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A new flute sonata by Handel

David Lasocki and Terence Best



Frontispiece from *The Compleat Tutor for the German Flute* (London, John Simpson, c 1760)

How many flute sonatas did Handel write? Chrysander's Händelgesellschaft edition¹ printed no fewer than 11, all of which were taken over into Hans-Peter Schmitz's volume for the new Hallische Händel-Ausgabe in 1955.² The discovery of the autographs and important copyists' manuscripts has, however, now changed this picture.³ We believe that Handel probably intended only one of these sonatas for the flute, and that even that is made up of four movements from other sources and another movement partly derived from elsewhere. On the other hand, a previously unknown original flute sonata by Handel has now come to light.

Seven of Chrysander's eleven sonatas were from Handel's op.1 collection: 1b in E minor, 2 in G minor, 4 in A minor, 5 in G major, 7 in C major, 9 in

B minor and 11 in F major. Another, 1a in E minor, supposedly from op.1, did in fact come from the autograph manuscript in the British Library. As we have recently shown, op.1, ostensibly published by Jeanne Roger in Amsterdam by 1722, was actually issued by John Walsh in London between 1726 and 1732 with a fake title-page, and reissued by him around 1732 with corrections and a title-page of his own.⁴ It seems to consist of compositions obtained by Walsh without Handel's permission, in some cases in earlier or later versions than those represented by the autographs.

The solo part of 1b, as Chrysander called it (it is simply the first sonata of the collection), contains a *b* in the second movement (b.34), whereas the flutes of Handel's day usually only went down to *d'*. It also

goes up to e''' and f''' , which is high for a flute sonata written in England at that time. In the autograph⁵ and the manuscript in the hand of the important Handel copyist known as S2,⁶ the sonata is in D minor, which produces an a in the second movement. Neither manuscript indicates the instrumentation, although in the autograph the sonata, called simply 'Sonata 2', begins in the middle of a page, immediately following a violin sonata. These two pieces of evidence suggest that Handel conceived the sonata for the violin.

Handel always differentiated between the transverse flute ('traversa') and the recorder ('flauto'). Sonatas nos. 2, 4, 7 and 11 were definitely intended for the recorder, not the flute. The autographs of 2, 4 and 11 are clearly marked 'Sonata a Flauto e Cembalo'.⁷ The title-page of the autograph of 7 is missing, but another copyist's manuscript⁸ is marked 'a Flauto e Cembalo', and all four sonatas bear the legend 'Flauto Solo' in the early prints. The autographs are fair copies dating from around 1712. In several details the prints present an earlier version of the text.⁹

Handel's autograph of 5 is missing. In the early prints it is found in G major and marked 'Traversa Solo'. There are no fewer than four copyists' manuscripts,¹⁰ three of them in F major; one of these is marked 'Haut: solo'. Moreover, four other versions by Handel of the fifth movement of this sonata are known, and they are all in F major.¹¹ Thus it is highly likely that the original version of this sonata was in F major, for oboe, which probability is supported by the key and range (c' to c''' in the manuscripts). Walsh's desire to publish sonatas for the newly fashionable flute makes it probable that he, rather than Handel, was responsible for the transposition and new instrumentation of the work. Nevertheless, it fits the flute well, and there is no reason why flautists should not continue to enjoy playing it.

In the early prints, 9 is in B minor and marked 'Traversa Solo'. However, the autograph and two copyists' manuscripts¹² are in D minor (range f' to d''') and one of the latter is marked 'a Flauto e Cembalo'. Clearly the sonata was originally intended for the recorder. It has in fact become well known as the third of Thurston Dart's so-called Fitzwilliam Sonatas,¹³ although for some unaccountable reason he did not print the sixth and seventh movements, claiming, wrongly, that the autograph 'omits the last two movements of what is already an immensely long

sonata'.¹⁴ The sonata is printed in full in David Lasocki's recent complete edition of the recorder sonatas.¹⁵ The autograph, and early versions of the sixth and seventh movements,¹⁶ date from around 1712. This time, however, the prints seem to derive from a source, no longer extant, which incorporated further alterations by the composer. The transposed version in B minor for flute may also have been found in this source or may have been made by Walsh.

What Chrysander called 1a is the only flute sonata ('Sonata a Travers. e Basso') to be found in Handel's autograph,¹⁷ which dates from around 1720, a little later than the other woodwind sonatas seem to have been written. The work has every appearance of having been put together in a hurry, presumably for a specific performance. The first movement is that of 1b, altered to avoid the high e''' and f''' in bars 15-17. The second and fifth movements are transposed versions of the second and fourth movements of the G minor Recorder Sonata. The fourth movement is again from 1b, rewritten to suit the flute. Even the sole newly composed movement, the third, contains reminiscences of phrases from the C major and F major recorder sonatas and begins with a borrowing of three bars from another sonata, as we shall see below.

