . . . Handel's destruction', and in fact it almost did so.

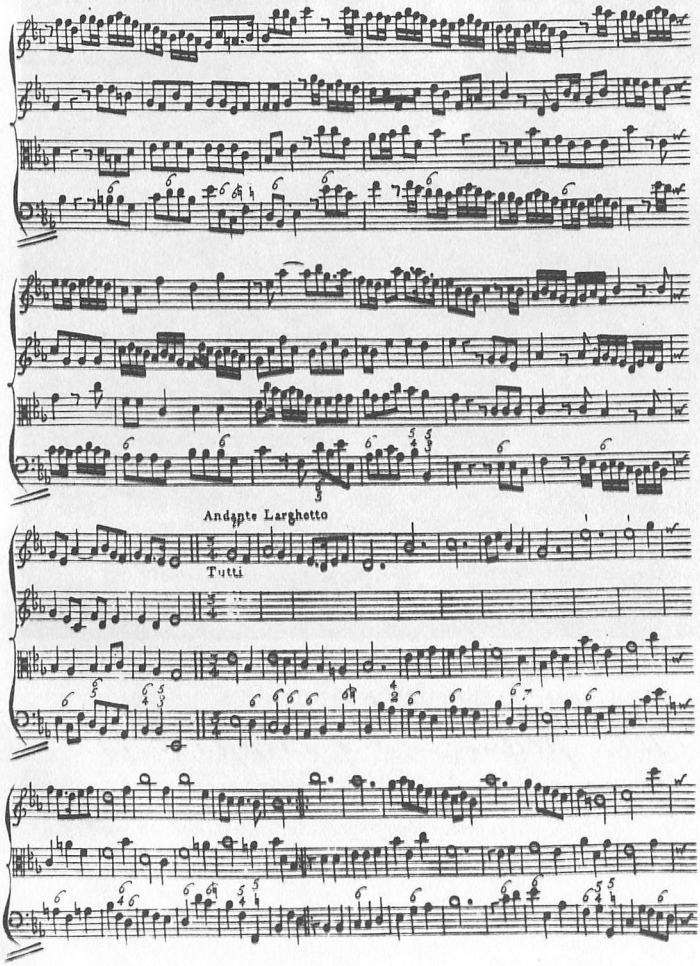
Handel started his 1736-7 opera season sooner than his rivals, with two castrati singing for him (the new recruit was Annibali, an alto). At first he staged some revivals, including *Atalanta*; not until January did he bring out the first of the new operas, *Arminio,* which had a mere half-dozen performances. In February he followed it with *Giustino,* which had a run of the same length. With the coming of Lent Handel put on *Il Parnasso in Festa* in oratorio form, followed by *Alexander's Feast,* a thoroughly revised version of the early oratorio *Il trionfo del tempo e della verità* and *Esther,* his season coming to a climax in Passion Week with performances on four successive nights.

The strain of this hectic season had its effect, and in the following days Handel suffered a paralytic stroke. He seems to have undergone some strenuous medical treatment, with satisfactory results, and though he was unable to direct the pasticcio *Didone* at Covent Garden he may have been fit enough to supervise two performances of *Giustino* early in May. But he was unable to direct the première on the 18th of May of a new opera, *Berenice,* which had only four performances. The intense strain under which he was working betrays itself in these scores. In *Arminio,* particularly, Handel sometimes seems to be going through the motions of writing an opera rather than creating something, and much of the music displays an almost mechanical quality. *Berenice* and especially *Giustino* have rather more variety and vitality. One must beware, however, of condemning Handel's late operas by comparison with the early ones: his singers were less able to sustain a grand manner, and the trends of musical style by this time were towards greater simplicity and more obvious melody. *Berenice* should not be passed over, incidentally, without mention of the beautiful minuet which concludes its overture.

In June 1737 the Nobility Opera finally collapsed and Farinelli went back to Italy, soon followed by Porpora. Its patrons, however, had achieved their aim, at least in part. Handel's finances

remained basically secure, because of the royal pension; but he had lost a good deal of money and, more important, his health was undermined and his reason was failing. In this condition he left London in the summer to take the cure at Aix-la-Chapelle and ponder over his plans for the future. His enemies might have been less pleased with themselves if they had known that buried in the ashes of his failure were the seeds of new and greater achievements.

Page from the first edition of Berenice, *showing the Minuet*



Vanloo pinx.t *J. Faber fecit 1749*

John James Heidegger Esq.r

Oratorios and Concertos

Though part paralysed and part unbalanced, Handel retained his fortitude even at Aix, where he endured the strain of the vapour baths 'three times as long as hath ever been the practice' (according to Mainwaring). Indeed, the nuns had good reason for their belief that a miracle had been worked when they heard him playing the convent organ a few hours after leaving the baths.

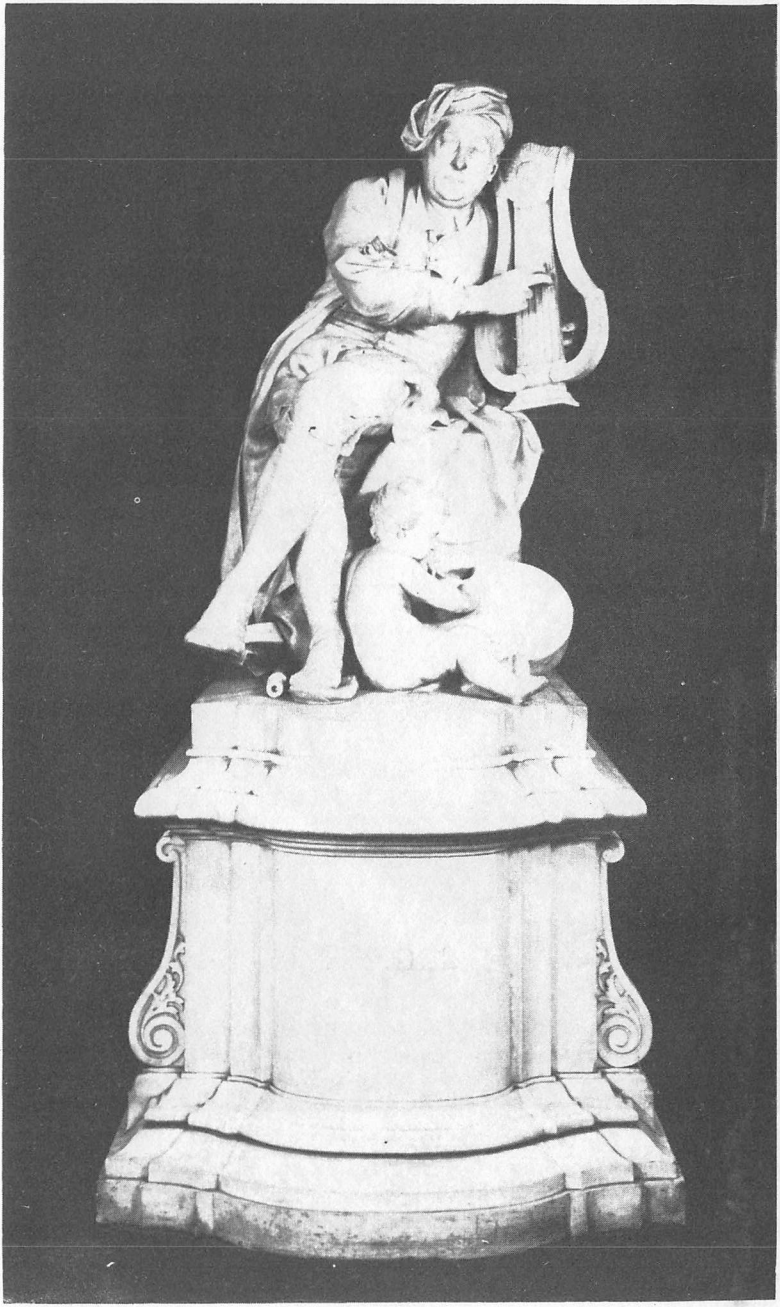
He got back to London about the end of October 1737, to find that Heidegger had just opened an opera at the Haymarket Theatre on his own account, with Pescetti as his main composer and a new castrato of high repute in Caffarelli. Covent Garden was now devoted to English opera; among the productions was J. F. Lampe's *The Dragon of Wantley,* a satire on Italian opera aimed particularly at *Giustino* (where a sea-monster appears). Handel is said to have enjoyed this piece, and one can be sure that he was just as ready to laugh at Italian opera as to write it – which in fact he started doing a few days after his return. But plans for the Londoner's entertainment in the autumn were sadly disturbed by the death of Queen Caroline during November. To Handel she had been an unswerving friend and supporter, so it was particularly appropriate that he was asked to write the funeral anthem. It was no mere formal tribute but a work of dignity and restraint, closer to the English traditions of church music than was usual for Handel.

After three years of rivalry, Handel and Heidegger entered into agreement once again, and when London's theatres re-opened after about six weeks' mourning it was Handel's *Faramondo* which re-started the Haymarket season. The opera was well received, but this seems to have been due mainly to the fact that Londoners had been without entertainment for some time. Handel's reappearance in public caused him to be 'honour'd with extraordinary and repeated Signs of Approbation'. Apart from Caffarelli the company was only moderately good, though the soprano, known as La Francesina, became Strada's successor and sang for Handel for several years. *Faramondo* may lack the strength and dramatic power of some of Handel's earlier operas, but there is much music in it to delight, including some fine songs for Caffarelli. It clearly shows the influence of current trends in musical style, more so than the operas of the 1736-7 season: one finds greater directness in melody and harmony as well as lighter orchestral textures – though this last may be connected with the resources he now had available. Signs of the indecision caused by his illness are visible in the manuscript, with its multitude of corrections. This applies equally to the next opera, *Serse,* which was not produced until April. In the interim, works by Pescetti and Veracini were staged at the Haymarket as well as a pasticcio, *Alessandro Severo,* which Handel arranged from previous works, adding an overture and a few new arias. It is generally thought that Handel must have been in serious financial straits at this time, for at the prompting of some friends he gave a concert for his own benefit at the theatre. Benefit concerts were no uncommon thing in eighteenth-century England – most musical societies allowed one for their leader at the end of each season, as a sort of reward for services rendered, and many musicians in the provinces organised such concerts in the areas where they worked. Handel had never given a benefit concert before and he was extremely successful: advertised as 'An Oratorio', it was in fact a mixture of choral music and arias, with an organ concerto added, and the profits have been variously reported as £800, £1000 and £1300. A purchaser of fifty tickets was Jonathan Tyers, proprietor of Vauxhall, London's famous pleasure gardens, where Handel's music had no doubt echoed round the groves and grottoes on many a summer evening. Tyers, a business man *cum* patron of the arts, erected about this time a statue of Handel, 'exquisitely done' by Roubiliac, costing some £300. The

George Knapton Pinx.t J. Faber fecit 1737.

Sign.a Lisabetta Du Parc detta La Francesina.

Sold by J. Faber at the Golden Head in Bloomsbury Square



Handel's Statue (Roubiliac)

Daily Post reported the event, regarding it as particularly appropriate since Mr. Handel's harmony had 'so often charm'd even the greatest Crouds into the profoundest Calm and most decent Behaviour'. The statue can still be seen in London at the premises of Novello's, the music publishers.

Handel's other new opera for the 1737-8 season, *Serse,* was something of a departure, being halfway towards comic opera – though not at all related to the contemporary Italian *opere buffe* of such composers as Pergolesi or Durante. The general musical style is lighter than usual, and the plot is not concerned with the customary lofty matters – politics and tragic love – but with the more everyday love affairs of Xerxes. *Serse* is best known today as the source of Handel's most popular movement, the aria 'Ombra mai fù', originally marked *Larghetto* but universally known as 'Handel's *Largo*'. It is sung by Xerxes as he relaxes under a plane tree and has no deeper significance than the welcome accorded by a tired man to a shaded spot on a hot afternoon.

Interest in opera was now once again waning. *Serse* had five performances, then came a few revivals before the season ended early in June. Heidegger tried to organise a subscription for a season to start in the autumn, but found insufficient support; it really seems that Londoners were satiated for the time being with this costly and elaborate form of entertainment.

No oratorios were given during Lent 1738; possibly Heidegger's experience of the form had been unfortunate, for in recent years he had put on (at the Nobility Opera) Porpora's *David e Bersabea* and Greene's *Jephtha* – neither of them works to be despised, but not on Handel's level. It was during July 1738 that Handel decided to look out the oratorio libretto which Jennens had sent him in 1735 (there is no certainty that it was the same libretto, but it seems overwhelmingly likely). A brief word about Jennens may not be out of place here. He was a literary dilettante of great wealth and greater complacency; but though he had some failings typical of lesser eighteenth-century poets he also had real dramatic feeling and sense of character, two of the most vital qualities for firing Handel's invention. He has been severely taken to task for daring to criticise the great man, but it is important to remember that Handel was by no means infallible, and even if some of Jennens' criticisms were irrelevant others are very much to the point. He visited Handel while work on his libretto, *Saul,* was in progress, and evidently

found the composer's mind in a somewhat disturbed state: 'Mr. Handel's head', he wrote to a friend, 'is more full of maggots than ever'. The three 'maggots' he detailed concerned a set of bells operated from a keyboard, a new organ from which Handel could see the performers better and thus improve ensemble without having to beat time, and a 'Hallelujah' which he had inserted 'very nonsensically' at the end of *Saul* (and later removed).

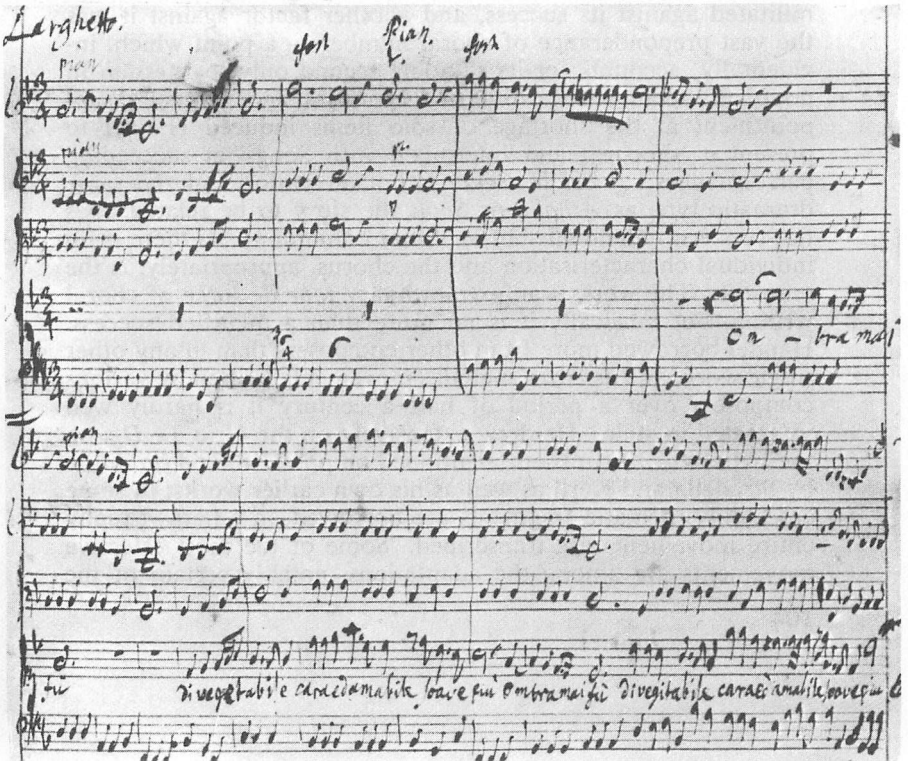
For the ordinary music-lover, whose knowledge of Handel oratorios may be confined to *Messiah,* it is perhaps rather hard to appreciate what a typical Handel oratorio really is and really aims to do. *Messiah* stands entirely alone in that it is a sacred work. Most of Handel's other oratorios are simply operas on biblical subjects, conceived in human and dramatic terms though not designed for actual staging. Each of the protagonists has his own music to sing, as in an opera, while the chorus usually represents a crowd or makes observations on the action rather like the chorus in a Greek tragedy. In oratorio, Handel could ignore some of the cramping formal exigencies of opera – he could dispense with the *da capo* aria, while the question of a singer's exit during the final ritornello did not, of course, arise. Moreover, the singers were not usually virtuosos like those at the opera house, so vocal tightrope-walking did not have to be displayed and the audience could listen to straightforward singing in a language they could all understand. It is not surprising that Handel's most distinctive contribution came in this form rather than in opera – but this should not be taken to mean that he was primarily a sacred, rather than a dramatic, composer.

Saul, in fact, is one of Handel's dramatic masterpieces. After a long overture with solo parts for Handel's new organ, there is a lengthy 'Epinicion', an almost entirely choral section of joy and thanksgiving at the Israelites' defeat of the Philistines and Goliath's death at the hand of David. The music is typical of Handel in festive mood. Soon the victorious leaders are welcomed by the 'daughters of the land' (dancing to Handel's carillon), to music adapted from Urio – this is the first oratorio with borrowings from other composers. Somewhat tactlessly, the chorus praise Saul for the thousands he has slain and David for his ten thousands, thus arousing Saul's powerful jealousy, which is strikingly conveyed in two brief recitatives and then in two airs, culminating in the 'whizzing javelin' which he throws at the upstart David. The second act does not carry the plot

forward to any great extent, though the music and action delineate the characters more clearly: its main glories are the flanking choruses, the first movement being a magnificent commentary on the evils of envy and the last, following Saul's murderous attempt on his own son, a no less powerful one on the consequences of rage, with a fine double fugue 'From crime to crime he blindly goes'. In the third act there is an eerie scene where Saul consults the Witch of Endor, and Samuel's spirit, darkly accompanied by only two bassoons and continuo, arises to speak to him and predict his doom. After a Battle Symphony and a report on the death of Saul, the famous Dead March begins the long and moving Elegy, sung by the chorus with David and other soloists. The work ends, however, in a mood of confidence in the future with David as leader of the Israelites.

The composition of *Saul* evidently caused Handel a great deal of labour, for here too his manuscript is full of crossings-out (of anything from a single note to an entire section), changes in the order of items and many other kinds of second thought. The work inaugurated Handel's first real oratorio season, for

The manuscript of 'Handel's Largo'



which he hired the theatre from Heidegger for twelve nights. *Saul* was first performed on the 16th of January 1739, and was enough of a success to be given five further performances.

The season was interrupted during March by a revival of *Alexander's Feast* 'For the Benefit and Increase of a Fund established for the support of Decay'd Musicians or their Families'. This charity, still in existence as the Royal Society of Musicians, had been founded the previous year by a group of London's leading musical figures, and Handel was among the first subscribers: on this occasion as on many later ones he gave his services and the use of the theatre, playing some organ concertos as an additional attraction.

Towards the end of his oratorio season Handel brought out another new work, *Israel in Egypt,* which he had written the previous October immediately after finishing *Saul. Israel in Egypt* was not particularly successful, having a mere three performances (at first Handel had planned only two, putting on an extra one 'at the Desire of several Persons of Distinction'). The text was adapted, possibly by Handel himself, from *Exodus* and *Psalms* (the work was to have been called *Exodus*); probably the idea of passages from Holy Writ being sung in a theatre militated against its success, and another factor against it was the vast preponderance of choral numbers – a point which, incidentally, accounts for its standing second only to *Messiah* in popular esteem today. But two centuries ago general disappointment at the shortage of solo items induced Handel to present it 'shortned and Intermix'd with Songs' at succeeding performances. *Israel in Egypt* is not an oratorio of the same dramatic type as *Athalia* or *Saul*: the story to be related does not concern individuals but an entire community, so there is no individual characterisation and the chorus, appropriately, is the narrator. The work is an extraordinary *tour de force* of choral writing, but musically it is no more than a qualified success. Handel borrowed more from other composers than in any other single work, and as *Israel* includes movements written by various composers over a period of half a century it is hardly well integrated in style. He drew extensively on the Urio *Te Deum,* the Erba *Magnificat* (both mentioned on pp. 27-8) and on music by Stradella and Kerll as well as his own earlier works; in some cases only thematic fragments are borrowed, in others virtually entire movements are transcribed. Some of the most effective movements are among the adaptations, notably certain of the

plague choruses and the famous duet 'The Lord is a man of war'. In this latter case, and in the case of the 'hailstone' chorus, Handel has taken elements from fairly conventional originals and worked them with the greatest ingenuity to produce very striking results. The oratorio was originally planned to have as its first act the funeral anthem for Queen Caroline (Handel at one time intended to use it in *Saul,* as the Elegy); this accounts for the absence of an overture, for Handel included the anthem in the earliest performances. The second act, now known as the first, includes the plague choruses, of which the most extraordinary is 'He sent a thick darkness' with its terrifying evocation of blind groping; the third act (now second) is an enormous song of praise on an even more splendid and majestic scale than the Epinicion in *Saul.*

After the three performances of *Israel in Egypt,* Handel's oratorio season ended in April with *Saul,* enhanced by a violin concerto played by 'the famous Sigr. Plantanida, . . . just arriv'd from Abroad' as well as an organ concerto played by Handel himself. Then followed a brief flirtation with opera, in the form of a pasticcio, *Giove in Argo,* made up from his earlier operas with a few new numbers added. The work achieved two performances before the season came to an early end at the beginning of May.

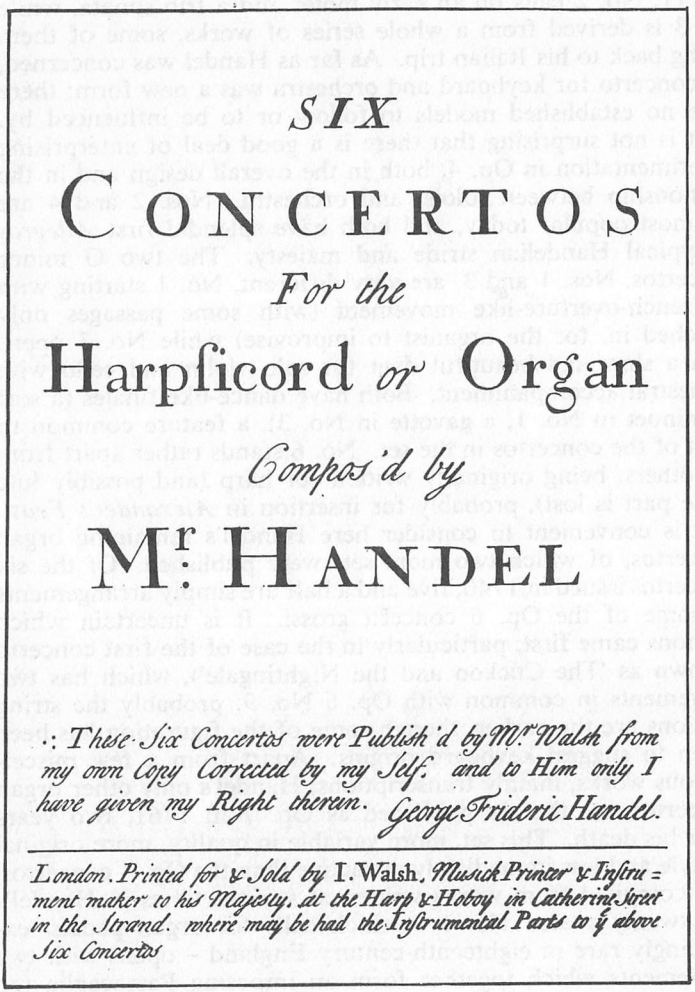
About this time Handel was again very active in the field of instrumental music. Late in 1738 the first six organ concertos, Op. 4, were published; in spring 1739 came the seven trio sonatas of Op. 5, mentioned on p. 84; and in the autumn of the same year, during a miraculous rush of inspiration lasting five weeks, Handel composed his instrumental *chef d'oeuvre,* the twelve concerti grossi of Op. 6.

