

# *The New Grove* **HANDEL**

*Winton Dean*  
*with Anthony Hicks*



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THE NEW GROVE

# HANDEL

Winton Dean

WORK-LIST

Anthony Hicks



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## GENERAL ABBREVIATIONS

<b>A</b>	alto, contralto [voice]	obbl	obligato
acc.	accompaniment	orch	orchestra
add., addl	additional	orchd	orchestrated
add, addn	addition	org	organ
ant	antiphon	ov.	overture
arr.	arrangement		
aut.	autumn	perf.	performance
		pr.	printed
<b>B</b>	bass [voice]	pubd	published
b	bass [instrument]	pubn	publication
bc	basso continuo		
bn	bassoon	qnt	quintet
cl	clarinet	<i>R</i>	photographic reprint
conc.	concerto	<i>r</i>	recto
cont	continuo	rec	recorder
db	double bass	recit	recitative
edn.	edition	repr.	reprinted
f, ff.	folio(s)	rev.	revision
facs.	facsimile		
fl	flute	<b>S</b>	soprano [voice]
frag.	fragment	str	string(s)
		sym.	symphony
gui	guitar	<b>T</b>	tenor [voice]
hn	horn	timp	timpani
hpd	harpsichord	tpt	trumpet
inc.	incomplete	tr	treble [instrument]
inst	instrument	transcr.	transcription
<i>Jb</i>	<i>Jahrbuch</i> [yearbook]	<b>U.</b>	University
kbd	keyboard	v, vv	voice(s)
lib	libretto	v., vv.	verse(s)
movt	movement	v	verso
ob	oboe	va	viola
		vc	cello
		vn	violin

## BIBLIOGRAPHICAL ABBREVIATIONS

<b>AcM</b>	<i>Acta musicologica</i>
<b>AMw</b>	<i>Archiv für Musikwissenschaft</i>
<b>AMZ</b>	<i>Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung</i>
<b>AMz</b>	<i>Allgemeine Musik-Zeitung</i>
<b>AnMc</b>	<i>Analecta musicologica</i>
<b>CMc</b>	<i>Current Musicology</i>
<b>DAM</b>	<i>Dansk aarbog for musikforskning</i>
<b>HjB</b>	<i>Händel-Jahrbuch</i>
<b>JAMS</b>	<i>Journal of the American Musicological Society</i>
<b>JbMP</b>	<i>Jahrbuch der Musikbibliothek Peters</i>
<b>KJb</b>	<i>Kirchenmusikalisches Jahrbuch</i>
<b>MA</b>	<i>The Musical Antiquary</i>
<b>Mf</b>	<i>Die Musikforschung</i>
<b>ML</b>	<i>Music and Letters</i>
<b>MMR</b>	<i>The Monthly Musical Record</i>
<b>MO</b>	<i>Musical Opinion</i>
<b>MQ</b>	<i>The Musical Quarterly</i>
<b>MR</b>	<i>The Musical Review</i>
<b>MT</b>	<i>The Musical Times</i>
<b>PAMS</b>	<i>Papers of the American Musicological Society</i>
<b>PMA</b>	<i>Proceedings of the Musical Association</i>
<b>PRMA</b>	<i>Proceedings of the Royal Musical Association</i>
<b>RaM</b>	<i>La rassegna musicale</i>
<b>RIM</b>	<i>Rivista italiana di musicologia</i>
<b>RISM</b>	<i>Répertoire international des sources musicales</i>
<b>SIMG</b>	<i>Sammelbände der Internationalen Musik-Gesellschaft</i>
<b>SMw</b>	<i>Studien zur Musikwissenschaft</i>
<b>SMz</b>	<i>Schweizerische Musikzeitung/Revue musicale suisse</i>
<b>TLS</b>	<i>The Times Literary Supplement</i>
<b>VMw</b>	<i>Vierteljahrsschrift für Musikwissenschaft</i>

## Preface

This volume is one of a series of short biographies derived from *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* (London, 1980). In its original form, the text was written in the mid-1970s, and finalized at the end of that decade. For this reprint, the text has been re-read and modified by the original author and corrections and changes have been made. In particular, an effort has been made to bring the bibliography up to date and to incorporate the findings of recent research.

