

## 11 Handel's sacred music

*Graydon Beeks*

Handel was involved in the composition of sacred music throughout his career, although it was rarely the focal point of his activities. Only during the brief period in 1702–3 when he was organist for the Cathedral in Halle did he hold a church job which required regular weekly duties and, since the cathedral congregation was Calvinist, these duties did not include composing much (if any) concerted music. Virtually all of his sacred music was written for specific events and liturgies, and the choice of Handel to compose these works was dictated by his connections with specific patrons. Handel's sacred music falls into groups of works which were written for similar forces and occasions, and will be discussed in terms of those groups in this chapter.

During his period of study with Zachow in Halle Handel must have written some music for services at the Marktkirche or the Cathedral, but no examples survive.<sup>1</sup> His earliest extant work is the F major setting of Psalm 113, *Laudate pueri* (HWV 236),<sup>2</sup> for solo soprano and strings. The autograph is on a type of paper that was available in Hamburg, and he may have written it there in late 1706 to take with him to Italy; alternatively, he may have written it at Rome early in 1707 on paper brought with him from Hamburg.<sup>3</sup> The jagged vocal lines for the solo soprano are typical of his early style and may be related to Mattheson's comment that Handel knew a great deal about fugue and counterpoint but 'very little about melody' in this period.<sup>4</sup>

Although Handel travelled extensively during his time in Italy, his sacred music was all written for performance in Rome and its environs on commission from two of his primary Roman patrons, Cardinal Carlo Colonna and Marquis Ruspoli. These works can be divided into liturgical and non-liturgical, the former having texts with fixed places in the Roman Catholic order of worship. It is worth remembering that works from either category could, given the right circumstances and proper dispensations, have been performed not only in a church service but also in a private performance of chamber music which might otherwise have been essentially secular in character.

Of the non-liturgical works, two have Italian texts. *Ah! che troppo ineguali* (HWV 230) consists of a recitative and aria for soprano and

strings, and is probably a fragment of a lost Marian cantata written in 1708 for an unknown purpose.<sup>5</sup> *Donna, che in ciel* (HWV 233), an extended Marian cantata for solo soprano, chorus and strings, was written for the annual celebration of the delivery of Rome from an earthquake on 2 February 1703, and may have been performed on the anniversary of that event in 1708 or 1709.

The motet *Silete venti* (HWV 242) is a setting of a Latin text directed to Jesus rather than to Mary, and is scored for soprano, oboes, bassoon and strings. The type of paper used in the autograph score indicates a date of composition around 1724, and it may have been written in London for Cardinal Colonna in Rome. It is an appealing work and has been the only one of Handel's solo motets to join the standard concert repertoire. Several movements were used again by Handel in the 1732 version of *Esther* (HWV 50b): the extensive 'Allelujah' from the motet was the only movement to retain its original text.

The Roman liturgical works were primarily appropriate for the service of Vespers. This early evening service consists of a series of psalms, each followed by scripture readings and prayers appropriate to the specific day or feast, and the Magnificat. Each psalm would have been preceded and followed by a brief antiphon, again to a text proper to the day. In contemporary Roman practice, all portions of the service could be spoken or chanted, but they could also be set to music in a style which continued the tradition of Renaissance polyphony (the so-called *stile antico*), or in more up-to-date style for solo voices, with or without chorus, accompanied by orchestra with basso continuo. The psalm texts, of which five were designated as proper for Vespers (depending on the day of the week), tended to be set for larger forces while antiphons, which changed from service to service, were generally chanted or set for solo voices. Works designated 'motet' were more appropriate for use in the Mass, specifically during the Elevation of the Host and the distribution of the Eucharist, but under the right circumstances they, too, could be performed during or at the end of Vespers.

Handel's Latin psalm settings are large-scale, multi-movement works for soloists, chorus and an orchestra of strings with occasional use of oboes; bassoons were apparently unavailable. The techniques employed in the choruses vary from chordal homophony to imitative polyphony. Handel's occasional use of chorale-like themes in long notes, while undoubtedly related to techniques he had learned in his studies with Zachow, reflected a favourite usage in Rome in which the melodies were frequently drawn from Gregorian chant. The arias are not written in da capo form, but rather in one or another of the forms usually employed by Italian composers to emphasise the parallelism of the psalm verses (e.g.

A B or A B A' B'). The rest of Handel's Roman church music is for solo voices accompanied by strings and occasional wind instruments, and ranges from short antiphons to extended, multi-movement motets and a single Marian antiphon.

Handel's first Italian sacred work, *Dixit Dominus* (HWV 232), a setting of Psalm 110 for soloists and five-part chorus and string orchestra, is one of his youthful masterpieces. It was completed at Rome in April 1707 and possibly written for Cardinal Colonna. It was presumably performed at Vespers for an appropriate festal celebration, perhaps even Easter. The scale and sheer energy of the writing are captivating and the technical challenges for performers are formidable. It is unfortunate that we know nothing of the performing forces for which it was written. Handel condensed the music and tightened its structure when he used some of it again later in English works such as the Cannons Anthems and *Deborah* (HWV 51).