The six concertos of Op. 4 were probably well known to London's musical public before they appeared in print, for they must have included the pieces with which Handel enraptured his audiences during the oratorio performances. They were published as harpsichord or organ concertos and must have been widely played on the harpsichord in the eighteenth century. Many more copies were sold of the keyboard part than of the orchestral parts, and one imagines that music-lovers often bought simply the keyboard copy to re-create for themselves, however imperfectly, the delights experienced at the full-scale performances with Handel himself as soloist. One can readily see why these works aroused so much enthusiasm, for they show Handel

A View of Vauxhall Gardens; Handel's statue can be seen on the right

in a relaxed mood, out to please and never failing to do so. A good deal of the music is borrowed from other works – No. 5 is hardly more than a transcription of a recorder sonata, Op. 1 No. 11, No. 2 calls on an early motet and a trio sonata, while No. 3 is derived from a whole series of works, some of them dating back to his Italian trip. As far as Handel was concerned, the concerto for keyboard and orchestra was a new form; there were no established models to follow or to be influenced by. So it is not surprising that there is a good deal of enterprising experimentation in Op. 4, both in the overall design and in the relationship between soloist and orchestra. Nos. 2 and 4 are the most popular today, and both have splendid first *Allegros* of typical Handelian stride and majesty. The two G minor concertos, Nos. 1 and 3, are very different, No. 1 starting with a French-overture-like movement (with some passages only sketched in, for the organist to improvise) while No. 3 opens with a slow and beautiful duet for solo violin and cello with orchestral accompaniment. Both have dance-like finales (a sort of minuet in No. 1, a gavotte in No. 3), a feature common to most of the concertos in the set. No. 6 stands rather apart from the others, being originally written for harp (and possibly lute – the part is lost), probably for insertion in *Alexander's Feast*.

It is convenient to consider here Handel's remaining organ concertos, of which two more sets were published. Of the six concertos issued in 1740, five and a half are simply arrangements of some of the Op. 6 concerti grossi. It is uncertain which versions came first, particularly in the case of the first concerto (known as 'The Cuckoo and the Nightingale'), which has two movements in common with Op. 6 No. 9: probably the string versions are the earlier, though some of the figuration has been taken to suggest keyboard origins. Apart from a few miscellaneous works, mainly transcriptions, Handel's only other organ concertos are the six published as Op. 7 in 1761, two years after his death. This set, more variable in quality, more original in style and less immediately attractive than the Op. 4 concertos, was compiled from works written at various times in Handel's last twenty years. No. 1 – which calls for organ pedals, exceedingly rare in eighteenth-century England – opens with two movements which together form an imposing Passacaglia (on a ground bass); the work should include, according to Handel's manuscript, a fugue from Op. 6 No. 11 and an organ improvisation as well as the brief *Largo* and bourrée-finale. There is

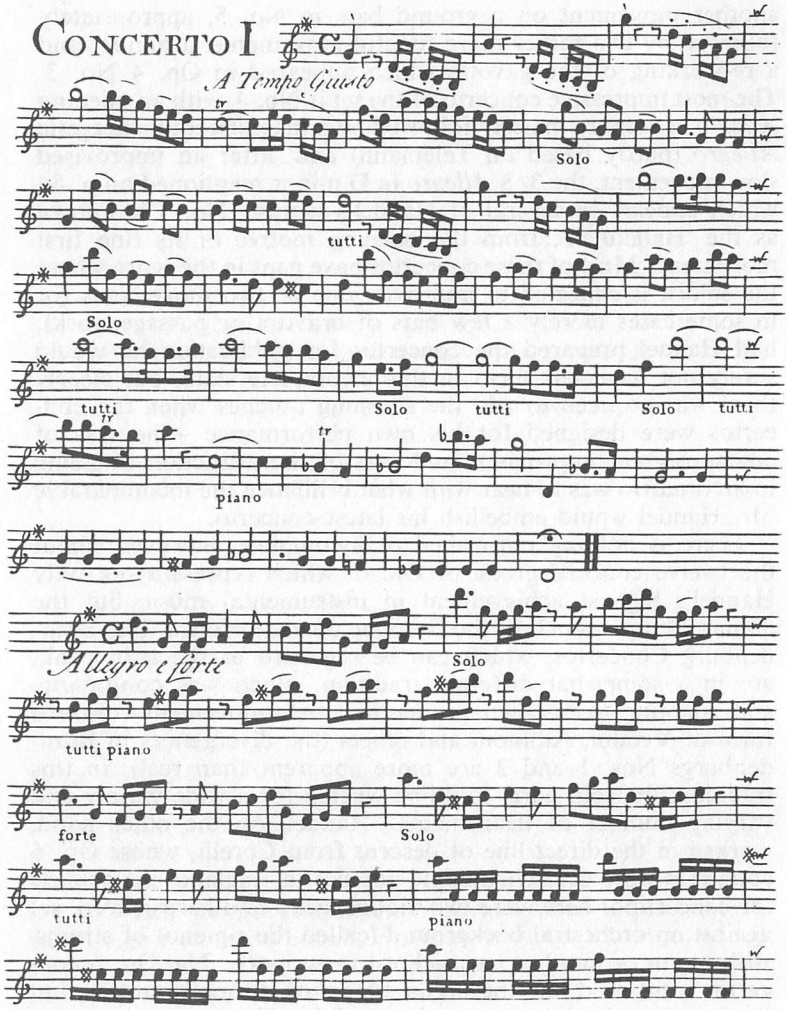

SIX
CONCERTOS
For the
Harpsicord or Organ
Compos'd by
Mr. HANDEL
These Six Concertos were Publish'd by Mr. Walsh from my own Copy Corrected by my Self: and to Him only I have given my Right therein. George Frideric Handel.
London. Printed for & Sold by I. Walsh, Musick Printer & Instru = ment maker to his Majesty, at the Harp & Hoboy in Catherine Street in the Strand. where may be had the Instrumental Parts to ye above Six Concertos

Title-page of the Six Organ Concertos, Op. 4

another movement on a ground bass in No. 5, appropriately followed by two rather more tuneful movements, a minuet and a re-working of the gavotte which appeared in Op. 4 No. 3. The most impressive concerto of the set is No. 4, with an opening *Adagio* of sombre majesty followed by a magnificently energetic *Allegro* (partly based on Telemann) and, after an improvised slow movement, the 3/8 *Allegro* in D minor mentioned on p. 84 which appears in several of Handel's works. No. 3 is known as the 'Hallelujah', from the opening motive of its fine first movement. Most of these concertos have gaps in the score where the soloist is expected to improvise one or two movements (or in some cases merely a few bars of bravura or passage-work); had Handel prepared the concertos for publication he would surely not have left them in this incomplete state, but clearly there was no need to add the finishing touches when the concertos were designed for his own performance – he was of course a great improviser, and part of the attraction of going to an oratorio was to hear with what brilliance the incomparable Mr. Handel would embellish his latest concerto.

There is nothing unfinished or incomplete, however, about the twelve concerti grossi of Op. 6, which represent not only Handel's highest achievement in instrumental music but the climax of one branch of the Baroque concerto form. The Brandenburg Concertos, which can be regarded as the twin peak, are in a somewhat different tradition. Bach was continuing, and adapting to his own genius, the three-movement concerto form of Vivaldi, Albinoni and others (the divergences in Brandenburgs Nos. 1 and 3 are more apparent than real); in this tradition, the solo parts could be written for a wide variety and varying number of instruments. Handel, on the other hand, worked in the direct line of descent from Corelli, whose Op. 6 concertos were overwhelmingly popular in England; the soloists (or concertino) here were two violins, cello and harpsichord, set against an orchestral background (called the ripieno) of strings, with organ or another harpsichord in support. The Op. 6 concertos were used like the organ concertos during oratorios, but the fact that Handel wrote twelve straight off – the usual number for a published set – shows that publication was definitely in his mind.

The Brandenburg Concertos display their variety primarily in terms of instrumental colour; Handel's Op. 6 concertos display theirs in terms of overall design and mood. Four have six



From the Twelve Grand Concertos, Op. 6

movements, four have five and four the more conventional four. These last, Nos. 2, 4, 11 and 12, are all arranged in the usual design, slow-fast-slow-fast, but their mutual resemblance ends

there. The particular glories of No. 2 are the spacious but gentle grandeur of its opening and the contrasting sternness and warmth of its *Largo*; No. 4 has a central *Largo* of profoundly moving sweetness followed by a finale in more playful mood. Nos. 11 and 12 are among the longest of the set: No. 11 has an expansive *Andante* for its third movement (preceded by a slow introduction) and a finale with a lengthy *da capo*; No. 12, in the rather uncommon key of B minor, has a *Larghetto* with one of the purest of all Handelian melodies and ends (after a brief slow introduction, so as not to break the spell of the *Larghetto* too abruptly) with a fugue in dotted rhythm. Of the five-movement concertos, No. 1 has an opening of massive dignity befitting the beginning of the set – a *pianissimo* chromatic passage ends the movement on a mysterious, questioning note which is rare in Handel. The fugue of No. 3 in E minor is, exceptionally, in moderate tempo (they are usually *Allegro*) and on a strangely gawky subject; the fourth movement here is a Polonaise, and a slight, gigue-like movement rounds off the work. The hushed beauty of the Musette is the outstanding feature of No. 6; No. 7 has a bustling fugue on a one-note subject, a not particularly characteristic *Largo* followed by an *Andante* very Handelian in its easily flowing gait, and a lively Hornpipe. Two of the six-movement concertos include self-borrowings. Just before starting work on the concertos Handel had completed a new *Ode for St. Cecilia's Day*: he borrowed its overture (itself borrowed in part from Muffat's *Componimenti,* a book of harpsichord pieces published a few months earlier) for No. 5, where it provided the first, second and sixth movements. Handel added the other three, which include a mischievous and gay *Allegro,* to turn it into a full-scale concerto. Of No. 9, two movements appear in an organ concerto, as already mentioned, and he later used two more in the overture to *Imeneo*; the work also has an introductory *Largo* and a Corellian concluding Gigue. The C minor concerto, No. 8, tends towards the dance suite, starting with an Allemande and having a long Siciliana as its fifth movement (after a brief *Adagio* based on an aria in *Giulio Cesare*); and No. 10 almost goes the whole way to being a French overture and suite, for after a 'dotted' opening and a fugue the remaining movements have much in common with the idealised dances of the time.

Writing about these concertos, it is hard to convey the sheer inventive power behind them, or their grandeur, their serene

grace, their melodic and harmonic beauty, their deceptively concealed subtleties of counterpoint and texture, or the wide range of human emotions they embrace. They have never quite enjoyed the wide popularity or acclaim they deserve: at first they were overshadowed by Corelli's concertos, whose simpler beauty and purity of style had an immense appeal for the eighteenth-century Englishman, while today primacy is usually accorded to those of Bach.

The Op. 6 concertos ultimately appeared in print in the spring of 1740, with an impressive list of subscribers including musical societies in Canterbury, Dublin, Lincoln, Oxford and Salisbury, as well as some in London, mostly described by the names of the taverns where they met – the 'Monday Night Musical Society at ye Globe Tavern, Fleet Street', for example, societies at the Swan and the Castle, and two societies at the famous Crown and Anchor. Such Handelians as Bernard Granville (Mrs. Pendarves' brother), James Harris of Salisbury, Charles Jennens and Jonathan Tyers also subscribed, as did several London composers, like the Dutchman Willem de Fesch and Charles Weidemann, a flautist. So Handel's greatest achievement in the instrumental field was launched; and in the next section we shall see the launching of what is widely regarded today as his greatest achievement of all.

The Dublin Visit

For the next two seasons Handel was again his own manager, hiring the Lincoln's Inn Fields Theatre from John Rich. Two extra-musical factors weighted the scales against him in 1739-40 – the 'War of Jenkins' ear' against Spain, when the peace-loving Walpole finally had to give way to public pressure, and a frost so severe that oxen could be roasted over fires built on the frozen Thames.

The first new work produced for the season was another Dryden setting, following the success of *Alexander's Feast* – his *Ode for St. Cecilia's Day*. It is short and attractive, rather lightweight in style and not of particular importance in Handel's output; much of it is based on movements from Muffat's *Componimenti*, mentioned in the last section. The music of the *Ode* is highly illustrative: thus passages about the trumpet, drum, flute and lute together (how could any poet miss the obvious pair!), violin and organ are illustrated with simple *obbligatos* for these instruments. For the 'hollow shell' a cello is chosen, and violins provide a passable substitute for the lyre.

Handel opened his season on St. Cecilia's Day with the new *Ode*, together with *Alexander's Feast* (or part of it) and three concertos. But after only three performances of the new work (two of them in company with *Acis and Galatea*) the icy weather closed the theatre doors – no one wanted to come to a draughty

The Theatre in Lincoln's Inn Fields

theatre, whatever heating the management promised in their advertisements, if there was a warm fire at home. Opera, with Pescetti as the chief composer, was just managing to keep alive; there had been a season at Covent Garden the previous winter, but now all that could be arranged was a series of pasticcios, serenatas and the like at the Little Theatre in the Haymarket. Burney wrote 'The opera, a tawdry, expensive and meretricious lady, who had been accustomed to very high keeping, was now reduced to a very humble state. Her establishment was not only diminished, but her servants reduced to half-pay'. The Little Theatre, a 'snug retreat', could be kept reasonably warm, and the season was less affected by the frost than Handel's.

Handel himself was well occupied during the freeze-up. Seeing in his mind the fresh greenness of spring in the English countryside, he set a new text sent to him by Jennens evoking a picture of rural and urban England. The main part is an adaptation of Milton's *L'Allegro ed il Penseroso,* to which Jennens subjoined *Il Moderato,* extolling in true eighteenth-century fashion if hardly Miltonic verse the virtues of moderation. A unique problem was posed by the text's inherently undra-

matic nature and its frequent unsuitability for musical treatment, but Handel overcame it by seizing all the opportunities for descriptive writing and by paralleling in musical terms the states of mind which the words portray. Part I, with its simple and often unsophisticated style, has a kind of bucolic charm rare in Handel but not uncommon in his English contemporaries – the first two choral items, 'Haste thee, nymph', with its delicious portrayal of laughter, and the Purcellian 'Come and trip it' are especially delightful. It would be invidious to select for special praise any one of the following succession of songs, for they all have an easy melodiousness typical of Handel in his most happily fertile mood. Part II is on a less consistently exalted level, but has a fine climax in the two choruses concluding the *Allegro* and *Penseroso* sections. Between these comes the very brief chorus 'There let the pealing organ blow,' with an organ *ad libitum* which must have provided a great moment when Handel was at the console. *Il Moderato,* the third part, is perhaps a slight anti-climax, for not only do the words inevitably seem trite after Milton's, but they delineate moods less clearly and thus sparked off Handel's imagination less readily (with the notable exception of the lovely duet 'As steals the morn'). In later performances Handel often omitted *Il Moderato.* The work was first performed at the end of February 1740, one of the Op. 6 concertos being used as an overture. It had five performances, but it seems that the combination of war and weather kept the houses thin. An anonymous correspondent to the *Gentleman's Magazine* of May 1740 wrote at the beginning of an encomium of Handel:

> *If e'er* Arion's *music calm'd the floods,*
> *And* Orpheus *ever drew the dancing woods;*
> *Why do not* British *trees and forest throng*
> *To hear the sweeter notes of* Handel's *song?*

In the autumn, after a couple of revivals of the oratorio *Il Parnasso in Festa,* Handel made a final attempt to return to his first love, Italian opera. His penultimate opera, *Imeneo,* was given in November 1740: he had started composing it while at work on *Saul,* but put the manuscript aside for about two years and only completed it six weeks before its production. Described in the newspaper advertisements as an operetta, *Imeneo* is shorter than most of his operas and pleasantly tuneful. Once more we

see stylistic concessions, even in such matters as cadence clichés, short phrases and static basses – all of them hallmarks of the coming *galant* style. The comic element is again present – another movement towards up-to-date Italian tendencies and away from the more pompous aspects of baroque opera; one of the best scenes in *Imeneo* is a sort of mock mad scene, where one character convinces the others (but not the audience) of her disordered mind. The opera includes an aria based on the finale of the concerto Op. 6 No. 4.

Imeneo had a mere two performances before disappearing from the stage (it was later revived in concert form). But Handel had another opera, *Deidamia,* ready to replace it. This was his last opera and rather superior to *Imeneo.* Again the plot is unconcerned with the lofty matters of the earlier operas, though the general style is more like Handel's own so it is not surprising that the music has greater strength. There are several splendid arias, full of character and perfectly designed for the dramatic situation, especially those for Deidamia herself. Even so the work achieved only one more performance than *Imeneo* before being consigned to oblivion: whether the failure was due primarily to the absence of good singers (as Burney suggests) or to a dying public interest in opera it is hard to say – probably it was a combination of both. After his farewell to the stage, on the 10th of February 1741, Handel finished his season with *Acis and Galatea, Saul* and *L'Allegro.*

A Frost Scene on the Thames

Rumours were rife in London that Handel was about to leave England; it was said that he was taking a trip to a German spa, or even leaving England permanently. Perhaps he was thinking of doing so, for he certainly had cause to be tired of the fickle English public which, though recognising his stature as the greatest living composer, would not come to hear his music. He still had enemies in London, who even pulled down the placards advertising his performances. But in the event Handel did not go so far afield. His fame had of course spread to Dublin, where some of his music (especially the *Utrecht Te Deum and Jubilate)* was well known. Earlier in 1741 he had received a letter from the Duke of Devonshire, Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, inviting him to Dublin to give concerts in aid of the charitable institutions there. The eighteenth century was a great age for charity, which indeed was very necessary, especially in a city like Dublin where the gulf between the living standards of rich and poor was even greater than in England. Handel left London early in November, after attending the first night of a new opera season at the Haymarket where Galuppi was the new principal composer. On the way he stopped (or was delayed) at Chester: Charles Burney was a schoolboy there and attended a rehearsal where Handel tried over parts of a new oratorio, called *Messiah,* which he had written in the summer; Burney saw him aroused to grotesque fury by the inability of the bass, a printer by profession, to sight-read his part in the chorus 'And with His Stripes'. Handel arrived in Dublin on the 18th of November. His first public appearance was at St. Andrew's Church three weeks later, where the annual charity sermon was being preached and the *Utrecht Te Deum and Jubilate,* together with anthems by Handel and Boyce, was performed.

The main entertainment Handel was offering to the Dublin 'nobility and gentry' (of whom there were plenty, the Viceroy's court being on a lavish scale) was a series of oratorio performances by subscription. His first series, of six concerts, opened on the 23rd of December; the event was reported thus in *Faulkner's Dublin Journal*:

> *Last Wednesday Mr. Handell had his first Oratorio, at Mr. Neal's Musick Hall in Fishamble-Street, which was crowded with a more numerous and polite Audience than ever was seen upon the like Occasion. The Performance was superior to any Thing of the Kind in this Kingdom before; and our*

Nobility and Gentry to show their Taste for all Kinds of Genius, expressed their great Satisfaction, and have already given all imaginable Encouragement to this grand Musick.

It was a welcome and overdue success for Handel, and it evidently elated him, judging by the long letter he wrote to Jennens a few days later. After describing the excellence of the performers, he wrote 'the Musick sounds delightfully in this charming Room, which puts me in such Spirits (and my Health being so good) that I exert my self on my Organ with more than usual Success'. He went on to describe the distinguished audience and their appreciation of Jennens' poetry in *L'Allegro, il Penseroso ed il Moderato,* and ended, after a request for news of Jennens' health,

. . . as for the News of Your Opera's, I need not trouble you for all this Town is full of their ill success, by a number of Letters from Your quarters to the People of Quality here, and I can't help saying but that it furnishes great Diversion and laughter. The first Opera I heard my Self before I left London, and it made me very merry all along my journey . . .

Handel followed *L'Allegro* with *Acis and Galatea* and the *St. Cecilia Ode,* then *Esther.* When the first series finished another was started, including *Alexander's Feast* and *Hymen,* an English version of *Imeneo* described as a serenata. Success continued; Dublin was a city with a flourishing concert life, but here the music-lovers were offered performances of a standard never reached before. Handel had a good team of singers, including an Italian soprano, Avolio, whom he had brought from London, and the mezzo-soprano Susanna Cibber (a tragic actress as well as a singer, sister of Thomas Arne and unfaithful wife of the brutal Theophilus Cibber). Singers from the cathedral choirs took most of the other parts, and Matthew Dubourg, whom Handel must have known in London, led the orchestra.

On the 13th of April 1742 came the climax of Handel's Dublin visit – the first performance of *Messiah.* In the Fishamble Street Musick Hall, designed to hold six hundred people, there were seven hundred in the audience; ladies had been requested to abandon their hoops and gentlemen their swords to make additional room available. The *Dublin Journal* reported the event as follows:

Handel at the time of Messiah's *composition*

On Tuesday last Mr. Handel's Sacred Grand Oratorio, the MESSIAH, was performed at the New Musick-Hall in Fish-amble-street; the best Judges allowed it to be the most finished piece of Musick. Words are wanting to express the exquisite Delight it afforded to the admiring crouded Audience. The Sublime, the Grand, and the Tender, adapted to the most elevated, majestick and moving Words, conspired to transport and charm the ravished Heart and Ear. It is but Justice to Mr. Handel, that the World should know, he generously gave the Money arising from this Grand Performance, to be equally shared by the Society for relieving Prisoners, the Charitable Infirmary, and Mercer's Hospital, for which they will ever gratefully remember his Name.

