

Introduction

Handel's Trio Sonata in G minor HWV393 survives in a single source, a score in Sächsische Landesbibliothek, Dresden, Mus. 2410/Q/3, pp. 32-38, where it is attributed to 'Hendel'. The manuscript, which dates from after 1750, also contains copies of Handel's trio sonatas op. 2, nos. 1a, 3, 4, 5a and 5b HWV386a, 388, 389, 390a and 390b.¹ The sonata was published for the first time in 1879 as part of vol. 27 of Friedrich Chrysander's complete edition of Handel's works, along with two other works from Dresden, the sonatas in F major HWV392 and E major HWV394.² Confusingly, Chrysander gave HWV392, 393 and 394 the numbers op. 2, nos. 3, 8 and 9 respectively, despite the fact that they have nothing to do with op. 2, published by John Walsh in about 1733.³ Of the three, HWV392 has generally been accepted as genuine, since all the movements are related to other Handel works, including the *Salve Regina* in G minor HWV241 and the great setting of *Dixit Dominus* HWV232, both written in Italy in 1707; HWV392 was therefore probably written in Italy in 1706 or 1707.⁴ Conversely, HWV394 is generally thought to be spurious. It is not related to other Handel works (an important indicator of authenticity in Handel), and it has 'many features untypical of Handel' in Terence Best's opinion; he suggested that it was written by an Italian composer at the Dresden court.⁵

Opinion is more divided in the case of HWV393. It was labelled 'authenticity uncertain' in Anthony Hicks's work-list for his Handel article in *Grove Music Online*,⁶ and 'Echtheit nicht verbürgt' by Bernd Baselt in HWV. Baselt's objection was that the work is not related to genuine Handel works, though that is not strictly true. Baselt himself pointed out in HWV that the chromatic sequence in the first movement, bb. 3-4, 9-10, 20-22 and 31-32, is similar to bb. 8-9, 23, 38-39 and 53 of the first movement of the *Organ Concerto* in G minor HWV310, op. 7, no. 5, while Basil Lam thought that the first phrases of the first and third movements have 'some resemblance' to the beginnings of the first and third movements of op. 2, no. 1.⁷ Another tell-tale Handelian idea is the two-bar phrase in the last movement ending with a crotchet and four descending quavers, bb. 49-50, 93-94 and 124-125. Similar ideas are found in a number of genuine works, including 'Would you gain the tender creature' from *Acis and Galatea* HWV49a/15, three minuets in the *Water Music* HWV348/7; 350/19, 20, and a separate two-part minuet in F major HWV518. The idea would presumably have been familiar to Handel and his English contemporaries from the popular song 'Lavender's blue', still well known in England today. The song's tune does not seem to have been printed until the nineteenth century, but it was called for in a broadside ballad printed in the 1670s, and versions of the text are found in the early nineteenth-century children's literature.⁸

Terence Best also drew attention to the repeated crotchet motif that begins the second movement of HWV393: it was 'a favourite with Handel c. 1717-18', occurring in 'the second movement of op. 2, no. 5, and in the opening fugue of the E minor keyboard suite (composed 1717, published as no. 4 in *Suites de pieces pour le clavecin*, i (London, 1720))'.⁹ Handel visited Dresden in 1719, a date 'entirely consistent with its style' according to Best,¹⁰ which perhaps explains why it survives in the Sächsische Landesbibliothek. There has been general agreement in modern times about the quality of the sonata. Musicologists have repeatedly praised it, and performers, editors, publishers and recording companies have made it one of Handel's most popular trio sonatas. It is a large-scale, ambitious work, with eloquent and beautifully planned slow movements and fast movements full of energetic and sophisticated free contrapuntal writing; it is difficult to see who else might have composed it.

There is no doubt that the sonata was originally written for two violins and continuo: in b. 32 of the first movement the top part goes down to g (ruling out likely wind instruments, the recorder, flute and oboe, which go down to f', d' and c' respectively), and there are strikingly violinistic ideas in the last movement, bb.

¹ For these sonatas and their sources, see in particular S. Flesch, 'Georg Friedrich Händels Triosonaten', *Händeljahrbuch*, 18/19 (1972-3), 139-211; *Händel-Handbuch*, iii: *Thematisch-systematisches Verzeichnis: Instrumentalmusik, Pasticcis und Fragmente* [HWV], ed. B. Baselt (Leipzig, 1986); T. Best, 'Handel's Chamber Music: Sources, Chronology and Authenticity', *Early Music*, 13 (1985), 476-499.