Handel next wrote three smaller works for soprano and strings for his other principal Roman patron, Marquis Ruspoli, to be performed in the Church of St Anthony of Padua at Vignanello, the Ruspoli summer home near Rome. The motet *O qualis de coelo sonus* (HWV 239) was performed on Whit Sunday, 12 June 1707, while the motet *Coelestis dum spirat aura* (HWV 231) was heard the next day on the Feast of St Anthony of Padua. The Marian antiphon *Salve Regina* (HWV 241) was probably performed after Vespers on Trinity Sunday, 19 June 1707. The soloist for all these works may have been the soprano Margherita Durastanti, who created the title role in *Agrippina* at Venice in 1709, and later sang for Handel in London in 1720–4 and again in 1733–4.

Almost immediately after the Ruspoli pieces Handel composed another series of sacred works for Cardinal Colonna, at least some of which were performed on 16 July 1707 in the Church of the Madonna di Monte Santo in Rome to celebrate the Feast of Our Lady of Mt Carmel, the patron saint of the Carmelite Order of which the Colonna family were patrons.<sup>6</sup> The D major setting of *Laudate pueri* (HWV 237), partly based on music from the the F major setting but expanded to include chorus, five-part strings and oboes, was completed on 8 July 1707. It would have been appropriate for either First or Second Vespers, and is associated in surviving performing material with two specifically Carmelite antiphons from First Vespers (*Haec est regina virginum* HWV 235, and *Te decus virgineum* HWV 243), and the Carmelite motet *Saeviat tellus inter rigores* (HWV 240). Both HWV 237 and HWV 240 require a virtuosic soprano with secure high notes (the solo part in the latter rises to top d'').

Handel's final sacred work from the Italian period is his setting of Psalm 127, *Nisi Dominus* (HWV 238), which was completed on 13 July

1707. Despite the fact that the forces expand from five parts to double chorus (with double orchestra) for the doxology, *Nisi Dominus* is both a gentler and a less rambling work than the earlier *Dixit Dominus*. The question of whether these two works, and even the *Salve Regina*, can also have been performed in connection with the Feast of Our Lady of Mt Carmel has generated a good deal of discussion, and attempts to perform all of the possible repertoire within the context of Second Vespers, for which only the three psalms would have been proper, using the rubric of 'substitute antiphons', have not met with entire critical approval, in part because of the discrepancy in scale between *Dixit Dominus*, *Nisi Dominus* and the other works.<sup>7</sup> Nevertheless, in whatever context they were first performed, the psalm settings must have made a profound impression on their early listeners and Handel was prepared to employ musical material from them later in England when the occasion arose.

Handel's remaining sacred music was written for the liturgy of the Church of England as set out in *The Book of Common Prayer*. The English Reformers had created two services, Morning and Evening Prayer, out of the eight Roman Catholic Offices. Each included a portion of the Psalms, Lessons (Scripture readings), Collects (prayers) and Canticles.<sup>8</sup> In addition, after the Third Collect a place was provided for an anthem, the text of which was not specified but was to be drawn from the Bible or the Prayer Book and to be appropriate to the season or specific feast day being celebrated.

The majority of Handel's English sacred works were written for the Chapel Royal, the institution responsible for meeting the ecclesiastical needs of the Monarch and the Court.<sup>9</sup> It consisted in Handel's day of the Officers serving under the Dean, the Gentlemen and Children, Composers, instrumental musicians, and various servants. At full strength the Chapel choir had twenty-six Gentlemen (of whom ten were priests) and ten boy choristers, but for a variety of reasons the actual numbers were generally lower. For most of the period of Handel's association there were two Composers, two Organists, a viol player, and a lutenist.

Handel supplied music for three sorts of services for the Chapel Royal. The nature and venue of those services, together with the number and type of musicians available for them, determined what he wrote. For the routine services, held in the small chapel at St James's Palace when the Court was in London, the boys and about ten to thirteen men were generally available, since the Gentlemen of the Chapel Royal attended in alternate months and, even allowing for the use of deputies, some places were bound to be unfilled at any given time. The regular instrumental resources available were limited to organ, viol (or possibly 'cello), and lute.

Somewhat more elaborate were occasional festal services of Morning Prayer at the Chapel Royal, generally including orchestrally accompanied canticles and anthem. In the reigns of George I and George II these were generally limited to celebrations of the King's safe return to London from visits to Hanover or Kensington. For these services string players from the Royal Musicians were employed, although whether all twenty-four of them performed is not clear. Occasionally oboe and bassoon players were imported from the opera or theatre orchestra, and for events requiring the performance of a special *Te Deum* and *Jubilate*, members of the Royal Trumpeters were sometimes employed.

Most elaborate of all were the great services of national rejoicing or mourning which might call for the full resources of the Chapel Royal, King's Musicians and Royal Trumpeters, and occasionally could command even larger forces. These services were usually held in buildings larger than the Chapel Royal at St James's Palace. Services of thanksgiving for great military successes, which were quite frequent during Queen Anne's reign, were generally held in St Paul's Cathedral. Coronations and royal funerals were traditionally held in Westminster Abbey. Royal weddings, which had been infrequent in the years leading up to Handel's arrival in England, had no fixed abode: the location and nature of the celebration generally depended on the dynastic importance of the specific wedding.

Handel probably wrote his first piece of Anglican church music soon after the beginning of his second visit to England in autumn 1712. It was almost certainly *As pants the Hart* (HWV 251a), which is likely to have been intended for a routine Chapel Royal service at St James's Palace during the period the Court was in London from December 1712 to May 1713.<sup>10</sup> It is written in the genre of the traditional English verse anthem with separate movements for soloists and chorus, the whole accompanied by organ, with viol or 'cello, and probably lute. The music reflects both English and German traditions of the seventeenth century, and is the least Italianate of all Handel's sacred compositions.

