

6599 637

Side 1:

Sonata in C, Op. 1 No. 7

for recorder

Larghetto Allegro Larghetto
A tempo di gavotti Allegro

Sonata in A minor

for German flute

Adagio Allegro Adagio Allegro

Side 2:

Sonata in C minor, Op. 1 No. 8

for oboe

- Allegro Adagio Allegro

Sonata in A minor, Op. 1 No. 4

for recorder

Larghetto Allegro Adagio Allegro

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Side 1:

Sonata in G, Op. 1 No. 5

for German flute

Adagio Allegro Adagio Borée Menuetto

Sonata in E minor, Op. 1 No. 1b

for German flute

Grave - Allegro - Adagio - Allegro

Sonata in G minor, Op. 1 No. 2

for recorder

Larghetto Andante Adagio Presto

Side 2:

Sonata in B minor

for German flute

Adagio Allegro Largo Allegro

Sonata in D minor

for recorder

(Fitzwilliam - Ms.)

Largo Vivace Furioso Adagio Alla breve

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Side 1:

Sonata in B flat

for recorder

(Fitzwilliam - Ms.)

- Adagio Allegro

Sonata in B flat

for oboe

(Fitzwilliam - Ms.)

Andante Grave Allegro

Sonata in F, Op. 1 No. 11

for recorder

Larghetto Allegro Siciliana Allegro

Side 2:

Minuet in E minor

for German flute

(from a sonata for German flute)

Andante in B minor

for German flute

(from Op. 1 No. 9)

Movement in D minor

for recorder

("A tempo di minuet" from Op. 1 No. 9)

Movement in D minor

for recorder

(Fitzwilliam - Ms.)

Allegro in F

for oboe

(from Op. 1 No. 5)

The title of this record album is: "Complete Sonatas for a Wind Instrument and Basso continuo." It means that we have recorded all those sonatas which we believe to have been written by Handel for a specific woodwind instrument, viz. recorder, transverse flute, or oboe. Owing to Handel's lack of interest in how his music was published, the specification and dating of his chamber music is extremely difficult to establish. Once settled in England he was first and foremost interested in the production of opera, and his publishers, sensing their fortune, were able to publish, correct, arrange, and mix up many of his chamber works in return, perhaps, for taking a share or two in some new theatre enterprise.

The majority of our recorded 12 woodwind sonatas come from Handel's Opus 1. This had been first published as "Sonates pour un(e) traversière, un violon ou hautbois con basso continuo" by Jeanne Roger, Amsterdam, c. 1722. It contained a total of 12 sonatas. A second printing c. 1731 contained 15 sonatas, and was immediately pirated by the notorious London publisher Walsh as "(15) Solos For a German Flute, a Hoboy or Violin with a Thorough Bass for the Harpsichord or Bass Violin. Opera Prima." It is this edition which has been the source of our recording. The woodwind sonatas in it are: No. 1a, for transverse flute, in E minor; No. 1b, for transverse flute, in E minor (the same as 1a, but in another version); No. 2, for recorder, in G minor; No. 4, for recorder, in A minor; No. 5, for transverse flute, in G; No. 7, for recorder, in C; No. 8, for oboe, in C minor; No. 9, for transverse flute, in B minor; and No. 11, for recorder, in F. The other sonatas (Nos. 3, 6, 10, 12, 13, 14, and 15) are for violin.

Another source in which Handel woodwind sonatas are to be found is the Walsh & Hare publication: "Six Solos, Four for a German Flute and a Bass and Two for a Violin with a Thorough Bass for the Harpsichord or Bass Violin, composed by Mr. Handel, Sigr. Geminiani, Sigr. Somis, Sigr. Brivio." The first three sonatas in this collection are transverse flute sonatas by Handel.² Finally, there are the woodwind sonatas which have survived in Handel's own hand:³ an oboe sonata in B flat, a recorder sonata in B flat, a recorder sonata in D minor, a recorder sonata in A minor (as Opus 1, No. 4), and a transverse flute sonata in E minor (as Opus 1, No. 1a). We have recorded the sonatas Opus 1, Nos. 1b, 2, 4, 5, 7, 8, and 11, the sonatas Nos. 1 and 3 from the Walsh & Hare publication, plus the autograph sonatas in B flat (2) and D minor, as, in our opinion, there can be hardly any doubt about their authenticity and instrumentation.

We did not include the transverse flute sonata Opus 1, No. 9, consisting of seven movements, because its first five movements duplicate the autograph D minor recorder sonata. The two remaining movements are played individually on the last side of this album, one in its *traversa* version, the other in a still more preferable autograph recorder version.⁴ We did not include the second of the transverse flute sonatas from the Walsh & Hare "Six Solos . . ." because its first two movements, i.e. the most important ones, are identical with the oboe sonata Opus 1, No. 8. To make up for the loss of the two last movements we played the best one, a beautiful little Minuet,

separately. Our decision regarding Opus 1, Nos. 1a and 1b, hesitant at first (the autograph of No. 1a!) but later on developing into respectful negligence, has been that we did not record . . . No. 1a. This sonata looks and sounds like a bad arrangement for oboe of No. 1b, notwithstanding its transverse flute label. Of its five movements two are borrowed from other sonatas which are probably older: Opus 1, No. 13 for violin, and Opus 1, No. 2 for recorder. And how clumsy is the setting for oboe, or for transverse flute for that matter, of the glorious violin piece! Of Opus 1, No. 5 there exists another eighteenth-century handwritten version for oboe, which may be authentic and therefore deserve some attention. Its second movement is written in such an excellent oboe-like manner that we included this movement in our sample collection on the last side, as we did also with an isolated autograph movement for recorder.

