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HANDEL *in Italy* VOL.1

Benjamin Bevan • Mary Bevan • Sophie Bevan

London Early Opera
Bridget Cunningham *conductor*



HANDEL IN ITALY, VOL.1

	Gloria , HWV deest	
1	Gloria in excelsis Deo	[2.19]
2	Et in terra pax	[2.49]
3	Laudamus te	[2.11]
4	Domine Deus, Rex coelestis	[1.24]
5	Qui tollis peccata mundi	[4.08]
6	Quoniam tu solus sanctus Sophie Bevan <i>soprano</i>	[3.04]
7	<i>Passacaille</i> from the Overture to Rodrigo , HWV 5	[4.21]
8	<i>Bel Piacere</i> from Agrippina , Act III, Scene 10, HWV 6 Mary Bevan <i>soprano</i>	[2.08]
9	Sonata for a Harpsichord with Double Keys in G major , HWV 579 Bridget Cunningham <i>harpsichord</i>	[5.14]
10	<i>Un pensiero nemico di pace</i> from Il Trionfo del Tempo e del Disinganno , Part 1, HWV 46a Mary Bevan <i>soprano</i>	[4.22]
	Cantata Cuopre tal volta il cielo , HWV 98	
11	Accompagnato: <i>Cuopre tal volta il cielo</i>	[1.19]
12	Aria: <i>Tuona, balena, sibila il vento</i>	[3.01]
13	Recitativo: <i>Così fiera procella</i>	[1.03]
14	Aria: <i>Per pietà</i> Benjamin Bevan <i>baritone</i>	[5.37]
	Total timings:	[43.00]

SOPHIE BEVAN · MARY BEVAN · BENJAMIN BEVAN
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HANDEL IN ITALY

At the turn of the seventeenth century, any young composer with a keen interest in the theatre is likely to have considered Northern Italian cities to be at the forefront of cultural developments. Italy was, after all, the country in which opera, oratorio and the chamber cantata were born. Certainly in Handel's case, the young composer showed a keen interest in touring Italy at the age of 19 shortly after writing his first opera, *Almira*. One of his first anecdotal biographers, John Mainwaring, reported that Handel's interest in Italian opera was significantly enhanced by a meeting with the 'Prince of Tuscany' – Prince Gian Gastone de Medici, the younger brother of the Grand Prince Ferdinand – who was so captivated by Handel's youthful compositions he demanded an audience and encouraged the young composer to explore the very latest Italian music. Shortly afterwards Handel embarked upon his three-year sojourn in Italy making his way – according to Mainwaring – “on his own bottom, as soon as he could make a purse for that occasion” despite the Prince's offer of travel with his entourage. The trip was a period of intense and rich musical activity, throughout which Handel's

music underwent fundamental changes. Indeed, by the end of his long life, these changes had fuelled a career of unrivalled fluidity and longevity in both the operatic and oratorio genres.

Key to understanding Handel's later successes, therefore, is the consideration of these fertile Italian years that comprised of not only opera and instrumental works but also, importantly, secular cantatas which were complete works in themselves and often also bore the seeds of later works. This programme explores key works from Handel's Italian years including works that contain musical inspiration modern audiences recognise from later incarnations in operatic arias or the grand melodic lines of now-familiar oratorio favourites.

The composer Johann Mattheson wrote that Handel travelled with a companion Herr Von Benitz, who may have introduced him to society or been a patron, yet we hear nothing more of him and indeed records show that Handel himself saved 200 ducats for his venture. The intrigue does not end there: once in Italy, Handel was no servant to aristocratic households supporting musical activities, rather, he was a house-guest of several well-connected

patrons who commissioned new works and presented their protégé to local society. We know little about Handel's first port of call, Florence (or perhaps Venice as Mainwaring suggests) but it made a convenient break in the journey to Rome. And such an invitation to Florence may have come directly from Ferdinand de Medici and it is worth noting that Handel returned to that city the following summer to write an opera, a genre forbidden in Rome by Papal edict.

During his tour, Handel stayed largely in Rome with excursions to Florence, Naples and Venice as well as in the country at Vignanello and Cerveteri. The presence of marching armies in Italy in response to the lingering war of Spanish succession may have made travelling more than usually arduous since many small Italian states were hedging bets by active involvement or by simply attempting to preserve neutrality as was the case with Venice. Negotiating these political sensitivities would have preoccupied most travellers and may have also influenced Handel's movements within Italy.