We should like to suggest an occasion for which the sonata may have been put together. Jean Christian Kytch was a woodwind player, probably Dutch, who came to London around 1707.¹⁸ The following year he joined the orchestra of the Queen's (later King's) Theatre in the Haymarket, the opera house of the day, as a bassoonist. Handel wrote an obbligato part for him in *Rinaldo* (1711). In 1719-20, Kytch was in the service of the Duke of Chandos at Cannons, in the famous musical establishment of which Pepusch was director and for which Handel wrote his masque *Acis and Galatea* and his Chandos anthems. Thus the connection between Kytch and Handel was close. Between 1719 and 1723, as newspaper advertisements of the time tell us, Kytch supplemented his income by playing in a large number of public concerts in London, sometimes with other Cannons musicians.¹⁹ He usually played a concerto and/or a sonata for the oboe, but twice he played a concerto for the 'little flute' (small recorder). In one, and only one, of these concerts did he play the transverse flute: on 23 February 1720, which is about the time when Handel's autograph of the E

minor Sonata was written, he is advertised to play 'a solo . . . on the German flute'.²⁰ Was Kytch's desire to play the flute in a concert, then, perhaps the stimulus for Handel to put together this sonata?

The three remaining sonatas collected by Chrysander, in A minor, E minor and B minor, were published as nos. 1-3 of *Six Solos, Four for a German Flute and a Bass and Two for a Violin with a Thorough Bass . . . Compos'd by Mr Handel, Sigr. Geminiani, Sigr. Somis, Sigr. Brivio* by Walsh in 1730. The first and third sonatas exist in no other source, and their authenticity must, especially in the case of the first, be open to doubt on stylistic grounds. The second sonata opens with the first two movements of the C minor Oboe Sonata op. 1 no. 8, which was composed around 1712, and must be later than the oboe version since it presents Handel's final version of the text, the autograph of which contains many corrections.²¹ (This piece of evidence, incidentally, refutes the common belief that these three sonatas were written before 1703 during Handel's period in Halle.) The second sonata's third movement is not found elsewhere. The last movement is a minuet, found elsewhere in G minor, which was later published in the second set of keyboard suites (1733). The arrangement is careless and presumably did not have Handel's authority.

We have tried to show that, of the 11 flute sonatas attributed to him in both old and new complete editions, Handel probably intended only one sonata, and a derivative sonata at that, for that instrument. We should now like to bring to light a previously unknown sonata that Handel seems to have originally intended for the flute.

The library of the Brussels Conservatoire has recently published a facsimile of its manuscript Litt.XY.15, 115, which, apart from a few movements for two flutes, contains solo sonatas for flute, oboe, violin or treble recorder and basso continuo, largely by German composers of the early 18th century.²² It includes copies of Handel's oboe sonatas in F major (cf. op. 1 no. 5)²³ and C minor op. 1 no. 8²⁴ and two flute sonatas, in G major and D major, attributed to him.²⁵ The G major sonata is found in no other source and is stylistically quite unlike Handel—indeed, it seems to have been written by a barely competent composer.²⁶ The D major sonata is in fact a pasticcio made up of three movements from a violin sonata attributed to Corelli in a manuscript in

Berlin²⁷ and one movement from a violin sonata by Albinoni.²⁸

The Brussels manuscript also contains three flute sonatas attributed to a 'S[igno]r. Weisse', another to 'Jean Sigm. Weisse' and an oboe sonata to 'S[igno]r Weis'.²⁹ If we can assume that these composers are one and the same, the man in question is no doubt the brother of the famous lutenist Sylvius Leopold Weiss, Johann Sigismund Weiss (c. 1690-1737), who is known to have worked at the Mannheim court from 1723 until his death.³⁰ One of these sonatas, the thirtieth, in D major, is of great interest, for it is full of ideas found in works by Handel.³¹ The first six bars of the first movement are a slightly simpler version of the opening of Handel's famous D major Violin Sonata, known as op. 1 no. 13 after Chrysander but in fact not written until 1749-51:³²



The opening theme of the second movement is that of the final movement in the overture to *Il trionfo del Tempo* of 1707 (it also appears in Handel's newly re-discovered Trio Sonata in F major for two treble recorders and basso continuo, also of about 1707):³³



The third movement is composed in the strangely angular chromatic style typical of some slow movements belonging to the beginning of Handel's Italian years (1706-7):