Messiah is the one work of Handel's really well known today and its music does not call for lengthy discussion here. It has already been pointed out that it stands apart from the other oratorios by the nature of its subject; indeed, in Handel's own time it was often called 'The Sacred Oratorio'. But it would be a gross mistake to regard *Messiah* as in any sense a liturgical

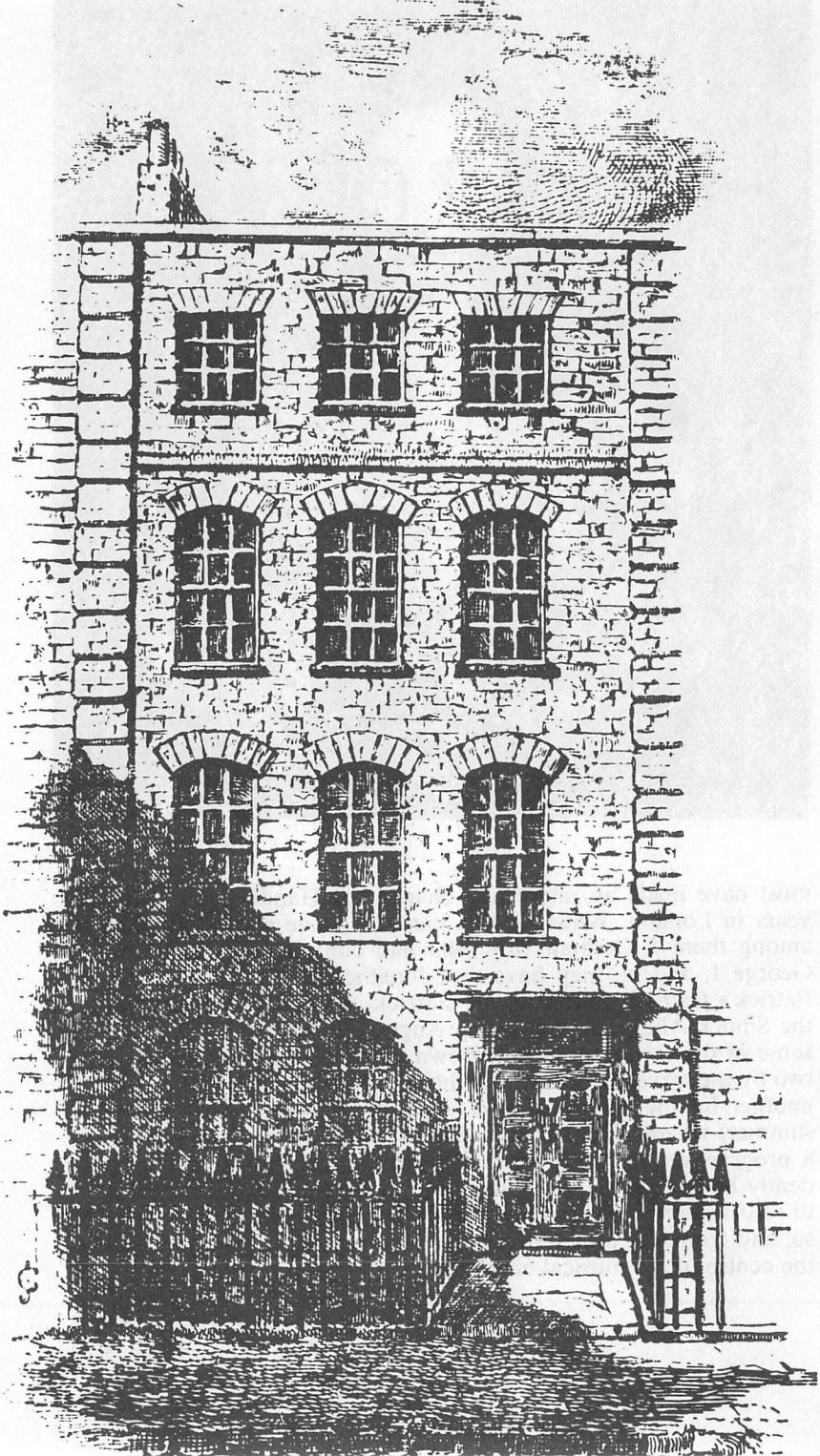
work: it was intended for performance in a concert room or theatre, to afford 'exquisite Delight' and to 'transport and charm the ravished Heart and Ear', as the Dublin reporter put it, and Jennens, who arranged the text, once referred to it as 'a fine Entertainment'. The tale that Handel wished it to 'improve' his audience rather than entertain them is so grossly out of character that it is hard to believe: it was not noted down until many years after Handel's death, at a time when the prevailing moral attitude was such that people wished to attribute ideas of this kind to him.

Though Handel's style was always basically Italianate, *Messiah* contains many different elements: the English church music tradition influenced the choruses, the German Passion profoundly affected the Passion Music in Part II, and even Italian love duets contributed to the make-up of the work, providing the material for three choruses in Part I. But it is essentially the work of a theatrical composer with a keen sense of dramatic atmosphere, as is seen in many of the accompanied recitatives and at such sections as the nativity scene of Part I or the entire first half of Part II. His visualisation of God on His throne, while composing the 'Hallelujah' chorus, is again absolutely characteristic of a composer who thought in theatrical terms. This is not to say, of course, that Handel's own religious feelings did not play a fundamental role in the work's composition. No doubt they account for its sustained high level. But in fact the difference in general level between *Messiah* and certain of the other oratorios is far less than its highly favoured position today might lead one to imagine. All the advantages are with *Messiah*: there is a higher proportion of choruses than in any other except *Israel in Egypt*; the subject of the text has an immense appeal; and the orchestral and especially the solo vocal parts are easier and less given to display than in most of the other oratorios – possibly because Handel had little idea when composing the work of the merits of the available performers (we do not know for certain whether it was specifically designed for Dublin, but it seems very probable, especially in view of the charitable purposes of Handel's visit).

Handel's stay in Dublin ended in the summer of 1742, after a further performance of *Messiah* and one of *Saul* – the rehearsal of the latter (open to those with tickets for the performance) 'gave such universal Satisfaction, that it was agreed by all the Judges present, to have been the finest Performance that hath been heard in this Kingdom'. His few months in Dublin society

Susanna Cibber

must have made an interesting change for Handel after thirty years in London. While he was there he made several friends, among them a German lady who had come to England with George I, and he may have met Jonathan Swift, Dean of St. Patrick's Cathedral, and David Garrick, who played *Hamlet* at the Smock-Alley Theatre during August. Probably he attended some of the concerts where his own music was given, including two by the travelling Hungarian horn virtuoso, Mr. Charles, and another for the benefit of Mrs. Arne (who arrived early in the summer) where, with her sister-in-law, Mrs. Cibber, she sang in a programme including several Handel songs and duets. Evidently he liked Dublin, for he wrote to Jennens of his intention to return there after another year in London. But he never did so, and from this time onwards London remained his home and the centre of his musical activities.

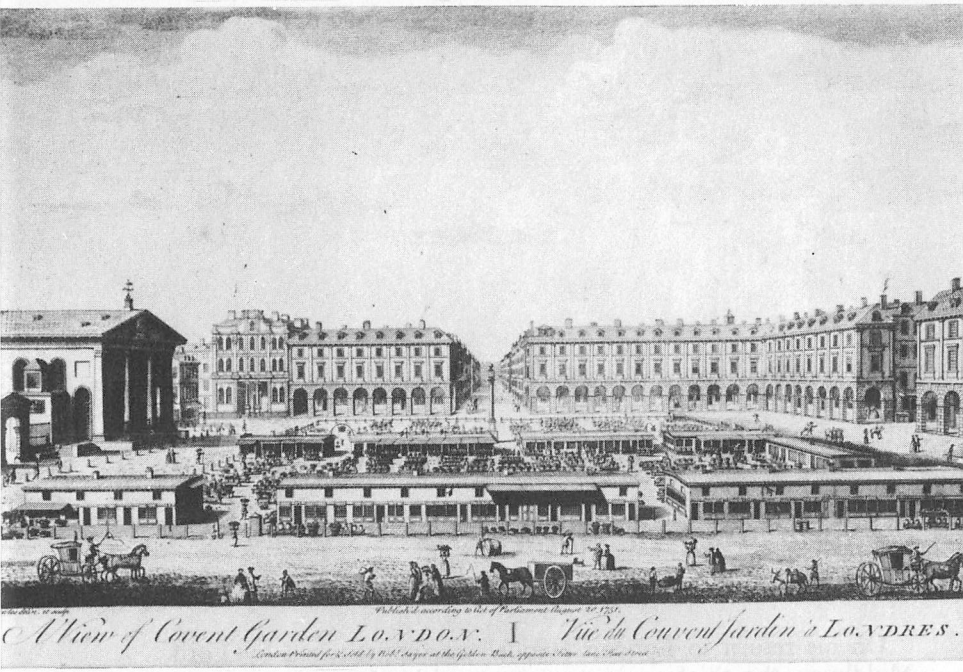


Oratorio at Covent Garden

On his return to London Handel was approached by Lord Middlesex, the chief opera promoter and his former enemy, to write two new operas for a thousand guineas. He eventually refused the offer, but not before it had given rise to rumours of new operatic dabblings, which he denied in a letter to Jennens. For the rest of his life, in fact, he left Italian opera severely alone, except possibly for lending a hand with the arrangement of some pasticcios and revivals. Nearly all his remaining works are of one kind – English oratorios, conceived in dramatic terms, a type of composition he had forsaken since 1738.

The first of the new oratorios was *Samson*, written before he left for Ireland but extensively revised on his return. Its libretto, supplied by Newburgh Hamilton, is based mainly on *Samson Agonistes*, but includes sections from several other Milton poems. Handel must have been pleased to return to dramatic characterisation after the relative abstraction of *L'Allegro* and *Messiah*. After a splendid overture partly based on Telemann, Muffat and Keiser (*Samson* has many borrowings), the work opens with a Philistine festival; this is followed by a scene in mournful mood for Samson, his father and his friend, including Samson's famous and moving air 'Total eclipse'. Dramatically, the first act is slow to come to life, and hardly succeeds in doing so even for Samson's indignant protest 'Why does the God of Israel sleep?'. At the

← *Handel's house, Brook Street (a nineteenth-century wood-cut)*



A View of Covent Garden. The theatre is in the far right-hand corner

opening of Act II the mood is much the same, with Micah's beautiful 'Return, O God of Hosts', but the dramatic tempo increases when Samson is visited by Dalila: he eventually repulses her advances, and a duet ('Traitor to love') forms a splendid climax to the scene. Then the Philistine warrior Harapha arrives to taunt him, and refuses his challenge in the song 'Honour and arms' – a fine piece of characterisation of the cowardly bully – and again the encounter is concluded by an angry duet. Act III provides the climax: its central feature is Samson's destruction of the Philistines' banqueting hall (pictured with terrifying power), followed by a dead march and a scene of mourning for Samson. The oratorio has to end in more cheerful mood, which it does with the famous air 'Let the bright Seraphim' and the final chorus.

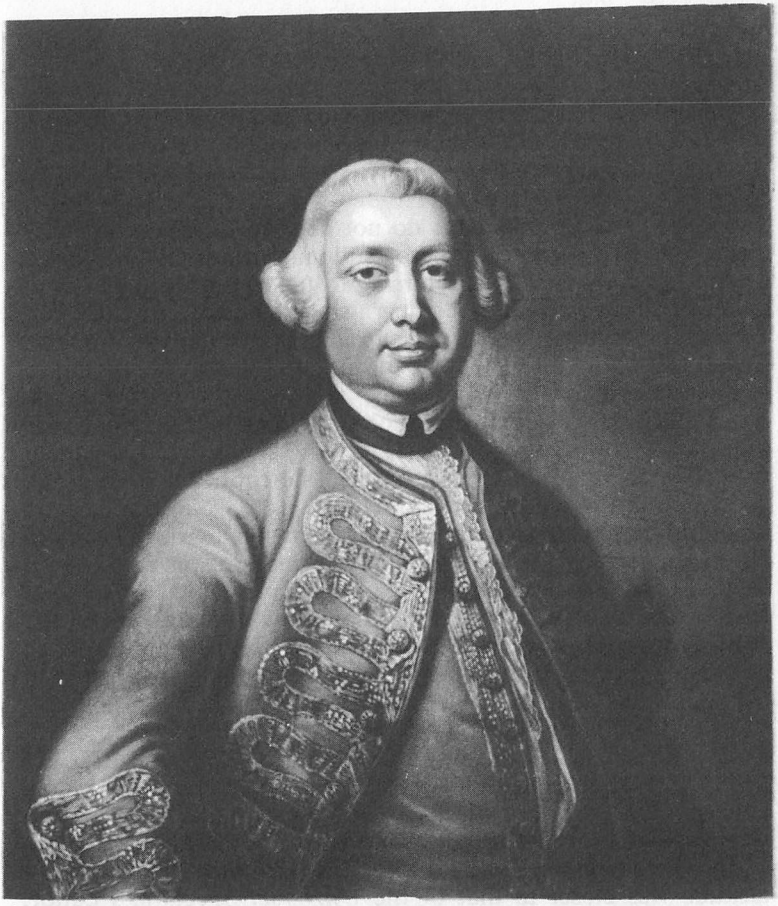
Handel started a new oratorio season at Covent Garden in February 1743, modelled on the Dublin plan of six performances by subscription. *Samson* was very successful, running for the entire six nights and opening a new series immediately after. Horace Walpole wrote:

Handel has set up an Oratorio against the Operas, and succeeds. He has hired all the goddesses from farces and the singers of Roast Beef [a popular song] *from between the acts at both theatres, with a man with one note in his voice, and a girl without ever an one . . .*

Walpole's musical judgments do not need to be taken too seriously, but Beard (a tenor hero, still most unusual) and Mrs. Cibber – if he was in fact referring to the two principals – had much smaller voices than the opera singers he was used to. But even so the oratorio series was eclipsing Lord Middlesex's opera; it was 'filled with all the people of quality in town', according to Lady Hertford, and crowds were being turned away at the doors. After *L'Allegro* Handel introduced *Messiah* to London under the title 'A New Sacred Oratorio', giving four performances to finish the subscription series. As usual he contributed an organ concerto, and an additional attraction was a violin solo played (and probably composed) by Dubourg, now on a visit to London. The audience remained good, but the reception was mixed – on religious, not musical, grounds. A new puritanical spirit had been aroused by John Wesley, William Law and others, and the faint disapproval stimulated by *Israel in Egypt* became less faint and more disapproving in *Messiah's* case. A letter published in the *Universal Spectator* on the 19th of March 1743, the day *Messiah* was first given in London, asked 'if the *Playhouse* is a fit *Temple* . . . or a Company of *Players* fit *Ministers* of *God's Word* . . .'. The writer, 'Philalethes', was objecting to the whole concept of the dramatic musical treatment of sacred subjects and was provoked into writing his long letter by the announcement of an oratorio on the subject of the Messiah. Perhaps the general attitude was closer to that of the *Universal Spectator's* editor, who prefaced the letter with the remarks:

The following Letter may to many of my Readers, especially those of a gay and polite Taste, seem too rigid a Censure on a Performance, which is so universally approv'd: However, I could not suppress it, as there is so well-intended a Design and pious Zeal runs through the whole, and nothing derogatory said of Mr. Handel's *Merit. Of what good Consequences it will produce, I can only say* – Valeat Quantum valere potest.

Soon after the end of the season Handel had another paralytic



John Beard

fit, but it was of short duration and he had a prolific summer. During June he composed *Semele*; in July he wrote a *Te Deum* and anthem to commemorate the victory at Dettingen, where George II himself led the British armies to victory; and in the following two months *Joseph and his Brethren* was completed. The three products of the summer could hardly have been more different – the first a gay and light-hearted work of supreme genius, the next as much a transcription from Urio as a work by Handel, the last at best to be described as uneven. The

Dettingen music was the first of the new works to be performed, being given at the Chapel Royal in November just after the King's arrival in London. It was well received, and though by no means superior to the *Utrecht Te Deum and Jubilate* written thirty years earlier it soon began to oust the older work in general esteem.

In 1744 Handel repeated the procedure of the previous winter, giving no performances in the autumn but a series of twelve in Lent (this time in a single series rather than two of six apiece). But Londoners had a chance to hear his music at the Haymarket Theatre in autumn 1743, when the opera promoters put on *Roxana: or, Alexander in India . . . Compos'd by Mr. Handel.* This seems to have been an arrangement of *Alessandro,* with arias from some other Handel operas, put together either by Handel himself or by Lampugnani, Galuppi's successor at the Haymarket. It is by no means impossible that Handel had in fact accepted an offer of a hundred guineas from Lord Middlesex for arranging one of his old operas. *Rossane* had a dozen performances in November and December, and Mrs. Delany (Mrs. Pendarves, now remarried) found it 'infinitely better than any Italian opera', though she was 'vexed . . . to hear some favourite songs mangled'.

Handel's 1744 season opened in February with *Semele,* performed 'After the Manner of an Oratorio'. The text was arranged from Congreve, who had originally called it 'An Opera'; and to call *Semele* an oratorio certainly requires considerable stretching of most definitions of the term. There is nothing scriptural or sacred about 'The Story of Semele' (as Handel called it) – in fact, it is exceedingly profane in mood. In the opening scene Semele, in love with no less a personage than Jupiter, is about to be married to Athamas against her will; this scene includes a brief but highly wrought quartet, a rarity in Handel, where Semele's sister Ino, in love with Athamas, cannot admit the cause of her distress. Before the marriage is solemnised, Semele is whisked off to Olympus (by 'An eagle . . . of mighty size, on purple wings . . . diffusing celestial odour and ambrosial dew'), whence she sings, in gavotte measure, of the 'Endless pleasure, endless love' which she 'enjoys above'. The second act is set on Olympus: after a spell of angry jealousy from Juno, we are treated to a marvellous succession of songs and choruses depicting the voluptuous atmosphere, starting with Semele's miraculously lovely 'O sleep, why dost thou leave me?' and culminating in the chorus

Handel's watch

'Now Love that everlasting boy' and Jupiter's song 'Where'er you walk'. There is nothing like this extraordinary act anywhere else in Handel, or indeed in any other composer. The third act is hardly less memorable. It opens with another portrayal of sleep, with Somnus the sleeper this time. After his song 'Leave me, loathsome light', Juno can only arouse him by promising him his favourite nymph. Disguised as Ino, whom Jupiter has spirited to Olympus, Juno persuades Semele to demand that Jupiter comes to her as himself, the mighty thunderer: finding him in keenly amorous mood (depicted in his song 'Come to my arms'), she coyly repulses him and makes her fateful request. This of course means her death, but Jupiter, having promised to grant all her wishes, has no alternative, and his emotions are expressed in two songs – the first agitated, the second sadly resigned. After Juno has given vent to her delight in a brief mocking song, Semele perishes in a pathetic arioso – one feels, however, that Handel could have made the scene of her burning more vivid and striking. The people of Thebes mourn her death, but for consolation (and to provide a happy ending) her unborn child, Jupiter's son Bacchus, is rescued from her ashes.

Much in *Semele* suggests that Handel was trying to recapture the freshness of *Acis and Galatea*; in that he did not quite succeed, but he did create a work which is no less delightful and gives a unique musical evocation of sensual pleasure. The work's overt sensuality no doubt had an adverse effect on its reception.

by Golling of Augsburg

and furthermore there was opposition from 'all the opera people' (since Handel had chosen an operatic subject) as well as from those whom Mrs. Delany dubbed 'the fine ladies, the petit maitres, and *ignoramus's*'. *Semele* had four performances and *Samson* two before *Joseph's* first night at the beginning of March. The Earl of Egmont found *Joseph* an 'inimitable composition', but we need only be glad that Handel did not imitate it. The chief causes of its weakness lie with the librettist, the Rev. James Miller, who clearly had little dramatic sense and less idea of what constituted suitable language for setting to music. The biblical story of Joseph is full of dramatic potentialities, but Miller squandered most of them by omitting certain incidents and leaving others obscure. Handel might have overcome this had Miller's approach been less sentimental and the language free of some of its monstrosities. Apart from one or two attractive songs, the musical interest resides almost solely in the choruses for Joseph's brethren and the two prison scenes – that at the opening with Joseph incarcerated has only a flicker of life, but the later one, where Simeon is tortured by doubt and his conscience, has real vitality and feeling of character. Handel was 'mightily out of humour' at the rehearsals, owing to one singer without a voice and another without brains (one would have expected him to be used to that by this time). *Joseph* had four performances, after which two of *Saul* rounded off the season. A few days later, at an informal dinner party with Mrs. Delany, Handel played over *Joseph* to her on the harpsichord.

During the summer Handel was in correspondence with Jennens, who sent a new libretto and made some criticisms of the setting of *Messiah* which Handel promised to look into. For the 1744-5 winter he decided on a series of twenty-four performances, at the Haymarket Theatre (now unoccupied, for the opera promoters were inactive for the time being). He started in November with two performances each of *Deborah* and *Semele*; then after a gap of four weeks came *Hercules,* which was given twice at the beginning of January.

Despite *Semele's* poor reception, Handel turned to another classical subject for *Hercules,* which he called a 'Musical Drama' rather than an oratorio (there was, of course, no stage action). The text was provided by the Rev. Thomas Broughton: though not on Congreve's level, it is well constructed and allows opportunities for characterisation. Following an overture based on Telemann, the first scene depicts the gloomy atmosphere at the Trachinian court, with Hercules away at war and his fate uncertain; the striking and profoundly felt song for his wife Dejanira shows her to be a formidable person. After more music mainly in slow tempos, Hercules of course returns in triumph, leading the captive daughter, Iole, of the king he has killed. In the second act we encounter the central feature of the plot – Dejanira's jealousy at Hercules' supposed love for Iole: after a scene between the two women, the chorus comment (in the manner of a Greek chorus) on 'Jealousy! infernal pest'; this is one of Handel's most masterly choruses in its sense of grim foreboding and its stark realisation of base emotion, akin to the Envy chorus in *Saul.* Later in the act comes a scene for Hercules and Dejanira, where the innocent and simple-minded Hercules sings complacently of his fame, to be taunted cruelly by his wife in her superb song 'Resign thy club', where she contemptuously goads him for his supposed abandonment of warlike things in favour of effeminate ones, sneering in the middle section at 'Venus and her whining boy'. In her next song her jealousy is more controlled and tragic, and before the act ends she sends a magic robe to Hercules to restore his love. Act III is introduced by an extraordinary Symphony where violence and repose alternate in alarming style. Then we hear of the tragedy: the robe was poisoned and Hercules is dying in agony. The chorus mourn the death of the 'world's avenger', but the dramatic climax comes in the vivid portrayal of his death throes, in a furious recitative and air, and especially in Dejanira's scene

where, in terror and full of remorse for her jealousy (she did not know the robe was poisoned) she believes herself pursued by the Furies. The inevitable happy ending is contrived by Hercules' acceptance among the immortals and the union of Iole with Hyllus, the son of Hercules and Dejanira. To a modern audience a happy ending may seem a hopeless anti-climax, but such a reaction is essentially romantic and had no place in the eighteenth-century scheme. An eighteenth-century audience did not want to step from high tragedy into the street; it required to be let down lightly. There is a parallel between Handel's happy endings, the sextet at the end of *Don Giovanni* and the light-weight minuet or rondo finales of instrumental works, and no one with a true understanding of the period should find fault with the lack of a tragic conclusion or a symphonic finale.

