

© 2003 William Archie Knowles

All rights reserved. The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary has permission to reproduce and disseminate this document in any form by any means for purposes chosen by the Seminary, including, without limitation, preservation or instruction.

A PERFORMER'S ANALYSIS OF THE BASS ROLES IN
SELECTED OLD TESTAMENT NARRATIVE ENGLISH
ORATORIOS OF GEORGE FRIDERIC HANDEL

A Dissertation
Presented to
the Faculty of
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Musical Arts

by
William Archie Knowles
December, 2003

UMI Number: 3120604

Copyright 2003 by
Knowles, William Archie

All rights reserved.

INFORMATION TO USERS

The quality of this reproduction is dependent upon the quality of the copy submitted. Broken or indistinct print, colored or poor quality illustrations and photographs, print bleed-through, substandard margins, and improper alignment can adversely affect reproduction.

In the unlikely event that the author did not send a complete manuscript and there are missing pages, these will be noted. Also, if unauthorized copyright material had to be removed, a note will indicate the deletion.

UMI[®]

UMI Microform 3120604

Copyright 2004 by ProQuest Information and Learning Company.

All rights reserved. This microform edition is protected against
unauthorized copying under Title 17, United States Code.

ProQuest Information and Learning Company
300 North Zeeb Road
P.O. Box 1346
Ann Arbor, MI 48106-1346

APPROVAL SHEET

A PERFORMER'S ANALYSIS OF THE BASS ROLES IN
SELECTED OLD TESTAMENT NARRATIVE ENGLISH
ORATORIOS OF GEORGE FRIDERIC HANDEL

William Archie Knowles

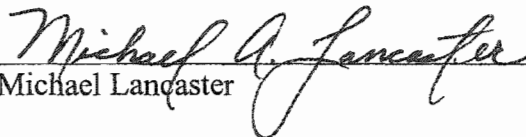
Read and Approved by:



Ronald A. Turner (Chairperson)



Thomas W. Bolton



Michael Lancaster

Date 26 August 2005

MSL THESES D.M.A. .K764p
0199701809931

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
LIST OF TABLES	v
LIST OF EXAMPLES	vi
PREFACE	viii
Chapter	
1. INTRODUCTION	1
Objectives	1
Delimitations	2
Need for Study	2
Basic Assumptions	2
Related Literature	2
Collecting and Organizing Material	3
2. HANDEL'S COMPOSITIONAL DEVELOPMENT	5
Germany: 1685-1706	5
Italy and Hanover: 1706-1710	9
London: 1711-1759, and Händel's Gravitation from Opera to Oratorio	12
3. HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF THE ORATORIO	27
Handel and the English Oratorio	32
4. BASS ROLES FROM SELECTED ORATORIOS	38
<i>Esther</i> (1718-20 Version)	39
<i>Esther</i> (1732 Version)	48
<i>Deborah</i> (1733)	49

Chapter	Page
<i>Athalia</i> (1733)	56
<i>Saul</i> (1739)	66
<i>Samson</i> (1742)	76
<i>Joseph and His Brethren</i> (1743)	87
<i>Belshazzar</i> (1744)	91
<i>Joshua</i> (1747)	99
<i>Solomon</i> (1748)	106
<i>Jephtha</i> (1751)	113
5. CONCLUSION	121
BIBLIOGRAPHY	124

LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
1. Comparison of voice part assignments for roles in 1718-20 and 1732 revision of Handel's <i>Esther</i>	41

LIST OF EXAMPLES

Example	Page
1. Handel, <i>Esther</i> , Chrysander's editing	45
2. Handel, <i>Athalia</i> , text painting, "When storms the proud to terrors doom." mm. 10-13	61
3. Handel, <i>Athalia</i> , "When storms the proud to terrors doom." mm. 18-20	61
4. Handel, <i>Athalia</i> , "When storms the proud to terrors doom." mm. 33-35	61
5. Handel, <i>Athalia</i> , "When storms the proud to terrors doom." mm. 42-44	62
6. Handel, <i>Athalia</i> , "When storms the proud to terrors doom." Mm. 57-59	62
7. Handel, <i>Athalia</i> , "Ah, canst thou but prove me!" mm. 4-7	64
8. Suggested cadenza for "Ah, canst thou but prove me!"	64
9. <i>Saul</i> , "With rage I shall burst," mm. 1-4, use of text painting through thematic material	71
10. Handel, <i>Saul</i> , "A serpent in my bosom warm'd." Bärenreiter ed. mm. 4-7, text painting	72
11. Handel, <i>Saul</i> , "A serpent in my bosom warm'd." text painting mm. 20-21	73
12. Handel, <i>Samson</i> , Cadenza for "Just are the ways of God to man." m. 68, beat three	81
13. Handel, <i>Samson</i> , "Honor and arms," text painting mm. 13-14	85
14. Handel, <i>Samson</i> "Honor and arms," text painting mm. 17-22	85
15. Handel, <i>Belshazzar</i> , "Oppress'd with never ceasing grief," text painting mm. 37-40	95
16. Handel, <i>Belshazzar</i> , "Oprese'd with never ceasing grief," text painting, mm. 51-54	95
17. Handel, <i>Belshazzar</i> , "Behold the monstrous human beast," text painting, mm. 17-18, 46-47	96
18. Handel, <i>Belshazzar</i> , "Behold the monstrous human beast," text painting, mm. 13-14	97

Example	Page
19. Handel, <i>Joshua</i> , “Shall I in Mamre’s fertile plain,” text painting mm. 9-15	105
20. Handel, <i>Solomon</i> , “Praise ye the Lord,” text painting mm. 48-53	110
21. Handel, <i>Jephtha</i> , “Pour forth no more unheeded pray’rs,” text painting mm. 21-24	117
22. Handel, <i>Jephtha</i> , “Laud her all ye virgin train,” rhythmic characterization	119

PREFACE

Any project of this size requires the support of many people, and many have patiently supported me through the development of this dissertation. First I want to recognize and thank my doctoral committee. Dr. Ronald Turner has been a mentor since I arrived at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. He has been a significant supporter as well as a positive encourager, and patiently working with me to develop this project. In addition, I am appreciative of Dr. Thomas Bolton, who has spent many hours working with me on this project, offering valuable advice and constant positive encouragement. The third member of my committee, Dr. Michael Lancaster, has also been a valuable resource and source of support. I also want to thank all the faculty members in the School of Church Music and Worship at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary who have been patient and a constant encouragement.

Second, I thank my wife, Diana, and my three daughters, Andrea, Christina, and Amanda, who have all been sacrificially supportive through my doctrinal pilgrimage. My loving wife of twenty-eight years has always been supportive, to the extent of putting aside her own needs and desires to help make this project possible. Andrea, Christina, and Amanda have all personally sacrificed much by being uprooted and moved across the country during their teen years to support me in this endeavor.

Primarily, I give all the glory to God who, through the shed blood of my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, has given me abundant and eternal life. It is God alone who is worthy of all our praise. I thank God for calling me and giving me the opportunity to be a part of the lives of young men and women who are aspiring to serve Him through music.

William Archie Knowles

Louisville, Kentucky

June 2003

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

It is universally accepted that George Frideric Handel was a significant contributor to the genre of oratorio. The oratorio became a symbol of Handel's art, and through his development of the oratorio Handel gained rank as one of the greatest composers of Western music. While Handel may not have been one of the most revolutionary composers, he developed existing forms, in particular the oratorio, to their highest possible point of beauty and perfection.¹ Within such a context this study considers the bass roles of selected English oratorios of George Frideric Handel.

Objectives

This dissertation discusses the bass roles, including recitatives and arias, of ten selected English oratorios by Handel based on Old Testament characters, composed between 1718 and 1751. These oratorios include *Esther* (1718-20 and 1732 versions), *Deborah* (1733), *Athalia* (1733), *Saul* (1738), *Samson* (1741), *Joseph and His Brethren* (1743), *Belshazzar* (1744), *Joshua* (1747), *Solomon* (1748), and *Jephtha* (1751).

The dramatic function of each aria and recitative within the oratorio plot is discussed, along with range, tessitura, literary rhyme scheme (if applicable), and tonal structure. Compositional devices that are used in melodic construction, level of difficulty, and maturity of voice needed for performance are discussed for each aria and recitative.

¹R. A. Streatfield, *Handel* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1964), 302.

Delimitations

Of the twenty-two oratorios composed by Handel, the ten examined in this study were selected for their emphasis of dramatic bass roles using Old Testament characters. These oratorios are representative of Handel's London period and are examples of his more mature style both in choral and solo music. Another delimitation comes through Handel's use of the English language for all ten oratorios included. Recitatives are included in this study only when they stand alone, and are not a part of a dialogue. All bass voice arias are considered.

Need for Study

The purpose of this document is to serve as a resource for singers and teachers of singing in selecting oratorio literature for the bass voice, providing a representative knowledge of bass solo roles for a significant portion of Handelian oratorio literature. There is no distinction made between whether the arias are suitable for baritone or bass, as Handel exclusively used the designation "bass" for all male low voice solos. In the analysis of each aria the recitative range and tessitura is discussed. There is no other study to date, published or unpublished, that specifically addresses this topic.

Basic Assumptions

This study assumed there to be vast resources available on the subject of Handelian oratorios and other related subject matter. It further assumed that through this study, vocal pedagogues and bass solo singers may become aware of a vast amount of seldom-used, yet exceptionally creative, and surprisingly accessible bass solo literature. It is also assumed that this study may help a singer design a bass recital featuring solos exclusively from "Handelian" oratorios.

Related Literature

It is surprising that no writer has specifically dealt with Handel's oratorio arias and recitatives for bass voice. Much writing exists, of course, on Baroque performance

practice, as well as on Handel's oratorios in general. Bibliographic entries list representative citations of this vast number of resources. John Mainwaring's biography, *Memoirs of the Life of the Late George Frederic Handel* is one of the few sources that give in-depth details of Handel's early life, and was used by this study for biographical data.² Other biographical sources include Paul Henry Lang's *George Frideric Handel*³ and Donald Burrows' *Handel*.⁴ The historical surveys of Winton Dean⁵ and Harold E. Smither⁶ have been helpful in gathering information on each particular oratorio.

One particular dissertation model was influential in formatting this study. Thomas Lamar Rowell (Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary) made a similar study for his dissertation, "A Performer's Analysis of Selected Tenor Recitatives and Arias from Oratorios by George Frederic Handel Based upon Old Testament Characters Composed Between 1718 and 1751."⁷

Collecting and Organizing Material

All of Handel's oratorios were examined to determine the most important oratorios for the bass voice. After concluding that the ten previously cited oratorios were the most significant ones for bass solo literature, both in dramatic content and musical creativity, each oratorio was then researched to determine its synopsis. In order to

²John Mainwaring, *Memoirs of the Life of the Late George Frederic Handel* (London: n.p., 1760).

³Paul Henry Lang, *George Frideric Handel* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1966).

⁴Donald Burrows, *Handel* (New York: Schirmer Books, 1994).

⁵Winton Dean, *Handel's Dramatic Oratorios and Masques* (London: Oxford University Press, 1959).

⁶Harold E. Smither, *A History of the Oratorio*, 3 vols. (Chapel Hills, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 1987).

⁷Thomas L. Rowell, "A Performer's Analysis of Selected Tenor Recitatives and Arias from Oratorios by George Frederic Handel Based upon Old Testament Characters Composed between 1718 and 1751" (D.M.A. diss., Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1998).

achieve a better understanding of Handel's creative genius the study also considered Handel's life and education, emigration and establishment in England, and his gravitation as a composer from opera to oratorio.

It is also important to understand the history of the oratorio up to Handel's time, as well as to discuss Handel in the context of the English oratorio overall. Therefore, the dissertation presents a brief overview of oratorio history. The study of the oratorios relies mainly on scores from Friedrich Chrysander's editions of Handel's works published in the late nineteenth century. Comparisons are made to the new Bärenreiter editions, where available.

CHAPTER 2
HANDEL'S COMPOSITIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Germany: 1685-1706

Georg Friederic Händel¹ was born February 23, 1685, in Halle, Germany, and died in London, England, at the age of seventy-four on April 14, 1759. Halle, which lies about one hundred miles southwest of Berlin, saw great changes throughout Händel's life and was considered by many a progressive city.

Händel was the second child of his widowed father's second marriage. His father, Georg Händel (1622-97) was thirty years older than Händel's mother, Dorothea Traust (1651-1730). The family surroundings in which he was reared were a typically conservative, Saxon, bourgeois existence. Georg inherited from his father a strong work ethic and an astute business sense. Händel's father was a "barber-surgeon" by profession.² He frowned on young Georg's propensity toward music and instead encouraged him toward a law degree. Händel's mother was a good and pious woman whom Händel remembered with warm affection, although he was unable to see much of her after he left Halle.

Georg became proficient at the keyboard at an early age, but it is unknown exactly how he did so, considering his father's strong disaffection for Händel's musical inclination. Frequently repeated stories of Georg's hiding a clavichord in the attic are romantic, but such stories are unfounded. It is known, however, that Händel traveled often to Weissenfels with his father. While at Weissenfels, a court employee, relative of

¹This is the German spelling of Handel's birth name. Handel's Anglicized name will be referenced after p. 14 of this study.

²Donald Burrows, *Handel* (New York: Schirmer Books, 1994), 2. Strange as it may seem today, the profession of a surgeon often included the duties of a barber.

his father's first wife, cared for Händel during his father's rounds. On one occasion young Georg was permitted to play the postlude in the ducal chapel and was heard by the duke. Impressed, the Duke of Weissenfels persuaded Händel's father to encourage Georg in his musical efforts. On his return home to Halle, Händel began musical instruction with Friedrich Wilhelm Zachow (1662-1712), whom Paul Henry Lang describes as Händel's first and only teacher.³

From his early years, Händel was inspired by Italian opera, an interest that will be discussed later in this chapter. Georg traveled to Italy in 1706, where he met many acquaintances, including Arcangelo Corelli (1653-1713), a member of patron Cardinal Ottoboni's household and considered by Lang as "an undisputed and universal leader in Italian instrumental music."⁴ Lang also mentions that Händel's style owed much to Corelli, and the meeting with him was an invigorating experience.⁵ Lang states:

Corelli's instrumental music was distilled classicism, based on tradition yet advancing into the future. This was new to Handel, as was the clarity of form, the logical yet imaginative exploitation of ideas, the pathos, and the beauty of the noble string tone that was never beclouded by empty virtuosity or reckless adventures.⁶

Christopher Hogwood mentions that Händel's violin writing shows influence of Corelli's playing.⁷ Lang suggests that the Italian Attilio Ariosti (1666-1740) also influenced Händel in his early years. At approximately the age of thirteen, Händel had the opportunity to spend several months in Berlin, an international musical metropolis, where he met Ariosti. For the first time Händel experienced the Italian spirit and their music. Ariosti's Italian oratorios are known for their strong dramatic appeal, and according to Lang, he was one who could "take his place in the Scarlatti-Steffani-Caldar-

³Paul Henry Lang, *George Frideric Handel* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1966), 11.

⁴*Ibid.*, 55.

⁵*Ibid.*

⁶*Ibid.*, 54.

⁷Christopher Hogwood, *Handel*, (London: Thames and Hudson, 1984), 32.

Bononcini-Lotti circle at no disadvantage.”⁸ Ariosti composed *La Passione di Cristo*, in 1693, and is described by Lang as being “strong and vigorous, and its dramatically agitated choral scenes seem to have been the first modern *turbae* depicting a people in action.”⁹ Young Händel was certainly influenced by many, but no formal training beyond Zachow is documented.¹⁰

During the time of Händel’s study, Wilhelm Zachow was about thirty years old. This dates young Georg as beginning his study with Zachow in 1692, at approximately seven years of age. Zachow was well known as a fine organist and a recognized composer in the “new style” (*stile rappresentativo*) of the period, characterized by a concerted dramatic, theatrical recitative style. Many traits that we consider “Handelian” are indeed present in Zachow’s music. Lang describes Zachow’s music in the following way:

It is spacious, euphonious, its melody sturdily designed yet sensuous, it can be suave but also monumental Above all, this music is healthy and communicative Zachow too had the ability—and the power to be simple yet effective he understood the Italians and managed to unite their art felicitously with his German heritage.¹¹

Zachow’s dramatic Pentecost cantata, *Ruhe, Friede, Freud und Wonne* (*Quiet Peace, Joy and Delight*), offers a representative example of Zachow’s music, and shows evidence of Zachow’s influence upon Händel. The cantata is something of a miniature oratorio on the subject of David’s struggle with the Tempter.¹²

Zachow taught Händel composition, harpsichord, organ, and other instruments.

⁸Ibid., 18.

⁹Ibid., 17-18.

¹⁰Hogwood, *Handel*, 32.

¹¹Lang, *Handel*, 11.

¹²Gunther Thomas, “Zachow, Friedrich Wilhelm,” in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music Online*, ed. L. Macy [on-line]; accessed 23 December 2002; available from <http://www.grovegrove music.com>; Internet.

By the age of eleven, young Georg was so accomplished on the organ that he was allowed to substitute for Zachow on various occasions. Händel's first composition is dated 1696, the same year as his eleventh birthday. Händel developed a comprehensive knowledge of styles and techniques through Zachow's unusually well-stocked library of musical scores. Zachow was strenuous in his expectations of Händel, not only by demanding incessant writing exercises in *fugue* and *cantus firmus* modal counterpoint, but also by frequently having him copy significant scores from Zachow's extensive library, thereby giving Händel a vast knowledge of styles and techniques.

Some of the composers whose works Händel copied included Johann Krieger (1652-1735); Johann Caspar Kerll (1627-1693), who spent ten years in Italy; Johann Jakob Froberger (1616-1667), another well-balanced internationally oriented musician; and Wolfgang Ebner (1612-1665), who, though less well-known, displayed excellence in seventeenth-century Viennese keyboard music and was an originator of Viennese ballet.

Händel's vocal compositions were influenced through his copying compositions of composers such as Heinrich Albert (1604-1651), known as one of the most popular song composers of the time; Adam Krieger (1634-1666), another well-known song composer of the time; Johann Philipp Krieger (1649-1725), a prolific opera and cantata composer; Georg Muffat (1653-1704), who studied with Lully, Corelli, and Pasquini; Johann Kuhnau (1160-1722), J. S. Bach's predecessor at St. Thomaskirche, with whom it is said Händel was not impressed; and Johann Pachelbel (1653-1706), whose music is said to have attracted Handel.¹³

Through this extensive yet incomplete list of composers we can conclude that Händel undoubtedly was well rounded in his knowledge of compositional styles and techniques, not only in the German tradition, but also in French and Italian music.

The *New Grove*, as well as other biographical sketches, suggests Händel

¹³Lang, *Handel*, 13-15.

entered Halle University's law school in February of 1702. It is perhaps more accurate to note that Handel did not actually matriculate into the law school, but did take law courses therein. The study of law in the eighteenth century was much different from the study of law today. In earlier days a law degree allied closely with the humanities, with much study dealing with human conduct. It was here that Händel developed his compassion for charity and his sense of duty to help others in need. It is from the atmosphere in Halle that Händel emerged an eighteen-year-old, well-bred, tough-minded, spirited, self-sufficient, good-natured and gregarious, well-trained musician.¹⁴

Händel desired to become a free and independent artist—a concept unknown in Germany at the time. Being familiar with the traveling Italian artists who frequently visited Berlin, Händel traveled to Hamburg in 1703. Joining a new friend by the name of Johann Mattheson, within a month he traveled to Lübeck to meet Dietrich Buxtehude to interview for the position as organist at St. Mary's. However, one of the requirements for the job was to marry Buxtehude's daughter, and Händel was not interested in marriage. As a violinist in Reinhard Keiser's opera orchestra in Hamburg, Händel became enamored with opera and began to write for the stage, his first opera being *Almira* in 1705. Händel also wrote his *Johannes Passion* (1704) while in Hamburg. While not particularly successful, these works raised Händel's professional standing in the community.¹⁵

Italy and Hanover: 1706-1710

Händel, like many artists of the day, traveled to Italy in 1706. In Händel the Italians found a German who, Lang says, “. . . could live their life, play their own game, and beat them at it.”¹⁶ Händel became well known throughout Italy for his operas in the Italian style. Even though Händel came to Italy for opera, he well understood the need to

¹⁴Ibid., 10-23.

¹⁵Ibid., 41.

¹⁶Ibid., 47.

learn the Italian musical language in which the cantata was of foremost importance. He began to write in the Italian cantata style, under the influence of such composers as Pietro Degli Antonii (c. 1645-1720), Francesco Antonio Pistocchi (1659-1726), Giovanni Bononcini (1670-1747), and Alessandro Stradella (1642-1688). It was in Italy that Händel composed seventy-two cantatas for solo voice, with twenty-eight having orchestral accompaniment.¹⁷

While in Italy Händel spent nearly a third of his time in Naples with Cardinal Vincenzo Grimani, whose family owned several opera houses. This association was of great benefit to Händel in that it provided an avenue for his opera performances. His first successful Italian opera, *Agrippina*, was written in Naples, and it was there that Händel learned about the powerful ability of *castrati* singers whose performances were sought after throughout Europe. Händel moved to Venice in the fall of 1709 and left in the spring of 1710. It is unknown exactly which compositions he wrote while in Venice, however it was in Venice that Händel realized the splendor and intensity of opera.

During Händel's stay, Venice was the operatic center of Europe, with opera houses nearly as plentiful as parishes. The opera houses operated for profit and were either personally run by Venetian patricians like Grimani or leased to entrepreneurs. Production of Venetian operas ran at an intense rate with more than a hundred new operas composed for the Venetian opera houses in the early eighteenth century. Händel, of course, heard not only the operas of all the contemporary masters, but also those of the previous generation, from which he borrowed material for many of his oratorios.¹⁸

After studying Italian music and learning the "operatic trade," Händel sought a place where he could settle and create an artistic world for himself. He sought a place where he could freely compose without religious or artistic boundaries—a place where an

¹⁷Ibid., 63.

¹⁸Hogwood, *Handel*, 46.

individual's religious and artistic views were a private affair and would not be stifled.¹⁹ Händel accepted the post of court conductor of Hanover under Georg Ludwig I, beginning June 16, 1710 at the age of twenty-five and then moved on to London in November of the same year.²⁰

Georg Ludwig I was a dull and unambitious country squire, however his son Ernst Augustus maintained subscriptions in five Venetian opera houses as well as building a theater of his own in Hanover. Händel's real friend in the royal family was Ernst August's daughter-in-law, Caroline (1683-1737), the future Princess of Wales and Queen of England. Caroline was married to Prince George II in 1705. Händel had already made acquaintance with Caroline when she spent her youth in Berlin and was at the court when young Händel visited it from Halle. Caroline received musical training from Pistocchi and Steffani, becoming an accomplished harpsichordist and singer. This friendship would be one that lasted until her death in 1737.

Händel's appointment to the post in Hanover included the stipulation that extended leaves of absence would be granted as needed.²¹ It is not clear precisely why Händel took a leave to London; possibly Händel received a proposal for a musical position or it could simply have been the fertile ground that London offered to a composer of opera in the Italian style. Another possible reason for Händel's going to London was an invitation from John Wyche, an English diplomatic representative in Hamburg. Whatever the reason for Händel's visit to London, later events proved his move to be a prudent business decision. Perhaps, Händel's acceptance of the Hanover position was simply a safe fallback option if London had not panned out for him.

¹⁹Lang, *Handel*, 106.

²⁰*Ibid.*, 108.

²¹*Ibid.*

London: 1711–1759, and Händel's Gravitation from Opera to Oratorio

On his way to London Händel stopped in his hometown of Halle to visit his mother, who found it hard to understand why her German-born son needed to roam the world. This visit gave him opportunity to rekindle old relationships, including his esteemed mentor, Zachow. He also stopped briefly in Düsseldorf to accept a gift of a fine set of tableware from the Elector Palatine. Lang notes, “This was the second set of tableware Handel received and one wonders what a travelling bachelor could have done with such a cumbersome collection of house-hold goods.”²² Händel arrived in the great metropolis of London in October or November 1710.²³

Even though the English aristocracy had political and religious control, there was a large middle class that increasingly gave rise to ideas and principles of individuality and the betterment of common man, resulting in a gradual secularization of the middle class. In his early days in London Händel was an independent entrepreneurial musician, depended heavily upon the nobility. However as time passed, he was able to become more independent of traditional patronage. Händel's insight as a businessman directed the future of musical commerce for England. As Händel had just begun to learn the English language, his situation was somewhat ambiguous in his new society. He was still involved in the aristocratic society, but at the same time he was also becoming a factor in furthering the intellectual aspirations of middle-class society.²⁴

The competitive element among London artists was strong, given the many foreign artists who came to visit, and the many, like Händel, who made London their home. Making opera his foothold into the artistic world of London, Händel composed *Rinaldo*, which rivaled his successes in Venice. Nicola Hayn (1679-1729), born of

²²Ibid., 111.

²³Ibid.

²⁴Lang, *Handel*, 113.

German parents in Italy, was among the first of Händel's rivals who eventually became a friend, later providing librettos for some of Händel's greatest operas, including *Radamisto*, *Giulio Cesare*, *Tamerlano*, and *Rodelinda*.²⁵

Italian operatic development in England and Händel's role as an impresario are well researched; therefore this study does not include an in-depth discussion of this facet of his life. However, it should be noted that Händel established a successful career and his place in London society was solid. He was paid well through his pensions from George I and Queen Caroline in the early 1700s. During the 1720s his operatic efforts centered around the Royal Academy of Music, which lasted until the Academy closed in 1729, owing to a decline in opera attendance. During this same decade Händel wrote music for the coronation of George II, which led to an appointment as composer to the Chapel Royal. Handel moved to a residence on Brook Street near Grosvesnor Square and was naturalized by George I in 1727, making him a British subject. By this time Handel had permanently altered his name to George, and dropped the German umlaut from his surname.²⁶ Just as things were beginning to go well for Handel however, opera attendance in London began to decline in the early 1730s and that launched Handel's transition to oratorio.

Up until April of 1732, Handel's corpus of London theater programs consisted exclusively of opera productions.²⁷ Burrows suggests that the transition in genre from opera to oratorio was not direct and was not under Handel's control. Rather, Handel was reacting to the artistic environment around him. However, it is incorrect to regard him as a victim of circumstance. Although he may have felt some nostalgic regret over the

²⁵Ibid., 114.

²⁶From this point Handel's Anglicized name will be referenced as George Frideric Handel.

²⁷Donald Burrows, *Handel* (New York: Schirmer Books, 1994), 16.

demise of Italian opera in London, at the same he time welcomed this new direction wholeheartedly. Donald Burrows quotes Carole Taylor from her article “Händel’s Disengagement from the Italian Opera:”

His transition from composer of Italian opera to composer of English oratorio involved a crucial transition from protégé, largely dependent on aristocratic largesse, to independent purveyor of his own works to a more broadly based public. By an ironic twist of fate, the Opera of Nobility, set up to put Handel to rout, actually dealt a blow to their own form of collective aristocratic patronage. By indirectly sanctioning the running of the Italian opera by a professional, they opened the way to the more commercialized form of patronage by the general public that was to take hold in the second half of the eighteenth century.²⁸

External factors, such as the closing of the Royal Academy in 1729 also contributed to Handel’s transition from opera to oratorio. Singers found themselves out of work, and many therefore moved to Italy, leaving fewer competent singers to maintain the high quality of opera that had been prevalent in London. The success of John Gay’s *The Beggars Opera* and the public’s growing desire for an English nationalistic opera style was another factor that led to Handel’s transition from opera to oratorio. On January 29, 1728, at Lincoln’s Inn Fields, the *Beggar’s Opera* opened for a run of over sixty performances. John Gay’s farcical libretto was a parody of contemporaneous Italian opera. Dr. Johann Pepusch’s music was included popular tunes, cleverly selected, arranged, and prefaced with an overture written by Pepusch, who was also a known competitor of Handel. Lang states,

The Beggar’s Opera drove the biggest nail in the coffin of the Royal Academy of Music, but the collapse of the Academy did not mean ruin and bankruptcy for Handel; his personal fortunes were not at all threatened, nor was his reputation as a composer, which was international.²⁹

Burrows also claims Handel’s revision of his 1718-20 version of the oratorio *Esther* in 1732 to be another external force that brought about the demise of the opera scene in London. Handel included an unstaged *Esther* in the 1731-32 opera season, without

²⁸Carole Taylor, *The Cambridge Companion to Handel*, ed. Donald Burrows (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 53.

