

PART I

Background

1 Germany – education and apprenticeship

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Scholars outside Germany have, with good reason, tended to avoid a direct confrontation with the first twenty-one years of Handel's life. First, there are few primary sources relating to his upbringing and education, and the secondary material from the eighteenth century is fraught with obvious inaccuracies and misunderstandings. Furthermore, whatever can be gleaned from the most influential accounts – most notably Mainwaring's of 1760¹ – might seem, on first sight, irrelevant to a composer whose talents and international exposure seem to stretch well beyond the confines of Halle and Hamburg.

Two of Handel's earliest English biographers, Mainwaring and Hawkins,² both try to portray the composer as an isolated genius, who – in Hawkins's view – learned to play the clavichord with virtually no previous experience of music. Even the most significant German biographer, Chrysander (who otherwise fills in many of the spaces in previous accounts of the German years), tends to underplay the achievement of Handel's teacher, Zachow, in order to emphasise the composer's innate talent.³ More recent writers have, fortunately, redressed the balance, showing quite clearly that Handel did not miraculously spring fully formed into cosmopolitan musical life.⁴ Nevertheless, surprisingly few have observed the sheer variety of musical institutions and patronage that Handel experienced before he left Germany, something which undoubtedly contributed to his uncanny ability to handle both court support and public financing during his active career in England.

Naturally, a study of the political, educational and musical environment of Handel's early years is not likely to provide a complete explanation for all his later achievement. However, it can at least give us some sense of how a figure such as Handel emerged, how the particular talents he possessed could have been developed to such an extraordinary degree, even before his Italian sojourn.

Halle, Weissenfels and their musical environments

A brief outline of Halle's fortunes in the late seventeenth century is appropriate here.⁵ Although Handel was born nearly forty years after the

end of the Thirty Years War, its outcome would still have conditioned much of his childhood environment. Most significant in this respect was one of the provisions of the Treaty of Westphalia from 1648, in which Halle, along with the rest of the Archbishopric of Magdeburg, was promised to the 'Great Elector', Friedrich Wilhelm of Brandenburg, on the death of the then administrator, Duke August of Saxony. The latter did not die until 1680, so the change in administration would have been fresh in the minds of the Handel household; indeed Handel's father, Georg Händel, had held a major position as court surgeon. In 1680 the court (now headed by August's son, Johann Adolph), retreated to the new sumptuous palace at Weissenfels, some twenty miles from Halle.

The late administrator had actually resided at the Moritzburg palace in Halle, so the city lost something of its autonomy when power moved to Berlin. Any sense of unease in 1680 would have been exacerbated by the horrendous plague that soon broke out, killing over half the inhabitants, followed by a devastating fire. Elector Friedrich Wilhelm was of the reformed confession and demanded tolerance of Calvinists throughout the Duchy of Brandenburg, despite the predominance of Lutheranism. In 1685 he passed an edict to allow French Huguenots to settle in Halle and, a few years later, Calvinist refugees from the Palatinate and a number of Jews also arrived. While the Elector's own religious outlook obviously lay behind these measures, the repopulation of the city was also of prime concern. In the event, the immigrants were extremely successful in revitalising the economy and developing Halle into a major manufacturing centre.

The worship and musical establishment of the principal church, the Marktkirche (or Marienkirche), was largely unaffected by these changes. Friedrich Wilhelm Zachow became organist in 1684, and every three weeks he presented concerted church music with the town musicians and choice singers from the Lutheran school (Gymnasium). Like several of his predecessors, Zachow was overall director of music, although it was more usual elsewhere for a cantor (a staff member from the local Lutheran 'Latin' school or Gymnasium who had particular responsibility for music) to hold this position. In Halle, the cantors still directed the music in the other churches and gave the boys who worked under Zachow's direction their preliminary training.