Hercules was not a success. Attendance at the two performances was so poor that Handel decided to curtail his season, after only six nights of the promised twenty-four, before his losses became 'too great to support'. He wrote a letter on the subject to the *Daily Advertiser*; after praising the generosity of the 'English Nation' and extolling the language ('the best adapted of any to the full and solemn Kind of Musick'), he continued:

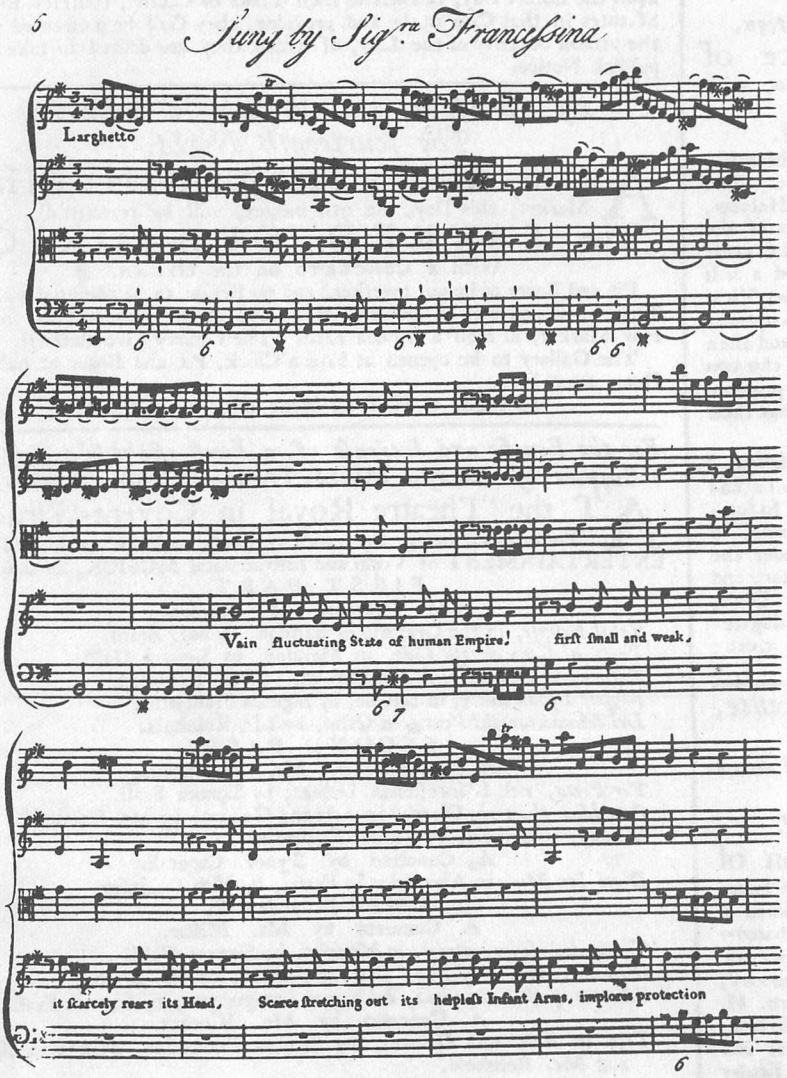
> *I have the Mortification now to find, that my Labours to please are become ineffectual, when my Expences are considerably greater. To what Cause I must impute the loss of the publick Favour I am ignorant, but the Loss itself I shall always lament.*

This rallied his supporters and he was enabled (as he wrote in a second letter) to 'proceed with the Oratorios, let the *Risque* which I may run be what it will'. So in March he reopened with *Samson, Saul* and *Joseph*; then came the season's other new offering, *Belshazzar.*

Belshazzar had been composed the previous summer immediately after *Hercules,* in another of those outstandingly creative spells, like the short one in 1739 which saw the composition of the Op. 6 concertos or the longer one two years later when *Messiah* and *Samson* were produced. The text of *Belshazzar* much excited Handel – it gave him 'great delight' and he found it 'a Noble Piece, very grand and uncommon', giving him 'Opportunity to some very particular Ideas'. The excessive length created some problems (if set in full it would have taken more than four hours), but Handel 'retrench'd . . . a great deal of the Musick' and

the difficulty was overcome by printing in the libretto some sections which were not set, as had been done in *Samson's* case. The work has a most impressive opening, the overture being followed by a long accompanied recitative for Nitocris, Belshazzar's mother, on the inevitable tragic fate of great empires. In the next scene the Babylonians deride the Persians from their walls 'as engaged in an impracticable undertaking' (as the libretto charmingly put it); a member of the first-night audience justly described this as 'the best expression of scornful laughter imaginable'. The scene concludes with a vigorous fugal chorus for the Persians, which is interesting to compare with the exultant Jewish chorus on hearing of Babylon's impending downfall. We next meet the tyrant himself, in gay mood: his declared intention to use the vessels from the temple at his feast draws from the Jews two magnificent choruses – the solemn and foreboding 'Recall, O King', and 'By slow degrees', the latter culminating in a superb chromatic fugue with a strong sense of Belshazzar's impending doom. The second act opens with an exhilarating chorus from the Persians as the Euphrates is diverted, leaving Babylon open to attack. As they march in along the river bed, Handel transports us to the rollicking and licentious atmosphere of the Babylonian feast, which is dramatically interrupted by the writing on the wall, depicted with masterly simplicity. Daniel's interpretation of the writing is again treated simply but effectively, in an accompanied recitative. In Act III the Persians enter the palace, the Jews have a brief but triumphant chorus at the fall of the Babylonian gods and the besotted Belshazzar shouts his defiance but is killed (during a Martial Symphony). The work ends with thanks being offered to God, to music from two of the *Chandos Anthems*. It is easy to see why Handel found the composition of *Belshazzar* so exciting: the characterisation may not be especially subtle (except in the case of Nitocris) but for sheer force of dramatic conception it stands high among his oratorios.

Audiences were already falling off by the time *Belshazzar* was performed at the end of March 1745. 'Handel, once so crowded, plays to empty walls', wrote one of his admirers; his enemies were still active – one of them, Lady Brown, even being celebrated in verse: she 'Was more implacable than all, And strait resolv'd poor *Orpheus* fall'. *Belshazzar* had three performances, *Messiah* two, and the season petered out after sixteen of the promised twenty-four nights.



Page from the first edition of Belshazzar, *showing the opening recitative*

work for any Maſter that follows his Buſineſs on the Lord's Day.

Note, Whoever of this Buſineſs ſhall preſume to ſhave or comb Wigs upon the Lord's Day, or exerciſe their Trade or Calling, contrary to the Statutes in that Caſe made and provided, they ſhall be proſecuted with the utmoſt Severity of the Law, of which they are deſired to take this publick Notice.

By SUBSCRIPTION.

The fourteenth Night.

AT the KING's THEATRE in the Hay-Market, this Day, the 9th inſtant, will be perform'd

The SACRED ORATORIO.

With a CONCERTO on the ORGAN.

Pit and Boxes to be put together, and no Perſon to be admitted without Tickets, which will be delivered this Day, at the Opera-Office in the Hay-Market, at Half a Guinea each. The Gallery Five Shillings.

The Gallery to be opened at Five o'Clock, Pit and Boxes at half an Hour after Five.

To begin at Half an Hour after Six o'Clock.

For the Benefit and Increaſe of a Fund eſtabliſh'd for the Support of decay'd MUSICIANS *or their Families.*

AT the Theatre Royal in Covent-Garden, Tomorrow, being the 10th inſtant, will be perform'd an ENTERTAINMENT of Vocal and Inſtrumental MUSICK, as follows.

FIRST PART.

The Overture of Samſon.

Total Eclipſe, in the Oratorio of Samſon, by Mr. Beard.

Preſo al Caro Amato Cido, in Meraſpe, by Signora Galli.

Return, O God of Hoſts, in Samſon, by Miſs Robinſon.

Myſelf I ſhall adore, in Semele, by Signora Franceſina.

Del Minacciar del Vento, in Otho, by Mr. Reinhold.

SECOND PART.

A Concerto by Mr. Weideman.

Per Pieta, nel L'Inconſtanza Deluſa, by Signora Frafi.

O ruddier than the Cherry, in Acis and Galatea, by Mr. Reinhold.

O Sleep, in Semele, by Signora Franceſina.

A Concerto by Signor Caperali.

Dirti Ben Mio, in Alexander in Perſia, by Miſs Robinſon.

THIRD PART.

A Concerto by Mr. Millar.

Tremende, oſcure, atroci, in Meraſpe, by Signora Galli.

Why does the God of Iſrael ſleep, in Samſon, by Mr. Beard.

Scherza queſt' Alma mia, del Signor Lampugnani, by Signora Frafi.

A Concerto by Mr. Vincent.

Trio in Acis and Galatea, by Signora Franceſina, Miſs Robinſon, and Mr. Reinhold.

Mr. Handel's Grand Sonata.

Pit and Boxes to be put together, and no Perſons to be admitted without Tickets, which will be deliver'd that Day at the Office, at Half a Guinea each; Firſt Gallery Five Shillings; Second Gallery Three Shillings and Six-Pence. The Galleries will be open'd at Four o'Clock. Pit and

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From the Daily Journal, *9 April 1745*

During the summer Handel was again ill. It has been suggested that he was already blind by this time, but this is based on the incorrect dating of a letter. In fact the trouble seems to have been mainly mental: to an old friend 'he talked much of his precarious state of health', while looking 'well enough'. It was probably his doubtful health which prevented him from writing the customary two works for the next season, but uncertainty over the political situation may also have had something to do with it. In July Bonnie Prince Charlie landed in Scotland and started rallying Jacobite forces with the intention of overthrowing the Hanoverians. Wars like the one with Spain or the sporadic ones with France had little effect on the lives of ordinary people, but the Jacobite rising was something which really mattered and it caused a good deal of alarm in London. As during every war or period of national anxiety, patriotic music was called for. At this time the national anthem (of doubtful authorship) became generally accepted, and part of Handel's coronation anthem *Zadok the Priest* (to the words 'God Save the King') was often sung at the ends of concerts. Handel's first contribution to the emergency was 'A Chorus Song . . . for the *Gentlemen Volunteers* of the City of London', called 'Stand round, my brave boys', a somewhat uninspired effort which nevertheless served its purpose adequately.

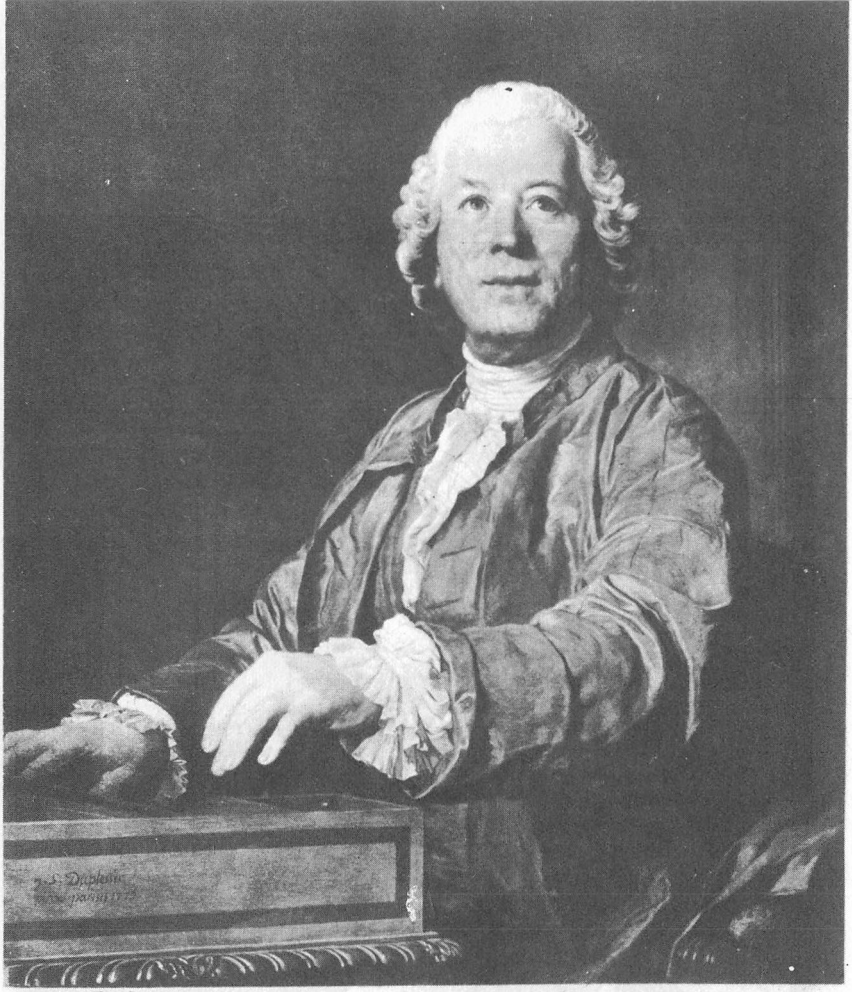
The Jacobites reached as far south as Derby in December, but then began to retreat, pursued by the Duke of Cumberland's armies. The opera house had not opened during the autumn, partly because of the general tension (which resulted in London being half empty) and partly because of prejudice against the Italian singers, who were Catholics. Early in January it opened with Gluck's *La Caduta dei Giganti,* a tribute to the Duke of Cumberland. It was not particularly successful and Handel is said to have told Gluck that he had taken far too much trouble over his opera – 'what the English like is something they can beat time to, something that hits them straight on the drum of the ear'. In February Handel produced his own national offering in the form of the *Occasional Oratorio* – an exhortation and paean of praise to those fighting in a good cause. Divine support is of course presumed, and the words are largely biblical. The work was clearly put together in haste. After a splendid overture (though no improvement on Telemann's original working of the same material), Part I has a good deal of vital and stirring music; it includes a song 'Why do the gentiles tumult' and a chorus

'Let us break off' – words Handel had already set, in slightly different form, in *Messiah*. The second part calls extensively on choruses from *Athalia*, and culminates in a fine 'Hallelujah'. Much of Part III is also borrowed – it includes several movements from *Israel in Egypt*, the Op. 6 concertos and the coronation anthems. The *Occasional Oratorio* had three performances in February 1746; Handel gave the previous year's subscribers two tickets for each performance to make up for the short season, but he had evidently had enough of the subscription system and never tried it again.

In April the Duke of Cumberland finally routed the Jacobites at Culloden, and in his honour Handel wrote his next oratorio, *Judas Maccabaeus*. He now had a new librettist, the Rev. Thomas Morell, who was to collaborate with him several times in the following years. Morell was something of a scholar, but he had much less sense of the dramatic than Jennens and less feeling for character. His English, while nowhere near as clumsy as Miller's, is sometimes awkward and affected. However, he was intelligent and cooperative and had a sense of humour – so he was particularly well equipped for dealing with Handel. Morell tells an interesting story of the genesis of *Judas*:

> *. . . Mr. Handell applied to me . . . in 1746, and added to his request the honour of a recommendation from Prince Frederic. Upon this I thought I could do as well as some that had gone before me, and within 2 or 3 days carried him the first Act of* Judas Maccabaeus, *which he approved of. 'Well', says he, 'and how are you to go on?' 'Why, we are to suppose an engagement, and that the Israelites have conquered, and so begin with a chorus as*
>
> *Fallen is the Foe*
>
> *or, something like it'. 'No, I will have this', and began working it, as it is, upon the Harpsichord. 'Well, go on.' 'I will bring you more tomorrow.' 'No, something now,'*
>
> *'So fall thy Foes, O Lord'*
>
> *'that will do', and immediately carried on the composition as we have it in that most admirable chorus.*

Judas was planned with the victorious mood of the English public in mind and thoroughly deserved its success. Writers on Handel have tended to criticise it for simplicity of style and lack of drama or characterisation, and possibly it does not merit



Gluck

its continued high standing among the oratorios. But its detractors tend to forget that good tunes are in themselves a positive virtue and *Judas* has more than its share. The first act begins, however, with a long and profoundly impressive mourning sequence, starting with 'Mourn, ye afflicted children' and including the deeply moving 'For Sion lamentation make'. The famous and rousing song 'Arm, arm ye brave' changes the mood to one of hope and determination, maintained in the attractive even if static songs which follow. 'Fall'n is the foe' opens Act II in brilliant style – in view of Morell's story, one

Thomas Morell

need not hesitate to call it inspired. As in the first act, further attractive if undramatic songs follow, like 'From mighty kings', but the mournful mood returns with bad news in 'Ah! wretched Israel'. The same process as before takes place, Judas calling for action in 'Sound an alarm', and the work moves to the inevitable triumphant conclusion.

Handel finished work on *Judas* during August 1746. He started his 1747 season with the *Occasional Oratorio* and *Joseph* (his plans were somewhat put out by the trial of the Jacobite Lord Lovat, on which public attention was focussed); then *Judas* came on at the beginning of April and proved a great success. It not only had the patronage of the Duke of Cumberland, but support from an unexpected quarter – London's small but prosperous Jewish community, who were delighted at the rare prospect of a work which presented a Jew in a favourable light. It ran for six performances in 1747 and during the rest of Handel's lifetime was easily the most frequently revived of his oratorios.

So the first product of Handel's cooperation with Morell was a resounding triumph; and not surprisingly, after a long period of alternating success and failure, it was to have a profound effect on the kind of music he produced during the following years.

Mrs. Delany

The Last Years

Artistic history time and again demonstrates that a success cannot be repeated; but that has never prevented artists from trying. Handel and Morell, having been successful with *Judas Maccabaeus,* sought their next subject from the book of *Maccabees* and with the following one again tried to please the Jewish public. Handel finished *Alexander Balus* early in July 1747, starting work on *Joshua* two weeks later.

But before the oratorio season came round Handel's music was heard once again in the Haymarket opera house. In November a pasticcio called *Lucio Vero* was staged, made up of arias from his operas, possibly in his own arrangement; it had ten performances during the season. One of the advertisements ran as follows:

The Lovers of Musick among us, whose Ears have been charm'd with Farinello, Faustina, Senesino, Cuzzoni, and other great Performers will now have an Opportunity of Reviving their former Delight; which, if not so transporting as then, may yet prove a very high Entertainment. Mr. Handel is acknowledged (universally) so great a Master of the Lyre; that nothing urg'd in Favour of his Capital Performances, can reasonably be considered as a Puff.

There was more Handel at the opera house early in 1748 when *Rossane,* the arrangement of *Alessandro* first put on five years before, had four performances.

In February the oratorio season opened, with *Judas*; then came the two new works, of which *Alexander Balus* had three performances and *Joshua* four. *Alexander Balus* is a curiously mixed work. There is little or no real action in the first two acts, but a good deal of agreeable music and unusually colourful orchestration. The outstanding song in Act I is Cleopatra's 'Hark, hark! He strikes the golden lyre', where a harp and mandolin are used and the flutes and strings are handled with the greatest delicacy. (The use of plucked instruments recalls Handel's treatment of a different Cleopatra in *Giulio Cesare.*) Alexander's brilliant 'Mighty love' became one of Handel's most popular songs. In Act II there is a flicker of dramatic life when a courtier slanders Jonathan, giving rise to an angry tenor song (something of a rarity) and a chorus 'O Calumny', a solemn movement but on a less high plane than the disquisitions on envy and jealousy in *Saul* and *Hercules* which it recalls. The act ends with wedding music, among which is a duet for the lovers that may well include some erotic symbolism. Cleopatra's opening song in the last act, 'Here amid the shady woods' (which seems to look ahead to the Elysian fields in Gluck's *Orfeo*), is rudely interrupted by a chorus (or perhaps quartet) of 'ruffians' who carry her off. There is another fine angry song, this time for Alexander on finding his bride abducted; but perhaps the best part of the act comes at the end in Cleopatra's tragic songs on learning of the deaths of her husband and her villainous father. Here, for once, Handel could not manage the happy ending with conviction and the final chorus is in a minor key and an unusually subdued mood. Morell has a story to tell about the creation of one of Cleopatra's final songs:

> *The next year he desired another* [*libretto*] *and I gave him* Alexander Balus, *which follows the history of the foregoing in the* Maccabees. . . . *as to the last Air, I cannot help telling you, that, when Mr Handell first read it, he cried out* 'D – n *your Iambics'. 'Don't put yourself in a passion, they are easily Trochees'.* 'Trochees, what are Trochees?' *'Why, the very reverse of Iambics, by leaving out a syllable in every line, as instead of*

Convey me to some peaceful shore,
Lead me to some peaceful shore.'

'That is what I want.' 'I will step into the parlour, and alter them immediately.' I went down and returned with them altered in about 3 minutes; when he would have them as they were [i.e. in Morell's original form], *and set them most delightfully accompanied with only a quaver, and a rest of 3 quavers.*

Joshua is an even more obvious attempt than *Alexander Balus* to repeat the success of *Judas*. Again, the plot is not truly dramatic and characterisation is not especially striking. The first act has some splendid choruses, notably the stirring opening one; Joshua has two admirable songs in different styles – the vigorous 'Haste, Israel, haste' and the gently flowing 'While Kedron's brook', and a pastoral note is heard in Achsah's 'Hark! 'tis the linnet'. Act II opens with the chorus 'Glory to God', featuring the trumpets at Jericho; this was the chorus which so impressed Haydn on his visit to London nearly half a century later. At news of a defeat, the mood changes to despondency in the chorus 'How soon our tow'ring hopes', but there is a call to action by Joshua and a song in gavotte rhythm by Othniel (on a theme which Handel had borrowed and used many times). A gentle and simple siciliana song for Achsah leads to a remarkable recitative where Joshua bids the sun and moon stand still: Handel illustrates this in a manner which can only be called naive, but in performance could be almost breathtakingly effective. The third act has little more incident than the others. It starts with a splendid chorus in praise of Joshua, and includes a humbly contemplative song for the ageing Caleb and the famous 'O had I Jubal's lyre', as well as 'See, the conqu'ring hero comes' on Othniel's triumphant return (this movement later found a place in *Judas Maccabaeus*). One must beware of undervaluing *Joshua* on account of its lack of drama or convincing character; it is too full of good music, both for chorus and soloists, to deserve disparagement for such failings.

As the entries in Handel's bank account demonstrate, the 1748 season was very successful. It seemed that he had at last found a reliable way of earning a living from the English public, after all the operatic ups and downs and the failure of subscription oratorios – though in fact he was never bankrupt, as has often been suggested, and by this time had several thousand

AUX HALL GARDENS shewing the Grand Walk at the entrance of the Garden, & the Orchestra with the Musick Playing.

pounds invested in securities (some of it, no doubt, saved from his royal pension; it was probably the accumulation of his savings which had enabled him to promote oratorios in the first place).

For the 1749 season the two new oratorios were *Solomon* and *Susanna*. We have no certain information on the identity of the librettists, though the former has been attributed to Morell. *Solomon* is almost nearer to a magnificent pageant than a true oratorio; there is no plot to speak of, and the three acts describe different aspects of the goldenness of the age of Solomon – with an eye on the parallel glories of Georgian England, no doubt, for to an eighteenth-century Englishman even the greatest men and creations of biblical or classical antiquity no more than approached the perfections of their own times. Act I of *Solomon* starts with the completion of the temple: the splendour and nobility of the opening eight-part chorus beggars description – and indeed several of the festal choruses in the oratorio achieve a unique level of pomp and grandeur. The second part of the act is devoted to the happiness of Solomon and his wife, who sing of the ecstacies of marital love; it ends with a song of the purest melodic beauty and simplicity, 'With thee th' unshelter'd moor', and a chorus of unforgettable gentle sweetness and poetry redolent of the lovers' 'soft hours'. Act II returns at first to the

grandeur of the opening, but is mainly devoted to Solomon's judgment between the two harlots. Here there is material for drama and Handel rises to the opportunity, especially in the trio for the harlots and Solomon, with the pathetic pleading of the true mother, the jealous agitation of the false one and Solomon's serene confidence in justice. Act III is devoted to the Queen of Sheba's visit (it starts with the famous 'Arrival' symphony, to some extent borrowed from Porta's *Numitore* – the opera which had opened the Royal Academy in 1720). There follows a kind of masque, where Solomon calls forth music depicting a wide range of different emotions, from the delights of music to the terrors of war and the anguish of hopeless love. The Queen is, of course, impressed (who would not be?) and the work ends with another eight-part chorus in Solomon's praise.

Handel followed the magnificence of *Solomon* with something in strongly contrasted style – *Susanna,* which has been described as 'an opera of English village life'. In it Handel clearly shows the influence of English composers, not Purcell, but Arne, Carey and their contemporaries who wrote light English operas. The choral opening, a moving lament by the captive Israelites, has little relevance to the plot; indeed, the chorus is almost superfluous throughout. Next we meet the young married couple, Susanna and Joachim, who sing of their mutual love in a musical language of almost rustic simplicity. After Joachim's departure two lecherous elders appear with designs on Susanna, one a sly insinuating tenor, the other a blustering bass. The act ends with a choral fugue vividly picturing the 'wrath divine' which may descend on these evil-doers. In the second act Susanna prepares for a bathe, to a lovely song depicting 'Crystal streams in murmurs flowing'; her attendant sings her two songs in dance rhythms which could almost have come from an English ballad opera of the time. The lascivious elders arrive as the attendant goes; one tries to seduce her, the other to rape her, both with suitable musical settings, and in a trio with admirably maintained characterisation she repulses them. They then decide to denounce her as an adulteress, to which she replies with a most impressive song, expressing her fearlessness and innocence; she again displays her nobility of character in her F minor air following the flurrying chorus proclaiming her guilt, which opens the third act. Daniel soon proves the falseness of the verdict, and sings a graceful paean of chastity. All ends happily with praise of Susanna, virtue and married love. It will be seen that

Susanna is very far from most people's ideas of what an oratorio should be; the fault lies not with *Susanna* but with these ideas, for to Handel an oratorio was simply a musical drama on a subject of sacred origin (the plot of *Susanna* comes from the *Apocrypha*).

Handel performed the two new works in the opposite order to that of composition, as he had done the previous year with *Alexander Balus* and *Joshua*. *Susanna* had four performances in February 1749, but although the first night house was exceptionally full the work was no great success. The reason may be explained by the Countess of Shaftesbury:

> *I cannot pretend to give my poor judgment of it from once hearing, but believe it will not insinuate itself so much into my approbation as most of Handel's performances do, as it is in the light* operatic *style.*

Hercules was revived for a couple of nights, then the popular *Samson* had four performances. The delay in producing *Solomon* was perhaps accounted for by the amount of rehearsal necessary to do justice to the sumptuous choruses and orchestration. It finally came on for three performances in March, to be succeeded by *Messiah*.