The fact that the texts of the books in this series originated as dictionary articles inevitably gives them a character somewhat different from that of books conceived as such. They are designed, first of all, to accommodate a very great deal of information in a manner that makes reference quick and easy. Their first concern is with fact rather than opinion, and this leads to a larger than usual proportion of the texts being devoted to biography than to critical discussion. The nature of a reference work gives it a particular obligation to convey received knowledge and to treat of composers' lives and works in an encyclopedic fashion, with proper acknowledgement of sources and due care to reflect different standpoints, rather than to embody imaginative or speculative writing about a composer's character or his music. It is hoped that the comprehensive work-lists and extended bibliographies, indicative of the origins of the books in a reference work, will be valuable to the reader who is eager for full and accurate reference information and who may not have ready access to *The New Grove Dictionary* or who may prefer to have it in this more compact form.

S.S.

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Cover: Portrait (1756) by Thomas Hudson

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# 1. Halle and Hamburg

George Frideric Handel\* was born in Halle on 23 February 1685. He was the son of Georg Händel (1622–97), a barber–surgeon of some distinction, and his second wife Dorothea Taust (1651–1730), daughter of the pastor of Giebichenstein near Halle, and was born when his father was 63 years old. What little is known of Handel's early life is derived mainly from Mainwaring's biography, based on information received from J. C. Smith the younger and ultimately from Handel himself, but independent sources, where they exist, have often proved its chronology unreliable. The boy's interest in music declared itself early; but his father, doubtless for good pecuniary reasons, intended him for the law and forbade access to an instrument. Handel nevertheless contrived to practise secretly on a small clavichord smuggled into the attic. On one of the family visits to the court of Saxe-Weissenfels, where Handel's half-brother Karl, his senior by 36 years, held the appointment of *valet de chambre* and his father that of court surgeon, the boy's organ playing attracted the attention of the duke, who urged the reluctant father to allow his son to study music as well as law. Handel, now a student at the grammar school, was therefore placed under the tuition

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\* This was the spelling he ultimately used in England. He was baptized Georg Friederich Händel, and that spelling is the one normally used in Germany. He spelt his surname Hendel in Italy, and at first in England (which may indicate the pronunciation he expected), but later signed 'Handel' without the *Umlaut*.

of F. W. Zachow, organist of the Liebfrauenkirche at Halle. Zachow seems to have been a gifted and sympathetic teacher. He had a large collection of German and Italian music in manuscript, and encouraged his pupil to copy as well as to imitate different styles. He may have sown the seeds of Handel's lifelong habit of borrowing and reworking old material. A volume of Handel's copies, dated 1698, is known to have survived until the late 18th century. He made rapid progress under Zachow, learning the organ, harpsichord and violin as well as composition, harmony and counterpoint, and was encouraged to write cantatas for the church services, though none has survived.

According to Mainwaring Handel and his father paid a visit to the court of the Electress Sophia Charlotte of Brandenburg at Berlin, where the boy met Giovanni Bononcini and Attilio Ariosti and made such an impression that the elector proposed to take him into his service and send him for further instruction to Italy, an offer declined on account of his father's failing health. That cannot be literally true, since Ariosti did not reach Berlin until after Georg Händel's death in February 1697, and Bononcini not until 1702. There may however have been more than one visit. On 10 February 1702 Handel matriculated at the University of Halle; he did not join any special faculty, but may have continued his law studies for a time. A month later, on 13 March, he was appointed organist at the Calvinist Cathedral (although himself a Lutheran) in succession to J. C. Leporin, a dissolute character to whom he had been acting as assistant. The appointment was for a probationary period of one year at a salary of 50 thaler and free lodging. Soon after it expired, in spring or summer 1703, Handel left Halle for Hamburg; in Mainwaring's

words, 'it was resolved to send him thither on his own bottom, and chiefly with a view to improvement'. His friendship with Telemann, then a student at Leipzig, dates from these early days at Halle. Telemann recorded later that Handel was clearly a person of consequence, and the two often exchanged ideas by correspondence or in person.

