

Cantata for Soprano, Oboe and Continuo

Mi palpita il cor
George Frideric Handel

GUILDHALL
SCHOOL

Performance Edition
Vocal Study Guide – English
(PSopEng)

Editors

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Introduction

George Frideric Handel was born in Halle, Germany, in 1685, and later naturalised as English in 1726. He was famed for his virtuosity and prolific output—works such as his *Messiah*, *Zadok the Priest* (performed at all British Coronations since that of George II), in addition to many others, have cemented his position as one of the finest and most eminent of the Baroque composers.¹ Following the success of his first London opera, *Rinaldo* (1710), Handel was invited to become the Master of the Orchestra at the newly-founded Royal Academy of Music in 1719, which ultimately led to him making London his permanent home. While it is true that the majority of Handel's most popularly enduring works were composed during his time in London, his earlier somewhat more Bohemian years travelling throughout Europe have provided us with many fine operas, cantatas and oratorios.

A close friend of Handel, the opera composer Johann Mattheson (1681–1764), wrote that the young composer travelled to Italy in 1706, and records show that Handel had saved 200 ducats for his venture.² Contrary to what was the norm for many composers at the time, during his time in Italy Handel did not work as a servant within musically-inclined aristocratic households, but lived instead as a house-guest of several eminent and well-connected patrons, from whom he received commissions. Although not much is known of Handel's travels in Italy prior to his arrival in Rome, an invitation to break his journey in Florence may have come directly from Ferdinando de' Medici, a highly respected patron and connoisseur of the Arts. Based in Florence, he bought works by Raphael, produced the first public exhibition of fine Arts in Florence (1705), and, as a result of his decision to hire the famed harpsichord maker Bartolomeo Cristofori in 1688, Ferdinando was instrumental in the invention and development of the fortepiano. Handel returned to Florence by invitation a year later to compose an opera (*Rodrigo*), a genre forbidden by Papal edict within Rome.³ Julian Herbage states that

Handel's stay in Italy was undoubtedly the most formative period of his career. He enjoyed the hospitality of the most enlightened patrons that music has ever known, and lived in an atmosphere of cultured splendour that has rarely been surpassed [...] He had arrived in Italy as a German; he left accepted by the Italians as one who spoke their own musical language.⁴

There is no doubt that Handel was influenced profoundly by the composers Arcangelo Corelli (1653–1713) and Alessandro Scarlatti (1660–1725), both leading musicians in Rome at the time of his visit. Influences from Scarlatti's works, who was a renowned composer of vocal music, are seen as 'the medium by which Handel's vocal style reached its maturity'.⁵ Ellen Harris states that the

basic assumptions underlying the Italian influence on Handel are fourfold: (1) the Italian style deeply and permanently affected Handel's musical style; (2) this is evident in Handel's music by the time he leaves Italy in 1710; (3) the

composers who most influenced Handel were Alessandro Scarlatti and Archangelo Corelli; and (4) the specific model for the changes in Handel's vocal music may be found in Scarlatti's cantatas.⁶

It was shortly after his time in Italy that Handel wrote the cantata *Mi palpita il cor*.⁷ Doris Ornstein, a renowned harpsichordist who made a great contribution in the early stages of the Baroque music revival in the second half of the 20th century, wrote that

Handel's Italian cantatas, written when the composer was in his early twenties, have been praised for their masterful dramatic construction and extraordinary melodic beauty'.⁸

While his Italian cantatas have widely received praise and admiration for their form and beauty, they are rarely performed today. The most well-known, or rather, the most frequently recorded, is *Lucrezia* ('O Numi eterni'), a work considered to be amongst the greatest of the continuo cantatas. Of the seventy-two continuo cantatas accredited to Handel, this is the only one to have established itself into the 'mainstream' concert repertoire today. Ornstein believed this fame to be owed partially to the existence of a good performance edition.

Ornstein played a key role in bringing attention to the lesser-known works of early composers, and produced her own edition of *Mi palpita il cor*. However, she did not have access to all autograph scores and sources we have today, and her harpsichord realisation is written in an early revival style, prominent in the last century, which might be deemed old fashioned by many harpsichordists today. With this edition we attempt to build on Ornstein's legacy and provide a comprehensive edition, offering a range of parts, from a clean Urtext version aimed at the more experienced Baroque musician, to a performance edition, with a brand new realisation and dedicated study scores to aid the performers who are starting out their journey into the Baroque repertoire. The aim of this edition is to make this work accessible to all who would wish to play it, and hopefully see more performances of this work of extraordinary beauty and power.

