

## Handel Flute and Recorder Sonatas

2009 is the 250th anniversary of Handel's death and here in London we have already celebrated with a very intensive London Handel Festival, and there are many other Handel performances throughout the year, including chamber music at Handel House, his home in Brook Street near Oxford Circus.

Despite the enormously increasing popularity of the flute in eighteenth-century England, Handel wrote surprisingly little for the instrument. Many of his wind players in the orchestra, principally oboists, would have doubled on flute and recorder for a very occasional change of colour. It seems, too, that scholars think that several of the "Handel Flute Sonatas" may not have been written by him at all, or were actually conceived for another instrument and adapted for the flute by his publisher, John Walsh.

Walsh was quick to capitalize on the flute's growing popularity and Handel's immense appeal. Even before he had permission to publish, Walsh brought out a collection of sonatas around 1730, entitled *Sonates pour un Traversiere un Violon ou Hautbois con Basso Continuo composées par G.F. Handel*, ostensibly published by Roger of Amsterdam, yet Roger had died in 1722! Of these sonatas, three were designated for the flute, four for the recorder, three for the violin and two for the oboe. Within a couple of years, as soon as Handel's privilege to publish his own music had expired, Walsh republished the sonatas as *Solos for a German Flute a Hoboy or Violin with a Thorough Bass for the Harpsichord or Bass Violin compos'd by Mr. Handel* with a note that this version was more correct than the previous one.

The "Roger" print was in fact full of errors; movements omitted or inserted into the wrong sonatas and the inclusion of two violin sonatas which are now widely believed not to be by Handel! The three flute sonatas appear to have been taken from earlier works for other instruments: the E minor (HWV 359b op. 1 no.1) from a violin sonata in D minor, the G major (HWV 363b op.1 no.5) from an oboe sonata in F major and the B minor (HWV 379b, op.1 no. 9) from a sonata in D minor for which the solo instrument is unspecified: it would seem almost certain that this D minor sonata is for the treble recorder, whose range it fits perfectly.

Whilst some works may have been conceived with one particular instrument in mind, it was common practice to borrow anything which could be easily adapted. Handel's own re-use of so much of his own material time and time again suggests he'd have been happy for these transcriptions to be played on the flute. Happily we have two other sonatas which are genuine Handel flute works; the sonata in D major (HWV 378) and another E minor sonata (HWV 379). The D major sonata (now published by Henle) is thought to be the earliest surviving sonata by Handel (though wrongly attributed in the manuscript to the lutenist, Johann Sigmund Weiss). Interestingly it opens with the glorious ascending figure which Handel reused in the third movement of the E minor sonata (HWV 379) and also in the late D major violin sonata (HWV 371). The short third movement is a recitative without words and the opening of the second and fourth movements occur in *Il trionfo del Tempo e del Disinganno* (Rome 1707) and in the finale of the F major recorder sonata (HWV 369, op.1 no.11).

This E minor sonata (HWV 379) is Handel's own compilation of movements taken from other works: its first and fourth movements are very similar to those in the other E minor sonata, (HWV 359b op.1 no.1) and its second and fifth movements occur in the G minor recorder sonata (HWV 360, op.1 no.2) whilst the central Largo shares material with the D major flute and violin sonatas. Confusingly, this extra E minor sonata has sometimes been numbered op.1 no 1a, when in fact it never appeared in opus 1.

There are three more sonatas (formerly named 'Halle Sonatas') in A minor (HWV 374), E minor (HWV 375) and B minor (HWV 376) which were published by Walsh around 1730 (with sonatas by Geminiani, Brivio and Somis. The E minor (HWV 375) contains material from an oboe sonata and a keyboard suite. Scholars doubt the authenticity of the B minor and A minor since there is no manuscript source and it has been said that Handel never reused any extracts elsewhere. However, this is clearly not the case! On the evidence below, I think we can reclaim these works as Handel Sonatas.

All the flute sonatas are listed below with HWV numbers for clarification .