In fact it resembles both the middle movement of the *Trionfo* overture and that of a violin sonata in G major of the same period.³⁴ The opening theme of the fourth movement is that of the third movement of the above mentioned trio sonata:



The image displays three staves of musical notation. The top staff is labeled 'Flute Sonata in D' with the tempo marking 'Adagio'. The middle staff is labeled 'Flute Sonata in C' with the tempo marking 'Largo'. The bottom staff is labeled 'Violin Sonata in D' with the tempo marking 'Affettuoso'. A vertical dashed line is drawn on the left side of the first two staves, indicating the start of the comparison. The notation shows the first few bars of each piece, with the Violin Sonata staff featuring a trill (tr) in the final bar.

Its first bar is the same as the well-known opening of the finale of the F major Recorder Sonata op. 1 no. 11, itself later reworked in the Organ Concerto op. 4 no. 5. The style is quite unlike that of the other sonatas attributed to Weiss in the manuscript; rather, it suggests early Handel throughout. Besides, it is most improbable that Weiss could have written the sonata, or another sonata from which Handel liberally borrowed, since in 1707 Weiss was only about 17 years old. Thus, although it is neither attributed to him, nor in his hand or that of a copyist from his circle, we believe that Handel wrote it. It was performed in Terence Best's edition during the *Händelfestspiele* in Halle in June 1980, when, on the basis of the evidence set out above, its authenticity was accepted by the Handel scholars there assembled.

Why, then, should it have been attributed to Weiss in the Brussels manuscript? One possible explanation is that Weiss met Handel in Düsseldorf in 1710 or 1711 and made a copy of the flute sonata. If such a copy was the source used by the scribe of the Brussels manuscript, he could easily have assumed that Weiss was the composer. More probably, the scribe simply made a mistake; several other misattributions show that he could be careless or ill informed.³⁵

This discovery solves one puzzle concerning the E

minor flute sonata known as op. 1 no. 1a. The third movement of that sonata, put together around 1720, begins with what looks like a transposition of the first three bars or so of the D major Violin Sonata, written 1749-51. Yet the violin version, although more ornamented, gives the impression of being earlier, since notes 5-10 of bar 2 of the flute version have been taken down an octave to avoid high *e'''* on the flute. It would now appear that Handel first wrote these bars in the D major Flute Sonata around 1707. When he needed a flute sonata in a hurry around 1720, he gained inspiration for its third movement from the opening of the first movement of the D major Flute Sonata, not to mention bits of the C major and F major recorder sonatas. When he wanted to compose a violin sonata around 1750, he again sought inspiration in the early D major Flute Sonata; this time, however, he retained more of its opening theme and ornamented it slightly (see ex. 5).

The D major Flute Sonata will be published soon as part of David Lasocki's complete edition of Handel's flute sonatas,³⁶ and in the third volume of solo sonatas edited by Terence Best for the Hallische Händel-Ausgabe.³⁷ Together with the F major Oboe Sonata op. 1 no. 5, the Flute Sonata will be broadcast in 'Early Music Forum' on BBC Radio 3 on 25 July 1981.

