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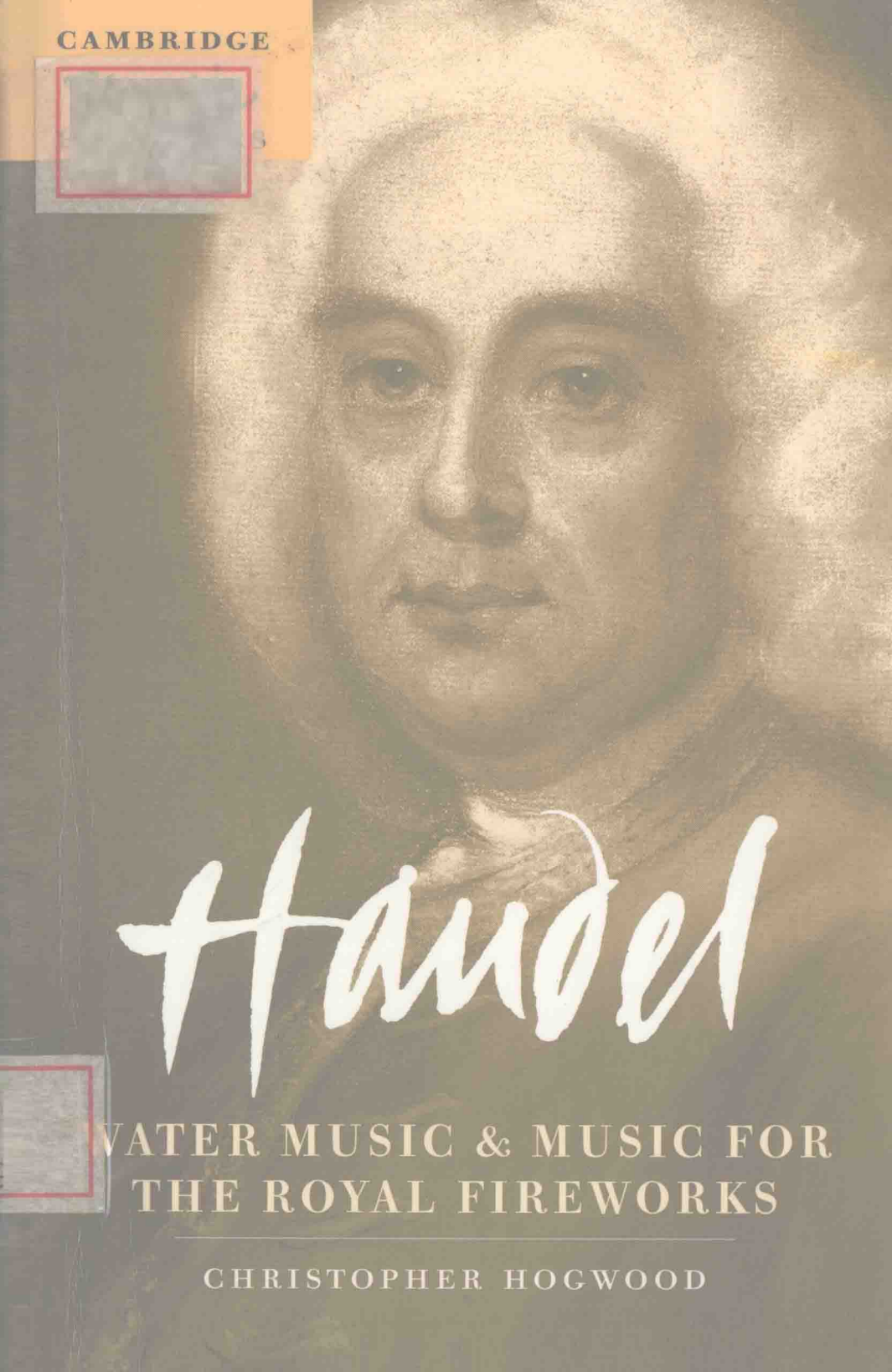

Handel

VATER MUSIC & MUSIC FOR THE ROYAL FIREWORKS

CHRISTOPHER HOGWOOD

Handel: *Water Music* and *Music for the Royal Fireworks*

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CAMBRIDGE MUSIC HANDBOOKS

Handel: Water Music and Music for the Royal Fireworks

This handbook covers Handel's best-known public music, the *Water Music*, written at the outset of his English career, and the *Music for the Royal Fireworks*, the last and largest of his orchestral creations. The genesis of these two orchestral suites is examined in its political as well as musical context; practical questions of performance style and interpretation are balanced by an enquiry into Handel's compositional processes, and the relationship of his other large-scale orchestral compositions, especially the *Concerti a due cori*, to these suites. Original source material is set alongside the most recent theories on Handel's character and working methods. In particular the problem of 'borrowings' is addressed with reference to most recent identifications of Handel's sources, together with the later presentation of these works in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, with an account of recordings, editions and a summary of performance questions.