²⁹Lang, *Handel*, 197.

costumes or scenery, with many successful performances in the King's Theater in Haymarket between May 2 and May 20, 1732.³⁰

During the period between 1732 and 1737, the operatic scene in London continued to be disrupted by the rivalry between Handel's company and the Opera Company of the Nobility, supported by the Prince of Wales. By the end of the 1736-37 season, both companies lost money.³¹ During this same period Handel's health began to fail, and expert medical advice suggested that he retreat to Tunbridge Wells to recuperate and escape the London scene. On April 13, 1737, Handel suffered a stroke and was partially paralyzed on his right side. He was sent to Aix-la-Chapelle to the vapor baths where he was cured in a manner that the nuns there suggested to be a miracle.³²

Upon Handel's return to London in late October or early November 1737, he discovered that the Italian opera scene in London was almost dead. However, Handel set about writing a new opera, *Faramondo*, on November 15, 1737. He had no more than begun when Queen Caroline died, and he began writing the lengthy funeral anthem, *The Ways of Zion do Mourn* (HWV264). As previously mentioned, Handel was personally close to the Queen and her passing was a significantly mournful time for him after knowing her from age eleven onward. *Faramondo* closed after only eight performances, unable to compete with an English burlesque opera, *The Dragon of Wantley* composed by John Frederick Lampe (1703-1751).³³

Bukofzer explains that Handel's success as an opera composer in England declined not for musical, but for social reasons, in that the nobility who usually supported

³⁰Burrows, *Handel*, 166.

³¹*Ibid.*, 172-80.

³²John Mainwaring, *Memoirs of the Life of the Late George Frederic Handel* (London: n.p., 1760), 122-23.

³³Hogwood, *Handel*, 146-47.

opera were too financially weak to support one opera company, much less two.³⁴ In an attempt to curb his losses in the declining opera scene in London, Handel decided to offer subscriptions of his works to the public, as announced on January 23, 1738, in the *Daily Post*. Handel was also persuaded to present a benefit concert for himself on March 28 of the same year. The concert was well attended and both projects proved to be financial successes.³⁵

Handel's acceptance in London's public life was apparently successful at this point as evidenced by profits from his benefit concert. Handel was also the driving force behind the founding of the Fund for The Support of Decay'd Musicians, whose members' first meeting was held at the Crown and Anchor Tavern in April 1738. It was Handel's music that provided the majority of the program for the fund's first benefit performance. He was evidently vitally involved in many charities that brought him much public favor. In 1738, a life-sized marble statue was erected in honor of Handel in the gardens at Vauxhall, just over the Thames from Westminster.³⁶

Handel reunited with J. J. Heidegger, a former opera companion, to return to opera production at the Haymarket Theater. Season subscriptions were offered for sale but the season had to be cancelled due to subscriptions not being filled and problems finding singers, many of whom had left London because of the lack of patronage for opera. Handel began a season on his own, using English oratorios, the first being *Saul*, with a libretto supplied by Charles Jennens. The season was marked by extremely cold weather, however, keeping many patrons in their warm homes instead of treading out in the cold for a concert. The season ended on April 23, 1740 with performances of *Saul*,

³⁴Manfred F. Bukofzer, *Music in the Baroque Era from Monteverdi to Bach* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1947), 331.

³⁵Hogwood, *Handel*, 147.

³⁶Burrows, *Handel*, 200-01.

Esther, and *Israel in Egypt*. *Saul* was apparently the best received of all.³⁷

The 1739 season presented a problem in semantics. Handel had in the recent past advertised opera seasons interspersed with oratorios, odes, and *serenatas* in various languages and in various proportions. He was now faced with a season primarily of oratorios. The works he presented in 1733 in the Sheldonian Theater in Oxford were all oratorios *Esther*, *Deborah*, and *Athalia*. In addition he performed one other work in Christ Church Hall, *Acis and Galatea*.

The distinction between English-language oratorios and non-oratorio works began to become more commonly known to concert goers; therefore Handel was able to describe the 1739 season as an oratorio season with little confusion to the public. Whether or not the 1739 season was considered a success depends on one's perspective. The new oratorios were remarkable works, and at least Handel was successful in sustaining a concert series in London during a season that was apparently funded by walk-in audiences, while Heidegger had been unable to fill a subscription series. It was an unusually short season in that the King's Theater was accustomed to housing at least fifty opera performances a year, while the 1739 season presented only twenty performances, one of which was a charity benefit. The previously cited cold weather also presented a problem with attendance. The season opened January 16 and closed May 5.³⁸ Viewing the season from a present-day standpoint, the success of Handel's 1739 season should not necessarily be measured by the balance of quantity of literature between Italian and English, but more appropriately by the quality of literature performed.

Handel, being committed to English oratorio for that season, composed *Saul*, which surpassed all earlier models of English oratorio. Given that there was a dearth of willing subscribers and that it was difficult to sustain a completely oratorio-based season,

³⁷Lang, *Handel*, 321.

³⁸Burrows, *Handel*, 203-05.

Handel decided to move his performances to Lincoln's Inn Fields, where he gave an all-English season beginning in January of 1740. Some of the season's works included *Ode to St. Cecilia's Day*, *Alexander's Feast*, two new concertos for instruments, *Acis and Galatea*, and the oratorios, *Saul*, *Esther*, and *Israel in Egypt*. A benefit performance of *Acis and Galatea* and the *Ode to St. Cecilia's Day* was also included on March 28 for the Decay'd Musicians Fund.³⁹

Handel traveled to Hanover during the summer of 1740, where he was given the honor of providing music for Princess Mary's espousal to the Prince of Hesse-Cassel. This was his last such duty. From July to August 1740, Handel's exact travels are unclear, but it is speculated that he passed through Haarlem in the Netherlands, as well as Berlin, and Halle to visit his aging mother. Either way he was back in London by October 10, 1740, where he finished composing the opera *Imeneo*, which he had begun in 1738. The season was largely another Italian opera season, opening with *Parnasso in Festa* on November 8, and later including *Imeneo* and *Deidamia*.

One of many circumstances influencing Handel toward yet another Italian opera season was the failure of the company of Lord Middlesex to offer a program for the 1740-41 season. This released the company's leading castrato, Andreoni, who could not sing in English, to Handel's employment. *Imeneo* lasted only two performances, and *Deidamia* lasted only for three. Handel's performance of *Deidamia* on February 10, 1741 is significant in Handel's biographical history, because it was his last performance of an Italian opera in London.⁴⁰

In 1741 Handel put himself out of the reach and influence of the Royal Academy and other aristocratic influences who might wish for him to continue to perform Italian opera. He left London and took a break, possibly to Charles Jennen's country

³⁹Ibid., 210.

⁴⁰Ibid., 213.

home at Gopsall, near Coventry. In a letter from Jennens to a friend, he writes:

Handel says he will do nothing next Winter, but I hope I shall perswade him to set another Scripture Collection I have made for him, & perform it for his own benefit in Passion Week. I hope he will lay out his whole Genius & Skill upon it, that the Composition may excell all his former Compositions, as the Subject excels every other subject. The Subject is the Messiah.⁴¹

Beginning composition of *Messiah* on August 22, 1741 and finishing it on September 14, Handel immediately began composing *Samson*, completing the draft score on October 29.

At the time Handel had not completely filled in the *Messiah* manuscript, as he had for the manuscript for *Samson*, because Handel's Dublin visit had not yet been confirmed. However, speculation has it that the Dublin visit was finally confirmed in October, when the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland (William Cavendish, third Duke of Devonshire) issued an official diplomatic invitation. Handel's music had been performed in Dublin for some time now, including a *Te Deum* and a coronation anthem that was performed for a charity service for Mercer's Hospital in St. Andrew's Church.⁴²

The first performance of *Messiah* was December 23, 1741, with five more following. According to a letter to Charles Jennens dated December 29, 1741, the performances were sold out by subscription and Handel was personally well received. *Messiah* was publicly rehearsed on Friday, April 9, 1742, and first performed on Monday, April 12. Handel had only sold 450 seats of a 600-capacity music hall, but over 700 attended the first performance of *Messiah*. After enjoying two successful seasons as well as non-subscription performances of *Messiah* and *Saul*, Handel left for London on August 13, 1742, planning to return to Ireland in a year, but he never did revisit.⁴³

Returning to London, Handel chose not to pursue a series for the remaining months of 1742, probably preparing for Lenten performances of *Samson*, which in fact

⁴¹Ibid., 259, quoted by Burrows in "Letter to Holdworth," 10 July 1741: HHB, 334.

⁴²Burrows, *Handel*, 260-61.

⁴³Lang, *Handel*, 355.

ran for six performances at Covent Garden. The first series of performances was so successful that Handel announced a second subscription series, including *Samson*, *L'Allegro e il Peneseroso*, and "A New Sacred Oratorio," which was *Messiah*. This season finished in March 1743. Why Handel did not give the title is not really known, although religious fervor was growing in London from the influence of the Wesley brothers and William Law, and he probably would have faced controversy for presenting a work such as *Messiah* in a secular location. An example of this thought is found in a letter that appeared in the *Universal Spectator* on the same day *Messiah* premiered.

An *Oratorio* either is an *Act of Religion*, or it is not; if it is, I ask if the *Playhouse* is a fit *Temple* to form it of a *Company of Players* fit *Ministers of God's Word*, for in that case such they are made. . . . What the *Piece* itself is, I know not, and therefore shall say nothing about it, but I must again ask, If the *Place* and *Performer's* are fit?⁴⁴

The first London performance of *Messiah* in March 1743 was successful even through much religious controversy. Two more performances continued on March 24 and 29, with a final performance of *Samson* on March 31. Even Jennens, Handel's long time friend and the librettist of *Messiah*, quibbled over the overture, the treatment of certain texts, and features of Handel's English word setting. Handel responded to Jennens' criticisms with some revisions for the 1743 and 1745 performances, however Jennens' criticisms were mostly irrational, conceived over personal issues arising from Handel's performing *Messiah* first in Dublin instead of London. In the main, however, Jennens was enthusiastic about the first performance. Handel was also under pressure from the aristocratic society to return to composing operas. However, he was determined to plan a season with no influence from aristocratic patrons.⁴⁵

The combination of pressures surrounding *Messiah* and the aristocratic society's demand for opera took a toll on Handel's health, leading to a stroke in April 1743. Evidence of the illness comes from two letters from Jennens, dated April 29, 1743,

⁴⁴Hogwood, *Handel*, 181.

⁴⁵Burrows, *Handel*, 294.

“I hear Handel has a return of his Paralytick Disorder, which affects his Head & Speech. He talks of spending a year abroad, so that we are to expect no Musick next year.”⁴⁶ Another letter from Horace Walpole on May 4, 1743, reads, “We are likely at last to have no Opera next year; Handel has had a palsy and can’t compose.”⁴⁷ However, Handel recovered fairly quickly, composing the secular oratorio, *Semele*, and the *Dettingen Te Deum* in the summer of 1743. He also began work on *Joseph and His Brethren*. In response to Jennens’ previous remarks about *Messiah*, Handel turned to James Miller as librettist.⁴⁸

It is no doubt that Handel was genuinely ill in the summer of 1743, although he apparently kept his quick recovery out of the public eye so that he could continue to avoid aristocratic pressures to write more opera in order to try to save the financially failing Middlesex Opera Company. Handel wrote no new operas, but revised *Allesandro*, changed its title to *Rossane*, and ran it for twelve performances.⁴⁹

The 1744 season was the first in which Handel had both sacred and secular theater productions concurrently performed. In a letter from a Mrs. Dewes to Mrs. Delaney dated February 25, it was indicated that at *Semele*, an Italian opera without costumes and staging, the theater was not crowded every night, but only fairly full. Aristocratic pressures for Handel to write more opera continued even to an extent cited by Lang as physical. “Hired ruffians made attendance at Handel’s productions hazardous as people were set upon, beaten, and robbed.”⁵⁰ The King finally appeared at one of the performances and the troublemakers were arrested. However, this scandalous behavior

⁴⁶Ibid., 272.

⁴⁷Ibid.

⁴⁸Ibid.

⁴⁹Ibid.

⁵⁰Lang, *Handel*, 418.

resumed after the King's visit. *Semele* was closed after a few performances, never to be performed again in Handel's lifetime.

The 1745 season followed the same format, with both secular and sacred works, including *Hercules* and *Belshazzar*. *Hercules* failed to such an extent that the season was cancelled and subscribers were offered reimbursement. However, the public responded in such a way that *Belshazzar*, a new sacred oratorio, opened in March with great success.⁵¹ Handel remained friendly with Jennens so that Jennens would write the libretto for *Belshazzar*. However, Handel became frustrated with him over the length of the libretto, claiming it was too long. In the end Handel set the music the way he wanted, omitting much of Jennens' text.⁵²

In June 1745, Handel left London to get away from its pressures. He first traveled to Exton in Rutland (now in Leicestershire), to the home of the Earl of Gainsborough, for whom he composed *There Is Blissful Shade* (HWV44), a short cantata-epilogue, for a family performance of Milton's *Comus*. From there Handel traveled to Scarborough, visiting the home of the Earl of Shaftesbury. By the time he returned to London in August of 1745, Handel's health was again failing. Jennens writes in a letter dated October 16, 1745:

I am sorry to hear of Mr. Handel's illness, & heartily wish his recovery; but he has acted so mad a part of late, I fear voluntarily, that I don't at all wonder if it brings a real unavoidable madness upon him, of which I am inform'd he discover'd some very strong Symptoms in his travels about the Country this last Summer.⁵³

Political events beginning in August of 1745 brought about doubts that a 1745-46 season would happen, which may have been just as well, considering Handel's failing health.⁵⁴

⁵¹Ibid., 428.

⁵²Burrows, *Handel*, 279.

⁵³Ibid., 287.

⁵⁴Ibid.

In late November Handel began looking through oratorio librettos on bellicose Old Testament stories, a seemingly appropriate theme for the times. Handel's *Occasional Oratorio* was the result, with a theme of the righteous celebrating their victory over their opponents, re-using scenes from *Israel in Egypt* that describe the defeat of the Egyptians at the Red Sea. Burrows suggests that Handel's poor health probably would have restricted his writing such a work at the time. There is no specific date in the *Occasional Oratorio*, except that at the beginning it is inscribed as 1746. The *Occasional Oratorio* opened February 7, 1746, with Newburgh Hamilton as the librettist, and played three times during February 14-26, marking the extent of Handel's season that year. The Earl of Shaftesbury gave the oratorio high praise, although Jennens did not attend any of the performances, saying he had no reason to hear it. This is no surprise, considering that his relationship with Handel was near its end.⁵⁵

Handel finished *Judas Maccabaeus* with librettist Thomas Morell on August 11, 1746, signifying that both the nation and Handel were once again back into good standing. *Judas Maccabaeus*, another Old Testament story of military victory, was withheld from performance until April 1, 1741, when it was presented in the Lutheran Savoy Chapel. The oratorio was designed to be a paean to the Duke of Cumberland upon his victorious return from Scotland.⁵⁶

Handel's activities in the latter part of 1746 are unclear. According to Burrows, he may have spent time securing performers for the next season. After the unsuccessful 1744-45 season and his incomplete recovery of the abbreviated season at Covent Garden in 1746, he was now ready for a full Lenten season at Covent Garden. Performing English Lenten oratorios would now prove to be successful for Handel for the remaining years of his life, although the period from 1747 to 1752 is the last period in

⁵⁵Ibid., 289.

⁵⁶Ibid., 291.

which Handel composed. *Alexander Balus* and *Joshua* were composed for the 1748 season. *Alexander Balus*, on a libretto by Thomas Morell is another bellicose-themed oratorio that was successful on the heels of war. Burrows suggests that *Alexander Balus* was successful even in the absence of reports of this season, given the nature of the subject and the success of *Judas Maccabaeus* the previous year.⁵⁷

At the end of the 1748 season Handel began composing two more oratorios for the 1749 season—*Susanna* and *Solomon*. The librettists for these oratorios are unknown, but according to Burrows the two oratorios were probably by the same author. The 1749 season was probably one of Handel's most lavish, as indicated both by use of substantial choral forces for *Solomon* and the start of each performance with orchestral concertos. The 1749 season was followed by the composition of *Music for the Royal Fireworks* in celebration of the peace of Aix-la-Chapelle. Handel also gave benefit concerts during this final period for the Thomas Coram's Foundling Hospital, of which he was a member of the board of governors, an association that continued for the rest of his life.⁵⁸

Burrows suggests that Handel reached one of the "major peaks of his career" during the first half of 1749:

After the uncertainties of his earlier years with opera and oratorio, he had now apparently gained a stable audience for his Lenten oratorios, his seniority as London's prime public composer was without question and his reputation was now founded on English language works that were potentially accessible to a wider audience in London than his Italian operas had been. . . . The prodigious and well-regarded youthful composer and keyboard player had matured into a respected producer of sublime Lenten oratorios.⁵⁹

Handel completed only one oratorio in the summer of 1749. *Theodora* was finished by the end of July. He took another trip to Bath, the convalescent resort, but probably more for a rest or holiday than for health concerns. It could be that Handel felt a sentimental

⁵⁷Ibid., 294.

⁵⁸Ibid., 300.

⁵⁹Ibid., 301.

connection between the Roman city of Bath and the Roman characters of *Theodora*.⁶⁰

Little is known of Handel's whereabouts between August and December of 1749, but it is known that he was back in London on September 30.⁶¹

Handel traveled to Germany in 1750, having drafted his will just prior to his departure. The first stages of blindness began to be evident during the composition of *Jephtha*. He wrote on the score in the final chorus of Act II, "Reached here on 13 Feb. 1751 unable to continue owing to relaxation of the sight of my left eye."⁶² *Jephtha* was not completed until August 30, 1751. Blindness brought bouts of depression and despondency, but through it all Handel continued to perform concertos and voluntaries between parts of his oratorios with a youthful vigor of thought and touch.⁶³

Handel's health improved somewhat during 1756-57, and he added two codicils to his will. However, during the oratorio season of 1759 his health declined again, and he obviously knew he was close to death, adding four codicils to his will that left benefits to the Society for the Support of Decay'd Musicians, as well as other causes. He left instructions for his funeral, requesting burial in Westminster Abbey in a private service. Handel died in his home on Saturday, April 14, 1759. The funeral service, which took place on April 20, was not within his wish for a private affair. Instead some three thousand persons were in attendance. According to the *London Executive Post*, the Bishop, Prebendaries, and the choirs of Chapel Royal, St. Paul's, and the Westminster Abbey all took part.⁶⁴

⁶⁰Ibid., 330.

⁶¹Ibid.

⁶²Ibid., 301.

⁶³Ibid., 361, quoted by Burrows, "Charles Burney, *An Account of the Musical Performances . . . in Commemoration of Handel*" (1785).

⁶⁴Burrows, *Handel*, 368.

Long time friend, James Smythe (the “Bond Street Perfumer”), in a letter to Bernard Grandville described the moments leading up to Handel’s death.

According to your request to me when you left London, that I would let you know when our good friend departed this life, on Saturday last at 8 o’clock in the morn died the great and good Mr. Handel. He was sensible to the last moment. . . . He took leave of all his friends on Friday morning, and in the evening took leave of me and told me we “should meet again”; as soon as I was gone he told his servant “not to let me come to him any more, for that he had now done with the world.” He died as he lived—a good Christian, with a true sense of his duty to God and man, and in perfect charity with all the world. He left the Messiah to the Foundling Hospital, and one thousand pounds to the decayed musicians and their children, and the residue of his fortune to his niece and relations in Germany. He died worth £20,000, and left legacies with his charities to nearly £6000.⁶⁵

Smythe, in describing his late friend as “the great and good Mr. Handel,” was referring to a common view of Handel, who Burrows describes as someone already on his way to becoming an institution, remembered as a personality and a composer.⁶⁶

Handel’s success as an oratorio composer during the last two decades of his life somewhat dimmed the recollection of earlier operatic successes. He was remembered for his charitable nature, and as the composer of English odes, coronation anthems, *Te Deum* settings, the op. 6 concertos, the *Fireworks Music*, and perhaps most of all, for biblical oratorios, of which *Messiah* is considered a masterpiece among masterpieces.⁶⁷

⁶⁵Ibid.

⁶⁶Ibid.

⁶⁷Ibid.

CHAPTER 3

A HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF THE ORATORIO

Howard Smither defines oratorio in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* as “an extended setting of sacred text made up of dramatic, narrative and contemplative elements.”¹ Smither continues to compare oratorio to opera, concluding that oratorio puts greater emphasis on the chorus throughout much of its history, and the normal manner of performance is in concerted style without scenery, costumes, or action. The ingredients that normally make up an oratorio include: sacred dramatic text, recitative, aria, use of the chorus, orchestra, and lack of staging.²

Beginnings of oratorio may be found as early as the Middle Ages in the liturgical drama, the Divine Office of Saints’ Feasts, the Passion and the dialogue *lauda*. The Italian vernacular *laude* were simply popular religious expressions sung at meetings of confraternities, or religious brotherhoods of laymen. The tenth-century texts were usually written as larger works, narrating the story of the feast being celebrated, yet distributed throughout the canonical hours. During Medieval times the miracle and mystery plays could as well be considered akin to the oratorio. Another distant precursor from the late Renaissance and early Baroque periods is the *rappresentazioni sacre*, defined as a religious play with music.³

The most significant beginnings of oratorio, however, are more evident in the late Renaissance and early Baroque periods. During these periods there was an

¹Howard E. Smither, “Oratorio,” *The New Grove Dictionary of Music*, ed. L. Macy, 1.1 [online]; accessed 5 December 2002; <http://www.grovemusic.com>; Internet.

²Ibid.

³Ibid.

increasing interest in setting dramatic and narrative texts to music, first in opera and then in oratorio. These texts were used largely for the polyphonic madrigals of the sixteenth century in such examples as Andrea Gabrieli's *Tirsi morir volea* and in seventeenth-century monodic madrigals of Monteverdi's *Combattimento di Tancredi e Clorinda*. Even sacred music such as the Passion contained uses of dramatic narrative texts. While these examples are indirectly related to the oratorio, most are considered to be motets.⁴

The term "oratorio" comes from the building next to the main sanctuary of a church, which was called the oratory. The word "oratorio" is derived from the Latin term "*oratio*" meaning "prayer." During the early sixteenth century, as part of the Catholic Counter-Reformation pious laymen would meet in the oratory for prayer, Scripture, and singing. These meetings were called *Congregazione dell' oratorio*, and were founded by Filippo Neri (1515-1595) in Rome. Neri, born in Florence, moved to Rome during the mid-1530s and entered the priesthood in 1551. He then moved to San Girolamo della Carità. While in San Girolamo he began meeting with a small group of laymen in the oratory for prayer, Scripture, and singing. The singing consisted of spiritual Italian *laude* for entertainment and was considered an important element in the meetings.

These kinds of meetings spread first in Italy, then throughout Europe. In the beginning the congregation performed the oratorios as a means to attract people to the spiritual exercises. As they became more popular, oratorios began to be performed by professional musicians. *Laude* were for the most part in simple three- and four-part voicings in popular poetic and musical styles, however many more complex polyphonic works existed. *Laude* texts dealt with the themes of the church year, including Christmas and Passion. Other musical antecedents used in the oratory were the motet, madrigal, *spirituale*, and the *oratorio vespertino*, which was used only on feast days during the

⁴Ibid.

winter months.⁵

Of significant historical importance was a performance in 1600 at the Chiesa Nuova of Cavalieri's *Rappresentatione di Anima, et di Corpo*. This is the first performance of a large-scale dramatic work in which solo portions are set to music in the new monodic style. Smither argues that *Rappresentatione* is not an oratorio, but rather a sacred opera; however, other historians have labeled the work an oratorio. Dean calls it a "sophisticated morality play with allegorical characters set to music in the new style of monodic recitative with choruses after the manner of the *Laudate Spirituali*."⁶ This work not only involves singing, but also dancing, costumes, and acting, and is more elaborate than other works that came to be known as oratorios. Cavalieri's *Rappresentatione* is a work, however, that forms the earliest tradition of oratorio. Yet, even though it is considered an antecedent of the oratorio, it was not very successful; therefore, it did not become a model for other composers and did not set a precedent.⁷

Except for the *laude*, there is not much is known of the repertory performed in the meetings of the oratory during in the first decade of the seventeenth century. However, *madrigal spirituali* and dramatic dialogues are commonly present in the second and third decades. One of the more successful efforts was the *Teatro Armonico Spirituale* (1619), composed by Francesco Anerio (c. 1567-1630), utilizing madrigal style in the choral portions and monody in the solo sections. This work is typical of many of the seventeenth century in its use of a solo narrator as *historicus* to describe the action of the story. Another important work of its day was *Querimonia di St. Maria Maddalena*

⁵Howard E. Smither, "Oratorio: Antecedents," *The New Grove Dictionary of Music*, ed. L. Macy, 1.1 [online]; accessed 5 December 2002; <http://www.grovemusic.com>; Internet: 1:2.

⁶Winton Dean. *Handel's Dramatic Oratorios and Masques* (London: Oxford University Press, 1959), 3.

⁷Smither, "Oratorio: Antecedents," 1:89.

(c. 1640), by Domenico Mazzochi (1592-1665). There are no arias at all in Mazzochi's oratorios, using simple *secco* recitative style for the *historicus* parts.⁸ Works like these, written in the native language, were known as *oratorio volgare*, while works written in Latin were called *oratorio latino*.⁹

During the middle of the seventeenth century Giacomo Carissimi (1604-74) created the first oratorios fully deserving of the name in such works as *Jephtha*, *Judicium Salomonis*, *Jonas*, and *Extremum Judicium*. Most of Carissimi's oratorios are written in Latin and were directed at highly educated audiences.¹⁰

One of the differences in *oratorio volgare* and *oratorio latino* is that the latter not only employed biblical text but also hagiography, or the depiction of the lives of the saints. Rhetorical devices are also prominent in many of Carissimi's text. Also, arias tend to be less dominant in the *oratorio latino* than in the *volgare*.

Carissimi's oratorios typically use Old Testament stories told by a narrator and chorus. His oratorios are considered to be some of the most significant in the development of the genre. This style of Italian oratorio resulted from "an attempt to strengthen the religious hold on oratorio and re-assert its didactic purpose."¹¹

Neapolitan style traits, which are commonly associated with the *opera seria* and are precursors of the Classical period, became increasingly prominent in music of the late Baroque period. The Neapolitan style is defined by emphasis on homophonic textures, symmetrical phrases, dominance of solo singing, technical display, and the use of *ario da capo*. Antonio Caldara (1671-1736) created many Roman oratorios with these

⁸Howard E. Smither, *A History of the Oratorio*, vol. 1, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1987), 230.

⁹Owen Jander, "Oratorio," in *The New Harvard Dictionary of Music*, ed. Don Michael Randel (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1986), 570.

¹⁰*Ibid.*, 571.