² *Georg Friedrich Händels Werke, Ausgabe der Deutschen Händelgesellschaft*, xxvii: *Sonate da camera* (Leipzig, 1879), 142.

³ For the publishing history of op. 2, see Best, 'Handel's Chamber Music', 492-493.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 487.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 497; see also Flesch, 'Georg Friedrich Händels Triosonaten', 165ff..

⁶ A. Hicks, 'George Frideric [Georg Friederich] Handel [Händel, Hendel]', *Grove Music Online*, ed. L. Macy (accessed 20 July 2007).

⁷ G.F. Handel, *Dresden Trio Sonatas*, ed. B. Lam (London, 1978), iii-iv.

⁸ E.F. Rimbault, *Nursery Rhymes, with the Tunes to which they are still Sung in the Nurseries of England, Obtained Principally from Oral Tradition* (London, [1846]), 20; see C.M. Simpson, *The British Broadside Ballad and its Music* (New Brunswick NJ, 1966), 428; *The Oxford Dictionary of Nursery Rhymes*, ed. I. and P. Opie (Oxford, 1951), 265-267.

⁹ Best, 'Handel's Chamber Music', 494.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*.

70-73, 111-118 and 130-133. However, a tradition grew up in the twentieth century of performing it on two violoncellos with the solo parts transposed down an octave. I know of two editions of arrangements for two violoncellos and piano, one by Louis Feuillard published in Nice in 1931 and the other by Heinz Beyer published in London in about 1935.¹ Of course, the practice of adapting violin music for other stringed instruments goes back to the eighteenth century: Handel himself authorised a viola da gamba arrangement of his Sonata in G minor for violin and continuo HWV364 by writing out the opening of the first movement with the solo part down the octave in the alto clef, labelling it 'per la viola da gamba'.² There are many arrangements of this sort in the eighteenth-century viola da gamba repertory (including one or more of J.S. Bach's sonatas BWV1027-9), and by using the octave-transposing treble clef, gamba players were able to read violin music without having to arrange it. The earliest viola da gamba music notated in the treble clef, to be read an octave lower, seems to be in *Aires and Symphonys for the Bass Viol* (London, 1710), and it became the most common way of notating music for the instrument later in the eighteenth century – as the autographs of Carl Friedrich Abel's solos show.³ The same principle was applied to the violoncello in the middle of the eighteenth century, and was used for much of the nineteenth century.⁴

This, then, is the context for the present edition. There is no direct evidence that Handel intended the sonata to be played down the octave on gambas or violoncellos, though the figuration fits surprisingly well on the bass viol (it is actually more idiomatic than the gamba version of HWV364), and when the violin parts are transposed down the octave they never create undesirable inversions by going below the bass line. All in all, the resulting work makes a fine addition to the gamba repertory.⁵

Colchester, Great Britain, July 2007
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Die ersten zwei Zeilen der Quelle
The first two lines of the source

¹ G.F. Handel, *Sonate en sol mineur, op. 2, no. 8*, ed. L.R. Feuillard (Nice: Delrieu Frères, 1931); id., *Sonata (Trio Sonata no. 16) in G minor for Two Cellos and Piano*, ed. H. Beyer (London: Peters, c. 1935). A version of the latter is still available from the International Music Company, New York together with an arrangement by Leonard Davies for two violas and piano.

² See in particular T. Best, 'Handel's Chamber Music', 479, 485. There is a facsimile in R. King, 'Handel and the Viola da Gamba', *A Viola da Gamba Miscellanea*, ed. S. Orlando (Limoges, 2005), 63-79, at 71. There is a modern edition arranged for gamba: G.F. Handel, *Sonata in G minor*, ed. T. Dart (London: Schott, 1950).

³ See, for instance, C.F. Abel, *27 Pieces for the Viola da Gamba*, facsimile with an introduction by W. Knappe (Peer: Alamire, 1993).

⁴ V. Walden, *One Hundred Years of Violoncello: a History of Technique and Performance Practice, 1740-1840* (Cambridge, 1998), 74-78.

⁵ It has been recorded in this form as part of *The Noble Bass Viol: English Music from Purcell to Handel for Three Bass Viols and Continuo*, The Parley of Instruments, Hyperion CDA67088 (1999).