Handel recomposed and remodelled *Mi palpita il cor* several times during the years 1710-1713. The work is known to exist in at least four versions in the *Händel Werke Verzeichnis*: HWV 132a scored for soprano and continuo, HWV 132b for soprano with oboe and continuo, HWV 132c for alto with flute and continuo, and finally HWV 132d, for alto with flute, oboe and continuo. Whilst up to six versions of the cantata and single arias are thought to exist,⁹ they each show considerable variations, the origins of which are partially unknown. Handel was renowned for reusing and remodelling his own music, and so extracts of the score also appear in his oratorio *Samson*.¹⁰ The origin of the libretto is not known. The cantata tells the story of a young man anguishing over whether or not his love, Cloris, will return his feelings.¹¹

Libretto Translation

RECIT:

Mi palpita il cor né intendo perché.

My heart throbs, and I don't know why.

ARIA:

Agitate è l'alma mia né so cos'è.

My soul is agitated, and I don't know what it is.

RECIT:

Tormento e gelosia, sdegno,
affanno e dolore,
da me che pretendete?
Se mi volete amante, amante son.
Ma, oh Dio, non m'uccidete,
ch'il cor, fra tante pene,
più soffrire non può le sue catene!

Torment and jealousy, disdain,
pain and sorrow,
what do you want from me?
If you want me to be a lover, a lover I am.
But, oh God, don't kill me,
because my heart, amidst many pains,
can suffer your chains no more!

ARIA:

Ho tanti affanni in petto,
che qual sia il più tiranno
io dir nol so.
So ben che do ricetta
a un aspro e crudo affanno
e che morendo vò.

I have so many pains in my chest,
which is tormenting me the worst
I can't describe.
I know well that I open myself up
to a bitter and cruel pain
that wants to kill me.

RECIT:

Clori de te mi lagno,
e di te, oh Nume, figlio di Citerea,
ch'il cor feristi
per una che non sa che costa è amore.
Ma se d'egual saetta
a lei feristi il core
più lagnarmi non voglio,
e riverente innanti al simulacro tuo
prostrato a terra,
umil devoto, adorerò quel Dio che fè
contento e pago il mio desio.

Chloris, I complain about you,
and of you, oh God, son of Venus,
that you pierced my heart
for one that doesn't know what is love.
But if, with the same arrow,
you pierce her heart,
I won't complain any more,
and reverently in front of your image
I will prostrate myself on the ground,
humbled and devoted, to worship the God
who fulfilled my desire.

ARIA:

S'un di m'adora la mia crudele,
contento allora il cor sarà
Che sia dolore, che sia tormento,
questo mio seno più non saprà.

If one day the cruel one loves me back,
my heart will be contented.
What is pain, what is torment,
this heart of mine will know no more.

Sources

After his death in 1759, many of Handel's scores and autographs passed into the Royal Music Library, a collection of over 1000 manuscripts, started by George III and added to by subsequent generations of the British Royal Family. Included among these works are manuscripts for *Mi palpita il cor*. In 1957, 200 years after the donation of the Old Royal Library to the British Museum (which itself contained music connected to earlier monarchs), Queen Elizabeth II presented the Royal Music Library to the British Museum. The collection is now housed at the new British Library.¹²

In preparing this edition of the work, we consulted **R.M.20.e.4**, one of Handel's most complete autograph scores of *Mi palpita il cor*, now in the British Library. To gain a more complete view of the work, this score was compared with autographs from the Coke Collection housed at the Foundling Hospital (**MS 192**), and also three early editions made in the 19th century by Friedrich Chrysander.

