

HANDEL
Recorder Sonatas
Op. 1, Nos. 2, 4, 7 and 11
Fitzwilliam Sonata No. 2

László Czidra, Recorder
Zsolt Harsányi, Recorder and Bassoon
Zsuzsa Pertis, Clavichord
Pál Kelemen, Violoncello



George Frideric Handel (1685 - 1759)

Recorder Sonatas

George Frideric Handel was born in Halle in 1685, the son of an elderly barber-surgeon of some distinction and his second wife. Destined by his father for a career of greater prestige than music seemed to allow, he was permitted to study music only through the intervention of the Duke of Saxe-Weissenfels, at whose court Handel's father served. After the latter's death, he studied briefly at the University of Halle, combining the study of law with a position as organist at the Calvinist cathedral in the city, before moving in 1703 to Hamburg, where he played second violin in the opera orchestra, later taking his place as harpsichordist and writing his first Italian operas, produced there in January and February 1705.

A meeting with Prince Ferdinando de' Medici, heir to the Grand Duke of Tuscany, led to an invitation to Italy, where Handel moved in 1706, remaining there until 1710 and winning for himself an increasing reputation as a keyboard-player and as a composer, although to Corelli in Rome his style appeared to be too French. Nevertheless it was Italy that decisively influenced his musical language and it was as a composer of Italian opera that he was to make his earlier career in England.

Handel had spent time in various cities of Italy and in Venice had met Baron Kielmansegge, Master of Horse to the Elector of Hanover, and members of the ruling family. It was through the Baron's agency that Handel was appointed Kapellmeister to the Elector, an appointment that he took up in the summer of 1710, stipulating immediate leave to visit England, where he provided music for Aaron Hill's ambitious opera *Rinaldo*, mounted at what was then the Queen's Theatre in the Haymarket and the subject of satirical comment from Addison and Steele in *The Spectator*. The following year he returned to Hanover, where he remained for fifteen months before permission was given once more for a visit to England. From 1712 he was to settle there permanently.

Handel was, of course, a composer of considerable versatility and had already written a large amount of music of all kinds. In London he was associated immediately with the Italian opera and under royal patronage wrote music for the court and for the church, quickly learning from the work of Purcell something of the English church style. The death of Queen Anne and the accession to the English throne of the Elector of Hanover might have caused some embarrassment, since Handel was still nominally the Elector's Kapellmeister, absent without leave. He was, however, to enjoy the new king's favour soon enough, proof, if any were needed, of the apocryphal nature of the story about the Water Music, popularly alleged to have reconciled monarch and composer.

Handel came to enjoy enormous popularity in England, where he long remained the dominant figure in music, at the expense of native talent. The fortunes of the exotic, irrational and expensive Italian opera waned in the 1730s, when Handel first turned his attention to the creation of a form of music particularly well suited to English religious, dramatic and linguistic prejudices, the English oratorio. By the 1740s he was able to devote much of his attention to compositions of this kind, with the first performances of *Messiah* in 1742, and a series of oratorios leading to the final work, *Jephtha*, in 1752. He continued his involvement in London concert seasons until his death in 1759.

The posthumous reputation of Handel in England distorted his real achievement, as the later years of the eighteenth century brought ever larger Handel celebrations, using forces never at the composer's disposal in his life-time. Oratorio, in its English form, unlike Italian opera with its minimal work for chorus, provided ample material for amateur and professional choirs, a provision that suited the nineteenth century popular choral movement. In some ways this has tended to obscure Handel's real character, his craftsmanship, his melodic gifts, his invention and humour.

The solo sonatas by Handel published as *Opus 1* appeared in England in the early 1730s under the imprint of the London publisher Thomas Walsh, all probably written very much earlier. Four of the set seem to have been

composed for treble recorder and basso continuo, although publishers normally left the choice of solo instrument open. The simple description treble instrument would allow sales also to players of the oboe or violin. The sonatas are attractive in melody, and thoroughly characteristic of Handel's musical idiom. In the Sonata in G minor, Opus 1 No. 2, a straightforward Larghetto is followed by an Andante in the style of Corelli, a very brief Adagio and a final Presto. Opus 1 No. 4, in A minor, starts with an Italian triple rhythm Larghetto, leading to an energetic Allegro, its opening figure based on the tonic triad. A short linking Adagio leads to a final Allegro with the usual sequences and imitation between the parts. The Sonata in C major, No. 7 of the set, again starts with a Larghetto over a moving quaver bass. In the following triple time Allegro the entry of the recorder is delayed until the fifth bar, with a third movement ternary form Gavotte and a final Allegro. Opus 1 No. 11, in F major, is marked, in its slow first movement, by the ascending melodic lines of bass and recorder. The second movement Allegro leads to a D minor Siciliana, a traditional shepherd dance, and a final Allegro in compound metre. The Sonata in D minor, published relatively recently, survives in the collection of Handel manuscripts in the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge.