Handel arrived in Rome early in 1707 and he impressed his first patrons and supporters, Cardinal Carlo Colonna, Cardinal Benedetto

Pamphili and Cardinal Pietro Ottoboni with his keyboard playing and spectacular compositions. Despite Handel's Lutheran faith and staunch Protestant upbringing, the most important compositions of his early months in Rome were for the Roman Catholic Church and they signify a determination to display a full range of compositional skills. It was probably Cardinal Colonna who commissioned the large-scale setting of the psalm *Dixit Dominus*, completed early in April 1707, as well as settings of two other Vesper psalms *Laudate pueri* in D major and *Nisi Dominus* during July. Since the papal ban did not extend to oratorio, by May 1707 Cardinal Pamphilli commissioned and wrote Handel's first major libretto, the allegorical oratorio *Il Trionfo del tempo e del Disinganno*. This opportunity, more than most, possibly persuaded the composer to stay in Rome despite there being no opera house as such. Again, it is interesting that a young Lutheran composer should receive such hospitality and high profile commissions of key Latin texts from Catholic clergy and not be converted to Catholicism himself. Also worthy of note is how Handel set secular love poetry from his circle of Italian patrons and in doing so created music to which he returned many decades later.

It was through these Roman Cardinals that Handel also developed a network extending beyond the city limits. In particular, in Cardinal Ottoboni's *Palazzo della Cancelleria*, Handel had access to a significant music library and opportunity to perform with the house band led by esteemed violinist Arcangelo Corelli. He also later met the influential Cardinal Vincenzo Grimani and Marchese Francesco Maria Ruspoli who also supported him. The rewards of such circles were not only financial, Handel enjoyed access to several of the finest harpsichords and organs and met many wonderful musicians such as Alessandro and Domenico Scarlatti who showed mutual admiration for his work, and soprano Margherita Durastanti for whom Handel wrote many of his solo cantatas. Theirs was a lasting partnership, Handel and Durastanti continued to work together throughout their careers, notably in London.

Handel became a distinguished house guest, rather than a servant, to his most influential secular patron, the music loving dignitary, Marchese Francesco Maria Ruspoli who commissioned Handel to write *La Resurrezione* the following Easter in 1708. In the same year, Ruspoli was made the first Prince of

Cerveteri by Pope Clement XI in gratitude for funding mercenaries to defend the Papal States during the Spanish war. Ruspoli came from a Florentine banking family who settled in Rome and it is possible that a Florentine link enabled this particular contact. Ruspoli held a weekly *conversazioni* of the '*Accademie degli Arcadi*' a circle of noble dilettantes augmented by guests of the highest ranks of church or state from both Italy and abroad, and their musical and literary protégés like a Freemasonry of the Arts. Handel was also invited to follow Ruspoli to his country palace of Vignanello where he continued composing and performing whilst enjoying country festivities.

In seeking to understand the network of influences in operation at this time one is drawn into a web of social, political – and possibly sexual – narratives that underpin Handel's musical watershed. These discs explore the young composer's Italian years through an appreciation of his wide variety of musical styles: cantatas, sacred pieces, operatic works and instrumental compositions. Handel wrote prolifically during his stay in Italy, his output includes oratorios, operas, sonatas, instrumental works and sacred vocal masterpieces including

over 100 cantatas. Handel was hugely inspired by the enormous reserve of talent in Italy and was inspired by the high calibre star singers to develop his aria style. It was a wonderful opportunity for Handel to write for voices of this quality and to encourage them to thrive and flourish as vocal personalities whilst sensitively support the individuality of his singers.

This disc gives a sample of some of Handel's finest music for voice during his time in Italy and in doing so gathers together for the first time the internationally acclaimed soloists Sophie Bevan, Mary Bevan and Benjamin Bevan.

Gloria In Excelsis Deo.

Rome (1707 or earlier), HWV deest

The Gloria is an ancient hymn of praise sung or recited during the Roman Catholic mass and this is Handel's only setting of the Mass Ordinary for solo voice. It is scored for coloratura soprano with violins and basso continuo. Hearing Georg Philipp Telemann's solo mass setting earlier in Hamburg may have inspired Handel and in turn, Handel's Gloria was closely followed by Vivaldi's choral setting of the Gloria in 1708.

Handel's setting was rediscovered in 2001 in connection with a project underwritten by the German Research Society. Both score and parts belong to the Royal Academy of Music in London and are not in Handel's hand. They are bound in a collection of Handel arias owned by singer and associate William Savage (1720-1789), and the extant manuscript was probably left to the Academy by Savage's student R. J. S. Stevens upon the latter's death.

Although Professor Hans Joachim Marx has identified the Gloria as an early work, questions still arise as to the purpose for which Handel may have composed it. It may even predate

the composer's arrival in Rome in 1707 and stem from earlier years in Germany. However, based on musical similarities it is possible that Handel wrote this in Rome with other Latin pieces during June of 1707 and it may have been used in the church at Vignanello, the country estate of his Roman patron, Marchese Ruspoli. The soprano Margherita Durastanti might have been the intended singer as she was also in the employment of the Marquis Ruspoli, although top B flats may have been too high for her (depending on pitch) so possibly a castrato performed it. The violin parts are also extremely important and dominant so was possibly written for the virtuosic Italian players Corelli or the Castrucci brothers.