¹¹Dean, *Handel's Dramatic Oratorios*, 7.

style traits while in Venice. From the 1720s onwards men such as Leonardo Vinci (1696-1730) created works in this new style, influencing others such as Giovanni Battista Pergolesi (1710-1736) and Leonardo Leo (1694-1744). Even though most of these men were trained in Naples, many of the Classical traits appeared in Rome and Venice, all of which would have influenced Handel as he heard them performed. These new style characteristics became increasingly prominent in the Italian oratorios from the 1720s on, and became fully developed in the Classical period. Another later composer of oratorios in the Neapolitan style was Niccolò Jommelli (1744-74), who's most important composition is *La Passione*.¹²

In time oratorios began to expand in length, becoming more secularized and similar to opera. Poets began publishing their own librettos, female singers were employed, and a strong emphasis was placed on the aria, especially the *aria da capo*. As the oratorio continued to evolve in the late seventeenth century, other characteristics became evident, such as an increased variety in instrumentation and the prominence of *concerto grosso* instrumentation with solo passages for instruments.¹³

In Protestant Germany oratorio was rooted in the *historia*, a story of Christ usually associated with Christmas or Easter, and based on the Bible. The first German composer of oratorio was Heinrich Schütz (1585-1672), with *Historia der Auferstehung* (1623). His most important Christmas oratorio is *Historia der . . . Geburt Christi* (1644). This work can artistically be compared to J. S. Bach's *Christmas Oratorio*, written almost a century later.¹⁴

During the seventeenth-century, Italian influences became more intense in the dramatic music composed for the Lutheran Church, specifically with the introduction of *basso continuo*, and the use of non-biblical text. The resulting genre was what Smither

¹²Smither, "Oratorio: Antecedents," 1.4.

¹³Ibid., 1:1.

¹⁴Ibid.

calls the “oratorio passion.” The first example is Thomas Selle’s *Passio secundum Johanneum cum intermediis* (1643). The genre culminated with Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750) in the highly revered *St. John Passion* (first version 1724) and the *St. Matthew Passion* (first version 1727 or 1729). What is most unique in Lutheran dramatic music is the use of the chorale. The chorales are usually sung in a straightforward manner with little adornment. They are often also woven into the choruses and arias. Bach also continued the Schütz tradition in both the *Christmas Oratorio* (1733-34) and *Easter Oratorio* (1736).¹⁵

In Germany in the second half of the eighteenth-century, German oratorio began to show close parallels to the Italian models of the period. The ten sacred oratorios of George Philipp Telemann (1681-1767) are characterized by a progressive, mid-century Italian style. They included an increased use of accompanied recitative and an emphasis on homophonic textures in the choruses. One particular example is *Die Donnerod* (1755). Other composers using these Italian characteristics include C. P. E. Bach and C. H. Graun.

The French held little interest in sacred dramatic music during the Baroque period, even though many of Carissimi’s oratorios were known to the French. Carissimi’s pupil, Marc-Antoine Charpentier (1643-1704) was a composer of dramatic motets, more commonly known as oratorios, numbering thirty-five in all. What is most common to all his oratorios is his ability to portray a character and his treatment of dramatic situations. One of the most important is *Le reniement de St. Pierre*. Even though the title is French, its text is in Italian.

Handel and the English Oratorio

Handel enjoyed much success in Italy with Italian opera beginning in the first decade of the eighteenth century and at the same time became familiar with Italian oratorio. When he arrived in London in 1711, however, the English were not as familiar

¹⁵Jander, *The New Harvard Dictionary of Music*, 571.

with this new genre of oratorio.¹⁶ Dramatic ingredients in music of the early Baroque period were not as strong in England as they were in Italy. Dramatic sacred works did not develop beyond “brief dialogue.” Some of the earliest known English sacred dialogues by John Hilton were probably composed as early as 1616. These include *The Dialogue of King Solomon and the Two Harlots* and *The Dialogue of Job, God, Satan, Job’s Wife and the Messengers*.¹⁷ A dialogue such as Richard Portman’s *How Many Hired Servants* resembles a verse anthem with text based on the story of the prodigal son.¹⁸

Dialogue takes place in the verses while the narrative passages are given to the chorus. In the verse anthem, particularly, in what has come to be called the “cantata-anthem,” other English composers such as Henry Blowman, Benjamin Lamb, John Blow, and Henry Purcell demonstrated tentative beginnings of what may have come to be something very similar to the oratorio; however they did not expand the form. The English oratorio is totally “Handelian” in its origin and has become so unique in its form that it could be labeled as an independent sub-genre.¹⁹

“Handelian” English oratorio may be defined as a musical entertainment that utilizes a three-act dramatic text based on biblical subjects. Musical ingredients include styles and forms of Italian opera of the time, as well as English sacred choral styles, sometimes tailored for their new context. The chorus was a prominent and essential part of the English oratorio, which was usually performed in a concert hall and most often included concertos between the acts. The distinguishing factors between the “Handelian” English oratorio and its Italian counterpart are the increased use of chorus and the division into three acts.

¹⁶Smither, *History of the Oratorio*, 2:178.

¹⁷Ibid., 175.

¹⁸Ibid.

¹⁹Smither, *Oratorio, Handel and the English Oratorio*, 1:1.

Oratorios are usually set in “parts,” although Handel preferred the division into “acts.” To every rule there are usually exceptions, as is the case in several of Handel’s oratorios. For example, *Israel in Egypt*, *Messiah*, and *Occasional Oratorio* all have non-dramatic texts. Another example of an exception was Handel’s benefit concert of 1738, advertised as “Mr. Handel’s Oratorio,” which contained a potpourri of music with no unifying plan. *Triumph of Time and Truth* (1757) is also considered an exception since it is not set to a biblical text, but rather uses a more ethical or moral text. This work is a revision of an Italian work and is considered to be more of a “secular oratorio” than sacred, even though Act Three ends with a ‘Hallelujah Chorus’ and includes an anthem of petition to God.

Other oratorios that have been labeled as “secular oratorios” include *Acis and Galatea*, *Alexander’s Feast*, *Ode for St. Cecilia’s Day*, *L’Allegro*, *Semele*, *Hercules*, and *The Choice of Hercules*.²⁰ Smither argues that Handel would not have considered any of these to be oratorios, since the term “secular oratorio” was not used in England at the time and likely would have been considered a contradiction in terms. Smither therefore suggests, according to genre classification based on normal terminology used in England at the time that these seven “oratorios” should be excluded from the oratorio category.²¹

The birth of the English oratorio was something of an accident. It was born through a performance of *Esther* (1718) on Handel’s birthday by the Children of the Chapel Royal under the direction of choirmaster Bernard Gates in 1732. The performance was to be staged for the Philharmonic Society at the Crown Anchor Tavern. Later in the same year Handel intended to present the same staged version publicly, using the same performers at the King’s Theater in Haymarket. However, The Bishop of London felt this not to be an appropriate venue for an oratorio, given the secular nature of

²⁰Ibid., 1:2.

²¹Ibid., 1:3.

the theater and the sacred nature of the oratorio. Therefore, Handel was forced to compromise and perform the work without staging in a revised concert version using mature professional musicians.

In Handel's time the mindset of clergy was that there should be a separation between secular and sacred music. Church leaders felt that music's influence on the emotions was a dangerous phenomenon with potential negative effects in the church, so it should be used with care. The outcome of *Esther* was a great success, prompting Handel to compose two more oratorios of this nature, *Deborah* and *Athalia*, in 1732. There is no precedence for staged productions of Handel's oratorios in England from Handel's day to the present.²² Although, it may well be possible that some of Handel's oratorios have been staged in England since 1988—the last copyright date of Smither's publication—it is known that many staged productions of *Messiah* have been performed in the United States.

Another factor contributing to the creation of English oratorios, as cited in Chapter 1, was the public's disenchantment with the Italian opera scene in London. Dean suggests that English peerage and poets societies also played an important role.²³ Another generative factor includes a competition of another kind brought about by the pirating of *Esther*. Following the previously mentioned birthday performance of *Esther* by Bernard Gates and the Children of the Chapel Royal, another performance was advertised for the following April, unbeknownst to Handel. The music had been pirated, which prompted Handel to revise the work entirely.²⁴

Although "Handelian" oratorio functioned as an opera substitute, it was not a

²²Ibid., 1:4.

²³Dean, *Handel's Dramatic Oratorios*, 33.

²⁴Ruth Smith, *Handel's Oratorios and Eighteenth-Century Thought* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 14.

substitute in the same sense of the *oratorio volgare* in Rome and Venice, where oratorio was performed during Lent when opera could not be performed. Instead, oratorio performances were used due to the sacred text. In England, during Handel's time, opera continued to be performed during Lent along with oratorio, and the two seasons often played at the same time, often presenting a competition between these two genres.²⁵

Most of Handel's librettos were chosen with great care, offering the English audience some of the most expressive religious texts available. All but *Messiah* and *Theodora* are based on Old Testament or Apocryphal characters. Even *Messiah*, which is so heavily prophetic in nature, is in fact set to more Old Testament Scripture than of the New Testament in spite of its Christian theme.²⁶

The Old Testament stories were familiar to the British people, who saw themselves paralleled with the Israelites of the Old Testament. Both the Israelites and the British were nationalistic in nature, and both were led by many heroic figures. The British, like the Israelites, considered themselves to be under special protection from God. The English justification for war had long been a religious one, just as the Israelites justified wars against the enemies of their faith through religious reasons.²⁷

Opera of the day depended primarily upon flamboyant arias and recitatives, while the chorus played the prominent role in Handelian oratorio. Handel incorporated many different compositional devices in his choruses, including fugues with one to three subjects, but predominantly used chordal homophonic effects, a varied *basso ostinato*, free imitation in something like a madrigal or motet style, and massive choral effects, sometimes using double chorus. His choruses often are contrasting in texture, using melodic, rhythmic, and harmonic devices for contrast. Handel paid careful attention to

²⁵Smither, *Oratorio, Handel and the English Oratorio*, 1:4.

²⁶Ibid., 1:3.

²⁷Ibid.

text in that he used significant amounts of text painting and symbolism.²⁸

The arias of Handel's oratorios are generally similar to those of Italian opera, depending primarily upon *da capo* style arias. However, there was a decreasing frequency in the numbers of arias as compared to choruses in the oratorio. Some of the arias use binary or ternary forms or are strophic in nature.

Many of Handel's oratorios make use of borrowed material—not an uncommon practice during the time. He borrowed material from his own works as well as those of others. However, seldom did he use complete movements that were not completely reworked, making the material obviously his own.²⁹ The overtures are almost two-thirds French in nature, with eleven out of seventeen oratorios beginning with a French overture.³⁰

Handel is the undisputed master of English oratorio in his time. His influence carried over into the Classic period, culminating in Franz Joseph Haydn's oratorios *The Creation* (1798) and *The Seasons* (1801). Handel's influence on the genre continued into the nineteenth century with the oratorios of Felix Mendelssohn, notably *Elijah* and *St. Paul* (1844-46). The enduring quality displayed by the popularity of *Messiah* throughout the world to this day speaks of Handel's mastery of reaching the masses with his powerful and expressive combination of soloists, chorus, and orchestra.

²⁸Ibid.

²⁹Ibid., 1:4.

³⁰Ibid.

CHAPTER 4

BASS ROLES FROM SELECTED ORATORIOS

Due to the many variables in the manuscript copies of Handel's oratorios there is a need for an authentic critical edition. Handel's manuscript copies served largely as a blueprint for the score with many details not written in. Often copyists filled in specific details of the scores.

Friedrich (Karl Franz) Chrysander (1826-1901) is known in the musical world for his exhaustive research of Handel. In 1856 Chrysander and literary historian Gottfried Gervinus (1805-71) founded the Händel-Gesellschaft to publish a collected edition of Handel's works. While there are certain inadequacies in the Händel-Gesellschaft edition, it continues to be the most widely accepted standard collection of Handel's compositions. Chrysander's editions were the first to utilize both autograph scores and Handel's personal conducting scores. Chrysander was also known to make changes where he thought there were manuscript or copyist errors. Handel often made cuts and revisions to his works and these are noted in the Chrysander editions.¹

In recent years Bärenreiter publications in Germany has begun to edit and publish Handel's complete works. The Bärenreiter edition yields Handel's original autograph score with no changes made. This edition also presents a larger, easier-to-read score along with editing notes. The Bärenreiter edition will be used for comparison, when available.

The selected literature for this study is limited to recitatives and arias that are able to stand alone and do not function as dialogue. There is one recitative included in this

¹Anthony Hicks, "Karl Friedrich Chrysander," *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, ed. L. Macey [on-line]; accessed 6 December 2002; <http://www.grovemusic.com>, 1.1; Internet.

study that is part of a dialogue in the role of Haman in *Esther*. However, it is in dialogue with Habdonah, whose part is only two measures in length. The remaining thirteen measures of the recitative are sung by Haman. It is recommended that while one studies the arias and recitatives in this study that a score of the oratorio being studied be assessable. While some direction about ornamentation and Baroque performance practice has been discussed, this subject has not been discussed in depth. There are many resources in the bibliography that will be helpful to the singer in determining more specific Baroque performance practice of the arias and recitatives.

Esther (1718-20 Version)

The first version of *Esther* was composed in 1720, even though a manuscript of the same music exists from 1718 under the title of *Haman and Mordecai, a Masque*.² It includes one act with six scenes. The librettist is unknown, although both Dean and Smither attribute it to Jean Racine:

Esther is of particular importance for having first brought to the English oratorio, by way of French classical drama, the influence of ancient Greek tragedy; the libretto is indirectly indebted to Jean Racine's classical Tragedy *Esther* (1688, first performed in 1689).³

The libretto has also been attributed to Alexander Pope or John Arbuthnot. Whoever the librettist, its text gave Handel opportunity for some excellent arias that build dramatic tension, with the climax being Haman's "Turn not, O Queen, thy face away," and Esther's reply aria bursting forth with "Flatt'ring tongue, no more I hear thee."

The libretto also presents several problems for understanding the entire Old Testament story of Esther. It is unclear that Ahasuerus has divorced his first wife for disobeying Persian court law or that he has married Esther as his second wife without knowing of her Jewish descent. Neither is it clear that Haman, the King's chief minister,

²Friedrich Chrysander, preface to *Esther* (Leipzig: German Handel Society, 1882; reprint, Ridgewood, NJ: Gregg Press, 1965).

³Harold E. Smither, "Oratorio, Handel and the English Oratorio," in *A History of the Oratorio* (Chapel Hills, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 1987), 2:189.

has made a decree that all court attendees will bow to him and that Esther's uncle Mordecai refuses due to the fact that Haman is a descendant of the Israelites' ancient enemies, the Amalekites. It may be that the British knew well this Old Testament story and intricate detail was not necessary. However, these omissions make unclear Esther's reasons for fearing to appear before Ahasuerus without being summoned. The omissions also deprive Haman of a motive for his vendetta against the Israelites.⁴

Esther was composed for the musicians employed by James Brydges, at the time Earl of Carnarvon and later Duke of Chandos. Brydges, with his cousin and second wife, apparently entertained guests frequently in small concerts. These became known as the "Cannons Concerts," named for his estate. They began in 1715 with cellist/composer Nicola Francesco Hayn (1678-1727) directing. According to Burrows the oratorio was probably performed in a concert performance, but with added scenic settings and some attempts toward conversational style between the characters, much like the previously mentioned Roman oratorios. The revision of *Esther* in 1732 was most definitely staged, but Handel was not likely involved in directing this performance since it was a birthday celebration for him given by the Chapel Royal choristers, directed by Bernard Gates.⁵

The story is based on the Old Testament book of Esther. Esther was a Jewish girl, raised by her uncle Mordecai, though she became queen to King Ahasuerus, who reigned from India to Ethiopia. Haman is brought to power as the King's minister and later hears of Mordecai's disdain for the King and plots to kill all Jews covertly, receiving approval from King Ahasuerus. Mordecai learns of Haman's plot, informs Esther and insists that she influence the king to intervene.

In that day a law prohibited anyone from approaching the king for petition uninvited, an offense punishable by death. However, Esther risks the punishment and

⁴Julian Herbage, "Handel's Oratorios," in *Handel a Symposium*, ed. Gerald Abraham (London: University Press, 1954), 77.

⁵Donald Burrows, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Handel* (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 264.

King Ahasuerus, acting out of love for Esther, assured her nothing would happen to her. She invites King Ahasuerus and Haman to a banquet, revealing to Ahasuerus Haman's plot to have the Jews killed, including herself. Ahasuerus is outraged and has Haman hanged on the gallows that were previously intended for Mordecai.

As stated in Chapter 2, Handel totally revised the 1732 version from the 1718 version due to someone pirating the 1718 version. Two acts were added to the 1732 version with three scenes each. Samuel Humphreys, librettist for the second version, supplemented a tremendous amount of text. Smither lists the changes from the 1720 version to the 1732 version:

In addition to the recitatives, the new music consists of six arias, one arioso, two duets, and three choruses; two of the choruses were borrowed from the Coronation Anthems (one from the massive "Zadok the Priest") and one from the "Ode for the Birthday of Queen Anne." A chorus and an aria were deleted from the 1720 version, and the B parts and *da capos* of three arias were also deleted—this revised work marks the beginning of Handel's interest in the *da capo* aria in the oratorios.⁶

The Bärenreiter and Chrysander editions show considerable changes in the voice parts used for the male roles. There are shifts in aria assignments as well as recitative assignments as demonstrated in Table 1.

Table 1. Comparison of voice part assignments for roles in 1718-20 and 1732 revision of Handel's *Esther*⁷

Character	1718-20 version	1732 version
Ahasuerus	Tenor	Contralto
Haman	Bass	Bass
Habdonah/Harbonah	Tenor	Tenor
Officer	Tenor	Tenor
Israelites	Sop., Alto, Tenor	N/A
Israelite Priest	N/A	N/A
Israelite women	N/A	Soprano, Alto
Esther	Soprano	Soprano
Mordecai	Tenor	Sop., Alto, or Tenor

⁶Smither, "Oratorio, Handel and the English Oratorio," 2:199.

⁷Winton Dean, *Handel's Dramatic Oratorios and Masques* (London: Oxford University Press, 1959), Appendix G.

As the table suggests, in scene three of the 1718 version the recitative “How have our sins provok’d the Lord” is designated as Third Israelite, but the same recitative is assigned to Mordecai in the 1732 version. The 1732 version gives more specific detail to the Israelite Priest, and the Israelite women are given a more dramatic function.

As mentioned in Chapter 3, English oratorio as we know it came about primarily by accident. Burrows cites Charles Burney’s account of *Esther*’s second performance by Handel. Burney’s writings appeared approximately fifty years after the performance:

Mr. Handel himself was present at one of these representations, and having mentioned it to the Princess Royal, his illustrious scholar, her Royal Highness was pleased to express a desire to see it exhibited in action at the Opera House in the Hay-market, by the same young performers; but Dr. Gibson then the Bishop of London, would not grant permission for its being represented on that stage, even with books in the children’s hands. Mr. Handel, however, the next year, had it performed at that theatre, with additions to the Drama, by Humphrey; but in *still life*: that is, without action, in the same manner as Oratorios have been since constantly performed.⁸

The Bass Role of Haman⁹

Handel often assigned the villainous character to a bass voice, as is the case with Haman. After a threat against his life, King Ahasuerus appointed Haman, the son of Hammedatha the Agagite in authority over all 127 provinces. Haman plots to hang Mordecai and kill the entire Jewish race. Haman is the only solo bass role in either the 1720 or the 1732 versions of *Esther*. A bass duet exists in the 1720 edition, entitled “Mount Lebanon His Firs Resigns”; however, it is not sung as a dramatic role, and will not be a part of this study.

The 1720 version of *Esther* assigns two arias to Haman—one entitled “Pluck Root and Branch from out the Land” and the other “How Art Thou Fall’n from Thy Height.” The recitative prior to the first aria is assigned both to Habdonah and Haman as a dialogue recitative; however, it may be performed with only Haman’s part prior to the

⁸Burrows, *Cambridge Companion*, 264.

⁹The range of Haman’s role lies between B₃ and E₄.

aria, since Habdonah sings only the first two measures of the recitative and his text is simply “tis greater far to spare, than to destroy.” Haman’s texts stand on their own for thirteen of the fifteen-measure recitative.

The role of Haman is not vocally demanding. Neither aria requires the performer to sing any of the rushing melismatic passages for which Handel is known. Both arias are best suited for a baritone, although both extremes of the arias’ ranges are within normal bass and baritone limits.

Secco Recitative: “I’ll hear no more.” Haman’s recitative “I’ll Hear No More” is an unaccompanied recitative in traditional *secco* Baroque style. The text proclaims both Haman’s disdain for the Jews and his plans to have them all executed.

I’ll hear no more; it is decreed,
All the Jewish race shall bleed.
Hear and obey, what Haman’s voice commands.
Hath not the Lord of all the East giv’n power into my hands?
Hear, all ye Nations far and wide,
Which own our monarch’s sway, Hear and obey.¹⁰

This is the first vocal selection in the work, coming immediately after the overture. The recitative functions as Haman’s decree, justified by the King to kill and destroy the entire Jewish race. It should be sung in a declamatory manner with little ornamentation. An *appoggiatura* down to the E-natural on the word “bleed” in m. 6 is appropriate. The recitative should be sung with emphatic strength, given the seriousness of the text. The range occupies little more than an octave from C₃ to D₄. The tempo should move with urgency appropriate to the text. It is textually appropriate to take a little more time at the quarter rest after the word “hands” in m. 11.

Aria: “Pluck root and branch.” The following aria, “Pluck root and branch from out of the land”; propels dramatic action through constantly dotted rhythmic figures

¹⁰George Frideric Handel, *Esther*, ed. Howard Serwer, in *Hallsche Händel—Ausgabe* [Works] (Kassel: Bärenreiter-Verlag Karl Vötterle GmbH & Co., 1995), 12.

in the accompaniment. Haman's disdain for Jewish blood continues in this aria, as he proclaims that he will spare no one.

Pluck root and branch from out the land:
 Shall I the God of Israel fear?
 Let Jewish blood dye [sic] ev'ry hand,
 Nor age or sex I spare.
 Raze, raze their temples to the ground,
 And let their place no more be found.¹¹

Howard Serwer makes some interesting observations on the text of this aria and the political and religious underpinnings in England in the early 1700s. The phrase "pluck root and branch" is taken from a play by Thomas Brereton produced in London in 1715. This line may well have referred to a petition submitted by the Puritans to Parliament on December 11, 1641, demanding the abolition of the Episcopacy. The bill submitted to parliament was known as the "Root and Branch" petition. Therefore, in the British mindset of the time, Haman represents the Hanoverian monarchy and the Church of England, threatening anyone who may oppose the system.¹²

The range of the aria is fairly extensive, lying between G₂ and E-flat₄. However, the low G₂ moves quickly on an eighth note. The *tessitura* remains for the most part within the octave of D₃ to D₄. The aria is only thirty-two measures long with a rhyme scheme of ABACC, and is set in a through-composed style with different melodic material for each line of text.

In terms of rhythmic notation, Handel was sometimes inconsistent. Chrysander, as shown in Example 1, edits one particular rhythmic figure repeated continuously in this aria. Bärenreiter follows the composer's notational irregularities faithfully except at mm. 18, 30, 31, and 32, where Handel had omitted thirty-second note beams, creating measures with an extra sixteenth note.

¹¹Ibid., 12-16.

¹²Ibid., xvi.

Example 1. Handel, *Esther*, Chrysander's editing

Handel's notation



Chrysander's editing

The singer needs to be aware of text painting Handel used in this aria. For example, at the entrance of the text, the words “pluck” and “root” are given a separation by rests to give a sound of something being plucked. Final consonants on each of these words should be carefully articulated, as well as in the following word “branch.”

In selecting a tempo for this aria, or any Baroque aria, one must take into consideration that late Baroque tempos were measured by the human pulse at an average of eighty beats per minute. The tempo marking for this aria is *Allegro moderato*.¹³ Dolmetsch cites Johann Quantz's *Essay* written in 1752 that *Allegro moderato* is a time indication of the late Baroque period that normally indicates ♩ = 80.¹⁴ However, this tempo seems somewhat slow for modern day performances. Even in consideration of the short thirty-second-note passages this piece could be taken as fast as ♩ = 89. The function of tempo is to bring out the desired urgency in the drama of the text.

In terms of tonal structure the aria is set in the key of B-flat major with a brief movement to the dominant F major at m.10. This could be to enhance the text “Shall I the God of Israel fear?” Handel often used psychological parallels with key assignments. For example, the key of B-flat is used for moods of the extroverted personality, fit for angry tyrants such as Haman.”¹⁵

¹³Carl Friedrich Chrysander, ed., *Esther, An Oratorio by George Frederic Handel* “Pluck root and branch” 1730 Version (New York: Edwin F. Kalmus, 1882), 10.

¹⁴Johann Joachim Quantz, *Essay* (Berlin: n.p., 1752, Ch. XVII Sect. Vii, 49ff.) quoted in Arnold Dolmetsch, *The Interpretation of the Music of the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centures, Revealed by Contemporary Evidence* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1980), 285-87.

¹⁵Dean, *Handel's Oratorios*, 60.

Accompagnato Recitative: “Turn not, O Queen thy face away.” The second piece assigned to Haman, “Turn not, O Queen thy face away,” is only twenty-four measures. The plot has now turned against Haman. Esther has pleaded to King Ahasuerus that he spare her life along with the Jewish nation. The King, out of anger over what Haman had done to Esther and the Jewish people, orders Haman hung on the very gallows that had been prepared for Mordecai. This recitative takes place at the banquet that Esther had prepared for the King and Haman and Haman is now begging Esther to have mercy on him.

The range lies within C₃ and D₄. The tempo is much slower, compared to “Pluck root and Branch,” demonstrating the groveling sorrow of the text:

Turn not, O Queen, thy face away.
Behold me, prostrate on the ground!
O speak, his growing fury stay,
Let mercy in thy sight be found!¹⁶

Bärenreiter does not indicate a tempo, just as Handel’s autograph score does not. However, Chrysander designates the mood as *Andante* which, according to Quantz, indicates a slow tempo of approximately $\text{♩} = 40$.¹⁷ Such a tempo for this recitative is likely too slow for a modern performance, as indicated in a recording directed by Christopher Hogwood and sung by David Thomas that takes the tempo at $\text{♩} = 50$.¹⁸

The tonal structure begins in D, demonstrating a somber, dirge-like mood. The accompaniment plays a large role in setting the mood as Handel uses descending half steps to signify the effect of Haman’s upcoming march to the gallows.

Aria: “How art thou fall’n.” The last aria assigned to Haman in *Esther* is titled “How art thou fall’n.” Esther has responded to Haman’s last recitative with

¹⁶Handel, *Esther* (ed. Chrysander), 90.

¹⁷Quantz, *Essay*, 49ff.

¹⁸George Frideric Handel, *Esther*, Westminster Cathedral Boys Choir and the Chorus and Orchestra of the Academy of Ancient Music, directed by Christopher Hogwood, David Thomas, soloist, Decca CD 414425-2.

disdain, followed by King Ahasuerus' recitative telling the guards to seize Haman and prepare him for hanging. Haman's soliloquy expresses his thoughts on how such a turn of events could happen.

How art thou fall'n from thy height!
 Tremble, ambition, at thy sight!
 In power let mercy sway
 When adverse fortune is thy lot,
 Lest though by mercy forgot,
 And perish in that day.
 How art thou fall'n from thy height!
 Tremble, ambition, at thy sight!
 In power let mercy sway.¹⁹

The rhyme scheme is AABCCBAAB. There are two complete versions of this aria with the shorter second version composed for the 1732 *Esther* that will be discussed later in this chapter. This aria is set in *da capo* form, making the aria a total of 148 measures encompassing a range of B₃ to E₄.

Handel uses a descending leap of a major-seventh to indicate a falling down effect on the word "falling." The only indication of ornamentation is a trill in m. 134 on the word "power." The aria is similar in mood and effect to "Pluck root and branch" in that it makes use of the dotted rhythmic device in the accompaniment, indicating that Haman's more boisterous character has returned.

In mood and tempo Chrysander suggests *Larghetto*, which according to Quantz would be approximately ♩ = 60.²⁰ However, this tempo is extremely slow for this text. Conductor Christopher Hogwood takes the tempo at ♩ = 100.²¹ Bärenreiter indicates no tempo, but suggests *Larghetto* in the critical report, the tempo marking found in MS C that likely was also Chrysander's source.²² The tonal structure begins in the key of e with a brief transition to the key of G at m. 62 on the text "When adverse fortune in thy lot,"

¹⁹Handel, *Esther* (ed. Bärenreiter), 124-27.

²⁰Quantz, *Essay*, 49ff.

