

# Handel's Organ Concertos Reconsidered

By NIELS KARL NIELSEN

Due to the solid foundations provided by the research carried out by Chrysander, W. Dean, O. E. Deutsch, J. P. Larsen, W. C. Smith and others the study of Handel's works has been rendered much easier to-day than it was a mere twenty years ago; this, however, does not mean that all the problems have been solved. On the contrary, many still await exhaustive treatment.

Whereas a vast number of books have been written about Handel's vocal compositions, and the Oratorios in particular, a detailed study of his Organ Concertos, based on the autograph scores and other contemporary sources has not yet been made. Ehrlinger's dissertation<sup>1</sup> contains many valuable observations; nevertheless its importance is reduced considerably by the fact that he did not incorporate the original sources in his research.

Accordingly, in the present study I intend to remedy this gap in our knowledge of Handel and his work, by discussing problems such as—date of composition—sources—original versions—style of performance, and last but not least, the inevitable question of Handel's borrowings. Some of these problems have of course been dealt with before, but I still find it worthwhile to try and collate as much information as possible about these aspects of Handel's work.

Handel embarked upon his concertos for organ and orchestra in close connection with his efforts to introduce the oratorio as a parallel to the production of operas which had dominated his work in London up to the beginning of the 1730's. In his early youth he had won great fame for his improvised organ- and harpsichord playing, which was a talent he further developed and later on used extensively in the Organ Concertos. It seems likely that Babell's rather extraordinary harpsichord arrangements of arias from *Rinaldo* aimed at imitating Handel's own style of improvisation, although it is impossible to distinguish accurately between Handel and Babell.

In the last Concerto Grosso in Handel's Opus 3, the one in D major/D minor, we find two single movements, the first of which calls for organ continuo and the second for harpsichord or organo concertato. These Concerti Grossi were published in 1734, but their date of composition is undoubtedly much earlier, except perhaps for the final movement, i. e. the one in D minor, Handel's first

---

1. F. Ehrlinger: *G. F. Händels Orgelkonzerte*. (Würzburg 1941).

"Organ Concerto", which was most likely composed in the early thirties. According to Burney, Handel played his Organ Concertos in public for the first time during the performances of *Deborah* and *Esther* in March/April 1733.<sup>2</sup> At that time Burney, however, was only 7 years old, so one cannot place too much credence in this. Burney also relates that Festing and Arne heard Handel play on the organ during his performances in Oxford in 1733.<sup>3</sup> The date and place may very well be correct, but their statement does not mention anything about what Handel actually played during his visit to Oxford. Did he play full-length concertos for organ and orchestra or concertos consisting partly or entirely of movements for solo organ? The latter seems the more credible, as it bears a close resemblance to Handel's later style of performance (cf. the indications given in Op. 4/1, in the Chaconne Concerto, in SS/2, Op. 7/3, 7/4, 7/5 a. o.)

It is in any case impossible to state with any accuracy when Handel first performed his Organ Concertos in public. At first all the movements were played on solo organ or harpsichord, but gradually the number of 'written-down' movements increased (this is what was happening at the time when Op. 3 was published), and finally all these different movements became full-length concertos like those published in 1738 and 1740.

In order to avoid any unnecessary confusion the following observations on the Organ Concertos will be dealt with in chronological order; for practical reasons I shall also use the commonly accepted opus numbers, despite their incorrect chronological order. In all, I intend to discuss the following 18 concertos:

- Opus 4 nos. 1–6 (published 1738).
- Chaconne in G (unpublished).
- Saul Conc. in C (from the oratorio).
- Second Set 1–2 (published 1740).
- Opus 7 nos. 1–6 (published posth. 1761).
- AE 1–2 (published posth. 1797).

To observe the intended chronological order Concerto Op. 4/1 will be passed over at this stage, as it was undoubtedly composed after the other five concertos in Opus 4. (Handel's autographs for Opus 4 no. 2, 3, 4 and 5 are all written on the same sort of paper, i. e. IIa/C in Jens Peter Larsen's study of paper, watermarks and handwritings used in Handel's scores.<sup>4</sup> The format of the paper used for the concertos Op. 4/1a (no autograph available of the last three movements = Op. 4/1b) and Op. 4/6 (harp and orchestra version) is the same as that of all the later concertos, Second Set, *Concerti Grossi* Op. 6, *Organ Concertos* Op. 7 a. o.).

2. Burney: *Sketch of the Life of Handel* (1785) p. 23.

3. *ibid.*

4. J. P. Larsen: *Handel's Messiah, Origins, Composition, Sources* (London 1957).

*Opus 4/2 in B flat major*

This Concerto seems to have been connected with the oratorio *Esther* in particular. The final movement was sometimes referred to as 'Handel's Menuet in *Esther*', and it is also probable that this was the concerto Mrs. Pendarves was referring to when she wrote to Mrs. Granville: "... We were together at Mr. Handel's playing here for three hours together: I did wish for you, for no entertainment in music could exceed it, except his playing on the organ in *Esther*, where he performs a part in two concertos, that are the finest things I ever heard in my life ...".<sup>5</sup> On the fifth of March 1735 Handel announced his performance of *Esther*: "At the Theatre-Royal in Covent-Garden, this present Wednesday ... will be perform'd an Oratorio, call'd AESTHER. With several New Additional Songs; likewise two new Concerto's on the Organ ...". This was the first time he mentioned the concertos in his advertisements, and may indicate that from now on he began to play them regularly during the oratorio performances.<sup>6</sup>

The first movement, *Sinfonia a tempo ordinario e staccato*, was taken, with minor alterations, from the opening *Symphonia* of the motet 'Silete venti', composed c. 1720 or earlier. Handel's reason for using this motet in particular may be attributed to his earlier use of the same motet for the 1732 version of *Esther*.