## Flute Sonata in D Major HWV 378

Adagio

Opening motive recurs in Handel's D major violin sonata (HWV 371) and in the 3rd movement of the E minor flute sonata (HWV 379).

Allegro

Similar motive used in the accompaniment to an aria in *Il trionfo del Tempo e del Disinganno* (1707). *Fido specchio!*, (Faithful mirror! In you I admire the glory of my youthful years; yet one day I shall be changed. You will always remain as you are, I am as I see myself in you; I shall not always be beautiful.) Also minor version in G minor Keyboard Suite

Adagio

Instrumental recitative. Other examples by Quantz, Frederick the Great, Telemann.

Allegro

Opening material reappears in F major recorder sonata (HWV 369, op.1 no.11) and in accompaniment to an aria in *Il trionfo del Tempo e del Disinganno* (1707) *Venga il Tempo, e làli funeste* (Let Time come, and with his dark wings dare to take these dear joys from these pleasant shores. But he sleeps, or no longer has claws; no, his counsels have no effect unless one is never to live in this life).

## Flute Sonata in E Minor HWV 379

Larghetto

6 6 9 6 # 9 3 7 4 3

Very similar to E minor flute sonata HWV 359b, op.1 no.1 and D minor violin sonata HWV 359), though with many differences of rhythm and articulation.

Andante

6 # 6 # 6

Transposed down a 3rd from 2nd movement of G minor recorder sonata, (HWV 360, op.1 no.2). Some octave transpositions in the bass and absent slurs and trills.

Largo

2 6 7 6 6

Opening motive recurs in Handel's D major violin sonata (HWV 371) and in the 1st movement of the D major flute sonata (HWV 378).

Allegro

6 6 6 6 # 5

Similar to (5 bars shorter than) 4th movement of E minor flute sonata (HWV 359b, op.1 no.1). Some differences of passage work, register and articulation.

Presto

6 # 6 6

A favourite motive of Handel's. Transposed down a 3rd from 4th movement of G minor recorder sonata, (HWV 360, op.1 no.2) but barred from the first beat and with small rhythmic differences. Bass line a 6th higher.

## Flute Sonata in E Minor HWV 359b, op.1

Grave

Allegro

Adagio

Allegro

Transposed from D minor violin sonata HWV 359), and very similar to E minor flute sonata HWV 359b, op.1 no.1 though with many differences of rhythm and articulation.

Transposed from D minor violin sonata HWV 359) and used in Chandos Anthem no.1, Adagio

Adagio oboe

violin

tenor

For the Lord is gra-cious, is gra-cious, is gra-cious is

Transposed from D minor violin sonata HWV 359)

Transposed from D minor violin sonata HWV 359) and similar to (5 bars longer than) 4th movement of E minor flute sonata (HWV 379). Some differences of passage work, register and articulation.

## Flute Sonata in G Major HWV 363b, op.1 no.5

Adagio

Allegro

Adagio

Boree

Menuetto

Complete sonata transposed from oboe sonata in F major HWV 363a. Opening phrase recurs in 1st aria of Messiah to the words *Comfort ye, my people*.

Com\_\_\_\_\_ fort ye\_\_\_\_\_ my peo ple,

Rekurs, marked *Larghetto*, as 3rd movement of C major recorder sonata (HWV 365, op.1 no.7). This movement omitted in Roger edition, with *Andante* from Sonata in B minor HWV 367b, op.1 no.9 wrongly in its place.

In the various sources this movement is entitled *Boree*, *Bouree*, *All[egr]o*, *Anglose*, and *Bourée anglaise*.

Trills in bars 1, 2 and 5 and grace notes in bars 9, 11 and 13 are included in Roger and Walsh prints but absent in manuscript sources of the oboe sonata. This movement omitted in Roger edition. Reused in Concerto grosso op.3 no 4

## Flute Sonata in B minor HWV 367b, op.1 no.9

**Largo**

**Vivace**

**Presto**

**Adagio**

**Alla breve**

**Andante**

**A tempo di Minuet**

Whole sonata transposed from recorder sonata in D minor HWV 367. Largo opening used in Chandos Anthem 3.