Founder and director of The Academy of Ancient Music since 1973, CHRISTOPHER HOGWOOD continues to work internationally with both period-instrument and modern ensembles, and has more than 200 critically acclaimed recordings to his name. He is currently engaged with editing keyboard music from the Fitzwilliam Museum for *Musica Britannica*, the complete keyboard works of Henry Purcell for the Purcell Society, Mendelssohn's seven great concert overtures for Bärenreiter and the original version of *La Revue de Cuisine* by Martinů, recently recorded by the Czech Philharmonic (Supraphon). His many publications include a survey of patronage through the ages (*Music at Court*), biographical studies of Haydn, Mozart and Handel, a history of the trio sonata, and *Music in Eighteenth-Century England* (Cambridge, 1983). Hogwood's academic positions include Honorary Professor of Music at the University of Cambridge, Fellowships at Jesus and Pembroke Colleges, Cambridge, and Visiting Professor at the Royal Academy of Music. He also teaches regularly at Harvard University.

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Preface

For ease rather than accuracy, *Water Music* and *Music for the Royal Fireworks* are conventionally packaged as the 'alpha and omega' of Handel's orchestral music, marking off a composing lifetime devoted to opera, oratorio and the orchestra. They were, as intended, popular from the first and have never lagged since, and for that reason are sometimes taken, quite wrongly, as being the epitome of his style; but they are far from being typical of Handel.

The composer would have been surprised – even (judging by warnings from his contemporaries) irritated – at the prospect of being remembered for such occasional pieces rather than his prime love, dramatic vocal music. True, a statue was erected to him during his lifetime in Vauxhall Gardens, that focus of liberal entertainment where *le bon ton* consorted with the less respectable. But he shared this honour with Homer and Milton, serious, epic artists (all three eventually blind) and it is a more significant pointer to his place in the artistic order that Handel was valued in his own lifetime as 'the more than Homer of his Age'.[1]

There would be other reasons for Handel's surprise at the present-day status of these instrumental pieces. Despite the ease of technique on display in them, Handel was very little interested in orchestral music *per se*, nor was he ever very stimulated by the suite as a formal construction apart from its balletic implications. On the whole his orchestral music was provoked either by the demands of publication or as an attempt to attract more public to his oratorios with virtuoso add-ons. There is no evidence that he ever attended a concert of purely instrumental music and, apart from the freak creation of *Water Music*,

[1] William Cowper, *The Task*, VI, 647 (1785)

he would never have known any entertainment of more than twenty minutes' length that was not basically vocal. Handel did not 'do' instrumental concerts: all his orchestral music, organ concertos and concerti grossi were planned as additions to his vocal entertainments. The two exceptions, *Water Music* and *Music for the Royal Fireworks* (WM and FM) were politically generated, occasional in every sense and peripheral to Handel's main goals.

In spite of thirty-two years between them, the two suites display surprising similarities: ease of melodic invention, instrumental colouring, organised 'alternativo' scorings for repeats, formal control, and the 'friendly' use of royal and military sounds. Both were played by 'super-orchestras'. Apart from the forces mustered for *La Resurrezione* in Rome (1708) and state occasions (royal funerals, coronations), Handel's normal expectations for an opera or oratorio orchestra were moderate; but when offered larger resources, he instinctively knew how to employ them for maximum impression and utmost variety.