The Lutheran Gymnasium in Halle maintained most of its activities during the period of transition. The talented Rector (head teacher), Johann Praetorius, provided some degree of stability. Not only was he extremely musical and an accomplished composer,⁶ he also promoted theatrical presentations, particularly 'Comedies', serenades and Singspiele during the 1680s and 1690s.⁷ While none of these was likely to

have been a fully-fledged opera, they must have been a significant avenue for the performance of dramatic music in Halle. Indeed, the previous regime of Duke August of Saxony had been noted for its operatic endeavours, so the school presentations would have appealed to those hankering for a lost era. Furthermore, one of Praetorius's deputy rectors, Albrecht Christian Rotth, wrote one of the most significant studies of German poetry and dramaturgy in the High Baroque, his *Vollständige deutsche Poesie* of 1688.⁸

Unfortunately, the school records are somewhat incomplete during the 1690s, so we have no direct record that Handel attended the Gymnasium. However, both Mattheson and the Halle chronicler Dreyhaupt (writing in 1749–50) affirm that he was educated there.⁹ Handel's father had himself attended the Gymnasium and was a close associate of the current school rector, Praetorius; both were members of a small committee formed in 1682 to provide relief for victims of the plague.¹⁰ Moreover, it would hardly have been likely that Handel could have matriculated at the University of Halle in 1702 without having experienced a thorough school education.

The curriculum of the Gymnasium was indeed impressive, the youngest pupils in the tenth class (*Decima*) beginning with the Lutheran Catechism, German and Latin reading, writing, counting and biblical stories. In subsequent classes the pupils would have worked through grammar and syntax, Latin composition, geography and letter-writing. From the sixth class Greek was introduced, followed by study of Tacitus and Ovid, the Greek New Testament, and the composition of German and Latin poetry. The uppermost classes (*Secunda* and *Prima*) covered Cicero and Horace, Socrates and Plutarch, Hebrew writing, 'elegant style', logic, ethics and physics and the arts of oratory and disputation.¹¹ Significantly, music seems not to have been studied as an academic subject, but practical instruction took place at noon each day.

While the Gymnasium seems to have preserved traditional Lutheran education at a high level, the new regime encouraged several new educational establishments and this led to an intellectual intensification that was without rival in the area of Brandenburg-Prussia. Given the Calvinist affiliations of the House of Brandenburg, dissidents from within the Lutheran church itself were tolerated, most notably the Pietists, who shared many articles of faith with the Calvinists. These Lutherans promoted an archetypally personal and emotionally involved religious life, and were as devoted to good works as they were opposed to elaborate liturgy, complex music and most forms of drama.

Together, the Calvinist and Pietist influences had a marked effect on the musical life of Halle. The town council complained in 1695 that 'there

is too much figural church music [i.e. polyphonic and concerted pieces], it is too long and unedifying, pleasing only to the cantors and organists, and should be modified with songs of penitence and thanks that can be sung by the entire congregation'. Furthermore, a church ordinance of 1702 forbade the use of Latin in the liturgy: even the Ordinary of the Mass was to be sung in German.¹²

The influx of such figures as the Pietist August Hermann Francke and the jurist Christian Thomasius was instrumental in the founding of the Friedrich-University of Halle in 1694. Not surprisingly, the ancient science of music was not to be found on the curriculum of a university devoted to Pietist (and, increasingly, Enlightenment) causes. Nevertheless music played an important part as a peripheral activity: town musicians were frequently employed for university ceremonies and a variety of city ordinances against unsociable student music-making, from 1698 onwards, point towards a rich amateur culture.¹³

One new German musical institution that had been developing during the closing decades of the seventeenth century was the *Collegium musicum*, a student-based concert organisation that often achieved professional standards; this is the single most important precursor of the modern concert tradition in Germany. It is highly significant that the first reports of such groups in Halle were made in 1700–2 by the young student Heinrich Brockes, who was subsequently author of the most significant Passion libretto of the early eighteenth century, set by Handel, among others.¹⁴ Brockes held concerts in his own rooms every week, so he was probably a focal point for student music-making.