Editions and Parts

In order to make our edition as accessible as possible, we have provided a range of scores and parts, each of which may be used interchangeably with the others. In the continuo line, the figures contained within the Urtext edition are Handel's own, whilst the performance edition contains additional suggested figures. Our work includes:

1) an Urtext edition:

- Full score featuring oboe, soprano, and figured basso continuo part (UFS)
- Oboe part (UOb)
- Figured cello part with vocal lines included during recitatives (UVcl)

2) a performance edition:

- Full score, featuring an oboe line with editorial suggestions, soprano, and figured bass with keyboard realisation, for harpsichord, piano, or organ (PFS)
- English vocal study part, with oboe, figured bass, and word-for-word translation under the Italian text, and additional prose translation (PSopEng)
- French vocal study part, with oboe, figured bass, word-for-word translation under the Italian text, and introductory notes and translation in French (PSopFr)
- Oboe part with editorial suggestions (POb)
- Cello part, with original and editorial figures, and vocal lines in recitatives (PVcl)
- Theorbo part featuring realisation of the recitative accompaniment in French tablature (PThFr)
- Theorbo part featuring realisation of the recitative accompaniment in Italian tablature (PThIt)

Libretto and Vocal Line

The starting point for any singer preparing an 18th-century work should always be the text. This provides the context for characterisation, it can offer the performer ideas for the colouring the voice and actioning their prose, and serve to illuminate the fluidity of vowel sounds and rhythms within the text (which, in Handel's case, often compliment the musical rhythms).

After developing an understanding of the context with the help of a poetic and a word-for-word translation, the focus shifts to the notation. The vocal line is based closely to the autograph R.M.20.e.4, with editorial choices restricted to a minimum, mainly in places where the text underlay was not altogether clear.

Included within our edition are two vocal study parts, for English- and French-speaking singers. They include a word-for-word translation written directly on the vocal line under the original Italian, helping with the learning of a text not in the singers' mother tongue.

Editorial Team

This edition of Handel's *Mi palpita il cor* has been prepared by members of the Guildhall School of Music & Drama's Historical Performance Department (2019/20). Under the tutelage and guidance of Nicholas Parle and Dionysios Kyropoulos, the following students and Junior Fellows have worked closely together to create this edition: Thomas Allery (harpsichord); Hannah Blumsohn (oboe); Ella Bodeker (soprano); Jens Franke (theorbo); Lucy Neil (cello); and Jorge Silva (harpsichord).

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Notes

¹ <https://www.london.handel.festival.com>

² https://www.hyperion-records.co.uk/dc.asp?dc=D_SIGCD423

³ Ibid.

⁴ Julian Herbage, 'The Oratorios' in *Handel: A Symposium*, ed. Gerald Abraham (1954), p 74.

⁵ Ellen T. Harris, 'The Italian in Handel', *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, Vol. 33, No 3 (1980), p. 469.

⁶ Ibid, p. 470. An in-depth study into the influences of Scarlatti in Handel's writings can be found in this work.

⁷ <https://www.chandos.net/chanimages/Booklets/AV2197.pdf>

⁸ Doris Ornstein, 'On Preparing a Performing Edition of Handel's Cantata: Mi Palpita il Cor', *Bach*, Volume 29, No. 1 (1998), p. 9.

⁹ <https://www.girolamo.de/single/g11009E.html>

¹⁰ <https://www.allmusic.com/composition/mi-palpita-il-cor-cantata-hwv-132>

¹¹ Edward Blakeman, *The Faber Pocket Guide to Handel* (2009), p. 226.

¹² <https://www.bl.uk/collection-guides/royal-music-library>

Mi palpita il cor

George Frideric Handel

Adagio [recit.]

Soprano

Mi pal - - pi-ta il cor nè in-ten -
My throbbing heart not I know

Basso continuo

5

- - - do per - chè nè in-ten - do per - chè
why?

Allegro [aria]

Soprano

a - gi - ta-ta è l'al - ma mi - a a-gi-
agitated soul my

Basso continuo

4

ta - - - - -

7

ta è l'al-ma mi - a è l'al-ma mi - a a-gi - ta -



11

14

ta è - l'a-l-ma mi - a nè
nor

17

so cos' è no nè so cos' è nè so no nè so cos' è
I know what it is

Recit.