²¹Handel's *Esther* (Hogwood Recording).

²²Handel, *Esther* (ed. Bärenreiter), 204.

but moves quickly back to the minor mode at “lest thou by mercy be forgot.”

***Esther*: 1732 Version**

Haman’s three arias and recitatives are repeated exactly in the 1732 version of *Esther*, except for the previously mentioned “How art thou fall’n from thy height,” in which the *da capo* repeat is omitted in the second version. The Chrysander edition simply refers to the first two arias, “Pluck root and branch” and “Turn not O Queen, thy face away,” as being performed in a particular place in the oratorio and does not print them in the 1732 version.

As mentioned previously, this second version of *Esther* is much longer, being expanded to three acts of three scenes each. Librettist Samuel Humphreys (1698-1738) added considerably to the text. For example, Haman was given more dialogue material in a recitative with Ahasuerus, Harbonah, and Officers. Given that it is dialogue material, it will not be discussed in this study.

Teaching Considerations

One may consider programming these two arias and their preceding recitatives as part of a recital, using program notes to synopsise the oratorio and Haman’s role in it. These arias are surprisingly accessible to a beginning bass/baritone voice student.

“Pluck root and branch” is accessible to most bass voices and can be done by a male singer eager to sing oratorio literature but not yet ready for some of the more complicated arias. However, one must also consider the character, tone, and ethos of the aria. It could be sung out of context, provided program notes are used to describe the plot and Haman’s role. “Pluck root and branch” also may offer the student opportunities to become more aware of diction as well as negotiating wide intervallic leaps of sixths, sevenths, and octaves. The narrow range makes the aria fairly accessible to a less mature singer, and the aria is devoid any difficult passages.

The *accompagnato* recitative “Turn not, O Queen” challenges the student to

produce a legato vocal line and demonstrate good breath management. The recitative could also be sung out of context by a less mature singer. “How art thou fall’n from thy height” challenges the student with wide intervallic leaps of sixths, sevenths and octaves as well as with long legato lines that require careful breath management. The narrow range makes the aria fairly accessible to a less mature singer and the aria is devoid of any difficult passages.

Deborah (1733)

Librettist Samuel Humphreys takes the story of Deborah, the Old Testament prophetess, from Judges 4-5. It is a gruesome story, climaxing with Jael, wife of Heber, driving a stake through the head of Sisera. The plot begins with the Israelites in their twentieth year of captivity under Jabin, King of Canaan.

The prophetess Deborah tells Barak, the son of Abinoam, that God has commanded him to go and defeat Sisera, the Canaanite commander at Mount Tabor, and that Sisera will die at the hand of a woman. In battle Sisera retreats with his army and flees the battlefield, seeking refuge with the beautiful young heroine, Jael, wife of Heber the Kenite. Jael offers Sisera sanctuary, but while he is asleep she nails his head to the ground with a tent peg. The oratorio ends as the Israelites rejoice in God’s deliverance (Judg 4-5).

The Book of Judges offers significant dramatic material for an oratorio, although Humphreys delivers little character development through his libretto. There is little expansion of the plot in *Deborah* and Humphreys could have made more of the action sequences. However, it must be remembered that Humphreys was working at tremendous speed to satisfy Handel’s urgent need for the libretto. To say the least, *Deborah* was not a great success at the time of its premiere. Handel raised the price of tickets for the first performance, but thereafter returned to the regular rate. It is not entirely clear why Handel did this; however, Dean quotes Mainwaring’s biography, “Handel had taken great pains, and . . . this was a new kind of music attended with some

extraordinary expense, and more over for his own benefit.”²³ Dean continues to explain that Handel could not have taken any more great pains over the score than any others. It was probably an attempt to turn a greater profit on the heels of the successful debut of *Esther* in the prior season.²⁴ The work was performed five more times during the 1733 season at the Haymarket Theater at regular prices for admission.²⁵ Chrysander notes that *Deborah* was completed on February 21, 1733, and first performed in March 17 of the same year. In keeping with Handel’s habit of borrowing from other works, many of the choruses are adopted from his *Brockes Passion* (1716).²⁶

Deborah is the only oratorio for which Handel did not produce his own newly-written autograph copy. According to Robert King, it seems as if he had a copyist continually by his side to write the manuscript that is now held in the British Museum. The manuscript displays two different handwritings.²⁷ Chrysander notes that Handel used material from the *Coronation Anthems*. In fact, Handel did not write out the manuscript, but simply gave the copyist a reference to his conducting score where he had written the new text directly over the original words.

Handel scored *Deborah* for a large orchestra of strings, oboes, bassoons, flutes, three horns, three trumpets, timpani, harpsichord, and two organs with an eight-part choir. King reports that at the first performance on March 17, 1733, there were 125 in the performance with twenty-five chorus singers. Even if the soloists joined on the choruses this appears to be greatly unbalanced. In later performances it is revealed that Handel

²³Dean, *Handel’s Dramatic Oratorios*, 236.

²⁴Ibid.

²⁵Paul H. Lang, *George Frederic Handel* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1966), 243.

²⁶Ibid., 244.

²⁷George Frideric Handel, *Deborah*, Choir of New College, Oxford, Chorister of Salisbury Cathedral, The Kings Consort, Robert King Conductor, Hyperion CDA66841/2 (cover notes by Robert King), 6.

increased the size of the choir considerably.²⁸

The Bass Role of Abinoam²⁹

Abinoam, Barak's father, is assigned the only bass role in the oratorio, consisting of three recitatives and arias, beginning in Act I, scene three, with the recitative "Barak my son" and an aria, "Awake the ardour of thy breast." The second recitative and aria comes in Act II, scene one: "The ardours warm the winter of my age" and "Swift inundation of desolation." The third recitative and aria follows in Act III, scene two, "My prayers are heard" and "Tears such as tender fathers shed." Abinoam's role is one of encouragement to his son Barak, who is commander of the Israelite army, commissioned by Deborah to make war on Sisera and the Canaanite army.

In terms of difficulty and performing force, this role requires a mature dramatic bass voice experienced in Baroque melismatic singing. It is not a role for a younger inexperienced voice; this role is best assigned to a bass rather than a baritone. As will be discussed later some of the selections in the role may be taken out of context and assigned to a younger, less experienced singer.

Secco Recitative: "Barak, my son." In the beginning of Act I, Deborah tells Jael that heavenly protection has been given to her. Jael then sings of the joy and peace that God will provide her even in this hideous act of assassination. Abinoam now appears in Act I scene three with the recitative "Barak my son," praying both for God's favor on Barak and that he as a father will be able to boast in his victory.

Barak, my son, the joyful sound
Of acclamations all around,
Gives me to know the glorious weight of cares
God for thy fortitude prepares.
Swift may thy virtue Judah's hopes outrun,
And make thy father boast of such a son!³⁰

²⁸Ibid., 7.

²⁹The range of Abinoam's role lies between A₂ and E₄.

This *secco* recitative's range lies within the octave of D₃ and D₄. Its nine measures are in the key of D, half-cadencing in A, the key of the following aria. This recitative yields no particular difficulty, in contrast to the following aria, "Awake the ardour of thy breast."

This recitative should be done in a declamatory mood, giving appropriate musical meaning to the text. The tempo should be taken at approximately ♩ = 80 to provide the declamatory style the text suggest. It is textually accurate to put the emphasis on the first syllable of "Ba'rak." It is also stylistically appropriate to insert an *appoggiatura* from G to F-sharp in m. 6, on the word "prepares," since Handel included a *fermata* on the last syllable. Another *appoggiatura* is appropriately added on the last word "son," from A to G-sharp. The vocal line should give the sense of leading the *continuo* accompaniment.

Aria: "Awake the ardour of thy breast." This aria, borrowed from the "Birthday Ode for Queen Anne," is full of tempestuous scales and trumpet calls as Abinoam gives his son encouragement to prepare for victory or death and leave the task in God's hands.³¹

Awake the ardour of thy breast,
For victory, or death, prepare;
Let all thy virtue shine confess'd
And leave the rest to Heaven's care.
Should conquest crown thee in the field,
Be humble, or if death's thy doom,
Thy life with resignation yield,
And crowds will envy thee thy tomb.³²

The aria is set in *da capo* form with a rhyme scheme of ABABCDCD in a total of 189 measures. The range of the aria is A₂ to E₄ with the *tessitura*, given the

³⁰Carl Friedrich Chrysander, ed., *Deborah, An Oratorio by George Frederic Handel* (New York: Edwin F. Kalmus, 1869), 82.

³¹Dean, *Handel's Oratorios*, 642.

³²Handel, *Deborah*, (ed. Chrysander), 82-85.

melismatic character of the melody, lying generally within the same range.

Chrysander sets the mood of the tempo in an *Allegro*, indicating a cheerful tempo of approximately ♩ = 120 in a 3/8 meter. A performance conducted by Robert King and sung by Michael George used a tempo of ♩ = 138, which seems reasonably comfortable and at the same time yields the bravura dramaticism evident both in music and text.³³ In terms of tonal structure Handel sets the aria in the key of A, modulating to f-sharp in mm. 47-55 and again at mm. 101-02 to indicate a somber mood on the text “death and tomb should conquest overcome.” The aria cadences in the key of c-sharp prior to the repeat of the *da capo*.

Text painting is evident in the first line of the text and throughout the aria on the text “awake the ardour.” Handel uses an ascending triad on an A major chord to create the effect of awakening.

To create contrast one may consider a more legato line at mm. 84-103. One also may consider emphasizing the text “be humble” at mm. 88-91, giving emphasis on the first syllable of “humble.” The accompaniment changes to long sustained dotted notes from the continually moving eighth-note pattern, giving consideration to the contrasting text. To ensure more contrast, the singer may consider a slight *ritard* on the last two measures of the second section before returning to the first section.

The aria is characteristically defined by its *da capo* form, the first section being in a 3/8 minuet dance style, and the second changing to a more somber, mournful mood.

Secco Recitative: “The ardours warm the winter of my age.” Abinoam’s second recitative and aria, “The ardours warm the winter of my age” and “Swift inundation of desolation,” is sung in Act II, scene one. The Canaanites and the Israelites are finally gathered at Mount Tabor and all possibilities of peace are gone. Barak, fired

³³George Frederic Handel, *Deborah*, Robert King, Conductor, Michael George, Bass, Decca CDA6681/2.

with enthusiasm, is ready to meet his foe when his father Abinoam sings another aria of encouragement, exhorting Barak swiftly to overwhelm and desolate Judah's foes.

In the recitative Abinoam suggests that his aging body is strengthened by Barak's eagerness.

Thy ardours warm the winter of my age,
Its weakness strengthens and its pains assuage;
And well dost thou our impious foes deride,
Justice is thine, and God is on thy side.³⁴

In a rhyme scheme of AABB, Handel sets the recitative in the key of a, using a chordal progression of various major and minor chords, to paint the text of "warm winter age" and "its pains assuage."

Aria: "Swift inundation of desolation." This aria is similar in dramatic function to the previous "Awake the ardour of thy breast" in Act I; however "Swift inundation" is set in the key of a.

Swift inundation of desolation,
Pour on the nation of Judah's foes;
Can fame delight thee, can heav'n excite thee,
They now invite thee to end our woes.³⁵

The aria is set in *da capo* form with a rhyme scheme of ABCB. The range lies within G₂ and E₄ with the tessitura between C₃ and E₄. Chrysander suggests the tempo setting of *Allegro*, which indicates ♩ = 120 in 4/4 meter. Michael George performs the aria on Richard King's recording at the exact tempo of ♩ = 120,³⁶ a challenging tempo, although it allows the soloist to cleanly negotiate the sixteenth-note melismatic passages.

In terms of compositional devices, Handel uses the accompaniment to deliver the text's excited rage of desolation extensively throughout the aria. He uses a descending sixteenth-note pattern in all instrumental parts, conveying a sense of

³⁴Handel, *Deborah* (ed. Chrysander), 160.

³⁵*Ibid.*, 160-62.

³⁶Handel, *Deborah* (Robert King).

destruction. For example, the violins will first introduce the rhythmic theme; then the other parts join the theme, delivering a sense of continuously downward motion.

The contrasting section modulates to the dominant key of e, increasing the tension to emphasize the text, which suggests Abinoam is not in a quest for fame, but that the Canaanites “now invite thee to end our woes.” The orchestral accompaniment is characterized by a martial/war-like rage style.

Abinoam and Barak introduce Act III, scene two, with the recitative “My prayers are heard.” Since this is a dialogue recitative with Barak, it is delimited from this study.

Aria: “Tears, such as tender fathers shed.” This aria is one of the shortest, comprising only nineteen measures, but is surely one of the most beautiful arias in the oratorio. It speaks of the tears of joy a father has for his triumphant son.

Tears, such as tender fathers shed,
Warm from my aged eyes descend,
For joy to think, when I am dead
My son shall have mankind his friend.³⁷

The Israelites have defeated the Canaanites in a victory described in Judges 4:16, “not even one was left” (NIV). Abinoam is pleased that his son has performed his duty well and now contemplates his own impending death. Handel set “Tears, such as tender fathers shed” in the key of E-flat, a key that Handel frequently used when writing quiet, noble music.³⁸ Handel adds the distinctive color of two solo flutes to soft strings and organ. The aria is characterized by its beautiful *legato* vocal line as well as the *siciliano* rhythmic style in the orchestration. According to Baroque performance practice, one may consider placing trills on the penultimate beat of m. 4, on the A-flat, beat four of m. 10, and on the G-natural on beat four of m. 16.

The range remains within B-flat₂ and E-flat₄ with a *tessitura* lying within the

³⁷Handel, *Deborah* (ed. Chrysander), 185-86.

³⁸Ibid.

octave of B-flat₂ and B-flat₃. The melody moves largely in stepwise motion with one upward leap of an octave from C₃ to C₄. The aria is through composed with a rhyme scheme of ABAB. In terms of tempo, Chrysander has marked the mood *Largo, e pianissimo*, indicating a tempo of approximately $\text{♩} = 40$. One must remember to think the pulse in a subdivided four.

Teaching considerations

Both “Swift inundation” and “Awake the ardour” are difficult arias that require an experienced singer. Both arias are best sung by a bravura bass voice. The recitative “My prayers are heard” was previously considered a dialogue recitative between Barak and Abinoam; however, Barak’s total of three words (“my honored father”) over two and one-half beats may be eliminated, giving the recitative totally to Abinoam. Both the recitative and following aria, “Tears, such as tender fathers shed,” may be extracted and sung out of the context of the oratorio. They may also be assigned to a young bass voice since neither of these are difficult to sing. The aria gives the bass student an opportunity to enhance his long legato line technique as well as negotiate wide intervallic leaps.

Athalia (1733)³⁹

Athalia was premiered at the Sheldonian Theater in Oxford and was Handel’s third English oratorio. *Esther*, *Messiah*, and *Athalia* are the only three English oratorios that Handel did not write for a London theater. Dean suggests that *Athalia* was written as an expression of gratitude for Oxford University for an honorary doctorate offered to Handel, but inexplicably not accepted. Oxford University held an elaborate ceremony called a “Publick Act” for the conferring of degrees that lasted for several days, usually in July, drawing large crowds from other academic institutions. After an invitation from the Vice Chancellor, Handel traveled to Oxford with his company to perform *Athalia* and

³⁹The biblical spelling for *Athalia* is *Athaliah*, but for this study Handel’s spelling will be used.

revivals of other works, including *Esther*, *Deborah*, and *Acis and Galatea*.

Handel enjoyed a triumph with *Athalia* at Oxford even though some of the conservative members of the university complained about “Handel and his lousy crew . . . a great number of foreign fiddlers . . . the theater was erected for other-guise Purposes, than to be prostituted to a Company of squeeking, bawling, out-landish Singsters.”⁴⁰

The libretto was written by Samuel Humphreys and based on Racine’s play *Athalia* (1691). Concerning Handel’s approach to literature, Young suggests:

Handel’s second study of Racine indicates his attentiveness to general intellectual habits, for the stage was under strong Francophile influence—in marked contrast to political affairs. Moreover we have a guide as to Handel’s approach: it was not that of the pious Bible reader, but that of the general student of art and literature.⁴¹

Lang suggests that Handel was drawn to the works of Racine due to both artists being drawn to contrasting women characters as tender virginal types as well as passionate murderers.⁴² The story of Queen Athalia yields more than sufficient dramatic oratorio material, although Humphrey’s libretto is weakened as a result of cutting, shifting, and reducing the story into what Lang calls “Sunday sermon proportions.”⁴³ Humphreys leaves out key details, such as the murder of Joas’s brothers,⁴⁴ the siege of the temple by Athalia’s forces, and the fact that Josabeth is Athalia’s daughter and Joas’s aunt.⁴⁵

The biblical account of the story is taken from II Chronicles 22-23, and concerns Queen Athalia, daughter of Jezebel. The story, of Athalia’s overthrow and her grandson Joas’s rise to power is set in the course of a twenty-four hour period in Jerusalem.

⁴⁰George Frideric Handel, *Athalia*, Choir of New College, Oxford, The Academy of Ancient Music, Christopher Hogwood, Conductor, Decca CD 41 71271/2 (CD booklet notes by Winton Dean), 17.

⁴¹Percy Young, *The Oratorios of Handel* (London: Dennis Dobson, 1949), 73.

⁴²Lang, *Handel*, 284.

⁴³*Ibid.*, 287.

⁴⁴The biblical spelling for Joas is Joash, but for this study Handel’s spelling will be used.

⁴⁵Lang, *Handel*, 289.

In Act I, scene one, a Jewish festival is taking place in the temple at Jerusalem. The high priest Joad⁴⁶ and his wife are offering up prayers for deliverance from the tyranny of the Baalite Queen Athalia. Scene two takes place in the palace where Athalia has awakened from a dream in which the apparition of her mother, Jezebel, appears to warn her of the wrath of Jehovah. During the dream Athalia witnesses her mother's mutilation, after which a young boy appears. As she is about to caress him, he plunges a dagger into her chest and she dies.

The Baalite priest, Mathan, tries to console her, assuring her it was only a dream with no truth in it. Mathan, in an effort to appease Athalia, agrees to search the temple for the boy and destroy him. At this time Abner, a bass role, appears as a Jewish soldier to warn Joad of the impending danger. The final scene in Act I, as well as the remainder of the story, takes place at the Temple, where Joad and Josabeth, the wife of Joad, decide to tell the people that the boy they have reared is Joas, the rightful heir to the throne.

Act II begins in a harvest festival, during which Joad asks Abner where his allegiance would lie if a rightful heir to the throne were found. Abner affirms that his allegiance will be to the true king who follows Jehovah. Athalia appears and demands the boy should live in her care, but Joad rejects her sacrilegious rites, and Athalia leaves. The boy still does not understand his real identity as Joad and Josabeth join in a duet and express their hope that they will find solace in God.

In Act III Joas is asked which Israelite king would be his model if he were to become king. Joas replies "David," the priest acknowledges Joas' royal lineage and declares him king. In the following scene Joad prophesies Athalia's downfall and death and dismisses Mathan as an apostate priest. Athalia enters and is informed of Joash's being crowned as king. She summons Abner to avenge her, but he ignores her command.

⁴⁶The biblical spelling for Joad is Jehoiada, but for the purpose of this study Handel's spelling will be used.

Mathan then sings of Jehovah's triumph and anger while Athalia continues to rant and rave. The oratorio ends with Joad and Josabeth in a duet, joined by the chorus in praise to God.⁴⁷

The Bass Role of Abner⁴⁸

The bass role in *Athalia* is assigned to Abner, commander of all the Jewish army. Abner is assigned three exciting arias and many recitatives, two of which will be discussed in this study. Due to the many melismatic passages, extended range, and generally difficult music, this role requires an experienced, flexible bass voice. Even though Abner is not a major role, his arias represent some of Handel's most exciting writing for bass.

Secco Recitative: "When He in his wrath revealed." The first aria and recitative is rather early in the oratorio in Act I, scene one, where praises are being sung, and Josabeth, the chorus of virgins, and Israelites are offering prayers up to Jehovah. The aria is introduced by a short recitative of only three measures entitled, "When He is in his wrath revealed." The recitative lies within a range of a fifth, between G₃ and D₄.

When He is in his wrath revealed,
Where will the haughty lie concealed?⁴⁹

The character of this recitative is revealed in the text through such words as "haughty" and "wrath." A suggested tempo of ♩ = 55 delivers the seriousness of the text, but still moves it along quickly enough. An *appoggiatura* from the A-natural on beat three of the last measure down to the G-sharp is stylistically appropriate.

⁴⁷George Frideric Handel, *Athalia* (CD booklet synopsis by Raymond McGill, 23-24), performed by Choir of New College, Oxford, The Academy of Ancient Music, Christopher Hogwood, Conductor, Decca CD4171271/2, 1985.

⁴⁸The range of Abner's role lies between G₂ and F₄.

⁴⁹Carl Friedrich Chrysander, ed., *Athalia, An Oratorio by George Frederic Handel* (New York: Edwin F. Kalmus, 1859), 29.

Aria: “When storms the proud to terrors doom.” The aria, “When storms the proud to terrors doom,” is a prayer of praise that Abner offers up to Jehovah, describing God’s storm-like strength.

When storms the proud to terrors doom,
 He forms the dark majestic scene,
 He rolls the thunder through the gloom,
 And on the whirlwind rides serene.⁵⁰

The rhyme scheme is ABAB, and the aria is in rounded binary form. The range of the aria lies between G₂ and E₄ with the tessitura between B₂ and D₄. Considering the numerous leaps and ascending/descending melodic patterns, the aria’s tessitura is almost as wide as its range.

Chrysander marks the tempo as *Allegro*, indicating ♩ = 120. The aria is performed at ♩ = 108 on a 1986 recording by bass David Thomas, conducted by Christopher Hogwood.⁵¹ This is a reasonable tempo, given the many melismatic passages. If performed much faster, some clarity may be lost in the sixteenth-note passages. The aria is set in the key of C with periodic shifts to the key of G at “He forms the dark majestic scene,” m. 19, and modulating to the key of a on the text, “he rolls the thunder” and “on the whirlwind rides,” mm. 34-40. There is another tonal shift to the subdominant in mm. 44-45, and then a shift to the key of B-flat at mm. 51-54, delivering a sense of “riding on a whirlwind.”

Handel not only uses tonality to incorporate text painting into this aria, but also many melodic and rhythmic compositional devices as well. Handel assigns each line of the text its own melodic and rhythmic pattern that is repeated throughout the aria each time the line returns. The first line of text in m. 13 is assigned an ascending eighth-note arpeggio to indicate a building of the “storm” as shown in Example 2.

⁵⁰Ibid., 29-38.

⁵¹George Frideric Handel, *Athalia* (CD booklet synopsis by Raymond McGill), no.5. CD-1.

Example 2. Handel, *Athalia*, text painting, “When storms the proud to terrors doom.” mm. 10-13⁵²



The text “He forms the dark majestic scene” is demonstrated, in mm. 18-20, through elongated, descending quarter notes to suggest the dark and deep majestic scenes of God’s creation pictured in Example 3.

Example 3. Handel, *Athalia*, “When storms the proud to terrors doom.” mm. 18-20⁵³



The text “He rolls the thunder through the gloom” is depicted in mm. 33-35 with straight eighth notes in a separated style, set in unison with the cello, indicating the crashing of thunder, as shown in Example 4.

Example 4. Handel, *Athalia*, “When storms the proud to terrors doom.” mm. 33-35⁵⁴



In this aria the word “rolls” is always set in a rushing melismatic pattern of sixteenth notes to indicate the obvious, as shown in Example 5.

⁵²Handel, *Athalia* (ed. Chrysander), 30.

⁵³Ibid., 31.

⁵⁴Ibid., 33.

Example 5. Handel, *Athalia*, “When storms the proud
to terrors doom.” mm. 42-44⁵⁵

rolls the thun-der, he rolls
rollt sein Don-ner, da rollt

The text “and on the whirlwind rides serene” is depicted largely in the orchestra, where all but two of the instrumental sections are assigned a stormy sixteenth-note pattern as depicted in Example 6.

Example 6. Handel, *Athalia*, “When storms the proud
to terrors doom.” Mm. 57-59⁵⁶

on the whirlwind rides se- rene, and on the whirl- wind rides se-
aus dem Sturmwind flammt sein Licht, und aus dem Sturm- wind flammt sein

H. W. A.

The aria is indicative of Handel’s virtuoso Italian operatic compositional style. In it Handel uses nature to describe God’s greatness, a device he frequently used. The character of God is described in the nature He has created; however there is a deeper

⁵⁵Ibid.

⁵⁶Ibid., 36.

implication that God is great and wonderful, but also wrathful and vengeful.

The aria settles on the subdominant at the end with the chorus joining in as the aria moves to the home key of C. The chorus comes crashing in with no instrumental interlude or transition from aria to chorus. Therefore, if one were to sing this aria without chorus, he should consider repeating the beginning twelve measures for an instrumental ending, returning the tonal center key of C.

Aria: “Ah, canst thou but prove me!” The second of Abner’s arias, “Ah, canst thou but prove me!” occurs at the end of Act II, scene one. A harvest festival is in progress and Joad asks Abner where his allegiance will lie if a rightful heir to the throne were found. Abner reassures her that his loyalty will be to the true king.

Ah, canst thou but prove me!
 To vengeance I spring,
 No terrors shall move me,
 I’ll fall for my king.
 But whilst you relieve me
 Awhile from my pain,
 I fear you deceive me
 With joys that are vain. *da capo*⁵⁷

The rhyme scheme is ABABABAB and the aria is in *da capo* form. The recitative that precedes the aria is in dialogue with Joad; it will not be discussed in this study.

The length of the aria is eighty-one measures, including the *da capo* section. Chrysander offers no tempo marking except for an *Adagio* at mm. 45-46 before the *da capo* and then back to tempo I at the repeat. Christopher Hogwood’s recording takes the aria at ♩ = 96, conveying a comfortable tempo.⁵⁸

The range of the aria is quite wide, lying within G₂ and F₄. There is only one F₄ and it is approached stepwise on a sixteenth-note passage at m. 14. It is difficult to discuss *tessitura* in this aria simply because the melodic line’s consistent ascending and descending motion often fills the extent of the range. However, it could be argued that

⁵⁷Handel, *Athalia*, CD Booklet, 132-36.

⁵⁸Ibid., Recording, CD-2/3.

the *tessitura* lies generally within C₂ to C₄. The aria's tonality begins in a minor, and shifts to G in the "B" section at m. 32, then moves back to the key of a minor at the *da-capo*. Text painting is evident each time the phrase "I'll fall for my king" occurs. Handel either sets a descending scale or leaps down by fifths or ninths to depict a "falling" effect, as shown in Example 7. The aria is characterized in a heroic and martial style to convey Abner's militaristic alliance with King David.

Example 7. Handel, *Athalia*, "Ah, canst thou but prove me!" mm. 4-7⁵⁹

fall for my king, I'll fall for my king, I'll fall, I'll fall, I'll fall for my king, no
fal - le mit Lust, ich fal - le mit Lust, ich fall, ich fall, ich fal - le mit Lust, kein

There is no instrumental introduction; however, there are eight measures of instrumental *ritornello* between the two sections at mm. 24-31. The *adagio* indicated at mm. 44-45 is Handel's and should be observed. It is appropriate to add a cadenza on the word "joys" at m. 46, and sing the E-flat an octave lower, providing the singer has the range. A suggested cadenza for m. 48 is shown below in Example 8.

Example 8: Suggested cadenza for "Ah, canst thou but prove me!"

Bass

Joys.....that are vain.

Aria: "Oppression, no longer I dread thee." The last bass aria for Abner in *Athalia* is found in Act III, scene four. After Joas replies to Joad's question concerning whom he would model as a King, both Joad and Josabeth hail him as the rightful heir to the throne. Athalia enters with cries of treason, commanding Abner to avenge his queen.

⁵⁹Handel, *Athalia*, "Ah, canst thou but prove me!" (ed. Chrysander), 132.

Abner denounces Athalia, suggesting he is no longer afraid of her.

The aria, in AB form, has a rhyme scheme of ABAB.