Based on the Gloria's orchestration (specifically, the lack of a viola), the punctuated character of the final Alleluia and the piece's fresh exuberance, musicologists ascribe its compositional date to Handel's 1707 sojourn in Rome. When questions lingered among scholars about the identity of the work's composer, a number of compositional details, including the generous use of melodic and harmonic dissonance, all point to the young Handel. Also there are several later borrowings and similarities with his other works such

as the *Laudate pueri* in D major, *Nisi Dominus*, the *Utrecht Jubilate*, Chandos Anthem *O be joyful in the Lord* and even the Coronation anthem *The King Shall Rejoice*.

All six movements from the Gloria are magnificent from the deeply expressive *Qui Tollis* to the breathtakingly exuberant finale with the virtuosic *Cum Sancto spiritu*. Handel interpreted the sacred texts literally in terms of poetic rhetoric, separating praise of God from pleas for the forgiveness of sins in other more pensive movements like the different characters *Allegro* and *Penseroso* in '*L'Allegro, Il Penseroso ed il Moderato*'. The resultant contrasts of mood as the piece progresses from movement to movement reinforce the work's underlying formal grand structure for the Mass.

Passacaille from Rodrigo.

Florence (1707), HWV 5

In the summer of 1707, Handel was back in Florence doing something that he could not do in Rome, mainly writing an opera – Rodrigo (HWV 5) or *Vincer se stesso è la maggior vittoria* (to overcome oneself is the greater victory). Despite it being unknown how this project came about, who commissioned it

and what the circumstances were for the performance and presentation of it, working on Rodrigo was certainly a very important moment for Handel as he was learning cutting edge skills about the opera at this period.

Rodrigo is an opera in three acts and is an extremely engaging piece musically. The opera is based on the historical figure of Rodrigo, the last Visigothic king of Hispania and the libretto was based on Francesco Silvani's *Il duello d'Amore e di Vendetta* ("The conflict between love and revenge").

The first performance of Rodrigo took place in Florence in the Autumn of 1707 at the *Teatro Cocomero* and was Handel's first opera written for performance in Italy. It was an instant success and Handel's biographer Mainwaring testified to its favourable reception by noting that Handel 'was presented with 100 sequins, and a service of plate.' The stunning Passacaille, from the Overture was again probably written with one of his leading Italian violinists in mind as it has a solo violin part again reflecting the exuberant concerto like Italian style.

Bel Piacere from Agrippina. **Venice (late 1709), HWV 6**

In 1709 Handel travelled North to Venice as he received a commission from the leading Italian opera house, *Teatro San Giovanni Crisostomo* theatre in Venice owned by the Grimani family. Handel was asked to write an opera and set Cardinal Vincenzo Grimani's sensational libretti Agrippina to music. It is unknown where exactly Handel stayed in Venice and we currently have no documented evidence that Handel met Vivaldi there, although it is very likely, as both composers would have had a great curiosity for meeting other musicians.

Agrippina, Handel's second Italian opera is a satirical comedy about sex, intrigue, treachery, jealousy, revenge, and the lust for power. It is set in ancient Rome at the time of the emperor Nero and shows amorality, frailty and idiosyncrasies of character. It was seen to portray Emperor Claudius as an oblique attack on the character of Pope Clement XI who frequently clashed politically with Grimani. With Grimani's libretti of such a high standard with good poetry, Handel was able to develop his presentation of character with a wonderful humorous setting and an absolutely

Shakespearian ability to understand and sympathise with his characters, reveal all their subtleties of human nature. The recitatives are sharply penned and the dramatic situations are brilliantly set up with a domination of arias over recitative.

Venice was the first place in Italy to run operas on a commercial basis for a public audience, rather than being supported by the munificence of nobles, clergy or princes. Agrippina opened the most popular carnival season and was an enormous success and ran for an unprecedented 27 performances. According to Mainwaring, enthusiastic audiences greeted every pause in the music with cries of 'Viva il caro Sassone!' (Long live the dear Saxon!) and Handel's triumph before the international audience established a worldwide reputation. Interestingly Venice had suffered to some extent from trying to preserve neutrality during the Spanish war and so there were a particularly large number of diplomats working in Venice at that time. Among them, Prince Ernst Georg of Hanover, brother of the elector (the future George I of England), and the English ambassador, Charles Montague Duke of Manchester, both of whom may have invited Handel to visit

their respective countries and helped pave the way for future work.