Hamburg, which was an important commercial and cultural centre, possessed the only regular opera company in Germany outside the courts. Its controlling spirit was the gifted but mercurial and intemperate Reinhard Keiser, with whom Handel's relations presently became strained. The young musician found a post among the ripieno second violins at the opera, and later as a harpsichordist; he augmented his income by giving private lessons, among others to the son of the English Resident John Wyche. He soon made friends with the composer, singer and theorist Johann Mattheson, his senior by nearly four years, and for a time enjoyed free board at his father's house. Mattheson later claimed to have introduced Handel into the city's musical circles and helped him with his compositions, including *Almira* 'scene by scene'. According to him Handel was already an accomplished organist but ignorant of melodic writing before he went to the opera: 'he knew how to compose practically nothing but regular fugues'. In August 1703 the two young musicians visited the aging Buxtehude at Lübeck with a view to succeeding him as organist of the Marienkirche, but since one of the conditions was that the candidate should espouse Buxtehude's daughter, who was not in her first youth, both (like J. S. Bach two years later) prudently declined. Handel's friendship with Mattheson was briefly interrupted in December 1704 by a quarrel,

leading to a duel, over the continuo accompaniment of Mattheson's opera *Cleopatra*. The *St John Passion* performed on 17 February 1704, long regarded as Handel's earliest important work, has been attributed recently to Georg Böhm and to Mattheson. Handel's first two operas, *Almira* and *Nero*, were produced within a few weeks on 8 January and 25 February 1705. The first was a considerable success (the libretto ran to three editions) and gave rise to a lively burst of pamphlet warfare, in which literary rather than musical matters took precedence; the second, whose music is lost, was a failure. Keiser's hostility to a potential rival can be discerned in his choice of the same two subjects within the next 18 months, *Octavia* in August 1705, *Almira* in autumn 1706, the latter on an altered version of the libretto used by Handel. It seems however that Keiser had first treated the subject at Weissenfels in 1704. The score of *Octavia* served Handel as a fruitful source of ideas for development, not only in Italy but in England as late as the 1730s, in *Orlando* and *Ariodante*. Keiser's opposition or the failure of *Nero* seems to have hindered Handel's career in the theatre, although he composed one more opera for Hamburg. This was subsequently divided into two, *Florindo* and *Daphne*, produced in January 1708, some time after Handel had left for Italy. Four movements survive in fragmentary form without their voice parts; several dances and instrumental 'choruses' also probably belong to this opera.

*Almira* is the only surviving major work that can be positively identified with the Hamburg period. Though strongly influenced by Keiser (especially in orchestration) and Mattheson, it has flashes of invention and dramatic power, despite the prolix libretto in a mixture of Italian and German, a regular practice at the

Hamburg opera. The style is mixed, drawing on the French tradition for the dances and Italian comedy for the servant Tabarco, the only *buffo* character in Handel's operas before Elviro in *Serse*, as well as the stiff gait of the north German cantata. The arias are often primitive and unbalanced in design, the vocal writing constricted and instrumental; there is little sign of the later melodic freedom.

Handel is said to have composed many sonatas in Hamburg, and Mattheson mentioned interminable arias and cantatas, weak in melody but strong in harmony and counterpoint. It is likely that a number of his surviving keyboard and instrumental works date from this period, even if they were revised later. Two personal characteristics are also perceptible, a sturdy independence of spirit and, in Mattheson's words, 'a natural inclination to dry humour'.