HWV 251a is the first of five versions of *As pants the Hart* (HWV 251a-e) which Handel prepared for varying occasions over the next twenty-five years.<sup>11</sup> Each setting but the first contains some material adapted from earlier versions and some newly composed music. The one element common to all versions is an opening chorus built on a point of imitation with which Handel would probably have been familiar from his studies with Zachow, and which also appears in the music of a number of composers including Antonio Caldara and John Blow. The version which Handel employs, with its initial leap of a minor third, is also found as the opening to the first sonata of Henry Purcell's *Sonnata's of Three Parts*

**Example 11.1** (a) Henry Purcell, Sonata I (1683), opening

\* The basso continuo part, which broadly doubles the other parts, is omitted here.

(b) Handel, *As pants the Hart* (HWV 251a/1), opening

\* The opening entry is marked by Handel for 'Mr Eilfurt' (Richard Elford)

(London, 1683), and this source is very likely to have been familiar to both the composer and his listeners. (See Example 11.1.)

Handel's next contribution to Anglican church music, the 'Utrecht' Te Deum (HWV 278) and Jubilate (HWV 279), was on a much larger scale. By the end of 1712 it was clear that a peace treaty would shortly be signed at Utrecht which would put an end to Britain's participation in the ten-year-old European conflict now known as the War of the Spanish Succession. He was asked, apparently at the instigation of Queen Anne, to provide orchestrally accompanied Canticles for the great Service of Thanksgiving which would be held to mark that event.<sup>12</sup> William Croft (1678–1727), the principal composer to the Chapel Royal, provided the anthem, which was not orchestrally accompanied.

Handel completed the Te Deum on 14 January 1713 and the Jubilate sometime later.<sup>13</sup> The music was publicly rehearsed on 5, 7, and 19 March, and at least once more in May before being performed in St Paul's Cathedral at the elaborate official Thanksgiving Service on 7 July. Somewhere between forty and fifty performers probably took part, consisting primarily of members of the Chapel Royal and the Queen's Musicians; perhaps half were singers.<sup>14</sup>

Although provision had been made for the singing of Canticles since the earliest edition of *The Book of Common Prayer*, use of orchestral accompaniment in the setting of the Morning Canticles had been a relatively recent development in England. Only a handful of such pieces are known to have been composed prior to 1713, all written for specific events of public rejoicing. It is, then, hardly surprising that Handel's 'Utrecht' Te Deum and Jubilate betray a debt to Purcell's comparable

setting written for the St Cecilia's Day celebrations in 1694, and to Croft's version written for the Thanksgiving Service in February 1709, both in general outline (including divisions into movements and the use of five-part texture with divided soprano parts) and in certain specific details. Handel's setting, however, is more spacious. His use of the woodwind instruments (with independent oboe parts in the tutti sections and obbligato parts for flute and oboe in vocal solo movements), and the higher proportion of choral involvement, make Handel's setting strikingly different from his models. The 'Utrecht' *Te Deum* and *Jubilate* were immensely popular, together with Purcell's Cecilian setting, throughout the eighteenth century, and although they shared the stage with Handel's 'Dettingen' setting of the *Te Deum* after 1743, they were only gradually replaced by it. They were printed by John Walsh c. 1732, the first of Handel's sacred works to achieve publication.

Queen Anne died on 1 August 1714 and the new King George I, accompanied by his son George August (later King George II), arrived in London on Monday, 20 September. The following Sunday, 26 September, they attended a service at the Chapel Royal where '*Te Deum* was sung, compos'd by Mr. Hendel, and a very fine Anthem was also sung'.<sup>15</sup> The remainder of the Royal party arrived nearly a month later and attended the Chapel Royal on the following Sunday, 17 October, where '*Te Deum*, with another excellent thanksgiving piece with music composed by the famous *musico* Mr Handel, was sung on account of the joyful arrival of the Princess of Wales and the young Princesses'.<sup>16</sup>

All of these occasions required festal celebrations of Morning Prayer, and on at least one of them Handel's D major *Te Deum* (HWV 280, generally known as the 'Caroline' *Te Deum* because of its traditional association with the Princess of Wales, later Queen Consort of George II) was sung. It is substantially shorter than the Utrecht setting, and comparable in scale, scoring, and external details to Purcell's D major setting, departing only in the use of SAATB choruses and the addition of a solo flute (in one movement only) to the Purcellian orchestra of trumpets and strings. The most striking aspects of this setting are found in the outstanding writing for the two alto soloists, Richard Elford (1676–1714) and Francis Hughes (c. 1666–1744), the lack of imitative counterpoint in the choral sections, and Handel's use of the chorus to round off solo movements.

A piece which can almost certainly be paired with the 'Caroline' *Te Deum* is the anthem *O Sing unto the Lord* (HWV 249a), which is scored for a comparable orchestra, contains solos for Elford, and a movement with flute; in addition, it contains solos for bass voice and requires an oboe. At some stage Handel marked the second, and possibly third, movements for deletion, which was musically unfortunate but may have been

forced by some practical expediency. He also replaced the second half of the fifth movement (the duet 'O Worship the Lord') with a chorus, to good dramatic and musical effect. With the exception of the Utrecht Canticles, none of these early Chapel Royal compositions seems to have been well known during Handel's lifetime, even though he revived the 'Caroline' *Te Deum* at least twice.