Another centre for music was the so-called Cathedral (Dom), where Handel served as organist during 1702–3. This had traditionally been the chapel for the administrator of the Archbishopric of Magdeburg, so the Elector maintained his claim to the building, and in 1688 gave over the Cathedral to the Calvinist congregation from the Palatinate. Not only did this cause much strife for the existing Lutheran congregation, it also meant a radical reduction in liturgical music. Handel's musical duties amounted to little more than psalm introduction and accompaniment.¹⁵ Furthermore, most of the other weekly teaching duties traditionally connected with the post were waived, because he was a Lutheran and not a Calvinist.¹⁶ However, according to the document relating to his successor as organist, he was also expected to direct capable performers of vocal and instrumental music in his own house. It may be that the loss of liturgical music led to an association of the post with private music-making, by way of compensation. This might explain why Handel was particularly interested in this post, which probably allowed an even wider field of music-making than Zachow would have maintained at the Marktkirche.

Furthermore, a royal privilege was given for an oboe band to perform in the cathedral on Sundays and feast days, together with the organist, as accompaniment to the psalms and songs of the reformed liturgy.¹⁷ According to one – albeit barely authenticated – anecdote, Handel was infatuated with the oboe during the early years of his career.¹⁸

The musical attitude of Handel's family has been subject to much conjecture and, since Mainwaring's time, Handel's father has been branded an enemy of music against whom the son's talents miraculously won out. Given the apparent association between Mainwaring and close friends of the composer, we should probably accept that there is an element of truth in his account.¹⁹ In fact, antipathy towards music *as a profession* was not unusual in the culture of the time. Telemann's experiences were almost directly analogous to Handel's: according to his autobiography, he set off to Leipzig to study law, following his mother's wishes, but was 'side-tracked' back into music partly as a result of his visit to Handel in Halle en route.²⁰ As the pastor Sebastian Kirchmaier wrote in the foreword to Georg Falck's *Idea boni cantoris*, a Lutheran singing treatise of 1688, 'Most people love and learn gladly only those arts which adorn and fill the purse, or which otherwise bear profit or adornment.'

This is not to say that musicians could not earn high salaries; indeed Zachow seems to have been well rewarded and to have belonged to the upper ranks of the city hierarchy.²¹ But the parents of both Telemann and Handel doubtlessly preferred the profession of law as being both highly respectable and also very desirable in an environment of increasingly centralised absolutism.²² It should be remembered, though, that Georg Händel was soon persuaded by his royal master that there was nothing unrespectable about the profession of music and that the world deserved a talent such as Handel's.²³ Indeed, some sources imply that Georg sent his son to study with Zachow on his own initiative.²⁴ Moreover, the evidence suggests that the father was familiar with – if not well disposed towards – music as an entertainment: the wife of the surgeon to whom he was apprenticed in 1637 was the daughter of the influential English violinist William Brade;²⁵ in the 1670s Georg Händel was very close friends with the royal Kapellmeister David Pohle, one of the founders of the Halle opera, and the organist Christian Ritter.²⁶ Furthermore, the famed Kapellmeister at the Weissenfels court, Johann Philipp Krieger, was a distant relation of the Händel family and, given Georg's bi-monthly visits to the court from 1688, the two were doubtless well acquainted. Indeed, the Weissenfels opera was the direct successor of the Halle court opera, so it was probably closely and enthusiastically followed by the ageing surgeon.

Georg Händel was first appointed private valet and surgeon to Duke

August (of Halle) in 1660; he earned a high reputation as a doctor and the Duke also granted him the privilege to sell wine in 1668.²⁷ Naturally he lost all these privileges on August's death in 1680, although he was soon able to secure an honorary title at the Brandenburg court. Not until 1688 was he able to reclaim his former post in the Saxon court, now at Weissenfels.²⁸ Given that his duties involved visiting the court every eight weeks, it is likely that the young Handel accompanied his father there on a number of occasions, and not merely on a single trip at the age of seven, as stated by Mainwaring.²⁹ After all, the journey was barely more than twenty miles.