Despite its uncanny freshness, the music of Agrippina was not entirely new, some was borrowed from other composers and some was self borrowed, adapted and developed from earlier Italian works such as *La Resurrezione* and the chamber cantatas written in Florence and Rome. There are also a few quotes from *Rodrigo*. Yet few people in Venice would have heard this music before and as a whole, *Agrippina* shows an assured mastery of the Italian idiom, and musically it reflects character and dramatic context more than in *Rodrigo*.

The aria *Bel Piacere* is sang by Poppea in Act III of *Agrippina* when, after much previous deception and plotting, Poppea's love for Ottone is finally revealed. Poppea was originally sung by the Italian soprano Diamante Maria Scarabelli well known for her vocal range, high tessitura and virtuosity.

Sonata for a Harpsichord with Double Keys in G major, HWV 579

This piece has long been attributed to the Italian period due to stylistic evidence although little is known about the circumstances of its composition. Certainly there are also a greater amount of keyboard works attributed to Handel's previous years in Hamburg.

The primary source for this Sonata is the printed text in the spurious edition *PIECES a un & Deux Clavecins COMPOSEES Par Mr HENDEL/ A AMSTERDAM / Chez Jeanne Roger*, c.1720. It was engraved by Walsh in London but published by Roger. The piece is printed on four staves, without indication of which manual is the lower or upper. It is possible that it was intended for two harpsichords or indeed an instrument with two manuals of equal strength of sound, but different tones. Two-manual harpsichords seem to have been rare in Italy at this time, and it is possible that one of Handel's patrons acquired one and asked him to compose for it and therefore Handel concluded with a display of virtuosity.

It is also possible that Handel might have played or improvised on this theme and that variations were subsequently worked up for the competition between him and Scarlatti described in Mainwaring's Memoirs. Mainwaring's anecdote relates that Handel and Scarlatti entered a musical contest with each other at the palace of Cardinal Ottoboni, and that, despite a common consensus that they shared the palms on the harpsichord, Scarlatti generously acknowledged the Saxon's superiority on the organ.

Handel's mastery of the organ that brought him attention in Rome: a contemporary diarist Francesco Valesio wrote on 14 January 1707 that "There is lately arrived in this city a Saxon who is a most excellent player upon the harpsichord and composer of music and who today made great pomp of his virtue in playing upon the organ in the church of San Giovanni to the amazement of all." Reputed to be the largest and most magnificent organ in Rome the instrument survives to this day.

It is not known what music Handel would have performed on either of those two historic occasions. No body of organ music by

Handel – apart from the concertos composed later in England – survives in a recognisable form. If the competition with Scarlatti took place, it is possible that pieces were improvised and that Handel constructed those probable improvisations upon his own compositions using themes from sinfonias, overtures, arias or indeed themes from other composers rather than performing his keyboard works.

This Sonata, which is a fantasia, is later altered and reincarnated in the character Armida's famous dramatic coloratura aria *Vo' far guerra*, from Act II of his later opera *Rinaldo* (HWV 7a) of 1711. This aria famously included a harpsichord obbligato part which offers an idea of what Handel would play and improvise during performances. In the third edition of the opera in June 1711, Walsh published 'The Harpsichord Peice perform'd (sic) ... perform'd by Mr Handel' and the Sonata is an elaboration of this into a virtuoso solo piece. Showing the popularity of this work and inspiration, William Babel also wrote a virtuosic fantasy based on *Vo' far guerra* (recorded by Bridget Cunningham on the CD **Handel in Ireland** also in this series).

Un Pensiero nemico di pace from Il Trionfo del Tempo e del Disinganno Rome (1707), HWV 46a

This was Handel's very first allegorical oratorio set to a libretto by Cardinal Benedetto Pamphili with a title that translates as "The Triumph of Time and Disillusionment" The work, comprising of two sections, was composed in the spring 1707 and premiered that summer in Rome.

In the libretto, Bellezza (Beauty) is tempted to become a disciple of *Piacere* (Pleasure) but eventually takes heed of the compassionate warnings of *Tempo* (Time) and *Disinganno* (Disillusionment) that it is better to avoid sin and instead dedicate oneself to virtue and godliness. This aria *Un pensiero nemico di pace* with virtuosic violin writing comes in Part 1, of *Il Trionfo* when Bellezza is still furious with *Tempo*'s warnings.

Handel often had problems with singers but during rehearsals for *Il Trionfo* in Rome he apparently struggled with the violinist and celebrated leader of his orchestra and Ottoboni's house band, Arcangelo Corelli. According to Mainwaring, Corelli told Handel he could not play the introduction or overture

as it was written in the French style which he did not understand. Corelli does have French touches in his own music, so he would have actually known what Handel was doing, but despite this, Handel apparently seized Corelli's violin and played the piece as he thought it should be performed.

