

# NEWSLETTER of The American Handel Society

Volume XXXVI, Number 1

Spring 2021

## ALTERNATE PERFORMING OPTIONS FOR HANDEL'S OP. 2 TRIO SONATAS FOUND IN CONTINENTAL SOURCES

Graydon Beeks

Handel's first collection of trio sonatas was published in London c. 1730 by John Walsh under the title *VI SONATES à deux Violons, deux hautbois ou deux Flutes traversieres & Basse Continue Composées Par G. F. HANDEL SECOND OUVRAGE*,<sup>1</sup> most likely without the composer's participation. The scoring as given on the title page seems clearly to have been the publisher's misleading attempt to increase the pool of potential purchasers, because while all six sonatas can be performed by two violins, a number of them cannot be performed by pairs of oboes or transverse flutes owing to the ranges of one or both of the upper two parts. Much has been written concerning the intended scoring of these pieces, since it seems likely that Handel had a particular instrumentation in mind. Since no autograph manuscripts survive, this must be deduced from internal evidence—specifically the keys employed and the ranges of the individual parts—and the designations given in the secondary sources. Differences of opinion remain, and modern performers generally feel free to use whatever instrumentation is practical for their ensembles.

The secondary sources also show that once these pieces were in circulation, some 18<sup>th</sup>-century musicians chose not to perform them as trio sonatas at all, but instead to adopt methods of performance that Handel would, perhaps, not have anticipated. In an important article published in 2013 and dealing with the transmission of Handel's instrumental music in Dresden and Berlin, Mary Oleskiewicz called attention to two examples of this procedure.<sup>2</sup> The first involves increasing the number of players on each part, thereby creating a work for a larger ensemble. One such source in SLUB Dresden (D-Dlb Mus.2410-N-4) consists of a set of parts to the second movement of Op. 2, no. 4 (HWV 389) in the hand of J. G. Morgenstern, violinist at the Dresden court from 1730–1763.<sup>3</sup> These were derived from a score in the same hand (D-Dlb Mus.2410-Q-5).

Alterations were entered in both the score and parts by the violinist Johann Georg Pisendel, Konzertmeister of the court orchestra from 1728. Oleskiewicz judges that these changes were made between 1735 and 1755. The label on the cover of the set of parts reads "Sinfonia. VVni. Oboi, Viola e Basso," but the set as preserved consists of 4 copies of "Violino Imo," 4 of "Violino 2do," 6 of "Basso" (1 with figures)

<sup>1</sup> The publisher named on the title page is Etienne Roger, but it is generally agreed that Walsh was, in fact responsible. See Terence Best, "Handel's Chamber Music: Sources, Chronology and Authenticity," *Early Music* 13/ 4 (1985): 492.

<sup>2</sup> Mary Oleskiewicz, "Quantz, Agricola und die Überlieferung von Händels Instrumentalmusik in Dresden und Berlin," in *Telemann und Händel: Musikerbeziehungen im 18. Jahrhundert*, ed. Carsten Lange and Brit Reipsch (Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 2013), 192–226.

<sup>3</sup> See digitized manuscript at <https://digital.slub-dresden.de/werkansicht/dlf/15111/5/0/>.

continued on p. 2

## 2021 AMERICAN HANDEL SOCIETY CONFERENCE: SCHOLARSHIP, PERFORMANCE, AND CONNECTION IN THE AGE OF COVID-19

Minji Kim

The American Handel Society convened for its biennial conference for the first time over Zoom on March 11–14, 2021, amid the COVID-19 pandemic. Hosted by Indiana University Bloomington with the team led by Professor Ayana Smith, the online event was successfully launched live, making possible real-time scholarly exchange during unprecedented times. The conference brought together participants from all around the globe for four days of engaging presentations and discussions of the latest scholarship on Handel. The AHS program committee, chaired by Nathan Link (Centre College), put together a well-balanced schedule that included two invited lectures, a lecture recital, four paper panels, a round-table discussion, multiple musical performances, and a social time during the virtual reception. The registrants were given access, free of charge, to all the live presentations as well as their recordings after the conference (the videos were all uploaded as of this writing). This year's meeting was definitely different, but the upside of keeping the biennial tradition was clear on many levels.

The conference opened on Thursday March 11 with the Howard Serwer Memorial Lecture, given this year by Dr. Berta Joncus, senior lecturer in Music at Goldsmiths, University of London. Wendy Heller (Princeton University) introduced the guest speaker, highlighting Joncus's accomplishments including the publication of her recent book *Kitty Clive, or The Fair Songster* (2019). Along the lines of the book's exploration of performance history and star production in eighteenth-century Britain, Joncus, in her lecture, looked into the career and stardom of Handel. With the title, "Posterity vs Celebrity: Handel Studies and the 21st Century," she examined Handel's rise to and management of his celebrity status: first by contrasting his approach and outcome to J. S. Bach's; and second by delineating the "celebrity war" between Handel and the famous castrato Senesino. Joncus drew attention to a couple of Handel's career moves that may have been strategic to the building of his status, such as his "reinventing" of himself as a composer/inventor of English oratorios and his possible contribution to the erection of his own statue.

continued on p. 4

## IN THIS ISSUE

*Alternate Performing Options* – Graydon Beeks  
*2021 American Handel Society Conference* – Minji Kim  
*From The President's Desk* – Graydon Beeks  
Upcoming Events & Recent Publications  
The Handel Aria Competition Returns  
Call for Papers: 2021 Handel Institute Conference