Oppression, no longer I dread thee,
Thy terrors, proud queen, I despise!
Thy crimes to confusion have led thee,
Ah Judah triumphant shall rise!⁶⁰

The range lies between G₂ and E-flat₄. The aria is very short, consisting of only thirty-six measures, seven of which are instrumental introduction. Again, as with many of Handel's arias, it is difficult to measure a specific tessitura, although the first part of the aria lies in higher tessitura, between F₃ and E-flat₄. The second part of the aria is primarily an ascending scale from G₂ and E-flat₄. The tempo marking is *Allegro* indicating a tempo of approximately ♩ = 120, which is the tempo Hogwood takes in his recording.⁶¹ The meter is set in *alla breve* time indicating a fast march style.

Handel brilliantly uses tonality to paint the text. The aria is primarily in the key of c minor; however he uses successions of minor chords to convey the text "crimes and confusion" in mm. 18-21. He also uses a G scale on the text "Judah triumphant shall rise" in mm. 24-27 to convey a sense of rising triumph.

The aria is characterized through its rhythmic structure. It utilizes a strong dotted-eighth and sixteenth note pattern continuously throughout the aria that is performed in unison in the vocal line and orchestral accompaniment. Through gigue dance style, along with text of a self-assured nature, Abner makes a mockery of Queen Athalia.

Teaching Considerations

The first aria, "When storms the proud terrors doom," reflects one of Handel's most exciting arias. The level of difficulty requires an experienced bass singer capable of negotiating many roulades, wide leaps, and tonal shifts. The melodic line reflects the text

⁶⁰Ibid., 192-94.

⁶¹Ibid., (Recording, CD-2), no. 15.

though a repeated descending line on the text “he forms the dark majestic scene” in mm. 16-17, 19-20, and 24-25. The entire aria is indicative of a storm-like mood.

The second aria mentioned, “Ah canst thou but prove me!”, may be taken out of context and assigned to a younger, less mature voice, since it contains only one melismatic passage at mm. 40-44. However, the aria’s wide leaps of octaves and sevenths, and the aria’s extended range yield some difficulty, presenting a challenge to a less experienced singer. As mentioned earlier, if one were to sing this aria out of the context of the oratorio, he may consider repeating the beginning twelve measures for an instrumental ending, returning to the tonal center key of C, since the aria runs directly into the following chorus. The last aria, “Oppression, no longer I dread thee,” is not a difficult aria and may be taken out of context and sung by a younger, less experienced singer. However, the extended range requires a singer with the range required by the role.

Saul (1739)

Handel composed *Saul* between July 23 and September 27 of 1738, with the first performance taking place on January 16, 1739. It was his first oratorio composition since *Athalia* in 1733. As cited in Chapter 3, during this five-year period he focused on performing and composing operas, yet the 1738-39 season had to be cancelled due to the subscriptions not being filled. Handel was faced with having to salvage a partial 1739 season, and was successful in keeping some sort of season afloat, which his partner Heidegger was unable to do.⁶²

Smither suggests that *Saul* is one of Handel’s most outstanding dramatic works, creating a synthesis of drama and music “rarely as closely integrated in Baroque oratorio or opera as this work.”⁶³ Webb also claims, “Saul is perhaps the first oratorio

⁶²Burrows, *Handel*, 203.

⁶³Smither, *Oratorio, Handel and the English Oratorio*, 2: 217.

which Handel took seriously, rather than composing for a quick financial profit. Freed from the conventions of *opera seria*, he created a fully articulated drama on his own terms.”⁶⁴ Handel’s genius is evident in his development of Saul’s character—prone to impulses of pride, fear, and envy that eventually lead to his own self-destruction. Dean continues to suggest, “Handel’s powers of characterization are nowhere more finely displayed than in his portrait of Saul.”⁶⁵ Dean also compares the oratorio’s theme to Verdi’s *Otello*, claiming that both are noble characters who see their downfall and try to reassert their nobility, even in the midst of catastrophe, to the point of their own destruction.⁶⁶

Saul’s destruction is not portrayed through his arias so much as it is through his recitatives. He is assigned only three arias in the entire work. Dean suggests,

Saul’s musical vehicle is recitative. . . . His five accompanied recitatives are among the finest in the whole range of Handel’s work, and the character they unfold is more akin to the psychological studies of modern opera than to the conspiratorial bass villains of opera seria.⁶⁷

The libretto, written by Charles Jennens (1700-1770), is taken from the story of Saul, King of the Israelites, and David, who eventually succeeded him, as recorded in the Old Testament book of 1 Samuel 17-31. The story begins as young David has gained victory over Goliath with a sling and a stone. Act I, scene one, opens with the Israelites singing to God the song of triumph for David’s miraculous victory. As David continues to be victorious in many wars that Saul had sent him to fight, David grows closer to Jonathan, Saul’s son. Saul becomes uncontrollably jealous both of David’s victories and of David’s relationship with Jonathan.

⁶⁴Ralph T. Webb, “Handel’s Oratorios as Dramas,” *College Music Symposium* (Fall 1983): 140.

⁶⁵Dean, *Handel’s Dramatic Oratorios*, 283.

⁶⁶*Ibid.*

⁶⁷*Ibid.*

Saul's suspicion begins when his daughters begin to praise David for his tens of thousands of victories, compared to Saul's thousands. Saul offers his daughter Merab to David as his wife, but David refuses Saul and eventually marries Saul's other daughter, Michal, who is sincerely in love with David. Saul had hoped that Michal would be a snare to David, and the Philistines would eventually kill him. When Saul saw that Michal truly loved David, and as David continued greater victories, Saul became even more jealous and afraid of him.

At one point in the story, Saul, in a fit of anger, throws his spear at David trying to "pin him to the wall," but David escapes Saul's wrath (1 Sam 18:11a). This, compounded with Saul hurling a javelin at his own son, Jonathan, because Jonathan was defending David, continues to thicken the plot. The many jealous and murderous-minded acts of Saul against David, coupled with Saul's disobedience to God by sparing the Amalekite king and seeking counsel from the witch of Endor, brings God's judgment on Saul, and his certain death at the hand of the Philistines (1 Sam 17-31).

The Bass Roles of Abiathar, Doeg, and Apparition of Samuel

Handel cut the bass role of Abiathar the Priest from the oratorio, due to the role's non-necessity in the plot; therefore this role will not be discussed in this study. Chrysander described it in the following words: "Abiathar, who in the first arrangement of the text, at suitable places delivered himself of thoughts, in themselves certainly quite unobjectionable, but always perfectly irrelevant to the action of the piece."⁶⁸ The bass roles of the Apparition of Samuel and Doeg are dialogue recitatives and cannot stand alone; therefore they will not be discussed in this study.

⁶⁸George Friderich Handel, *Saul* [Works], ed. Friedrich Chrysander (New York: Edwin F. Kalmus, 1862), preface.

The Bass Role of *Saul*⁶⁹

Saul is the only Old Testament oratorio in which Handel assigned the title role to a bass. Saul has three arias, five *accompagnato* recitatives, and two other *secco* recitatives. Five of the seven recitatives are dialogue in nature and cannot stand alone; so they will not be discussed in this study.

***Accompagnato* recitative: “What do I hear?”** This recitative is Saul’s response to the chorus of women as they celebrate David’s tens of thousands of victories over Saul’s thousands of victories. The recitative, only six measures in length, proclaims Saul’s animosity in a somber mood.

What do I hear?
Am I then sunk so low,
To have this up-start boy preferr’d before me?⁷⁰

The range is C₃ to D-flat₄ with a contemplatively slow tempo. Nicolaus Harnoncourt’s recording takes the recitative at ♩ = 58.⁷¹ Neither Chrysander nor Bärenreiter offers a tempo marking. The tonal structure is in C, modulating to f to deliver Saul’s somberness, and then modulating back to the key of C on the last cadence.

***Accompagnato* recitative: “To Him ten thousands!”** In the next recitative in this set Saul begins to react sarcastically as he sings,

To him Ten thousands!
And to me but Thousand?
What can they give him more?
Except the Kingdom?

This accompanied recitative is also only four measures long, set similarly to the tempo of the previous one at approximately ♩ = 58. The tonal structure is simply a chord progression of D-G-A-G, which takes the singer into the key of the next aria.

⁶⁹The range of Saul’s role lies between Bb₃ and E₄.

⁷⁰George Friderich Handel, *Saul* [Works], ed. Bärenreiter-Verlag Karl Vötterle (London: Bärenreiter Kassel, 1962), 115.

⁷¹George Friderich Handel, *Saul* The Viennese State Opera Chorus and Orchestra, Nikolaus Harnoncourt, conductor, Teldec 8.35687, CD-1.

Aria: “With rage I shall burst his praises to hear!” Saul is now outraged and finally admits David as a rival. At this point in the story Saul listens to David play the lyre while possibly Saul sharpens his spear. Saul hurls his spear at David, hoping to pin David to the wall:

With Rage I shall burst his Praises to hear!
 Oh! How I both hate the Stripling, and fear!
 What Mortal a Rival in Glory can bear?
 Oh! How I both hate the Stripling, and fear!
 A Rival, In Glory.⁷²

Both the range and *tessitura* lie primarily in the upper range of the bass voice between B₃ and E₄, with many florid passages in the melodic material. Harnoncourt’s recording takes the tempo at ♩ = 114, which appears to be quick enough, but not so quick that one may not clearly negotiate the melismatic passages.⁷³ The aria is set in the key of e minor with periodic shifts to the relative G major. Handel uses florid sixteenth-note passages in the strings, a compositional device often used by Handel to convey a sense of rage and urgency.

The thematic material on the text “With rage I shall burst his praises to hear” is repeated each of the three times the text appears and is performed in unison with the accompaniment. The thematic material is unique in relationship to the text in that Handel uses an ascending quarter-note passage beginning on B₃ and climaxing on E₄ to convey Saul’s rising rage. The melodic material then changes to descending eighth and quarter notes on the words “his praises to hear,” conveying a dying effect, indicating Saul’s intent to kill David as shown in Example 9. In formal structure, the aria is set in a simple binary form with a four-measure instrumental *ritornello* (mm. 25-28) separating the two sections.

Aria: “A serpent in my bosom warm’d.” Saul’s second recitative and aria come toward the end of Act I, scene five. The scene is set with Jonathan, Saul, and David.

⁷²Handel, *Saul* (ed. Bärenreiter), 102-05.

⁷³Handel, *Saul* (Harnoncourt recording).

Example 9. *Saul*, “With rage I shall burst,” mm. 1-4,
use of text painting through thematic material⁷⁴

Andante.

Violino I.

Violino II.

Viola.

SAUL.

Bassi.

With rage I shall burst his praises to hear!
Wie wallt mir vor Zorn im Busen das Blut!

Organo tasto solo, e l'ottava bassa.

Jonathan proclaims that Saul’s fury continues against his friend, David. Saul replies in the following recitative and aria that even though a serpent (David), warmed in Saul’s bosom, may seek to sting him in the heart, his venom would soon be disarmed and David would feel the pain.

A serpent, in my bosom warm’d,
Would sting me to the heart:
But of his venom soon disarm’d,
Himself shall feel the smart.
Ambitious Boy! Now learn, what Danger
It is to rouse a Monarch’s Anger!⁷⁵

The rhyme scheme is ABABCC. Handel begins the aria in the orthodox *da capo* style but fully closes at the end of the “B” section, followed by a modulation to the key of a minor, ending with a four-measure coda, after which Saul hurls his javelin at David, missing him as David exits. It is interesting that the stage direction “Throws his javelin—exit David”⁷⁶ exists in both the Bärenreiter and Chrysander editions, indicating this to be Handel’s stage direction as well. While no evidence for a precedence of Handel staging his oratorios has been found, Burrows suggest such visual images are:

Left to the audience’s imagination (assisted by the word-book) . . . all motivation

⁷⁴Handel, *Saul* (ed. Bärenreiter), 102.

⁷⁵Ibid., 115-19.

⁷⁶Ibid., 119.

and action need not be covered in the musical setting, provided the links are made explicit in the word-books. A high proportion of the audience presumably purchased and consulted the word-books It is doubtful whether pre-electric technology allowed much variation in the level of house lighting, so that reading during a performance would have been a practical proposition It may also have been significant that most of the biblical stories were better known to the audience than the historical opera plots.⁷⁷

The range lies between B-flat₃ and E-flat₄ with the tessitura lying primarily between C₃ and C₄. Both range and tessitura lie comfortably within a baritone voice range. Both Bärenreiter and Chrysander indicate Handel's tempo marking of *Allegro*, suggesting ♩ = 120. Harnoncourt's recording takes the tempo at ♩ = 105, perhaps more realistic given the numerous sixteenth-note melismatic passages.⁷⁸

Handel utilizes various techniques for text painting through the orchestra as well as in the vocal line. The first is evident in that the "sting" of the serpent is first revealed in the introduction in mm. 4-7, again in mm. 15-19, mm. 22-25, and finally in mm. 32-36. The syncopated rhythmic structure in the orchestra creates a stinging effect on each pulse of the measure, as pictured in Example 10.

Example 10. Handel, *Saul*, "A serpent in my bosom warm'd."
Bärenreiter ed. mm. 4-7, text painting⁷⁹

The image displays a musical score for Example 10, which is a text painting from Handel's opera Saul. The score is arranged in five systems. The top system contains the vocal line in a single staff. The second system consists of two staves for the strings, showing a complex, syncopated rhythmic pattern. The third system is for the bass line, also featuring a syncopated rhythm. The fourth system is for the keyboard (piano), showing a dense texture with many sixteenth notes. The fifth system is for the right hand of the keyboard, also with a dense texture. The music is in a minor key and a 3/4 time signature. The overall effect is one of a stinging, rhythmic pulse that emphasizes the text 'A serpent in my bosom warm'd.'

⁷⁷Burrows, *Handel*, 306-07.

⁷⁸Handel, *Saul* (Harnoncourt recording), CD-1.

⁷⁹Handel, *Saul* (ed. Bärenreiter), 93.

The slithering motion of the serpent is evident even to the eye when looking at the vocal line and the unison orchestral accompaniment in mm. 20-21, as shown in Example 11.

Example 11. Handel, *Saul*, “A serpent in my bosom warm’d.”
text painting mm. 20-21.⁸⁰

The aria characterizes Handel’s heroic and martial style in a *concitato* orchestral setting giving the singer an excellent medium in which to describe Saul’s anger toward David.

In tonal structure Handel sets the aria in B-flat major, moving to F through mm. 12-27, then back to B-flat at the end. There is no *ritard* at the end of the aria, for there is a need for the tempo to remain the same, with the descending thirty-second note passage suggesting the javelin being thrown at David. The following recitative is in dialogue with Jonathan and does not stand alone, and therefore will not be discussed in this study.

Aria: “As great Jehovah lives, I swear.” The third aria assigned to Saul is taken from 1 Samuel 19:6 where Saul listens to his son Jonathan and swears he will not put David to death. However, as the story continues to unfold it is evident that Saul is less than honest here.

As great Jehovah lives, I swear,
The youth shall not be slain;
Bid him return, and void of fear,
Adorn our court again.⁸¹

This is a short aria of only thirty-one measures, but in that short time it

⁸⁰Ibid., 94.

⁸¹Ibid., 166-67.

demonstrates some of Handel's most beautiful melodic composition. The range lies between C₃ and E-flat₄ with the tessitura lying within the octave of C₃ and C₄.

Both Bärenreiter and Chrysander have indicated Handel's tempo as *Andante* in 4/4 meter, indicating ♩ = 60; however, this may be somewhat slow for a modern-day performance. Harnoncourt's recording takes the tempo at ♩ = 94, which seems a little fast for the mood of the text.⁸² After sampling various tempi, it may be best taken at ♩ = 80. The rhyme scheme is ABAB and the aria is set in binary form. Handel has set the aria in F, briefly moving to the dominant C for mm. 17-21.

This aria presents a smooth legato line in the vocal melody, indicating the sincerity of Saul's recanting of his disdain for David. Although, from mm. 25 to the end, one may consider singing it in a more declamatory recitative style, given the textual considerations in "bid him return and void of fear, adorn our court again."

Accompagnato Recitative: "Wretch that I am." There are two other recitatives assigned to Saul—this accompanied one and another only partially accompanied. "Wretch that I am" introduces Act III, scene one. God has forsaken Saul for his disobedience, and now Saul is about to summon the apparition of Samuel through the witch of Endor, to seek guidance from Samuel.

Wretch that I am
 Of my own ruin author!
 Where my old supports?
 The valiant youth,
 Whose very name was terror to my foes?
 My rage has drove away,
 Of God forsaken
 In vain I ask his counsel!
 He vouch safes
 No answer to the sons of disobedience!
 Ev'n my own courage fails me!
 Can it be? Is Saul become Coward?
 I'll not believe it!
 If Heav'n denies thee aid—seek it from Hell!⁸³

⁸²Handel, *Saul* (Harnoncourt recording), CD-1.

⁸³Handel, *Saul* (ed. Bärenreiter), 241-43.

The range lies between B-flat₃ and E-flat₄ with the tessitura remaining within G₃ and D₄. Both Bärenreiter and Chrysander indicate Handel's tempo marking as *Largo* in 4/4 meter, indicating a tempo of approximately ♩ = 40. Harnoncourt's recording takes the tempo at ♩ = 45, a tempo that fits the mood of the text.⁸⁴ Handel set the recitative in the key of c minor with brief modulations to e and D.

The accompaniment of the recitative is a foreshadowing of the chorus from *Messiah* "Surely He has borne our griefs." Handel uses the exact rhythmic compositional style here as he does in *Messiah* to convey the same dirge-like mood. He changes the accompaniment figure to sixteenths on the last three measures on "I'll not believe it! If heaven denies thee aid, seek it from hell!" to create a sense of urgency.

***Secco/Accompagnato* Recitative:** "Tis said, here lives a woman, close familiar." The story continues in the next recitative, "Tis said here lives a woman." Saul is speaking of the witch of Endor, whom he summons to raise the apparition of Samuel.

Tis said, here lives a woman, close familiar,
 Close familiar with the enemy of mankind.
 Her I'll consult, and know the worst.
 Her art is death by law;
 And while I minded law,
 Such horrid practices;
 Yet, O hard fate; Myself am now reduced
 To ask the counsel of those I once abhorr'd!⁸⁵

The recitative begins with just continuo accompaniment, but becomes *accompagnato* when the strings appear at m. 9. The range lies between F₃ and C₄. The tonal structure begins in C as Handel uses a succession of major and minor chords to set a mood for the text.

⁸⁴Handel, *Saul* (Harnoncourt recording), CD-2.

⁸⁵Handel, *Saul* (ed. Chrysander), 195-96.

Teaching Considerations

The accompanied recitatives “What do I hear,” “To him ten thousands,” and the aria, “With rage I shall burst his praises to hear,” may appropriately be performed as one set. Even though a chorus divides them, they all have the same dramatic function and plot.

“What do I hear” and “To him ten thousands” present no apparent difficulty. “With rage I shall burst his praises to hear” is more accessible than it may appear. It requires a mature voice to bring out the intense rage of the aria, but its level of musical difficulty makes the aria accessible to young voices. There is only one difficult melismatic passage on the word “rival” in m. 38. This is an appropriate aria for a student who may already have limited experience singing Handelian arias, and who wants to delve a bit deeper into Handel’s more intense aria literature.

“A serpent in my bosom warm’d” is difficult, requiring a mature well-trained bass singer. The melismatic passages extend up to five measures in length and convey some of Handel’s most intense solo composition. This is not an aria that can be sung convincingly by an immature voice.

“As great Jehovah lives” is not a difficult aria. It may be taken out of context and assigned to a singer with less training. As stated before, the aria gives the bass or baritone student an opportunity to sing some of Handel’s most beautiful melodic writing. The aria provides the singer opportunities to work on breath management through long florid melodic passages. Both the *accompagnato* recitative “Wretch that I am” and the *secco* recitative “Tis said, here lives a woman” may be assigned to a less trained voice. The two may be extracted and sung as a set, considering that both have the same dramatic function.

Samson (1742)

According to Burrows, *Samson* and *Messiah* rate as Handel’s two finest oratorios.⁸⁶ Handel immediately began composing *Samson* upon completing *Messiah*.

⁸⁶Burrows, *Handel*, 312.

By September 29, 1741, the first act was completed, a mere fourteen days after the completion of *Messiah*. The second act was completed by October 29 of the same year. Handel added a new conclusion a year later, completing the work on October 12, 1742, and first performing it in London on February 18, 1743.⁸⁷ Newburgh Hamilton was the librettist for the work. Although relying on John Milton's *Samson Agonistes*, the basic story is taken from the Old Testament book of Judges, chapter 16.⁸⁸

The story begins after Samson has been captured, blinded, and imprisoned at the hands of the Philistines. His Philistine wife Delilah tricked Samson into telling the secret behind his super-human strength. After Samson finally shares with Delilah that the source of his strength is in his long hair, Delilah cuts Samson's hair while he sleeps, rendering him humanly weak. At the beginning of the oratorio, Samson has been released from slave labor to provide amusement for the Philistine feast and sacrifice to their god Dagon in celebration of his capture. Through the course of the story, his father, Manoah (bass), his friend Micah, wife Delilah, and the Philistine giant, Harapha (bass), visit Samson.

Micah and Manoah try to gain Samson's release; they remind Samson of his many triumphs in the past. Delilah, in a shallow attempt, tries to manipulate Samson to forgive her for betraying him, but to no avail. Harapha's derisive attitude toward Samson, along with each interaction with Delilah, painfully reminds Samson of his disobedience to God, yet the encounters serve as the impetus for developing his character from mournful darkness to boldly singing of light. Smither quotes:

The principal theme of the libretto is the spiritual development of Samson from his deep remorse for his past sins and resentment of his degradation as a blinded captive to his fulfillment as an instrument of divine Will; yet his triumph is at once his tragedy, for he conquers the Philistines in a Progression from darkness to light, from the eclipsed sun to the rising sun, from Samson's aria "Total eclipse" of Act I to his "Thus when the sun" of Act III. . . .⁸⁹

⁸⁷Handel, *Saul* (ed. Chrysander), Preface.

⁸⁸Smither, *Oratorio, Handel and the English Oratorio*, 2: 272.

⁸⁹Ibid.

The Baritone Role of Manoah⁹⁰

Samson is rich in bass and baritone recitatives and arias. One of the baritone roles in *Samson* is Samson's father, Manoah, who is assigned four arias and seven recitatives, five of which are in dialogue and thus not discussed in this study. Manoah plays the supportive role of a loving father, remembering his son's triumphs through joyous arias, but saddened by his son's captivity, reflected in the sad, mournful sections.

Accompagnato Recitative: "Oh miserable change." Manoah's first recitative is a lament entitled "Oh miserable change!" set in the middle of Act I when Manoah arrives on the scene to see his son who has been blinded and bound in chains. He sings of his son's past victories as compared to his present mournful state. The range lies within E₃ and D₄. The recitative is only thirteen measures, and the marking is *Largo*, indicating ♩ = 40. The slow subdivided common meter reflects both a father's mournful state and his son's weak and wounded condition. The opening five measures and first two lines of text use elongated, tied half notes to reflect Manoah's mournful state over his son.

Oh miserable change!
Is this the man, renown'd afar, the dread of Israel's foes?
Who with an angel's strength, their armies duell'd,
Himself an army!
Now unequal match, to guard his breast,
Against the coward's spear!⁹¹

The recitative is set in the key of a, but Handel moves into C at m. 6 and uses a subdivided 4/4 meter with sixteenth notes in all parts to assert strength on the text "dread of Israel's foes, who with an angel's strength their armies duell'd." Handel reduces the rhythmic structure to whole and half notes at m. 11 to reintroduce Manoah's mournful state.

Accompagnato Recitative: "The good we wish for." Manoah's second recitative, "The good we wish for," comments on how often wishes requested and


⁹⁰The role of Manoah is within a baritone range of C₃ and F₄.

⁹¹Handel, *Samson* (ed. Chrysander), 57-61.

received turn to despair.

The good we wish for, often proves our bane.
 I pray'd for children, and I gain'd a son,
 And such a son, as all men hail'd me happy;
 But who'd be now a father in my stead?
 The blessing drew a scorpion's tail behind;
 This plant (select and and sacred for a while
 The miracle of all) was in one hour
 Ensnar'd assaulted, overcome, led bound
 His foes' derision, captive, poor and blind!⁹²

This accompanied recitative appears within the same scene, soon after the previous recitative. The range lies within D₃ and D₄.

There is no tempo indication, but a recording conducted by Harry Christopher takes the tempo at ♩ = 60, which seems to reflect the text well.⁹³ The first twelve measures of text are characterized by the accompaniment's elongated, tied half notes. The last three measures of the text, "was in one hour ensnar'd, assaulted, over-come, led bound, his foes, derision, captive poor, and blind!," begins an *acclerando* as Handel adds a rhythmic pattern of  to create a sense of urgency. The recitative begins in D, but moves in and out of major and minor modes to create alternate moods of joy and sadness.

Aria: "Thy glorious deeds." Manoah's first aria, "Thy glorious deeds," offers an example of some of Handel's finest aria composition. This aria has two parts, with the first being a song of joy sung in a martial and militaristic style, hailing the glorious deeds Samson has accomplished throughout his life. The second section is a lament, as Manoah reflects on seeing his son blind and imprisoned.

Thy glorious deeds inspir'd my tongue,
 Whilst airs of joy from thence did flow,
 To sorrow now I tune my song
 And set my harp to notes of woe.⁹⁴

⁹²Ibid., 62-63.

⁹³George Friderich Handel, *Samson*, The Sixteen Symphony of Invention, Harry Christopher, conductor, Collins CD70382/1.

⁹⁴Ibid., 63-68.

The aria is 100 measures in length in ABAB rhyme scheme, with the joyous section consisting of sixty measures with forty measures in the mournful section. The range lies within C₃ to F₄ and, given its continuously ascending and descending nature, the tessitura is the same. The tempo of the joyous section, in polyphonic texture, is marked *Allegro*, indicating a tempo of ♩ = 120; however, for some singers this may be a bit fast, considering the many melismatic passages. The second section, in homophonic texture, is marked *Largo*, indicating a tempo of ♩ = 40. This may be too slow for modern performances, and singers may consider taking it a bit faster.

Throughout the aria, Handel uses major and minor modes to create a variable sense of strength/joy and weakness/sorrow. After introducing the piece with a lively eight-measure instrumental introduction in d minor in 4/4 meter with an ebullience of triplets, Manoah recalls his son's military glory. The second half of the aria changes to a slower pace in 3/4 meter at the text "To sorrows now I tune my song." Two string parts are added, yielding a dirge-like affect, beginning in the key of f-minor, wandering aimlessly and hinting at many key centers, then settling back in d minor at the end. The rhyme scheme is ABAB in a binary form. The two sections of the aria are so characteristically different that they almost give the impression of two separate arias.

Aria: "Just are the ways of God to man." Manoah's second aria appears in Act II, scene one. The scene is set when Micah and Manoah have come to visit Samson in his captivity and seek to gain his freedom. In this aria Manoah encourages Samson to trust in God, whose ways are just and who in the end always blesses the righteous man.

Just are the ways of God to man,
 Let none his secret actions scan;
 For all is best though oft we doubt,
 Of what his wisdom brings about.
 Still his unsearchable dispose
 Blesses the righteous in the close.⁹⁵

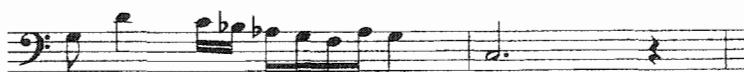
⁹⁵Ibid., 104-08.

Handel's genius again is recognized in this delightful aria. Dean claims, "Samson has been the most consistently admired of all of Handel's dramatic oratorios."⁹⁶ This aria evidences some of Handel's most mature aria composition, a consistent characteristic throughout the oratorio.