The second movement, *Allegro*, was to a large extent based on the *Trio Sonata* Op. 2/4 from the set published by Walsh c. 1732–33.

The third movement, *Adagio e staccato*, is actually a fully written-out improvisation 'adagio ad libitum', based upon a simple chord sequence in the orchestra (Ex. 1, p. 6).

The term 'Adagio e staccato' of course refers to the orchestral parts and not to the organ part, which should definitely be played as fast as possible. (This equally applies to the opening bars of the first movement of Op. 4/3 and to the first bars of *Concerto Grosso* Op. 3/3. As is clearly shown in the *Hallische Händel-Ausgabe* of Op. 3/3 (Appendix) the opening orchestral chords have

5. O. E. Deutsch: *Handel, A Documentary Biography* (London 1955), p. 383 f.

6. The four items (*Capriccio* in F, *Fantasia* in C, *Preludio ed Allegro* in g and *Sonata* in C) listed in William C. Smith's *Catalogue of Works* (Abraham: Handel, A Symposium, p. 307 ff) as part of 'The Celebrated Organ Concerto compos'd by Mr. Handel' do not belong to this work at all.

In c. 1734 Walsh issued the four pieces in a collection entitled "The Lady's Banquet 5th Book", which should not be confused with "The Lady's Entertainment 5th Book", published in September 1738. The latter was a "... Collection of the most favourite *Airs* from the late *Opera's*. ... To which is prefixed the celebrated *Organ Concerto*, Compos'd by Mr. Handel ...". A copy is preserved in King's College, Cambridge, from which it appears that the Celebrated *Organ Concerto* was not the harpsichord pieces listed above, but simply Handel's *Organ Concerto* Op. 4/2 in B, reissued a few days later in the complete edition of Op. 4.

Organ:

Orchestra:

*Adagio, e staccato.*

but little meaning in themselves, and were intended as a background for the improvisations of an oboe- and organ-player, respectively).

The fourth movement, *Allegro ma non presto*, has not been found to have any parallels in Handel's earlier works, although certain similarities between this movement and the D minor movement in Op. 3/6 (later reprinted in Op. 7/4) are evident. Although one is in the major key and the other in the minor the same basic motifs appear at the same places in both movements:

Op. 3/6,2

Op. 4/2,4

*Presto*

*Allegro ma non presto*

Performers of that period did not always confine themselves to playing the melody as it was printed, but added their own ornaments, passing notes, trills, appoggiaturas etc. Although this is widely known performers are often left to themselves as contemporary illustrations of such additions are hard to find.

I must therefore make mention of a manuscript copy (c. 1750) of the final movement of this Concerto, entitled "Handel's Menuet in Esther", which is in the Rowe Library, King's College, Cambridge. The copy (solo part only) which is reproduced in full here together with the solo part from the printed version, should of course not be considered as a 'definitive' version but only be taken as an interesting illustration of the practice then current. Such embellishments were not usually added at random; most often they were added in accordance with the example set by the leading performers of the period. Handel was of course the most eminent performer of his own Organ Concertos, and there can be no doubt that whenever we find contemporary copies of his

Copy:  
(Rowe 251)

Printed version:

Solo

Tutti

Mr. Handel's Menuet in Esther (Rowe MS 251).

(Printed by permission of the Provost and Fellows of King's College, Cambridge).

works, in particular his Organ Concertos, like the one shown here, the aim of the copyist has been to reflect Handel's own style of performance as correctly as possible.

### *Opus 4/3 in G minor*

This Concerto was also ‘composed’ about 1735, the paper and the handwriting being identical with that of Op. 4/2 and Op. 4/4 from the same time.

The first movement, Adagio, consist of two sections. First comes two bars of chords for the orchestra. These were taken from the opening movement of the Concerto Grosso Op. 3/3, having being changed from G major to G minor. Thus the introduction of Op. 3/3:



is found again in the Organ Concerto:



Consequently what was said about a similar sequence of chords in Op. 4/2, third movement, should also be applied to the opening bars of this concerto. The orchestra serves only as a background for the improvisation to be carried out by the soloist.

After the two opening bars Handel inserted the first movement of a Concerto for violin and cello, which was again based on the Trio Sonata Op. 2/6, first movement. At a later date, however, he added the word “Org.” before the two solo parts, thus making it into an Organ Concerto movement.

The second movement was also based on the Trio Sonata Op. 2/6, final movement.<sup>7</sup>

Both the third and fourth movements of this Organ Concerto were based on the last two movements of the Concerto for violin and cello, which themselves had been arranged from the last two movements of the Recorder Sonata Op. 1/2 in G minor.

### *Opus 4/4 in F major*

In the case of this Concerto we find for the first time an exact date of composition. In the autograph the last movement, a fugue, is followed by an

7. Cf. Abraham: Handel, A Symposium (London 1954), p. 211 & 266.



Alleluja chorus, at the end of which Handel wrote "S. D. G. GFH March 25. 1735". On the 26th of March a performance of Deborah was given "... With a New Concerto on the Organ ...".

The present Concerto was composed at the same time as the opera Alcina, which can be seen from the fact that the tutti introduction to the first movement of the concerto is practically identical with the opening orchestral section of the chorus from Alcina "Questo é il cielo di contenti".

The second movement, Andante, is significant in that Handel here for the first—and only—time indicated which organ stops he intended to use (cf. p. 13). The solo part of this movement is derived from at least two different gignes from Handel's earlier harpsichord suites, as will be seen from the following examples:



The third movement, Adagio, was originally composed as part of a Solo Sonata.<sup>8</sup> Handel transposed it from G minor to D minor, altered the melody slightly and inserted it in the Organ Concerto.

