Handel Traditions and Handel Interpretation

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A short time ago I had a letter from an elderly gentleman, keenly interested in Haydn's music and its revival. He sent me a quotation from an old book, containing reminiscenses and observations of a once rather wellknown German musician. The father of this musician had been in contact with Haydn, and as my correspondent's father had in his turn known the said musician well, he felt that he himself was in possession of "a sense of tradition from Haydn's own world."

I refer to this letter because there seems to me to be two points of interest in it in connection with the question we are going to discuss. Firstly our correspondent obviously regards it as a natural thing that we try to find our way back to "the tradition from Haydn's own world" when we are going to perform his music. Secondly he seems to be convinced that a tradition of this kind may be kept alive more or less unchanged through 4 or 5 generations which otherwise brought very striking changes in musical traditions and taste.

Let us consider the first of these two points very briefly. In a way it should not be necessary to discuss it. I do not think that there would be much discussion if we were to ask, whether we should attempt to perform Purcell's or Bach's or Beethoven's music (like Haydn's) with as much understanding as possible of the traditions of the music in question. But the curious fact remains that what seems to be true in the case of Purcell, Haydn, Bach or Beethoven, is not taken for granted in the case of Handel. Though of course Handel performances of our days are generally more in accordance with Handel's own style and practise than most performances from the earlier part of this century, we can still experience performances or recordings where Handel's masterpieces have been cut to pieces and lumped together, and where great portions have been filled up with "additional accompaniments" in the manner of the 19th century. I do not believe that it will be possible to keep performance traditions of this particular kind alive very much longer, so I think we can leave them out of our discussion. But even if we agree in principle that we want to perform Handel, like Bach or Mozart, in accordance with the traditions of his time, we have not solved all problems.

Let us stress at first that it is not the outward appearance of the music but its essence, its very soul we want to call to life. I do not think it would be a gain if by a law or decision all Handel performances could be made quite uniform. Wide variations in character of performance are quite a natural thing. But certainly not unlimited variations to suit modern primadonna conductors. Nor a performance character based on an approach to music fundamentally different from the spirit of

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Handel's music, even if some specialized details of baroque performance traditions have been adopted. In the course of time the tradition of Handel performances, like that of any other old composers, has changed in accordance with the changing musical traditions in general. This is certainly unavoidable, because a performance tradition of this kind will of necessity again and again be confronted with traditions of later origin. So in every Handel performance, even the one which comes nearest to the tradition from Handel's time, there will be a certain amount of "modernisms". Now it might be argued, that as after all we can only arrive at a compromise between old and modern tradition, we should not bother too much about the problem of performance style. However, I do not think that this argument will hold.

May I draw a brief parallel. If you try to learn a foreign language, you will find that even if you work very hard, you will never get quite the same mastery of another language as of your mother tongue. This might lead you to the conclusion, that is does not matter so much whether you try to acquire the proper pronunciation etc., because it will never be quite good enough anyway; but of course the opposite conclusion is more reasonable. Even if you will never fully master the language in question, you will succeed much better, if you try to submit yourself to what in your eyes may seem at first unreasonable and peculiar in its make-up. And you will experience after some time that what seemed at first peculiar will now come quite naturally.

If we return to the problem of performance traditions, we can make observations of quite the same kind. May I refer to one special point, the question of continuo instrument. In the course of say the last 20 or 30 years, the change from piano to harpsichord accompaniment has taken place. I remember from the time of my youth how all Handel and Bach performances were done with piano, and from the 1920'es and 30'es how certain bold conductors ventured to use a harpsichord – much to the surprise and dismay of many listeners. In the 1940'es and 50'es the use of a harpsichord has gradually become dominant and what seemed peculiar in 1920 is now a quite normal practice which does not create any reaction or sensation.

To sum op: even if we cannot arrive at a style of performance which in every respect expresses the tradition from Handel's time, we shall get much closer to it, if we are willing to give up our prejudices, founded on modern taste and modern traditions, and submit ourselves to the traditions from Handel's time, in so far as we can recover and understand them. And one point in special: we should do this, not to arrive at any "historical" or "purist" performance, but because in this way we come closer to the spirit of the music. If we hear for the first time a performance making use of an unwonted instrument or technique, it may seem a little "historical", but this is only because we must have time to accomodate ourselves to a new way of hearing. It is just what happened in the case of the harpsichord accompaniments, and what may happen in other cases too.