Make me a clean heart, O God,

Resembles *Hornpipe* in Watermusic

Transposed from recorder sonata in D minor HWV 367, where this movement is marked *Furioso*.

Transposed from recorder sonata in D minor HWV 367.

Transposed from recorder sonata in D minor HWV 367.

Transposed from recorder sonata in D minor HWV 367.

Transposed from recorder sonata in D minor HWV 367.

## Flute Sonata in A minor HWV 374 Publ. Walsh, c.1730

**Adagio**

**Allegro**

**Adagio**

**Allegro**

Allegro resembles fugal chorus in Chandos Anthem 2.

Then shall my song, with praise in spir'd, to thee my God ascend

Bars 22-24 of the second movement are very similar to bars 44-46 in the 4th movement of the A minor recorder sonata HWV 362, op.1 no.4.

4th mvt resembles *L'empio* in Guilio Cesare, albeit in a major key.

L'em-pio, sle-a-le, in-de-gno,

Similar rhythm also in 6th Chandos Anthem.

## Flute Sonata in E minor HWV 375 Publ. Walsh, 1730

**Largo**

**Allegro**

**Grave**

**Minuet**

Transposed from oboe sonata in C minor (HWV366). Reworked as duet for oboe and bassoon in *Ah! Crudel* in Rinaldo

Transposed from oboe sonata in C minor (HWV366).

Opening two bars based on 4th movement of flute sonata in E Minor HWV 379 which is itself transposed from 2nd movement of G minor recorder sonata, (HWV 360, op.1 no.2).

Based on a minuet in G minor, in the keyboard Suite in Bb major HWV 434/4.

## Flute Sonata in B minor HWV 376

**Adagio**

**Allegro**

**Allegro**

The form of a ground bass opening followed by a languishing sustained melody was a compositional device Handel used number of times in Agrippina.

A similar rising scale occurs in one of the Chandos Anthems, with the words: *Put thy trust in God.*

An indirect reference to the opening occurs in the cantata *Un alma innamorata*

Quel po - ve - ro\_\_\_ co - re

Opening motive appears in *With courage fire me, or art inspire me* in Theodora, albeit in a major key.

With cou - rage fire me, or art in - spire me,

Aside from the sonatas there are many other chamber pieces by Handel: trio sonatas (with violin and continuo) in opus 2 and 5 and an 18th century copy of the G minor oboe concerto HWV 287 has been found, designated for flute *or* oboe (now published by Bärenreiter). John Walsh continued to supply the demand with hundreds of arrangements of highlights from Handel's operas and oratorios for flute and continuo. These are a real treasure trove; mostly unpublished, I hope to make these available soon.

## Recorder Sonata in G minor HWV 360

**Larghetto**

**Andante**

**Adagio**

**Presto**

Opening motive resembles Flute Sonata in E minor HWV 375 (transposed from oboe sonata in C minor, HWV366) and first organ concerto op.4 no.3

Reused in Flute Sonata in E Minor HWV 379. Slurs and trills present here.

Opening phrase reworked in Flute Sonata in E minor HWV 375.

Reworked in Organ Concerto op.4 no.3 (HWV 291)

Reworked as 4th mvt of Organ Concerto op.4 no.3

**Allegro**

and in Agrippina

## Recorder Sonata in A minor HWV 362

**Larghetto**

**Allegro**

**Adagio**

**Allegro**

Bass line used in aria *Pur ritorno in Agrippina*

Opening motive used in major in 1st mvt of Concerto grosso op.3 no4

**Allegro**

Opening motive used rather differently in the minor in the aria *Verso in Aci, Galatea e Polifemo*

Adapted to 3 time in Keyboard Allegro in A minor

## Recorder Sonata in C major HWV 365

Larghetto

Allegro

Larghetto

A tempo di Gavotta

Allegro

2nd mvt reused in the overture to *Scipione* in G major

Ground bass used in Chandos Anthem no.6

Larghetto

8

5th mvt used in an aria in *Alessandro. Placa'alma*

Allegro

and Concerto grosso op.3 no.2

Allegro

also similar mvt in minor in Concerto grosso op3 no.6

## Recorder Sonata in F major HWV 369

Grave

6 6 6 6 5 6 6 7 4 3

Allegro

6 6 6 6

Alla Siciliana

6 6 4 # # 6

Allegro

4 2 6 6 5

Entire piece adapted for Organ Concerto op.4  
no.5 (HWV 293)

Short tutti phrases added to open and at the  
close of each half.