During 1748 the peace of Aix-la-Chapelle had been signed. Elaborate celebrations were planned for the spring of 1749, including a firework display in Green Park for which Handel was commissioned to write the music. At first the King had objected to music, but was satisfied when told of the number of players there was to be, and that only 'martial' instruments (that is, wind and percussion) were to be used. Handel at first planned his *Music for the Royal Fireworks* for wind alone but seems to have decided in the course of composition that such an ensemble would not be effective; accordingly he added string parts. The Master General of the Ordnance was very put out, and wrote indignantly to the Comptroller of His Majesty's Fireworks:

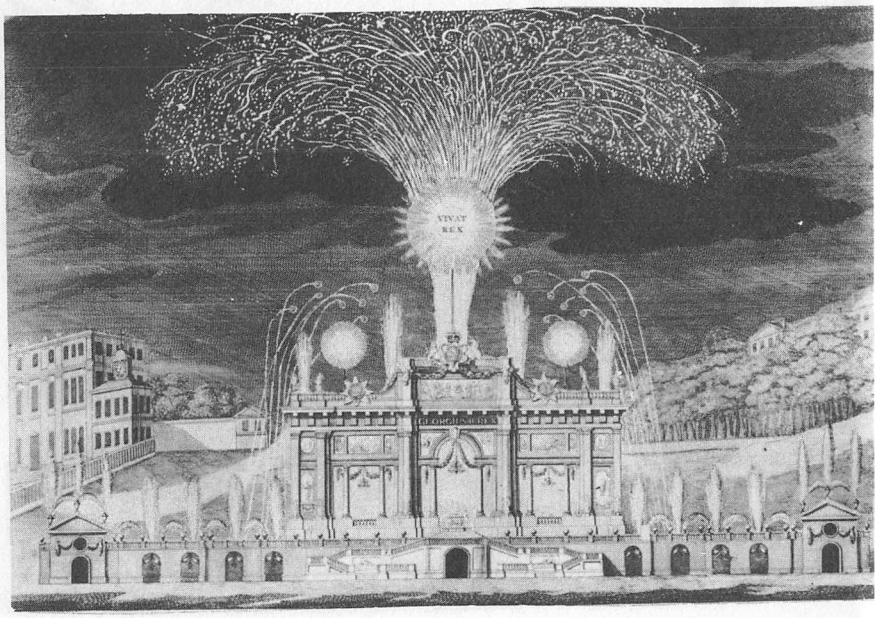
> *Now Hendel proposes to lessen the nomber of trumpets, &c. and to have violeens. I dont at all doubt but when the King hears it he will be very much displeased. If the thing war to be in such a manner as certainly to please the King, it ought to consist of no kind of instrument but martial instruments. Any other I am sure will put him out of humour, therefore I am shure it behoves Hendel to have as many*

trumpets, and other martial instruments, as possible, tho he dont retrench the violins, which I think he shoud, tho I beleeve he will never be persuaded to do it.

Handel again decided to be awkward when it was proposed to hold a public rehearsal of the music in the Vauxhall Pleasure Gardens, at first refusing his permission although detailed arrangements had been set afoot. He gave way over this point and the rehearsal was duly held, attracting a crowd of twelve thousand. 'So great a resort occasioned such a stoppage on *London Bridge,* that no carriage could pass for 3 hours', it was reported. But he probably got his own way over the 'violeens', for the band at the rehearsal (and presumably the performance) numbered a hundred but the wind and percussion instruments specified in Handel's manuscript add up to a mere sixty-odd. The fireworks themselves were something of an anti-climax: not only was there some rain, but one of the buildings caught fire and its designer, the Chevalier Servandoni, drew his sword and affronted the Comptroller. Only the music seems to have been an unqualified success.

The charitable propensities which Handel had shown in Dublin (and which his music continued to fulfil in his absence) found

'*A View of the Magnificent Structure Erected for the Fire Works*'



an outlet in London during 1749. In May he offered to give a concert in aid of the Foundling Hospital, which Captain Coram had founded a few years earlier. His offer was accepted with alacrity by the hospital committee, who proposed to elect him a Governor; he at first declined the honour (which possibly carried unwelcome obligations) but was in fact elected the following year. The concert was held in May, attended by members of the royal family and 'a prodigious Concourse of the Nobility and Gentry'; included in the programme were the *Fireworks Music,* the Dettingen anthem, excerpts from *Solomon* relating to the dedication of the temple (appropriately, for the proceeds were to be applied to the finishing of the hospital chapel) and a new anthem written for the occasion. From 1750 onwards Handel gave annual performances of *Messiah* at the hospital.

The summer of 1749 saw the composition of only one new oratorio, *Theodora.* Possibly Handel realised that old oratorios were almost as acceptable as new ones; possibly the extra work of producing the *Fireworks Music* and the Foundling Hospital

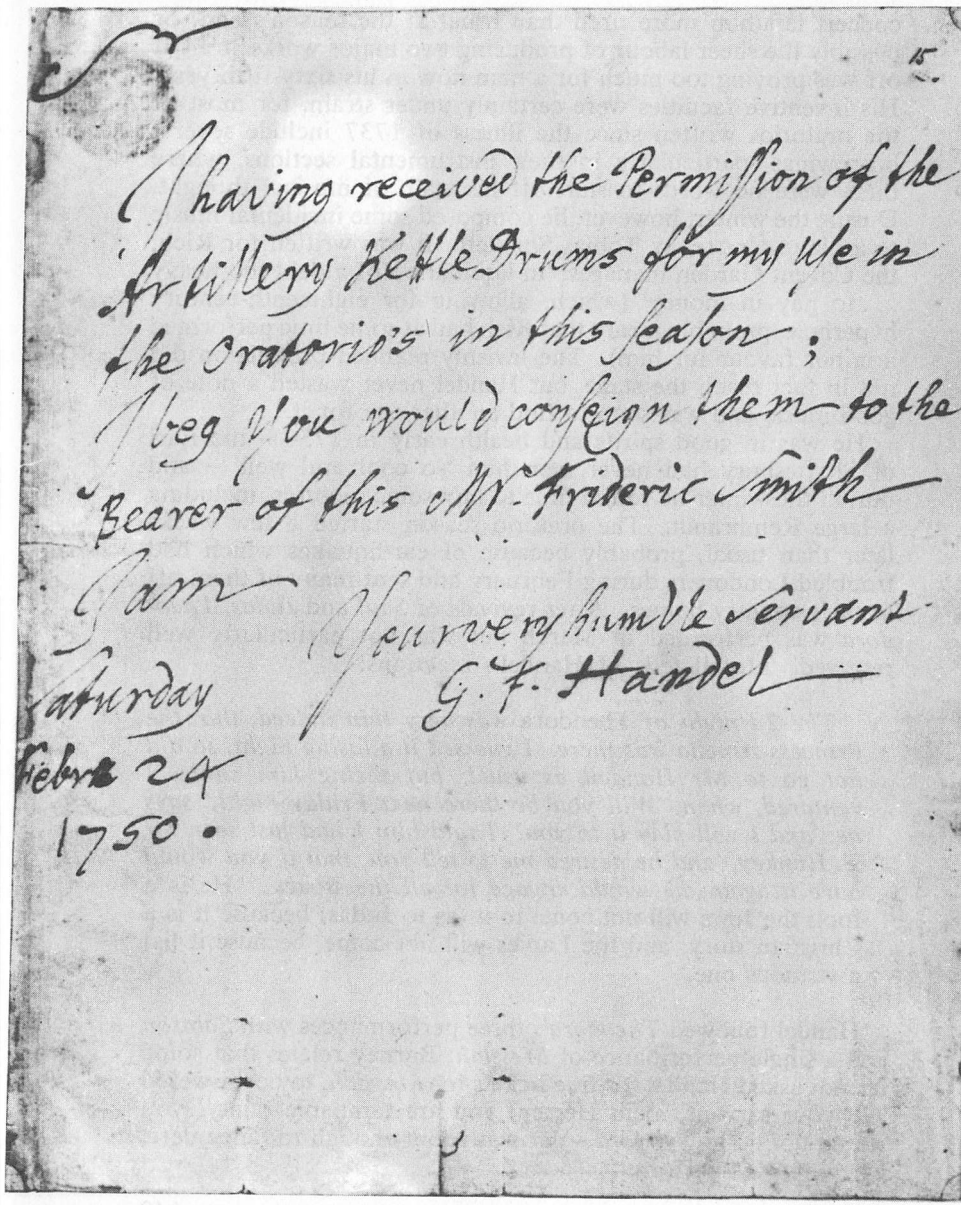
The Chapel of the Foundling Hospital

concert left him more tired than usual at the season's end; or possibly the sheer labour of producing two major works straight off was proving too much for a man now in his sixty-fifth year. His inventive faculties were certainly under strain, for most of the oratorios written since the illness of 1737 include several borrowings, particularly in their instrumental sections, where there were no words to start off his train of musical thought. During the winter, however, he composed some incidental music to a play, *Alceste,* by Tobias Smollett. It was written for Rich, the Covent Garden manager, 'in liquidation of a debt too heavy . . . to pay in money' (which, allowing for eighteenth-century hyperbole, probably meant that Rich had at some time performed a minor favour for him). The lavishly planned production did not in fact reach the stage, but Handel never wasted a note of good music and was soon to find another use for it.

He was in good spirits and health early in 1750 – the Earl of Shaftesbury had never seen him 'so cool and well' – and during the winter he found time to buy some pictures, including a large Rembrandt. The oratorio season started a few weeks later than usual, probably because of earthquakes which had troubled Londoners during February and sent many of them off to their country homes. After revivals of *Saul* and *Judas, Theodora* was performed in March but was not particularly well received. Morell tells of Handel's reactions:

> *The 2d night of* Theodora *was very thin indeed, tho' the Princess Amelia was there. I guessed it a losing night, so did not go to Mr Handell as usual; but seeing him smile, I ventured, when, 'Will you be there next Friday night,' says he, 'and I will play it to you?' I told him I had just seen Sir T. Hankey, 'and he desired me to tell you, that if you would have it again, he would engage for all the Boxes'.* 'He is a fool; the Jews will not come to it (as to Judas) because it is a Christian story; and the Ladies will not come, because it [is] a virtuous one.'

Handel followed *Theodora's* three performances with *Samson* and a single performance of *Messiah*; Burney relates that some friends asked Handel for free tickets for *Messiah*, to be answered 'Oh your sarvant, mein Herren! you are tamnaple tainty! you would not co to *Teodora* – der was room enough to tance dere, when dat was perform'.


Sr

15.

I having receiv'd the Permission of the
Artillery Kettle Drums for my Use in
the Oratorio's in this Season;
I beg You would consign them to the
Bearer of this M^r. Frideric Smith
I am
Saturday
Febr^y 24
1750.

Your very humble Servant
G. F. Handel

Letter from Handel to the Keeper of the Ordnance Office

Theodora is said to have been Handel's favourite among his oratorios. As he wryly remarked to some friends, his pleasure at the performances was enhanced by the music sounding better in an empty hall. The plot is not biblical. Morell's libretto was derived from a book by the chemist Robert Boyle about the martyrdom of the Christian virgin Theodora and her Christian but Roman lover Didymus. In the opening scene are two typical bass songs for the heathen President of Antioch, and two no less typical heathen choruses – Handel disregards the savagery of Morell's words and as usual makes his heathens gay, almost likeable fellows. Soon we meet the Christians: Theodora has a slow and noble air in C minor, and her friend Irene has a remarkable one which is highly expressive despite having no melodic interest whatever. The Christian choruses have great restraint and dignity of the kind which Handel usually reserved for the Israelites in his Old Testament oratorios. After an angry warning from a Roman of 'the fruits of Christian folly' Theodora, sentenced to worse than death, sings the only item from the oratorio which is at all often heard today – 'Angels, ever bright and fair'. After a very operatic song for Didymus, horrified at his lover's fate and asking heaven's aid, a sombrely beautiful Christian chorus ends the act. Act II opens with easy-going music for the Romans, followed by a prison scene of rare intensity for Theodora. The music of this act – naturally, in view of the subject – is predominantly slow, which must be counted a weakness, but it achieves considerable emotional depths. The chorus 'He saw the lovely youth', which Handel himself placed higher than the 'Hallelujah' chorus from *Messiah,* ends the act with a profound expression of Christian faith and hope. Act III is less highly wrought from both the musical and dramatic viewpoints, but has some fine individual items – the duet where Theodora, bent upon martyrdom, leaves Irene, the unusually *galant* air for Septimus and the two Christian choruses (the concluding one has not unjustly been compared to the final chorus of the *St. Matthew Passion*).

The tragic ending may have been one of the factors which militated against *Theodora's* success. But one feels that it is a work primarily for the connoisseur; lacking the big drums of *Judas* or the high drama of *Samson,* it is much less immediate in its appeal. The libretto, though one of Morell's best, is often sententious; the characters are symbols rather than human beings and one can detect more than a streak of the kind of

Scene from Theodora *(Handel Opera Society, London)*

Puritanism which was rapidly gaining ground at this time but was wholly foreign to Handel. For all its profound spiritual qualities the music suggests a lack of personal involvement. Handel could put himself in the position of a hero leading a nation to war or a mighty giant pulling down a building on his feasting enemies, but the role of a Christian martyr was outside his scope.

After giving two performances of *Messiah* at the Foundling Hospital, Handel went off to Germany in the summer of 1750 to visit some old friends and presumably his relatives in Halle. Nothing is known of his itinerary, and indeed nothing would be known of the entire trip had not the *General Advertiser* reported that in the coach between The Hague and Haarlem he 'had the Misfortune to be overturned, by which he was terribly hurt'. By December he was back in London, writing to his old friend Telemann to thank him for some musical textbooks which he had sent. In return Handel dispatched a crate of rare plants (Telemann was an ardent botanist) – he had good cause to be indebted to Telemann, having used so much of his music over recent years. It may have been through Telemann that Handel acquired some of the other music by Continental composers which he borrowed, such as the Habermann Masses he

called upon in his next oratorio, *Jephtha,* or the Clari duets used in *Theodora.*

It was in the course of the composition of *Jephtha,* during February 1751, that Handel's blindness began to trouble him seriously. In the score he wrote (in German) 'got as far as this on Wednesday 13 February 1751 unable to continue as the sight of my left eye is so weak'. (He usually composed during the summer months; the relatively poor light of a London February may have accentuated the weakness.) On the 23rd he noted 'a little better, started work again'. The previous night he had opened the new season with *Belshazzar.* This year the only novelty was a brief one. *Alexander's Feast* was not long enough to provide an entire evening's entertainment; usually Handel had added to it a shorter work such as the *Ode for St. Cecilia's Day,* or had played a generous number of concertos. For the 1751 revival he added *The Choice of Hercules,* a 'musical interlude' largely made up from the *Alceste* music. The story is a simple allegory, with three characters, Pleasure, Virtue and Hercules: Pleasure and Virtue in turn try to persuade the young Hercules to follow their paths. He finally plumps for Virtue, though the characteristically charming and seductive music with which Pleasure regales him might, one feels, have induced a weaker man to accept her offerings. Along with *Alexander's Feast* and *The Choice of Hercules* Handel played a new organ concerto (probably Op. 7 No. 3, completed two months earlier); a member of the audience at one of these performances wrote 'Noble Handel hath lost an eye, but I have the Rapture to say that St. Cecilia makes no complaint of any Defect in his Fingers'. The season proceeded more than tolerably, to judge by Handel's substantial deposits at his bank on the days following performances. His coupling of *Alexander's Feast* with *The Choice of Hercules* yielded £305. 9. 0. the first night, £300 the second, £200 the third and £140 the fourth and last (these are of course the takings, not the profits). Handel then put on the first of all his oratorios, *Esther,* and the inevitable *Judas*; but the death of the Prince of Wales brought the season to an abrupt end.

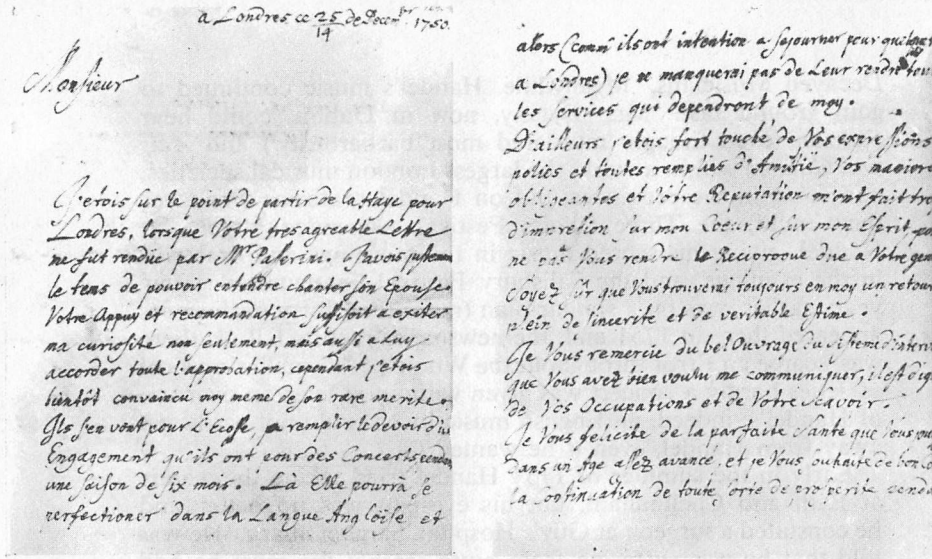
During the spring London concert-goers could hear a voice from the past – Cuzzoni, heavily laden with debts and far from her former glories. It is somewhat ironic that she should have sung 'Falsa imagine' from *Ottone,* the song with which she first charmed Londoners' ears, at a concert in aid of the Fund for


GEORGIVS PHILIPPVS TELEMANN
REIPVBLICAE HAMBVRGENSIS DIRECTOR
CHOERI MVSICI,
Natus Magdeburgi MDCLXXXI die 14 Martii.

Decayed Musicians. Meanwhile, Handel's music continued to gain ground fast. Mrs. Delany, now in Dublin, could hear *Samson* (even though 'murdered most barbarously') and *Acis and Galatea* within a week; the largest London musical societies, and some in the provinces, put on Handel oratorios whenever they could; the Three Choirs Festivals depended largely on Handel, giving his sacred music in the mornings and oratorios in the evenings; and the Salisbury Festival, inaugurated a few years earlier, was on a similar plan (more than forty performers appeared there in 1751 and, the newspaper reports tell us, there was 'scarce an Error throughout the Whole'). At smaller musical societies hardly a concert was given without at least an overture of Handel's; indeed, an English music-lover could not easily get away from Handel, even if he wanted to.

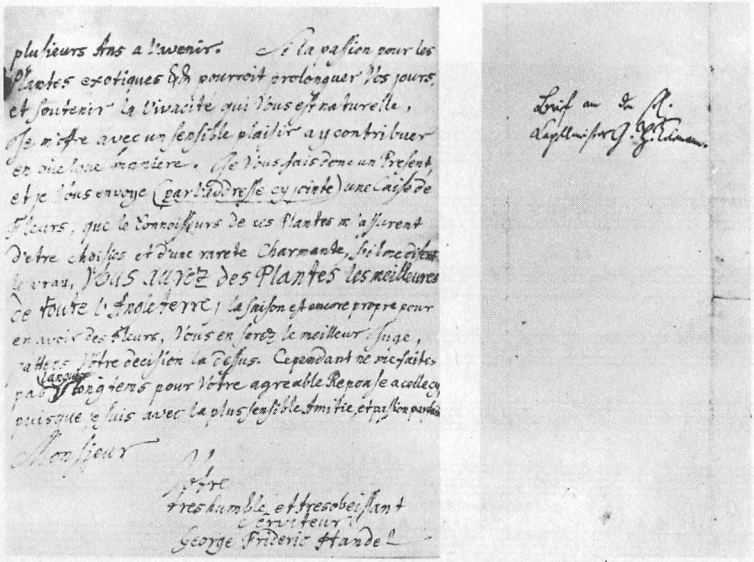
Early in the summer of 1751 Handel tried taking the waters at Bath and Cheltenham, but his eyesight was no better and he consulted a surgeon at Guy's Hospital, Samuel Sharp. He was told that he was suffering from *gutta serena*; the most he had to hope for was freedom from pain in his eyes. Sharp suggested that Handel should go into partnership with John Stanley, the English composer and organist who had been blind since infancy. Handel made a characteristic reply – 'Mr. Sharp, have you never read the Scriptures? Do you not remember? If the blind lead the blind, they both fall into the ditch'. Within the next few years Handel was to have three operations, but by the beginning of 1753 his sight was gone altogether.

Handel was able to complete the composition of *Jephtha* in summer 1751. It was first performed, following revivals of *Joshua* and *Hercules*, in the 1752 season. His last oratorio, it has claims to be considered his greatest even though much of it is based on Habermann's Masses. The first chorus, largely the work of Habermann, shows us the by now familiar sight of the Israelites in captivity. After Jephtha's appointment as the Israelite commander, we meet his daughter Iphis and her lover, who have a delightful and very *galant* duet (Jephtha's first song also has leanings towards this style). His wife, Storgè, has a splendidly powerful song of foreboding, 'Scenes of horror', but Iphis soon cheers her with a gay bourrée song. In the second act we hear of the victory (with aid from 'thousands of armed Cherubim'). Iphis and a train of virgins greet Jephtha with a charming song and chorus in gavotte rhythm: but he reacts with horror, for his own daughter is the first person he has seen on



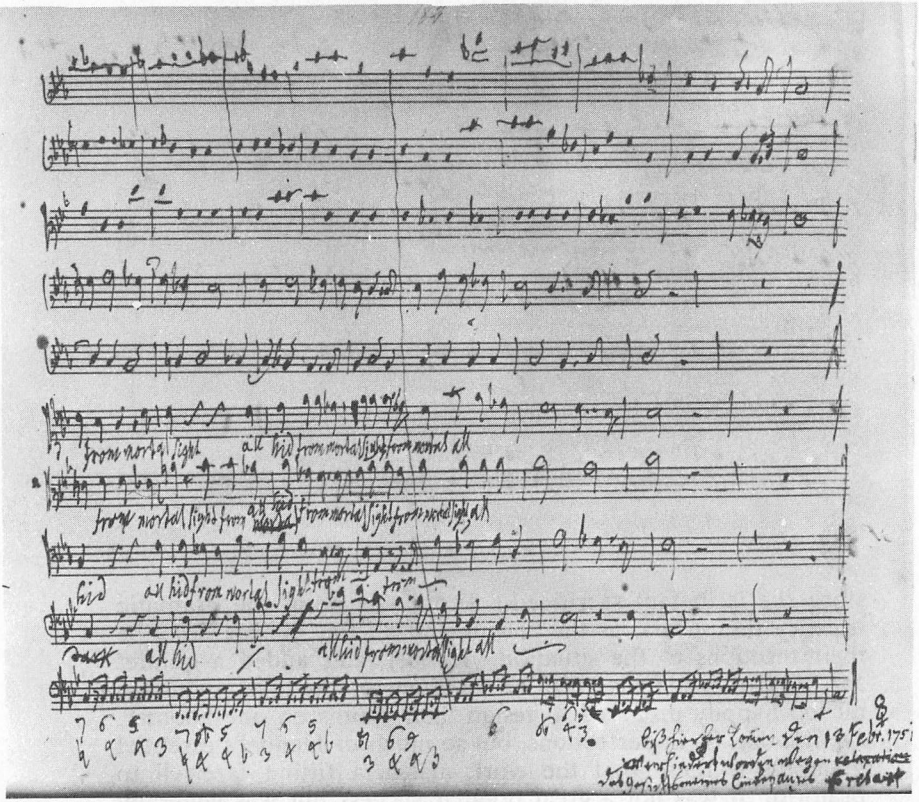
Letter from Handel to Telemann, 1750

his return so will have to be his sacrificial victim (a similar situation to that in Mozart's *Idomeneo*). His confusion is conveyed in a chromatic song, borrowed from *Lotario,* where the breathless phrases vividly portray his state of mind; then Storgè has a furious accompanied recitative and air, 'Let other creatures die'. The scene's climax is a quartet where Jephtha steadfastly refuses the pathetic pleadings to break his vow; the music conveys Jephtha's anguish at his agonising decision as well as his determination not to break faith, and his dilemma is further explored in the famous accompanied recitative 'Deeper and deeper still'. It was while writing the final chorus of this act, 'How dark, O Lord, are thy decrees', that Handel's eyesight forced him to cease work – one can hardly help finding in the profound depths of this chorus something of Handel's own acceptance of the inevitable. The last act starts with an accompanied recitative leading to 'Waft her, angels', as Jephtha is about to sacrifice his daughter. After her nostalgic farewell (a siciliana in E minor) and a solemn chorus of priests, an angel enters commuting her sentence to perpetual virginity – a condition which in the Bible she bewails, but one regarded with favour, in theory if not in practice, in mid-eighteenth-century England. (In the biblical



story she is in fact sacrificed.) From this point the dramatic urgency disappears, as the chorus and all the soloists describe their reactions to the situation. Handel later added a quintet for the five principals, most of it a duet for the lovers who are all too happily prepared to resign their claims on one another. *Jephtha* has its imperfections, but so much of Handel's essential greatness is there that the work makes a fitting farewell to oratorio. It was not a great popular success but was generally well received.