I hope I have not bored you too much with these introductory remarks, which may seem rather self evident, but which should serve the purpose of making the point of departure for my following observations quite clear.

The second question to be raised in connection with the letter quoted to begin with, was this: is it possible that a performance tradition dating back a hundred years or more can survive unchanged to our time? I have already stressed that I

cannot believe this would be possible, and I shall give some evidence for my view a little later. I do not think we can gain insight into problems of this kind if we are not willing to work on them a little. We will have to collect as complete a material as possible of historical facts connected with these problems, and we must be able to interpret these facts in the light of the music itself and through the magnifying glass of a well-trained critical observation. May I give just one example to make it clear why an interpretation of facts is needed, if you want to draw the right conclusions.

We are accustomed to regarding all indications like "Allegro", "Largo", "Andante" etc. as rather fixed terms, each of them corresponding to a certain point on the metronome scale. In Handel, however, you will find indications like "Andante Allegro" or even "Largo Allegro" which from a modern point of view may seem quite meaningless, but which nevertheless are quite sensible. They tell us that the indications "Allegro", "Andante", or "Largo" were not nearly as absolute or nearly as contrasting as in later times. Without this understanding of the specific character of Handel's indications, we may collect a great many facts about them, and yet arrive at quite wrong conclusions.

I should like now to go through a few important performance problems to make clear how much the conditions of performance have changed in the course of time, and to throw a little light on the question, in how far we are able to arrive at well-founded conclusions about the "authentic" traditions. I should like to stress that my remarks will be centred mainly around the oratorio performances. The Handel opera traditions present different problems of their own, which cannot be taken into consideration here.

The most conspicuous change in Handelian traditions may well be the change in orchestral make-up, already touched upon, which dates back to the time of Mozart, and which influenced the Handel performances of the following generations so very strongly. Although the addition of clarinettos etc. by Mozart is said to have been caused by the fact that there was no organ available in the great hall of the Vienna Court Library where these performances took place, it is quite obvious that there was something more behind this. The remodelling of instrumentation is so to speak a translation of the work from baroque into Vienna classical orchestral language. It is not simply a question of makeshift but of changing taste. This long tradition of additional accompaniments extending from Mozart's day to ours, may be compared with the period when Shakespeare's works were performed with all possible alterations and "amendments" to suit the taste of other times. They represent conscious and easily recognizable remodellings, not born of necessity, but caused by a lack of understanding or of respect for, the spirit of the works in question.

These altered versions of Handel's oratorios have been en vogue so long that they have in this respect completely broken off the original tradition of performance. The real questions of orchestral performance practice arise therefore, when we have decided to quit the additional accompaniments and let Handel speak with his own voice. Since Handel's day the tone volume of the various instruments as well as of chorus and soloists has changed a good deal, so that we must face the problem of balance of sound between orchestra, chorus and soloists, which in its turn must be weighed against the acoustic conditions of the various premises used by Handel and in our time. We know e.g. that in the performance of the Funeral

Anthem for Queen Caroline in 1737 in Westminster Abbey, Handel had at his disposal about 80 singers and an orchestra of about 100 players. In the Messiah performances in the Foundling Hospital in the late 1750'es, however, he had only about 20 or 25 singers and an orchestra of 30 or 35 players. The considerable difference in number between these two bodies of performers must of course be viewed in connection with the very different occasions and surroundings of the performances in question: the State celebration of the funeral of a Queen in Westminster Abbey, and the casual charity performance in a private, rather small chapel. But these must again be compared with the normal oratorio performances in the Covent Garden Theatre. Handel is said to have used for the latter a fairly large orchestra, but the actual size of the body of performers is not known.[1)]

As far as the question of the orchestral set-up of the oratorio is concerned, we have, to sum up, quite good evidence for Handel's own performances. There are special points to be cleared up from time to time, and there is above all the question of balance, regarding the number of performers as well as the power of the varoius instruments compared to their modern substitutes. How far we should go in imitation of baroque orchestral traditions in regard to violin bows, trumpet types, continuo playing etc. may be open to discussion, and I believe a fine performance can be made with different ways of handling these problems. When I try to look back to the Handel performances from about 40 years ago as far as I remember them, I think we have made good progress towards a better understanding of this side of the Handel performance, but I am convinced that there will still be room for improvement.