#### *Opus 4/5 in F major*

According to Hawkins<sup>9</sup> the fifth concerto was a Harp Concerto, while the sixth was a Flute Concerto composed for one of Handel's friends. Hawkins must have mistaken one concerto for the other, as the sixth concerto was in fact for harp and orchestra while no. 5 was originally a Recorder Sonata; and this instrument may very well have been used for the solo part of the concerto as well.

Unfortunately the greater part of the autograph of this Concerto has been lost. A fragment, comprising about two thirds of the last movement is, however, preserved in the Fitzwilliam Museum (30 H 14). The format of the paper, and the handwriting indicate the time of 'composition' as 1735 or a little earlier. The autograph fragment reveals that Smith had been told to copy the Recorder Sonata Op. 1/11, leaving enough space for Handel to add the orchestral parts. This explains why the solo part of the concerto, including the figured bass, is completely identical with that of the sonata. Handel's autograph

8. Handel's autograph of this earlier version is in the Fitzwilliam Museum, (30 H 10).

9. Hawkins: *A General History of the Science and Practice of Music* (London 1776) vol. 5, p. 356–57.

of the Sonata (Fitzw. Mus. 30 H 10) may have been the one Smith used for his copying.

The fragment of the Concerto has the words "ad libitum" at the end of the solo part, which proves that Handel also played this work—or at least part of it—on the organ.

#### *Opus 4/6 in B flat major*

This work was originally played as a Concerto for Harp, Lute and Orchestra with organ continuo during the performance of Alexander's Feast in 1736. At later performances in 1737 and 1739 a Concerto for Harp, Lute and Lyrichord is mentioned in the librettos. Handel also produced a version for harp and orchestra, the autograph of which is in the British Museum (RM 20. g. 12). Furthermore, pencilled notes in this autograph show that he also played the first movement—in A major instead of B major—as part of his Organ Concerto Second Set no. 2. The version for organ and orchestra, as published in Op. 4, was based on Handel's autograph score of the Harp Concerto. No doubt the harp (= organ) version is but a poor arrangement of the original Double Concerto, a reconstruction of which has been made by Thurston Dart.

It should be noted that the Concerto has only three movements, which is quite extraordinary for a Handel concerto; and also that the three movements bear little resemblance to other works by him. Since the autograph of the original Double Concerto has been lost it is not possible to establish any exact date of composition. Still, it seems most likely that it was composed for the performance of Alexander's Feast, that is, about 1735–36.

#### *Opus 4/1 in G minor—G major*

The printed edition of this Concerto has four movements, in G minor, G major, E minor and G major. The autograph of the last three movements has been lost, while that of the first movement is preserved in the British Museum (RM 20. g. 12). Handel's own notes in pencil after this first movement show that it was to be succeeded by two movements for solo organ, i. e. an Adagio 'ad libitum' and an Allegro (or Andante), the theme of which is sketched as follows:



This theme is also found in an aria that occurred to Handel several times, as he also used it in sketches for Jupiter in Argos ("In braccio al tuo spavento") and Imeneo ("Se ricordar ten vuoi").

As for the first movement of the Organ Concerto both the handwriting, and



the format of the paper show that it must have been composed at a later date than the Concertos nos. 2–6. In any case there can be no doubt that this first movement in G minor did not originally belong to the rest of the concerto, in which it was placed; it was part of an unfinished work in G minor—(E flat major—G minor). As such it will be referred to as Op. 4/1a.

The last three movements of this Concerto (= Op. 4/lb.) show every sign of having been taken from what was originally a Trio Sonata. This holds good of the final movement at least, as the Trio Sonata movement which Handel used as a model is still in existence in the Fitzwilliam Museum (30. H. 13).<sup>10</sup>

»Concerto« in G major (*Chaconne*)

This unpublished Concerto is found in the collection of sketches in the Fitzwilliam Museum (30. H. 14, p. 1.). The paper is that of IIa/C as classified by J. P. Larsen. On the bottom lines is written a first sketch of the Siciliano, which Handel later included in his Organ Concerto Second Set no. 1 as the second movement. The sketch of the Chaconne movement must therefore date from the beginning of 1739 or perhaps earlier, as Handel finished his Organ Concerto Second Set no. 1 on April 2nd 1739. The upper half of the page shows that the Concerto consisted of one or two movements for harpsichord (organ?) solo, after which came one movement for the solo instrument accompanied by small orchestra consisting of recorders, oboes, strings and continuo. The solo part is not fully written out, but it appears from the sketches that it was to be taken from various chaconnes, in particular those in G major with 21 and 62 variations. This Chaconne for soloist and orchestra was to be in three sections, the second of which—in G minor—was to be played by the soloist without orchestral accompaniment. The Chaconne movement was followed by a solo Adagio.

From all this we get a very good impression of what Handel's Organ Concertos originally looked like: one or two movements for solo organ<sup>11</sup> followed by one or two movements for organ and orchestra. It also corresponds very closely to the description given by Hawkins, "When he gave a Concerto, his method in general was, to introduce it with a voluntary movement on the

10. This movement was included by Chrysander in Op. 5/6. It was, however, omitted in the first printed edition of Op. 5 (published in 1739), probably because it had already been used in the Concerto.

The whole of Handel's stock of Trio Sonatas later to be used in other instrumental works has not yet been thoroughly investigated. It seems as if this sketching of trio sonatas is a close parallel to his composing of Italian duets to be used later on in the *Messiah* a. o.

11. Evidence of such a practice is to be found in Handel's autograph for the second movement of his Harpsichord Suite no. 6 (in RM 20.g.14). At beginning of this Largo Handel wrote the word "Org" in pencil. After the Adagio are the words (in ink) "Segue la Fuga".

Diapasons, which stole on the ear in a slow and solemn progression; the harmony close wrought, and as full as could possibly be expressed; the passages constructed with stupendous art; the whole, at the same time, being perfectly intelligible, and having the appearance of great simplicity. This kind of Prelude was succeeded by the Concerto itself, which he executed with a degree of spirit and firmness that no one even pretended to equal . . .”.