The rhyme scheme is AABBC in an ABA form. The tonal structure begins in e, moving to the dominant key of b and back to e. Handel uses many accidentals in this aria, giving a hint of key movement, making the tonal center somewhat ambiguous. The range of the aria is from C₃ to E-flat₄, with wide leaps and florid passages. The tempo is marked *Allegro*, indicating ♩ = 120. Christopher's recording takes the tempo almost exactly at ♩ = 120.⁹⁷

There are several places in the aria where the singer may take liberties. It is stylistically appropriate to pause between the coda and section two at m. 61, to give more emphasis to the ending of the aria, and to prepare the singer for the long melismatic passage on the word "blesses." A trill is also appropriate on beat three of m. 67, as well as a cadenza on beat three of m. 68. A suggested cadenza is shown in Example 12.

Example 12. Handel, *Samson*, Cadenza for "Just are the ways of God to man." m. 68, beat three⁹⁸



Handel has set the aria to one central six-measure theme, then breaking the theme up into three motives or sub-themes. The violins open the aria with the six-measure theme, then the soloist takes the first sub-theme in m. 11-12, introducing the text "just are the ways." This hymn-like text is set in a dance-like first section, moving to a

⁹⁶Dean, *Handel's Dramatic Oratorios*, 326.

⁹⁷Handel, *Samson* (Harry Christopher's recording), CD/2.

⁹⁸By author.

more legato section at m. 43 for the the text “still his unsearchable dispose, blesses righteous in the close.”

Aria: “How willing my paternal love.” Manoah’s last aria comes approximately in the middle of Act III, scene three, after Samson prays for one last breath of strength to avenge the Philistines by pulling down the two pillars that support the house of the Philistines. The aria is mournful, telling of Manoah’s paternal love for his son—a paternal love that Handel never received from his father.⁹⁹

How willing my paternal love
The weight to share Of filial care,
And part of sorrow’s burden prove
Though wand’ring in the shades of night,
Whilst I have eyes he wants no light.¹⁰⁰

Again, Handel sets this beautiful text with some of his loveliest melodic writing. The rhyme scheme is ABACC set in ABA musical form. The tempo is marked *Larghetto*, indicating a slow, mournful tempo of approximately $\text{♩} = 40$. Harry Christopher’s recording takes the tempo at $\text{♩} = 50$, which may be more appropriate for modern performance.¹⁰¹ The tonal structure begins in E, modulates to the dominant key of B in the “B” section and then back to E. The range lies between B₃ and C₄, which also describes the tessitura, given the leaps and ascending/descending nature of the melodic line. The aria is set in a slow 6/8 meter, yielding a *siciliano* effect. The overall character of the combination of text and music reminds the listener of a lullaby.

Teaching Considerations in the Role of Manoah

The role is best assigned to a baritone voice capable of negotiating many long

⁹⁹Dean, *Handel’s Oratorios*, 333.

¹⁰⁰Carl Friedrich Chrysander, ed., *Samson, An Oratorio by George Frederic Handel* (New York: Edwin F. Kalmus, 1861), 244-46.

¹⁰¹George Friedrich Handel, *Samson* The Sixteenth Symphony of Invention, Harry Christopher, conductor, Collins CD70382/2, 1997, CD/3.

melismatic passages. “The good we wish for” is an accompanied recitative, set at a level of difficulty accessible to a less-seasoned singer, as is “Oh miserable change.” However, the dramatic function of the recitative limits its intelligibility when taken out of context. It should be sung in context of the next recitative and aria.

“Thy glorious deeds” requires a highly skilled bass voice, able to negotiate five melismatic passages, each four measures in length. This is a difficult aria to sing, due not only to the melismatic passages, but also to the sustained phrases of half and whole notes. This aria may be used as a teaching tool for contrasting styles, since the first section is *allegro* and the second section is marked *largo*.

“Just are the ways of God” may also be taken out of context, given the content of the text. Not only does the text reflect the story of Samson in Judges 16, but it also reflects Romans 8:28 and Matthew 5:10. The level of difficulty requires a mature, experienced bass voice, with significant flexibility required by extensive wide leaps and many melismatic passages.

Manoah’s last aria, “How willing my paternal love,” may also be taken out of context and assigned to a singer who is just beginning to sing oratorio literature. Its narrow range and level of difficulty makes the aria accessible. There is a repeated rhythmic sequence over four sixteenth notes at mm. 13, 15, 17, 19, 30, and 33, but this creates no particular difficulty. The aria offers a less experienced singer an opportunity to sing one of Handel’s most beautiful melodies.

The Bass Role of Harapha¹⁰²

The other bass role in *Samson* is Harapha, who is assigned two arias and three recitatives. Harapha’s recitatives are all in dialogue and will not be discussed in this study. Harapha, the Philistine giant, enters in Act II, scene four. He also has several

¹⁰²The bass role of Harapha lies within G₂ and F₄.

recitatives that are in dialogue with Samson prior to this aria. During the beginning of Act II, four, Harapha considers Samson's many battles and how they have never opposed one another in battle. Harapha continues to taunt Samson about how he would have beaten him and "left his carcass in the field" had they ever met in battle. Dean describes Harapha as "gross and loud-mouthed, but not really wicked."¹⁰³ As Dean claims, Handel put forth some of his finest efforts in composing this oratorio and it is reflected in Harapha's arias as well. Therefore, the role requires a skilled bravura bass voice.

Aria: "Honor and arms." Harapha's boastful first aria is arguably the most famous of Handel's bass arias outside of *Messiah*, and is found in several bass oratorio anthologies.

Honor and arms scorn such a foe
 Though I could end thee at a blow;
 Poor victory, to conquer thee,
 Or glory in thy overthrow!
 Vanquish a slave that is half slain?
 So mean a triumph I disdain.¹⁰⁴

The rhyme scheme of the aria is AABACC and it is set in *da capo* form. The aria consists of 161 measures, including the *da capo* repeat, with sixty-seven measures in the first section and twenty-three in the second section. The tonal structure begins in B-flat, moving to the dominant F major at m. 21 and back to B-flat in m. 31. Handel begins the second section at m. 68 in the relative g minor to reflect the text "Vanquish a slave that is half slain."

The tempo is marked *Allegro*, indicating $\text{♩} = 120$. Christophers takes the tempo at $\text{♩} = 112$, which seems to be a comfortable tempo for the leaps and melismatic passages.¹⁰⁵ The range of the aria lies between G₂ and E-flat₄. Considering the many

¹⁰³Dean, *Handel's Oratorios*, 398.

¹⁰⁴Handel, *Samson* (ed. Chrysander), 165-69.

¹⁰⁵Handel, *Samson* (Harry Christophers, Conductor), Collins CD/3.

leaps and the scales of the melodic line, the tessitura lies in the same range.

The aria is characterized by a war-like trumpet call in both the melody and instrumental accompaniment. Example 13 shows the opening text, “honor and arms,” which is set in a martial trumpet call. Handel sets the text “though I could end thee with a blow” in ascending stepwise motion to indicate Harapha’s strut and the swinging blow of his fist as shown in Example 14.

Example 13. Handel, *Samson*, “Honor and arms,” text painting mm. 13-14¹⁰⁶

Example 14. Handel, *Samson* “Honor and arms,” text painting mm. 17-22¹⁰⁷

Aria: “Presuming slave.” This aria comes at the beginning of Act III, after a dialogue recitative among Micah, Samson, and Harapha. Harapha bids Samson to show public proof of his strength at the feast of the sacrifice to the god of Dagon. However, Samson refuses and Harapha responds to Samson with the following text:

¹⁰⁶Handel, *Samson* (ed. Chrysander), 165.

¹⁰⁷*Ibid.*

Presuming slave, to move their wrath
 For mercy sue,
 Or vengeance due
 Dooms in one fatal word thy death.
 Consider, ere it be too late,
 To ward th'unerring shaft of fate.¹⁰⁸

The rhyme scheme is ABBACC, set in rounded binary form. There are many elements that make this aria unique in comparison to most of Handel's arias. One element is its instrumentation. It uses only solo violins in the extended upper register and continuo in the extended lower register in unison with the melody. Another element is the mood marking *Pomposo* (pompous). This, of course, reflects the attitude of Harapha trying to convince Samson to use his powers in the feast of sacrifice to the god, Dagon. Another element is the somewhat confusing form. The contrasting "B" section material comes in mm. 85-91, consisting of two melodic themes on the text "consider" and "presuming slave," sandwiched between three measures of rest with *fermatas*. The "A" material does not fully return except in the closing instrumental section. The range lies between G₂ and E-flat₄. The melodic material is characterized by wide leaps and a florid melody, yielding a wide *tessitura*.

It is interesting that Handel uses a minuet to set this text, because it presents somewhat of a dichotomy of emotions. In one sense the text is serious and anger-provoking, and in the other sense, through the minuet rhythmic structure, Handel pictures Harapha's arrogance.

Teaching Considerations in the Role of Harapha

"Honor and arms" is a well-known Handelian aria, often taken out of context and assigned to a capable bass singer. The aria's range, wide leaps, and long melismatic passages offer a challenge to an experienced bass singer. Harapha's aria, "Presuming love," offers few performance opportunities outside the context of the oratorio. It is particularly written for this plot with a unique musical content that does not lend itself to be taken out of context.

¹⁰⁸*Ibid.*, 207-08.

Joseph and His Brethren (1743)

The dates of the commencement and conclusion of the composition of *Joseph* are not given in the manuscript; however Handel completed part of the oratorio on August 26, 1743, and the remaining parts on September 12 of the same year. The last part does not indicate a date in the autograph score, but it evidently belongs to the same time, therefore the composition as a whole may safely be assigned to August and September of 1743.¹⁰⁹

Both Smithers and Dean suggest that *Joseph* was almost a complete failure, putting much of the blame on librettist James Miller (1708-1744). Dean explains: “His text, a linguistic monstrosity that surpasses the worst of Humphreys is endlessly repetitive and so obscure as to be incomprehensible without a study of the Bible story, many of whose essential features are left in the air.”¹¹⁰ The Reverend James Miller of Wadham College, Oxford, had previously been a writer of comedies, satires, and ballad operas. His only oratorio libretto, *Joseph* is based on the biblical story, taken from the Genesis 39-45.¹¹¹

Regardless of Smither and Dean’s assessment of *Joseph*, the oratorio apparently was received well at the time of its first performances and was reasonably successful. The Earl of Egmont was impressed at his first hearing, calling it “an inimitable composition.”¹¹² Handel’s long-time friend and supporter, Mrs. Mary Delany, wrote in her comments on Handel’s oratorio series: “The oratorios fill very well, notwithstanding the spite of the opera party: nine of the twelve are over. *Joseph* is to be

¹⁰⁹Carl Friedrich Chrysander, ed., *Joseph, An Oratorio by George Frederic Handel* (New York: Edwin F. Kalmus, 1883), iii.

¹¹⁰Dean, *Handel’s Oratorios*, 399.

¹¹¹Smither, *History of Oratorio*, 2:281.

¹¹²*Ibid.*, from “Diary of the Earl of Egmont,” March 1744, 282.

performed (I hope) once more, the *Saul*, and the *Messiah* finishes.”¹¹³ *Joseph* was revived in 1744, 1747, 1755, and 1757, but since the eighteenth century has virtually been ignored.¹¹⁴

The biblical story of Joseph begins in Genesis 37. However, Miller’s libretto joins the story in Genesis 39, after Joseph had already been sold into slavery. The story continues with his brother’s deceiving their father Jacob by telling him that some ferocious animal had devoured Joseph, while in truth they had sold Joseph to a group of Midianite merchants, who in turn sold him to Potiphar, one of the Egyptian Pharaoh’s officials in Egypt.

Act I, scene one, opens with Joseph imprisoned, reclining in a melancholy posture, and accepting a fate he cannot understand. Joseph is in prison because he has been falsely accused of sexual advances toward Potiphar’s wife. Potiphar, however, sends for Joseph to interpret a dream of Pharaoh. The Pharaoh is so impressed with Joseph’s ability to interpret his dream that he appoints him governor over the land of Egypt. Asenath, the daughter of Potiphar, falls in love with Joseph and they are married. Act I continues through the time of Joseph’s appointment as governor, and his marriage to Asenath.¹¹⁵

Act II is set seven years later, after Joseph has already met his brothers and has held one of them, Simeon, as a hostage until his other brothers return from Egypt. Joseph summons Simeon and questions him about his father, but more particularly about his younger brother, Benjamin. Phanor announces the arrival of Joseph’s brothers, Reuben and Judah. Joseph questions them concerning Benjamin; the act closes with a choral prayer for the protection of Israel.

¹¹³Ibid., from “Delany to Ann Granville Dewes,” March 1744, 281.

¹¹⁴Ibid.

¹¹⁵Smither, *History of the Oratorio*, 2:283.

In Act III the brothers are arrested on the suspicion of stealing a silver cup. Much to Benjamin's surprise the cup is found in his sack, and Joseph orders him to prison. Simeon offers to take Benjamin's place because Benjamin is the only remaining son of Jacob and Rachel, and is his father's dearest son. After hearing of Simeon's sacrificial offer, Joseph is emotionally overwhelmed and reveals his true identity to his brothers. Joseph asks them to "receive and give a kind embrace," and asks Benjamin to "forgive this harmless stratagem," by which Joseph tested his brothers' loyalty to Benjamin. The oratorio closes with choral anthem of rejoicing.¹¹⁶

Pharaoh, King of Egypt, and Joseph's brother Reuben are the only bass roles in *Joseph*. The role of Reuben is all dialogue recitative, so it will not be discussed in this study. Pharaoh's role consists of only one recitative and aria that are not in dialogue.

The Bass Role of Pharaoh¹¹⁷

After Joseph has been put in charge of Egypt, Pharaoh gives Joseph the name Zaphenath-Paneah. He also gives Asenath, the daughter of Potiphar, the priest of On, to be Joseph's wife. Pharaoh's only recitative and aria is set at the wedding of Joseph (Zaphenath) and Asenath, which comes in Act I, scene six. The role requires a strong, well-trained bass voice, capable of sustaining long melismatic passages, as well as negotiating a number of leaps of sixths, sevenths, octaves, and ninths.

Secco Recitative: "Glorious and happy is thy lot." This *secco* recitative precedes Pharaoh's only aria. The recitative is in the key of A major, consisting of four measures, and set in typical Baroque style.

Glorious and happy is thy lot, O Zaphenath!
Join'd to such sweetness, dignity and virtue.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁶Ibid., 282.

¹¹⁷The range of the bass role of Pharaoh is G₂-E₄.

¹¹⁸Handel, *Joseph*, (ed. Chrysander), 82.

Aria: “Since the race of time begun.” Even though Smither and Dean were critical of the oratorio, this aria is evidence of some of Handel’s most exciting aria composition. It is the only aria in the oratorio that Handel scored for full orchestra. Only the strings accompany the other arias in the oratorio.¹¹⁹ The aria opens in full force with all instruments in an eight-measure introduction. It is in an AABB rhyme scheme and set in ternary form.

Since the race of time begun,
 Since the birthday of the sun,
 Ne’er was so much wisdom found,
 With such matchless beauty crowned.¹²⁰

Chrysander indicates Handel’s tempo as *Andante con moto*, indicating a tempo of approximately ♩ = 80 in 4/4 meter. This may be a bit slow for a modern day performance. A recording conducted by Robert King and the choir of New College takes the tempo at ♩ = 103.¹²¹

The aria begins in the key of D, modulating to the dominant key of A at m. 21. It then modulates to the subdominant key of G at m. 31, remaining there only briefly, and modulates back to D at m. 35 to the end. For this aria Handel adds oboes and trumpets to the orchestration, adding to the pageantry of Joseph and Asenath’s wedding, while only strings accompany all other arias in *Joseph*. The distinction of this aria is found in its instrumentation with trumpets and oboes, which offers a heroic, martial style using many fanfares throughout the aria.

Teaching Considerations

“Since the race of time began” can easily be taken out of context and used in a studio or recital setting. As previously mentioned concerning the role, the aria requires a

¹¹⁹Smither, *History of the Oratorio*, 2:284.

¹²⁰Handel, *Joseph* (ed. Chrysander), 82-89.

¹²¹George Friedrich Handel, *Joseph and His Brethren* The Choir of New College, Oxford, The Choir of The King’s Consort, Robert King, conductor, Michael George, bass, Hyperion CDA67171/3, 1996.

well-trained bass voice to negotiate the many melismatic passages and wide leaps. The aria is followed by the chorus bursting forth into “Swift our numbers, swiftly roll,” as if the chorus is part of the aria. Since Handel has extended the note values on the penultimate measure of the aria, the aria can be easily excerpted by simply stopping on the D major chord in m. 1 of the chorus.

Belshazzar (1744)

Librettist Charles Jennens takes the story of Belshazzar’s feast from Daniel 5, Jeremiah 29, and Isaiah 44-45. However, the story also incorporates extra-biblical history based on the Classic literature of *Herodotus’s History* and Xenophon’s *Cyropaedia*.¹²²

The oratorio was composed between August 23 and October 23, 1744, and first performed at the King’s Theater, Haymarket, London, on March 27, 1745. During the season of 1744-45, Handel promised twenty-four performances, but given the diminishing subscriptions to the 1745 season, he presented only sixteen performances and closed the season. Handel performed another revised version in February of 1751 and 1758, although it is doubtful that he had much influence on the performance in 1758, given his blindness and aged condition.¹²³

Burrows claims that, given the series of changes to the score of *Belshazzar*, it is difficult to produce an edition that is representative of Handel’s performance practice.¹²⁴ The Burrows edition published by Novello is based on Handel’s performing versions of 1745 and 1751, and offers the most recent research on the oratorio; therefore, this will be the edition referred to in this study.

Belshazzar is a story of a civilization in decline—the fall of the Babylonian

¹²²Smither, *History of Oratorio*, 2:289.

¹²³George Frideric Handel, *Belshazzar* ed. Donald Burrows, (London: Novello, 1993), vii.

¹²⁴*Ibid.*

empire. The setting is 538 B.C., in and around the walled city of Babylon, the capital of Assyria. The story revolves around the Babylonian king, Belshazzar, and his feast to Sesach, the god of wine. Belshazzar has profaned the temple by taking the sacred goblets and using them to drink wine at his feast.

The hand of God appears and writes the message of Belshazzar's impending demise on the wall. Queen Nitocris, mother of King Belshazzar, reflects upon the rise and fall of empires, and reminds that only God remains unchanging and eternal. The prophet Daniel assures her that her submission to God will be rewarded. Cyrus and his Persian army plans to attack, aided by Gobrias (bass), a Babylonian, who lost his son to Belshazzar.

After Daniel's interpretation of the handwriting on the wall, Belshazzar, emboldened in his drunken state at the feast, marches out to battle with Cyrus and is defeated. Jewish captivity in Babylon is brought to an end, and the oratorio ends with a chorus of praise to God.¹²⁵

There are only two bass roles in *Belshazzar*—one simply named Messenger, and the other Gobryas. All of the Messenger recitatives are dialogue; however Gobryas is assigned one *secco* recitative that is not dialogue, and one *accompagnato* recitative as well as two arias.

The Bass Role of Gobryas¹²⁶

Gobryas is characterized as a man with deep emotions, who deserted Belshazzar's army and joined Cyrus' Persian forces to exert revenge for the loss of his son. His arias range from the sad and mournful "Oppress'd with never-ceasing grief" to vengeance arias such as, "Behold the monstrous human beast." Gobryas' other numbers

¹²⁵Ibid., xvii-xix.

¹²⁶The range of the bass role of Gobryas is between A₂ and F₄.

include the *secco* recitative “O memory,” and an aria, “To pow’r immortal.” As previously cited, Jennens referenced Xenophon’s *Cyropaedia* for the role of Gobryas. Xenophon’s story relates how Gobryas lost his son and defected to Cyrus, leader of the Persian army.¹²⁷ The bass role of Gobryas requires a well-trained bass singer, capable of negotiating long melismatic passages and extended leaps.

Secco Recitative: “O memory.” In Act I, scene one, the setting is in the camp of Cyrus, the night before the Persian invasion of Babylon. In the background is a view of the city and the Euphrates River running through it. Cyrus reminds Gobryas that the Babylonian invasion is upon them. In this recitative and the following aria, Gobryas laments the death of his son, killed by Belshazzar.

Oh memory!
 Still bitter to my soul! —me thinks I see
 my son, the best, the loveliest of mankind,
 Whose filial love and duty above all sons,
 Made me above all other fathers happy,
 I see him breathless at the tyrant’s feet,
 The victim of his envy.¹²⁸

In the tonal structure, Handel uses a progression of sustained major and minor chords to paint the text, beginning in E-flat major on the text “O memory” and moving to b minor to relate to the “bitterness to the soul.” All chords are sustained and tied over the bar line, creating an elongated *legato* texture. There is no tempo marking, although the text suggests an overall slow tempo. However, considering the urgency of movement in last two measures of the text, “I see him breathless at the tyrant’s feet, the victim of his envy,” one may consider increasing the tempo from this point to the end.

Aria: “Oppress’d with never ceasing grief.” This aria immediately follows the previous recitative, remaining in the same depressed mood.

¹²⁷Dean, *Handel’s Oratorios*, 437.

¹²⁸Handel, *Belshazzar* (ed. Burrows), 20.

Opress'd with never-ceasing grief,
 I drag a painful weary life;
 Of all that made life sweet bereft,
 No hope, but in revenge, is left.¹²⁹

The rhyme scheme is AABB in a rounded binary form. Handel set the “A” section in a slow *Larghetto* mood, however, the “B” section, beginning at m. 47, enters with a sense of urgency, on the text “but in revenge.” It is in the “B” section that the melismatic passages occur, suggesting a change in mood from the “A” section’s somberness to the “B” section’s more furious mood. Even though there is not a tempo change in the “B” section there is evidence of a change of mood and texture.

The range of the aria lies between B-flat₃ and E-flat₄. Handel’s score indicates a tempo of *Larghetto*, in 3/4 meter, ♩ = 40, perhaps too slow for a modern-day performance. A recording by The Choir of the English Concert, with bass soloist David Wilson-Johnson and conductor Trevor Pinnock, takes the “A” section tempo at ♩ = 58, and the “B” section tempo at ♩ = 120.¹³⁰

Handel uses frequent movements of tonality to reflect the changing moods of the text. The “A” section begins in the key of E-flat, moving to the relative minor key of c minor to repeat the word “Opress’d” at m. 27. The “B” section modulates to the subdominant key of g. The “A” section however, returns in the key of c minor, the relative minor of the first “A” section. The aria ends in the home key of E-flat in an instrumental *ritornello*.

The aria is characterized by both an opening lamentation, with long legato melodic and accompanying material, as well as rage and vengeance in the “B” section. Text painting is evident in mm. 37-40 on the text “I drag a painful life,” utilizing descending stepwise motion to indicate a “dragging down” effect, as shown in Example 15.

¹²⁹Ibid., 21-23.

¹³⁰George Frideric Handel, *Belshazzar* The Choir of the English Concert, David Wilson-Johnson, bass, Trevor Pinnock, Conductor, Archive CD 431793-2/1.

Example 15. Handel, *Belshazzar*, “Oppress’d with never ceasing grief,” text painting mm. 37-40.¹³¹

ne - ver ceas - ing grief, I drag a pain - ful life, of all that made life

Example 16 is indicative of further evidence of text painting in mm. 51-54 where on the word “revenge,” Handel utilizes a long descending melismatic passage to illustrate Gobryas’s vengeful anger.

Example 16. Handel, *Belshazzar*, “Opress’e’d with never ceasing grief,” text painting, mm. 51-54.¹³²

- venge, but in re - venge,

Aria: “Behold the monstrous beast.” In Act I, scene two, Gobryas and Cyrus are in dialogue, devising their plan to invade Babylon. They have decided to invade the city by diverting the Euphrates River into the lake at the west of the city, and then enter the city on the riverbed. Gobryas confirms that the river could be temporarily

¹³¹Handel, *Belshazzar*, Burrows, ed., 21.

¹³²*Ibid.*, 22.

diverted since it had been directed previously to build the city, but he claims the city's walls remain a barrier. Cyrus reminds Gobryas that the Babylonians will be celebrating their god Sesach, involving drunkenness and revelry and may be temporarily negligent in their defenses.¹³³

Behold the monstrous human beast
 Wallowing in excessive feast!
 No more his Maker's found:
 But, self-degraded to a swine,
 He fixes grov'ling on the ground
 His portion of the breath Divine.
 Behold the monstrous human beast.¹³⁴

The character of this aria is almost comical in the sense that Handel uses a dominating sixteenth-note passage on the word "wallowing" and "grov'ling," illustrating Gobryas's description of Belshazzar's "wallowing" like swine in "excessive feast." The theme, as shown in Example 17, is repeated fifteen times in the vocal line throughout the aria, not counting the many repetitions in the accompaniment.

Example 17. Handel, *Belshazzar*, "Behold the monstrous human beast," text painting, mm. 17-18, 46-47.¹³⁵

The musical score for Example 17 consists of a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The vocal line is in bass clef and features a repeating sixteenth-note pattern on the word "wallowing". The piano accompaniment is in treble and bass clefs and features a similar sixteenth-note pattern. The score is divided into two systems, with the first system containing measures 17-18 and the second system containing measures 46-47. The lyrics under the vocal line are: "- ces-sive feast, wal - low-ing, wal - low-ing, wal".

Another example of text painting is revealed in the opening text "behold the monstrous human beast." Handel uses even quarter notes set in octaves with the accompaniment to create a parade effect as shown in Example 18.

¹³³Handel, *Belshazzar* (ed. Burrows), xvii.

¹³⁴*Ibid.*, 33-35.

¹³⁵*Ibid.*

Example 18. Handel, *Belshazzar*, “Behold the monstrous human beast,”
text painting, mm. 13-14.¹³⁶

The image shows a musical score for a vocal line and piano accompaniment. The vocal line is in bass clef and the piano accompaniment is in treble and bass clefs. The text under the vocal line reads: "hu - man, beast, be - hold the mon - strous hu - man, beast wal - low-ing in ex -". The piano accompaniment features a prominent bass line with a forte (f) dynamic marking. The score is numbered 12 at the beginning of the piano part.

The aria is set in *da capo* form with a rhyme scheme of AABCBCA. The range of the aria lies between B₃ and D₄, and given the character of the melodic line, the tessitura lies within the same range. Handel set the tempo as *Allegro* indicating ♩ = 120 in 4/4 meter.

Handel presents the aria in the key of B-flat, modulating to its dominant F in m. 16. A strong tonic-to-dominant relationship is achieved for the text “Behold the monstrous human beast” in m. 24 by modulating back to the tonic. The “B” section begins in m. 40, modulating to the relative minor key of g.

Aria: “To Pow’r immortal.” Gobryas’s last aria comes at the beginning of Act III, scene three. The battle has ended, and Belshazzar and his attendants are slain as Gobryas sings this aria in thanks to God and to Cyrus for avenging his son’s death.

To Pow’r immortal my first thanks are due;
My next, great Cyrus, let me pay to you,
Whose arm this impious king laid low,
The bitter source of all my woe.
Tears, sure, will all my life employ!
E’en now I weep, but weep for joy.¹³⁷

This lamentation-style aria is in a sub-divided 12/8 meter, creating a dirge-like effect in both the vocal line and accompaniment.

The rhyme scheme is AABBC, but the text is set in binary form. Handel

¹³⁶Ibid., 33.

¹³⁷Ibid., 188-89.

marked the tempo *Largo* and set it in 12/8 meter. According to Quantz the tempo for *Largo* is ♩ = 40, which would result in ♩ = 80 in a meter of a subdivided four. A recording by the Choir of the English Concert with Trevor Pinnock as conductor and David Wilson-Johnson as bass takes the tempo at ♩ = 75.¹³⁸ The aria begins in g, but Handel ingeniously moves through a progression of major and minor chords to set mood for specific portions of the text.