The second problem I would like to discuss more briefly, is the question of singers, and especially the question of singers' ornamentation. One difficulty presents itself at once, when we compare the tradition of Handel soloists in his own time and today: the lack of castratos in our time. I am not intending to recommend the reinstitution of the castrato practice. But it is quite obvious that it changes the character of the music very much, if, as it is mostly done in our time, the castrato parts are sung by men an octave lower than planned by Handel. Perhaps Mr. Deller and his colleagues can help us to find a better solution of this problem. This is fortunately, however, a question which is connected above all with opera, not with oratorio performances.

As stressed by various recent writers, one of several important differences between Handel opera and oratorio performance consists in the changing quality of singers. Whereas the cast for a Handel opera mostly comprised a number of Italian singers of European fame, his oratorio singers were almost exclusively people of moderate abilities, compared to the Italian opera stars. As I have stressed in my Messiah book, I do not think on the whole they were less suited for oratorio singing than the Italian opera singers. In certain ways they may even have been better suited for this sort of music. But they were without doubt much inferior as far as purely vocal abilities are concerned. And this brings us to the problem of ornamentation of the vocal line, which has been much discussed, and can still arouse controversies among Handel specialists and fanatics. I think it was an article by the late German musicologist Max Seiffert which started the discussion in 1907; an

1) A letter dating from 1752, printed in R. Manson Myer's Messiahbook (p.112–13), speaks of "an hundred instruments, and fifty voices" in a Messiah performance in London. But this seems to be only a rough indication, based on the memory of a listener.

important late contribution to it is the valuable article "Handel's Graces" by James and Martin Hall, published in the Händel-Jahrbuch 1957.

There are various difficult questions involved in the problem of vocal ornamentation. Let me name a few of them. 1. Were these embellishments wanted by the composer or are they to be regarded as concessions to the singers? 2. Were they in use throughout the 18th century or in any case in the whole of Handel's time, or were there periods, in which they were more favoured than in others? 3. Were they the common property, or should we say the common obligation, of all singers, or were they especially, not to say exclusively, carried out by certain singers, above all the Italian stars? 4. Is it possible to arrive at what might be called rules for the ornamentation of the vocal line, or is our information based primarily on what might be termed exceptions rather than rules?

I am not going to try to answer all these questions elaborately. But I might state a few facts. 1. The ornamentation of the vocal line found its natural place in the da capo aria, where it would create a welcome variation of the repeated first part. But in the oratorio the da capo aria played a far less important role than in the opera. In some oratorios it almost completely dropped out. Apparently the desire for a variation of this kind was far less pronounced in oratorio performances. 2. The singers in Handel's oratorios were neither able to carry out vocal equilibristics, nor trained in the art of improvising vocal embellishments, as were the Italian stars, who had been brought up in these traditions from their early childhood. 3. The various tables of ornamented melodies, which in our days are being quoted to serve the propaganda for a wide spread use of vocal embellishments, date back to especially brilliant singers, like Farinelli, who were connected with Handel's operas, not his oratorios, and there is no reason to believe that we can draw any conclusion from them about oratorio performances. 4. We have so far no single trace of authentic ornamentation in Handel's oratorios. The various cadenzas, which Seiffert published as authentic in his article just mentioned, are no longer considered such. James and Martin Hall refer to a few arias, apparently ornamented by Handel himself, probably (as shown by the two authors) for the young castrato Guadagni in or about 1751. It is, however, rather characteristic that these arias should all have been taken from operas, though at the time they were written Handel had long ago given up opera, and was only composing and performing oratorios.

Taking into consideration all that can be found to serve as evidence for Handel's use of vocal ornamentation, I for my part must adhere to the opinion that he did not count on this practice in connection with the oratorios. I believe that he was on the whole not very interested in these ornamentations. He presumably tolerated, or even accepted them when carried out by distinguished artists, like Faustina Bordoni–Hasse, for whom he would on occasion take the trouble to write out the ornamentation within his own notation of the aria as a fixed composition. But I cannot imagine that he let his ordinary oratorio singers try to exhibit talents which they did not possess. And we have, as already stressed, no evidence for such an assumption. Until such evidence is available, I believe we should think twice before we accept any ornamented version of Handel's oratorios.

The third and last problem, which I am going to discuss a little more elaborately, is the problem of tempo.[2] Unlike the two other problems we have dealt with,

[2] The following observations are based on my lecture at the Handel Festival in Halle in April 1959: "Tempoprobleme bei Händel, dargestellt an dem Messias", to appear in the forthcoming report.

this one has so far not been very much considered. Many editors have made indivual tempo-suggestions in the form of metronome indications for single pieces, but I think Cusins is the only one who has tried to investigate the problem, whether the conception of tempo has changed since Handel's days, and whether it would be possible to find some foundation for evaluating the original tempi. I shall return to his article in a little while, but first I want to say a few words about the measuring of tempo in general.