As Corelli was one of the most influential composers of the time and also a virtuoso player, his musical impact was huge. Handel was deeply sensitive to his performers when writing instrumental Italian works and here he took the Corellian style on board and penned a more appropriate replacement overture.

Handel returned to this work 30 years later with a revised and expanded three section version *Il Trionfo del tempo e della verità* (HWV 46b) and again much later when he was in poor health in 1757 (HWV 71) with the 'Triumph of Time and Peace'.

***Cuopre tal volta il cielo* Naples (1708), HWV 98**

This tempestuous bass cantata was written in Naples, in 1708 several years after the earthquake. It was possibly written for the

Neapolitan singer and priest, Antonio Manna the only named singer in the cast of the serenata, *Aci, Galatea and Polifemo* (HWV 72) which was also performed in Naples in 1708. Handel was apparently delighted to write for Manna due to his huge range and formidable vocal dexterity. The tradition of contrabasso singing was extremely popular and is demonstrated in this cantata with robust bass notes teemed with the high baritone register which can skilfully be transposed up.

In this standard cantata setting of two arias and recitatives for bass, two violins and continuo, Handel shows a mastery of the cantata form influenced by dramatic arias. That the influence flows from opera to cantata demonstrates how the latter could be regarded as a serious form in themselves and not just short try outs for opera as is often assumed. Here, Handel's word setting is delicately poised: the text 'An unforeseen dark cloud may cover the sky' tells us of a lover, who with a single dark look from the object of his desire, feels like a ship tossed about on the ocean. Images of nature serve as a metaphor for suffering and the text blends elements from classical mythology with nature

to create subtle meanings and allusions beyond modern recognition.

The scene takes place in a tempest off the coast of Naples and commences with an introductory *Accompagnato* – a recitative portraying violent gusts of wind, churning waves, thunder and lightening. The figure of the '*tridentato Dio*' emerges from the Ocean, depicting Neptune with his trident. The first aria depicts the stormy sea through wild triplet figures and disjunctive chords whilst the voice is forced to surmount gruelling triplets, coloratura and gigantic leaps throughout all registers. In the second recitative, a shepherd reveals that the ungracious glances and haughty words of his beloved are like thunder and lightning. In the final aria, he pleads for mercy from his enraged lover, demonstrating the refined Italian baroque method of resolving a relationship crisis.

As a musical painter of action, and emotion, especially in enormous tableaux, Handel was unmatched in his depictions of God as a creator and destroyer and of heaping up the waters of the sea. And here, as elsewhere, when Handel trembled and blew the musical world felt both the joy and terror of his music.

As Handel's friend Alexander Pope wrote in the *Dunciad*:

"Giant Handel stands, / Like bold Briareus, with a hundred hands, / To stir, to rouse, to shake the soul he comes."

2015, Bridget Cunningham

TEXT AND TRANSLATIONS

1 - 6 Gloria, HWV deest

- 1 Gloria in excelsis Deo
2 Et in terra pax
hominibus bonae voluntatis
3 Laudamus te, benedicimus te,
adoramus te, glorificamus te.
Gratias agimus tibi
propter magnum gloriam tuam
4 Domine Deus, Rex coelestis,
Deus Pater omnipotens.
Domine Fili unigenite Jesu Christe.
Domine Deus Agnus Dei, Filius patris.
5 Qui tollis peccata mundi,
miserere nobis.
Qui tollis peccata mundi
suscipe deprecationem nostram.
Qui sedes ad dexteram
Patris, misere nobis.
6 Quoniam tu solus sanctus,
tu solus Dominus,
tu solus Altissimus, Jesu Christe.
Cum Sancto Spiritu
in Gloria Dei Patris
Amen.

*Gloria to God in the highest
and on earth peace
to people of good will
We praise you, we bless you,
we adore you, we glorify you.
we give you thanks
for your great glory
Lord God, heavenly King,
O God, almighty Father.
Lord Jesus Christ, only begotten Son,
Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father,
You take away the sins of the world,
have mercy on us;
You take away the sins of the world,
receive our prayer.
You are seated at the right hand of the Father,
have mercy on us.
For you alone are the Holy One,
you alone are the Lord,
You alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ,
With the Holy Spirit,
in the glory of God the Father.
Amen.*

8 Bel piacere è godere

Poppea's aria from **Agrippina**, Act III,
Scene 10, HWV 6

Recitative:

Piega pur del mio cor nel dolce nido
placido le tue piume, oh mio Cupido!

Aria:

Bel piacere è godere fido amor!
questo fa contento il cor.
Di bellezza non s'apprezza lo splendor,
Se non vien d'un fido cor.

10 Un pensiero nemico di pace

Bellezza's aria from **Il Trionfo del Disinganno**,
Part 1, HWV 46a

Un pensiero nemico di pace
fece il Tempo volubile edace,
e con l'ali la falce gli diè.