- ¹ Eight sonatas in vol.27 (1879) and three in vol.48 (1894)
² HHA iv/3
³ See T. Best, 'Handel's Solo Sonatas', *M&L* 58 (1977), pp.430-38, and D. Lasocki, 'A New Look at Handel's Recorder Sonatas, ii: The Autograph Manuscripts', *Recorder & Music*, 6 (1978), pp.71-9, and 'iii: The Roger and Walsh Prints—A New View', *ibid*, 6 (1979), pp.130-32; see also the preface to D. Lasocki and W. Bergmann, eds., *G. F. Handel: The Complete Sonatas for Treble Recorder and Basso Continuo* (London, Faber Music, 1979).
⁴ See Lasocki's articles and preface cited in fn.3.
⁵ Cambridge, Fitzwilliam Museum, MS 261, pp.25-9
⁶ Manchester, Central Library, MS 130 Hd 4, vol.312, pp.1-5
⁷ Fitzwilliam Museum, MS 261, pp.1-5; British Library, MS R.M.20.g.13, ff.12-15; Fitzwilliam Museum, MS 261, p.7-11
⁸ Autograph, Fitzwilliam Museum, MS 263, pp.13-17, lacking first folio; copyist's manuscript in a private collection, London
⁹ For a discussion of this see Lasocki and Bergmann, *op cit*.
¹⁰ Manchester, Central Library, MS 130 Hd 4, vol.312, pp.55-9, in F major; Brussels, Conservatoire, MS Litt.XY.15, 115, pp.209-12, in F major, marked 'Hautb: solo'; Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Tenbury 1131, ff.120-21, in F major; and London, private collection, in G major, marked 'Traversa'. For a full discussion see the preface to Lasocki, ed., *G. F. Handel: The Three Authentic Sonatas for Oboe and Basso Continuo* (London, Nova Music, 1979).
¹¹ Three slightly differing minuets for treble instrument and bass (British Library, MS R.M.18.b.8, f.86v; R.M.19.a.4, f.18r; and Arnold's edition of the third set of pieces for harpsichord) and an orchestral version as the first minuet of the fourth movement of the Concerto Grosso in F major, op.3 no.4
¹² Autograph, Fitzwilliam Museum, MS 261, pp.52-60; Manchester, Central Library, MS 130 Hd 4, vol.312, pp.40-49; and London, private collection, marked 'a Flauto e Cembalo'
¹³ London, Schott, 1948
¹⁴ In his review of the Hallische Händel-Ausgabe edition of the 11 'flute' sonatas, *M&L* 37 (1956), p.402
¹⁵ Cited in fn.3
¹⁶ Fitzwilliam Museum, MS 263, pp.21-2
¹⁷ British Library, MS R.M.20.g.13, ff.9-11
¹⁸ For a detailed biography of Kytch, see Lasocki, *Professional Recorder Playing in England, 1540-1740* (in preparation).
¹⁹ For details see E. L. Avery, ed., *The London Stage, 1660-1800* (Carbondale, Ill., 1960-70), ii, pp.527, 528, 530, 532, 538, 539, 560, 575, 620, 624, 628, 635, 677, 713, 715 and 718; *Daily Courant*, 20 February 1720, 3 March 1720, 16 February 1722, 29 March 1723, 23 May 1723; *Daily Post*, 22 December 1720.
²⁰ See *Daily Courant*, 20 February 1720.
²¹ Autograph, Fitzwilliam Museum, MS 263, pp.9-12
²² Thesaurus musicus, Nova Series, Serie A, vol.7 (Brussels, Editions Culture et Civilisation, 1979)
²³ no.46, pp.209-12
²⁴ no.48, pp.216-18
²⁵ nos.27, pp.132-4 and 29, pp.138-41
²⁶ Nevertheless, an edition by Reinhold Kubik (Kassel, 1980) has been published by Bärenreiter.
²⁷ First, second and fourth movements in C major, West Berlin, Staatsbibliothek Preussischer Kulturbesitz, MS 4126. We are very grateful to Dr Kubik for informing us of this and the source in fn.28.
²⁸ Third movement in C major as first movement of Albinoni's op.6 no.1 (Amsterdam, Roger, c 1708-12)
²⁹ nos.28, pp.134-7; 30, pp.142-5; 50, pp.222-6; 32, pp.152-5; and 52, pp.233-6
³⁰ For biographical details see H. Neemann, 'Die Lautenistenfamilie Weiss', *Archiv für Musikforschung*, 4 (1939), pp.157-89, especially pp.171-3.
³¹ The existence of this sonata has already been pointed out in

print by Reinhold Kubik in his article 'Zu Händels Solosonaten', *Händel-Jahrbuch* (1980), pp.117-18. At that time he did not question Weiss's authorship. In Halle in June 1980, however, Terence Best discussed with Dr Kubik the evidence presented in our article and he immediately acknowledged that the sonata must be by Handel.

³² Autograph, British Library, MS R.M.20.g.13, ff.5-8; see Best, *op cit* in fn.3.

³³ Autograph, Fitzwilliam Museum, MS 261, pp.70-76 (lacking bass of first movement); missing bass in Washington, DC, Library of Congress, MS M350/M3/Case, pp.1-6. The discovery of the complete sonata was made by Christopher Hogwood, whose edition will be published in 1981 by Faber Music, London.

³⁴ Fitzwilliam Museum, MS 261, pp.61-4

³⁵ One of the sonatas attributed to J. B. Loeillet does not appear in any publication of his (although the other three are from op.5). One of the sonatas attributed to Stricker is a flute sonata by Quantz (*Solos for a German Flute, a Hoboy or Violin* (London, Walsh & Hare, 1730), no.5). The Vivaldi violin sonata (rv22) is found in no other source. One of the sonatas attributed to Freytag is Angelo Michele Besseghi's op.1 no.5 (Amsterdam, Roger, c 1708-12).

³⁶ London, Faber Music (scheduled for 1981)

³⁷ HHA iv/18 (scheduled for 1981)



Plucked string · 2

OCTOBER 1981

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