In July 1717 Handel joined the household of James Brydges, who had become Earl of Carnarvon in October 1714 (and would subsequently become First Duke of Chandos in April 1719), at his country estate of Cannons located at Edgware, Middlesex, some fifteen miles north-west of London. Brydges was immensely rich, having amassed a fortune estimated at around £600,000 in the course of his employment as Paymaster General to Queen Anne's forces abroad during the War of the Spanish Succession. He was currently engaged in converting the Elizabethan manor house of Cannons into a stately – not to say ponderous – example of Palladian style. In the course of this project he also arranged for his workmen to rebuild the local parish church of St Lawrence, Little Stanmore (also called 'Whitchurch') in the Italian Baroque style, complete with a tripartite gallery at the west end where he could sit with his family, servants and bodyguards. The church was re-opened for services by Easter 1716, and included a new single-manual organ by Gerard Smith which stood in the 'Organ Room' at the east end of the church behind the communion table, with enough space around it for up to twenty-four musicians to gather.<sup>17</sup> St Lawrence's also served as Brydges's domestic chapel until the chapel in Cannons house was finally completed and opened in August 1720, by which time Handel's association with Brydges had ceased. One of Handel's responsibilities was to provide music on occasion at St Lawrence's for the Sunday morning services attended by Brydges.

On Handel's arrival the so-called 'Cannons Concert' included some eight to ten players, most of them Italians drawn from the ranks of the opera orchestra, and perhaps five singers, all of them English. This ensemble would increase in size, although not without some cutbacks along the way, until by New Year 1721 it included six violins, a viola, cello, double bass, oboe, bassoon, trumpet and flute to accompany a chorus of three trebles, a [male] 'contralt', two 'counter tenors', a tenor, and two basses.<sup>18</sup> After that date the Duke of Chandos halved the size of his musical establishment in response to his losses in the collapse of the South Sea Bubble, and most of the dismissed musicians found work in the London opera orchestra. There were further retrenchments and by the mid-1720s musical activity at Cannons had virtually ceased.

In 1717–18 Handel composed twelve sacred works for Brydges – a *Te*



Deum and eleven anthems including a setting of the Jubilate.<sup>19</sup> The anthems are multi-movement works consisting of arias, duets and choruses, with an occasional recitative: all but one begin with a two-movement instrumental sonata.<sup>20</sup> The texts are drawn exclusively from the Psalms, but the verses employed are not always consecutive or even from the same Psalm.<sup>21</sup> It is sometimes said that these anthems – variously called ‘Anthems for Cannons’ and (less appropriately) ‘Chandos Anthems’ – are derived as a genre from the Lutheran cantatas of his teacher Zachow, and are thus closely related to the early cantatas composed by Bach. This is true only in the most general sense and they are, in fact, much more closely related to Handel’s own Italian psalm settings and to the English verse anthems of Croft and other followers of Purcell, which betrayed strong Italian influence. Handel apparently chose as his specific models a set of six anthems setting verses from the Psalms which had been written by Nicola Francesco Haym (1678–1729) and had been presented to Carnarvon with a dedication dated 29 September 1716.<sup>22</sup> Haym was also a ’cellist in the ‘Cannons Concert’.

Nine of Handel’s works would presumably have been sung as anthems, while *We praise Thee, O God* (HWV 281) and *O be joyful in the Lord* (HWV 246) would have served as Canticles. *O come let us sing unto the Lord* (HWV 253), which begins like the Venite but sets only five verses from Psalm 95 before branching out into verses from other Psalms, seems unlikely to have qualified as the Invitatory (opening chant for Morning Prayer) and was probably also performed as an anthem. The time constraints on services at St Lawrence’s must have been less restrictive than those at the Chapel Royal, and Handel’s later Cannons Anthems in particular are quite extended.

In the works written for Brydges Handel both composed new music and re-used music from earlier works, often substantially rewritten in its new context. Many of these earlier works, including the Italian psalm settings and secular chamber duets, would not have been known to his listeners. A few, including the ‘Utrecht and’ ‘Caroline’ Te Deum settings, must have been familiar to some, and it is possible that the transcription of the ‘Utrecht’ Jubilate for the smaller Cannons forces (HWV 246) was the result of a specific request.

The first eight of Handel’s Cannons anthems were written in pairs, each including one penitential and one celebratory work; there is no indication, however, that these pairs were meant to be performed at a single service. For the music Handel could draw on ideas from his previous English and Italian works. In the early anthems he was clearly challenged by the need to adapt music originally written for larger ensembles to the smaller Cannons forces, in most cases consisting of canto (i.e.

soprano-register voice), tenor and bass, accompanied by two or three violins and single 'cello, double bass, oboe, bassoon and organ continuo. They are full of a sort of musical sleight-of-hand in which some of the original vocal lines are taken over by instruments – especially the oboe, which was still somewhat of a novelty in English church music, where anthems had previously been accompanied either by strings or by organ alone – and the bass line is often separated into four constituent elements of bassoon, 'cello, double bass and organ, each being employed separately or in varying combinations.