While the early German opera of Halle would have been of the Singballett/Schauspiel genre, with intermittent music, the newer establishment at Weissenfels was able to mount full-length operas from 1685.³⁰ The operas of Kapellmeister Krieger were obviously the most significant productions, but there were also guest performances from the 'public' opera houses at Leipzig and Hamburg. The church and instrumental music at the court was no less impressive, with a repertory of many Italian works and Krieger's own cantatas and sonatas.³¹ Given that Duke Johann Adolph spared no expense in establishing his court music, Weissenfels was, for a time, unequalled among the Saxon courts, drawing its musicians from a wide range of local and more distant institutions.³² It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that the much-travelled Krieger, who knew so many internationally prominent musical figures, must have been a major influence on his distant relative, the young Georg Friedrich Handel.³³

Music education in school and study with Zachow

On the assumption that Handel attended the Gymnasium in Halle, it seems likely that his education there began in August 1692 (when there happens to be a gap in the records) at the age of seven.³⁴ Mainwaring claimed that Handel made his eventful visit to Weissenfels and subsequently began his study with Zachow at around that age.³⁵ On the other hand J. G. Walther, in the earliest biography of Handel, states that he went to Zachow in 1694, a date we should take seriously since Walther is virtually the only eighteenth-century commentator to give the correct year for Handel's birth.³⁶ Furthermore Dreyhaupt, the informative chronicler of Halle writing c. 1749, also gives 1694 as the outset of Handel's study with Zachow.³⁷

If Handel went to school at seven and began his specialist training at nine or ten, this would still allow much of Mainwaring's story to stand.

Handel would have received his elementary training in school, discovered his talent for keyboard playing and perhaps acquired from school the clavichord for his secret practice in the family house.³⁸ Within two years he could have advanced enough to impress the prince at Weissenfels and he might also have encountered Zachow, as a member of the school choir which sang in the Marktkirche. Handel's musical education at the Gymnasium, under the two cantors and rector, presumably continued after he began his studies with Zachow; the two forms of tuition would have complemented one another in a variety of ways. However, given that the school education would have begun first and would have been the less specialized pursuit, it makes sense to examine that first.

The School Ordinance of 1661 was still valid in Handel's time, although it must have been updated in a number of matters, particularly regarding the repertory to be performed in church.³⁹ As is typical in Lutheran schools of the time, the entire school body is divided into classes of different levels of musical training, and from this body are formed the choirs that perform in the various churches of the locality. Instruction begins at noon every day and the cantor is to open each lesson with songs in two to four parts, even if all the boys are not yet present. The actual course of instruction begins in the lowest classes (Decima and Nona) with study of the chorales and psalms for the next Sunday's worship. After this, the boys learn musical notation and begin to sing the same chorales in parts, followed by pieces in progressively complex polyphony. The prescribed authors for instruction books are noticeably conservative, dating from the previous century (Faber, for basic notation; Dressler and Glarean, for the study of modes). Likewise, the music for high feasts is to be taken from the era stretching from Josquin to Lassus; indeed, there is a certain resistance to music in newer styles.

The arrival of Zachow at the main church had evidently changed matters somewhat, and by Handel's time the 'new Italian style' must have been more or less accepted, at least for certain occasions. Study of modes was rapidly dropping from German instruction during the latter half of the century, and indeed Handel once stated that he saw little need for the modes in modern composition; nevertheless there is evidence that Handel had acquired a certain degree of knowledge.⁴⁰ None of the instruction books prescribed by the 1661 ordinance would have prepared the pupil sufficiently for the sort of music that Zachow was writing, so it is likely that the cantors updated the material, and it is possible that they used some of the more recent pedagogic publications.

One published instruction book that may have been used by the more advanced students at the Gymnasium was the *Rudimenta Musices* (Mühlhausen 1685) by Wolfgang Mylius, a former pupil of Christoph

Bernhard at the Dresden court, who had also studied in Vienna and who was now Kapellmeister at the court of Gotha.⁴¹ This comprehensive tutor takes the pupil through all the fundamentals of notation, and gives advice on good vocal style, good diction and an expressive presentation of the text. Most interesting of all are the chapters on the correct vocal *Manier* – in other words, the Italian style of ornamented singing that is so comprehensively codified in German school books of the seventeenth century.⁴² The repertory of ornaments is astonishingly detailed, ranging from basic dynamic shading and simple appoggiaturas, through rhythmic alteration and trills to the most complicated passage-work. Particularly useful are Mylius's monodic musical examples in which the remarkable profusion of ornaments to be added is actually specified with abbreviations.⁴³ It is quite clear that Mylius is not merely preparing boys for church music (indeed, he recommends particular care and discretion in polyphonic pieces); he remarks that he cannot possibly give all the information required to perform recitative in 'comedies, tragedies and such sung operas', thus implying that the book provides the fundamentals for such arts without outlining all the applications. One may well imagine Johann Praetorius using a book of this kind to prepare the boys for his school comedies in the 1680s and 90s.