Dean suggests that Handel seems to have been dissatisfied with some of the arias of Act III, because he rewrote four of them, including “To Pow’r immortal.” Chrysander prints both versions, but Novello only prints the first of Chrysander’s A version. This first setting is only sixteen measures long and contains no *ritornello*, with the last two measures set as an instrumental coda. The emphasis of the aria is on the last “E’en now I weep, but weep for joy,” indicating Gobryas will always weep for his son.¹³⁹

Teaching Considerations

The first recitative and aria, “O memory,” and “Oppress’d with never ceasing grief,” may be taken out of context and sung as part of recital or as literature for a student considering oratorio literature. The difficulty level is medium-to-difficult with melismatic passages in mm. 52-54 and mm. 69-72 of the aria. However, these are not among Handel’s most challenging melismas, and they are doubled in the cello part.

The second aria, “Behold the monstrous beast,” is more difficult and requires a mature well-trained singer. It may easily be extracted and used on a recital. The third aria, “To Pow’r immortal,” also may be taken out of context and sung by a singer of lesser experience. It may be appropriate to use this aria with the first in a selection of oratorio arias in a recital, since both are from the same oratorio and role.

¹³⁸Handel, *Belshazzar* (Choir of the English Concert, recording), CD3.

¹³⁹Dean, *Handel’s Oratorios*, 507.

Joshua (1747)

Handel began composing the score to *Joshua* on July 19, 1747, completing it on August 18 of the same year. The first performance was at Covent Garden on March 9, 1748. *Joshua*'s theme is based on the favorite bellicose theme of the English people during the middle eighteenth century, which is the one prevailing factor for its success during its first performances. *Joshua* was among the most successful of the later oratorios. Of the oratorios written after *Samson*, only *Judas Maccabaeus* received more performances during Handel's lifetime. There is no doubt that English audiences preferred this type of extroverted oratorio to subtly themed or less musically dramatic oratorios. Eliza Haywood wrote in *Epistles for the Ladies* (1749), comparing Handel to the "great Creator:"

Though the Words were not quite so elegant, nor so well as I could have wished adapted to the Music, I was transported in to most divine Exstasy. I closed my Eyes, and imagined myself amidst the angelic Choir in the bright Regions of everlasting Day, chanting the Praises of my great Creator, and his ineffable *Messiah*. I seemed, me thought, to have nothing of this gross Earth about me, but was all Soul!—all Spirit!¹⁴⁰

Joshua received much criticism from nineteenth-century musicologists. Both Smither and Dean rate *Joshua* on the lower end of Handel's oratorios, laying its weakness primarily on the libretto. Dean states:

In *Joshua* we find the same neglect of characterization, the same monotonous emphasis on Jewish victories against odds (varied, as before in a single defeat), the same prolonged celebrations of triumph. *Joshua* has a love story, it is true, but instead of being integrated with the plot it is used simply as light relief from the spasms of tribal warfare.¹⁴¹

Thomas Morell (1703-84) was the librettist for all four of the "victory oratorios," written between 1746 and 1748, including the *Occasional*, *Alexander Balus*, *Judas Maccabaeus*, and *Joshua*. Morell was a theologian and scholar, very much involved in the arts, and a good friend of Handel.¹⁴²

507. ¹⁴⁰Dean, *Handel's Oratorios*, from "A letter to Mrs. Dewes," 2 February 1751,

¹⁴¹*Ibid.*, 488.

¹⁴²*Ibid.*

The story is taken from the Old Testament book of Joshua and deals with the Jewish victory over the land of Canaan, and the Israelites' entrance into the Promised Land following forty years in the wilderness. *Joshua* has five characters besides the obligatory chorus, including Joshua (tenor)—God's appointed leader of the Israelites, and successor to Moses. Joshua's character is strong and commanding, and sometimes even conceited. The second character, Caleb (bass), is a patriarchal leader, nearing retirement from the battlefield. The third character is Caleb's daughter Achsah, a concerned and sometimes admonitory character, betrothed to the fourth character Othiniel, Caleb's nephew, who is finding it difficult to find a balance between playing the young warrior and devoted lover. The fifth character is an Angel, a small but vital part.¹⁴³

Act I begins after the Israelites have miraculously crossed the Jordan River on dry ground, and entered into Canaan. Joshua instructs Caleb to commemorate the event by setting up a monument from the stones they had taken from the dry ground in the Jordan River, at Gilgal. Othiniel, a young chieftain, then observes the appearance of the Angel, who orders Joshua to attack Jericho, giving him assurance of a victory.¹⁴⁴ At this point Morell fabricates a love scene that does not appear in the Bible, between Othiniel and Achsah, Caleb's daughter, to whom he is betrothed.

In Act II Joshua has followed God's command to march around Jericho for six days, then on the seventh day, to blow the trumpets, and shout. The priests sound the trumpets, all the people of Israel shout, and the walls of Jericho fall. Another non-biblical love scene appears between Othiniel and Achsah. Caleb sends his daughter away out of anger toward Othiniel for not attending to his assigned task. After Caleb informs Othiniel that their Gibeonite allies are endangered by Adoni-zedek, King of Jerusalem, Othiniel's

¹⁴³George Frideric Handel, *Joshua* Choir of New College, Oxford, The King's Consort, Robert King, Conductor, Hyperion, CD booklet, CDA66461.

¹⁴⁴Dean, *Handel's Oratorios*, 498.

fighting spirit is then aroused and the scene changes to the battlefield. As the armies of the Gibeonites and Israelites fight against the Canaanites, it seemingly appears that Joshua and his forces are going to be defeated due to nightfall. Instead, Joshua orders the sun and the moon to stand still, they obey, and Joshua and the Israelites are again victorious.¹⁴⁵

In Act III Joshua divides the conquered territory among the tribes. Caleb reminds him of his own past victories at Hebron, which Joshua bestowed upon him and his tribe of Judah. Othiniel reminds Joshua of one unconquered city of Debir. Caleb, now showing his age, asks for a volunteer to go and subdue the town of Debir, offering his daughter's hand in marriage as reward. Othiniel quickly seizes the opportunity, and returns as the conquering hero, receiving the prize in another non-biblical love scene.¹⁴⁶

The Bass Role of Caleb¹⁴⁷

Caleb, the only assigned bass role in *Joshua*, is among the patriarchal leadership in Joshua's Israelite army. Handel frequently assigned the paternal father figure, such as Caleb, to a bass. Caleb is assigned three arias, "Oh first in wisdom, first in power," "Shall I in Marmre's fertile plain," "Welcome my son! My Othiniel," and one recitative not in dialogue, "The walls are levell'd." The role of Caleb requires a mature dramatic bass voice experienced in singing extended melismatic passages and frequent wide leaps.

Aria: "Oh first in wisdom, first in pow'r." Caleb's first aria comes at the beginning of Act I, scene one, as Caleb reinforces Joshua's confidence that Jehovah will "shower blessings around Joshua's head," providing victory for the Israelites.

O first in wisdom, first in pow'r
Jehovah, ev'ry blessing show'r

¹⁴⁵Ibid., 499.

¹⁴⁶Ibid.

¹⁴⁷The range of the role of Caleb lies between G₂ and E₄.

Around thy sacred head!
 The neighb'ring realms with envy see
 The happiness and liberty
 O'er all thy people spread.¹⁴⁸

The aria is in ABA form in a rhyme scheme of AABCCB. The range of the aria lies between G₂ and E-flat₄ with a tessitura between C₃ and E-flat₄. Handel marks the tempo as *Allegro moderato*, with two *Adagio* sections in mm. 11-12 and m. 54. A recording by The Choir of New College, Oxford with Edward Higginbottom conducting and Michael George, bass, takes the tempo at approximately ♩=120 in 4/4 meter. This may be a bit too fast for some singers, given the legato nature of the melodic line, the many leaps of fifths, sixths, and sevenths in mm. 6-10, and the extended melismatic passages in mm. 16-19, 30-33, and 49-50. Handel begins the aria in g, modulating to the dominant minor key of D, then returning back to the home key of g at m. 49.

The rhythmic motive of running eighth notes in triplets is the characteristic feature in this aria, used in both the vocal line and accompaniment. The “A” section is primarily homophonic in texture, while Handel resorts to a highly polyphonic texture in the “B” section, creating a more elongated effect on the text “the neighb'ring realms with envy see the happiness and liberty o'er thy people spread.” A trill on the dotted half note at the *adagio* in m. 11 on the word “sacred” is appropriate.

Secco Recitative: “The walls are levell'd.” This recitative consists of only eleven measures and is sung in a basic *secco* recitative style. The range of the recitative lies between C₃ and D₄ and comes at the beginning of Act II, scene one.

After Joshua and the people of Israel have marched around the walls of the city of Jericho six times, Joshua orders the trumpets to sound and the people to shout aloud as God had commanded. The walls fall, and Caleb describes the scene and orders the people to spare the hospitable harlot, Rahab, who had been sympathetic to the Israelite's cause.

¹⁴⁸George Frideric Handel, *Joshua* ed. Carl Friedrich Chrysander (New York: Edwin F. Kalmus, Publisher of Music, 1894), 17-20.

The walls are levell'd, pour the chosen bands,
 With hostile gore imbrue your thirsty hands:
 Set palaces and temples in a blaze,
 Sap the foundations and bulwarks raze.
 But, oh! Remember in the bloody strife,
 To spare the hospitable Rahab's life.¹⁴⁹

The rhyme scheme of the recitative is AABBC. The recitative's eleven-measures are set in the key of E, and primarily based on major chords of the subdominant and dominant to relate the strength of the text. This recitative should be sung in a quick tempo, driving forward in declamatory style. An *appoggiatura* from e-natural to d-sharp on the last word, "life," is stylistically appropriate.

Aria: "See the raging flames arise." This aria is full of rushing melismas, representing the flames that add to the destruction of Jericho.

See, the raging flames arise.
 Hear the dismal groans and cries!
 The fatal day of wrath is come.
 Proud Jericho hath met her doom,

The rhyme scheme is AABB and the aria is in ABA form. The range of the aria lies between A₃ to E₄, with the tessitura, given the nature of the melodic line, lying within the same range. Handel sets the tempo at *Allegro*, indicating ♩ = 120 in 4/4 meter. A recording of bass soloist Michael George and conductor Robert King takes the tempo at ♩ = 120.¹⁵⁰

The aria is set in the key of a, modulating to E in the "B" section at m. 21, and back to the home key of a minor at mm. 33. The "B" section continues to move through different related major and minor key centers before settling back to the home key of a minor in the return of the "A" section at m. 49.

The text is set in a "raging" melodic line, while the accompaniment paints the text in *concitato* orchestral style. The "raging flames" are pictured in the introduction,

¹⁴⁹Ibid., 96.

¹⁵⁰George Frideric Handel *Joshua* Choir of New College, Oxford, The King's Consort, Robert King, Conductor, Hyperion CDA66461/2, 1991, bass, CD 1/26.

beginning in mm. 3-5, and again in the vocal line in mm. 11-12. The “raging fire” in the fall of Jericho is again painted through the dynamic changes in the orchestral accompaniment in mm. 16-33, as Handel has indicated a *piano* marking, beginning in m. 16, and gradually moving to *mezzo forte* at m. 20, and continuing the crescendo to *forte* level in m. 29.

Aria: “Shall I in Mamre’s fertile plain.” This hymn-like aria comes at the beginning of Act III, scene one, where Caleb reflects on laying down the burdens of life in his old age, and looks forward to “eternal praise to heav’n’s high King.”

Shall I in Mamre’s fertile plain,
The remnant of my days remain?
And is it giv’n to me to have,
A place with Abrah’m in the grave?
For all these mercies I will sing,
Eternal praise to heav’n’s high King.¹⁵¹

The range is between G₂ and E₄ with the tessitura being between C₂ and B₄. The rhyme scheme is AABBC and the aria is in ABA form. The chorus joins the aria after only 25 measures, although the aria may be taken out of context and used without the chorus by ending the aria on the first beat of the chorus’s entrance. Handel set the aria in the key of E-flat, modulating to F, and almost into D, then back to E-flat in the end. The tempo is set as *Largo*, indicating ♩ = 40. Conductor Richard King takes the aria at ♩ = 43 in a subdivided four.¹⁵² The serenity of the text and music suggest a smooth legato line.

There is evidence of text painting in mm. 9-15 on the text, “a place with Abra’m in the grave,” where Handel has set a continually descending eighth-note pattern, first ending on C₂ on the word “grave.” The next pattern of eighth notes ends a half-step down on B₂, with the third pattern of eighth notes ending on the word “grave” on G₂, as shown in Example 19.

¹⁵¹Handel, *Joshua*, (ed. Chrysander), 171-72.

¹⁵²Handel, *Joshua* (Robert King, Conductor), CD2/18.

Example 19. Handel, *Joshua*, “Shall I in Mamre’s fertile plain,” text painting mm. 9-15.¹⁵³

The image displays two systems of musical notation for a bass voice part. Each system consists of a vocal line and a basso continuo line. The lyrics are written below the vocal line. The first system covers measures 9-15, and the second system covers measures 16-22. The lyrics are in both English and German, with some words in German appearing in italics.

System 1 (measures 9-15):

have a place with Abraham in the grave. a place with Abraham in the grave?
stab. soll ich mit Abram ruh'n im Grab. mit A. bra. hamdort ruh'n im Grab?

System 2 (measures 16-22):

and is it giv'n to me, to have a place with Abraham in the grave?
und wenn man Zu'twe'n Händ' stab. soll ich mit A. bram ruh'n im Grab?

This pastoral aria is set in a slow subdivided four in a style again very similar to the chorus “Surely he has borne our griefs” from *Messiah*.

Teaching Considerations

One may consider taking any of these bass selections out of context. “Oh first in wisdom” requires a mature bass voice capable of negotiating the many wide leaps and melismatic passages. Both the recitative “The walls are levll’d” and aria, “See the raging flames arise” could be used in a recital setting and they are also good study literature for a strong, mature bass.

The aria “Shall I in Mamre’s fertile plain” offers an opportunity for a younger, possibly less-trained voice to sing an oratorio aria. It is only twenty-five measures long and, as mentioned earlier, may be excerpted by ending the aria on beat one of the first measure of the chorus. It is a tool that could be used to help a singer develop the skill of

¹⁵³Handel, *Joshua* (ed. Chrysander), 171-72.

long legato line and good breath management. It requires a voice with a rich lower register that can sustain a viable G₂ over four slow beats.

Solomon (1748)

Solomon was composed between May 5 and June 13, 1748, and first performed at Covent Garden on March 17, 1749. The oratorio *Susanna* was also composed during the same time span as *Solomon*. However, according to Dean, the two works are worlds apart in most respects, but have two things in common. Both oratorios use sights and sounds of nature and “show a wonderful recrudescence of Handel’s creative power.”¹⁵⁴ Chrysander attributes the libretto to Thomas Morell;¹⁵⁵ however, Dean claims Morell “starved this side of Handel’s imagination,”¹⁵⁶ therefore negates the attribution. Smither agrees with Dean and says the libretto is by an anonymous writer, given the stylistic differences between *Solomon* and other Morell librettos.¹⁵⁷

There is no direct evidence concerning *Solomon*’s reception, but Dean implies that it was not enthusiastically received. After three performances in 1749, Handel did not revive the oratorio until six weeks before his death ten years later. This revision came with many alterations and additions.¹⁵⁸

Solomon is freely based on the biblical story of King Solomon’s reign depicted in I Kings, II Chronicles, and Josephus’ *Antiquities of the Jews* 8:2-7. The oratorio reflects a turn from Handel’s previous dramatic bellicose themes to one of “pageantry, the boast of heraldry, and the pomp of power.”¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁴Dean, *Handel’s Oratorios*, 511.

¹⁵⁵Chrysander, *Solomon*, Preface.

¹⁵⁶Dean, *Handel’s Oratorios*, 511.

¹⁵⁷Smither, *History of the Oratorio*, 2:318.

¹⁵⁸Dean, *Handel’s Oratorios*, 526-27.

¹⁵⁹*Ibid.*, 511.

The oratorio is inundated with symbolism, with many references to creation and natural things, mentioning such things as plants, animals, music, sex, and minerals. The reference to pastoral themes and seasons are present in at least ten of the arias.¹⁶⁰ The characters of *Solomon* are also said to be partly symbolic. Dean suggests Solomon himself is a symbol rather than a man, “the regal personification of his age; idiosyncrasy is not required of him.”¹⁶¹ Handel further identifies other characters as “partially symbolic:” Solomon’s Queen of marital bliss, Zadok of religious orthodoxy, and the Queen of Sheba “of the respect due to the golden city from the outer world.”¹⁶² Solomon is also symbolic of George II. Percy Young states:

It is impossible to believe other than that the intention was to read George for Solomon throughout. George II was the hero of Dettingen, the patron of the Foundling Hospital, to which he gave £2,000 and an additional £1,000 for the inauguration of the instruction for children in the principles of the Christian religion, the friend of Handel and the symbol of the victory of the constitutional government over the forces of insurrection and reaction.¹⁶³

There is no continuing story line throughout the three acts, but each act reveals significant events in the life of Solomon.

Act I focuses on the celebration of Solomon’s newly built temple in what Dean describes as “a mighty paean of thanksgiving . . . from King, priests, and people.”¹⁶⁴ A sacrifice is offered and accepted by Jehovah, and the High Priest, Zadok, is emotionally overcome. The story then centers on Solomon’s promise to build his Queen, Pharaoh’s daughter, a new palace as she elaborates on the joys of married, physical love.

Act II focuses on Solomon’s wisdom as he settles the dispute of the two

¹⁶⁰Ibid., 515.

¹⁶¹Ibid.

¹⁶²Ibid.

¹⁶³Percy M. Young, *The Oratorios of Handel* (London: Dennis Dobson, Ltd., 1949), 166-67.

¹⁶⁴Dean, *Handel’s Oratorios*, 510.

harlots. The harlots lived together and both gave birth to sons. During the night one of the sons died, and one harlot accused the other of exchanging her dead son for the other's live son. Solomon settles the argument by deciding to have the one live boy cut in half with a sword. The true mother comes forward and tells the King to give the baby to the other mother to save the life of the infant child, revealing to Solomon the identity of the true mother.¹⁶⁵

In Act III, the Queen of Sheba makes a diplomatic visit to Jerusalem and Solomon's palace that he had built for his Queen since Act I. The Queen of Sheba whose name is Nicaule, is shown the palace by Solomon; she is impressed with the splendor, wisdom, and "fair truth" of Solomon. The oratorio ends in a "mood of serene contentment and triumphant virtue."¹⁶⁶

The Bass Role of the Levite¹⁶⁷

The only role assigned to a bass is the Levite, a supporting role, consisting of three arias and one recitative. The Levite is the author of the II Chronicles, which contains the story of Solomon. The author boasts of the golden age of King Solomon in his wealth and wisdom, leaving out the less desirable qualities of King Solomon, such as sexual and politically motivated sins, including the execution of his elder brother Adonijah. While the Levite makes passing reference to the latter, he does not dwell on the incident.¹⁶⁸ While the Levite is not a particularly difficult role, it requires a bass voice capable of long melismatic passages.

Aria: "Praise ye the Lord." This ceremonial aria comes at the beginning of Act I, scene one, after the first chorus offers songs of thanksgiving to Jehovah in

¹⁶⁵Ibid., 512-13.

¹⁶⁶Ibid., 513.

¹⁶⁷The range of the Levite's role lies between G₃-Eb₄.

¹⁶⁸Dean, *Handel's Oratorios*, 513.

celebration of the completion of Solomon's Temple. The Levitical priest follows with a song in praise for the Lord's "mercies past."

Praise ye the Lord for all his mercies past,
Whose truth, whose justice will for ever last.¹⁶⁹

The aria is in ABA form, simply repeating the couplet four times. It lasts approximately five minutes with 189 measures, a somewhat extended time for such a short text. Handel set the tempo at *Andante larghetto*, in 3/4 meter, indicating ♩ = approximately 60, considered somewhat slow for a modern-day performance. A recording by conductor John Elliot Gardiner reveals a much quicker tempo at ♩ = 103.¹⁷⁰

The range of the aria lies between B-flat₃ and E-flat₄, and the *tessitura* remains in the same range. Handel set the aria in the key of E-flat, modulating to the dominant key of B-flat in the "B" section, and then back to E-flat in the repeated "A" section.

Handel sets this hymn-like text of praise in a typical minuet style epitomizing the grandeur and sophistication of King Solomon's court. The aria is set in simple four-measure phrases with little ornamentation. A couple of exceptions include an ornament that sounds similar to a bird call, which Handel used both in orchestral and vocal writing in some of his last oratorios.¹⁷¹ In mm. 48-53 Handel paints the word "last" by assigning it to a long melismatic passage with the last three measures containing dotted-eighth and sixteenth-note figures in a 7-6 chain suspension, creating a sound similar to a birdcall, as shown in Example 20.

Secco Recitative: "Great prince, thy resolution's just." This recitative comes at the beginning of Act II, scene one after Solomon has wisely discerned the identity of the mother of the baby. The Levite praises Solomon, and remarks that it is

¹⁶⁹Handel, *Solomon* (ed. Chrysander), 31-35.

¹⁷⁰Handel, *Solomon*, The Monteverdi Choir, John Elliot Gardiner, conductor, Digital Classics CD412612-2/3.

¹⁷¹Dean, *Handel's Oratorios*, 516.

virtue that makes a great monarch.

Example 20. Handel, *Solomon*, “Praise ye the Lord,”
Text painting mm. 48-53.¹⁷²

Great prince, thy resolution's just;
He never fails, in Heav'n who puts his trust;
True worth consists not in the pride of state,
Tis virtue only makes a monarch great.¹⁷³

The rhyme scheme is AABB, and the recitative is only eight measures long. The range lies between E₃ and C₄, and the recitative is set in the key of C.

Aria: “Thrice bless’d that wise discerning king.” This aria follows the previous recitative, and as Dean states, “The aria gives the impression that Handel would rather be dealing with Goliath, to whom the powerful main theme would not be inappropriate, than with the courtly compliments of a priest.”¹⁷⁴

In a rhyme scheme of ABABCD, the Levite priest “thrice blesses” Solomon for his virtuous honor.

Thrice bless's that wise discerning king,
Who can each passion tame,
And mount on virtue's eagle wing
To everlasting fame:
Such shall as mighty patterns stand
To princes yet unborn,
To honour prompt each distant land,
And future times adorn.

¹⁷²Handel, *Solomon* (ed. Chrysander), 32.

¹⁷³Handel, *Solomon* (ed. Chrysander), 116.

¹⁷⁴Dean, *Handel's Oratorios*, 520.

Thrice bless'd that wise discerning king.¹⁷⁵

The aria is in ABA form beginning in the key of a, modulating to the keys of g, A, C, and back to the home key of a. As Dean suggested, raging melismatic passages and wide leaps characterize this aria, requiring a mature and skilled bass singer. Handel marked the tempo *Allegro*, indicating $\text{♩} = 120$. Conductor John Eliot Gardiner takes the tempo at $\text{♩} = 110$, quick enough, given the melismatic character of the melodic line.¹⁷⁶ The range for this aria lies between A-flat₂ and E-flat₄, and given many melismas in the aria the *tessitura* lies within the same range.

Again, Handel utilizes melodic construction to depict scenes of nature. The text “and mount on virtue’s eagle wing, to everlasting fame,” gives the sense of an eagle soaring above, in a higher *tessitura*, in mm. 18-24, then soaring down and climbing again at m. 25. This is done again at mm. 66-67. Handel sets the word “adorn” in mm. 54-57 on a long ornamental passage to express the obvious. The aria is characterized by a martial, militaristic style with fanfares in both the melodic line and the orchestral accompaniment.

Aria: “Pious king, and virtuous queen.” The Levite priest’s last aria in the oratorio comes in Act III, scene one, during the Queen of Sheba’s diplomatic visit. The Levite priest responds to the queen’s previous aria by praising both the Queen of Sheba and Solomon, and says that their names will be remembered throughout history.

Pious king, and virtuous queen,
May your name resound in story;
In time’s latest annals seen,
Crown’d with honour, crown’d with glory.¹⁷⁷

The rhyme scheme is ABAB. The meter is 3/8 in a tempo marked *Larghetto*, indicating a tempo of approximately $\text{♩} = 40$. The music suggests a smooth legato flow, in prayerful reverence. The range lies between A-flat₂ and E-flat₄, with a *tessitura* lying

¹⁷⁵Handel, *Solomon* (ed. Chrysander), 146-51.

¹⁷⁶Handel, *Solomon* (Gardiner recording), CD412612/2.

¹⁷⁷Handel, *Solomon* (ed. Chrysander), 257-61.

between D₃ and C₄. The form of the aria is ABA, set in 140 measures. The “A” section begins in the key of c, modulating to the relative major key of E-flat in the “B” section. The return to the “A” section begins in the key of F, modulating back to the home key of c at minor at the *Adagio* marking in m. 118. The aria is set in minuet dance style with typical four-measure phrases.

Teaching Considerations

The aria “Praise ye the Lord” can be excerpted and sung by a more lyrical bass voice. It is not as difficult as some of the other dramatic arias in *Solomon*, and could be sung by a less-experienced voice. There are three melismatic passages in mm. 48-52, 94-96, and 132-135 but they do not present as much difficulty compared to the other dramatic arias in the oratorio. This aria may be used as a teaching tool for wide leaps as well, considering the octave leap in m. 34, the leap of a ninth in m. 46, tritones in mm. 86 and 93, and various other octave and seventh leaps.

“Thrice bless’d that wise discerning king” requires a skilled bass voice capable of negotiating long and “raging” melismatic passages in a quick tempo. It also requires a voice with a wide bass range consisting of A-flat₂ and E-flat₄. “Pious king, and virtuous queen” requires a skilled bass singer capable of singing long melismatic passages and long legato lines, but a younger singer may want to take on this aria as a “vocal challenge.” A slower tempo may be helpful in negotiating the melismatic passages that represent the less difficult melismas in comparison to Handel’s other oratorio arias. The long sustained C natural in mm. 65-69 sandwiched between two melismatic passages, is a tool for developing proper breath management.

In conclusion, the three arias represented in the role of the Levite offer some of Handel’s most exciting aria literature. Even though the role of the Levite is a supportive one, the character and style of the music in the role is not any less significant than the tenor role of *Solomon*. Any of the three arias may be taken out of context and performed for a recital or as study repertoire.

Jephtha (1751)

Handel began composing *Jephtha*, his last oratorio, on January 21, 1751, and finished it on August 30 of the same year. Encroaching blindness interrupted his work several times, but the work premiered at the Theater Royal, Covent Garden, on February 26, 1752.

Chrysander's edition references the conducting score copied by John Christopher Smith, Handel's copyist and friend since school days in Halle. Chrysander suggests Handel, struggling with his failing sight, laboriously finished the score. However, the manuscript score contained numerous errors, gaps, and omissions, and Smith "enriched it with numerous corrections and improvements."¹⁷⁸

The libretto is attributed to Thomas Morell, who takes the story from Judges 10:6-12. Apparently Morell added the characters of Zebul (bass), Jephtha's half-brother, who is mentioned earlier in the book, but under a different context; Storgè, Jephtha's wife; and Hamor, a soldier who is in love with Jephtha's daughter Iphis, whose fate is also embellished. Except for the Angel, Morell's other characters are justified.¹⁷⁹

The story begins with the Israelites practicing idolatry, serving the Baals, the Ashtoreths, and the gods of Aram, Sidon, Moab, and the Ammonites. The Israelites are therefore neglected by Jehovah. Jephtha was a great warrior, but he was born of a prostitute. Jephtha's father was Gilead and had other sons by his real wife. His brothers drove Jephtha from the family because he was born of a prostitute and they did not want Jephtha to be a part of their inheritance. Jephtha went into exile in Tob where he led a small army. Now, as the Israelites are being oppressed by the Ammonites and need a leader, Jephtha's half-brothers come to him for help (Judges 10-11).

In Act I, Jephtha's half-brother Zebul encourages the Israelites to ask Jephtha

¹⁷⁸Carl Friedrich Chrysander, ed. *Jephtha, An Oratorio by George Frederic Handel* (New York: Edwin F. Kalmus, 1886), Preface.