The first pair of anthems are reworkings of the two anthems Handel had previously provided for the Chapel Royal. *As pants the Hart* (HWV 251b) – particularly notable for its opening chorus and the duet 'Why so full of grief, O my Soul' – seems to have become the best known of the set,<sup>23</sup> while *O sing unto the Lord* (HWV 249b) includes the duet 'O worship the Lord', subsequently used in the Chapel Royal Anthem *I will magnifie Thee* (HWV 250b), and the vocal fugue 'Declare his Honour unto the Heathen', whose theme is also used in both the Brockes Passion (HWV 48) and the Concerto Grosso Op. 3 No. 2 (HWV 313). The second pair of anthems, *Let God arise* (HWV 256a) and *My Song shall be alway* (HWV 252), add an alto to the ensemble. HWV 256a, which contains a striking borrowing from *Dixit Dominus*, is one of the best of the set, while HWV 252, which borrows extensively from the 'Caroline' Te Deum and the Brockes Passion, seems to have given Handel a great deal of trouble and is perhaps the least satisfactory.

The third pair of anthems consists of *O be joyful* (HWV 246), an adapted transcription of the 'Utrecht' Jubilate, and *Have mercy upon me* (HWV 248), an effective setting of verses from Psalm 51 which contains several musical borrowings from the 'Utrecht' Te Deum. The music of the final pair, *I will magnifie Thee* (HWV 250a) and *In the Lord put I my Trust* (HWV 247), contains much vigorous writing but lacks some of the variety that is found in the earlier three pairs. These anthems do not call for a 'cello, indicating that Haym may have been temporarily unavailable, and in their original versions require only a tenor soloist; at some point early on, two additional solo movements were added to HWV 250a, one of them for soprano.

The remaining three anthems and the 'Chandos' Te Deum (HWV 281) were probably written singly, although in some ways *O Come let us sing unto the Lord* (HWV 253) feels like a companion piece to the Te Deum. All four expand the vocal forces to include two (and, in the case of the Te Deum, three) tenors and, while technically assured and containing many memorable moments, they often seem unnecessarily extended, as if Handel had felt constrained to provide solos for each of his singers and

sometimes two for his principal tenor. The instrumental scoring is also less adventurous, although the use of recorders in HWV 253 and HWV 255 provides variety.

Arguably the most interesting of the four is *The Lord is my Light* (HWV 255), with graphic depictions of natural phenomena (e.g. the waves of the sea, thunder and lightning) which look forward to *Israel in Egypt* (HWV 54). *O praise the Lord with one Consent* (HWV 254), which like HWV 247 sets the psalms in Tate and Brady's versifications rather than the versions of the *Book of Common Prayer*, also contains music of a consistently high standard which was later to be used extensively in *Deborah* (HWV 51). In the 'Chandos' Te Deum Handel borrowed from the portions of the Utrecht and 'Caroline' settings which he had not already re-used, and the presence of the trumpet encouraged the use of a type of rondo-like chorus which appears again in the finale to *Esther* (HWV 50a),<sup>24</sup> Handel's English oratorio from the Cannons period which itself resembles an extended anthem.

In the Cannons Anthems Handel honed his skills in setting the English language and developed his sense of proportion in the construction of choral movements. The instrumental and vocal fugues are related to the composer's increased interest in fugal composition during this period, and may also reflect a spirit of friendly competition with his sometime colleague at Cannons Dr Johann Christoph (John Christopher) Pepusch (1667–1752), who was already noted for his mastery of learned contrapuntal devices.<sup>25</sup> These anthems were seldom performed during Handel's lifetime, and only one was published before 1784, although they survive in a surprisingly large number of earlier manuscript copies. Handel consequently felt free to draw upon their music for choruses and, occasionally, arias in his later anthems and oratorios.

Handel renewed his contact with the Chapel Royal in the early 1720s, being appointed 'Composer of Musick for his Majesty's Chappel Royal' on 25 February 1723. William Croft still remained as the Chapel's principal composer, as well as organist and master of the choristers, and he was assisted by John Weldon (1676–1736), who had also been serving since the death of Blow in 1708. The exact nature of Handel's duties is unknown, but they cannot have been extensive since he was primarily concerned with London's Italian opera company, the Royal Academy of Music, in these years. He prepared four works for the Chapel Royal during the remainder of George I's reign, all re-using music from earlier Cannons compositions, transposed down by either a tone or a semitone. This feature presumably reflects the difference in pitch between the organ at Cannons, which now appears to have been near modern pitch at a' = 433, and that at the Chapel Royal, which was considered especially high

even in the eighteenth century.<sup>26</sup> There is some indication that Handel may have undertaken his Chapel Royal compositions at this period in part to check the attempts made by Maurice Greene (1696–1755), organist of St Paul's Cathedral since 1718, to acquire royal patronage.