Mylius is by no means alone in outlining some of the details of Italianate singing. Advice of this kind had begun to appear in German sources during the last decade of the sixteenth century, and many new treatises appeared during the two decades after 1685.⁴⁴ Some of these provide advice on instrumental performance: G. Falck (1688), for instance, includes instruction on the violin and viol with detailed advice on posture, bow-grip and bowing rules; J. C. Stierlein introduces the student to figured bass. D. Merck's *Compendium* (1695) is the first German treatise devoted entirely to instructing the youth in string instruments. It thus does not seem surprising that Handel was able to play ripieno violin parts when he first arrived in Hamburg in 1703; quite possibly he was familiar with several other instruments by the time he had finished school and participated in some of Halle's *Collegia*.

The most impressive, or at least the most comprehensive, of all the treatises addressed to schools and the education of youth is D. Speer's *Grundrichtiger Unterricht der musikalischen Kunst* (1697). This 'four-leafed clover' (as it is subtitled) covers the standard rules of notation and singing, figured bass, instruments (the fundamentals of strings, brass and flutes) and, finally, the rules of composition. Speer evidently drew on his wide experience – especially apparent in his extensive knowledge of wind instruments – both as a school teacher and as a town musician. He was also clearly adept at keyboard instruments, since the chapter devoted to

them is the most extensive. While all matters of a theoretical or speculative nature are omitted, the student is given a grounding in composition, working first from figured bass (as part of the keyboard practice) through to the rules of counterpoint. The latter are taught using figured-bass numerals, so it is clear that counterpoint is basically to be seen as a two-part texture, firmly grounded in the movement of the bass.

Speer's treatise provides a useful transition to the other side of Handel's musical education, his study with Friedrich Wilhelm Zachow. Like Speer, Zachow began his career as a *Stadtpfeifer*, but advanced to the socially higher station of town organist.⁴⁵ He would have taught composition as a very practical matter, although the wide range of styles and expression in his oeuvre suggests that he relished the many possibilities of the art. Mainwaring's account of Handel's study with Zachow seems plausible in the light of this and other evidence, so it is worth recounting it here:⁴⁶

The first object of his attention was to ground him thoroughly in the principles of harmony. His next care was to cultivate his imagination, and form his taste. He had a large collection of Italian as well as German music: he shewed him the different styles of different nations; the excellences and defects of each particular author; and, that he might equally advance in the practical part, he frequently gave him subjects to work, and made him copy, and play, and compose in his stead. Thus he had more exercise, and more experience than usually falls to the share of any learner at his years.

This implies a two-part programme: first a study of the ground-rules of the art and then a massive study of existing examples. Mainwaring is most vague in respect to the first part; what were 'the principles of harmony'? Most probably Zachow did not follow a specific treatise, but we might situate his method somewhere between the older compositional theory of Printz (reprinted in 1696) and the newer method of Niedt (1700–17).⁴⁷ Printz begins his theory of 'musical poetics' with a study of intervals, together with syllabic stress and metres. Thus the principles of harmony are intimately connected with the rhythm and metre of text, and the art of text-setting. After an extensive study of intervallic progressions in a variety of note values, modes and cadences, Printz proceeds with a method of stimulating the invention. This is grounded in the concept of variation, achieved through knowledge of an enormous repertory of ornamental figures, methodically classified by Printz. The incipient composer thus learns to vary and expand a given idea through the judicious use of ornamental figures and their permutations; furthermore, this experience encourages him to invent further themes. The last section of Printz's composition theory is an introduction to figured bass, an art

which – like variation – bridges the fields of composition and performance.