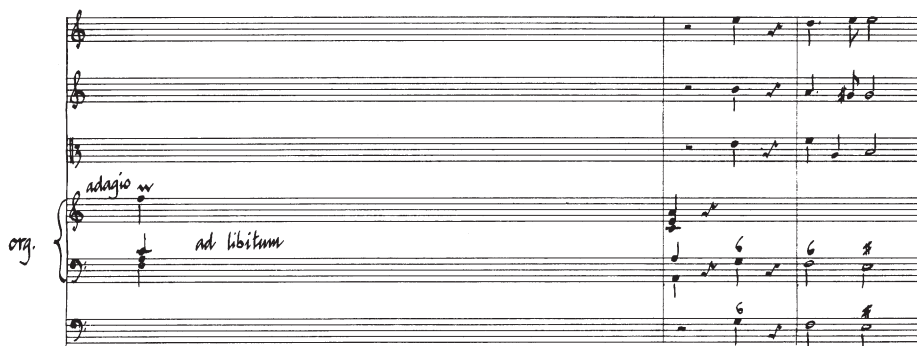
### *Saul Concerto in C major*

This Organ Concerto was included in the Oratorio *Saul*, which explains why it has never been published separately. It was presumably composed at the end of 1738 and the beginning of 1739.

In Handel's autograph score of *Saul* (RM 20. g. 3) the third movement of the Overture is written for solo oboe and orchestra. In pencil he added the words “Ad libitum” in the solo part as he usually did in his organ concertos. In both the Granville copy (Eg. 2935) and that in the Hamburg collection this solo has been transferred to the organ.

A reconstruction of the Organ Concerto is made possible by comparing Handel's autograph notes in his own score with the Hamburg copy, which gives the following result,

1. Organo ad libitum, or Larghetto (Sinfonia II act, 1st movement).
2. Allegro (Overture, 3rd movement).
3. Adagio for solo organ (Harpsichord Suite II, 1st movement). In the autograph it is sketched as follows:



4. Allegro 6/8 (Sinfonia II act, 2nd movement).
5. Menuet (Overture, final movement).

The second and fourth movements of this Organ Concerto were based on an unpublished Trio Sonata in C major (now in the Fitzwilliam Museum, 30. H. 9).

The fourth movement—Allegro 6/8—shows traces of influence from Domenico Scarlatti's Sonatas, which Handel also used extensively in this Concerto

Grossi Op. 6. Stylistic affinities between the Organ Concerto movement and some of the Scarlatti Sonatas (K. 26 & 33 in particular) are evident, although no actual borrowings can be demonstrated. The fact that Handel was also familiar with the Sonata K. 33 proves that he had acquired Roseingrave's edition, published in January 1739, which comprised twelve Sonatas and the thirty *Essercizi*.<sup>12</sup>

The composition of the *Sinfonia II* act (= the first and fourth movements of the present Organ Concerto) must therefore have taken place during the first half of that same year.

### *Handel's Organ*

It might be appropriate at this stage to sum up very briefly what is known about Handel's organ.

During his visit to Oxford in 1733 Handel must without doubt have seen and played the strange instrument invented by Mr. Munday, who "plays upon the Harpsichord and two Organs, either single or all together, with one set of Keys, wherein he makes 30 Varieties, without taking his Hands off."<sup>13</sup>

Unfortunately very little is known about the organ on which Handel played the early Organ Concertos Op. 4. From the Concerto Op. 4/4 and the continuo part for Alexander's Feast (RM 19. a. 1) it is certain that his organ at that time had at least four stops,

Open Diapason,  
Stopped Diapason,  
Principal, and  
Flute.

In September 1738 Jennens described in a letter some of Handel's "maggots", "... His second maggot is an organ of £ 500 price which (because he is overstocked with money) he has bespoke of one Moss of Barnet. This organ, he says, is so constructed that as he sits at it he has a better command of his performers than he used to have, and he is highly to think with what exactness his Oratorios will be performed by the help of this organ; so that for the future instead of beating time at his oratorios, he is to sit at the organ all the time with his back to Audience".<sup>14</sup> The organ thus described by Jennens has been mistaken for a small chamber organ, but as Winton Dean has already pointed out it was certainly not a chamber organ, but a combination of harpsichord and organ—no doubt inspired by the instrument Handel had seen in Oxford five years earlier.<sup>15</sup> A further description of this instru-

12. R. Kirkpatrick: Domenico Scarlatti, Princeton 1953, p. 402 f. & 442 f.

13. O. E. Deutsch: Handel, A Documentary Biography, London 1955, p. 322 f.

14. O. E. Deutsch, op. cit. p. 466.

15. W. Dean: Handel's Dramatic Oratorios and Masques (London 1959), p. 110.

ment is given by Burney in his account of the performances in 1784: "The keys of communication with the harpsichord, at which Mr. Bates, the conductor, was seated, extended nineteen feet from the body of the organ, and twenty feet seven inches below the perpendicular of the set of keys by which it is usually played. Similar keys were first contrived in this country for Handel himself at his Oratorios; but to convey them to so great a distance from the instrument, without rendering the touch impracticably heavy, required uncommon ingenuity and mechanical resources".<sup>16</sup>

In his earlier Organ Concertos Handel had never indicated any dynamic changes in the organ part, and yet from the beginning of 1739 (starting with the concertos in the Second Set) he suddenly introduces all sorts of subtleties such as echoes, imitation of bird's voices, dynamic changes etc. made possible only by an organ with more than one manual. In 1740 he wrote the Organ Concerto Op. 7/1, in the first movement of which he introduces an independent bass-line and later on a Trio, which he states is to be played on two manuals and pedal. Handel's newly-built harpsichord-organ must have also been provided with a pedal-board.