The listener to all these woodwind sonatas should not be surprised to hear, in the course of them, Handel frequently quote or predict himself. Parts from earlier or later works appear in almost every sonata (for instance from organ concertos, harpsichord pieces, music for Charles Clay's musical clock, violin sonatas, the *Overture* to "Scipione," reminiscences of a second "Water Music," etc.). And we might even picture the disturbance of Handel's eternal peace in Westminster Abbey, could he ever hear these 12 sonatas played without interruption.

Choosing the instruments for this recording we were led straight away to the Stanesby family: Thomas Stanesby, Senior, c. 1668-1734, and his son Thomas Stanesby, Junior, 1692-1754. They were famous London woodwind-instrument makers of Handel's time,⁵ whose work was known to Handel himself,⁶ and the only contemporaries who, together, made all the instruments we needed. A recorder by Stanesby Senior and a transverse flute by Stanesby Junior came from our own collection; the oboe and bassoon were kindly lent to us by Mr. Anthony Baines, curator of the Bate Collection at Oxford University, and by Mr. William Waterhouse, of London.

If words could describe the tone of a recorder one could say that the one by Stanesby Senior is mellow, rather soft, and sonorous in the true sense. It bears all the characteristics of a late seventeenth-century instrument. Its pitch is as low as c. 410 Hz for a', which is typical of all woodwinds made in England at this early period. Its tuning is very much in mean-tone, showing the pure major and minor thirds (too high and too low respectively to the modern ear unaccustomed to them). It is made of stained boxwood.

About the oboe by Stanesby Junior Bruce Haynes writes: "This instrument represents a later style than the classic eighteenth-century oboe made by both Stanesbys and presumably Bressan and Ashbury as well. In style it is typically English. Because of the thick walls of this instrument, the tone is especially dark and round. The pitch centres around a' = 415 Hz. It is made of stained boxwood with silver mounts and two keys. John Bannister's words on the oboe (1695) may well apply to it - 'Indeed it looks strange at first Sight: But on the other hand, if a Man considers the



Excellency and Use of it, this Wonder will soon vanish . . ."

The one-keyed transverse flute by Stanesby Junior is made of pomegranate wood ornamented with ivory. It proves the son's modern outlook: a less veiled sound, a more equally tempered tuning and a higher pitch than the instruments of his father: a' = c. 419 Hz.

The bassoon is - a rare occurrence - dated (1747). It is the only known bassoon by Stanesby Junior and the earliest surviving bassoon by an English maker. Hans Jürg Lange (who himself is also a maker of Baroque bassoons) writes: "Working with such a fine instrument soon proved again what a confident maker Stanesby has been, judging not only by the musical qualities. It shows interesting details on how he moved away from conventional ideas in bassoon-making. The instrument is probably made of maple wood, with brass bands, and has four keys of brass for B flat, D, F, and G sharp."

Had we lived in the London of Handel's day, we would not have hesitated in trying to become pupils of the best living masters⁷ who, no doubt, also played on Stanesby instruments. Could we, retro-musicians with our old instruments, have stood up against their standards? We think not. *L'Histoire ne se répète pas.*

Frans Brüngen

- (1) *The recorder, growing out of fashion and difficult to sell in those days, is not mentioned on the title page of Opus 1. However, in individual sonatas in it, Handel is quite clear in specifying some for traversa (= German flute = transverse flute) and others for flauto (= common flute = recorder).*
- (2) *On stylistic evidence the date of origin of these sonatas may be much earlier, even reaching back to Handel's German years. The same could be said of most of the woodwind sonatas, notably the ones for recorder.*
- (3) *In the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge, and the British Museum.*
- (4) *In the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge.*
- (5) *"There were two persons, flute-makers, of the name of Stanesby, the father and the son, the Christian name of both was Thomas; they were both men of ingenuity, and exquisite workmen; the father dwelt many years in Stonecutter-street leading from Shoe-lane to what is now the Fleet-market . . .; the son had apartments and his workshop over the Temple Exchange, in Fleet-street . . ." (Sir John Hawkins, "A General History of the Science And Practice of Music," 1776)*
- (6) *In preparing for Handel commemorations of huge proportions - among them a performance of "Messiah" with 48 first violins, 47 (sic!) second violins, etc. - in 1784, "The Directors of the Concert of Ancient Music" stimulated the use of a double-bassoon. This instrument " . . . which was so conspicuous in the Orchestra and powerful in its effect . . . was (previously) made with the approbation of Mr. Handel, by Stainsby, the Flute-maker, for the coronation of his late majesty, George the Second (in 1727)." (Charles Burney, "An Account of the Musical Performances in Westminster Abbey . . ." London, 1785)*
- (7) *"The favourite musicians of our own country at this time (1731) were . . . Kytch on the Hautboy; Jack Festing on the German-flute; Baston on the Common-flute; Karba on the Bassoon . . ." (Charles Burney, "History of Musick," 1776-89)*