The first reappearance of Handel's music in the Chapel Royal seems to have been at a service on Sunday, 7 October 1722 to celebrate the King's safe return to St James's Palace from his summer stay at Kensington following the discovery of the Atterbury plot. Handel may initially have prepared a second verse-anthem version of *As pants the Hart* (HWV 251d) for this service. This was largely a revision of HWV 251a with some reference to HWV 251b, but was probably never performed. It seems very likely that when Handel discovered that an orchestra of oboe and strings would be available for this service, he prepared a second orchestral version of the same work (HWV 251c). This latter is primarily an expanded arrangement of HWV 251d, but it is clear that Handel drew ideas from the other two versions as well. It may have been performed with a revised version of the 'Caroline' Te Deum – in which an oboe may have taken over the original trumpet solos.<sup>27</sup>

The text of *As pants the Hart* was printed in 1724, in a volume of texts of anthems 'as the same are now performed in his Majesty's Chapels Royal', but Handel's music was not copied into the Chapel Royal part-books and it apparently never entered the regular Chapel Royal repertoire.<sup>28</sup> A fifth version of the anthem (HWV 251e), consisting of HWV 251c with the addition of newly written settings of 'Now when I think thereupon' and 'For I went with the multitude' – the latter incorporating the Lutheran chorale 'Christ lag in Todesbanden' – together with a concluding 'Allelujah' borrowed from *Athalia* (HWV 52) of 1733, was incorporated into 'An Oratorio' for Handel's theatre benefit night in 1738.<sup>29</sup>

Handel next contributed an anthem for the service on Sunday 5 January 1724 celebrating the King's safe return from his visit to Hanover. Evidence points strongly to this having been *I will magnifie Thee*, HWV 250b, which may have been performed with another revival of the 'Caroline' Te Deum. For HWV 250b Handel borrowed music from four of the Cannons Anthems (HWV 250a, 249b, 253 and 252) and rearranged it for the larger Chapel Royal forces. This anthem, unlike others written for the Chapel Royal in this period, seems to have been taken up soon by other choirs: documentary evidence and surviving performing material indicate that some version of it was performed in London, Oxford, and Dublin during the 1730s, 40s and 50s. Handel also borrowed material from it for the conclusion to the oratorio *Belshazzar* (HWV 61) in 1744, and it is just possible that certain members of the oratorio audience were meant to recognise it.

Handel's final contributions to the Chapel Royal in the reign of George I were the anthem *Let God arise* (HWV 256b) and the A major Te Deum (HWV 282). These are arrangements and abridgements of their Cannons counterparts HWV 256a and HWV 281, and feature extensive bassoon solos. They were almost certainly first performed on Sunday 16 January 1726 to celebrate George I's safe return from Hanover, following a particularly bad Channel crossing. All of these later Chapel Royal works are more compact than their Cannons counterparts, mainly because the time constraints on the Chapel Royal services were apparently greater. The enforced concision often works to the benefit of the music, and these pieces deserve to be better known.

George I died at Osnabrück on 11 June 1727: it took several days for the news to reach London and for his son to be proclaimed as George II. On 11 August the coronation was announced for 4 October, and after several postponements it duly took place on the 20th of that month. Croft died at Bath on 18 August and on the same day the Bishop of Salisbury recommended Greene as his successor. Weldon, the likeliest choice to provide music for the coronation, appears to have given up composition by this date, but Handel, who already held court office as a composer to the Chapel Royal and had become a naturalised British subject on 27 February 1727, was both eligible and available. Furthermore, he was of the same generation as the new King and Queen and had known them since his days in Hanover; they may, in fact, have insisted on his participation in the coronation. Apparently some sort of compromise was arranged, the details of which are not known, by which Handel provided the music for the coronation; Greene assumed Croft's regular duties as composer and organist to the Chapel Royal, together with responsibility for the ongoing operation of that institution; and Bernard Gates became Master of the Choristers.<sup>30</sup>

Coronations were important dynastic events and were governed by precedent even more rigidly than other Court activities. The texts of the anthems, assembled from various Psalms and the Books of Kings and Isaiah, were prescribed from previous coronation services, although some cuts and other alterations were made in 1727 by the Archbishop of Canterbury and, apparently, Handel himself. Handel had presumably attended the coronation of George I in 1714, where he could have heard Croft's orchestrally accompanied anthem *The Lord is a Sun and a Shield*. He may also have looked at the scores of the anthems written by Purcell and Blow for the coronation of James II in 1685, the last occasion on which a Queen Consort had been crowned. From these sources he would have learned that the style of large-scale anthem deemed appropriate for coronations was the 'full' anthem accompanied by orchestra, including

occasional passages for a semi-chorus or solo voices but containing none of the arias, duets and trios found in his earlier Chapel Royal music.

Handel's four Coronation Anthems satisfy these requirements perfectly, and his use of large blocks of choral sound accompanied by strings, oboes, bassoons, trumpets and drums indicates that he intended to take advantage of the augmented forces available (including perhaps twelve trebles, forty adult singers including members of the Chapel Royal and Westminster Abbey choirs, and some eighty instrumentalists) as well as the size and resonance of Westminster Abbey. Each anthem fulfilled a specific function within the coronation liturgy, although there is some disagreement about their exact placement. The most likely order is: *Let thy Hand be strengthened* (HWV 259) for the Recognition (which would explain its lack of trumpets, since the players might have been elsewhere in the Abbey at that point); *Zadok the Priest* (HWV 258) for the Anointing; *The King shall rejoice* (HWV 260) for the Crowning of the King; and *My Heart is inditing* (HWV 261) for the Queen's coronation.

*Zadok the Priest* has been performed at every succeeding coronation of a British monarch; it quickly became the most famous of the four anthems and was used for innumerable charity and benefit concerts and services during the eighteenth century. It is most striking for the blaze of sound at the initial entrance of the chorus following a twenty-three-bar string introduction which generates almost unbearable harmonic tension. *Let thy Hand be strengthened*, an altogether gentler piece and the only one not in the 'trumpet key' of D major, is most memorable for its turn to the relative minor at the words 'Let justice and judgment be the preparation of thy seat'. *The King shall rejoice* is perhaps the least individual of the group, while *My Heart is inditing*, with its move to the dominant and secondary dominant harmonies during the two inner movements, is the most varied and presented a suitable homage to the new Queen. Handel re-used much of the music from the Coronation Anthems in his oratorios of *Esther* (1732) and *Deborah* (1733), and it seems clear that the reference was meant to be recognised in its new contexts.