Handel's remaining years were uneventful. The Lenten oratorio seasons continued, with *Judas* and *Samson* often included and the less popular ones (*Deborah* and *Israel in Egypt,* for example) having an occasional airing. *Messiah* performances at the Foundling Hospital continued; too: the Foundling Hospital committee wanted at one time to reserve to themselves the sole rights of performance, by means of a petition to Parliament – a notion rejected by Handel with some indignation: 'The Devil! Mein Musick shall not go to the Parliament.' His blindness prevented his playing an active part in the oratorio performances; the Countess of Shaftesbury wrote in a letter of 1753 (which has in the past been mis-dated 1745 and 1751):



A page from the manuscript of Jephtha, *with Handel's notes on the failure of his left eye*

. . . I went last Friday to 'Alexander's Feast'; but it was such a melancholy pleasure, as drew tears of sorrow to see the great though unhappy Handel, dejected, wan, and dark, sitting by, not playing on the harpsichord, and to think how his light had been spent by being overplied in music's cause. *I was sorry to find the audience so insipid and tasteless (I may add unkind) not to give the poor man the comfort of applause . . .*

But the London public was not always so heartless; it is related that many of the audience were in tears at 'Total eclipse' in *Samson* while the great man sat there unseeing. The legend 'With a Concerto on the Organ' disappeared from oratorio advertisements, though we know from Burney that Handel did occasionally play concertos during his blindness; at first he relied on his memory, but eventually resorted to improvising the solo sections and indicating by a cadential trill when the orchestra was to enter.

To see him led to the organ [Burney writes] *and then conducted towards the audience to make his accustomed obeisance, was a sight so truly afflicting and deplorable to persons of sensibility, as greatly diminished their pleasure in hearing him perform.*

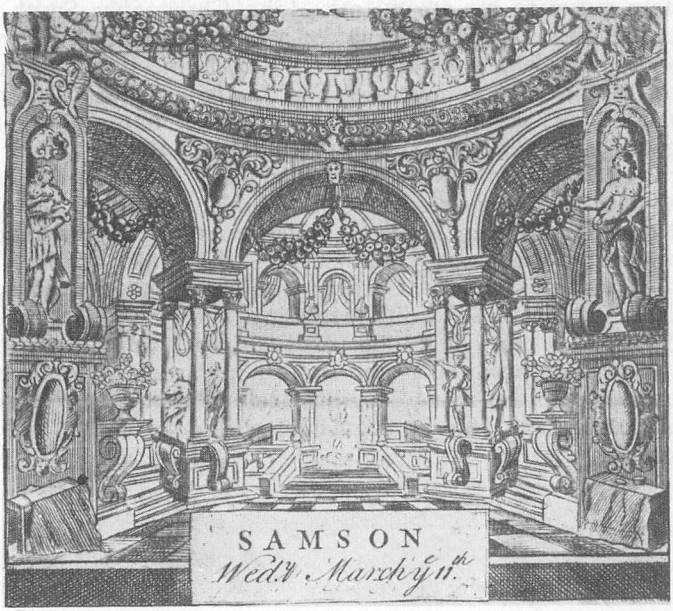
Composition was difficult, but not impossible. He could still dictate music to his amanuensis, John Christopher Smith the younger, and in 1757 he produced a new version in English of *The Triumph of Time and Truth,* based on the Italian oratorio composed in 1708 and revised in 1737. It had little or no new music, but its compilation and arrangement must have taken a good deal of work. For revivals of the other oratorios he occasionally added new numbers (including 'Sion now her head shall raise' for *Judas* – said to be his last composition) or arranged old ones for different singers. Italian opera at the Haymarket – where *Admeto* was revived in 1754 – still sometimes drew the audiences from Covent Garden: but during these last years Handel's public was steadily increasing, and in his final season, 1759, he took close on £2000. *Messiah* was gradually climbing to its present position as the most popular of the oratorios, mainly due to the rising religious feelings among the middle-class audiences. Handel regularly used it to round off his seasons.

In 1758, the year before his death, Handel went to Tunbridge Wells, where he was attended by the famous oculist Chevalier Taylor (who had also operated upon Bach). At first there was hope of success from the operation but soon darkness descended again. The next year, his oratorio season started early in March with *Solomon* (twice), *Susanna, Samson* (three times), *Judas Maccabaeus* (twice) and finally three performances of *Messiah.* Handel had then intended to go to Bath for the waters, but was so ill after the last performance that he had to be taken home to bed. Five days later he added a fourth codicil to his will, with many minor legacies to his friends, a request to be buried in Westminster Abbey and an allocation of £600 for a monument there. On the 14th of April he died, about eight o'clock in the morning. At his funeral six days later three thousand Londoners were present and Croft's funeral anthem was sung by the choirs of the Chapels Royal, St. Paul's and Westminster Abbey.

Handel's friend James Smyth, in a letter to Bernard Granville, described the great man's last hours thus:

> *According to your request to me when you left London, that I would let you know when our good friend departed this life,* on Saturday last at 8 o'clock in the morn died the great and good Mr. Handel. *He was sensible to the last*

Admission ticket for a performance of Samson. *11 March 1752*



moment; made a codicil to his will on Tuesday, ordered to be buried privately in Westminster Abbey, and a monument not to exceed £600 for him. I had the pleasure to reconcile him to his old friends; he saw them and forgave them, and let all their legacies stand! In the codicil he left many legacies to his friends, and among the rest he left me £500, and has left to you the two pictures you formerly gave him. *He took leave of all his friends on Friday morning, and desired to see nobody but the Doctor and Apothecary and myself. At 7 o'clock in the evening he took leave of me, and told me we 'should meet again'; as soon as I was gone he told his servant* 'not *to let me come to him any more, for that he had* now done with the world'. *He died as he lived – a good* Christian, *with a true sense of his duty to God and man, and in perfect charity with all the world . . .*

This Evening the Remains of Mr. Handel will be buried in Weſtminſter-Abbey. The Gentlemen of his Majeſty's Chapels Royal, as well as the Choirs of St. Paul's and St. Peter's, will attend the Solemnity, and ſing Dr. Croft's Funeral Anthem

From the Public Advertiser, *20 April 1759*

J. C. Smith, the younger

The Great Mr. Handel

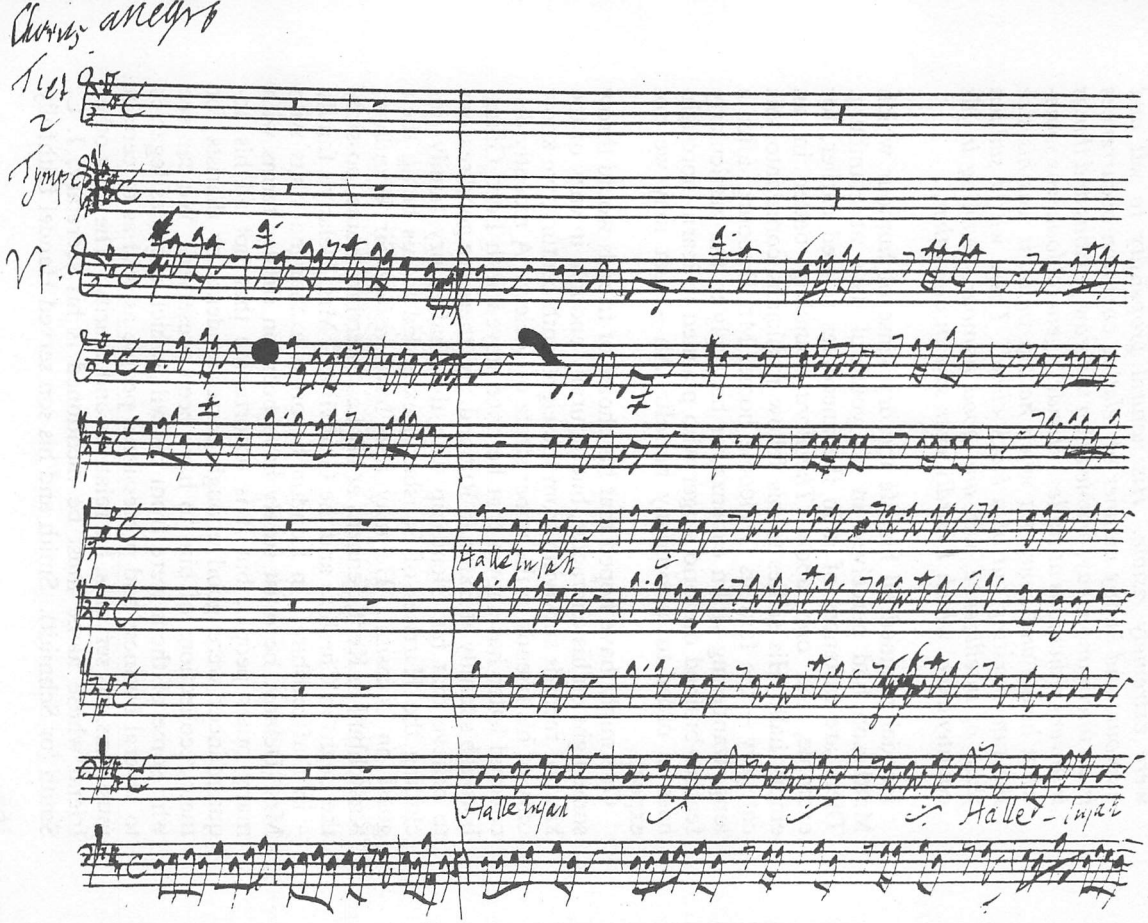
In the preceding sections we have followed the events of Handel's life, as far as they are known, from his birth to his death. We have seen his childhood in provincial Germany, his travels and triumphs in Italy and his varying fortunes as composer of opera and oratorio in London. But many questions of interest to the Handelian of today remain unanswered. What sort of a man was he? Who were his friends, and what were his relationships with them? Was he religious? Had he any special weaknesses? What did he do during those long spells when he was not composing? Not all these questions can be answered – indeed, none of them can be answered in simple and positive terms – but looking into them can add a little light and shade to the picture of the great Mr. Handel which has emerged from the foregoing biographical account.

The countless anecdotes told of Handel do not illuminate his character to any great extent, but they do highlight certain aspects of it – his determination to have things his own way, for example, and his forthright intolerance of mediocrity. That he had a quick temper can hardly be doubted, for almost every anecdote tells of some poor unfortunate who experienced his verbal lash; but the story of his rating Burney for singing something wrongly, 'a circumstance very terrific to a young musician', then humbly apologising ('I pec your barton – I am a very odd tog') when the fault was traced to a copying error, shows that

he was by no means boorish. Humility, however, was not a characteristic which often showed itself. He undoubtedly knew that he was acknowledged the greatest composer of his time, and though he had a library including much music by his contemporaries (among them English composers such as Chilcot and Boyce) one can hardly doubt that he thought his own music much superior – a point borne out, incidentally, by the readiness with which he made improvements in nearly all the music he borrowed.

But although Handel was clearly a man of considerable (and justifiable) self-esteem, in his relations with social superiors he generally conformed to normal eighteenth-century standards. It is believed to have been George III who wrote that he was 'excessively polite' – which only means that he followed the customary civilities. He was not servile, and when his 'great bear' was out he could be less than mannerly. Burney tells of the oratorio rehearsals held at Carlton House, home of the Prince of Wales: Handel could be 'very violent' if the Prince and Princess were 'not exact' in entering the Music-Room, and 'if the maids of honour, or any other female attendants, talked, during the performance, I fear that our modern Timotheus, not only swore, but called names; yet, at such times, the princess of Wales, with her accustomed mildness and benignity, used to say, "Hush! hush! Handel's in a passion".' Possibly the alliance against him described on pp. 74-5 arose out of some such impetuous disregard of the civilities; one can imagine that at times it must have been as irksome for Handel to conform to them as it was for Mozart – equally aware of his own powers in the one field that really mattered to him – to be treated as he was by Archbishop Colloredo. From the social point of view, Handel ranked high among English musicians, in the category of such worthies as Drs. Greene and Boyce, holding university degrees, rather than with the men who played in his orchestra. (Indeed, he may have ranked still higher, for he appears on subscribers' lists not as 'Mr. G. F. Handel', but as 'G. F. Handel, Esq.'.) How he appeared to a particularly perceptive young man who played a few times in his orchestra can be seen from Burney's account:

> *. . . his countenance . . . was full of fire and dignity; and such as impressed ideas of superiority and genius. He was impetuous, rough, and peremptory in his manners and conversation, but totally devoid of ill-nature or malevolence; indeed there*



The manuscript of the Hallelujah Chorus from Messiah

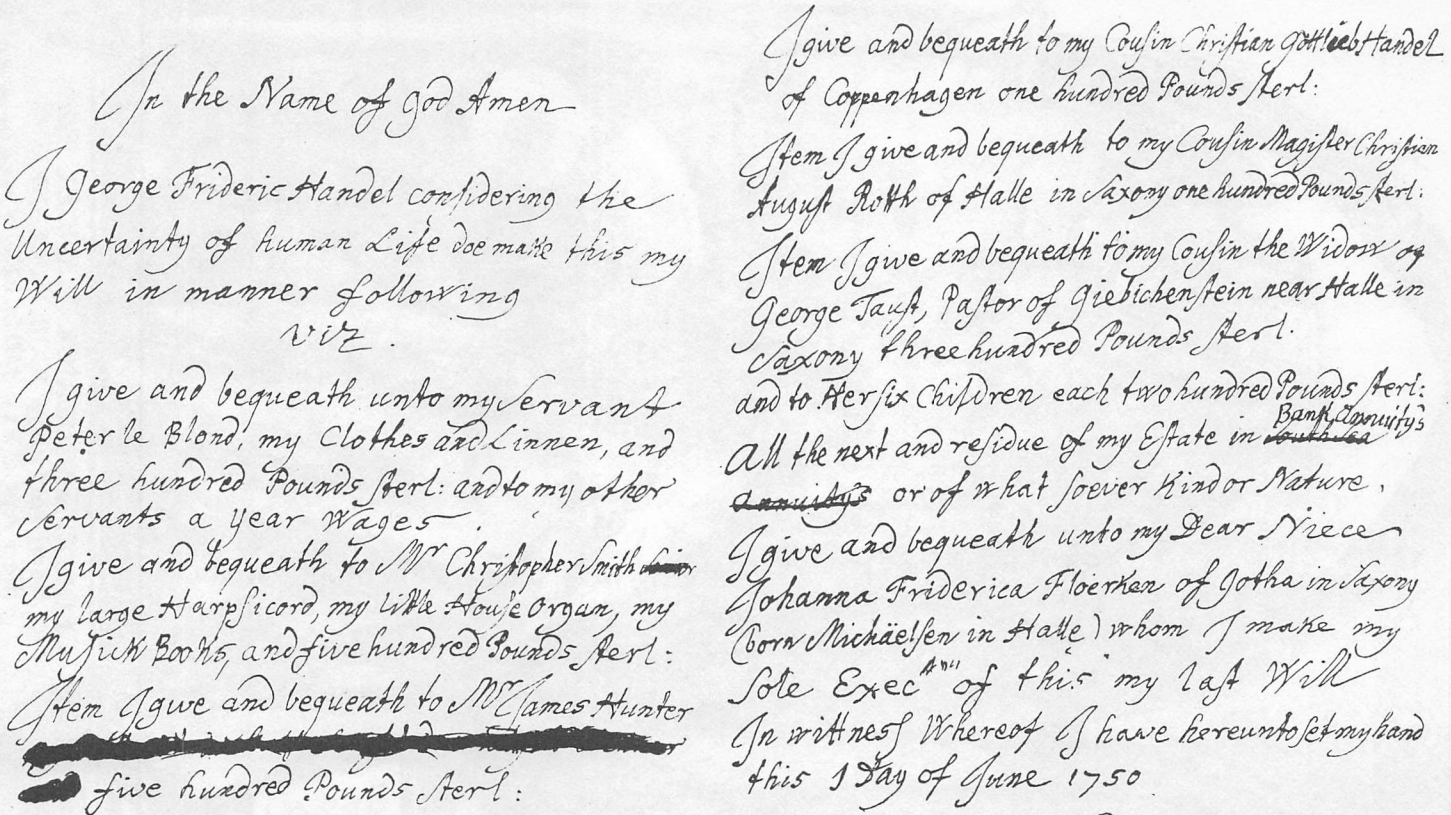
was an original humour and pleasantry in his most lively sallies of anger or impatience, which, with his broken English, were extremely risible. His natural propensity to wit and humour, and happy manner of relating common occurrences in an uncommon way, enabled him to throw persons and things into very ridiculous attitudes. Handel's general look was somewhat heavy and sour, but when he did *smile, it was his sire the sun, bursting out of a black cloud. There was a sudden flash of intelligence, wit, and good humour, beaming in his countenance, which I hardly ever saw in any other.*

Handel retained all his life the dry sense of humour which Mattheson had perceived in his youthful days at Hamburg. There are instances of it in the anecdotes related earlier, for example, the one about *Theodora* sounding better in an empty hall. His sallies to his fellow musicians come into this category – the famous 'Welcome home, Mr. Dubourg' after a long, wandering violin cadenza, or his reply to the particularly feather-brained oratorio singer who planned to learn thorough-bass in order to accompany herself: 'Ah – vaat may we not expect'.

One might have hoped that his choice of friends would throw some light on his character, but naturally enough, in view of the kind of records surviving from the eighteenth century, we know only of his friends in the upper strata of society. A recently discovered letter has shown that he once stayed with Lord Gainsborough's family at Exton in Rutland, and there are good reasons to believe that his friendship with the Shaftesbury family (including the Harrises of Salisbury) extended to his being their guest on occasion. He may also have visited Sir Wyndham Knatchbull in Kent, Jennens at his Leicestershire home, possibly the Leghs in Cheshire and the Granvilles – Mrs. Delany's family – in Staffordshire. In London he often exchanged visits with Mrs. Delany: he must surely have been on similar terms with many other people, but it is unfortunate that not all his acquaintances were good enough correspondents or diarists for their recollections of him to have been preserved. We can see who some of them were from his will, which includes legacies to several business and professional people as well as to certain musicians, his servants, his relatives and charity. The only other friend whose name must be mentioned is his secretary, J. C. Smith (or Schmidt). Smith and his son served Handel faithfully

The Handel statue in Westminster Abbey →


MESIAH
GEORGE FREDERICK HANDEL Esq.r
born February XXIII. MDCLXXXIV.
died April XIV. MDCCLIX. L.F.Roubiliac inv.t et sc.t



In the Name of god Amen

I George Frideric Handel considering the Uncertainty of human Life doe make this my Will in manner following viz.

I give and bequeath unto my servant Peter le Blond, my Clothes and Linnen, and three hundred Pounds Sterl: and to my other servants a year Wages.

I give and bequeath to Mr Christopher Smith my large Harpsicord, my little House Organ, my Musick Books, and five hundred Pounds Sterl:

Item I give and bequeath to Mr James Hunter [redacted] five hundred Pounds Sterl:

I give and bequeath to my Cousin Christian Gottlieb Handel of Copenhagen one hundred Pounds Sterl:

Item I give and bequeath to my Cousin Magister Christian August Roth of Halle in Saxony one hundred Pounds Sterl:

Item I give and bequeath to my Cousin the Widow of George Taust, Pastor of Giebichenstein near Halle in Saxony three hundred Pounds Sterl.

and to her six Children each two hundred Pounds Sterl:

All the next and residue of my Estate in Bank Annuity's ~~Annuity's~~ or of what soever Kind or Nature, I give and bequeath unto my Dear Niece Johanna Friderica Floerken of Gotha in Saxony (born Michaëlsen in Halle) whom I make my Sole Exec^trix of this my last Will

In wittness Whereof I have hereunto set my hand this 1 Day of June 1750

George Frideric Handel

Handel's Will. He later added four codicils giving legacies to various friends

from 1716 until his death, despite occasional estrangements – mainly, it seems, Handel's fault (once Smith wrote that 'it seems he has taken an aversion to see me, for having been to[o] much his friend'). It is related that towards the end of Handel's life the two old men had a violent quarrel at Tunbridge Wells and Smith, no doubt goaded to fury by Handel, left the great man blind and helpless in the street. Handel swore never to forgive him, and struck him out of his will: he only relented a few weeks before his death at the persuasion of Smith's son.

Handel undoubtedly had acquaintances, if not friends, in the literary world. He had met Gay and Pope during his early London days; later he could have met Smollett when working on the *Alceste* music. He also seems to have been on good terms with his librettists, both Italian and English. But Handel was generally regarded as a man of narrow interests outside music and it is unlikely that he had much in common with such men. His ownership of Rembrandts shows him to have had some

Scene at the bicentenary commemoration ceremony round Handel's statue in the Market Place, Halle

The Figure's odd – yet who would think?
Within this Tunn of Meat & Drink
There dwells the Soul of soft Desires,
And all that HARMONY inspires:

THE Charming BRUTE –

Can Contrast such as this be found?
Upon the Globe's extensive Round:
There can – you Hogshead is his Seat,
His sole Devotion is – to Eat.