The first immediate difference in Niedt's theory is the fact that he deals with figured bass first (something also to be observed in Speer's treatise). Niedt's affirmation that 'the thorough-bass is the most complete foundation of music' suggests that the traditional intervallic rules of counterpoint were now generally seen through and within the concept of figured bass. All notes, in an implied four-part texture, are related to the bass line. Even at this elementary stage Niedt introduces variation of the texture, a simple two-part fugue and the rules of modulation. Book II deals with variation, providing a glossary of ornamental figures not unlike that of Printz. In all, this approach tends to meld together the complementary concepts of structure and ornament: the ornamental variation of one piece can be the thematic material of another; a single bass progression can work as the basis of a plethora of otherwise distinct pieces. There is never any sense that the composer must create anything entirely new; he should rather become skilful in the manipulation, extension and variation of existing material.⁴⁸

The eager learner can imitate these and similar skilful *Manieren* [patterns] taken from compositions of good Masters, or, after hearing such skilful passages and patterns, he can commit them forthwith to paper and see what they consist in. Let me assure him that he will suffer no harm from this practice, but will discover that, in time, he himself will think of many *Inventiones*.

It is only in the last (unfinished) part of Niedt's course that he deals with counterpoint proper, but it is quite clear that he sees this as a refinement and reiteration of the previous thorough-bass theory, not as a completely new subject, requiring 'large Spanish spectacles'.⁴⁹ Indeed much is repeated from the first part, and Niedt frequently uses figured-bass numerals in his instructions about counterpoint (just as Speer did). The remaining chapters of this unfinished book include an irreverent and inadequate study of canon, and a survey of motets, chorales and short arias.

To return to Handel's study with Zachow, we might then surmise that his first study was figured bass, followed by the art of variation and elaboration, and ending with an examination of more complex contrapuntal devices. In no sense would he have studied counterpoint as a purely abstract, timeless art; everything would have been directed towards practical needs and the cultivation of a wide stylistic and affective repertory. This leads into the second and most essential part of Zachow's curriculum: the copying, performing and critical study of exist-

ing music. The only clue we have to the repertory concerned is the celebrated (but unfortunately lost) notebook, dated 1698, and first described by William Coxe in 1799:⁵⁰

It contains various airs, choruses, capricios, fugues, and other pieces of music, with the names of contemporary musicians, such as Zackau, Alberti, Froberger, Krieger, Kerl, Ebner, Strunch. They were probably exercises adopted at pleasure, or dictated for him to work upon, by his master. The composition is uncommonly scientific, and contains the seeds of many of his subsequent performances.

In other words, this was a fairly comprehensive miscellany of vocal and keyboard pieces from German lands of the late seventeenth century. It was through imitation of south German models, such as Froberger and Kerll, that Handel would have become adept at ‘strict counterpoint’, and we may assume that he amassed works of as many different styles as he could in other notebooks.

Opera centres outside Halle and Weissenfels: Berlin, Leipzig and Hamburg

Handel’s visit to Berlin was first recounted by Mainwaring, but his version of the story has to be emended to take into account various chronological factors.⁵¹ Mainwaring’s date of 1698 does not accord with his report of the ill health of Handel’s father at the same time (since he had died the year before) or his reference to the King of Prussia (whose coronation did not take place until 1701).⁵² Then there is the issue of Handel’s encounter with the Italian composers Ariosti and Bononcini at the Berlin court: Ariosti worked there from 1697 to 1703 but Bononcini did not arrive until 1702. Given that Händel senior had an honorary post at the Berlin court,⁵³ it is certainly possible that the young composer was introduced to the Elector before his father’s death, and that the prince – like Johann Adolph of Weissenfels – took an interest in the boy’s musical development. It is thus possible to infer at least two visits to Berlin, one in 1697, before the death of Georg Händel, and another in 1702.⁵⁴ In any event, Berlin would have offered Handel his first direct encounter with Italian musicians and composers, and a chance to see them working within a sumptuous court opera.

Mainwaring did not mention Handel’s visits to Leipzig, a major trading city quite close to Halle. Information about these visits surfaces in Mattheson’s publication of Telemann’s autobiography, where Telemann refers to their regular communication and ‘the frequent visits we made to

each other'.⁵⁵ This would suggest that the two composers met one another regularly in the period c. 1701–3, after Telemann's arrival in Leipzig and before Handel's departure for Hamburg.