This new instrument, built according to his own specifications, must have represented a great source of inspiration for Handel. In the spring of 1739 he performed the oratorios *Saul and Israel in Egypt*. In the autumn he composed his twelve *Concerti Grossi* Op. 6 in less than a month's time; in the same year he performed *Jupiter in Argos*, composed the *Ode for St. Cecilia's Day* and furthermore at least two new Organ Concertos. In January 1740 he set music to the *Ode L'Allegro, il Penseroso ed il Moderato*,<sup>17</sup> which was performed on February 27th, along with a new Organ Concerto, Op. 7/1. Later in 1740 he also completed two Operas, *Imeneo* and *Deidamia*.

It has often been said that the mental illness from which Handel suffered in the mid-thirties may have filled him with fear of losing his ability as a composer, and that this would explain why he jotted down so many motifs in his sketchbooks, in particular during the late thirties. This may be true as far as his activities in the late forties and early fifties are concerned, but I do not think that the theory holds good of Handel's work of the late thirties. I am inclined to believe that a considerable number of the sketches were made during Handel's practising on his newly-built organ. The availability of a brand-new organ, built according to his own specifications, explains why Handel was suddenly able to turn out such a large number of instrumental works; first of all the twelve *Concerti Grossi* Op. 6.

The large number of borrowings from keyboard works which appear in Handel's works from 1739 and onwards must undoubtedly be ascribed to his

16. Burney, *An Account of the Musical Performances ... in Commemoration of Handel* (London 1785), p. 8.

17. In both works the organ is used as a solo instrument.

preoccupation with this new instrument. In the *Concerti Grossi* Op. 6 he borrowed themes and motifs from Muffat's *Componimenti musicali*, from D. Scarlatti's *Sonatas*, from Kuhnau's *Frische Klavierfrüchte* and also from his own keyboard works. The *Ode for St. Cecilia's Day* is largely based on Muffat themes, and in the *Organ Concertos Second Set/2*, Op. 7/1 and Op. 7/2 Handel used material from Muffat and Kuhnau.

In September 1749 Handel wrote to Jennens: "Sir, Yesterday I received Your Letter in answer to which I hereunder specify my Opinion of an Organ which I think will answer the Ends You propose, being every thing that is necessary for a good and grand Organ, without Reed Stops, which I have omitted, because they are continually wanting to be tuned, which in the Country is very inconvenient . . . The System of Organ I advise is, (Vizt

The Compass to be up to D and down to Gamut  
full Octave                      Church Work  
One Row of Keys, whole stops and none in halves.

Stops

An Open Diapason—of Metal throughout to be in Front  
A Stopt Diapason—the Treble Metal and the Bass Wood  
A Principal—of Metal throughout  
A Twelfth—of Metal throughout  
A Fifteenth—of Metal throughout  
A Great Tierce—of Metal throughout  
A Flute Stop—such a one is in Freemans Organ."<sup>18</sup>

This seems to be extremely valuable information. It must, however, be borne in mind that Handel in his specification omitted not only the reed stops, which he may have had on his own organ, but also a second manual, and pedal. Although he may also have omitted other stops for various reasons we get at least some idea of the sound of Handel's own organ.

With all this in mind the size and registration of the organ to be used in Handel's *Organ Concertos* composed in and after 1739 should be reconsidered. Two manuals and pedal will be necessary to obtain the proper balance between soloist and orchestra. Since Handel did in fact dispose of a pedal-board on his organ he may also have used it now and then to emphasize and reinforce the bass line, even if this is not clearly indicated in the solo part. To a skilful organist there is no difficulty in using—throughout or for certain passages—the pedal for the bass line of a composition even if it is written on two staves only. The fact that all Handel's *Organ Concertos*—except Op. 7/1—were printed with the organ part on two staves has led to the misunderstanding that they were to be played on an organ without pedal. For this reason even

18. Deutsch: *Documentary Biography*, p. 675 f. The organ built according to this specification, except for the addition of a second manual, is still in use in the church of Great Packington, Warwickshire.

some of the large-scale concertos of Op. 7 have been performed on a small organ positif. It is not difficult to see why this misunderstanding has arisen. If Handel had had an organ with even three manuals and pedal this would not have been made clear from his score. He himself played the solo part, and he himself also had the instrument for which the music was originally intended. Therefore it would have been pointless to indicate any changes from one manual to the other; neither was there any need to write down the registration of each movement, still less an independent stave for the pedal part. Such indications were of course also omitted in the printed editions, the Concertos being advertised as being "for the harpsichord or organ".

#### *Second Set/1 in F major*

In 1740 Walsh published another volume of Six Concertos for the Organ or Harpsichord, the last four of which were merely transcriptions of the concerti grossi Op. 6 nos. 10, 1, 5 and 6. No instrumental parts were published. Of the remaining two concertos the one in F major, no. 1, was completed on April 2nd 1739. Two days later Israel in Egypt was given its first performance, and the concerto must have been written for that occasion.

The first movement is based on the first movement of the Trio Sonata Op. 5/6.

Both the second and third movements are usually described as having been arranged from the Concerto Grosso Op. 6/9 in F major. Apart from the fact that Handel did not compose his Concerti Grossi Op. 6 until the late spring, a closer examination of the two autograph scores in question has shown that the Organ Concerto must beyond any reasonable doubt be considered the original version of these two movements.

A study of Handel's autograph score for the Organ Concerto as compared with the printed editions reveals that the first printed edition contained a much longer version of this second movement than the second edition from 1761, which is the one used to-day. The original version contained a good deal more of "Cuckoo" and "Nightingale" music, but Handel shortened many of these passages at later performances, perhaps when a two-manual organ was not available.

The fourth movement was also based on the Trio Sonata Op. 5/6.