Allegro

Adagio

Allegro

(Allegro)

The first system of the musical score for 'The Little Boat' consists of two staves. The top staff is in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a 12/8 time signature. It contains a melody with eighth and sixteenth notes, some beamed together, and a final quarter note. The bottom staff is also in treble clef with the same key signature and time signature. It contains a bass line with eighth and sixteenth notes, some beamed together, and a final quarter note. The system ends with a double bar line.

Largo

Vivace

Furioso

Adagio

Alla breve

Andante

A tempo di menuet

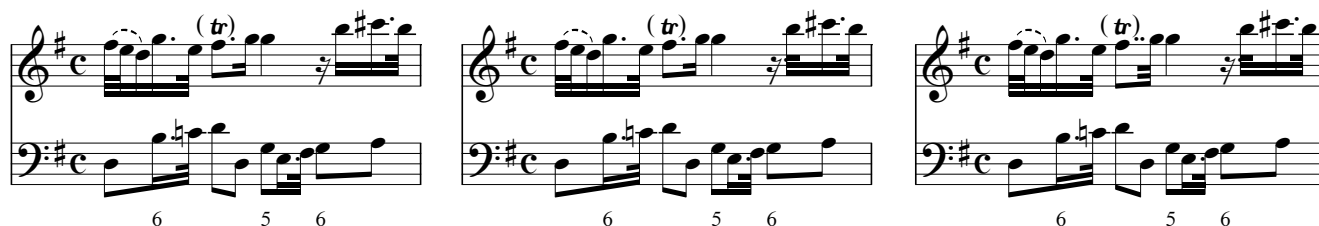
A Tempo di Minuet



## Rhythmic alteration

Handel's music poses certain questions regarding rhythm since his method of notation was not always what we might expect today. Strange as it may seem to us, it was not common practice to write dotted rests or double-dotted notes. Whilst it should be remembered that if the printed rhythms were intended by the composer, then that is exactly what he would have written, yet **if** these dotted rhythms were wanted, they were often only implied.

For instance, in bar 6 of the opening movement of both E minor sonatas (HWV 379 and 359b, op.1 no.1) the upbeat to bar 7 may have been intended to be played as written, or with a dotted semi-quaver (16th) rest followed by a demi-semi-quaver (32nd) E. Some may even advocate double dotting the cadential trill on the second beat to fit with the prevalent dotted rhythm.



HWV 379 and 359b, b.6 original

with dotted rest

and double-dotted trill

Any changes might be carried over to similar undotted phrases, for instance in bar 2.



HWV 379 and 359b, b.2 original

altered to match other upbeats

altered to match prevailing rhythm

The subject of rhythmic alteration in 18th century music is tricky. Early Music scholarship has shifted on this one! A fashion for dotting to make everything match has, with many scholars and performers, changed to a literal reading of printed rhythms. I found Stephen Heffling's book *Rhythmic Alteration in Seventeenth and Eighteenth Century Music* (Schirmer) helpful and unbiased, with evidence for and against, suggesting that there were different opinions in baroque times!

The interesting thing with Handel is that he uses and reuses fragments of his own material time and time again throughout his works with hopeless or delightful inconsistency, depending on how you see it. Anything could be different - the tempo marking, the rhythm, the articulation as well as the instrumentation. Any given rhythm, may sound very different according to whether you choose to emphasize the differences or treat them casually as light relief from monotony. Be guided by the mood, not just of the movement but of individual phrases.