Until about 1700 we find very little, and little of importance, in the way of actual indications of time in music. One may refer to something like Buchner's "Fundamentbuch" from about 1550, in which we are told that one "tactus" should fill out the time between two steps of a man walking moderately. Michael Prätorius says in his "Syntagma musicum" that in the case of a moderate tempo 160 "tempora" would last a quarter of an hour. This would lead to a metronome indication of 80 or 90 for a crotchet.

References to the pulsebeat as a time unit are to be found as early as Gafurius, who fixes the time of a semibreve as follows: "It should take as long as the pulsebeat of a man breathing quietly", which suggests about 70 as metronome indication. In the 18th century the idea of using the pulsebeat as a unit for time values is especially propagated by Quantz. He arrives at modifications of tempo in a fairly simple way, through a doubling of the duration of note values. Thus in an Allegro assai (in $^{4}/_{4}$ tact) a halfnote is fixed at 80, in an Allegretto it is the crotchet, and in an Adagio cantabile the quaver which will have 80, whereas in an Adagio assai the quaver should have 40 as metronome indication, according to the system of Quantz. One quite understands that he himself tries to modify these rough indications, telling us that it would be unreasonable and impossible to measure the time for each and every piece of music according to the pulsebeat. On the whole it would seem as if Quantz's rules were meant mainly as a guide for beginners. I do not think we should lay very much stress on his system.

The idea of using a clockwork as basis for the fixing of musical time values had been put forth occasionally in earlier times, but it was not until about 1700 that a way was found to the construction of apparatuses, in which the pendulum principle was used for measuring time values in music. Various French scholars have contributed to the construction of such apparatuses, and other French scholars have left us results of their experiments with these constructions, dating back to Handel's early years of oratorio writing. Their indications of time values are, quite naturally, mostly based on arias and dance movements from the operas of Lully and his followers. We cannot discuss these indications here. It may suffice to stress that they seem to indicate pronouncedly lively tempi throughout.

It would be extremely welcome if contemporary measurements of time values for Handel's music could be found, but to the best af my knowledge, we have so far nothing of the kind. The only and unfortunately not very exact indications of this sort which I remember to have seen are a few original annotations by Handel in the autograph score of "Solomon". At the end of the first part he writes "50 minutes"; at the end of the second and third part he puts "40 minutes". These are certainly not to be taken as measured time values in a stricter sense, but we must regard them as authentic estimated values for each part of the oratorio. As they probably represent the only authentic indications of their kind, they seem very important, despite their rather casual character. We might even try to use

them as basis for an evaluation of time values in connection with other oratorios.

If we want to learn what these figures can tell about Handel's tempi, our first step should be to compare them with similar figures from later times, which we are able to check. I have used the metronome indications in Novello's edition as the basis for a comparison. Counting no time for pauses in between the single numbers, nor for traditional final ritardandi etc., and leaving out the aria "Sacred raptures" which is not in Handel's manuscript, I arrive at the following figures for each of the three parts: about 61 minutes, 59 minutes, and 57 minutes. I have tried further to play the whole oratorio from beginning to end, deliberately aiming at lively tempi throughout, according to my own conception of time values. This led me to the following figures: a little less than 60 minutes for the first part, and about 50 minutes for each of the two following parts.

When we compare these figures with Handel's own (50 minutes, 40 minutes and 40 minutes), we must arrive at the conclusion that he wanted to have his music performed in what we would call very quick tempi. Of course this is not simply a question of tempi, but of the whole style of performance, especially the style of singing in the soloists, and the chorus as well. No doubt the English way of singing is more suited for an easily flowing style of performance than the heavier German one. May I just answer an argument which might be advanced against the value of our comparison. Somebody might suggest that the surprisingly short time indications given by Handel himself would be explained, if we assume that a number of arias were shortened or left out in his own performances. But this is not the case. Of course Handel often did rearrange his oratorios, and substituted new versions of arias for old ones, but the ruthless abridgement of oratorios so familiar in our time is a later invention, not Handel's.

