

# *A New Dating for Handel's Recorder Sonatas*<sup>1</sup>

DAVID LASOCKI

Since the publication of my articles on Handel's recorder sonatas in this journal in 1978-79,<sup>2</sup> new research by several Handel scholars into the types of paper he used for his manuscripts has indicated later dates than I suggested for the autograph manuscripts of the recorder sonatas.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, another Handel scholar has brought to light the probable purpose for which the fair copies of four of the sonatas were made and the reason why they were unknown to the publisher John Walsh.

Before discussing this new research let me briefly recapitulate the most important surviving sources of these works. Handel wrote six recorder sonatas: in G minor, A minor, C major, F major, B $\flat$  major, and D minor. Four of these sonatas – those in G minor, A minor, C major and F major – have long been known in the versions in which they appeared in the early-18th-century printed collections of solo sonatas, Opus 1. The first such collection, ostensibly published by Jeanne Roger in Amsterdam in 1722, was in fact issued by John Walsh in London between 1726 and 1732 with a fake title-page. The second collection – a revision of the first – came out under Walsh's own imprint in 1732. The D minor sonata appeared in these collections transposed into B minor for flute. The transposition was probably made by Walsh, eager to find repertory for the newly-popular flute, rather than by the composer. All of the sonatas except that in B $\flat$  major exist in a manuscript in the hand of the important Handel copyist known as S2. The F major, C major and D minor sonatas also survive in an anonymous copyist's manuscript in a private collection in London. Finally, for all six sonatas we have the autograph manuscripts (five in the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge, one in the British Library), which have only recently been described and used as the basis of editions.

The autographs of the B $\flat$  major and D minor sonatas are written sloppily, and the D minor sonata in particular contains many corrections. There are also two early autograph versions of the sixth and seventh movements of the D minor sonata. The autograph of the B $\flat$  major sonata is a unique source. The print and S2 manuscript of the D minor sonata seem to represent *later* versions of the music than that found in the autographs. The autographs of the G minor, A minor, C major, and F major sonatas, on the other hand, are fair copies, written in a large, bold, neat hand with practically no corrections. Some details in the prints and S2 manuscript of these four sonatas show that they must have been based on *earlier* versions of the music

than that found in the autographs. In other words, the autographs were unknown to Walsh. In my previous articles I assigned a date of *c.* 1712 for all the autographs.

Now let us discuss the new research. The autographs of the recorder sonatas are written on two different types of paper. First, the manuscripts of the B $\flat$  major and D minor sonatas are written on some Italian paper of a type that Handel used for other works composed between December 1724 and early 1726. Among those other works are the drafts of some thoroughbass exercises that were intended for the instruction either of Princess Anne, the daughter of George II, to whom Handel had become music master by 1724, or – more likely, since they ended up in his own collection – of John Christopher Smith junior, the son of Handel's amanuensis and principal copyist, whom he began teaching in 1725. The writing of the B $\flat$  sonata in particular is very similar to that of these exercises. Handel probably did not, as I previously suggested, acquire this paper on his early travels in Italy but rather obtained it much later from some as yet unknown source.

Second, the fair copies of the G minor, A minor, C major, and F major sonatas as well as the drafts of the sixth and seventh movements of the D minor sonata are written on some Dutch paper of a type that Handel used for other works composed between December 1725 and April 1726. Among those works are fair copies of both the thoroughbass exercises referred to above and some exercises in fugal composition intended for the same purpose. Alfred Mann has recently pointed out that 'in general appearance, and with their decorative headings' the fair copies of the four recorder sonatas 'very much resemble the various fair copies' of Handel's instructional exercises.<sup>4</sup> Indeed, he believes the recorder sonatas to have been 'an integral part of Handel's thoroughbass instruction', the chief argument being 'the unusually conscientious notation of figured bass symbols. Among various similar autographs in the Fitzwilliam Collection, the one most easily compared to the autographs of the recorder sonatas is that of the A major violin sonata Op. 1 no. 3. . . . Yet this work – as well as other sonatas of the collection – appears without any figures in the continuo part'.<sup>5</sup> In fact the instructional purpose for the autographs 'may be the reason to which posterity owes their remarkably good condition: they were executed and preserved in exemplary manner. Even in the earliest lessons Handel's fair copies could not have

posed any reading difficulties for the pupil'.<sup>6</sup> It also suggests why the manuscripts should have been unknown to Walsh: they were special copies made for private use.