Another rhythmic question arises with the first movement of the A minor recorder sonata HWV 362, op.1 no. 4, where the dotted rhythms may have been intended to fit with triplets (the 3/4 time signature implying 9/8). There is also the possibility of altering the written quavers (eighth notes) to fit with the prevailing triplets for a more lilting effect. Bizarrely, that would mean quavers (eighths), triplet quavers and semiquavers (sixteenths) could all be played the same length! The written rhythms are, of course, equally viable.



HWV 362, op.1 no.4, b.1 original

with triplets in the bass

with triplets throughout

## Suggestions for Articulation

Handel's flute and recorder sonatas contain remarkably few slurs. This could be because they were prepared for publication by Walsh or someone else, because he/they assumed the performer would add slurs where appropriate, or because he genuinely intended most notes to be articulated. We have a lot of evidence that eighteenth century flute players used a wide variety of tongue strokes, according to the character of the piece, the tempo and the grouping of notes in each phrase. The basic principles are outlined below, all of which work very well on modern as well as historical instruments. The most important element is contrast between light and shade, strong and weak, pointed or soft.

*Di*, a legato tongue stroke (gentle or firm), was used for smooth, step-wise melodic lines, eg, in the second movement of the B minor sonata HWV 376.



*Ti*, a faster, more pointed attack was used on repeated notes of the same pitch, or leaps, eg in the second movement of the E minor sonata HWV 359b, op.1 no.1, (shown here with suggested variation in strength).

Allegro



*Ti-ri* or *di-ri* (with ri on the beat) was used in dotted rhythms, eg in the first movement of the E minor sonata HWV 359b, op.1 no.1.



*Di-ri* or *Ti-ri* was used in paired notes and extended passages, eg in the Boree of the G major sonata HWV 363b, op.1 no.5.



*Di-d'l* was used for fast double-tongued passages, often combined with *ti-ri*, eg in the *Presto*, third movement of the B minor sonata.



di-ri\_ ti di-ri\_ ti di-ri\_ ti di-ri\_ ti di-ri\_ di ti ti di-ri di di di-ri di-ri di - ri di-ri di-ri di-ri di-ri di-ri di-ri di

di-di-ri ti di di-ri ti di di-ri ti di di-ri ti di di-ri ti ti ti di-ri ti di-ri di-ri di-ri di-ri di-ri di-ri di-ri di-ri di-ri

di-ri-dl ti di-ri-d'l ti di-ri-d'l ti di-ri-d'l ti di-ri-d'l ti ti di-d'l di di-d'l di-d'l di-d'l ti-d'l di-d'l di-d'l di-d'l ti-d'l di-d'l di-d'l di-d'l

d d-g t d d-g t d d-g t d d-g t d d g D t t d-g T d g d g d g D-g d-g d-g d-g D-g d-g d-g d-g

## Phrygian cadences

Many slow movements of Handel sonatas conclude with a special type of imperfect cadence, called a Phrygian cadence, as a link to the following movement. Frequently, these Phrygian cadences occur after a full cadence which is really the end of the piece. Then a short coda creates an anticipation of what is to come. The tempo is relaxed (often marked *Adagio*), the piece winds down but is left unfinished. Rhetorically it is a way of saying: “And then...” or “To find out what happened next, read on...” So often these occur just before a page turn and inevitably the connection is lost! If such interruption is unavoidable, try at least to turn the page with a sense of expectation.

A Phrygian cadence is easily recognisable. It finishes on the dominant chord, and the previous bass note is one step higher with figured bass chords 7 6. In the key of E minor, this cadence occurs a surprising number of times in Handel's flute sonatas: at the end of the E minor Largetto and Largo movements in HWV 379, the Adagio in HWV 359b, op.1 no.1, the Adagio in HWV 375 and the two Adagios in the G major sonata, HWV 363b, op.1 no.5.

Basic skeleton of a Phrygian cadence      with implied cadential trill      and with a trill with a termination.

Phrygian cadences are particularly affecting in minor keys. The seventh chord is especially touching and this invites a little embellishment. Dwell on the 7th (B) just long enough to savour the dissonance, then add a short cadenza, of just a few notes, based on notes of the seventh chord leading to a trill on the penultimate melody note. Any of the notes of the seventh chord can be used, in any order (though ascending or descending order flow most logically) and in any rhythm (not necessarily connected with the piece). Even the simple addition of one more note from the chord can be highly expressive.