Nacque un altro leggiadro pensiero,
per negare sì rigido impero,
ond' il Tempo più Tempo non è.

Recitative:

*Fold then your wings, my Cupid,
And rest in the sweet nest of my heart!*

Aria:

*What a genuine pleasure it is to enjoy true love!
This makes a happy heart.
The splendour of beauty cannot be appreciated,
unless it comes from a true heart.*

*A thought hostile to peace
Caused fickle Time to be devouring
And gave him his wings and his scythe.*

*A second lighter thought arises,
to deny such rigid tyranny,
whereupon Time is Time no more.*

11 **Accompagnato**

Cuopre tal volta il cielo
nube oscura improvvisa,
e tenebroso velo
spande nera tempests
in faccia al sole:
turbato il rio di duole,
e il tridentato Dio
voragini spumanti
apre fra l'onde
ad assorbir le vele.
Con impeto crudele,
scuoton rapidi vanni aure nemiche,
e per le spiagge apriche
cadono dissipati e fronde e fiori:
feriscono gl' orrori
che ingombrano di Giuno molli campi
insidiosi lampi,
e repentino tuono
fa più temer
con strepitoso suono.

*This time an unforeseen dark cloud
covers the sky
and a gloomy veil
spreads a black storm
over the sun's face:
disturbed the river aches
and the trident bearing God
opens sparkling chasms
among the waves
to absorb sailing ships.
With cruel surge
enemy wings stir their swift wings
and over serene beaches
leaves and flowers fall scattered:
wounded horrors
that clutter up Juno's soft fields
treacherous lightning
and sudden thunder
stir more fear
with resounding noise.*

Tuona, balena,
sibila il vento,
e l'etra s'oscura,
s'agita il mar.

E rio spavento.
barbara pena,
così congiura
per tormentar.

13 **Recitativo**

Così fiera procella
dà rio tormento,
e spaventar sa l'alme;
ma le perdute calme,
misero, assai più gemo
e mi querelo
quando in tempesta miro
il volto del mio ben
ch'è pari al cielo;
torbido a me d'intorno
ombre spande d'affanni,
e sdegnosi, e tiranni;
or fuggitivi, or tardi,
lampi sono i suoi sguardi,
e son fulmini orrendi

*Thunder roars, lightning flashes,
the wind hisses,
the air is obscured,
the sea is agitated.*

*And an evil fright
a barbarous sorrow
thus conspires
to bring torment.*

*Thus a fierce storm
creates an evil torment
and knows how to scare the soul;
but I, the lost calm,
wretched, complain more,
and I lament
when in the storm I see
the face of my beloved
equal to the sky;
cloudy around me
it spreads shadows of worry
and disdainful, and tyrannous,
fugitives, delayed,
her glances are flashes
struck by horrendous lightning*

i detti alteri,
onde fra ciechi orrori
errano già confusi
i miei pensieri.

14 Aria

Per pietà di miei martiri,
sia, mio ben,
l'arco del ciglio
sempre l'iride di pace.

Che se irato a me lo giri,
senza scampo nel pericolo,
la mia vita è più fugace.

*the haughty words
waves of blind horror
my thoughts already wander
in confusion.*

*Have mercy on my suffering
and become, my love,
may the arch of your brow
always be a rainbow of peace.*

*For if you turn it against me in anger
without any escape in peril
my life will be more fleeting.*

Translations © Bridget Cunningham

SOPHIE BEVAN

Sophie Bevan graduated from the Benjamin Britten International Opera School where she was awarded the Queen Mother Rose Bowl Award.

Conductors she works with include Sir Antonio Pappano, Daniel Harding, Andris Nelsons, Edward Gardner, Laurence Cummings, Sir Mark Elder, Sir Neville Marriner and Sir Charles Mackerras. She is a noted recitalist and has performed at the Concertgebouw Kleine Zaal with Malcom Martineau and made her Wigmore Hall recital debut with Sebastian Wybrew to critical acclaim. Sophie has also appeared at the BBC Proms and the Edinburgh, Aldeburgh and Tanglewood Festivals.

Her operatic roles for English National Opera include Despina *Così fan tutte*, soprano solos *Messiah*, Polissena *Radamisto*, Yum Yum *Mikado*, Telair in Rameau's *Castor and Pollux* and her first Sophie *Der Rosenkavalier*. For Garsington Opera she has performed Pamina and her first Susanna, for Welsh National Opera she has sung the title role in *The Cunning Little Vixen* and for Frankfurt Opera she appeared as Ninetta in Rossini's *La gazza ladra*. She made her Glyndebourne