The indication after the second movement "Ad lib ex A C<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub>" did not appear in the original version, and must have been added when the work was revised (that is, at the same time as the second movement was shortened).

#### *Second Set/2 in A major*

A parallel version of this Organ Concerto is to be found in the Concerto Grosso Op. 6/11 also in A major, which in addition contains a fugue. The



Organ Concerto is usually regarded as an arrangement of the Concerto Grosso; this, however, is not entirely correct. In the second printed edition (1761) of the Second Set of Six Concertos the one in F major was entitled 'Handel's Second Concerto', which may or may not imply that the Concerto in A major was composed before that in F. Handel finished his Organ Concerto in F major on April 2nd 1739, and the Concerto Grosso Op. 6/11 on October 30th 1739.

A detailed study of the autograph scores of either concerto shows that the first, third and fourth movements of the Organ Concerto were original compositions, having been corrected over and over again, while the corresponding movements of the Concerto Grosso show every sign of having been copied from the earlier work. As for the second movement of the Organ Concerto it is impossible to decide whether it was based on the Concerto Grosso version and inserted later on or whether it was originally composed as part of another Organ Concerto in A major. At a certain time there were in fact two different A major Organ Concertos. This can be seen from a copy in the Fitzwilliam Museum (30. H. 15) comprising only three movements: Largo, Org. ad libitum and Allegro; and also from the fact that Handel wrote the title "Concerto" at the beginning of the present second movement—Andante—in his autograph score.

The first movement of this A major Organ Concerto is another typical example of Handel's preoccupation at that time with the imitation of bird's voices, in particular that of the nightingale, which is imitated here and similarly in the aria "Sweet bird ..." from L'Allegro, in which the flute plays the leading part.

The theme of the second movement—Andante—is a slightly altered version of a theme from Kuhnau's 'Frische Klavierfrüchte' (1696), Suonata III, 1st movement:

Kuhnau:



Handel:



*Opus 7/1 in B flat major*

Handel finished this Organ Concerto on February 17th 1740, and included it in the first performance of L'Allegro ten days later.

The first movement is a grandiose Chaconne for orchestra and organ with two manuals and pedal, in which Handel displays all his skill as an organist. It is divided into two sections, the first in 4/4 and the second in 3/4. In the first section all the variations are new, apart from the quotation from an early G minor Passacaglia. After the rhythm has changed (not the tempo) Handel suddenly introduces thematic material borrowed from one of his contemporaries, the Viennese composer Gottlieb Muffat. In about 1736 Muffat had published his *Componimenti Musicali*, a collection of harpsichord suites ending with a Ciacona in G major/G minor/G major using the same bass line as the one Handel had already used for his Chaconne with 21 variations. In his new Organ Concerto Handel now took the opportunity to demonstrate that he himself was a better composer of chaconnes than Muffat. He took some of the best of the Muffat variations, altered them slightly and placed them in his own Chaconne; the score was even again.

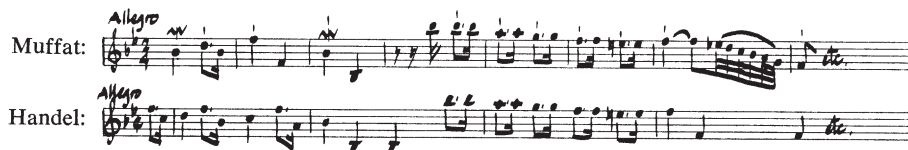
Perhaps the following examples will illustrate the point,



The second movement—*Largo e piano*—is based on various slow movements from Kuhnau's 'Klavierfrüchte', in particular that of *Suonata VII*. The time signature 3/2, the motif in Handel's sixth bar, and also the use of

minims and crotchets only, show very clearly that Handel was strongly influenced by these keyboard works by Kuhnau.

For the last movement Handel again turned to Muffat's *Componimenti*,<sup>19</sup> this time to borrow the theme from *La Hardiesse* in Suite VI:



Handel's notes in the autograph of this Organ Concerto reveal that he omitted the first two movements when no pedal was available, for instance during his visit to Dublin, and played an arrangement of the fugue from Op. 6/11 instead, transposed to B major and followed by an *Adagio* in G minor for organ solo.

### *Opus 7/2 in A major*

At the end of this Concerto Handel wrote "Fine London Febr. 5. 1743", that is, a few months after his return from Ireland and immediately before the first performance of *Samson* on February 18th.

Muffat's harpsichord suites seem to have been an almost inexhaustible source of inspiration to Handel when he was to compose purely instrumental music. The first movement of this Concerto, at first entitled *Ouverture Vivace*, is derived from Muffat's Suite I, first movement, which was also called *Ouverture*.



The subject of the following Fugue is derived from two bars of a fugue in Kuhnau's 'Klavierfrüchte', *Suonata VII*. Although Handel altered it almost beyond recognition the origin of his own theme is evident:



19. A list of Handel's borrowings from Muffat and other composers is given in W. Dean, op. cit. p. 643 ff. Some other borrowings from Muffat are described in the additional fifth volume of the Chrysander Edition, in which the *Componimenti Musicali* are reprinted.

The final movement of the Organ Concerto is a rearrangement of one for two horns and orchestra, originally composed as the third movement of the overture to *Samson*. The ritornello was taken from Muffat's Suite VI, *La Coquette*:



The repeat in the first section of this final movement was to start from bar 9, and not from the first bar as in the Chrysander Edition; this appears from the autograph score.

#### *Opus 7/4 in D minor/D major*

When Op. 7 was about to be published after Handel's death only five complete Organ Concertos could be found. The publishers managed to find an Adagio for two organs and double orchestra in D minor (composed before 1744/45<sup>20</sup>) and an Allegro for organ and orchestra in D major, composed after 1744/45.<sup>20</sup> In the D minor movement they omitted one of the organs and also nine bars at the end.<sup>21</sup> The Adagio was then followed by the D major Allegro, for which Handel had found inspiration in the Suite II from Telemann's *Musique de Table* (published in Hamburg 1733).