In this Phrygian cadence in E minor the notes of the seventh chord are C, E, G and B.

Introducing just one new note alone is possible, but perhaps without dwelling too long upon a C, since it is already there in the bass. Here are lots of alternatives:

The E could be introduced at either octave and in combination with the C. The interval of a 6th from E to C is especially tender.

Similarly, the sixth from B up to G has a heartfelt appeal about it. It may be combined with C, E and B. Whilst only notes of the 7th chord are used, they may be tongued or slurred as you please. Suggestions are in dotted lines.



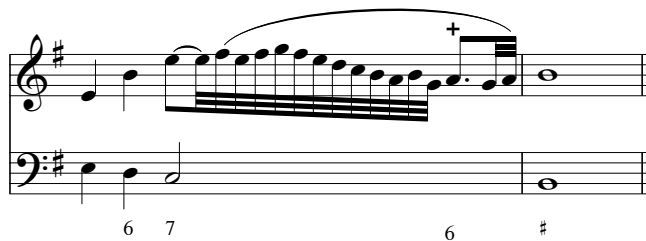
Such a tiny cadenza can be made even more enticing by adding passing notes. All passing notes must be slurred from or onto a harmony note.



This last one is typical of Italian style ornamentation, with many notes under a long slur and a shape within the melisma; a rise before the fall or a hilly contour. Here are some examples transposed and adapted from Corelli violin sonatas, supposedly as he played them.



Corelli Sonata op.5 no.5, 3rd movement



Corelli Sonata op.5 no.2, 3rd movement

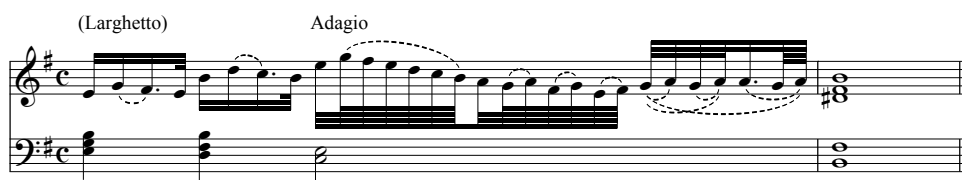
Quantz gave a beautifully florid example in his book (*Versuch*) in which he marked various entry points for lengthening or shortening the cadenza. A typical Phrygian cadence by Telemann, however, would be simpler yet poignant with a strategically placed accented chromatic rising appoggiatura (D#).



Transposed from Quantz, *Versuch*, ch.

Transposed from Telemann Methodical Sonata in C minor

And finally, one from Handel himself, transposed from the keyboard Sonata in G minor.



As a step on the way to becoming fluent in the art of improvising these embellishments, practise all the suggestions above. Pick a few that you like and memorise them. Then introduce one of them on the spur of the moment in performance. A prepared choice will still offer an element of freedom. Make up some of your own. It is a very good idea to write them down (not in the music, but on a separate piece of paper), then you can analyse what was good and what was less successful and try to work out why. Was it incorrect harmony, lack of (or too much) rhythmic interest, or inappropriate choice of articulation? That knowledge is the key to understanding this style of ornamentation.

Handel's music is so intrinsically vocal even when he is writing in a purely instrumental idiom. The connection with actual text (where material has been reused) is interesting, and may help to establish the basic character of the music, though it should not be binding, since Handel so easily mutates from fast to slow, major to minor and perhaps just as easily could change mood. Defining a mood is crucial: Handel's music is never bland and nondescript, but either happy or sad, urgent or relaxed, highly charged or at peace. The balance may shift within a movement as the motives and tonalities change, but always the intention or the *Affekt* should be clear. Choose your articulation and ornamentation (and even any rhythmic alteration) to reflect and enhance your message and deliver it with passion, commitment and clarity, as would a singer in a drama or an orator in the public forum, to win the hearts of the listeners.