When we add up the time of performance for the whole of "Solomon", according to Handel's own indications, the result would be 2 hours and 10 minutes. This is of course purely netto, i.e. without regard to the pauses between the three parts or to the possible introduction of organ concertos to be played as interludes. Taking these two factors into consideration, we may suppose that a total duration of from $2^1/_2$ to 3 hours would be found a reasonable time for an oratorio performance in Handel's own day. We may quote some further evidence of this conclusion.

One of the first to comment on Handel's oratorio performances was the old Oxonian Thomas Hearne, who left some rather unkind remarks in his journals about the Handel performances at Oxford in the summer of 1733. He reports of the "Esther"-performance on the 8th of July that it lasted from 5.30 p.m. to around 8 h. That would mean $2^1/_2$ hours, and it fits well into the picture we have just arrived at. Of course we must ask, whether the two works in question are of roughly the same dimensions. They certainly do not differ very much in lenght, even if "Esther" may be a little shorter than "Solomon". This might indicate a slight reservation with regard to the very quick tempi suggested by Handel's annotations in "Solomon".

A second piece of evidence – though only indirect – for our suggestion regarding the normal duration of an oratorio performance in Handel's time may be found in the correspondence between Handel and Jennens concerning the composition of "Belshazzar" [3]). Jennens was inclined to let his text outgrow its natural limits, and Handel found it necessary to oppose to this tendency in a letter of 2.October 1744,

[3]) Deutsch p. 595.

in which he writes: "Dear Sir/ I received the 3rd act with a great deal of pleasure as you can imagine, and you may believe that I think it a very fine and sublime oratorio, only it is really too long, if I should extend the musick, it would last 4 hours and more". It is quite obvious that Handel regards 4 hours as a monstrosity, quite unacceptably exceeding the normal duration of an oratorio. Actually the first part of "Belshazzar" is so long, that in a complete performance it would last about 20 minutes longer than the first part of "Solomon" or of "Messiah". So we can see that Handel had to protest. The 3rd part was shortened, but nevertheless the performance time approaches 3 hours netto, or rather 3 or $3^1/_2$ hours, if we count on some time for an organ concerto or a pause between the various parts.

We have finished with the references from Handel's own times, which I have so far been able to discover. Very likely some further evidence may be found in other letters and memoirs from the 18th century. I should like to add only a few references from the late 18th century, after Handel's death, which seem to throw some light on the following development of performance traditions. Mr. Manson Myers in his Messiahbook quotes 1 or 2 pieces of evidence for a slowing down of tempi from the time about 1785, when the monumental festival performances in Westminster Abbey began. In the journal of one Miss Hamilton we hear about a performance on the 5th of June 1784, which lasted from 12 to 4, i.e. the very 4 hours which Handel himself found intolerable. A letter from Horace Walpole of 29th May 1786 confirms this, giving once again 4 hours as the duration. How much external circumstances, such as long intermissions, may have been responsible for this development cannot be said, but it seems reasonable to assume that the actual performance, even strictly netto, was of longer duration than in Handel's day.

Finally, exact information occurs in some very remarkable annotations in a few orchestral parts to the "Messiah" from the British Museum (press-mark: g 74 v (2)). Three parts are present, presumably dating from about 1800: one 1.violin, one 2.violin and one bass part. In the part for the 2.violin the exact time of duration is noted at the end of each of the three parts, namely 1 h.18 min., 1 h.15 min., and 39 min. In the part for the 1.violin the following indications occur: "1 h.20 min." at the end of the first part, and "3 h.25 min." at the end of the third part. Combining these indications gives us both the duration of the single parts and through addition the netto duration of the whole of the oratorio, 3 h.12 min., and the time of the whole performance, including intermissions: 3 h.25 min. It should be noted that a few cuts have been made in the performance in question.

Now we arrive at the period where the development of tempi can be checked through a vast number of editions with metronome indications for the single numbers. A short list of such metronome indications in various "Messiah" editions may serve as a basis for my following observations. (See below p. 46/47). My list comprises 11 different editions, the first from the beginning of the 19th century, the later ones from about 1900 (Prout, Chrysander-Seiffert) up till about 1940 (Coopersmith).

I should like to give a few comments on the single editions.