The Telemann movement—entitled *Air*—goes like this:



which Handel altered slightly:



The very first bars of Handel's version of this theme are an exquisite illustration of his ability to transform a rather conventional opening into a vigorous and well-proportioned theme.

20. The copying of the Granville Collection was completed c. 1744/45, cf. J. P. Larsen, *Handel's Messiah*, p. 211. The D minor Adagio is included in the volume of *Organ Concertos* (Eg. 2945), the D major Allegro (in the autograph: *Allegro così così*) is not.

21. The very fine original setting of this D minor Adagio is reprinted in the Chrysander Edition vol. 48, p. 51.

To end this Concerto the publisher (or perhaps one of Handel's assistants) took the D minor movement for organ and orchestra that had already been published once before, as part of the Concerto Grosso Op. 3/6 (publ. c. 1734). There is nothing at all to suggest that Handel should have played this concerto in the version printed as Op. 7/4.

*Concerto in D minor (AE/1)*

In the second half of the 1740's Handel wrote two Concertos for Organ and Orchestra, which for some reason were not available when Op. 7 was published in 1761. They were first printed in Arnold's Edition in 1797.

One of these is in D minor, and has only two movements: Andante 3/4 and Allegro 9/8, though Handel added "Org. Adagio ad lib./poi una Fuga/ Allegro ad lib/poi/segue 9/8" after the first movement.

Both the Andante and the Allegro were based on a Flute Sonata in B minor by Telemann (*Musique de Table I*, 5). In the first movement the Telemann ritornello remains unaltered in Handel's version, except for the transposition from B to D minor. The same method was employed for the second movement—no attempt being made to improve upon the theme. At a certain point Handel's inspiration seems to have dried up; his autograph shows how he then crossed out some of the duller passages and again turned to the Flute Sonata where he found the following motif:



which helped him to finish the movement.

In Chrysander's Edition the final movement of this Organ Concerto is incorrect in that the viola part is identical with that of the bass. Handel did in fact write an independent viola part to fill in the harmonies.

*Concerto in F major (AE/2)*

The second of the two Organ Concertos published by Arnold for the first time was one in F major, comprising no less than eight movements. The authenticity of that version is, however, rather dubious, since Handel always limited the number of movements in his organ concertos to four, or five.

Furthermore, in the British Museum (Add. MSS 30310) there is an autograph copy of the organ part in only five movements, arranged in the following order:

Handwritten musical notation for five movements of an organ concerto. The movements are numbered 1 through 5. Movement 1 is marked 'Grave' and is in C major, 4/4 time. Movement 2 is marked 'Allegro' and is in B-flat major, 2/4 time. Movement 3 is marked 'Org. ad libitum' and is in B-flat major, 2/4 time. Movement 4 is marked 'Andante' and is in B-flat major, 3/4 time. Movement 5 is marked 'Marche allegro' and is in B-flat major, 2/4 time. The notation is written on five staves, each with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat (B-flat major).

As for the remaining three movements in Arnold's version it is not possible to tell whether he arranged them for organ and orchestra himself, or whether they were in fact just another Organ Concerto made up by Handel from one of his *Concerti a Due Cori*. Still, the version based on Handel's own organ part seems to be more correct than that printed by Arnold and must therefore be preferred.

The orchestral parts of this concerto were of course taken from the corresponding movements of the *Concerto a Due Cori* in F major.

The first movement is a further development of an idea already used by Handel in the Overture for two Clarinets and Corno di Caccia.

The opening theme of the fourth movement was also used in the Overture to *Joseph*, which Handel had finished in 1743/44.

The final movement is identical with the March in *Judas Maccabaeus*, which was composed in 1746. The March was, however, not originally composed for the oratorio but must have been included at later performances. The theme was taken from the *Air Vivace* in Muffat's *Componimenti Musicali*, Suite VI:

Handwritten musical notation for the *Air Vivace* from Muffat's *Componimenti Musicali*, Suite VI. The notation is written on a single staff with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat (B-flat major). The tempo marking 'Air Vivace' is written above the staff. The notation includes various musical symbols such as notes, rests, and accidentals.

#### *Opus 7/6 in B flat major*

This Concerto appears as number six in the printed edition Op. 7, although it was in fact composed before the Organ Concertos no. 3 and 5—about 1748/49.

In the first movement of this concerto Handel wrote in his autograph score "Senza ripieni" at the beginning and "qui entran li ripien" towards the end.



Similar indications of “senza ripieni” or “con ripieni” appear only in those works which Handel performed during the spring of 1749, i. e. the oratorios *Hercules*, *Solomon* and *Susanna*, as can be seen from the scores in the Hamburg Collection.

The origin of the Organ Concerto is a *Sinfonia*, which was probably written for *Joshua* (first performed in March 1748). Handel seems to have changed his mind for he took the first and third movements of the *Sinfonia* and made them into an Organ Concerto. The slow movement of the original *Sinfonia*, entitled *Air Lentement*, was then rearranged and placed at the beginning of *Joshua*, as “*Introduzione*”. The original version of the *Air Lentement* (unpublished, in RM 20. g. 12) may, or may not, have been used in the new Organ Concerto. It was based on another movement from Muffat's *Componimenti*, namely the *Adagio* from *Suite I*:



The theme of the first movement of the *Sinfonia*, and Concerto, was taken from a Telemann concerto for two horns and orchestra in E flat (*Musique de Table III*, 3).