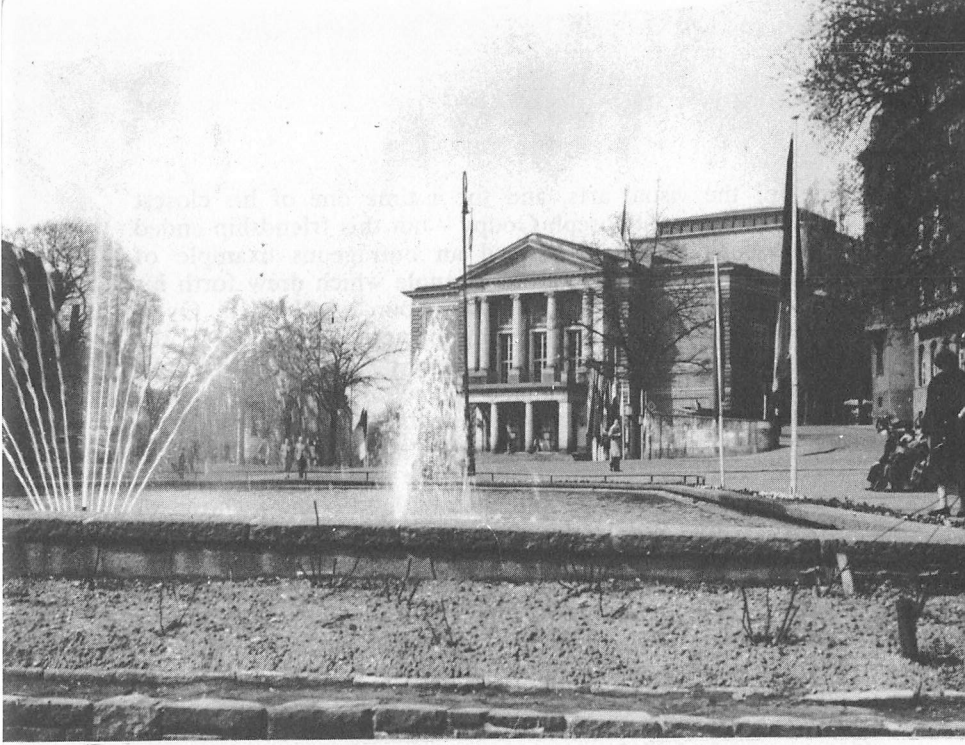
Pub according to Act of Parliam.t March 1.1754

'The Charming Brute', caricature by Goupy

feeling for the visual arts, and for a time one of his closest friends was the artist Joseph Goupy – but this friendship ended abruptly when Goupy witnessed an outrageous example of Handel's gluttonous appetite, an example which drew forth his famous and particularly revolting cartoon of Handel. Overeating was not uncommon among prosperous people in the eighteenth century, but it seems to have been a habit which he indulged to excess. Burney made a generous attempt to excuse it by pointing out that 'Nature . . . required a great supply of sustenance to support so huge a mass' – though possibly there is a little confusion here between cause and effect.

No biography would be complete without some mention of its subject's love life. Here again we have no reliable information. He did not marry and though he is said to have been engaged twice not a word has come down to us suggesting that he had any love affairs, except for a story told by Mainwaring which is demonstrably untrue. His name has been linked by various would-be-romantic biographers with certain ladies whom he encountered – a Spanish princess in his Italian days and Strada (a married woman) many years later – but in both cases without the remotest factual foundation. A 'Mlle. Sbülens' mentioned in a letter to Mattheson during his time in Hamburg has also been put forward; here is at least a possible candidate, unlike the others – but again there is not the slightest evidence. Perhaps the last word should go to the annotator of a copy of Mainwaring's biography, believed to be George III, who wrote that Handel 'scorned the advice of any but the Woman he loved, but his Amours were rather of short duration, always within the pale of his own profession'. The absence of women in Handel's life may perhaps disturb the modern reader, but there is no occasion whatever to believe that Handel was sexually anything other than perfectly normal. Of course, ample facilities existed in eighteenth-century London for the unobtrusive satisfaction of the sexual side of his character – though it should be added that no breath of scandal about his private life has ever come to light. The profound understanding of women and of sexuality constantly exhibited in his music, in works as diverse as *Giulio Cesare, Samson* and *Semele,* surely has something to tell us about him as a person.

It is of course extremely hazardous to attempt to discover facts about a composer's character from his music, but in Handel's case it is worth mentioning some of the situations in his plots



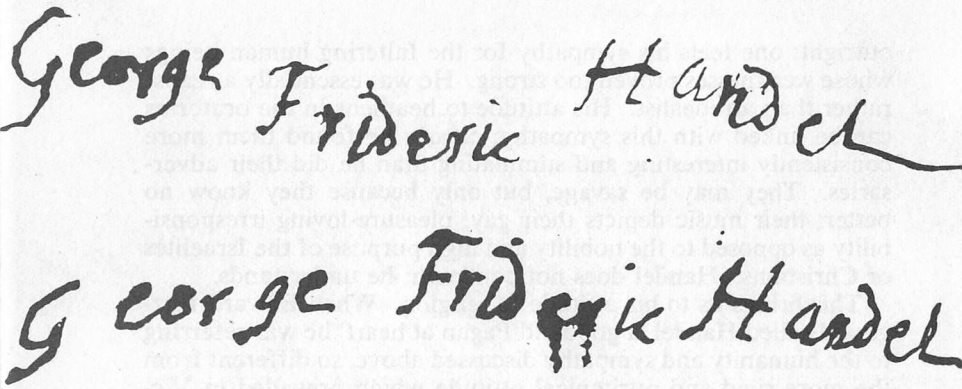
The theatre in Halle, where many of Handel's operas have been revived

which always evoked an especially sympathetic response (apart from the obvious operatic situations of parting lovers, imprisoned heroes, angry jealous women and so on, to which any composer is likely to respond). The father-child relationship is one such case: in *Samson* and *Jephtha* it is depicted in deeply felt terms which might lead one to conjecture on Handel's memories of his own father or on his reaction to his own childlessness. One might also link it with the strong family feeling which impelled him to maintain contact with his relatives in Halle. The sympathy for old age, as seen especially in *Joshua,* is worth noting but perhaps to be expected in a man of such profound humanity as he passes his sixtieth birthday. Mad scenes in eighteenth-century opera are not uncommon, but Handel's own experience of mental unbalance must have added something to the one in *Hercules* and the mock one in *Imeneo,* if not to that in *Orlando* which pre-dated his own disorders by four years. Finally, his obvious sympathy with human weakness, a trait which he shares with Mozart: Handel never adopted a censorious attitude or a high moral tone, as Bach or Beethoven might have done. He had far too deep an understanding of mankind to condemn his villains

outright; one feels his sympathy for the faltering human beings whose weaknesses proved too strong. He was essentially a realist rather than an idealist. His attitude to heathens in the oratorios can be linked with this sympathy: clearly he found them more consistently interesting and stimulating than he did their adversaries. They may be savage, but only because they know no better; their music depicts their gay, pleasure-loving irresponsibility as opposed to the nobility and high purpose of the Israelites or Christians. Handel does not condemn; he understands.

This brings us to his attitude to religion. When Edward Fitzgerald called Handel 'a good old Pagan at heart' he was referring to the humanity and sympathy discussed above, so different from the more rigid and puritanical attitude which prevailed in Victorian England (and had originated in the evangelistic movement of Handel's time). Handel's own brand of Christianity was a worldly religion; but even if it lacked the mystical depths of Bach's it was on no less firm a basis of belief and was imbued with a profound humanity of spirit. During his closing years he worshipped twice daily at St. George's, Hanover Square. As

St. George's Church, Hanover Square

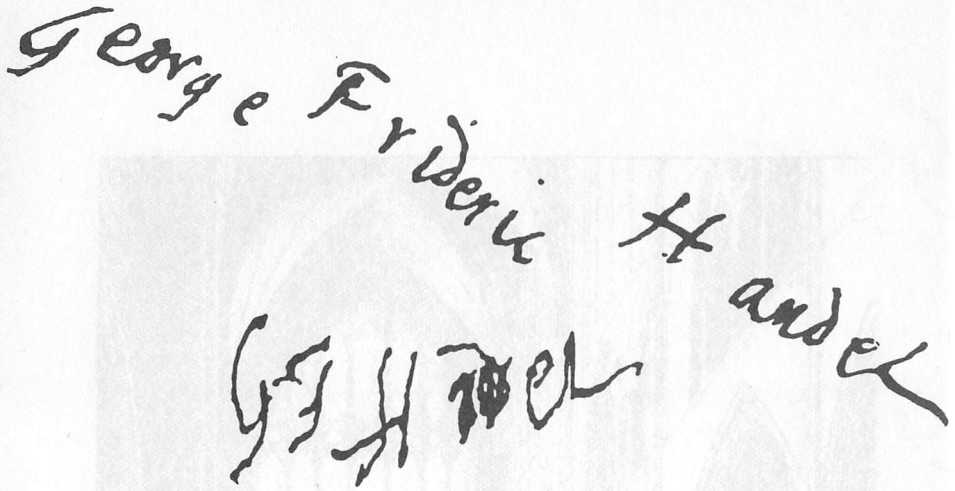


Handel's signatures, from

a young man in Italy, attempts had been made to convert him to Roman Catholicism but (according to Mainwaring) he 'was resolved to die a member of that communion, whether true or false, in which he was born and bred'. His Latin church music represents no more of a deviation than does Bach's B minor Mass.

Handel's strong sense of charity ought not be passed over at this point. It has already been mentioned that the eighteenth century was a great age for charity, but Handel was exceptional even for his time. His activities for the Foundling Hospital were outstanding; perhaps his choice of charity again reflects on his attitude to having no child of his own. Another of his charitable activities bears out this point, for he once tried adopting a child – an experiment which ended in failure with the boy's absconding (no doubt Handel was rather a terrifying foster-father).

On the question of how Handel spent his time, apart from composing, we can do little more than conjecture. The aportionment of his days during his stay at Lord Burlington's house has been described in the third section of this book. Hawkins tells us that in his earlier years in London he directed private concerts for several musical patrons among the nobility, including some in the Queen's library at Green Park where members of the royal family performed; but, 'As these connections dissolved, he gradually retired into a state of privacy and retirement, and showed no solicitude to form new ones'. He did not perform at any of the London music clubs which gave regular public concerts and it is unlikely that a man of his kind would have gone to hear per-

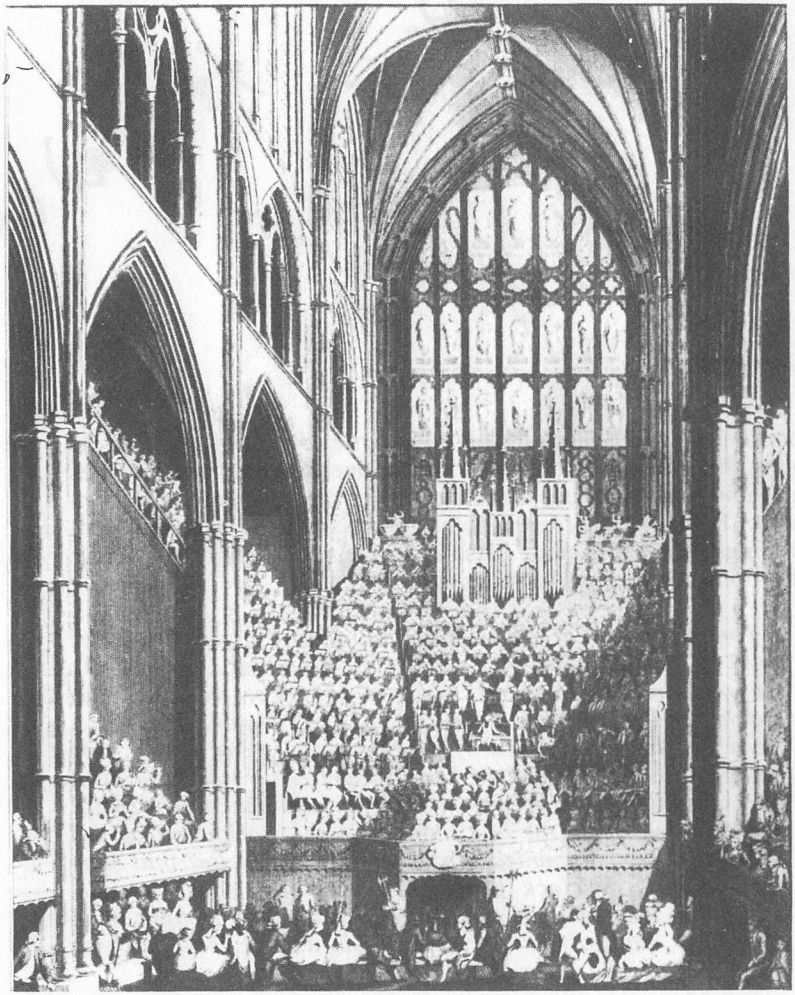


the four codicils to his Will

formances by musicians mostly much inferior to himself. We do know that he visited the rival Italian opera house, but this was probably to keep an eye on things rather than for pure entertainment. It has already been mentioned that he sometimes spent evenings with his friends; Mrs. Delany gives a delightful picture of a domestic musical evening in 1734:

> *I must tell you of a little entertainment of music I had last week . . . I had Lady Rich and her daughter, Lady Cath. Hanmer and her husband, Mr. and Mrs. Percival, Sir John Stanley and my brother, Mrs. Donellan, Strada and Mr. Coot. Lord Shaftesbury begged of Mr. Percival to bring him, and being a* profess'd friend *of Mr. Handel (who was here also)* was admitted; *I never was so* well *entertained at* an opera! *Mr. Handel was in the best humour in the world, and played lessons and accompanied Strada and all the ladies that sang from seven o' the clock till eleven. I gave them tea and coffee, and about half an hour after nine had a salver brought in of chocolate, mulled white wine and biscuits. Everybody was easy and seemed pleased . . .*

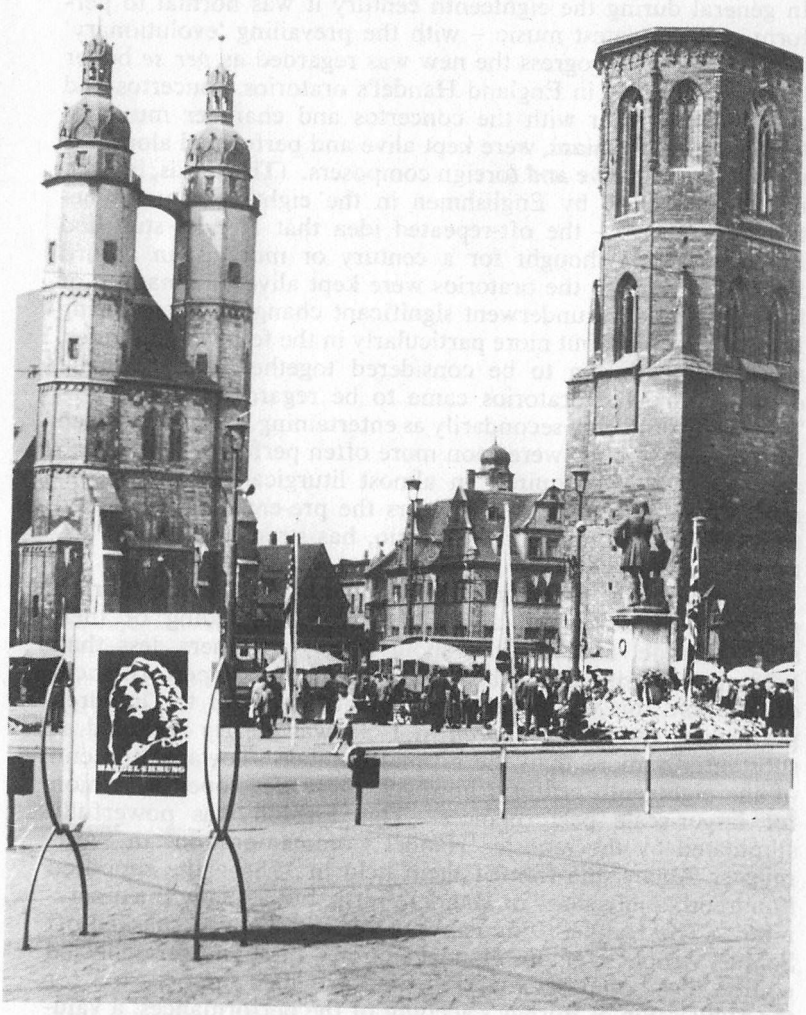
No doubt he spent some of his time reading books or newspapers, and he is said to have practised so much on his harpsichord that the keys were worn hollow. He must also have spent a good deal of time on the administration of his opera and oratorio seasons. And one cannot imagine that he hurried over meals.



Scene at the Westminster Abbey Handel Commemorations, 1784

It would be wrong to conclude without a few words on the present-day attitude to Handel and his music. To investigate this it is necessary to go back to the eighteenth century and the circumstances of the creation of the English Handel tradition. In general during the eighteenth century it was normal to perform only the latest music – with the prevailing 'evolutionary' view of musical progress the new was regarded as *per se* better than the old. But in England Handel's oratorios, concertos and overtures, together with the concertos and chamber music of Corelli and Geminiani, were kept alive and performed alongside new music by native and foreign composers. (There was, in fact, much new music by Englishmen in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries – the oft-repeated idea that Handel stultified English musical thought for a century or more is an absurd fiction.) Although the oratorios were kept alive, the manner of their performance underwent significant changes. Even during Handel's lifetime, but more particularly in the following decades, moral values began to be considered together with aesthetic ones: in time the oratorios came to be regarded primarily as 'improving' and only secondarily as entertaining. Though written for the theatre, they were soon more often performed in church and so gradually acquired an almost liturgical significance to music-lovers. In more recent years the pre-eminence accorded to *Messiah,* the only sacred oratorio, has strengthened this distorted view of Handel.

Alongside the growing misunderstanding of the oratorios' nature there developed a parallel misunderstanding of their scale. Handel himself used about sixty performers, less than half of them singers, in his Foundling Hospital performances of *Messiah*: this was probably about his ideal, for the hundred performers used for *Deborah* in 1733 was clearly regarded as substantially more than the normal number. Towards the end of the eighteenth century, however, there developed a fashion for larger-scale performances. This fashion was powerfully stimulated by the monster Handel Commemorations in Westminster Abbey, the first of them held in 1784 – the supposed hundredth anniversary of Handel's birth, but actually the ninety-ninth. (The Handel Commemorations, incidentally, sparked off Samuel Arnold's famous Handel edition – the first-ever collected edition of a composer's works – and provided the occasion for the publication of Burney's account of the performances, a valuable source of information on Handel's life.) During the Victorian



Handel Statue and poster for bicentenary commemoration with Liebfrauenkirche, Halle

era – with moral and inaesthetic pressures having led to the use of heavily cut and bowdlerised editions – the inflationary tendencies reached their climax in the Crystal Palace performances with massed choirs. It is hardly surprising that many sensitive musicians recoiled from Handel when they had only heard his music in such mammoth misrepresentations, sung by hundreds of voices in a spirit ludicrously remote from that of Handel's time.

It would be pleasant to be able to look upon this as an error of our grandfathers which has duly been corrected. Unhappily, although we now have a great deal of information on eighteenth-century methods of performance, Handel's music is still often grossly violated. The traditions of more than a century of misunderstanding can not quickly be effaced, and while we do not think of rearranging Bach, or even such minor composers as Vivaldi or Telemann (where there has been no continuous performing tradition), Handel remains fair game and is commonly played in inflated form, in versions by Mozart, Prout, Harty or Beecham. The customary argument, 'If Handel were alive today . . .' provides no justification: if Handel were alive today he would probably be writing very ably in an advanced form of serial technique; and the further argument, that he would have used full twentieth-century resources had they been available in his day, cannot be countenanced since in that case his entire musical outlook would have been different.

While use of the right number of players and singers, the right textual adjustments (in accordance with eighteenth-century conventions) and the right kind of instruments are bringing us much closer to Handel, there are still some major problems outstanding. Since the stage revivals of some of the oratorios, at first in Germany during the 1920s and then in England (especially at Cambridge), it has been widely suggested that the oratorios are best presented with theatrical action. This undoubtedly brings out most clearly Handel's dramatic conception of the works, but there are many difficulties involved, not the least of them concerning the staging of certain types of chorus. For stage productions several cuts usually have to be made, not only because eighteenth-century audiences liked longer entertainments than are acceptable today but because Handel, writing for concert performance, was not primarily concerned with maintaining dramatic life. In a sense, drama is almost incidental: Handel's concern was to produce a good evening's

entertainment and it was only when the situation particularly stimulated his genius that the music achieves real dramatic urgency. (The public certainly regarded drama as secondary; indeed, the published scores of the oratorios – as well as the operas – gave the names of the singers, not of the protagonists, above each song.) Handel was certainly a dramatic composer rather than a sacred one; but above all he was simply a composer of music.

The problems involved in reviving his operas are rather different. First, the singers require not only a kind of technique which is practically unknown today but also the ability to improvise stylishly, particularly in the *da capo* sections. Castrato parts present another difficulty: a male baritone voice (as is always used in German revivals) is wrong in pitch, a female (or male alto) is far too weak. But more fundamental than these technical problems is the difference in attitude between eighteenth- and twentieth-century audiences. We can not expect modern music-lovers to accept as an opera something designed as a 'concert in costume' for an audience only half-listening. This is not to say, of course, that Handel's operas can have no appeal to a modern audience. Indeed, they often have striking passages of dramatic insight, and even where they do not the music itself is still nearly always sufficiently vital and attractive to be compelling. With intelligent production and probably a little careful cutting the operas can mostly be made not only acceptable but thoroughly enjoyable, as long as an audience does not attempt to judge them by the degree of their conformity to Verdian or Wagnerian dramatic principles.

Perhaps it is appropriate to be ending with a mention of opera, the form to which Handel was above all devoted and which provided his main occupation for the greater part of his life. It is vital to remember this if we are trying to understand his oratorios, his instrumental music and above all the man himself. What is so surprising is that his greatness is so widely accepted today, on the strength of one untypical major work. Much more searching exploration of his output will be necessary before musicians and music-lovers alike can claim any real understanding of the Great Mr. Handel.

Appendices

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(The above represent a small selection of the most valuable works on Handel. For more comprehensive bibliographies the reader is referred to the works by Abraham, Dean, Deutsch and Flower.)

LIST OF WORKS

(Dates of first performance are given for operas, oratorios, *etc.*, where known; dates of composition are given for other works.)

OPERAS

Almira (8 Jan. 1705); *Nero* (25 Feb. 1705 - music lost); *Florindo* (Jan. 1708 - music lost); *Daphne* (Feb. 1708 - music lost); *Rodrigo* (?1707-8 - music partly lost); *Agrippina* (26 Dec. 1709); *Rinaldo* (24 Feb. 1711); *Il pastor fido* (22 Nov. 1712 - with prologue *Terpsichore*, 9 Nov. 1734); *Teseo* (10 Jan. 1713); *Silla* (*c.* 1714 - music partly lost); *Amadigi* (25 May 1715); *Radamisto* (27 April 1720); *Muzio Scaevola*, Act III (15 April 1721); *Floridante* (9 Dec. 1721); *Ottone* (12 Jan. 1723); *Flavio* (14 May 1723); *Giulio Cesare* (20 Feb. 1724); *Tamerlano* (31 Oct. 1724); *Rodelinda* (13 Feb. 1725); *Scipione* (12 March 1726); *Alessandro* (5 May 1726); *Admeto* (31 Jan. 1727); *Riccardo* I (11 Nov. 1727); *Siroe* (17 Feb. 1728); *Tolomeo* (30 April 1728); *Lotario* (2 Dec. 1729); *Partenope* (24 Feb. 1730); *Poro* (2 Feb. 1731); *Ezio* (15 Jan. 1732); *Sosarme* (15 Feb. 1732); *Orlando* (27 Jan. 1733); *Arianna* (26 Jan. 1734); *Ariodante* (8 Jan. 1735); *Alcina* (16 April 1735); *Atalanta* (12 May 1736); *Arminio* (12 Jan. 1737); *Giustino* (16 Feb. 1737); *Berenice* (18 May 1737); *Faramondo* (3 Jan. 1738); *Serse* (15 April 1738); *Imeneo* (22 Nov. 1740); *Deidamia* (10 Jan. 1741).

Operas entitled *Flavio Olibrio* and *Tito* may have been projected but Handel wrote only fragments of them.

PASTICCIOS

Handel contributed recitatives and/or other items to the operas or pasticcios listed below. Pasticcios compiled by other composers including a few arias by Handel are not included.