Handel's next official composition for the Court of George II was the anthem *This is the Day which the Lord hath made* (HWV 262), written to celebrate the marriage of his pupil Anne, the Princess Royal, to Prince William of Orange in the French Chapel at St James's Palace. The wedding was originally scheduled for 12 November 1733 but when the bridegroom contracted smallpox it was postponed until 14 March 1734. Greene, who had provided music to celebrate the King's safe return from Hanover in 1729 and 1732, apparently assumed that he should also provide the wedding anthem. He accordingly composed one which was publicly

rehearsed on 27 October 1733 and for which he was paid. On 30 October, however, it was announced that Handel would compose the anthem, which was rehearsed before the royal family in early November.

Since this was the first royal wedding to have been celebrated in London in over half a century, the ceremony and the anthem itself were on a lavish scale. The choral writing and orchestral scoring resemble those found in the Coronation Anthems, and as many as seventy-five performers may have been involved, including the full complement of the Chapel Royal and the King's Musicians, together with some twenty-five 'additional' participants.<sup>31</sup> The arias for bass, tenor and soprano, as well as the opening chorus, borrow extensively from the oratorio *Athalia* (HWV 52), which had not yet been heard in London. This music was in turn re-used in the serenata *Parnasso in festa* (HWV 73), which the Royal Family and the Prince of Orange heard at the King's Theatre in 1734, the evening before the wedding.

Two years later Handel provided the anthem *Sing unto God* (HWV 263) for the marriage of Frederick, Prince of Wales, to Augusta, Princess of Saxe-Gotha, in the smaller Chapel Royal at St James's Palace on 27 April 1736. The music is on a suitably smaller scale, with the chorus reduced to four parts and the trumpets restricted to the first and last movements. The performing forces were perhaps comparable to those employed in the Chapel Royal anthems of the 1720s. Handel adapted the music of the concluding chorus from one in *Parnasso in festa*; the next year he re-used the other two choruses and one of the arias from the anthem in his oratorio *Il trionfo del Tempo e della Verità* (HWV 49b). The Prince of Wales had supported the Opera of the Nobility from its inception in 1733, and the wedding seems to have marked a rapprochement with Handel; the Prince subsequently supported Handel's activities until a renewed coldness set in over his support for Lord Middlesex's opera endeavours in the early 1740s.<sup>32</sup> The marriage led to the birth of a son in 1738 who, as King George III, played a significant part in the posthumous propagation of Handel's music. Handel apparently provided a condensed version of HWV 262 and HWV 263 for the proxy wedding of the younger Princess Mary (1723–72) to the Landgrave of Hesse-Cassel in the Chapel Royal at St James's on 8 May 1740, but no copies survive of this setting.

At the end of October 1737 Handel returned from Aix-la-Chapelle, to which he had travelled in search of a cure for the 'Paraletick Disorder' which had afflicted him the previous spring. Shortly thereafter, on 20 November, Queen Caroline died, and Handel completed her funeral anthem, *The Ways of Zion do mourn* (HWV 264), on 12 December, having spent perhaps a week on its composition. She was buried in King Henry VII's Chapel in Westminster Abbey on 17 December: the music at her

funeral service was performed by singers from the Chapel Royal, Westminster Abbey, and St George's Chapel, Windsor, accompanied by the King's Musicians and additional instrumentalists. The number of performers was given variously as between 140 and 180, but is more likely to have approximated to the number involved in the 1727 coronation.

Caroline had been Handel's patroness and supporter for nearly forty years, since his days at Hanover, and the Funeral Anthem is both a personal and a formal work. It is a fully choral anthem with orchestral accompaniment, in the manner of the Coronation Anthems (though without trumpets and drums), to a text compiled from several books of the Old Testament by Edward Willes, Sub-Dean of Westminster Abbey. What is perhaps most striking about the music is Handel's extensive use of Lutheran chorale melodies (a practice he continued in his later oratorios and anthems). Also notable are citations of music by Johann Philipp Krieger (1649–1725), Heinrich Schütz (1585–1672), and especially Jacob Handl (Gallus) (1550–91), whose well-known funeral motet *Ecce quomodo moritur justus* is recognisably quoted at the words 'but their name liveth evermore'. These references seem clearly intended to acknowledge Caroline's German heritage, but may also reflect Handel's renewed contact with German musical traditions. The following year Handel employed the Funeral Anthem, suitably re-texted and with an added introductory symphony, under the title 'The Lamentation of the Israelites for the Death of Joseph' as the first part of his oratorio *Israel in Egypt* (HWV 54).<sup>33</sup> It may have been that, as with the use of the Coronation Anthems in *Esther* and *Deborah*, he intended the borrowed music to be recognised by at least some members of his oratorio audience. In any case, music serving the function of an anthem had by this time become an established element in his oratorios.