In Handel's bar 57 a new motif appears, which he also borrowed from the same Telemann movement:



Handel made the unfinished final movement of the Sinfonia into an Organ Concerto simply by adding the words "Org. ad lib" in the margin of the autograph score after bars eight and sixteen. Apart from that he wrote no further indications of the music to be played in the organ solo, so that S<sub>1</sub>, before Op. 7 went into print, had to make an arrangement in which he introduced some suggestions for the organ solo. The incipits thus printed are, however, not very much in the style of Handel.

*Opus 7/5 in G minor*

Handel finished this Organ Concerto on January 31, 1750. On March 16th his new Oratorio Theodora was given its first performance "... With a New Concerto on the Organ".

The Concerto was originally composed in three movements, with the addition of one or two movements for solo organ. For some reason a rather dull and clumsy arrangement of an early Handel Gavotte was added after the Menuet when Op. 7 was published in 1761. Handel himself wrote the date after the Menuet, with no indication of additional movements. Furthermore, the manuscript on which the printed version of this Gavotte was based is preserved in the Fitzwilliam Museum (30. H. 15). The handwriting is not Handel's, but belongs to one of the copyists of the Smith 'circle', probably Sm jr.

A highly characteristic feature of the first movement is the fact that the opening ritornello has been put together from several smaller motifs. The opening theme no longer consists of only one basic idea, but has several contrasting sections of two or four bars each. In doing so Handel of course provided himself with ample material for his improvisations, however, this was not the main reason for adapting this procedure. As already suggested by Winton Dean the more likely explanation is that "... his imagination still made a creative response to the stimulus of words, which set it going in the airs, but was no longer equal to the supply of basic raw material for instrumental or contrapuntal development."<sup>22</sup> Handel's inventive power was beginning to fade, and he had to abandon his former practice of writing down the whole movement without pausing. Instead he had to build up the ritornello bit by bit, by adding two or four bars at a time. This emerges very clearly from the first movement of this Concerto, and becomes even more evident in the first movement of his next and last Organ Concerto Op. 7/3.

The first movement seems to be genuine Handel; no borrowings from other works having been yet discovered.<sup>23</sup>

22. W. Dean, op. cit. p. 57.

23. The parallel quoted in Abraham, op. cit. Ex. 87 should not be considered as a "borrowing" in the usual sense of the word. It is just one of the many clichés which composers of that period usually employed in the key of G minor, along with strong elements of chromaticism and abrupt modulations.

For the next movement Handel resorted to the Chaconne formula; the whole movement shows very convincingly that he was still able to compose the most brilliant music as soon as the right 'stimulus' was at hand.

The final movement—a Menuet in G minor—was originally composed as part of the Overture to *Alceste*. The performance of *Alceste*, which was to have taken place at the beginning of 1750, was abandoned for some unknown reason, and Handel put the Menuet in his Organ Concerto instead. The remaining parts of the *Alceste* overture were used in *Jephtha* the following year, with the addition of a new Menuet.

### *Opus 7/3 in B flat major*

This was Handel's last Organ Concerto. He began the composition on January 1st 1751 and finished it three days later, on January 4th.

On March 1st of the same year he performed *The Choice of Hercules* "...With a New Concerto on the Organ", which must have been this one.

Between January 31st and August 30th, 1751, Handel also composed his last Oratorio, *Jephtha*, being interrupted several times by his eye trouble. The composition of *Jephtha* was to a large extent based on material which Handel borrowed from the *Six Masses* (published in 1747) by the Czech composer Frantisek Habermann.

As already mentioned by Max Seiffert (*Kirchenmus. Jahrb.* 1909) the second movement of this Concerto is based on a Habermann theme, taken from the *Osanna* movement of his *Mass* Opus 1/3. Borrowings from Habermann may also be found in the first movement; due to unfortunate circumstances it has not been possible so far to verify this.

The *Spiritoso* was succeeded by a Menuet in B major, for organ and orchestra. In 1761, when Op. 7 was published, this menuet must have been mislaid temporarily. The publisher therefore took another Menuet for orchestra without organ, which had been found among Handel's autograph manuscripts. As already suggested by Chrysander it had never had any connection with this Organ Concerto.

A conducting score of this Organ Concerto (in FM 30. H. 15) reveals how Handel when his sight began to fail later on omitted all the passages of interplay between organ and orchestra, and confined himself to improvisation between the tutti ritornellos only. In his *Sketch of the Life of Handel*<sup>24</sup> Burney gives the following account of Handel's practice: "... for, after his blindness, he played several of his old organ-concertos, which must have been previously impressed on his memory by practice. At last, however, he rather chose to trust his inventive powers, than those of reminiscence: for, giving the band only the skeleton, or ritornels of each movement, he played all the solo parts

24. London 1785, p. 30.

extempore, while the other instruments left him, *ad libitum*; waiting for the signal of a shake, before they played such fragments of symphony as they found in their books”.

\*

In conclusion, some of the more important points of the results accounted for in this present study may be briefly summarized as follows,

Handel's Organ Concertos were composed between 1735 and 1751 as interludes in his oratorio performances, 1739–40 being his most productive period after the installation of a new organ.

The Organ Concertos when played by Handel himself consisted of one or two movements for solo organ, followed by one or two movements for organ and orchestra.

The Concertos Op. 4 were written for a small chamber organ with perhaps four stops only.

The Concertos written from 1739 onwards were performed on a somewhat larger organ, with two manuals and pedal. The organ may even have had reed stops.

After the installation of the new instrument (at the end of 1738 or the beginning of 1739) Handel began to play various collections of harpsichord music, viz. his own Suites, Scarlatti's Sonatas, Kuhnau's *Frische Klavierfrüchte* and Muffat's *Componimenti musicali*, all of which left their mark on his instrumental compositions from the following years.

Nearly two thirds of the themes used in the Organ Concertos were borrowed from some of Handel's other works, or from those of other composers, viz. D. Scarlatti, Kuhnau, Muffat, Telemann and Habermann.