Ormisda (4 April 1730); *Venceslao* (12 Jan. 1731); *Lucio Papirio* (23 May 1732); *Catone in Utica* (4 Nov. 1732); *Semiramide* (30 Oct. 1733); *Cajo Fabricio* (4 Dec. 1733); *Arbace* (5 Jan. 1734); *Oreste* (18 Dec. 1734); *Didone* (13 April 1737); *Alessandro Severo* (25 Feb. 1738); *Giove in Argo* (1 May 1739); *Rossane* (15 Nov. 1743); *Lucio Vero* (14 Nov. 1747).

INCIDENTAL MUSIC FOR THE STAGE

The Alchymist (1732 - based on music in *Rodrigo*); *Alceste* (1750).

ORATORIOS

St. John Passion (1704); *La resurrezione* (8 April 1708); *Brockes Passion* (*c.* 1716): *Esther* (1718-20); *Deborah* (17 March 1733); *Athalia* (10 July 1733); *Saul* (16 Jan. 1739); *Israel in Egypt* (4 April 1739); *Messiah* (13 April 1742); *Samson* (18 Feb. 1743); *Joseph and his Brethren* (2 March 1744); *Belshazzar* (27 March 1745); *Occasional Oratorio* (14 Feb. 1746); *Judas Maccabaeus* (1 April 1747); *Joshua* (9 March 1748); *Alexander Balus* (23 March 1748); *Susanna* (10 Feb. 1749); *Solomon* (17 March 1749); *Theodora* (16 March 1750); *Jephtha* (20 Feb. 1752).

SECULAR CHORAL WORKS

Il trionfo del tempo e del disinganno, or *della verità* (1708); *Aci, Galatea e Polifemo* (19 July 1708); *Ode for the Birthday of Queen Anne* (Feb. 1714); *Acis and Galatea* (1718-20); *Il Parnasso in Festa* (13 March 1734); *Alexander's Feast* (19 Feb. 1736); *Ode for St. Cecilia's Day* (22 Nov. 1739); *L'Allegro, il Penseroso ed il Moderato* (27 Feb. 1741); *Semele* (10 Feb. 1744); *Hercules* (5 Jan. 1745); *The Choice of Hercules* (1 March 1751); *The Triumph of Time and Truth* (11 March 1757 - partly revised from *Il trionfo*).

MISCELLANEOUS SECULAR VOCAL MUSIC

72 Italian Cantatas for voice and continuo (mostly *c.*1707-10); 28 Italian Cantatas for voice, instruments and continuo (mostly *c.*1707-10); 5 miscellaneous Italian Cantatas (? *c.*1707-10); 4 English Cantatas (3 doubtful - ? *c.*1710-30); Spanish Cantata (1708); 23 Italian Duets with continuo (some 1707-12, others 1741-5); 2 Italian Trios with continuo (*c.*1708); 9 English Songs (various dates, *c.*1730-51); 7 French Songs (*c.*1708); 3 German Songs (*c.*1696).

SACRED MUSIC

Utrecht Te Deum and Jubilate (1713); *Dettingen Te Deum and Anthem* (1743); 11 *Chandos Anthems* and *Chandos Te Deum* (1717-20); 4 Coronation Anthems (1727); *Te Deum* in D (date uncertain); Anthems: *O praise the Lord* (?1724), for the funeral of Queen Caroline (1737), for the weddings of Princess Anne (1734) and Frederick, Prince of Wales (1736), for the Foundling Hospital (1749); 9 German Sacred Songs (*c.*1729); 6 Alleluias (*c.* 1740); 3 Hymns (*c.* 1750); Cantatas: *Ach Herr, mich armen Sünder* (*c.*1696) and *Lobe den Herrn* (1719, doubtful); Latin Church Music (mostly 1706-10): *Dixit Dominus, Hec est Regina virginum* (Antifona), *Laudate pueri* (2 settings), *Nisi Dominus* and *Gloria Patri, Salve Regina, Seuiat tellus* and *Silete venti* (motets), also other doubtful items.

ORCHESTRAL MUSIC

6 *Concerti Grossi* for flutes, oboes, bassoons, strings and continuo, Op. 3 (*c.*1715-33 - first edition has a different concerto as No. 4 from all succeeding editions); 12 *Concerto Grossi* for strings and continuo, Op. 6 (1739); 6 Organ Concertos, Op. 4 (*c.*1735-6); 6 Organ Concertos (mainly arrangements of Op. 6 concertos - *c.*1739); 6 Organ Concertos, Op. 7 (1740-51); 3 Organ Concertos (one for 2 organs - dates uncertain); Concerto in C for *Alexander's Feast* (1736); 3 Oboe Concertos (? *c.*1700-15) (part of one concerto also exists in a different form); 3 Concertos for double wind band, strings and continuo (dates uncertain); Concerto in D for horns, strings and continuo (*c.*1710); Sonata *a* 5 for violin, oboes, strings and continuo (*c.*1710); 8 *Sinfonie diverse* (dates uncertain); *Water Music* (? 1715, 1717); *Music for the Royal Fireworks* (1749); 3 Concertos (fragments, used in the 2 preceding works); Overture in D (date uncertain); *Hornpipe . . . for the Concert at Vauxhaull* (1740).

CHAMBER MUSIC

14 Solo Sonatas, for flute, oboe or violin and continuo, Op. 1 (from Roger and Walsh publications - ? *c.*1715-22); Solo Sonata in D for violin and continuo (usually numbered Op. 1 No. 13 - date uncertain); 3 Solo Sonatas for flute and continuo (before 1730); Sonata for viola da gamba and harpsichord (*c.*1705); 6 Trio Sonatas for 2 oboes and continuo (*c.*1696); 6 Trio Sonatas for 2 violins, oboes or flutes and continuo, Op. 2 (*c.*1715-22); 3 Trio Sonatas for 2 violins, oboes or flutes and continuo (usually numbered Op. 2 Nos. 3, 8 and 9 - dates uncertain); 7 Trio Sonatas for 2 violins or flutes and continuo, Op. 5 (*c.*1739); further sonatas including about 6 each of solo and trio sonatas, some doubtful (dates uncertain); *Forest Music* for (?) violin and continuo (1742); Overture for 2 clarinets and horn (*c.*1740); Minuets and Marches for various instruments (various dates).

KEYBOARD MUSIC

Suites de Pièces, Book I (*c.*1715-20); *Suites de Pièces,* Book II (*c.*1715-33); 6 *Fugues* (*c.*1715-33); 6 *Fugues faciles* (date uncertain); Third Set of Lessons (a collection by Arnold, *c.*1793, of miscellaneous pieces - various dates); *Capriccio* in F (? *c.*1725); 12 Fantasias and other pieces (various dates); many other miscellaneous pieces, including fugues, suites, preludes, dance movements, organ voluntaries (various dates); Suite for 2 harpsichords (*c.*1710-20).

MISCELLANEOUS

Theme and Variations for Harp (date uncertain); Pieces for Musical Clock (date uncertain).

Chronology

	Handel	The Others
1685	23 February, Handel born.	J. S. Bach and D. Scarlatti born.
1686		B. Marcello and Porpora born.
1687		Lully dies, aged 54.
1690		Vinci born.
1692		Vitali dies, aged about 52; Tartini born.
1693	Handel heard playing organ by Duke at Weissenfels(?); starts studying music under Zachau.	Locatelli and G. Sammartini born.
1694		Leo born.
1695		Purcell dies, aged 36; Greene born.
1696	Visit to Berlin(?).	
1697	Handel's father dies.	Quantz born.
1699		Hasse born.
1701		G. B. Sammartini born.
1702	Enters Halle University; appointed organist of Halle Domkirche.	
1703	Travels to Hamburg, meets Mattheson, plays in opera orchestra and teaches.	
1704	*St. John Passion* performed.	Charpentier dies, aged 69.
1705	*Almira* and *Nero* produced.	
1706	Writes *Florindo* and *Daphne*; leaves Hamburg for Italy (probably Florence).	Pachelbel dies, aged 52; Galuppi born.
1707	In Rome, meets Corelli, Pasquini *etc.*; to Florence (?) and Venice; writes *Rodrigo* (?), sacred music and cantatas.	Buxtehude dies, aged 70.
1708	*Florindo* and *Daphne* produced at Hamburg; *La resurrezione* and *Il trionfo del tempo e del disinganno* performed at Rome; *Aci, Galatea e Polifemo* performed at Naples.	
1709	*Agrippina* produced at Venice with great success.	
1710	Takes up appointment at Hanover Court; visits England in autumn.	Arne, W. F. Bach, Boyce and Pergolesi born.
1711	*Rinaldo* produced in London; returns to Hanover *via* Düsseldorf.	Mondonville born.
1712	Returns to London; *Il pastor fido* produced.	Zachau dies, aged 48.
1713	*Teseo* produced; *Birthday Ode* for Queen Anne and *Utrecht Te Deum and Jubilate* composed; awarded pension by Queen Anne.	Corelli dies, aged 59; Stanley born.

	Handel	The Others
1714	Queen Anne dies, George I of Hanover becomes King; (?) *Silla* composed; Handel living at Burlington House.	C. P. E. Bach and Gluck born.
1715	*Amadigi* produced; (?) water party with music by Handel.	
1716	Visit to Hanover, Halle and Ansbach (persuading J. C. Schmidt to come to London); *Brockes Passion* composed.	
1717	Water party on Thames with Handel's *Water Music*; Handel living at Cannons.	J. Stamitz born.
1718	At Cannons: 1718-20, *Acis and Galatea, Esther, Chandos Anthems,* first book of harpsichord lessons, some chamber music and concertos composed.	
1719	Royal Academy of Music founded; Handel visits Düsseldorf and Dresden to engage singers.	L. Mozart born.
1720	First Royal Academy of Music season, including Handel's *Radamisto*; Senesino and Bononcini arrive.	
1721	*Muzio Scaevola* (Act III by Handel) and *Floridante* produced; rivalry with Bononcini.	
1722	12 Solo Sonatas, Op. 1, and 6 Trio Sonatas, Op. 2, published in Amsterdam about 1722.	
1723	Cuzzoni joins Royal Academy company; *Ottone* and *Flavio* produced.	
1724	*Giulio Cesare* and *Tamerlano* produced.	
1725	*Rodelinda* produced.	A. Scarlatti dies, aged 65.
1726	*Scipione* and *Alessandro* produced, the latter including the newly-arrived Faustina.	Lalande dies, aged 68.
1727	Handel naturalised; appointed Composer to the Chapel Royal; *Admeto* produced; Royal Academy discredited by Cuzzoni-Faustina fight; George I dies, Handel writes Coronation Anthems for George II: *Riccardo I* produced.	
1728	*Beggar's Opera* produced; *Siroe* and *Tolomeo* produced; Royal Academy fails.	Steffani dies, aged 73.
1729	Handel goes to Italy and Germany to engage singers for new opera organisation run by himself and Heidegger; *Lotario* produced.	

	Handel	The Others
1730	*Partenope* produced; 3 flute sonatas published.	
1731	*Poro* produced.	
1732	*Ezio* and *Sosarme* produced; revivals by pirates and then by Handel of *Acis and Galatea* and *Esther*, which suggest the idea of giving oratorio seasons.	Haydn born.
1733	*Orlando* produced; *Deborah* performed; Handel visits Oxford and performs various works, including *Athalia*, there; Walsh publishes Opp. 1 and 2 and second book of harpsichord lessons.	Couperin dies, aged 64.
1734	Nobility Opera opens in rivalry to Handel; *Arianna* and revised version of *Il pastor fido* (with ballet) produced; *Il Parnasso in Festa* written in celebration of royal marriage; Walsh publishes 6 Concerti Grossi, Op. 3.	
1735	*Ariodante* and *Alcina* produced (with ballet); no opera season 1735-6.	J. C. Bach born.
1736	*Alexander's Feast* performed; *Atalanta* produced in honour of Prince of Wales' marriage.	Pergolesi dies, aged 26.
1737	*Arminio, Giustino* and *Berenice* produced; both opera houses fail; Handel has a stroke and is cured at Aix-la-Chapelle; writes funeral anthem for Queen Caroline.	
1738	*Faramondo* and *Serse* produced; Walsh publishes 6 Organ Concertos, Op. 4.	Mouret dies, aged 56.
1739	*Saul, Israel in Egypt* and *Ode for St. Cecilia's Day* performed; Walsh publishes 7 Trio Sonatas, Op. 5.	Keiser dies, aged 65; B. Marcello dies, aged 53; Dittersdorf and Vanhal born.
1740	*L'Allegro, il Penseroso ed il Moderato* performed; *Imeneo* produced; Walsh publishes 12 Concerti Grossi, Op. 6, and 6 Organ Concertos.	
1741	*Deidamia* produced; Handel gives concerts in Dublin.	Grétry and Paisiello born.
1742	*Messiah* performed in Dublin; Handel returns to London.	
1743	*Samson* performed; *Messiah* first performed in London; *Dettingen Te Deum and Anthem* performed.	Vivaldi dies, aged about 67; Boccherini born.
1744	*Semele* and *Joseph and his Brethren* performed.	Campra dies, aged 83; Leo dies, aged 50.
1745	*Hercules* and *Belshazzar* performed; subscription series of oratorios fails.	Albinoni dies, aged about 71.

	Handel	The Others
1746	*Occasional Oratorio* performed, but no oratorio season.	
1747	*Judas Maccabaeus* performed; Handel gives the first of his Lent seasons of oratorios, not by subscription, which were to continue for the rest of his life.	
1748	*Joshua* and *Alexander Balus* performed.	
1749	*Susanna* and *Salomon* performed; Handel writes *Music for the Royal Fireworks*, in celebration of the Peace of Aix-la-Chapelle; first Foundling Hospital concert given.	
1750	*Theodora* performed; first Foundling Hospital performance of *Messiah* (to continue annually during Handel's life); Handel visits Germany.	Bach dies, aged 65. (?) Bononcini dies, aged 80; (?) G. Sammartini dies, aged about 57; (?) Veracini dies, aged 60.
1751	*Choice of Hercules* performed; Handel's eyesight begins to fail.	
1752	*Jephtha* performed.	
1753	Handel's eyesight finally fails.	
1755		Durante dies, aged 71.
1756		Mozart born.
1757	*The Triumph of Time and Truth* performed (revised from earlier works).	D. Scarlatti dies, aged 72; J. Stamitz dies, aged 39.
1759	Handel dies 14 April, aged 74.	

Iconography

Dawson, London: pp. 90-1
Denz, Halle: p. 9
Fleming R. B. & Co. Ltd.: p. 100
Handel House, Halle: pp. 10, 15, 17, 18, 20, 22, 44, 45, 156-7
Johne, Halle: pp. 169, 178
Kitson, London: pp. 2, 26, 36, 43, 48, 50, 57, 60, 61, 76, 119, 122
National Buildings Record, Warburg Institute: p. 167
Trans World Photographs, London: p. 152
The author: pp. 12, 16, 172
British Museum: all the remainder (by kind permission of the Trustees)

Discography

(* denotes stereophonic recording)

OPERAS

Sosarme
Soloists, St. Anthony Singers, St. Cecilia Orch., Lewis
(G.B.) Oiseau-Lyre OL 50091-3

Alcina (2 arias); *Rodrigo* (ov. and dances)
Sutherland, Philomusica, Lewis
(coupled with oratorio excerpts)
(G.B.) Oiseau-Lyre OL 50170 - SOL 60001*

Giulio Cesare (5 arias, sung in Ger.)
Della Casa, Vienna P.O., Hollreiser
(coupled with Mozart operatic arias)
(G.B.) Decca LXT 5277 (U.S.) London LL 5268

ORATORIOS etc.

Acis and Galatea
Soloists, St. Anthony Singers, Philomusica, Boult
(G.B. & U.S.) Oiseau-Lyre OL 50179-80 - SOL 60011-2*

L'Allegro ed il Penseroso
Soloists, St. Anthony Singers, Philomusica, Willcocks
(G.B. & U.S.) Oiseau-Lyre OL 50195-6 - SOL 60025-6*

Israel in Egypt
Soloists, Dessoff Choirs, N.Y. Symph. of the Air, Boepple
(G.B. & U.S.) Vox PL 11642 - STPL 511642*

Judas Maccabaeus
Soloists, Utah Univ. Chorus and S.O., Abravanel
(G.B. & U.S.) Westminster 3310 - 301*

Messiah (complete)
Soloists, London P.O. and Choir, Boult
(G.B.) Decca ACL 118-20 (U.S.) London A 4403

Semele
Soloists, St. Anthony Singers, New S.O., Lewis
(G.B.) Oiseau-Lyre OL 50098-100

Esther (2 songs); *Jephtha* (2 symphonies)
Soloists, Philomusica, Lewis
(coupled with opera excerpts)
(G.B.) Oiseau-Lyre OL 50170 - SOL 60001*

Oratorio excerpts (from *Acis and Galatea, Alexander's Feast, Samson* and *Theodora*; also an aria from *Orlando*)
Brannigan, Handel Op. Soc. Chorus, Philomusica, Farncombe
(G.B.) H.M.V. DLP 1200

Oratorio excerpts (from *Jephtha, Judas Maccabaeus, Samson, Solomon*; coupled with oratorio excerpts by Haydn and Mendelssohn)
Marshall, London S.O., Bernard
(G.B.) H.M.V. CLP 1127

CANTATAS

Apollo e Dafne
Ritchie, Boyce, Oiseau-Lyre Ensemble, Lewis
(G.B.) Oiseau-Lyre OL 50038

Dalla guerra amorosa
Hudemann, *etc.*
(G.B.) Archive EPA 37118

Nos. 8 and 11
Fischer-Dieskau *etc.*
(coupled with a trio-sonata by Handel and a cantata by Bach)
(U.S.) Electrola 91063 - S91063*

SACRED MUSIC

Dixit Dominus
Soloists, Halle School Choir, Berlin Bach Orch., Wenzel
(G.B. & U.S.) Cantate T 72452LP

Utrecht Te Deum and Jubilate; Coronation Anthem, *Zadok the Priest*
Soloists, G. Jones Chorus and Orch.
(G.B.) Archive APM 14124 - SAPM 198008*
(U.S.) D.G.G. ARC 3133 - ARC 73133*

Dettingen Te Deum
Soloists, Netherlands Bach Soc. Choir, orch., van der Horst
(G.B.) Fontana CFL 1034 (U.S.) Epic LC 3540 - BC 1042*

9 German Songs
Guilleaume, *etc.*
(G.B.) Archive APM 14031 (U.S.) Decca ARC 3042

ORCHESTRAL MUSIC

12 Concerti Grossi, Op. 6
Boyd Neel Orch.
(G.B.) Decca LXT 5041-3 (U.S.) London A 4311

6 Concerti Grossi, Op. 3
Boyd Neel Orch.
(G.B.) Decca LXT 5020 (U.S.) London CM 9117

6 Concerti Grossi, Op. 3, with Op. 3 No. 4b and Concerto in *Alexander's Feast*.
Capella Coloniensis, Wenzinger
(G.B.) Archive APM 14139-40 - SAPM 198017-8*
(U.S.) D.G.G. ARC 3139-40 - ARC 73139-40*

Oboe Concertos in B flat and G minor; Concerto Grosso in G, Op. 3 No. 3
Töttcher, Berlin Bach Orch., Gorvin
(U.S., coupled with Music for the Royal Fireworks)
(G.B.) Archive AP 13044 (U.S.) Decca ARC 3059

Organ Concertos
Opp. 4 and 7
Richter, Chamber Orch.
(G.B.) Decca LXT 5578-80 - SXL 2115*, 2187*, 2201*
(U.S.) London CMA 7302 - CSA 2302*

Op. 4 Nos. 1-6
Biggs, London P.O., Boult
(G.B.) Philips ABL 3260-1 (U.S.) Columbia K2L-258 - K2S-602*

Op. 7 Nos. 1-6
Biggs, London P.O., Boult
(G.B.) Philips ABL 3326-7 (U.S.) Columbia M2L-261 - M2S-604*

Harp Concerto, Op. 4 No. 6
Ellis, Philomusica, Dart
(coupled with Concerto in *Alexander's Feast*)
(G.B. & U.S.) Oiseau-Lyre OL 50181 - SOL 60013*

Concerto No. 3 in F for two wind choirs
Saidenberg Little Sym.
(coupled with music by Geminiani and Vivaldi)
(U.S.) Am. Soc. 1001 - S1001*

Music for the Royal Fireworks; Concerto in F for double orchestra
Wind Ensemble, Pro Arte Orch., Mackerras
(G.B.) Pye CML 33005

Water Music
Philomusica, Dart
(G.B. & U.S.) Oiseau-Lyre OL 50178 - SOL 60010*

Boyd Neel Orch.
(G.B.) Decca ACL 19 (U.S.) London CM 9116

Overtures
Alexander's Feast, Arianna, Ezio, Jephtha, Il pastor fido (2 overtures), *Rodelinda, Teseo*
Bamberg Symph. Orch., Reinhardt
(G.B. & U.S.) Vox PL 11300 - STPL 511300*

Alcina, Berenice
Boyd Neel Orch.
(G.B.) Decca CEP 652

CHAMBER MUSIC

Solo Sonatas
Violin Sonatas, Op. 1 Nos. 3, 10, 12-15
Campoli, Malcolm
(G.B.) Decca LXT 2751

Flute Sonatas, Op. 1 Nos. 1, 2, 4, 5, 7, 9, 11
Baker, Marlowe
(G.B.) Brunswick AXTL 1028-9 (U.S.) Decca DX 116

Wummer, Valenti (with 3 additional sonatas)
(U.S.) Westminster 18583-4

Oboe Sonata, Op. 1 No. 6
Pierlot, Gerlin
(coupled with 18th-century oboe sonatas)
(G.B.) Oiseau-Lyre OL 50147

Oboe Sonata, Op. 1 No. 8
Munclinger, Svihlikova
(coupled with Op. 5 No. 4 and music by Telemann)
(G.B.) Supraphon SUF 20041

Recorder Sonatas, Op. 1 Nos. 2, 4, 7, 11
Conrad, Ruf, Koch
(G.B.) Archive APM 14163 - SAPM 198163*
(U.S.) D.G.G. ARC 3158 - ARC 73158*

Trio Sonatas
Op. 2 No. 1
Linde, Brix-Meinert *etc.*
(G.B.) Archive EPA 37178

Op. 2 No. 2
Nicolet, Poppen *etc.*
(coupled with cantatas by Handel and Bach)
(U.S.) Electrola 91063 - S91063*

Op. 2 No. 5
Lam Ensemble (in 'History of Music in Sound', Vol. VI)
(G.B.) H.M.V. HLPS 16 (U.S.) Victor LM 6031

Op. 5 No. 2
De Vito, Menuhin *etc.*
(coupled with Bach, 2-violin Concerto)
(G.B.) H.M.V. BLP 1046

Op. 5 No. 4
Munclinger, Simandl *etc.*
(coupled with Op. 1 No. 8 and music by Telemann)
(G.B.) Supraphon SUF 20041

Op. 5 No. 6
Schneiderhan *etc.*
(coupled with music by Telemann and Loeillet)
(U.S.) Westminster 18585

2 Concerti a quattro; Sonata for viola da gamba (cello) and harpsichord
Harpsichord Quartet
(coupled with Bach, Trio Sonata No. 1)
(U.S.) Esoteric 528

Music for wind instruments
Saidenberg Little Sym., *etc.*
(coupled with Oboe Concerto in G min. and music by Telemann)
(U.S.) Am. Soc. 1002 - S1002*

KEYBOARD MUSIC

Suites
Dart (Nos. 1-4)
(G.B.) Oiseau-Lyre OL 50184

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(U.S.) Expériences Anonymes 0032, 0038, 0033

Heiller (Nos. 2, 3, 4, 6; 1, 5, 7, 8)
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Richter
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