## 2. Italy

When he was in Hamburg Handel met Prince Ferdinando de' Medici, son and heir of the Grand Duke of Tuscany, who was impressed by his talents and invited him to visit Italy, and particularly Florence. It is doubtful if he financed the journey. According to Mainwaring Handel 'resolved to go to Italy on his own bottom, as soon as he could make a purse for that occasion', and it is likely that his principal object was to gain experience, especially of Italian opera. Mattheson said he travelled with one Binitz. Research (by Ursula Kirkendale and Reinhard Strohm) has thrown fresh light on the chronology of Handel's years in Italy. There is no reason to doubt Mainwaring's statement that he went at once to Florence (autumn 1706). His first Italian opera, generally known as *Rodrigo*, was produced there at the Cocomero Theatre probably in November 1707 under the title *Vincer se stesso è la maggior vittoria*. The opera is said to have brought Handel 100 sequins and a service of plate from the grand duke, and the favours of the prima donna Vittoria Tarquini (the grand duke's mistress), whom he was to encounter again in Venice. Tarquini did not sing in *Rodrigo*, but Handel could have met her in 1706, when she appeared in Alessandro Scarlatti's *Il gran Tamerlano* at Pratolino. He returned to Florence each autumn until 1709, made contact with the prince's court poet Antonio Salvi, several of whose librettos he was to set later in London, and probably heard G. A. Perti's operas *Dionisio rè di Portogallo* (1707), *Ginevra principessa di Scozia* (1708) and *Berenice* (1709), all on

librettos by Salvi.

Handel's signature, dated Rome 1706, in a copy of Steffani's duets in the British Museum suggests that he reached that city before the end of the year (unless it refers to the old-style year ending in March 1707). He was probably the 'Sassone' mentioned by Valerio as playing the organ in the church of St John Lateran in January 1707. About this time (certainly before May) he composed his first oratorio, *Il trionfo del Tempo e del Disinganno*, to words by Cardinal Benedetto Pamphili. This may have been performed at the palace of Cardinal Pietro Ottoboni, a prominent patron of the arts. A third cardinal, Carlo Colonna, was another of Handel's noble acquaintances; but it was a rich and ambitious layman, Marquis (later Prince) Francesco Ruspoli, who elicited by far the greatest number of his Roman compositions. Ruspoli employed Handel as household musician at his palace in Rome or his country estates at Vignanello and Cerveteri at three different periods, May–October 1707, February–May 1708 and July–November 1708, and possibly in 1709 as well. The terms of his employment were flexible: he had no regular salary but was expected to supply cantatas (secular) for weekly performance on Sundays, as Bach did later under different circumstances at Leipzig. Among the other musicians in Ruspoli's household during Handel's employment were at least four who subsequently followed him to London, the soprano Margherita Durastanti, the violinists Domenico and Pietro Castrucci (father and son) and the cellist Filippo Amadei. Handel's compositions for Ruspoli include the oratorio *La Resurrezione* (April 1708), three Latin motets (performed at Vignanello in June 1707), eight or more cantatas with upper instruments – among them *Diana cacciatrice* (May

1707), *Armida abbandonata* (June 1707), *Arresta il passo* (July 1708, composed for a concert of the Arcadian Academy) and *O come chiare e belle* for three voices and orchestra including trumpet (September 1708) – the cantatas with Spanish and French words (both September 1707), and at least 40 continuo cantatas. These include the famous *Lucrezia* and *Handel non può mia musa* (August 1708) with words by Cardinal Pamphili comparing the composer favourably with Orpheus. The principal soprano parts in nearly all these cantatas were composed for Durastanti.

The production of *La Resurrezione* in April 1708 – it had three rehearsals and two performances, on 8 and 9 April – was spectacular. A special theatre with scenery and a curtain was constructed in Ruspoli's palace, and an exceptionally large orchestra engaged, numbering at least 45 players, under the leadership of Corelli. The audiences were substantial, and 1500 copies of the libretto were printed. Durastanti sang Maddalena on the first night but was replaced by a castrato on the second by order of the pope, who objected to the appearance of a female singer in what was virtually an opera in all but name. Ruspoli's food bills reflect one characteristic for which Handel became notorious in England – his voracious appetite.

On his first sojourn in Rome, between April and July 1707, Handel composed the three most ambitious of his Latin church works, the psalms *Dixit Dominus*, *Laudate pueri* (in D) and *Nisi Dominus*. James Hall plausibly suggested that they formed part of a complete setting of the Carmelite Vespers for the feast of the Madonna del Carmine on 16 July 1707. After the production of *Rodrigo* at Florence Handel seems to have spent winter 1707–8 at Venice, where he probably