The three short pieces, an A minor Minuet, a 14-bar A minor Air and a 12-bar Gigue are vignettes of Handel's craft, intended for a musical clock, while the Trio Sonata in F major represents a form of music to which Handel had apparently turned even in childhood. Lelio's aria comes from the last act of Handel's opera *Scipione*, a work celebrating the magnanimity of Scipio, who gave up the captive Berenice, with whom he had fallen in love, together with her ransom, to allow her to rejoin her lover. The Overture to the opera, first produced in London in 1726, makes some use of the Recorder Sonata in C major, Opus 1 No. 7, the latter dated, because of the date of the paper on which it survives, to 1725.

László Czidra

László Czidra is one of the most distinguished recorder-players today, combining practical ability as a performer with skill as a musicologist and as artistic director of the Camerata Hungarica. His recordings as a soloist include the Brandenburg Concertos, a Suite and Concerto of Telemann and concertos and sonatas by Vivaldi.

Zsolt Harsányi

The bassoonist Zsolt Harsányi has served as a principal in the Hungarian State Opera Orchestra since 1971. He is a member of the Camerata Hungarica, where he is also a player of the recorder, principally the bass.

Zsuzsa Pertis

The Hungarian keyboard-player Zsuzsa Pertis was a piano pupil of Pál Kadosa at the Ferenc Liszt Academy in Budapest, proceeding thereafter to the Vienna Academy, where she studied the harpsichord under Isolde Ahlgrimm, graduating with distinction in 1969, a year after winning second prize in the Bruges International Harpsichord Competition. Since 1969 she has been professor of harpsichord at the Ferenc Liszt Academy and is a member of the Franz Liszt Chamber Orchestra. She has performed in the major cities of Europe and with the Franz Liszt Chamber Orchestra abroad and at home in the concert-hall and the recording studio.

Pál Kelemen

The Hungarian cellist Pál Kelemen was born in 1945, completing his studies at the Liszt Academy in 1970. He had started his career in 1968 in the orchestra of the Hungarian State Opera, in 1970 joining the Liszt Chamber Orchestra, an ensemble with which he has travelled widely and played in some 200 recordings.

Georg Friedrich Händel

Sonaten für Blockflöte und Continuo op. 1

Die Frage, wem er denn mehr "gehöre" - den Deutschen oder den Briten - ist bis heute unbeantwortet: Ob als Georg Friedrich Händel oder George Frederick Handel, beide Nationen beanspruchten den Meister des Barock für sich. Und man muß einräumen, daß jede Seite bis zu einem gewissen Maße diesen Anspruch zu Recht erhebt. Die knappe biographische Skizze verrät, warum: Händel wurde am 23. Februar 1685 im sächsischen Halle als Sohn des Chirurgen Georg Händel geboren; gegen den Widerstand der Familie bei dem dortigen Organisten Friedrich Wilhelm Zachow ausgebildet; lernte in Hamburg die Welt der Oper kennen; ging 1706 nach Italien, wo er seine Fähigkeiten vervollkommnete und bald schon begeistert als der "Sassone" (der Sachse) gefeiert wurde. Über Hannover kommt Händel schließlich nach England, und hier wird er zur beherrschenden Figur zunächst der italienischen Oper, dann des englischsprachigen Oratoriums: nicht nur Komponist, sondern auch regelrechter Unternehmer und als solcher den Gesetzen des Marktes unterworfen, die ihm neben rauschenden Erfolgen diverse Pleiten, neben der Anerkennung durch praktisch sämtliche Bevölkerungsschichten (von der Hocharistokratie bis zum Normalbürger) manchen Ärger mit zickigen Sängern und Konkurrenten eintrug. Seinem Ruhm freilich konnte das keinen Abbruch tun; nach seinem Tod am 14. April 1759 wurde er in der Westminster Abbey beigesetzt; das lebensgroße Denkmal zeigt ihn an der Orgel, in der rechten Hand hält er ein Notenblatt mit einer Arie aus dem "Messias", seinem bekanntesten Oratorium: "Ich weiß, daß mein Erlöser lebt."