In both works Handel shows himself a congenital borrower, but also a consummate craftsman. *Water Music* and *Fireworks Music* stand at either end of a long and well-travelled composing life, from escape via Hamburg to Italy as 'il caro Sassone' to residence in London as 'the great and good Mr Handel'. It is worth exploring not only what Handel as a composer discovered in the course of this life, but also what we must rediscover today to make the most of his legacy. As modern listeners and performers (amateur or professional) we want to know more about Handel's methods of composing, and the problems and choices he leaves to the present-day performer. We are also intrigued to see what aspects of Handel's technique and vision changed during his lifetime, and what mannerisms of style and method remained constant. A glimpse into his working methods is promised by his life-long preference for making generous use of pre-existing materials and the evidence of his working scores. There is no autograph version of *Water Music*, but the score of *Fireworks Music* carries the advantages (and disadvantages) of having been worked over several times by the composer.

Handel's accommodations to social and political pressures are fascinating, if less clearly documented than the subtle shifts and re-scoring of his compositions. Although firmly established outside the frontiers of

court life, he was an enlightened monarchist and proud of his position as an artistic bridge between King and people at moments of celebration. Handel rarely failed to respond to the demands of national and political theatre and fitted into British history as neatly as his music has since come to define British sensibility.

Credits and thanks

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Editions and abbreviations

Much of the detailed description in this handbook will be more lucid with a modern score alongside the reader. Several editions are available, of varying accuracy and cost, and the most relevant are referred to by the following abbreviations:

Chrysander	*G. F. Händel's Werke: Ausgabe der Deutschen Händelgesellschaft*, vol. 47 (*Water Music*, *Fireworks Music*, the three *Concerti a due cori* and the two *Concerti* associated with *Fireworks Music*), 1886. Reprinted in full by Gregg Press Incorporated, 1965, Lea Pocket Scores L.P.S. No. 139 and Kalmus Miniature Score Series, no. 1362. *Water Music* and *Fireworks Music* reissued in Dover Miniature Scores, 1999
Fiske WM	*The Water Music*, ed. Roger Fiske, Edition Eulenburg no. 1308, London, 1973
Fiske FM	*The Musick for the Royal Fireworks*, ed. Roger Fiske, Edition Eulenburg no. 1307, London, 1979
Redlich FM / WM	Hallische Händel-Ausgabe (Bärenreiter Urtext scores): *Wassermusik*, ed. Redlich, (1962), *Music for the Royal Fireworks*, ed. Redlich (1962). Revised editions by Terence Best and Christopher Hogwood in preparation
Hudson	Hallische Händel-Ausgabe (Bärenreiter Urtext scores): *Concerti a due cori*, ed. Hudson (1983)

HWV [Händel Werke Verzeichnis] numbers refer to Bernd Baselt, *G. F. Händel: Thematisch-systematisches Verzeichnis* (Leipzig and Kassel, 1978–86).

A facsimile of Handel's autograph manuscript containing *Fireworks Music* and the two Concertos HWV 335a and 335b, together with *A Description of the Machine for the Fireworks* and a selection of contemporary engravings, is published by Bärenreiter-Verlag, Kassel (2004). More specific references to manuscript and early printed sources for *Water Music* and *Fireworks Music* are listed in their respective chapters.

1

The character of the man

The Figure's odd; yet who wou'd think?
(Within this Tunn of Meat & Drink)
There dwells the Soul of soft Desires,
And all that HARMONY inspires.

'I am myself alone' reads the Shakespearian inscription on a scroll decorating Goupy's caricature of Handel as a bewigged and well-dressed hog playing the organ, with the remnants of gluttony evident all around him (Plate 1). Joseph Goupy, painter and scene designer, was a close friend of Handel until (so Walpole tells us) this caricature and inscription created a rift – based on the 'evidence' that Goupy received no legacy in Handel's will; but many other close friends were not mentioned in that document. By the standards of eighteenth-century satire, the verses accompanying 'The Charming Brute' were both critical and complimentary; another, more exotic version reads:

Strange Monsters have Adorn'd the Stage,
Not Afric's Coast produces more,
And yet no Land nor Clime nor Age,
Have equal'd this Harmonious Boar.[1]

Maybe he was difficult, unusual, over-interested in food, independent, larger than life in all senses and short-tempered with it – but as a musician, the verses emphasise, he was unique and unrivalled. He was also private, and to many people, then as now, not easily explained; in spite of becoming a national monument, he was (and remains) an international enigma.