¹⁷⁹Dean, *Handel's Oratorios*, 291.

to be their commander, and also encourages them to turn back to the one true God, Jehovah. Jephtha agrees to lead them only under the condition that he remains as their commander after the battle. One of the warriors, Hamor, is betrothed to Jephtha's daughter, Iphis, who agrees to marry him if the battle ends in victory (in the biblical account there is no mention of a love story between Hamor and Iphis). Jephtha makes a private vow to God that if he would grant him victory over the Ammonites he would offer a sacrifice of whatever comes out of the door of his house to meet him upon his return home from battle. Storgè, Jephtha's wife, does not know this, but senses something terrible is about to happen. Jephtha sends a message to the king of the Ammonites demanding the end of their oppression over Israel. The Ammonite king refuses, so Jephtha and the Israelites advance into battle with the Ammonites.¹⁸⁰

Act II begins with Hamor's return with the news of Jephtha's great victory. As Jephtha returns home his only daughter and only child, Iphis, is first out the door to meet him, dancing to the sound of tambourines. He is horrified by this sight and tells her of his vow. Iphis reconciles herself to die, but asks for two months to roam the hills and weep with her friends, for she will never marry. Jephtha grants her wish, and after two months she returns.

In Act III Jephtha prepares to carry out the sacrifice of his daughter, Iphis. At the last moment an angel appears and declares it was the Holy Spirit who led Jephtha to make the vow and explains that its intent can be met if Iphis remains a virgin and never marries. She agrees and there is much celebration.¹⁸¹ Morell takes some liberties here, since in the biblical account of the story Jephtha goes through with the sacrifice of his daughter (Judges 11:38).

¹⁸⁰Ibid., 591.

¹⁸¹Ibid.

The Bass Role of Zebul¹⁸²

As mentioned earlier, the character of Zebul is Jephtha's half-brother, a relationship Morell never quite developed in the oratorio. He plays a warrior that Morell invented for the opening battle aria, and for the additional love scene between Zebul and Iphis. Dean states: "Zebul is little more than a mechanism to get the story underway, which he does very well. He establishes a strong military position at the outset, but does not extend his perimeter."¹⁸³

Zebul is assigned three arias, two *secco* recitatives, and one *accompagnato* recitative that stand-alone, and are not part of a dialogue. The difficulty of the arias in the role of Zebul requires a proficient bass singer with an extended range and capable of negotiating long melismatic passages.

Accompagnato/Secco recitative: "It must be." In this first recitative Zebul opens Act I, scene one, with his brothers, suggesting they call on Jephtha to be their leader.

It must be so: or these vile Ammonites (our lordly tyrants now these eighteen years),
 will crush the race of Israel.
 Since Heaven vouchsafes not,
 with immediate choice,
 to point us out a leader, as before,
 ourselves must choose.
 And who so fit a man as Gilead's son,
 our brother, valiant Jephtha?
 True, we have slighted, scorn'd,
 expell'd him hence, as of a stranger born.
 But well I know him:
 his gen'rous soul disdains a mean revenge
 when his distressful country calls his aid.
 And perhaps Heaven may favour our request
 if with repentant hearts we sue for mercy.¹⁸⁴

This recitative is twenty-six measures long, but only the first three are accompanied. Handel marks the recitative *Largo, e staccato*, with the phrase "it must be

¹⁸²The range of the role of Zebul lies between G₂ and F₄.

¹⁸³Dean, *Handel's Oratorios*, 596.

¹⁸⁴Handel, *Jephtha* (ed. Chrysander), 7-8.

so” in the key of B-flat, immediately moving to a *secco* style recitative in m. 4.

Aria: “Pour forth no more unheeded pray’rs.” Even though Morell may not have fully developed the character of Zebul in the libretto, Handel’s mature style is evident in his arias, giving the character command of the stage. Zebul makes it clear in this declamatory aria that the people of Israel must turn away from the idols and false gods.

Pour forth no more unheeded pray’rs
To idols deaf and vain.
No more with vile unhallow’d airs
The sacred rites profane.¹⁸⁵

The aria immediately follows the previous recitative in Act I, scene one. The rhyme scheme is ABAB, set in binary form. The length of the aria is approximately three minutes, consisting of 114 measures. Handel marked the tempo *Vivace*, a term equivalent to *allegro* or faster. In this case it indicates tempo of approximately ♩ = 120 in 3/4 meter. Gardiner takes the tempo at ♩ = 122, which seems comfortable, given that the melismas predominantly consist of quarter and eighth notes, without the usual running sixteenth-note passages.¹⁸⁶ The range of the aria lies between G₂ and F₄, with the tessitura lying between C₃ and C₄. Handel set the aria in the key of F, modulating to C at m. 25, and back to F at m. 48. The contrasting “B” section is in the key of d, modulating back to F the *Adagio* coda at m. 110.

Jephtha gets the story underway in this militaristic style aria with a *concitato* style orchestral accompaniment. Example 21 pictures a dominating rhythmic figure in the accompaniment that characterizes this aria throughout. Handel utilizes a syncopated rhythm set in a melismatic style on the word “vain,” in mm. 21-24 and again in mm. 28-30, to paint the text.

¹⁸⁵Ibid., 9-13.

¹⁸⁶Handel, *Jephtha*, Monteverdi Choir, John Elliot Gardiner, Conductor, Stephen Varcoe, bass, Phillips CD422 352-1.

Example 21. Handel, *Jephtha*, “Pour forth no more unheeded pray’rs,” text painting mm. 21-24.¹⁸⁷

Secco Recitative: “Again Heav’n smiles.” Zebul introduces Act II, scene two with this recitative and the following aria, “Freedom now once more possessing.” The recitative is only six measures in length, and comes as a straightforward declaration of celebration that Jehovah has once again brought victory to the people of Israel. The range lies within D₃ and D₄.

Again Heav’n smiles on his repentant people,
And Victory spreads wide her silver wings,
To soothe our sorrows with a peaceful calm.¹⁸⁸

Aria: “Freedom now once more possessing.” This aria was borrowed from Handel’s opera *Agrippina* (1709), and is *da capo* in form, consisting of ninety-three measures with a rhyme scheme of AABCCB.

Freedom now once more possessing,
Peace shall spread with ev’ry blessing
Triumphant all around.
Sion now no more complaining,
Shall, in blissful plenty reigning,
Thy glorious praise resound.¹⁸⁹

Chrysander’s tempo marking is *Allegro*, indicating a tempo of $\text{♩} = 120$ in 4/4 meter. This seems to be a comfortable tempo, even though there are many long

¹⁸⁷Handel, *Jephtha* (ed. Chrysander), 10-11.

¹⁸⁸Ibid., 118.

¹⁸⁹Ibid., 118-22.

melismatic passages, requiring a confident bass singer with an extended range between G₂ and F₄. The tessitura lies between C₃ and D₄.

Secco recitative: “Let me congratulate this happy turn.” This recitative and the following aria come at the beginning of Act III, scene two. It is only ten measures in length.

Let me congratulate this happy turn,
My honour'd brother, judge of Israel!
Thy faith, thy courage, constancy and truth,
Nations shall sing; and their just applause,¹⁹⁰
All join to celebrate thy daughter's name.

The Angel has just informed Jephtha that Jehovah has renounced his vow, and he need not sacrifice his daughter. Zebul responds in this celebration recitative and aria.

Aria: “Laud her all ye virgin train.” In this dance-like aria, Zebul calls all the virgins and angels together to celebrate and praise Iphis through song for her release from the awful vow of the sacrifice Jephtha had promised Jehovah.

Laud her, all ye virgin train
In glad songs of choicest strain.
Ye blest angels all around,
Laud her in melodious sound.
Virtues that to you belong,
Love and truth demand the song.¹⁹¹

The rhyme scheme is AABBC in binary form. The meter is 3/8 in a tempo, marked by Handel as *Allegretto*, indicating ♩ = 80. However, this may be a bit quick, considering the many long melismatic passages. Gardiner takes the tempo ♩ = 77, which seems to be a comfortable tempo.¹⁹² The range is between C-sharp₃ and D₄, and given the melodic pattern of melismatic passages the *tessitura* lies within the same range. The aria is 118 measures in length, and performance time is approximately two and one-half

¹⁹⁰Ibid., 226.

¹⁹¹Ibid.

¹⁹²Handel, *Jephtha* (Elliot Gardner, conductor), CD422 351/3.

minutes. The “A” section begins in the key of G, modulating to D in m. 19. Handel sets the “B” section in the key of a, modulating back to the home key of G in m. 47 to the end.

The aria is characterized by its minuet dance setting of the joyful text. It is also rhythmically characterized in its repeated sixteenth-note turns as shown in Example 22.

Teaching Considerations

The recitative “It must be so,” and aria “Pour forth no more,” may be extracted and used as recital or semester literature, providing the bass soloist has the capability of negotiating melismatic passages. However, as previously mentioned, these passages are primarily quarter and eighth notes, relatively easier than Handel’s typical sixteenth-note passages.

Example 22. Handel, *Jephtha*, “Laud her all ye virgin train,” rhythmic characterization.¹⁹³

The image displays a musical score for a vocal and piano setting. It consists of two systems of staves. The first system includes a vocal line (soprano and bass clefs) and a piano accompaniment (treble and bass clefs). The lyrics are: "Laud her, all ye virgin train, in glad songs of choicest strains, laud her, Preist sie laut, ihr Jungfrau'n all, im Ge. sang mit Ju - bel schall! preist sie". The second system continues the vocal and piano parts with lyrics: "all ye virgin train, in glad songs, laud. ihr Jungfrau'n all, im Ge. sang." The piano part features a rhythmic pattern of repeated sixteenth-note turns.

The recitative “Again Heav’n smiles,” and aria “Freedom now once more possessing,” may also be well used outside the setting of *Jephtha*, but they require a skilled bass soloist with an extended range of G₂ and F₄. Leaps of sixths and sevenths are

¹⁹³Handel, *Jephtha* (ed. Chrysander), 226.

extensive, and there is a challenging melismatic passage in mm. 29-31.

The recitative “Let me congratulate this happy turn” and aria “Laud her, all ye virgin train” also can be taken out of the context of *Jephtha* and used in a teaching situation or for recital. A less-skilled bass singer may consider singing this aria, since there are only three melismas—one lasting two measures and the other lasting four measures.

Summarizing the role of Zebul, all but one of these arias are representative of Handel’s most mature work, and they are exciting but challenging. “Freedom now once more possessing” is from the opera *Agrippina*, and was composed forty-two years earlier. Even though Zebul’s character is not developed in the libretto, the music Handel assigned the character is highly developed.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

In review of Handel's compositional training, it is concluded that Wilhelm Zachow made a significant contribution to Handel's early career, teaching him composition, harpsichord, and organ from the age of seven. Handel became well rounded in the German tradition, as well as French and Italian styles. Handel's time in Naples, where he composed Italian genres, was also a significant influence in his compositional career, composing Italian opera.

It was in London, however, that Handel turned his compositional efforts to Oratorio. Handel was one of the first composers to become less dependent upon the aristocracy, using his music to become an independent entrepreneur. While continuing to write opera, Handel began writing oratorio, and eventually turned completely to oratorio for his livelihood. Handel experienced health problems for much of his life, leading to complete blindness in his later years, although he continued to compose and perform concertos and voluntaries up until a couple of years before his death.

Oratorio, defined as "an extended setting of sacred text made up of dramatic, narrative and contemplative element,"¹ had its beginnings as early as the Middle Ages, in liturgical drama. However, its name developed much later in the early sixteenth century through the *Congregation dell' oratorio*.² The evolution of the oratorio continued

¹Howard E. Smither, "Oratorio Antecedents," *The New Grove Dictionary of Music*, ed. L. Macy, [online]; accessed 5 December 2002; <http://www.grovemusic.com>; Internet. 1:1

²Ibid.

through Cavaleri's *Rappresentazione di anima et di aorpo*, and Carissimi's vernacular *oratorio volgare* in the seventeenth century.³ However, it was Handel who gave birth to the English oratorio, somewhat by accident, through the performance of *Esther* in 1718. It was through the oratorios of George Frideric Handel that the genre evolved to what many think of today when considering the genre of oratorio.

In review of the bass roles and arias of Handel's English oratorios based on Old Testament characters, it becomes apparent that Handel seldom assigned the title role to a bass. In fact, *Saul* was the only bass role assigned to the title character. The villainous character is often a bass. Haman in *Esther*, Harapha, the Philistine giant, in *Samson*, and Saul in *Saul*, were all portrayed as the proverbial "bad guy." The father-figure type character was also common among the bass roles of this study. Abinoam in *Deborah*, Manoah in *Samson*, and Gobryus in *Belshazzar*, were all cast as father figures. Other bass characters included warrior/patriarchal figures and priests. Abner in *Athalia*, Pharaoh in *Joseph and His Brethren*, Zebul in *Jephtha*, Levite in *Solomon*, Saul in *Saul*, and Caleb in *Joshua* all fall into this category.

There were almost as many *accompagnato* recitatives for bass as there were *secco*. Handel used nine *accompagnato* and eleven *secco* recitatives of those revealed in this study. This is interesting because among the tenor roles *secco* recitatives tend to be the dominating style of recitative.⁴ Recitative serves two functions. One is expository or narrative in nature, being primarily dramatic. The other is musical in nature, modulating to create transition from one aria to the other. Highly dramatic and climactic texts are usually reserved for *accompagnato* recitatives, since they are more musical in nature, offering a vehicle to enhance dramatic effect.

³Smither, "Oratorio Antecedents," 1:2.

⁴Thomas L. Rowell "A Performer's Analysis of Selected Tenor Recitatives and Arias from Oratorios by George Frederic Handel Based Upon Old Testament Characters Composed Between 1718 and 1751." (D.M.A. diss., Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1998), 173.

The bass arias in Handel's Old Testament oratorios generally resemble those of contemporary Italian opera in their affections but not in structure. The styles of the arias range from rage and vengeance to heroic or martial arias with fanfares in the melodic lines and at times trumpets in the orchestral accompaniments. Other aria styles include lamentations, often using *sarabande* rhythmic style, and pastoral or love texts using a *siciliano* rhythmic style. In this study, there are almost twice as many rage, heroic, or martial arias compared to the number of somber or solemn lamentation or love arias, and at least three arias use both contrasting styles. *Da capo* form was used more frequently in Handel's earlier oratorios; however, Handel moved away from use of the operatic structure in his later works, although he did not abandon it completely.

The range of virtuoso arias is generally wider than the arias characterized by somberness or solemnity. The range of the arias characterized by rage, vengeance or heroic, martial style, are usually wide, extending from G₂ to E-flat₄. The range of the arias characterized by somberness or solemnity usually extended only from B₃ to D₄, making these arias more accessible to student singers. The majority of the bass roles in Handel's Old Testament oratorios require a mature, well-trained voice, although a number of arias and especially *accompagnato* recitatives were found to be accessible to amateur singers.

The twenty-nine arias and eighteen recitatives considered in this study have revealed much knowledge concerning Handel's solo compositional styles. The present study also brought to light many arias and recitatives that may have been relatively unknown to some, making available additional high-quality oratorio aria literature for the baritone and bass.

This study has included only the bass roles of Handel's Old Testament oratorios. Another study cited in Chapter 1 dealt with the same topic, using the tenor roles. There has been no study to date that includes the soprano and alto roles, which presents a need further study in the same topic.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Books

- Abraham, Gerald. *Handel, A Symposium*. London: Oxford University Press, 1954.
- Anderson, Nicholas. *Baroque Music: From Monteverdi to Handel*. New York: Thames Hudson, 1994.
- Baker, Theodore. "George Frederick Handel." In *Baker's Biographical Dictionary of Musicians*. 8th ed. Revised by Nicolas Slonimsky. New York: Schirmer, 1992.
- Brown, Howard Mayer, and Stanley Sadie, eds. *Performance Practice: Music after 1600*. New York: W. W. Norton, 1990.
- Buelow, George J. *The Late Baroque Era*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1993.
- Bukofzer, Manfred F. *Music in the Baroque Era: From Monteverdi to Bach*. New York: W. W. Norton, 1947.
- Burrows, Donald. *Handel*. New York: Schirmer, 1994.
- _____, ed. *The Cambridge Companion to Handel*. Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 1997.
- Cyr, Mary. *Performing Baroque Music*. Portland: Amadeus, 1992.
- Dean, Winton. *Handel's Dramatic Oratorios and Masques*. London: Oxford University Press, 1959.
- Deutsch, Otto. *Handel: A Documentary Biography*. New York: W. W. Norton, 1954.
- Dolmetsch, Arnold. *The Interpretation of the Music of the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries, Revealed by Contemporary Evidence*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1980.
- Donnington, Robert. *Baroque Music: Style and Performance*. New York: W. W. Norton, 1982.
- Dorian, Frederick. *The History of Music in Performance*. New York: W. W. Norton, 1942.
- Flower, Newman. *George Frederick Handel: His Personality and His Times*. New York: C. Scribner and Sons, 1923.
- Hogwood, Christopher. *Handel*. London: Thames and Hudson, 1984.
- Lang, Paul Henry. *George Frederic Handel*. New York: W. W. Norton, 1966.

- Larsen, Jens Peter. *Handel, Haydn, and the Viennese Classical Style*. Ann Arbor, MI: UMI Research Press, 1988.
- Larue, C. Steven. *Handel and His Singers*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995.
- Mainwaring, John. *Memoirs of the Life of the Late George Frederic Handel*. London: N.p., 1760.
- Neumann, Frederick. *Ornamentation in Baroque and Post-Baroque Music*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1978.
- Palisca, Claude. *Baroque Music*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1968.
- Rink, John, ed. *The Practice of Performance: Studies in Musical Interpretation*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995.
- Rogers, Patrick J. *Continuo Realization in Handel's Vocal Music*. Ann Arbor, MI: UMI Press, 1989.
- Sadie, Stanley, ed. "George Frederick Handel." In *The New Grove Dictionary of Music Musicians*. 20 vols. London: Macmillan, 1980.
- Smith, Ruth. *Handel's Oratorios and Eighteenth-Century Thought*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995.
- Smither, Harold E. *A History of the Oratorio*. 3 vols. Chapel Hills, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 1987.
- Stevens, Denis. *A History of Song*. New York: W. W. Norton, 1960.
- Streatfeild, R. A. *Handel*. New York: Da Capo Press. 1964.
- Taylor, Sedley. *The Indebtedness of Handel to Works of Other Composers*. New York: Johnson Reprint Company, 1971.
- Tosi, Pier Francesco. *Observations on the Florid Song*. Translated by Galliard (1742). Edited by Michael Pilkington. London: Stainer and Bell, 1987.
- Young, Percy M. *The Oratorios of Handel*. London: Dennis Dobson, 1949.

Articles in Periodicals

- Bartlet, Ian. "Boyce and Early English Oratorio." *Musical Times* 120 (April-May 1983): 385-87.
- Conrad, Peter. "Samson: Body and Soul." *Opera News* 50 (March 1, 1986): 16-17.
- Dean Winton. "The Performance of Recitative in Late Baroque Opera." *Music and Letters* 58 (October 1977): 389-402.
- Fiske, Roger. "Handel's *Joseph*." *Music and Letters* 15 (October 1934): 301-05.
- Freitas, Roger. "Singing Handel." *Opera News* 61 (July 1996): 14-17.

- Gollecke, Thomans. "Ornamenting Handel: Like Seasoning a Meal: A New Look at the Old Style." *National Association of Teachers of Singing Journal* 47 (1990): 15-18.
- Hansell, Sven Hostrup. "The Cadence in Eighteenth-Century Recitative." *Musical Quarterly* 54 (1968): 228-48.
- Mold, Simon. "Handel's Music Today." *Musical Opinion* 108 (April-May 1985): 199-201.
- Nott, Kenneth. "'Heroick Vertue': Handel and Morell's *Jephtha* in Light of Eighteenth-Century Biblical Commentary and Other Sources." *Music and Letters* 77 (May 1996): 194-208.
- _____. "Handel's Esther." *Musical Times* 136 (February 1995): 87-91.
- Serwer, Howard. "In Praise of Handel's *Deborah*." *American Choral Review* 27/2-3 (1985): 14-19.
- Webb, Ralph T. "Handel's Oratorios as Dramas," *College Music Symposium* (Fall 1983): 140.

Dissertations

- Rowell Thomas L. "A Performer's Analysis of Selected Tenor Recitatives and Arias from Oratorios by George Frederic Handel Based Upon Old Testament Characters Composed Between 1718 and 1751." D.M.A. diss., Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1998.

Internet

- Hicks, Anthony. "Karl Friedrich Chrysander." *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, ed., L. Macey [online]. Accessed 6 December 2002. Available from <http://www.grovemusic.com>; Internet.
- Smither, Howard E., "Oratorio." *The New Grove Dictionary of Music*, ed. L. Macey [online]. Accessed 5 December 2002. Available from <http://www.grovemusic.com>; Internet.
- Thomas, Gunther. "Zachow, Friedrich Wilhelm." *The New Grove Dictionary of Music*, ed. L. Macy [online]. Accessed 12 December 2002. Available from <http://www.grovemusic.com>; Internet.

Musical Scores

- Burrows, Donald, ed. *Handel, Belshazzar*. London: Novello, 1993.
- Chrysander, Carl Friedrich, ed. *Athalia, An Oratorio by George Frederic Handel*. New York: Edwin F. Kalmus, 1859.
- _____. *Belshazzar, An Oratorio by George Frederic Handel*. New York: Edwin F. Kalmus, 1864.

- _____. *Deborah, An Oratorio by George Frederic Handel*. New York: Edwin F. Kalmus, 1869.
- _____. *Esther, An Oratorio by George Frederic Handel*. 1720 Version. New York: Edwin F. Kalmus, 1882.
- _____. *Esther, An Oratorio by George Frederic Handel*. 1730 Version. New York: Edwin F. Kalmus, 1882.
- _____. *Jephtha, An Oratorio by George Frederic Handel*. New York: Edwin F. Kalmus, 1886.
- _____. *Joseph, An Oratorio by George Frederic Handel*. New York: Edwin F. Kalmus, 1883.
- _____. *Joshua, An Oratorio by George Frederic Handel*. New York: Edwin F. Kalmus, 1864.
- _____. *Samson, An Oratorio by George Frederic Handel*. New York: Edwin F. Kalmus, 1861.
- _____. *Saul, An Oratorio by George Frederic Handel*. New York: Edwin F. Kalmus, 1862.
- _____. *Solomon, An Oratorio by George Frederic Handel*. New York: Edwin F. Kalmus, 1867.
- Flesch, Siegfried, and Klaus Hortschansky, eds., *Esther by Georg Friedrich Händel*. Prague: Bärenreiter, 1995.
- Siegmund, Walther-Schultze, ed. *Saul by Georg Friederich Händel*. Prague: Kassell: Bärenreiter, 1962.

Musical Recordings

- Handel, George Frideric. *Athalia*. Choir of New College, Oxford, The Academy of Ancient Music, Christopher Hogwood, Conductor, Decca CD4171271/2. 1985.
- _____. *Belshazzar*. The Choir of the English Concert, David Wilson-Johnson, bass, Trevor Pinnock, conductor, Archive CD431793/2. 1991.
- _____. *Deborah*. Choir of New College, Oxford Chorister of Salisbury Cathedral, The Kings Consort, Robert King, conductor, Michael George, Bass. Hyperion CDA66841/2. 1993.
- _____. *Esther*. Westminster Cathedral Boys Choir and the Chorus and Orchestra of the Academy of Ancient Music, directed by Christopher Hogwood, David Thomas, bass. Decca CD414425-2. 1996.
- _____. *Jephtha*. The Monteverdi Choir, John Elliot Gardiner, conductor, Stephen Varcoe, bass. Phillips Cd422 352/2. 1988.
- _____. *Joshua*. Choir of New College, Oxford, The King's Consort, Robert King, conductor, Hyperion CDA66461/2. 1991.

_____. *Joseph and His Brethren*. The Choir of New College, Oxford, The Choir of The King's Consort, Robert King, conductor, Michael George, bass. Hyperion CDA67171/3. 1996.

_____. *Samson*. The Sixteenth Symphony of Invention, Harry Christopher, conductor, Collins CD70382/2. 1997.

_____. *Saul*. The Viennese State Opera Chorus & Orchestra, Nikolaus D. Harnoncourt, conductor, Teldec 8. 35687/4. 1985.

_____. *Solomon*. The Monteverdi Choir, John Elliot Gardiner, conductor, Digital Classics CD412612/2. 1984.

Critical Editions

Howard Serwer, ed. *George Frederic Händel, Esther*. Hallische Händel—Ausgabe [Works]. Kassel: Bärenreiter-Verlag Karl Vötterle GmbH, 1995.

ABSTRACT

A PERFORMER'S ANALYSIS OF THE BASS ROLES IN SELECTED OLD TESTAMENT NARRATIVE ENGLISH ORATORIOS OF GEORGE FRIDERIC HANDEL

William Archie Knowles, D.M.A.
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2003
Chairperson: Dr. Ronald A. Turner

This document facilitates the study of the bass roles, including the bass arias and recitatives that are in the Old Testament English oratorios of George Frideric Handel. This study is largely dependent upon the Chrysander editions of the oratorios, however both the Bärenreiter and Novello editions are consulted where available.

This work may serve as a reference for bass soloists, or vocal pedagogues in selecting bass oratorio arias and recitatives, and in study for preparation of a bass role in one or more of the selected oratorios.

Ten oratorios were selected for this study, based on their dramatic emphasis, Handel's more mature compositional style, and the use of the English language. While all arias are discussed, recitatives were selected on the basis that they stand-alone and are not in dialogue with another character. The study is limited to ten of Handel's Old Testament English oratorios: *Esther* (1718-20 version and 1732 revision), *Deborah* (1733), *Athalia* (1733), *Saul* (1738), *Samson* (1741), *Joseph and His Brethren* (1743), *Belshazzar* (1744), *Joshua* (1747), *Solomon* (1748), and *Jephtha* (1751).

The study is concerned with the dramatic function of each aria and recitative within the plot of the oratorio, as well as the range, tessitura, literary rhyme scheme (if applicable), and tonal structure of each aria and recitative. Compositional devices that

are used in melodic construction, level of difficulty, and maturity of voice needed for performance will be also be discussed for each aria and recitative.

Chapter 1 of the study is the introduction to the dissertation, including objectives, delimitations, need for study, basic assumptions, and related literature. Chapter 2 discusses Handel's compositional development from Germany, while in Italy, and finally in England. Chapter 3 is concerned with a historical overview of the genre of oratorio. Chapter 4 focuses on the bass roles and the arias and recitatives within the selected oratorios. Chapter 5 concludes the dissertation, makes observations and directs for further study.

VITA

William Archie Knowles

PERSONAL

Born: February 4, 1954, Phenix City, Alabama
Married: Diana Dismuke Knowles, June 7, 1975
Parents: William Hollis (deceased) and Thelma Knowles

EDUCATION

B.C.M., Samford University, Birmingham, Alabama, 1980
M.C.M., Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1983

MINISTRY

Minister of Music, Myrtle Grove Baptist Church, Pensacola, Florida, 1983-89
Minister of Music, Westside Baptist Church, Gainesville, Florida, 1989-96
Minister of Music, Lees Lane Baptist Church, Louisville, Kentucky, 1996-02
Minister of Music, Bethany Baptist Church, Louisville, Kentucky, 2002-

ACADEMIC

Voice Instructor, Westside Music Academy, Gainesville, Florida, 1994-96
Voice Instructor, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, School of Music, 1999-
Garrett Fellow for Professor and Assistant Professor of Church Music, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2000-

PERFORMANCE

Featured soloist and conductor for numerous Florida state and local church related choral performances as well as producing and conducting seasonal musical drama presentations, 1983-96
Lead role as Papa Charlie in *Shenandoah*, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1996
Trio role in *A Medieval Christmas Festival*, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1997
God's Love Song, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1998
Handel Messiah, Bass Soloist, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2000
Handel Messiah, Bass soloist, South End Community Chorus, Louisville, Kentucky, 2001
Lead role of Jabez in *The Devil and Daniel Webster*, 2002
Handel Messiah, Bass soloist, Zion Baptist Church, Louisville, Kentucky, 2002