

Handel's London

Handel	Sonata in A major for violin and B.C. HWV 361 <i>Adagio, Allegro, Larghetto, Allegro</i>
Carbonelli	Sonata IX in E minor for violin and B.C. <i>Largo, Allegro, Adagio, Siciliana</i>
Handel	Air and Variations from Suite no.5 in E major HWV 430,
Babell	Sonata in C minor for violin and B.C. <i>Adagio, Allegro, poco Largo, Adagio, Allegro</i>
Handel	Sonata in D major for violin and B.C. HWV 371 <i>Affetuoso, Allegro, Larghetto, Allegro</i>

George Frideric Handel became a naturalised British subject in 1727 having by that time lived there for 15 years. Having established himself in London, Handel travelled to engage musicians from all over Europe engaging amongst many other famous musicians, the celebrated singer Farinelli to come to London. His knowledge of many styles of music and the current trends in music was reflected in his borrowing from a long list of contemporary composers. From 1712 to his death it would have been difficult for any musician in London to not know of Handel.

There have been many efforts to resolve the uncertainty surrounding the authenticity of Handel's published violin sonatas. It was a situation created by the original publisher's misrepresentation (Walsh in 1730 and 1732) of the music he was offering, and compounded by the composer's penchant for using material from earlier works in creating 'new' compositions. The violin sonatas are in a collection of 12 sonatas for flute violin or oboe. The sonatas HWV 361 and 371 are from what has been recognised as the collection of authentic violin sonatas.

The eight harpsichord suites were published in 1720 and the Air and Variations from the E major suite are popularly known as the Harmonious Blacksmith, a title probably given in the early 18th century.

William Babell set many of Handel's operatic arias to music for harpsichord solo. He wrote underneath their titles, "as sung by..." indicating the florid embellishment added was the way some of the celebrated singers performed. If they did so they must have indeed been very accomplished singers to sing such embellishments incorporating rapid scale passages and many trills. While this could be a valuable resource for singers to study how to perform these arias, it could also be Babell exaggerating, as the oboe and violin sonatas also have these florid passages. The seemingly hastily prepared editions often lack proper details in the notation and this is particularly so in the figured bass which leaves many harmonic ambiguities. Presumably Babell knew what he wanted when he performed these sonatas.

A contemporary music critic, Charles Burney, was scathing of Babell, writing that "*he acquired great celebrity by wire-drawing the favourite songs of the opera of Rinaldo, and others of the same period, into showy and brilliant lessons, which by mere rapidity of finger in playing single sounds, without the assistance of taste, expression, harmony or modulation, enabled the performer to astonish ignorance, and acquire the reputation of a great player at a small expence ... Mr Babel ... at once gratifies idleness and vanity*". Despite this criticism many others favoured Babell with accolades and tributes to his virtuosity. Babell was a violinist in the Royal Orchestra as well as a famous keyboardist.

Giovanni Stefano Carbonelli was born in Livorno sometime between 1690 and 1700 to a French mother and Italian father. He is purported to have studied with Corelli in Rome, and likely worked as a violinist in Venice as part of Vivaldi's band for his opera productions.

Moving to London around 1719 he cemented a reputation as a fine violinist, leading the orchestra at the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane, as well as leading the orchestra for Handel's operas at the Theatre Royal, Haymarket. Carbonelli married in 1730, converted to Anglicanism, and was then naturalised in 1735 adopting the anglicised name John

Stephen Carbonell. An entrepreneur and a resourceful, adaptable man, Carbonelli began operating as a wine merchant, becoming an official purveyor of wine to the King George II and his Court in 1759.

As a composer, Carbonelli's main patron was the Third Duke of Rutland, John Manners, to whom he dedicated his volume of *12 Sonate da camera e violone o cembalo* in 1729. Tragically, these sublime works, which hint strongly of the influence of the Italian masters Corelli and Albinoni, are the composers only surviving compositions. While it is documented that Carbonelli performed his own violin concerto and sonata in London in 1719, it is unclear as to how prolific his compositional output actually was.

Jennifer Kirsner is a Melbourne-based period and modern violinist who performs with various Australian ensembles including the Orchestra of the Antipodes (Pinchgut Opera), the Australian Romantic and Classical Orchestra, and the Melbourne Chamber Orchestra. She has also worked with early music ensembles including Latitude 37, Ludovico's Band, and Accademia Arcadia, and has been involved in numerous live and studio recordings for ABC Classic. Jennifer is founding Artistic Director of the Melbourne-based chamber orchestra, Genesis Baroque. She received her Bachelor of Music (Hons) at The University of Melbourne with first class honours in performance, and pursued further study in historically-informed performance over several years through private study, summer schools, and masterclasses on period violin in Australia, Italy, and the UK.

Jennifer also has a doctoral degree in forensic psychology and maintains an active private practice as a clinical psychologist. She has completed a Master of Philosophy investigating psychosocial developmental factors associated with the development of music performance anxiety, and she has a keen clinical interest in this area. Her work has been published in the Oxford Handbook of Music Performance.

See www.peterhagen.com.au for information on Peter Hagen

“Handel’s London”

Jen Kirsner – Violin

Peter Hagen – Harpsichord



King George I and Handel on the River Thames – Edouard Hamman

Salon Concerts at Broadford

7 May 2023 @4.00pm