The two editions listed at the beginning, Smart's and Horsley's, are the ones whose importance has been stressed already by Cusins in his previously mentioned article about the "Messiah", which appeared in 1874. Cusins wanted to find a basis for evaluating the tempi of his own time, and he used the two sets of metronome indications, dating from Smart and Horsley, as the starting point for a com-

Tempo indications in »Messiah«

	Smart	Horsley	Crotch	Rimbault	H. Bishop	Novello	Elvey	Prout	R. Franz	Chrysander/ Seiffert	Coopersmith
Overture I	60	60	50	42	42	60	50	60	54	58	60
— II	116	126	112	126	112	116	108 (216?)	116	112	—	116
1. Accomp.recit. ♪	80	80	—	60	69	80	58	72	80	120	80
2. Aria	76	88	—	72	76	66	92	80	80	84	88
3. Chorus	116	116	96	116	116	116	108	100	120	116	116
4. Accomp.recit.	76	—	—	60	60	72	ad lib./ 72/ ad lib.	76	76	—	—
5. Aria I ♪	96	88	—	76	76	100	72	88	88	—	88
— II	138	120	—	144	144	138	176 (88?)	138	120	—	138
6. Chorus ♪	144	132	126	120	138	116	144	144	144	—	168 (♩ = 84)
(7. Recit.)											
8/9. Aria/Chorus ♪	138	126	120	120	138	120	150	138	120	120	126
10. Accomp.recit. ♪	80	60	—	76	66	80	72	72	80	76	80
11. Aria	72	72	—	66	66	63	84	72	72	69	72
12. Chorus	76	80	66	66	69	69	92	76	76	72	80
13. Sinf. ♪	—	92	88	104	104	104	80	132 (♩. = 56)	168	162 (♩. = 54)	104
14. Accomp.recit. I ♪	104	72	—	92	76	88	88	112	112	138	138
— II ♪	—	72	—	108	96	80	100	144	112	168	168
15. Chorus	88	76	63	—	72	80	84	80	88	84	88
16. Aria	104	96	—	96	104	96	—	88	92	100	96
(17. Recit.)											
18. Aria ♪	112	150	—	104	80	126	80	112	112	174 (♩. = 58)	120
19. Chorus ♪	144	132	126	132	152	120	176	138	138	168 (♩ = 84)	160 (♩ = 80
20. Chorus	44	56	37	42	40	40	40	40	44	54	44
21. Aria ♪	72	63	—	60	63	72	56	72	84	120 (♩ = 60)	88
22. Chorus ♪	88	72	74	—	69	72	92	72	84	80	80
23. Chorus ♩	96	88	84	80	96	88	100	80	80	69	88
24. Chorus I	100	66	76	88	100	76	100	92	92	92	92
— II	80	66	76	(88)	60	60	58	60	(92)	88	66
25. Accomp.recit. ♪	80	60	84	63	72	80	88	80	76	—	80
26. Chorus	88	72	82	69	69	88	88	80	80	88	88
27. Accomp.recit. ♪	—	—	—	56	—	—	—	—	—	58	—
28. Arioso ♪	69	60	—	56	60	66	100 (50?)	66	76	100 (♩ = 50)	66

	Smart	Horsley	Crotch	Rimbault	H. Bishop	Novello	Elvey	Prout	R. Franz	Chrysander/ Seiffert	Coopersmith
29. Accomp.recit.	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	56	—
30. Aria ♪	108	104	—	92	104	88	84	108 (♩ = 60)	120	132 (♩ = 66)	108
31. Chorus	88	76	74	76	76	88	92	76	80	84	80
(32. Recit.)											
33. Chorus	92	80	—	80	88	72 (♪ = 144)	92	72	88	—	88
34. Aria	96	96	—	100	100	84	108	84	92	—	84
35. Chorus	72	66	66	58	72	80	76	80	72	92	80
36. Aria ♪	108	96	92	96	96	120	80	104	104	174 (♩. = 58)	108
37. Chorus	88	80	66	88	96	72 (♪ = 144)	76	88	88	(NB) (Vers. B)	88
38. Aria	120	108	—	120	120	112	132	112	116	116	126
39. Chorus	104	88	72	92	104	80 (♪ = 160)	104	76	92	—	88
(40. Recit.)											
41. Aria	108	88	—	108	108	80 (♪ = 160)	92	84	100	—	84
42. Chorus	72 (♪ = 144)	66	72	—	76	66 (♪ = 132)	76	72	88	88	92
43. Aria	72	66	—	60	69	72	54	72	72	63	76
44. Chorus I	60	52	36 (♪ = 72)	50	54	60	80	60	58	63	60
— II	92	92	88	84	104	84/80	96	84	92	96	92
45. Accomp.recit.	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	69	—
46. Aria	100	92	—	104	104	80	92	80	100	92	84
(47. Recit.)											
48. Duet ♪	104	92	108	100	60	88	66	138 (♩ = 69)	108	—	69
49. Chorus ♪	152	112	120	72	80	112 (♩ = 88)	88(?)	138 (♩ = 69)	144 (♩ = 72)	—	69
50. Aria	98	88	—	104	120	88	92	88	100	—	88
51. Chorus I	60	54	30 (♪ = 60)	50	33(?) (♪ = 66)	60	60(?) (♪ = 60)	60	60	66	60
— II ♪	116	132	100	84	92	100	100	120	72	76	168(?) (♩ = 84!)
— III	80	69	60 (♪ = 120)	72	76	60 (♪ = 120)	80(?) (♪ = 80)	72	80	84	76
52. Chorus	92	84	76	84	92	84(?) (♪ = 84!)	92	84	96	112	92