Great Britain entered the War of the Austrian Succession in 1742, and on 27 June 1743 an allied army defeated the French in a battle at Dettingen, in which George II led his troops in person. Handel began composing a *Te Deum* (HWV 283) on 17 July, following it with the anthem *The King shall rejoice* (HWV 265) written between 30 July and 3 August. It looks as though Handel wrote these pieces in anticipation of a large-scale public Thanksgiving celebration at St Paul's Cathedral, similar to the one in 1713 that had followed the Peace of Utrecht. Certainly the scoring, length and general style of the two works would have made them more appropriate for a larger venue than the Chapel Royal at St James's where they were eventually performed on 26 September, in the context of a smaller service of thanksgiving to celebrate the King's safe return.<sup>34</sup>

The Dettingen *Te Deum* became a great favourite and eventually supplanted the Utrecht setting almost entirely during the nineteenth century.



The music often strikes modern listeners as unnecessarily loud and predictable, embodying the worst of what Samuel Butler referred to as Handel's 'Big Bow-Wow' style. Yet it cannot be denied that some moments, such as the entry of the unaccompanied trumpets following the words 'We believe that thou shalt come to be our judge', never fail to make an impression. By contrast, the Dettingen Anthem disappeared into almost complete obscurity after the four rehearsals and single performance of 1743. However, two choruses from it were heard in Handel's new oratorios of 1744: the final chorus in *Joseph* (HWV 59), and 'And why? Because the King' to a new text ('Bless the glad earth') in *Semele* (HWV 58), from which it had, in fact, originally been adapted.<sup>35</sup>

Handel's last occasional work for the House of Hanover was the Anthem on the Peace, HWV 266, written in 1749 to celebrate the Peace of Aix-la-Chapelle which concluded the War of the Austrian Succession.<sup>36</sup> It was performed before the King and the Royal Family on the official Day of Thanksgiving, 25 April, in the Chapel Royal at St James's, and is scored for soprano and two alto soloists, four-part chorus, flute, oboe, bassoon and strings, with the trumpets and drums entering only in the second and final choruses. It was performed with the 'Caroline' Te Deum, HWV 280, perhaps with the oboes reinforcing the trebles in the choruses in the manner of the oratorios. The first movement of the anthem, 'How beautiful are the feet of them', was newly composed, based on music from the duet and chorus to the same text written for the 1742 Dublin version of *Messiah* (HWV 56), combined with instrumental material derived from the Chapel Royal version of *As pants the Hart* (HWV 251c). For the remaining movements Handel added trumpets and drums to the chorus 'Glory and Worship are before him' from his earlier Chapel Royal anthem *I will magnifie Thee* (HWV 250b), and re-used music from an aria (re-composed) and chorus (re-texted) from the *Occasional Oratorio* (HWV 62), before concluding with the chorus 'Blessing and Honour . . . Amen' from *Messiah*.

Handel's final piece of sacred music was written not for a service of worship but rather for a benefit concert, held on 27 May 1749 in the newly completed but incompletely furnished chapel of the 'Hospital for the Maintenance and Education of Exposed and Deserted Young Children', generally referred to as The Foundling Hospital.<sup>37</sup> Handel had become deeply involved in the work of this newest of London's major charities, founded in 1739 by Thomas Coram, eventually becoming a Governor and directing annual benefit performances of *Messiah* there from 1750 onwards. In its original form the Foundling Hospital Anthem (HWV 268) was fully choral, opening with the elaborate chorus 'Blessed are they that considereth the poor', which includes music adapted from a move-

ment in the Funeral Anthem as well as a setting, in the style of a chorale prelude, of the tune 'Aus tiefer Not schrei ich zu dir' to the words 'O God who from the suckling's mouth'. This was followed by another chorus from the Funeral Anthem and a chorus from *Susanna* (HWV 66) – both with adapted texts – and the 'Hallelujah' chorus from *Messiah*.

Handel later revised and expanded the anthem, probably in connection with plans for the formal dedication of the Foundling Hospital Chapel in 1751, adding solo arias for the tenor Thomas Lowe and the alto castrato Gaetano Guadagni, as well as a duet for two trebles. In the event, the chapel was not opened until 16 April 1753, when the revised version of the anthem was performed together with the 'Caroline' Te Deum and one of Handel's settings of the Jubilate. It was performed again on 24 May 1759 as part of a memorial concert for Handel at the Hospital under the direction of John Christopher Smith the younger, the programme of which also included the four Coronation Anthems.

The Foundling Hospital Anthem can be seen as an apt summation of Handel's career as a composer of sacred music. The fact that it was composed for a benefit concert rather than for a service of worship illustrates the broadening definition of sacred music that can be observed in London over the first half of the eighteenth century in the use of the Coronation Anthems (as well as certain of the Cannons and Chapel Royal Anthems) in non-liturgical contexts. In the Foundling Hospital Anthem the movements adapted from the Funeral Anthem, together with the duet for two treble voices, testify to Handel's ties to both the Hanoverian Court and the specifically English Chapel Royal. The use of a Lutheran chorale tune illustrates Handel's increased interest in the musical traditions of his native Germany after 1737, as a complement to his essentially Italianate style. Finally, the juxtaposition in the anthem of arias for the playhouse singer Lowe and the opera singer Guadagni with the most recognisable chorus from *Messiah* sung by men and boys from the Chapel Royal, is emblematic of the fluid mixture of sacred and secular which was characteristic of much of Handel's church music written in the 1730s and 40s, and which formed the basis of his English oratorio style.