Georg Friedrich Händel war einer der bedeutendsten Repräsentanten der barocken "Breitwand-Kunst". Die monumentalen Formen - Opern und Oratorien - sind sein Metier, die opulenten Unterhaltungskompositionen, deren berühmteste: die "Wassermusik" und die "Feuerwerksmusik" zu ihrer Zeit höchstes Aufsehen erregten. Vergleicht man sein Gesamtwerk mit dem seines Altersgenossen Johann Sebastian Bach, so sieht man zwei ganz und gar unterschiedliche Ebenen. Der Leipziger Thomaskantor Bach, zu Lebzeiten

kaum mehr als eine regionale Größe, schreibt unzählige Kantaten, seine Passions-Oratorien nach Johannes und Matthäus, die pädagogischen Klavierwerke - die schillernde Welt der Oper ist ihm verschlossen. Händel dagegen produziert eine solche Fülle an Bühnenwerken und Konzert-Oratorien, daß seine kammermusikalisch-intimen Kompositionen davon beinahe erdrückt werden. Dennoch, oder eben deshalb, ist die "Rückseite" der öffentlichen Musik von besonderem Interesse. Hier nämlich ist er feingliedrig, knapp und gedrängt, durchsichtig. Seine 1731 als Opus I gedruckten "XV Solos for a German Flute, Hoboy or Violin with a Thorough Bass for the Harpsichord or Bass Violin" (15 Soli für eine deutsche Flöte, Oboe oder Violine mit Generalbaß für Cembalo oder Baßgeige) gehören neben den Trio-Sonaten zu den markantesten Beispielen dieses privaten Musizierens. Sechs Sonaten sind für Violine, zwei für Oboe, alle weiteren für die deutsche Flöte (Blockflöte) geschrieben, und die vorherrschende Form ist die der italienischen Kirchensonate mit der Satzfolge "langsam-schnell-langsam-schnell". Ausnahmen in der vorliegenden Produktion bilden die Sonate Nr. 7 C-dur, wo Händel als "überzähligen" Satz ein "Tempo di Gavotti" einschaltet, und die dreiteilige Sonate ohne Opuszahl d-moll.

Die Triosonate F-dur hingegen folgt der zweiten Standard-Form - der Kammersonate, in der ein langsamer Mittelsatz von zwei raschen Ecksätzen umrahmt wird. Die drei Tänze Menuett, Gavotte und Gigue sind modische Miniaturen, und die Bearbeitung einer berühmten Arie aus der Oper "Scipione" (1726) führt uns schließlich doch auf jenes musikalische Gebiet, auf dem Georg Friedrich Händel sein internationales Ansehen gründete.



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Sonata in G Minor, Op. 1, Nr. 2, HV 360

- | | | |
|----------|-----------|--------|
| 1 | Larghetto | (2:09) |
| 2 | Andante | (3:48) |
| 3 | Adagio | (0:43) |
| 4 | Presto | (2:01) |

Sonata in A Minor, Op. 1, Nr. 4, HV 362

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|----------|-----------|--------|
| 5 | Larghetto | (2:28) |
| 6 | Allegro | (3:03) |
| 7 | Adagio | (1:51) |
| 8 | Allegro | (3:38) |

Sonata in C Major, Op. 1, Nr. 7, HV 365

- | | | |
|-----------|--------------------|--------|
| 9 | Larghetto | (2:22) |
| 10 | Allegro | (2:29) |
| 11 | Larghetto | (1:59) |
| 12 | A tempo di Gavotti | (2:28) |
| 13 | Allegro | (1:47) |

Sonata in F Major, Op. 1, Nr. 11, HV 369

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|-----------|-----------|--------|
| 14 | Larghetto | (2:15) |
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Zsuzsa Pertis, Clavichord
Pál Kelemen, Violoncello

DDD

Playing
Time :
60'04"

- | | | |
|-----------|-----------|--------|
| 15 | Allegro | (2:27) |
| 16 | Siciliana | (2:20) |
| 17 | Allegro | (2:23) |

Sonata in D Minor, HV 367a (from the Fitzwilliam MS)

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|-----------|--|--------|
| 18 | A tempo di Menuetto | (1:40) |
| 19 | Andante-Allegro | (4:37) |
| 20 | Menuet, HV 603 | (1:00) |
| 21 | Gavotte, HV 604 | (0:48) |
| 22 | Gigue, HV 599 | (1:25) |
| 23 | Favourite Air
(from Scipione - Aria of Lelio) | (2:36) |

Trio Sonata in F Major, HV 405

- | | | |
|-----------|---------|--------|
| 24 | Allegro | (2:23) |
| 25 | Grave | (1:50) |
| 26 | Allegro | (2:36) |

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Music Notes: Keith Anderson

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