In the light of the new dating of the paper on which the recorder sonata were written, let us re-examine the evidence for their dates of composition. First, the B♭ major sonata, written in a corrected draft on paper Handel used between December 1724 and early 1726, has handwriting that closely resembles that of the drafts of the thoroughbass exercises written in 1725-26. Its first movement was used in the Overture to *Scipione* (early 1726) and its third movement in the A major violin sonata (fair copy written on paper used between December 1725 and April 1726). The sonata was therefore probably composed in 1725 or early 1726.

Second, the sixth and seventh movements of the D minor sonata were composed in draft on paper used between December 1725 and April 1726. The autograph of the whole sonata, written on paper used between December 1725 and early 1726, was presumably therefore made almost immediately afterwards. As stylistically the other movements of this sonata, especially the third and fifth, seem earlier than the last two movements and indeed the other five sonatas, perhaps Handel was drawing on material – now lost – which he had composed previously.<sup>7</sup>

Third, as I discussed in my articles, the fair copies of the G minor, A minor, C major, and F major sonatas, written on paper used between December 1725 and April 1726, contain a number of recomposed passages. The original versions of these sonatas, which form the basis of the S2 manuscript and the 'Roger' and Walsh prints, must have been written earlier. It need not have been very much earlier, however, since the original C minor violin version of the first movement of the A minor sonata is written on paper used between

December 1724 and early 1726. Moreover, the second movement of the C major sonata, like the first movement of the B♭ major sonata, was used for the Overture to *Scipione* (early 1726).<sup>8</sup> Thus these four sonatas could well have been composed in 1725-26 at the same time as the other two sonatas under discussion.

Thus my previous articles are still valid in every respect but one. Instead of 'c. 1712' for the date of the autograph manuscripts, read 'probably 1725-26'. The chronology of the sources, their relationships to one another, and the weight that may be given to each of them remain unchanged.

<sup>1</sup>This article is a revised version of the 'Preface to the Second Edition' of David Lasocki and Walter Bergmann, ed., *G. F. Handel: The Complete Sonatas for Treble (Alto) Recorder & Continuo* (London: Faber Music, 1979; 2nd ed., 1982).

<sup>2</sup>David Lasocki, 'A New Look at Handel's Recorder Sonatas, II: The Autograph Manuscripts', *Recorder & Music* VI/3 (September 1978), 71-79, and 'III: The Roger and Walsh Prints – A New View' *ibid.*, VI/5 (March 1979), 130-32.

<sup>3</sup>I am extremely grateful to Terence Best for sending me a detailed report of the results of this research and giving his own opinions on the dates of composition of the recorder sonatas. The researchers working on the study of paper-types are Donald Burrows, Martha Ronish and Keiichiro Watanabe, to whom I am most grateful for allowing me indirect access to their preliminary findings.

<sup>4</sup>Preface to Alfred Mann, ed., *Aufzeichnungen zur Kompositionslehre aus den Handschriften im Fitzwilliam Museum Cambridge/Composition Lessons from the Autograph Collection in the Fitzwilliam Museum Cambridge*, Hallische Händel-Ausgabe, Supplement, Vol. 1 (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1978), 80.

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.*, 80-81.

<sup>6</sup>*Ibid.*, 12.

<sup>7</sup>I am grateful to Anthony Hicks for pointing this out.

<sup>8</sup>The fifth movement of the flute sonata in E minor, known as Opus 1 No. 1a, to which I had assigned a composition date of c. 1720, is based on the fair-copy version of the fourth movement of the G minor sonata. The recent paper studies, however, suggest a composition date of 1727-28 for the flute sonata, so that the chronology of the two uses of the movement in fact poses no problems.

## *Martin Agricola's Poetic Discussion of the Recorder and other Woodwind Instruments*

Part 2: 1545

WILLIAM E. HETTRICK

The *Musica instrumentalis deutsch* (1529 and 1545) of Martin Agricola (1486-1556) occupies an important place in the list of printed books of the Renaissance dealing with musical instruments and written in the German language. Other notable works in this list are Sebastian Virdung's *Musica getuscht* (1511), on which Agricola's work is loosely based, and the encyclopedic *De organographia* (*Syntagma musicum*, vol. 2, 1619) of

Michael Praetorius. These treatises are especially significant in that they not only give practical information on playing a number of musical instruments, but also include woodcut illustrations of them. All of these authors discuss the recorder, which was considered a basic instrument whose fingering technique could easily be transferred to the krummhorn and shawm (pommer), and Agricola and Praetorius go