Soprano

Tor - men-to e ge - lo - si - a sde-gno af -
Torment and jealousy anger breathlessness

Basso continuo

3

fan - no e do - lo - re da me che pre - ten - de - te?
suffering from myself that demands of me

5

Se mi vo - le - te a - man - te a - man - te io sono ma oh Di - o
self, me you want a lover to be but oh God

8

non m'uc - ci - de - te ch'il cor fra tan - te pe - ne più sof -
don't kill me that the heart between many pains more suffer

10

fri - re non può le sue ca - te - ne.
not can he the chains (break)

[Aria] [tr]

Oboe

Soprano

Basso continuo

6

11

Ho tan - ti af - fan - ni in pet - to che qual sia il più ti -
I have many cares in (my) chest the that is the most tyrant

15

ran - no che qual sia il più ti - ran - no

20

- no io dir io dir nol so io dir io dir nol so
I will say not I know

25

ho tan-ti af fan-ni in pet - - to che qual

31

sia il più ti - ran - no il più ti - ran - -

35

- - - noio dir io dir nol - so no nolso

40

nolso che qual sia il più ti - ran - -

45

no io dir io dir-nol so.

51

55

So ben che do ri - cet-to so ben chedo ri -
I know well that I do remember

60

cet - to a un a - spro e cru - do af - fan - no e che mo - ren-do io
to a sour and cruel pain and that die I

64

vò mo - ren - do io vò mo - ren - - -
will go

68

do e che mo - ren - do io vò. Da Capo

[Recit.]

Soprano
 Clo - ri di te mi la - gno e di té o
Clori of you I complain and of you o

Basso continuo

3

nu - me, fi - glio di Ci - te - re - a, ch'il cor fe -
God son of Venus (Cupid) that the heart

5

ri - sti per u - na che non sa che cosa è a - mo - re ma se d'e - gual sa -
 (you have)wounded for one that not knows what it is to love but if the same

8

et - ta a lei fe - ri - sti il co - re più la - gnar - mi non
 arrow wounds (her) heart complain no more

10

vo - glio e ri - ve - ren - te in - nan - ti al si - mu - la - cro
 I will want and reverantly in front of your likeness

12

tu - o pro - stra - to a ter - ra u - mil de - vo - to a - do - re - rò quel
 prostrated on the ground humble devoted I will worship this

15

Di - o che fè con - ten - to e pa - go il mio de - si - o.
 God that makes content and satisfied my desire

8

Allegro [Aria]

Oboe

Soprano

Basso continuo

5

8

S'un di m'ad - or - a la mia cru - del - e
if one day my beloved (who is) cruel

11

con - ten - to al - lo - ra il cor sar - à al - lor con - ten -
contented/happy then the heart is

14

to con-ten-to al-lo

Detailed description: This system contains measures 14, 15, and 16. It features three staves: a vocal line in the upper treble clef, a piano accompaniment in the upper treble clef, and a bass line in the lower bass clef. The key signature has two flats (B-flat and E-flat). The lyrics 'to con-ten-to al-lo' are positioned below the piano staff.

17

- rail cor sa - rà al - lor con - ten - - - to il

Detailed description: This system contains measures 17, 18, and 19. It features three staves: a vocal line in the upper treble clef, a piano accompaniment in the upper treble clef, and a bass line in the lower bass clef. The key signature has two flats. The lyrics '- rail cor sa - rà al - lor con - ten - - - to il' are positioned below the piano staff.

20

cor sa-rà

Detailed description: This system contains measures 20, 21, and 22. It features three staves: a vocal line in the upper treble clef, a piano accompaniment in the upper treble clef, and a bass line in the lower bass clef. The key signature has two flats. The lyrics 'cor sa-rà' are positioned below the piano staff.

23

s'un di m'a-do - ra la mia cru - de - le

Detailed description: This system contains measures 23, 24, and 25. It features three staves: a vocal line in the upper treble clef, a piano accompaniment in the upper treble clef, and a bass line in the lower bass clef. The key signature has two flats. The lyrics 's'un di m'a-do - ra la mia cru - de - le' are positioned below the piano staff.

26

con-ten-to al-lo - ra il cor sa - rà il cor sa - rà con-ten -

29

- - - to con-ten-to al - lo - ra il cor sa-

32

rà s'un di m'a - do - ra la mia cru - de - le con-ten-to al -

35

lo - ra il cor sa - rà

39

[tr]

che sia do - lo - re che sia tor - men - to
that it is pain torment

42

que-sto mio se - no più non sa - pra que - sto mio se - no più
this my breast longer not I know (the pain and torment in my heart)

45

non sa - pra che sia do - lo - re che sia tor - men - to
I no longer know/have)

48

Da Capo

que-sto mio se - no più non sa - pra que - sto mio se - no più non sa - pra.