parison between old and new performance traditions. He refers to the fact that Sir George Smart had as a boy turned the leaves for Joah Bates, who conducted the great Handel performances in 1784, whereas Dr. Horsley's indications probably date back to Wilh. Cramer, one of the leaders in the same performances. It may be questioned again, whether traditions of tempo from 1784 can have survived in this way, and it may be further stressed that we found various evidence for the fact that the performances of 1784 lasted a good deal longer than those of Handel's time. We may, however, follow Cusins in regarding these two lists as reflecting the performance style from about 1784. As stressed already by Cusins, the tempi found in these are rather quicker than the tempi from the middle of the 19th century. Smart's tempi in particular are, as Cusins puts it, "the quickest of all". According to Grove's dictionary they might even date back to a tradition of still higher authority. Grove tells ut that Smart was much sought for by singers who wanted to acquire the tradition of performing Handel's songs, which he had learnt from his father who had seen Handel conducting his oratorios.

The figures in the third column, though published earlier than those just mentioned, must definitely be taken as reflections of a later performance tradition. They come from a vocal score by Dr. Crotch, comprising only the choruses and the two orchestral pieces[4]). This edition must date from about 1820, having the year 1817 as part of the watermark. The metronome indications refer to the early period of such markings; they are not given in normal metronome figures, but in terms of length of pendulums, but I have here transcribed them to ordinary metronome indications. It will be seen that the figures given by Crotch indicate a pronounced slowing down of tempo, compared to Smart, and even to Horsley. If we calculate the duration of the pieces given by Crotch, excluding all recitatives and arias, we shall arrive at the following figures: Smart about 1 h., 8 min.; Horsley 1 h., 13 min.; and Crotch 1 h., 22 min.

The four next editions belong to the middle of the 19th century. No clear pattern of development emerges from these. They have been listed merely to show the arbitrary nature of the metronome indications in a number of editions published almost at the same time. In some of these editions we find especially strange indications, aiming at an increased effect, either in the form of slowing down or of quickening the tempo, or both together, giving rise to a pronounced contrast, as e.g. in the aria "But who may abide" (no.5), or the chorus "All we like sheep" (no.24). On the whole these editions seem to indicate a certain quickening of tempo compared to Crotch's edition. If we take Novello's edition, for so many years to come a standard edition of the work, the summing up of time for the pieces given by Crotch will give us 1 h., 17 min., i.e. 5 minutes less than Crotch, but still 8 or 9 minutes more than Smart. Coming to the Prout edition from 1902, we get still nearer to the time value of the two editions first mentioned. Prout brings the duration of the Crotch selection back to 1 h., 13 min., exactly as Horsley, but 5 minutes longer than Smart. Even shorter performance times are given in the three last editions. The once very popular German edition by Robert Franz, from about 1875, carries us to 1 h., 11 min., and the two others, the practical edition by Chrysander and Seiffert, from 1902, and that edited by the well known American Handel scholar Coopersmith, from about 1940, bring us back to 1 h., 8 min., just the duration of these pieces according to Smart.

4) London, Printed for Rt. Birchall. A Copy in British Museum h 435n(5).

In this brief survey I have concentrated on the choruses and orchestral pieces, firstly because this was the only possibility of bringing Crotch into the picture, as he includes only these numbers, secondly because the choruses rarely show so many quite individual variations of tempo, so that the general tendency in the development of performance traditions may stand out a little more clearly. Before I try to sum up the conclusions of our investigation regarding this tendency in general, I should like to add a few remarks about the modifications of tempo in various separate pieces, among them some of the arias.