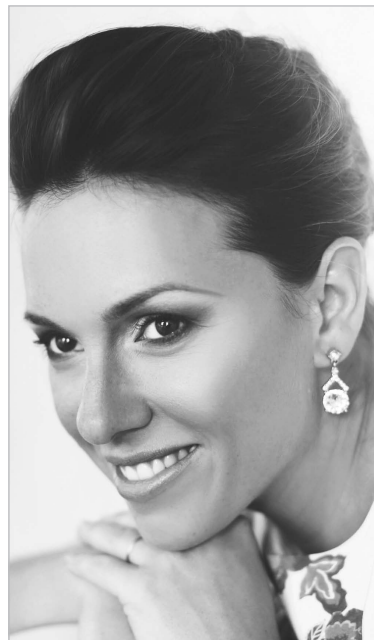
Festival debut as Michal *Saul* in a new production by Barrie Kosky. For the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden she has appeared as Waldvogel *Siegfried*, Ilia *Idomeneo* and Pamina.

In 2010 Sophie was the recipient of the UK Critics' Circle Award for Exceptional Young Talent in music. She was nominated for the 2012 Royal Philharmonic Society Awards and was the recipient of The Times Breakthrough Award at the 2012 South Bank Sky Arts Awards and the Young Singer award at the 2013 inaugural International Opera Awards.

MARY BEVAN

Mary Bevan is one of Britain's top emerging artists, receiving acclaim from critics and audiences alike for her stand out performances. In October 2014 Bevan was awarded the UK Critics' Circle Award for Exceptional Young Talent in music.

In the 2015/16 season Bevan sings the title role in Rossi *Orfeo* for the Royal Opera House at Shakespeare's Globe, and Yum-Yum *The Mikado* at English National Opera. Recent operatic engagements include Susanna *The Marriage of Figaro* at ENO, Music & Euridice in Monteverdi *L'Orfeo* with ROH at the Roundhouse, Barbarina *Le nozze di Figaro* at the ROH, Despina *Così fan tutte*, Papagena *The Magic Flute* and Second Niece *Peter Grimes* at ENO, Musetta *La bohème* at the St Endellion Festival, Servilla *La Clemenza di Tito* with Classical Opera, and David Bruce's *The Firework Maker's Daughter* with The Opera Group, Opera North and ROH2. Previous roles for ENO also include Barbarina and Rebecca in Nico Muhly's *Two Boys*.



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On the concert platform Bevan recently performed Mozart *Requiem* with the English Chamber Orchestra, Faure *Requiem* with the Philharmonia Orchestra, Maxwell Davies

Caroline Mathilde Suite at the BBC Proms, Mendelssohn Symphony No.2 with the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, Stravinsky *Pulcinella* with the Prague Philharmonia and Handel *Messiah* with the English Concert. A dedicated recitalist, she has appeared at the Oxford Lieder Festival and the Wigmore Hall.

Bevan's recordings feature a selection of Ludwig Thuille songs and Mendelssohn's complete songs for Champs Hill Records, Handel *The Triumph of Time and Truth* and *Ode for St Cecilia's Day* with Ludus Baroque, Vaughan Williams Symphony No.3 and Schubert *Rosamunde* with the BBC Philharmonic Orchestra, Hadley *Fen and Flood* with the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra, and Handel in the Playhouse, a selection of Handel songs with L'Avventura London for Opella Nova Records.

Bevan trained at the Royal Academy Opera, and is currently a Harewood Artist at ENO and an Associate of the Royal Academy of Music.

BENJAMIN BEVAN

Benjamin is the youngest of fourteen and as a child sang in the Family Choir. After a spell in the wine trade, Benjamin won a scholarship to study at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama and then went on to sing roles Scottish Opera, Welsh National Opera, Nationale Reisopera, The Royal Opera, English Touring Opera, Opera de Lausanne, The Royal Danish Opera, Dijon Opera and at Garsington Opera.

Conductors he has worked with include Cornelius Meister, Paul Daniel, Francesco Corti, Thomas Adès, Martin André, Jac van Steen and Thomas Zehetmair.

On the concert Platform, Benjamin has performed with Bach Collegium Japan under Mazaaki Suzuki, The English Concert with Harry Bickett, The Royal Northern Sinfonia with Paul McCreesh and with The Stavanger Symphony Orchestra under the direction of John Butt.

Benjamin has sung at many of the notable festivals including The Three Choirs Festival, London Handel Festival, the Northlands



Festival, Aix en Provence, Canterbury and The Perth International Festival in Australia. Benjamin lives in Kent with his wife and two children and is a keen cricketer and tennis player and wine aficionado.

BRIDGET CUNNINGHAM

Bridget Cunningham is an international opera conductor, prizewinning harpsichordist, presenter and musicologist who trained at the Royal College of Music. She has researched, conducted and produced this series of vocal and orchestral recordings of Handel with sopranos Sophie Bevan and Mary Bevan, baritone Benjamin Bevan, and London Early Opera with production by Grammy winning Chris Alder.

Bridget has conducted at venues such as St Martin-in-the Fields, Grosvenor Chapel, St James's Piccadilly and St John's Smith Square in London and at venues and festivals throughout Europe and her repertoire has included *Magic Flute*, *Semele* and *Fairy Queen*. She conducts several orchestras including London Early Opera, Music of the Spheres Ensemble and is associate conductor for the Schola Pietatis Antonio Vivaldi. She has a wide musical background as well as Early Music from performing Piazzolla with the RTE Irish Chamber Orchestra live on Lyric Radio, to conducting recordings of early 20th Century English music composed by George Butterworth.



As a solo harpsichordist, Bridget has broadcast on Austria's National Radio Stephansdom with pianist Angela Hewitt, performed as a

solo harpsichordist to Prince Charles and the Royal Family at Buckingham Palace and played at Château de Hautefort and Maison Hine as part of Festi Classique in France.

Bridget Cunningham has been supported by the Finzi Trust and the Worshipful Company of Musicians as a Junior Fellow of the Royal College of Music for her work in the Centre for Performance History where she researched Early Music and the collection of historic instruments and continues to coach singers. She regularly gives lecture recitals at National art galleries and has opened 'Watteau: The Drawings Exhibition' at the Royal Academy of Arts in London.

She has recorded and presented several programmes for SkyArts, RTE, Radio Stephansdom, Radio France and BBC television documentaries including *Messiah* and *Vivaldi's Women*. She has made a recent harpsichord video for the Handel House Museum, Brook Street, London and has recorded several radio broadcasts on Handel and the King James Bible for BBC Radio 3 and 4.

LONDON EARLY OPERA

Violin I

Adrian Butterfield (Leader)
Kirra Thomas
Eleanor Harrison

Viola

Alexis Bennet
Nichola Blakey

Double Bass

Kate Aldridge

Bassoon

Zoe Shevlin

Theorbo

Alex McCartney

Organ

Richard Vendome

Violin II

Nicolette Moonen
Philip Yeeles
Felicity Broome-Skelton

Cello

Jennifer Bullock
Emily Ashton

Oboe

Belinda Paul
Ann Allen

Harpichord

Bridget Cunningham

London Early Opera (LEO) established themselves as a registered UK charity in 2011 at the forefront of Baroque research and performance. As well as putting on operas, oratorios and concerts, they record material recently discovered and unusual programmes in a thorough historical context. All members are leading exponents of early music and offer concerts, operas, oratorios, lecture recitals and educational workshops. LEO is always keen to collaborate with other early music supporters and sponsors in the promotion of this music with new concerts and recordings.

See www.londonearlyopera.org

LEO are conducted from the harpsichord by Bridget Cunningham who researches and explores

the background of the music and coaches and directs the instrumentalists and singers.

This series of recordings really sets the scene of Handel's colourful life, influences and experience which inspire and nuance his magnificent output and musical legacy. **Handel in Italy** was recorded when the three international and prizewinning Bevan singers all had a small window of opportunity to record an album together for the very first and perhaps only time. **Handel in Italy Volume 2** will be released soon and will be followed by the next in the series, **Handel at Vauxhall** and again will have extended CD booklet notes to give the historical context to the music and enhance pleasure for the listener.

These high quality performances and recordings with many hours of detailed research all require ongoing funding.

We ask you to visit the Charity website to see ways of financially supporting future performances and recordings for your pleasure and education.

We are able as a charity to recover Gift Aid on donations made and also ask our supporters to use our web portal for online purchases [EASYFUNDRAISING.ORG.UK], recycling of mobile phones and or our crowd funding schemes to further the production and benefit of future projects which we hope you will enjoy.

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With thanks to Jennifer Hassell, Roger Sydenham, Elizabeth Tompkins and Richard and Jane Lawson.

Recorded at Saint Jude-on-the-Hill, Hampstead, London, from 14-16 January 2013.

Series Producer and Conception – Bridget Cunningham
Producer – Chris Alder
Recording Engineer – Neil Hutchinson, Classic Sound

Orchestra Administrator – James Brookmyre

Keyboard instruments supplied by Malcolm Greenhough, Keith McGowan and Andrew Wooderson
Organ – Collins 3 stop chamber organ.

Harpsichord – Wooderson double manual Blanchet copy of a Ruckers.

415 Hz pitch – due to the differing low Roman pitch and the high Venetian pitch used in Italy in the 18th century.

Cover Image – iStock Photo
Design and Artwork – Woven Design www.wovendesign.co.uk

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SignumClassics, Signum Records Ltd., Suite 14, 21 Wadsworth Road, Perivale, Middx UB6 7JD, UK.
+44 (0) 20 8997 4000 E-mail: info@signumrecords.com
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