Leipzig would have introduced Handel to an entirely new concept of operatic production: the public opera established by Nicolaus Adam Strungk. Handel's borrowings from the latter's keyboard works might imply that he encountered Strungk in Leipzig, and he must have known at least some of the twenty operas that Telemann composed during this period.⁵⁶ Baselt suggests that the cantor of the Thomaskirche, Johann Schelle, would also have been an important figure to Handel, on account of his biblical oratorios.⁵⁷ We must furthermore consider the influence of the organist Johann Kuhnau, who succeeded to Schelle's post in 1701. Mattheson generally speaks very highly of Kuhnau – who had published four sets of keyboard pieces by 1700 – particularly as a contrapuntist, and as one of the few composers of his age to consider melody, rather than directing everything towards harmony. He states that Handel at this time was even stronger than Kuhnau in improvised fugue and counterpoint, but that Kuhnau's pieces (in contrast to Handel's?) were all melodic and readily singable.⁵⁸ Telemann too acknowledges the influence of Kuhnau as a model for fugue and counterpoint, although he – in interesting contradiction to Mattheson – states that he and Handel had to turn to each other for the study of melodic style.⁵⁹

It is in Hamburg that the facts of Handel's early career become more certain, owing to the direct account of his friend Johann Mattheson.⁶⁰ We do not know exactly how Handel came to move to Hamburg. Certainly, as one of the most prosperous cities in Europe, which had managed to survive the Thirty Years War virtually unscathed, it would have been an attractive centre. As a free city, it was not beholden to any particular ruling family and was, throughout the seventeenth century, the trading capital of northern Germany. It was already well known in musical circles as the home of the first public opera in Germany, founded in 1678 and largely supported by the business community; indeed, a specially designed opera house had been erected in the centre of town. Furthermore, Matthias Weckmann's *Collegium musicum*, founded in 1660, was perhaps the most significant public concert organisation before the eighteenth century. Handel had many acquaintances in Halle who could have introduced him to the city: the most obvious was the enthusiastic music-lover Heinrich Brockes; another of Handel's Halle contemporaries, Barthold Feind, also comes to mind.⁶¹ Johann Theile, a former resident of Hamburg and one of the founders of the opera, was a close friend of Zachow, so he too might have played a part.⁶² There may even have been connections through the Weissenfels court; after all, guest

appearances from the Hamburg opera at Weissenfels were not uncommon. Reinhard Keiser himself – arguably the strongest musical influence on Handel during his Hamburg years – spent some time in Weissenfels during this period.⁶³

Mattheson claimed to have introduced Handel to a wide range of musical activities throughout the city. Handel's operatic career began modestly as a second violinist in the opera orchestra, but he was soon working as a harpsichordist and writing his own operas, with or without the support of Keiser.⁶⁴ Mattheson complains of the extraordinary length of Handel's early arias and his almost unending cantatas,⁶⁵ and states that he could only write full and well-developed harmony, without any true sense of taste or melody.

Here we may perhaps sense the conflict between the old order of Lutheran composers and the influence of early-Enlightenment thinking, where the emphasis was placed upon simplicity, 'natural' melody and the appropriateness of music for any particular text or dramatic situation. Handel had learned much about the 'stuff' of music from his studies with Zachow and his intense engagement with manuscript anthologies of music; now he was finishing his education with what Mattheson termed the 'high school of opera', learning how to apply his craft. On the other hand, Handel had much to teach the 'modern' Mattheson; according to the latter, Handel enjoyed many meals at the table of Mattheson's father, and there Mattheson learned as much about counterpoint from Handel as he taught Handel about musical drama. Handel apparently had many pupils at this time,⁶⁶ which suggests that his skills as a composer were well recognised.

When Handel expressed indifference to the collection of Italian music shown to him by the Prince of Tuscany in Hamburg,⁶⁷ he might well have been viewing it with the critical eye of a Kuhnau or Zachow. The Germanic music education he had received stressed not only deeply wrought musical textures but also an intense awareness of the potential of any particular piece or theme. In this sense, he already had more than enough tools for fluent and efficient compositional practice. Moreover, the musical establishments in Halle, Weissenfels, Berlin, Leipzig and Hamburg had provided him with a remarkable breadth of experience, covering virtually every musical genre of the age.