If we go through the single pieces, comparing the metronome indications in the changing editions, we shall find that there are some pieces, which show only a rather limited variation of tempo. This applies to the second part of the overture, to the first chorus, no.3 "And the glory, the glory of the Lord", to the arias no.8, "O thou that tellest good tidings to Zion", and no.11 "The people that walked in darkness" to the chorus no.12, "For unto us a child is born" and to some other pieces. When I call the variation in these pieces rather limited, that is certainly to be taken in a relative sense. Obviously a change of metronome indication from 66 to 92 or from 96 to 120 is more than a small nuance. However, compared to the radical changes found in other numbers, there is still a certain moderation here.

A more pronounced variation occurs in a number of pieces not to be enumerated here. Particularly interesting is, on the other hand, a group of pieces showing quite extraordinary variations of tempo indication in the editions on our list. This group includes above all the following numbers:

The accompagnato no.1 ("Comfort ye, my people", 58–120), the sinfonia no.13 (80–168), the accompagnato no.14 (72–138, respectively 168), the aria no. 18 ("He shall feed his flock", 80–174), the aria no.21 ("He was despised", 56–120), the aria no.36 ("How beautiful are the feet", 80–174), the chorus no.44 ("Since by man", 36–80/84–104), the duet no.48 ("O death where is thy sting", 60–138) and the first half of the chorus no.51 ("Worthy is the lamb", 30–66/72–168).

In the case of nearly all these pieces the slowest performance takes more than double the time of the fastest. Had time permitted, we could have demonstrated with a few examples the incredible difference between successive performances of the same aria at the highest and the lowest speed – but that is a point which everyone can easily test for himself. We must limit ourselves to a few observations on the nature of the pieces which have varied most strikingly in performance.

It was to be expected that arias of a markedly emotional character would be particularly liable to an exaggeration of the expressive element through a pronounced slowing down, and indeed this fate has overtaken both "He was despised" and the arioso "Comfort ye, my people". A second category of pieces is likewise predestined to suffer from exaggerations of tempo, namely those which contain contrasting tempi. This category includes the Christmas recitativo (no.14) and the two choruses "Since by Man came Death" (no.44) and "Worthy is the Lamb" (no.51). But tempo variations are particularly pronounced in yet a third category of pieces, where it was perhaps less to be expected, namely those determined by the baroque flowing, to which we have earlier referred. This includes above all the Sicilianos or similar pieces, namely the Sinfonie (no.13), the arias "He should feed his flock" (no.18), "How beautiful are the feet" (no.36) and finally the duet

"O, death" (no.48), so largely characterized by a typically baroque running bass.

In most editions, these pieces have – in accordance with 19th century conceptions – been assigned tempi undoubtedly too slow, because editors failed to recognize their fundamentally baroque flowing character.

Only the tempi of Chrysander/Seiffert seem quite to have caught the essence of these pieces; the fundamental fact must be noted, however, that the tempi of this edition, where the Sicilianos are concerned, are based on a beat of two, not six stresses, because the dotted crotchet, not the quaver, is the unit employed. The tables provided might give rise to several other observations, but we must come to an end, offering only the following final conclusions.

From the source material available – admittedly scanty – several stages of development in the conception of tempo determining the performance of Handel's music, seem to emerge. First, the tempi of the original Handel performances up to the 1760'es, which may strike us as surprisingly lively. Secondly, the tempi from the period of the first great Handel celebrations in 1784–85, which as a consequence on one hand of the change in musical approach, on the other of the transference of oratorio performances from the theatre to the cathedral, had slowed down perceptibly. Thirdly, the tempi from the early 19th century which, following the general tendency of the time towards a slowing down of church music – and that is what the oratorios were mostly felt to be – achieves a maximum of tardiness. Fourthly, the tempi from the mid 19th century, which quickening somewhat, still show a tendency towards exaggeration of tempo contrasts combined with some obvious uncertainty. Fifthly, the tempi of the period around 1900, which may to some degree – particularly in Chrysander/Seiffert – claim recognition as a revival of 18th century traditions. Broadcasts and recordings suggest that this tempo tradition has to a certain extent been accepted in our time.

Everything points to the fact that excessive slowness has been the besetting sin of most Handel performances. If, however, I must consider a lively tempo a fundamental requirement, it should once again be stressed that this is not merely a question of speeding up performances in mechanical terms of metronome indications. The aim is rather to produce a continuously flowing movement wherein Handel's music may live and breathe and have its total being.