Handel's self-sufficiency had been noted for years. John Mainwaring in his *Memoirs of the Life of the Late George Frederic Handel*, a biography based on conversations with Handel's assistant, John Christopher Smith,

Plate 1 Engraving of a caricature by Joseph Goupy, 1754

describes the composer's unorthodox independence from his early days in the Hamburg opera, comparing him to Pascal and Tycho Brahe for his determination to follow his own choice of career. Setting out for Italy to seek his fortune 'on his own bottom' he showed an egalitarian attitude to patronage that meant he would never have to complain, as Bach did, that

'those in charge are odd and ambivalent towards music, which means I have to live with almost non-stop vexation, envy, and persecution'.[2] Handel was never liable to suffer at the death of a sole patron, nor be threatened with prison or an employer whose wife was 'amusa' or (like Haydn) with the dissolving of the cappella on the death of his princely patron. When Handel was offered a court position in Berlin, the argument went that 'if he once engag'd in the King's service, he must remain in it, whether he liked it, or not; that if he continued to please, it would be a reason for not parting with him; and that if he happened to displease, his ruin would be the certain consequence'. As a result, Handel never in his life took a 'tenured' position of the sort that Bach, Mozart or Haydn accepted; his was always a form of 'regulated employment' with a specific object and an end-plan in mind.

Handel was not the first German to decide that England offered the best prospects for a freelance musician at the beginning of the eighteenth century. Finger, Galliard, Keller, Greber and Pepusch had all preceded him, and the peripatetic Johann Sigismund Cousser (who had lived with Lully for six years and came to London in 1704) wrote out a series of rules for what a 'German' (in his case, Hungarian) might expect in coming to England, exchanging secure employment by a city or court for the more empirical world of public concerts and *ad hoc* patronage by the nobility.

Cousser offered a total of thirty-three rules for 'What a virtuoso should observe upon arriving in London', among them:

> Find good lodging.
>
> Retain your freedom and have it in the contract that you are permitted to perform outside the theatre whenever you wish.
>
> Be proud but greet everyone politely, for the English like to be flattered.
>
> Associate cordially with the musicians, but without great familiarity; seldom go drinking with them. If you wish to pay them special honour, do it in your own lodgings.
>
> Prepare yourself with music to fit their taste – no pathos certainly, and short, short recitatives.
>
> Praise the deceased Purcell to the skies and say there has never been the like of him.
>
> Make yourself acquainted with the best masters, such as Lullie [Loeillet], Pepusch, etc.
>
> Because of their great impertinence, don't engage an English servant.[3]

In letter or spirit, Handel followed the essence of these suggestions. He was proud and independent, secured lodgings on his own terms in such palaces as Cannons and Burlington House, struck up a close acquaintance with Pepusch, made due deference to elements of Purcell's style and the English taste, and employed a German manservant. In addition he was a great composer.

Handel fitted into the society and system that he had adopted with ease, although he remained a private enigma in many respects. He left no account of his political feelings, but his allegiances can be seen in the long list of compositions for royal celebrations and the speed with which he could rally to the support of the royal PR machine when asked. He was openly accounted a royalist by society; conversely it amounted to *lèse-majesté* not to love Handel, according to Lord Hervey: 'an anti-Handelist was looked upon as an anti-courtier, and voting against the Court in Parliament was hardly a less remissible or more venial sin than speaking against Handel'.[4] He balanced his favours, courting the Prince of Wales as well as his father, and maintained connections with the opposite end of the political field. But in the end, as Donald Burrows points out, 'many of his strongest patrons and collaborators were, like Charles Jennens ... supporters of the Old Succession (without necessarily being Jacobites)'.[5]

Several contemporary German commentators wrongly described Handel as the Capellmeister of the Court in London. Not only did Handel shrewdly avoid commitment,[6] but in fact George I was in no position to make such appointments. It was no longer within his purview to allocate funds either for a royal Director of Music or for the maintenance of an opera, as he had in Hanover; such expenses were now dealt with by Parliamentary decree, the purse strings tightly controlled by the young Robert Walpole, Chancellor of the Exchequer. Added to which, Handel was 'other', i.e. not British. The most the King could offer was a continuation of the 'retaining' pension conferred by Queen Anne, and a position as Music Master to the Princesses.

Handel's independence was thus guaranteed both from within and without; nor was he in any doubt of his worth, as the satirical press was aware: in *Harmony in an Uproar*, an anonymous 1734 pamphlet, 'Handel' describes his progress in the first person: