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Working Paper

Changing cultural space: The public molding of Handel's Esther into an English Oratorio (1732)

WZB Discussion Paper, No. SP II 2016-310

Provided in Cooperation with:
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Suggested Citation: Chrissochoidis, Ilias (2016) : Changing cultural space: The public molding of Handel's Esther into an English Oratorio (1732), WZB Discussion Paper, No. SP II 2016-310, Wissenschaftszentrum Berlin für Sozialforschung (WZB), Berlin

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https://hdl.handle.net/10419/148597

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Discussion Paper

SP II 2016–310

December 2016

Research Area
Markets and Choice

Research Unit
Economics of Change

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Abstract

Changing cultural space: The public molding of Handel's Esther into an English Oratorio (1732)

English oratorio engendered lasting changes in music history, yet the social context of its genesis remains under-explored. No convincing explanation has been offered for the Oratorio's revivals as Esther in February-March 1731/2 and the events leading to Handel's ambitious production two months later are still obscure. Moreover, scholarly emphasis on the textual affinities between the two works threatens to reduce its birth into mere compositional updating. This essay promotes Esther's cultural autonomy by shifting attention from music text to context, and from composition to reception. It examines the oratorio's historical milieu and suggests that political and cultural tensions in 1731–32 informed Handel's molding of a piece of chamber music into a public-oriented genre. It also upgrades the press as a shaping force in the new market of musical products and finds that rhetorical and typographical choices in Esther advertisements encoded ideological tensions between progressive and antiquarian claims on the oratorio.

English oratorio engendered lasting changes in music and social history. It shifted Handel's artistic path from helplessly expensive Italian operas to cost-effective music dramas, eventually earning him financial prosperity and national devotion. It breathed new life into sacred music at a time of growing secularism, turning the religious sublime into a gate for heightening music's power. Above all, it exemplified the synergy between art, religion, national affirmation (at least in the 18th century), and social activism, as demonstrated in countless charitable fundraisers. *Messiah*, *Samson*, and *Judas Maccabeus*, in particular, were foundational classics in the symphonic/choral performance canon, shaping reverential attitudes we usually associate with 19th-century reception. Before German writers made a religion out of music, English oratorio had blended the two in admirable proportion.

For all its significance, the birth of English oratorio remains historiographically under-explored. No convincing explanation has been offered for the *Oratorium*'s revivals as *Esther* in February-March 1731/2 and the events leading to Handel's ambitious production two months later are still obscure. More important, excessive attention to the textual affinities between the two works has led to problems. Once openly called the "birth" of the genre,[1] the May 2, 1732, premiere of *Esther* is nowadays understood almost as the end of a trajectory beginning in 1718.[2] Designating the Cannons

[1] "Handel's first public performance of *Esther* on 2 May 1732 marked the birth of concert oratorio": Robert Manson Myers, *Handel's Messiah: A Touchstone of Taste* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1948), 25; Myers repeats the statement in *Handel, Dryden, & Milton* (London: Bowes & Bowes, 1956), 17-18; "[T]he birth of English oratorio [...] was casual and unpremeditated, its parentage discreetly veiled, and its legitimacy not above suspicion": Winton Dean, *Handel's Dramatic Oratorios and Masques* (London: Oxford University Press, 1959), 206; "Thus was born the English oratorio, a *pièce de circonstance* compounded of homage, piracy, retaliation, and ecclesiastical fiat": Paul Henry Lang, *George Frideric Handel* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1966), 280.

[2] "[...] in the spring and summer of 1718, came two major dramatic works. One was *Acis and Galatea* (HWV 49), basically in the style of the short English masques [...] The other was *Esther* (HWV 50a), the first English oratorio [....] The circumstances which gave birth to this new musical form remain frustratingly obscure": Anthony Hicks, "Handel and the Idea of an Oratorio," in *The Cambridge Companion to Handel*, ed. Donald Burrows (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 145-63: 150; "Handel's first English oratorio was an accidental consequence of the period between the closure of the Haymarket opera company in 1717 and the establishment of a new permanent opera company, the Royal Academy of Music, in 1719"; the 1732 *Esther* was "Handel's next venture into oratorio": Donald Burrows, *Handel: Messiah* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 4. Notwithstanding later clarifications on the genre's identity, Burrows does introduce the Cannons masque in these terms: "Schon während seiner Tätigkeit für den Duke of Chandos in den Jahren

masque *Esther I*, the *Hallische Händel-Ausgabe* indeed suppresses explicit references to it as *Oratorium* and *Haman & Mordecai*; it also discounts the late appearance of Esther half-way through the work, an expansion that justified the title change in 1732.[3] Two distinct historical moments have thus been reduced to mere compositional updating.

This essay promotes *Esther*'s cultural autonomy by shifting attention from music text to context, and from composition to reception. It examines the oratorio's historical milieu and suggests that political and cultural tensions in 1731-32 informed Handel's molding of a piece of chamber music into a public-oriented genre. It also upgrades the press as a shaping force in the new market of musical products and finds that rhetorical choices and topography in *Esther* advertisements encoded ideological tensions between progressive and antiquarian claims on the oratorio.

What's in an ad?

Two reliable accounts have been offered for the May 1732 production of *Esther*. The one has Handel capitalizing on successful revivals of his old masque on February 23, and March 1 and 3, by Bernard Gates and the children of the Chapel Royal with vocal support from the latter's and the Westminster Abbey's choirs and instrumental from the Academy of Ancient Music and the Philharmonic Society: "the applause with which it was received," writes John Hawkins in 1770, "suggested to Mr. *Handel*, the thought of exhibiting that species of composition at Covent-Garden [*recte* the King's] theatre."[4] Moving a step further, Burney credits the idea of a staged production to Handel's "illustrious scholar"

1717/18 hatte Händel ein englisches Oratorium komponiert: das Oratorium *Esther*" ("Händel in London," in *Europäische Musikgeschichte*, ed. Sabine Ehrmann-Herfort, Ludwig Finscher, and Giselher Schubert, 2 vols. [Metzler: Bärenreiter, 2002], 1:461-98: 487).

[3] Georg Friedrich Händel, *Esther: Oratorio in Six Scenes (1. Fassung), HWV 50[a]*, ed. Howard Serwer (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1995), 186-88; even "the conducting score prepared by John Christopher Smith Sr. and his assistant(s) for Handel's production of the revised work in May, 1732 still called it *Oratorium*": Händel, *Esther*, xvi, n15. Significant or not, *Esther*'s serialization chimes with Serwer's professional background in accounting: see Ellen T. Harris, "Handel the Investor," *Music & Letters* 85 (2004), 521-75: 521. For a comparison between the two versions, see David Vickers, "Handel's Performing Versions: A Study of Four Music Theatre Works from the 'Second Academy' Period," 2 vols. (Ph.D. dissertation, The Open University, 2007), 2:57-67 and 68-73.

[4] [John Hawkins], *An Account of the Institution and Progress of the Academy of Ancient Music* (London, 1770), 6.

Princess Anne.[5] Neither author is interest free. A champion of antiquarianism, Hawkins more or less designates the Academy of Ancient Music as *Esther*'s obstetrician;[6] and Burney's historiographical compliment targets none other than the aunt of George III, sponsor of the Handel Commemoration Festival and dedicatee of the event's official *Account*. This is not enough to compromise their accuracy, though, as both drew on eyewitness accounts, one source being John Randall, singer of the title-role in the 1732 revival and later Professor of Music at Cambridge University. The problem lies elsewhere. *Esther*'s unexpected triumph in May suggests that the production was a risky move. Given Handel's problematic season, especially after *Ezio*'s failure,[7] it seems questionable that the composer would have switched to sacred drama, of all other options, and as easily as Hawkins and Burney let us think.

Far more convincing is the second account: "Handel seems to have been stimulated to this attempt by the encroachments of other adventurers upon his property."[8] Intellectual piracy indeed was more likely to have spurred him to action. Back in 1720, he had to secure a royal privilege for printing his music after unauthorized editions of his keyboard works began to circulate.[9] The advertisement of an *Esther* performance on April 20, 1732,[10] similarly led him to revise and produce the work at the

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[5] Charles Burney, *An Account of the Musical Performances in Westminster-Abbey and the Pantheon* [...] *in Commemoration of Handel* (London: for the Benefit of the Musical Fund, 1785), 100.

[6] See Donald Burrows, *Handel and the English Chapel Royal* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 289-90 (n6).

[7] According to Colman's opera register, "In Janry. Ezio. a New opera; Clothes & all ye Scenes New but did not draw much company": British Library, Add. Ms. 11258, f. 30v; see also Reinhard Strohm, "Handel, Metastasio, Racine: The case of 'Ezio,'" *The Musical Times* 118 ([no. 1617, November] 1977), 901-03.

[8] Charles Burney, *A General History of Music, from the Earliest Ages to the Present Period* [...] *Volume the Fourth* (London: the author, 1789), 360.

[9] "The Author has been obliged to publish these Pieces [Harpsichord Lessons] to prevent the Publick being imposed upon by some Surreptitious an incorrect Copies of some pf them that has got abroad": *The Daily Courant*, no. 5945, Wednesday 9 November 1720, [2]. See also Otto Erich Deutsch, *Handel: A Documentary Biography* (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1955), 117; and Terence Best, "Handel's harpsichord music: a checklist," in *Music in Eighteenth-Century England: Essays in memory of Charles Cudworth*, ed. Christopher Hogwood and Richard Luckett (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 171-87: 174-75.

[10] *The Daily Journal*, no. 3520, 17 April 1732, [1].

King's Theatre on May 2. The scenario of theatrical competition finds support in the contemporary pamphlet *See and Seem Blind.* Its author, very likely Aaron Hill, considers *Esther* a response to the success of *Amelia* (either he was ignorant of the pirated *Esther* or he found the contrast with a staged English opera more profitable for his theatrical agenda): "This alarm'd *H—l*, and out he brings an *Oratorio*."[11] For a competitive production, however, *Esther* was an odd choice: "to my great Surprize, [I] found this Sacred *Drama* a mere Consort, no Scenary, Dress or Action, so necessary to a *Drama*."[12] Hill's puzzlement raises questions about the nature and real aims of Handel's response. Staging is everything in theatre and no concert performance will ever compare with a staged production. The ecclesiastical veto on staging *Esther*, so often invoked as an explanation, was merely a condition.[13] Handel could have staged *Esther* without the Chapel Royal boys or offer another work.

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[11] [?Aaron Hill], *See and Seem Blind: Or, A Critical Dissertation on the Publick Diversions, &c. Of Persons and Things, and Things and Persons, and what not. In a Letter from the Right Honourable the Lord B----- to A--- H--- Esq* (London: H. Whitridge, [1732]), 14; repr. with an introduction by Robert D. Hume (Los Angeles: William Andrews Clark Memorial Library, University of California, Los Angeles, 1986).

[12] *See and Seem Blind*, 15.

[13] Since Burney is the only source for this subject, it is worth quoting him in full: "Mr. HANDEL himself was present at one of these representations [on February 23, and March 1 and 3], and having mentioned it to the Princess Royal, his illustrious scholar, her Royal Highness was pleased to express a desire to see it exhibited in action at the Opera-house in the Hay-market, *by the same young performers* [emphasis added]; but Dr. Gibson, then bishop of London, would not grant permission for its being represented on that stage, even with books in the children's hands. Mr. HANDEL, however, the next year [starting on March 25 in the Julian calendar], had it performed at that theatre, with additions to the Drama, by Humphreys; but in *still life:* that is, without action, in the same manner as Oratorios have been since constantly performed. *The Drama exhibited by the children* [emphasis added] consisted only of two acts [...] as it had been originally set for the duke of Chandos" (*Account*, 100-01). Burney links the Chapel Royal children only to the semi-private revivals, which suggests they were absent from Handel's production. If so, and considering that Gibson had no jurisdiction over theatrical performances, why did Handel refrain from staging *Esther*? For Donald Burrows, who has written the most detailed and incisive account of the episode to date, Handel "still hoped to involve the choristers in some way": *Handel and the English Chapel Royal*, 294. No one has mentioned that Handel's partnership with Heidegger at this time might have influenced Gibson, who had been a vociferous critic of the latter's masquerades as early as 1724: see *A Sermon preached to the Societies for Reformation of Manners, at St. Mary-le-Bow, on Monday January the 6th 1723. By the Right Reverend Father in God, Edmund Lord Bishop of London* (London: John Wyat, 1723[/4]),

Why did he interrupt his opera season with what effectively was "a mere Consort"? What prompted his high exposure to failure at a time when attendance at the King's Theatre "was so thin"?

The answer I propose will not be found in *Esther*'s text and score. It can be glimpsed, however, from another type of sources, advertisements. If we know anything about this incident at all, it is because of Burney's pioneering use of early English newspapers (for which he has received insufficient credit). Handel's career in London coincided with the rise of the press as a shaping force in theatrical life.[14] Although board bills were still in use, advertisements and reports in the dailies guaranteed wide and swift circulation. Producers could communicate with the public directly and at minimum cost. Cancellations, changes of date, retractions and protests, all could reach the capital within a day at the latest. Had the unauthorized *Esther* been performed without publicity in the press, Handel might have been unaware of it (at least personally) and the incentive to answer the challenge would have been minimal. But an advertisement in the newspapers was public property and had to be reckoned with. The display ad in the *Daily Journal* issue of April 17 was making available to the general public not only Handel's masque but also critical information about the work's origins, as we shall see below. [**Figure 1**]

The fascinating record of this rivalry, peaking with back-to-back advertisements in *The Daily Journal* issue of April 19 [**Figure 2**], is not always or correctly available in Handel literature. A facsimile of the ads appears only in Stanley Sadie's "pictorial" biography of the composer, a book of little scholarly value.[15] (The standard life-and-works monograph on Handel by Donald Burrows reproduces only Handel's "respond" advertisement, bypassing the causal link between the two productions.[16])

19-20; and the satirical rejoinder *Heydegger's Letter to the Bishop of London* (London: N. Cox, 1724).

[14] See Jeremy Black, *The English Press in the Eighteenth Century* (Beckenham: Croom Helm, 1987).

[15] Stanley Sadie, *Handel* (London: Faber and Faber, 1968), 45.

[16] Donald Burrows, *Handel* (New York: Schirmer Books, 1994), 168. Burrows acknowledges this performance earlier in the book ("In 1732 there was a further performance of *Esther*, on 20 April at the 'Great Room in Villars-Street, York Buildings'": *Handel*, 166, n2), but only as a follow up of the February revivals. He does accept the link in his *Messiah*, 4-5, but totally ignores it again in his full examination of the revivals in *Handel and the English Chapel Royal*.

Even the text of the advertisements, available since 1857, is reproduced with problems.[17] One is alarmed to find that Otto Erich Deutsch's documentary biography of Handel, an effort to supplant romanticized narratives with annotated primary sources, resorts to editorial tricks. Here the April 19 ads appear in reverse order, with the second one serving as invisible stand-up for the original from April 17.[18] [**Figure 3**] Moreover, his transcription suppresses meaning embedded in the layout. The highly stratified text collapses into compact paragraphs and continuous lines. To seal the damage, the revision of the book as volume 4 of the "Händel Handbuch" eradicates all typographical inflections.[19] [**Figure 4**] "As a result," J. Merrill Knapp rightly complains, "emphasis of certain phrases and words are lost."[20]

From text to context

Textual emphasis is only part of the story, though. The April 19 advertisements were designed not simply to be read, but also to be looked at. As commercial products with precise consumer targets and high-return expectations (luring music lovers to a specific performance), they deploy typography to add layers of meaning to the text. It has taken long time for typography to be recognized as a semiotic

[17] See Victor Schoelcher, *The Life of Handel* (London: Robert Cocks & Co., 1857; reprint, New York: Da Capo Press, 1979), 104-05; and, in German translation, Friedrich Chrysander, *G. F. Händel*, vol. 2 (Leipzig: 1860; repr. Hildesheim: Georg Olms / Wiesbaden: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1966), 274.

[18] *Handel*, 288-89 (the correct order is acknowledged in the manuscript card used for the book: "Handel. A Documentary Biography MS. II Deutsch 1954," Foundling Museum, Gerald Coke Handel Colelction, HC 764). Deutsch's claim that the unauthorized advertisement of April 17 was preceded by several earlier ones is unfounded. Winton Dean, too, erroneously states that "the issues of [*The Daily Journal*] 10-15 April are missing from the Burney Collection" (Dean, *Oratorios*, 205, n1). The full-week hiatus appears only in *The Daily Courant*, which had no part in the publicity of the unauthorized production anyway. Dean's inference that the ad might have first appeared in the week of April 10-15 ("The announcement appeared on the 17th, but not on the 8th or earlier": *ibid*.) is mistaken: in the continuous run of *The Daily Journal* for the month of April, the ad appears for the first time on the 17th.

[19] *Händel-Handbuch. Band 4: Dokumente zu Leben und Schaffen*, ed. Walter Eisen and Margret Eisen (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1985), 199-200.

[20] J. Merrill Knapp, "The New Edition of Otto Erich Deutsch, 'Handel: A Documentary Biography' – A Review," *Göttinger Händel-Beiträge* 3 (1989), 296-311: 298.

system independent of linguistic content, and capable of enhancing or undermining the latter through its indexical and iconic functions.[21] According to Hartmut Stöckl,

> literate users of typography will also notice various aspects of graphic and visual detail which convey often subtle, never completely redundant and invariably connotative, meanings. Here, type faces may point to the nature of the document, carry emotional values or indicate the writer's intended audience, and aspects of the layout may serve to reinforce the thematic structure of a given text and facilitate access to its information.[22]

The effectiveness of display advertisements rests on how "typography structures visual space and thus creates optical balance, shapes textual order and guides readers' attention by providing a page-map to navigate."[23] Stöckl codifies these operations in four levels:[24]

Microtypography	design of fonts and individual graphic signs (type face, size, style, and color, e.g. Times Roman, 11 pt)
Mesotypography	configuration of graphic signs in lines and text blocks (letter fit, word and line spacing, amount of print on page alignment of type, position of lines, mixing of fonts, e.g. wide spaced characters in double spaced, centered lines)
Macrotypography	graphic structure of the overall document (indentations and paragraphing, caps and initials, emphasis, ornamentation, visual identity of the text, e.g. italics, headlines, figurative initials)
Paratypography	materials, instruments and techniques of graphic sign-making (e.g. paper quality, characting)

Although 18th-century print advertising was less sophisticated than ours, it developed an impressive palette of graphic inflection. Type size and font changes (bold, italic), capitalization, spacing, and

[21] For concrete examples of the textual-visual nexus in modern advertising, see Hartmut Stöckl, "In between modes: Language and image in printed media," in *Perspectives on Multimodality*, ed. Eija Ventola, Cassily Charles and Martin Kaltenbacher (Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 2004), 9-30: 19-24.

[22] Hartmut Stöckl, "Typography: body and dress of a text – a signing mode between language and image," *Visual Communication* 4/2 (2005), 204-14: 206.

[23] Stöckl, "Typography," 213.

[24] The following is a simplified version of the table in Stöckl, "Typography," 210.

centering were common ways of stratifying linguistic content in an age when public space was both defined and bedeviled by the printed word.[25] Italicization, for instance, allowed Burney to recognize two discursive layers in the satirical pamphlet *Harmony in an Uproar* from 1734: "The only parts of this ironical letter which seem to be serious are printed in Italics, and contain HANDEL's own defence."[26] Interrogating such inflections was even more likely to have happened on April 19, 1732, as readers of the *Daily Journal* saw the competing announcements of *Esther* one atop the other (as late as 1789, Burney was intrigued by this juxtaposition).[27] They probably have taken a second look to ensure that this placement was not an accident, nor the inclusion or absence of information therein was the outcome of neglect. With eyes in "spot the difference" mode, they might have compared details, identified markers, and should they have kept abreast of recent debates, unpacked certain connotations.

Take for instance the venue of the two performances, typically listed as headings in large type and/or full capitalization: "AT the KING's THEATRE in the HAY-MARKET" denotes more than a building. This was the seat of the Royal Academy of Musick, the single purveyor of Italian Opera in London, subsidized by the King and directed (until 1728) by peers of the realm; in other words, an institution.[28] On the other hand, the "Great Room in Villars-street York Buildings" was an independent venue hired for occasional functions, including concerts.[29] What is more, it had strong

[25] See John Feather, "The Power of Print: Word and Image in Eighteenth-Century England," in *Culture and Society in Britain: 1660-1800*, ed. Jeremy Black (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1997), 51-68; how much the press had infiltrated the daily life of upper classes can be seen in the following humorous report: "A noble Lord, in a high Station, that is pretty far advanced in Years, never rises from his Bed, but asks, *Am I in the Papers?* For it has been an Observation made by most People, that his Name has been made use of for being *greatly indispos'd*; *finely mended*; *dangerously relaps'd*; *in a fair way of Recovery*; *going to*, *and returning from the Country* […] in one Paper or other, for several years together": *The Tricks of the Town: Or, Ways and Means for getting Money* (London: J. Roberts, 1732), 49.

[26] Burney, *Account*, *19.

[27] As late as in the 1780s, Charles Burney would not fail to observe that Handel's advertisement "appeared above the preceding, in the same newspaper": *History 4*, 360.

[28] For the founding of the Academy, see Elizabeth Gibson, *The Royal Academy of Music, 1719-1728: The Institution and Its Directors* (New York and London: Garland, 1989), 108-16.

[29] The room had been used for performances since 1685: Hugh Arthur Scott, "London's First Concert Room," *Music & Letters* 18 (1937), 379-90: 380. A detailed description of its interior survives from 1724: "The GREAT ROOM in Villars-street, York-Buildings, 32 Foot 4 Inches long, 31 Foot 6 broad,

anti-Handelian connotations, often serving as seat of resistance to the composer. Following the enormous success of *Rinaldo*, in spring 1711, Thomas Clayton, Nicolino Haym, and Charles Dieupart had retreated there to mount their own subscription series of "*Italian* Musick grafted upon *English* Poetry." As Burney explains, "Sir Richard Steele [...] had let his concert room, in York-buildings, to Clayton, Dieupart, and Haym, who losing their power and importance at the opera on the arrival of Handel, solicited subscriptions for a concert at York-buildings, and were abetted and patronized by the Spectators, number 258 and 278, both written by Steele."[30] The collapse of the project in 1712 led Steele to pursue an even more ambitious scheme called "Censorium," "a noble entertainment for persons of a refined taste [consisting] of the finest pieces of eloquence translated from the Greek and Latin authors [and] accompanied by the best musick suited to raise those passions that are suited to the occasion."[31] Although he borrowed heavily to renovate the room, Steele offered sporadic performances from 1715 to the early 1720s.[32] His mercurial career in politics and journalism and, most likely, the high cost of these entertainments forced him to let the Room in 1724. The venue's anti-Handelian connotations were revived in May 1731, when Giovanni Maria Bononcini "formed a scheme to erect a music meeting at York buildings in opposition to the Opera."[33]

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21 Foot high, the Sides and Roof adorn'd with Painting, Gilding, Pillars, Capitals, and other Decorations, 4 Rows of Seats round the Room, stuff'd and cover'd with green Bayes and rail'd in with Iron, besides an Alcove rais'd four Foot, with a Semicircle of Seats, and stands for Music, 15 Foot 9 deep, and 17 Foot in Diameter; towards the Room, a Gallery over-against the Alcove, handsomely rail'd with Iron. Together with the House thereunto belonging, of 2 Ground Rooms, 3 one Pair of Stairs, 6 two Pair of Stairs, and 7 Garrets, with Kitchen and Cellars": *The Daily Post*, no. 1526, Monday 17 August 1724, [2]; see also *The Correspondence of Richard Steele*, ed. by Rae Blanchard (Oxford University Press / London: Humphrey Milford, 1941), 114-15, n2.

[30] Burney, *History 4*, 225; see also John Hawkins, *A General History of the Science and Practice of Music*, 5 vols (London: T. Payne, 1776), 5:4n, 147, and 164. For the full announcement, see *The Spectator*, no. 258, Wednesday 26 December 1711, [2]; and no. 278, Friday 18 January 1711, [2]. For a background of their agenda, see John Loftis, "Richard Steele's Censorium," *The Huntington Library Quarterly* 14/1 (November 1950), 43-66: 44-49.

[31] Letter by George Berkeley to John Percival, 7 March 1713: George A. Aitken, *The Life of Richard Steele*, 2 vols. (London: Wm. Isbister, 1889), 1:361.

[32] The first recorded entertainment appears in *The Weekly Packet*, no. 152, Saturday 28 May – Saturday 4 June 1715, [2], and several issues of Steele's *Town Talk* expound on the project.

[33] Viscount Percival's Diary, 31 August 1731: *Manuscripts of the Earl of Egmont: Diary of Viscount Percival afterwards First Earl of Egmont. Vol. I. 1730-1733* (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1920), 202. See also, Lowell Lindgren, "The Three Great Noises 'Fatal to the Interests of

On April 17, 1732, opera going readers of the *Daily Journal* could easily suspect that the York Buildings *Esther* stood for more than commercial competition. Especially if they combined the top italicized line "*Never Perform'd in Publick before*" with the title qualifier "As it was compos'd originally for the most noble James Duke of Chandos by GEORGE FREDERICK HANDEL." The promise here was not simply to revive an obscure work by Handel, but one written specifically for the kingdom's most extravagant nobleman at the height of his power. Could the revelation of Handel's service to the "princely Chandos" (back then Earl of Carnarvon) have been of consequence in 1732?[34]

The "Timon" scandal

The name of Chandos had special resonance among Londoners in the winter/spring of 1731-32. On December 14, Alexander Pope had published his poetical *Epistle to Lord Burlington*, an attack on scandalous profligacy disguised as art patronage.[35] There he starkly contrasts Burlington's fine taste with the ostentatious spending of a character named Timon:

> At *Timon*'s *Villa* let us pass a Day,
> Where all cry out, 'What Sums are thrown away!
> [...]
> Treated, caress'd, and tir'd, I take my leave,
> Sick of his civil Pride from Morn to Eve!
> I curse such lavish Cost [...]
> In you, my *Lord*, Taste sanctifies Expence,

Bononcini,'" *The Musical Quarterly* 61 (1975), 560-83: 571-72. The project's failure, along with two other "noises" put an end to Bononcini's career in England.

[34] For accounts of Handel's association with Cannons, see William Hayman Cummings, *Handel, the Duke of Chandos, and the Harmonious Blacksmith* (London: Musical News Office, 1915); R. A. Streatfeild, *Handel, Canons and the Duke of Chandos* (London: Charles Whittingham and co. / Chiswick Press, 1916); and Graydon Beeks, "'A Club of Composers': Handel, Pepusch and Arbuthnot at Cannons," in *Handel: Tercentenary Collection*, edited by Stanley Sadie and Anthony Hicks (London: Macmillan Press, 1987), 209-21.

[35] [Alexander] Pope, *An Epistle to the Right Honourable Richard Earl of Burlington. Occasion'd by his Publishing Palladio's Designs of the Baths, Arches, Theatres, &c. of Ancient Rome* (London: L. Gilliver, 1731); advertised in *The Daily Journal*, no. 3414, Tuesday 14 December 1731, [2].

For Splendor borrows all her Rays from Sense.[36]

The dismissal of Timon and his villa were immediately construed as an attack on the Duke of Chandos and his magnificent residence in Cannons.[37] (The announced arrival of the Duke in London two days after the *Epistle*'s publication might have reinforced this perception.[38]) Since Pope had been known as a beneficiary of Chandos' munificence,[39] the unprovoked insult to a former benefactor was considered monstrous. By the 16th the verdict of the town was clear: "they say, the satire is personal."[40] "Everybody concurs in their opinion of Pope's last performance, and condemns it as dull

[36] Pope, *Burlington*, 9, 12-13. Subsequent editions of the poem add the title "Of TASTE" and "OF FALSE TASTE."

[37] "By *Timon* he was universally supposed, and by the Earl of Burlington, to whom the poem is addressed, was privately said to mean the Duke of Chandos": Samuel Johnson, *Prefaces, Biographical and Critical, to the Works of the English Poets*, 10 vols. (London: J. Nichols, 1781), 7:141. Chandos himself had been aware of such criticism as early as 1718, when he wrote "I don't know that my way of living is such as can give Offence to any, but I confess as I have got my Estate honestly, I can't see why I should be ashamed to show it": letter to George Brydges, 5 September 1718, cited in P. G. M. Dickson and J. V. Beckett, "The Finances of the Dukes of Chandos: Aristocratic Inheritance, Marriage, and Debt in Eighteenth-Century England," *The Huntington Library Quarterly* 64 (2001), 309-355: 314. Cannons had 1161 visitors from June 1721 to June 1722 alone: "A Book of Straingers 1721" "17 June 1722 Totall of Straingers dined at Cannons since ye 25 June last being one year 1161": Huntington, Stowe Ms. 59, cited in Susan Jenkins, *Portrait of a Patron: The Patronage and Collecting of James Brydges, 1st Duke of Chandos (1674-1744)* (Aldershot and Burlington: Ashgate, 2007), 51), and a detailed account of the building had been published in 1722. John Macky reported that "few *German* Sovereign Princes, live with that Magnificence, Grandeur and good Order," and the establishment included "above a Hundred Servants in Family of one Degree or another": [John Macky], *A Journey through England. In Familiar Letters from a Gentleman here, to his Friend abroad. Vol. II* (London: J. Pemberton, 1722), 5, 10. Poetic eulogies include Charles Gildon's *Canons: Or, The Vision. A Poem address'd to the Right Honourable James Earl of Caernarvan, &c.* (London: J. Roberts, 1717); and Samuel Humphreys' *Cannons. A Poem. Inscrib'd to His Grace the Duke of Chandos* (London: J. Roberts, 1728).

[38] *The London Evening-Post*, no. 631, Tuesday 14 – Thursday 16 December 1731, [1].

[39] In 1715, the then Earl of Carnarvon had subscribed for twelve copies of Pope's translation of the *Iliad*, a gesture that the poet acknowledged: Jenkins, *Chandos*, 154, 157.

[40] William Cleland to John Gay, 16 December 1731: *The Works of Alexander Pope*, ed. Whitwell Elwin, 10 vols. (New York, Gordian Press, 1967), 7:445. The poet himself would acknowledge later

and impertinent," Lord Hervey wrote on December 21; "I cannot but imagine, by the 18 lines in the last page but one, that he designed ridiculing Lord Burlington as much as he does the Duke of Chandos."[41] This turn of events both stunned and embarrassed Pope. "I declare to you," he confided to Aaron Hill on December 22, "I never imagin'd the least application of what I said of *Timon* could be made to the D. of *Ch*[*ando*]*s* [...] And if I have not lost my senses, the town has lost 'em, by what I heard so late, as but two days ago, of the uproar on this head."[42] The following day, he publicly denied the rumors in an anonymous letter:

> I Really cannot help smiling at the Stupidity, while I lament the slanderous Temper, of the Town. I thought no Mortal singly could claim that Character of *Timon*, any more than any Man pretend to be Sir *John Falstaff*. But the Application of it to the D. of Ch. is monstrous.[43]

It would take two personal letters and Hill's services to convince the Duke of his good intentions ("his grace from the first assured me of his opinion of my innocence").[44]

Pope's remonstrations counted little, however, in a public sphere inflamed by partisan politics. As Aaron Hill tried to explain: "it is no wonder that the malice of a little herd of censurers, whom your *wit* has made your *enemies*, would awaken a resentment, of more consequence, than their own. *They*

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that "The report was almost universal": Alexander Pope to John Caryll, 29 March [1732]: *Works*, 6:331; for coverage of the debate in the press, see *The Gentleman's Magazine* 2 (1732): 555.

[41] Lord Hervey to Stephen Fox, 21 December 1731: *Lord Hervey and His Friends, 1726-38*, ed. the Earl of Ilchester (London: John Murray, 1950), 124-25. Burlington was involved in the creation of the poem, which was supposed to introduce the second volume of Palladio's sketches: Jenkins, *Chandos*, 161.

[42] *The Works of the Late Aaron Hill, Esq*, 2nd edn, 4 vols. (London: printed for the benefit of the family, [1754]), 1:162-63.

[43] *The Daily Journal*, no. 3422, Thursday 23 December 1731, [1]; the letter is dated December 19.

[44] Alexander Pope to Lord Oxford, 22 January 1732: *Works*, 8:293. Apparently, Hill had shown the Duke Pope's letter, which may have been written exactly for this purpose. Alexander Pope to Aaron Hill, 22 December: "it would have been a pleasure to me, to have found some friend saying a word in my justification, against a most malicious falshhood [*sic*]." Aaron Hill to Alexander Pope, 23 December: "I could more effectually, convince him [Chandos], how *he* ought to *think*, by letting him see, how *you* think, on this subject" (Hill, *Works*, 1:163, 167.)

are glad to *mistake*, if they can make *others* mistake *you*."[45] Chronic irritation with Pope's Catholicism, Jacobite sympathies, and biting attacks on the Walpole administration transformed the "Timon" *faux pas* into a wave of public outcry against his morals and even his deformed body:[46]

> INGLORIOUS Rhimer! Low licentious Slave!
> Who blasts the Beauteous, and belies the Brave:[47]

In January alone, the *Monthly Chronicle* listed half-dozen titles on the topic:

> 41 Of False Taste. An Epistle to the Right Hon. *Richard* Earl of *Burlington*. By Mr. *Pope*. The Third Edition, with an additional Letter. [...]
>
> 42 Of Dulness and Scandal. Occasioned by the Character of Lord *Timon*, in *Pope*'s Epistle to the Earl of *Burlington*. By Mr. *Welsted*. [...]
>
> 43 An Epistle to Mr. *Pope*. Printed for *H. Whitridge*; [...]
>
> 44 Malice defeated. A Pastoral Essay. Occasioned by Mr. *Pope*'s Character of Lord *Timon*, in his Epistle to the Earl of *Burlington*; and Mr. *Welsted's* Answer. [...]
>
> 45 Of Good Nature. An Epistle humbly inscrib'd to his Grace the Duke of *Chandos*. [...]
>
> 46 A Miscellany on Taste. With a curious Frontispiece. [...][48]

The published reactions continued up to late April 1732, when the *Esther* advertisements appeared:

> *LET* P-pe *no more what* Ch——s *builds deride*,
> *Because he takes not* nature *for his guide*;

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[45] Hill, *Works*, 1:165.

[46] J. V. Guerinot, *Pamphlet Attacks on Alexander Pope, 1711-1744* (London: Methuen, 1969), 204-21. "Never previously or subsequently in his career did Pope so deliberately fail in deference and affront a whole class": James McLaverty, *Pope, Print and Meaning* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 145. See also George Sherburn, "'Timon's Villa' and Cannons," *The Huntington Library Bulletin* 8 (1935), 131-52.

[47] [Leonard] Welsted, *Of Dulness and Scandal. Occasion'd by the Character of Lord Timon. In Mr. Pope's Epistle to the Earl of Burlington* (London: T. Cooper, 1732), 5. Pope had attacked Welsted in his *Dunciad* (London: 1728): "But nimbler *W——d* reaches at the ground, / Circles in mud, and darkness all around, / No crab more active, in the dirty dance, / Downward to climb, and backward to advance" (30).

[48] *The Monthly Chronicle* 49 (vol. 5, no. 1) (January 1732), 23.

Since, wond'rous critick, in thy form *we see*
That nature *may mistake as well as he*.[49]

VIRUS reproves false Taste with witty Art,
But does not VIRUS shew a falser Heart?
What Pity 'tis that such Poetick Fire,
[...]
Shou'd in the baleful Hand of Envy blaze,
To wound his gen'rous Friend with pois'nous Rays.
[...]
How hast thou us'd poor TIMON and his Feast?[50]

"Timon" begets *Esther*

While comforting his friend Pope, Aaron Hill also made explicit that the poem itself, not its interpretation, was at the root of the scandal:

> I confess, at the first, and second reading, I was, myself, mistaken in your purpose; and fell into the general construction, that has been put upon the character of *Timon* [...] you would have foreseen, that the unlucky name of *Timon*, would be applied, as it has since been, from a present reverse, (as is reported) to the splendor of that great man's fortune.[51]

The retrospective (*and* persistent) reading of "Timon's villa" as Cannons invites questions about the sudden revival of the *Oratorium*, Chandos' most ambitious musical production. Among the scandal's

[49] "An Epigram on reading *False Taste*," in *The London Magazine: Or, Gentleman's Monthly Intelligencer* 1 ([April] 1732): 34.

[50] "*Advice to a* CRITICK," in *The Universal Spectator, and Weekly Journal*, no. CLXXXVI, Saturday 29 April 1732, [1]. The attacks would continue through 1733, as in the following verses by Henry Fielding: "Say, against Chandois what thy Fury arm'd, / Was it what any other Breast had charm'd? / Did thy malicious Soul with envy burst? / And did his Virtue make thy Vice more Curst / Thy Darts when thrown at any noble Head, / Still fly where Honour, Virtue, Learning lead. / [...] / No, it is thine the little Wretch to hurt / Or else at virtuous Greatness throw thy Dirt": "An Epistle to Mr Lyttleton occasioned by two Lines in Mr Pope's Paraphrase on the first Satire of the 2d Book of Horace" (1733), reproduced in Isobel M. Grundy, "New Verse by Henry Fielding," *Proceedings of Modern Language Association* 87 (1972), 213-45: 244-45.

[51] Hill, *Works*, 1:165-66.

cultural reverberations we find a renewed interest in Shakespeare's *Timon of Athens*. The production of Thomas Shadwell's adaptation of the work, performed on October 21, 1731, was suddenly revived on January 6.[52] Moreover, the play had two editions in 1732, the first ones recorded since 1720.[53] Although Handel is not mentioned in the "Burlington" epistle, his Cannons links became publicly known on December 23. In his printed refutation of the "Timon-Chandos" identity, Pope argued that the music references in his poem were incompatible with Cannons' superb musical establishment:

> And now the Chappel's silver bell you hear,
> That summons you to all the Pride of Pray'r:
> Light Quirks of Musick, broken and uneven,
> Make the Soul dance upon a Jig to Heaven.[54]
>
> Is the *Musick* of his Chapel bad, or *whimsical*, or *jiggish*? On the contrary, was it not the best composed in the Nation, and most suited to grave Subjects; witness *Nicol. Haym*'s and Mr. *Hendel*'s Noble *Oratories*?[55]

[52] *The Daily Post*, no. 3772, Wednesday 20 October 1731, [1]; British Library, Add. Ms. 32251 ("F. Latreille, Play-Bills of London Theatres), ff. 3r, 6v. *The Daily Post*, no. 3770, Monday 18 October 1731, [1], announced the performance of *Timon* the following day, yet the advertisement in that date's issue has been cut out. Following Latreille's calendar, *The London Stage*, Part 3, lists only the October 21 performance as well the one on January 6, 1732, which, however, is unverifiable in the Burney newspaper collection: *The London Stage, 1660-1800. A Calendar of Plays, Entertainments & Afterpieces together with Casts, Box-Receipts and Contemporary Comments compiled from the Playbills, Newspapers and Theatrical Diaries of the Period. Part 3: 1729-1747*, ed. Arthur H. Scouten (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1961), 163, 181.

[53] *The History of Timon of Athens, the Man-Hater. As it is acted at the Duke's Theatre. made into a Play* (London, 1732); Thomas Shadwell, *Timon of Athens; or the Man-Hater. As it is acted at the Theatre-Royal in Drury-Lane, by His Majesty's Servants* (London, 1732).

[54] Pope, *Epistle*, 11 (ll. 141-44).

[55] *The Daily Journal*, no. 3422, Thursday 23 December 1731, [1].

To read this evaluation from one known for his amusia is rather amusing.[56] It becomes suspicious, though, by omitting Dr. Pepusch (1667-1752), who oversaw Cannons' musical activities until the mid-1720s and wrote more music for its chapel than Haym and Handel.[57] Pope might have worried that the Doctor's long association with theatrical music and, especially, recent fame as music arranger and director in the *Beggar's Opera* (1728) would have contradicted his argument.[58]

How Pepusch took this public snub of his services to Cannons is hard to say. He certainly had the means to refresh memories, however, by reviving Cannons' most spectacular production. His personal interest in Handel's two masques must be taken for granted.[59] During 1714-16, he had pioneered the revival of the genre in Drury-Lane theatre, contributing four original ones between March 1715 and April 1716 (*Venus and Adonis*, *Myrtillo and Laura*, *Apollo and Daphne*, and *The Death of Dido*).[60] Although commercially motivated, the enterprise did "initiate a fashion for English masques 'after the Italian manner' which found its justification and immortality in Handel's Acis and Galatea."[61] Pepusch's engagement at Cannons, first recorded in 1717, must have been vital for the creation of

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[56] [John Mainwaring], *Memoirs of the Life of the Late George Frederic Handel* (London: R. and J. Dodsley, 1760), 93-95. Mainwaring wonders "how an ear so perfectly attentive to all the delicacies of rhythm and poetical numbers, should be totally insensible to the charms of musical sounds" (94).

[57] For Pepusch's association with Cannons, see Burney, *History 4*, 634-35; and Donald Frederick Cook, "The Life and Works of Johann Christoph Pepusch (1667-1752), with Special Reference to His Dramatic Works and Cantatas" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of London King's College, 1982), 184-210; the latter includes a thematic catalog of his sacred music (2:180-205; see also 1:211-17). He was certainly present there until January 1722 (British Library, Egerton Ms. 2159, f. 41). For the musical establishment at Cannons in general, see Beeks, "'A Club of Composers,'" 209-21.

[58] Burney called the opera's tunes "wild, rude, and often vulgar": *History 4*, 635. For a discussion of Pepusch's settings, see John Graham Williams, "The Life, Work and Influence of J. C. Pepusch," 3 vols. (D.Phil. dissertation, The University of York, 1975), 1:189-206.

[59] Note that Burney's comments on the mutual dislike of Handel and Pepusch come from the time of his personal acquaintance with the Doctor, in 1746-47, when Pepusch had entirely dissociated from theatre and immersed himself in antiquarian studies: Burney, *History 4*, 637-38.

[60] Cook, "The Life and Works of Johann Christoph Pepusch," 1:102-83. See also D. F. Cook, "Venus and Adonis: An English Masque 'After the Italian Manner,'" *The Musical Times* 121 ([no. 1651, September] 1980), 553-57. For the tradition of the pastoral masque in England at this time, see Ellen T. Harris, *Handel and the Pastoral Tradition* (London: Oxford University Press, 1980), 193-209.

[61] Cook, "The Life and Works of Johann Christoph Pepusch," 1:111; Dean, *Oratorios*, 155-56.

Handel's masques in 1718-20. His close relationship (by then marriage, according to Hawkins) with Margarita L'Epine,[62] the former opera star and a lead singer in his Drury Lane masques, created opportunities for dramatic productions. The literary and musical parallels between *Venus* and *Acis* suggest that Handel "more likely than not" used Pepusch's masque as a model,[63] and the appearance of Mr. Blackly for the tenor parts in both productions makes almost certain the simultaneous casting of L'Epine as Galatea and probably Esther.[64]

To the extent that Handel's masques reflected his own achievements before and during Cannons, Pepusch had good reason to revive them in 1731-32: he was challenging the "Timon" slander against his patron and responding to Pope's callous excision of his name among the composers of its chapel. Although *Acis and Galatea* was (and remains) Handel's most popular Cannons work, it had been publicly available almost in its entirety since 1722,[65] and was revived on March 26, 1731.[66] On the other hand, Pope's reference to Handelian anthems as "Noble *Oratories*" instantly evoked the *Oratorium*. Hawkins states that in February 1732 the Academy of Antient Music, which counted Pepusch among its leaders, was "in possession of a copy of the oratorio of Esther."[67] Indeed, the

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[62] Hawkins, *General History*, 5:153-55. Hawkins dates the marriage in 1718 and 1722 (199) in different passages. Even if the marriage took place later, D'Epine already was attached to Pepusch, for she moved with him to Lincoln's-Inn Fields for 1718-19.

[63] Dean, *Oratorios*, 159. This view is contested by Ellen Harris ("there is little direct borrowing in *Acis* from any source": *Handel and the Pastoral Tradition*, 207) and Donald Cook ("The Life and Works of Johann Christoph Pepusch," 1:178-79), the latter recognizing, however, similarities between the two works.

[64] Beeks, "'A Club of Composers,'" 213-14; Cook, "Venus and Adonis," 554. It may not be a coincidence that *Venus* was revived in November 1718 (*The Daily Courant*, no. 5328, Tuesday 18 November 1718, [2]), a few months after the Cannons' production of *Acis*: see Cook, "Venus and Adonis," 557.

[65] "The favourite Songs in the Opera call'd Acis and Galatea," advertised in *The Post-Boy*, no. 5186, Tuesday 16 – Thursday 18 October 1722, [2]; according to William C. Smith, "Some numbers of this first edition were issued earlier and sold separately": assisted by Charles Humprhies, *Handel: A Descriptive Catalogue of the Early Editions*, 2nd edn (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1970), 81.

[66] The March 1731 revival, calling the work a "Pastoral," was for Rochetti's benefit: *The Daily Journal*, no. 3189, Friday 26 March 1731, [1]. "The Mask of Acis and Galatea" was lately advertised in *The Daily Journal*, no. 3390, Tuesday 16 November 1731, [2].

[67] *General History*, 5:348.

institution's surviving papers list Pepusch, along with Bernard Gates, as members of the program committee for 1731-32.[68] An inveterate bibliophile who had turned his collector's bug into a policy in the Academy,[69] he probably had the score already in his library.[70] The *Oratorium* is listed in the inventory of Cannons music he had signed in August 1720 as being under his care, and as late as 1729 and 1732 there were inquiries by the Duke about items Pepusch might have kept in his own library.[71] The goodwill he accumulated with the February-March revivals helps account for his first benefit concert in years, on March 31, 1732.[72] And his Charterhouse organist appointment in 1737 at the age of seventy suggests the influence of Chandos, a governor of the institution since 1721.[73]

If Pepusch was the expected procurer of the score, William Huggins (1696-1761) is credited with two (and almost certainly was responsible for all three) performances, for which he also provided the

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[68] British Library, Add. Ms. 11732, f. 16r.

[69] Burney, *History 4*, 635.

[70] Although he appears not to have composed oratorios himself, he is listed, alas in a much later source, as providing instrumental parts for Carissimi's *Jeptha*: *The Words of such Pieces as are most usually performed by The Academy of Ancient Music* (London: 1761), 22.

[71] "A Catalogue of Anthems Cantatas and other Musick belonging to his Grace James Duke of Chandos &c." The "Oratorium for Voices and Instr:" appears as no. 123 (nos. 121 and 122 include the line "Compos'd by M^{r}. Hendel"). The "O" has been redrawn and bolded (with a strong upper curlicue), making it the most distinct letter on the entire page; the ink is similar to the one Pepusch used to sign the catalogue "Agust the 23 1720": Huntington Library, Stowe Ms. 66, f. 4v. The second of two notes attached at the end of catalogue, signed by G. Baxter and dated "Aug: 10. 1729," states that he delivered the catalogue to Pepusch to recover any missing books in the Duke's library. Chandos' letter to Baxter of March 9, 1731/2 mentions "the Catalogue of Musick books and Instruments wch. D^{r}. Pepusch is to deliver up, but now ye keys of ye Musick press are come, I'l [*sic*] have those books that are in it examined by ye Catalogue, & he [Farquharson, his secretary] shall send to D^{r}. Pepusch to make good such as are not there": Huntington Library, Stowe Ms. 57:39, p. 112. For an overview of Chandos' book and manuscript collection, see Jenkins, *Chandos*, 143-46.

[72] *The Daily Journal*, no. 3510, Friday 31 March 1732, [1].

[73] Stephen Porter, *The London Charterhouse* (Stroud: Amberley, 2009), 73. Hawkins credits this appointment exclusively to the "duchess of Leeds [who] had been his scholar, and at her recommendation he was elected": *General History*, 5:400. However, Chandos' letter to Lord Percival of January 29, 1731/2, clearly suggests his role in influencing elections at the institution: Huntington Library, Stowe Mss. 57:39, p. 76.

costumes.[74] He was the son of John Huggins, holder of the profitable Fleet prison Wardenship since 1713 and a man of political connections and shadowy dealings.[75] The family's intellectual interests are reflected in John's numerous book subscriptions, such as Pope's translation of the *Iliad*, the works of Milton and of Addison, and, more impressively, the purchase of the late Isaac Newton's library in summer 1727, for £305.[76] William would write and produce the first non-Handelian oratorio, *Judith* (1733), set to music by Willem De Fesch,[77] and would earn literary fame in the mid-1750s for translating Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso*.[78] Upon returning from Paris in 1721, he was appointed commissioner in the State Lottery (to "initiate him into business & acquaintance," as his father wrote).[79] In late October he also became "Wardrobe-keeper and Keeper of the Private Lodgings at Hampton-Court," and in 1730 he (or one of his brothers) is reported as "Clerk and Remembrancer to

[74] Burney, *Account*, 106.

[75] *The British-Mercury*, no. 417, Wednesday 1 July 1713, 5. In 1720, he volunteered to offer the astronomical amount of £300,000 to the East India Company for exclusive trade rights with Southeast Africa: *The London Journal*, no. xlviii, Saturday 18 – Saturday 25 June 1720, 5. He appears to have lost £2000 in the South-Sea "bubble": *A List of all the Names (who were skreen'd) mention'd in the Report of the Committee of Secrecy. With the Sums wherewith they are charged, in relation to South-Sea Stock* ... (London: S. Popping, 1722), "An Abstract of the Supplement, &c.," 18.

[76] A deposit of five pounds was received on June 2, and the three hundred were paid on July 20: British Library, Add. Ms. 25424, f. 21v.

[77] See Eva Zöllner, "Murder Most Virtuous: The *Judith* Oratorios of De Fesch, Smith and Arne," in *Music in Eighteenth-Century Britain*, ed. David Wyn Jones (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000), 158-71.

[78] First published anonymously in 1755 with parallel Italian and English text, it appeared under his name two years later as *Orlando Furioso, by Ludovico Ariosto. Translated from the Italian by William Huggins*, 2 vols. (London: James Rivington and James Fletcher, and John Cook, 1757) with accompanying *Annotations on the* Orlando Furioso (identical publication details). He was also the first to translate the *Divine Comedy* in English. For his literary career and correspondence with Tobias Smollett, see L. F. Powell, "William Huggins and Tobias Smollett," *Modern Philology* 34 (1936), 179-92.

[79] John Huggins to the Earl of Sunderland, 1721: British Library, Add. Ms. 61603, f. 206r. William is listed among the Lottery's commissioners in *The Post-Boy*, no. 4984, Saturday 1 – Tuesday 4 July 1721, [1].

the Island of Barbadoes."[80] His financial independence was cemented through marriage, in 1723, to a "Mrs. Tylson, a Gentlewoman of a very considerable Fortune."[81]

A joint member of the Academy of Vocal Music and the Philharmonic Society, William was responsible for the admission of Chandos, a flute player, in the latter group of gentlemen performers in the end of 1731, and personally invited the Duke to its February 17 meeting.[82] During the Timon scandal period his affairs intersected with the Duke's thanks to two separate trials. After chronic complaints about inhuman conditions and scandalous profiteering in the Fleet prison, culminating with the shocking death of Edward Arne (uncle of Thomas and the future Mrs. Cibber) in 1725, the Crown pressed charges against John Huggins,[83] and a parliamentary inquiry of the state of prisons was launched.[84] Held responsible for the accident and a host of other illegal activities, John was stripped of

[80] *The Post-Boy*, no. 5034, Thursday 26 – Saturday 28 October 1721, [1], and *The Chronological Diary for the Year 1721* (London: H. Meere, 1721), 41. *The London Journal*, no. 559, Saturday 18 April 1730, [3]; the *Daily Post* names "Charles Huggins" (no. 3296, Monday 13 April 1730, [1]). According to a newspaper report, William owned "Heath-house near Farnham in Hampshire": *The London Evening-Post*, no. 444, Thursday 8 – Saturday 10 October 1730, [2].

[81] *The Weekly Journal: Or, British Gazetteer*, Saturday 5 January 1723, 2437. She died on April 11, 1730: *The Daily Journal*, no. 2891, Monday 13 April 1730, [1].

[82] He is listed as member of the Academy of Vocal Music for 1728/29 and for the 6th and 8th subscriptions, April 9, 1730: British Library, Add. Ms. 11732, ff. 7v and 12v. On November 28, 1732, Chandos wrote to Huggins "I had ye honour last winter, to be admitted into / the Society of the Gentlemen performers of Musick, if it is renewd again this winter / I desire Mr Huggins will be so good, to put my name down for one, & let me know / where I shall send ye Subscription mony [*sic*] & how much it is?": Stowe Mss. 57:40, p. 311. For the February 17 concert, see Chandos' letter to Mr. Peters, 10 February 1732: Huntington Library, Stowe Mss. 57:39, p. 84.

[83] See his petitions from 1729, British Library, Add. Ms. 36137, ff. 201-06.

[84] *A Report from the Committee appointed to enquire into the State of the Goals of this Kingdom: Relating to the Marshalsea Prison; and farther relating to the Fleet Prison ...* (London: Robert Knaplock, Jacob Tonson, John Pemberton, and Richard Williamson, 1729). The following passage describes the shocking conditions of confinement in the prison: "Mr. *Arne* ... whilst he was in the Tap-House of the said *Fleet* Prison, during the Wardenship of *John Huggins* Esq; and behaving himself quietly, was suddenly seized by *James Barnes* (Agent for *Huggins*) and without any Reason given, was forced into the Strong Room or Dungeon on the Master's Side, which Dungeon being then but lately built, and so Damp that the Drops hung upon the Walls, was very nauseous and unwholesome. In this Place was this Unfortunate Man locked up, and never once permitted to go out; But by an

his appointments,[85] was committed to the Newgate prison on March 20, 1728, impeached in April 1729 "for high Crimes and Misdeameanors,"[86] tried on May 22, 1729, and remained incarcerated for another year.[87] In late November 1731, a special verdict on the escape of high-profile prisoners was tried before the Exchequer-Court and, after delays and legal maneuvers, Huggins was finally acquitted on February 9, 1732, exactly two weeks before the *Esther* revival.[88] The Duke on the other hand, had designated Huggins as arbitrator in a reciprocal litigation with an art restorer who had damaged his

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Accident on a *Sunday*, the Door being opened, he ran into the Parlour adjoining to the Chappel, during the Time of Divine Service; he had then no Covering upon his Body but the Feathers of a Bed (which Bed was thrown in to him by a Prisoner) into which he crept, to defend himself from the Cold, and the Feathers stuck and were clotted upon him, by his own Excrements, and the Dirt which covered his Skin. / He was immediately seized and carried back into the said Dungeon, where thro' the Cold and the Restraint, and for want of Food, he lost his Senses, languished, and perished. / Notwithstanding the miserable Condition of this Man, and the Applications which were made to Mr. *Huggins*, the then Warden, who saw this miserable Object lying naked in the said Dungeon and unable to speak, but lifting up his Eyes to Mr. *Huggins*, the said *Huggins* had no Compassion on him, but caused the Door to be close locked upon him." (17). Formal complaints about the inhuman conditions in the prison had been filed as early as 1723 (John Mackay, *A True State of the Proceedings of the Prisoners in the Fleet-Prison, in order to the Redressing their Grievances, before the Court of Common-Pleas* (Westminster: A. Campbell, 1729)). Indeed, Huggins had a disturbing history of power abusing, including an order for imprisonment in 1708, when as High Bailiff he refused to administer the required oath of abjuration during a Westminster election: Paul Chamberlen, *An Impartial History of the Life and Reign of our late most gracious Sovereign Queen Anne* (London: W. Lloyd, 1738), 306. See also, *Pax, Pax, Pax; Or, A Pacifick Post Boy*, no. 2806, Saturday 2 – Tuesday 5 May 1713, [2].

[85] "John Huggins, Esq; is removed from being House-Keeper of his Majesty's Palace at Hampton Court": *The Daily Journal*, no. 2138, Monday 20 November 1727, [1]. The report was denied in the following day's issue, but it reappeared a year later: *The British Journal: Or, The Censor*, no. 35, Saturday 14 September 1728, [3]; *The London Evening-Post*, no. 201, Thursday 20 – Saturday 22 March 1729, [2].

[86] See "The humble Petition of John Huggins / sometime Warden of the Fleet now a Prisoner / in Your Majesties Goal of Newgate.": British Library, Add. Ms. 36137, f. 251r; see also f. 245.

[87] See the report dated June 15, 1730 accompanied by his petition for a bail: British Library, Add. Ms. 36138, ff. 249r, 251r.

[88] *The Daily Journal*, no. 3391, Wednesday 17 November 1731, [1]; and no. 3464, Thursday 10 February 1732, [1].

Raphael cartoons.[89] William was motivated, then, to protect the Duke's reputation from the Timon scandal by sponsoring the *Oratorium*'s revival as a tribute to Chandos' artistic patronage and political influence in his father's trial.[90] It is not surprising that the only visual attack on Pope ("Taste") came from Hogarth, Huggins' close friend and fellow Academy member.[91] [**Figure 5**]

Pepusch and Huggins, along with Gates, were responsible for the revival of *Oratorium* as *Esther* in February and March 1732, following Pope's reference to Handel's "Oratories."[92] Both had ties to Chandos and were strongly motivated to protect his artistic legacy from the "Timon" stain (something alluded to by Lord Percival's reference to Pope's literary paternity of the work).[93] If they selected February 23 as the revival date, it was not necessarily to observe Handel's birthday (as is usually

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[89] (John?) Huggins' role in this dispute appears to have continued through 1733. On May 28, Chandos wrote "I have likewise wrote to Mr Huggins about Cock, pray remember, to get this dispute either ended by Mr Huggins, or brought to an hearing this Term": Huntington Library, Stowe Mss. 57:42, p. 4. The Duke's obsession with investing in building projects coincided with Huggins' activity as investor in the Fulham Bridge along with Robert Walpole: *The London Evening-Post*, no. 150, Thursday 21 – Saturday 23 November 1728, [1].

[90] Huggins was not the only protégé to defend Chandos. Leonard Welsted, author of the most substantial attacks against Pope, had secured his managerial post in the State Lottery on the personal recommendation of Chandos to the Duke of Marlborough: Earl of Carnarvon to the Earl of Sunderland, 30 December 1718: British Library, Add. Ms. 61603, f. 125r; see also Jenkins, *Chandos*, 163-65.

[91] *The twenty-second volume of the Walpole Society, 1933-1934: Vertue note books. Volume III* (Oxford, 1934), 56. Hogarth's first biographer states that the artist recalled the print and destroyed the plate fearing retaliation from Pope's caustic pen: *Biographical Anecdotes of William Hogarth* (London: J. Nichols, 1781), 18; see also the expanded 2nd edition of 1782, 153-54. Hogarth painted the portraits of Huggins father and son, now housed at the Houghton Library, Harvard University.

[92] The link between Pepusch and Huggins would continue in 1733, when the former subscribed to De Fesch's *X. Sonatas for two German Flutes or, two Violins; with a Thorough Bass, op. 7* (London: B. Cooke, 1733), a work dedicated to Huggins: David Hunter and Rose M. Mason, "Supporting Handel Through Subscription to Publications: The Lists of *Rodelinda* and *Faramondo* Compared," *Notes* (2nd Series) 56 (1999), 27-93: 80; Heddo Heide, "Treasures of 18th and Early 19th Century Manuscripts and Printed Scores in a Privately Owned Belgian Library: Highlights from a Recently Completed Inventory," *Revue belge de Musicologie / Belgisch Tijdschrift voor Muziekwetenschap* 58 (2004), 67-79: 78.

[93] *Manuscripts of the Earl of Egmont*, 225.

assumed). Wednesday was the Philharmonic Society's regular meeting and also a non-opera night.[94] In addition, it was their first gathering after the annual Feast of the Sons of the Clergy (February 17), when Gates and the Chapel Royal singers had performed Handel's *Te Deum* and *Jubilate*, and two Coronation anthems.[95] This last selection presumably inspired the inclusion of "Zadok the Priest" introduction in the "Captain Mathias" copy of the masque, and the extensive use of Coronation music in the revised *Esther*.[96] [**Figure 6**] More crucial, finally, Chandos was coming to London that day, which makes it likely that he, already a member of the Society, attended the event.[97] The Duke had good reasons to welcome the event, as in fall 1731 he had suffered financial losses (from the collapse of the Charitable Corporation and his banker absconding with his securities) and failed to make a return to public office.[98] With Handel and Pepusch also present, the February 23 revival must have felt a Cannons reunion and thus a powerful exorcism of the Timon scandal. The commemorative spirit is evident in the exceptional gesture of printing the wordbook (although the performance was private) and listing the full cast (even though they were children performers) as well as in the production of a clean copy of the score. [**Figure 7**] The repeat performances of March 1 and 3 attest to the favorable reception of the production as much as to Pepusch's/Huggins' effort to strengthen their pro-Chandos agenda.[99]

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[94] Lord Percival records visits to the society's on Mondays (9 Feb. 1729/30, 14 Feb. 1731/2) and Wednesdays (24 Feb. 1730/1, 24 Mar. 1731, 23 Feb. 1731/2, and 5 Apr. 1732): *Manuscripts of the Earl of Egmont*, *passim*.

[95] *The London Journal*, no. 660, Saturday 19 February 1731-2, [2]. This was the second year the Festival performed Handel's music.

[96] Foundling Museum, Gerald Coke Handel Collection, accession no. 681.

[97] During this period he was commuting between London and Cannons. On March 2, he wrote to Welsted "I have been in such an unsettled way between Town and Country": Huntington Library, Stowe Mss. 57:39, pp. 105-06. His letters of February 23 are signed "London."

[98]C. H. Collins Baker and Muriel I. Baker, *The Life and Circumstances of James Brydges First Duke of Chandos Patron of the Liberal Arts* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1949), 344, 352-53; *The Gentleman's Magazine* 1 (1731), 448. On November 25, Chandos wrote The misfortune that has befallen ye Charitable Corporation has ruined a vast number of Familys and made in proportion almost as many unhappy people as did ye Year 1720: their loss is computed to be upwards of 400:000:£: Huntington Library, Stowe Mss. 57:38, p. 337.

[99] Coincidence or not, March 1 (St. David's Day) was Queen Caroline's birthday, duly celebrated at the Court and reported in the press: *The Daily Courant*, no. 9458, Wednesday 1 March 1731-2, [2]; and no. 9459, Thursday 2 March 1731-2, [2]. Pepusch had certainly been aware of the date since 1716, when he had set John Hughes' *An Ode for the Birth-Day of Her Royal Highness The Princess of*

Handel responding

The "Timon" scandal, then, brings together the *Epistle to Lord Burlington* (December 14) and the *Esther* revivals (February 23), turning Pope into the latter's unexpected midwife, refreshing public memory of Chandos' celebrated patronage, and conditioning Handel's attitude to the pirated production of April 20. The Chandos reference in the April 17 advertisement was dragging the composer into a nasty controversy at a time when he least needed it. After the failure of *Ezio* and the six-week run of *Sosarmes* (15 February – 21 March), Handel was left with a choice of pasticcios and revivals for the remaining of the season. Indeed, the advertisement appeared exactly on the day of *Flavio*'s public rehearsal (April 17),[100] and the four performances of the opera seem to have yielded a disappointing box-office.[101] Financial loss, however, could not have been the decisive factor for his swift response, as the unauthorized *Esther* was scheduled for a non-opera night (Thursday). Moreover, the small capacity of the York's Building Room and the modest admission price (5 schillings) did not warrant substantial revenue. Absorbed as Handel must have been with the public rehearsal and premiere of his opera, it is remarkable that he found the time to compose an impressive counter-ad. Even more noticeable is his decision to end a period of disengagement from his "private" repertory (works composed for early patrons, especially Burlington and Chandos).

By far the most vexing issue for Handel at this time must have been a public association with Pope, who still remained a target of vicious attacks. In *Mr. Taste, The Poetical Fop*, a comedy published on April 5, Mr. Briton advises Mr. Alexander Taste to "leave off your Vanity and behave, as it becomes you, with Distance and Modesty to your Betters; forbear to asperse Peoples Characters, and every body will be willing to forget your past Follies: your Works be read with Pleasure, and your Person

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Wales, St. David's Day, the First of March, 1715/16. Set to Musick by Dr. J. C. Pepusch, And Perform'd at the Anniversary Meeting of the Society of Ancient Britons, establish'd in Honour of Her Royal Highness's Birth-Day, and of the Principality of Wales (London: Jacob Tonson, 1716). Thus *Esther* (as content and title) was serving as a double tribute, to a virtuous royal consort and to Chandos' patronage.

[100] "AT the KING's THEATRE in the HAY-MARKET, To-morrow, being Tuesday, the 18th Day of April, will be revived, An OPERA, call'd, FLAVIUS": *The Daily Courant*, no. 4998, Monday 17 April 1732, [2]. Midday on the 17th, Handel was offering an open rehearsal, which was attended by Viscount Percival and his two children: Viscount Percival's Diary, Monday 17 April 1732: *Manuscripts of the Earl of Egmont*, 257.

[101] Judith Milhous and Robert D. Hume, "Box Office Reports for Five Operas Mounted by Handel in London, 1732-1734," *Harvard Library Bulletin* 26 (1978), 245-66: 247-52.

respected."[102] What was privately known about *Esther*'s literary origins would now come to the open.[103] Indeed, the extra phrase "the Words by Mr. POPE" in the April 19 advertisement was designating the poet *Esther*'s co-creator.[104] As Ruth Smith explains, "the public linking of the libretto with Pope, known to be Catholic and suspected of being Jacobite, could have signaled an interpretation unacceptable to the crown and government."[105] Esther's toleration message, proclaimed at the very opening of the masque ("TIS greater far to spare than to destroy") and later affirmed by a remorseful Haman ("In Power let Mercy sway;"), had a strong resonance among Catholics and Jacobites in England.[106] In addition to Smith's insightful reading of *Esther*, the political underpinnings of the libretto are also accepted by Howard Serwer, Kenneth Nott, who finds in the 1718 masque "a celebration of Walpole's fall from grace," and recently John Roberts, who links the story to Britain's military struggle against Spain.[107] One could even suspect a Jacobite context in the wordbook of the

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[102] *Mr. Taste, The Poetical Fop: Or, The Modes of the Court. A Comedy* (London: E. Rayner [1732]), 74; advertised in *The Daily Journal*, no. 3510, Wednesday 5 April 1732, [2]. Pope himself was still in confusion, writing on March 29, "I do not yet know the effect it will have upon my conduct": *Works*, 6:331.

[103] The Cannons masques were ascribed, at least partly, to Pope as early as 1718: "there is a litle [*sic*] opera now a makeing for his [Carnarvon's] diversion whereof the Musick will not be made publick. The words are to be furnished by M[rs] Pope & Gay, the musick to be composed by Hendell, It is as good as finished, and I am promised some of the Songs by Dr Arbuthnot who is one of the club of composers" (Sir David Dalrymple to Hugh Campbell, 27 May 1718: Patrick Rogers, "Dating 'Acis and Galatea': A newly discovered letter," *The Musical Times* 114 (1973), 792). Ellen T. Harris also finds "verbal echoes" of Pope's poems in both works: Ellen Harris, *Handel as Orpheus: Voice and Desire in the Chamber Cantatas* (Cambridge, MA, and London: Harvard University Press, 2001), 216-21.

[104] It should also be noted that Pope had attacked (Italian) opera as late as 1728: "'Till rais'd from Booths to Theatre, to Court, / Her seat imperial Dulness shall transport. / (Already, *Opera* prepares the way, / The sure fore-runner of her gentle sway)": *The Dunciad. An Heroic Poem* (Dublin; London: A. Dodd, 1728), 50.

[105] Ruth Smith, *Handel's Oratorios and Eighteenth-Century Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 281.

[106] Smith, *Oratorios*, 279-80.

[107] Händel, *Esther*, xvi; Kenneth Nott, "Sacred and Profane: The Ambitious Minister and the Unsearchable Ways of God's Wisdom," *The Musical Times* 136 (1995), 87-90: 88-89; John H. Roberts, "The Composition of Handel's *Esther*, 1718-1720," *Händel-Handbuch* 55 (2009), 353-90.

first *Esther* revival in 1732.[108] The woodcut on the first page of text (p. 3) shows a contrasting landscape of rural life against London in the background (St. Paul's Cathedral is discernible) [**Figure 8**]. The ruralist theme as a Jacobite symbol is well known among historians;[109] and so is Pope's political use of the pastoral as a representation of an "ideal Tory state."[110]

More disturbing than textual interpretation was *Esther*'s genesis in an environment of Jacobite sympathies. As Ellen T. Harris notes, "the Jacobite reading proposed by [Ruth] Smith seems to fit best with the specific group of artists and patrons associated with the work."[111] Lord Burlington, the addressee of Pope's *Epistle* and joint patron of the poet and Handel, is strongly suspected of clandestine support to the Stuarts.[112] Dr. Henry Brydges, Chandos' brother, was arch-deacon of

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[108] *Esther: An Oratorio; Or, Sacred Drama. The Musick as it was Composed for the Most Noble James Duke Of Chandos. By George Frederick Handel, in the Year 1720. And Perform'd by the Children of His Majesty's Chapel, on Wednesday, Feb. 23. 1731* [= 1732] (London: [?], 1732).

[109] "[T]he ruralist theme in Jacobitism was closely associated with a dispossessed gentry and their allies. Stuart ruralism may have dated back as far as the 1620s": Murray G. H. Pittock, *Jacobitism* (London: Macmillan, 1998), 73.

[110] Aaron Santesso, "The Conscious Swain: Political Pastoral in Pope's Epic," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 37 (2004), 253-71: 268.

[111] Harris, *Handel as Orpheus*, 221. Similarly, David Hunter cautions that "Handel's attachment to the Hanoverian dynasty [before the 1720s] should not be overestimated": "Handel and the Jacobites," *Music & Letters* 82 (2001), 543-56: 551.

[112] See Jane Clark "'Lord Burlington is Here,'" in *Lord Burlington: Architecture, Art and Life*, ed. Toby Barnard and Jane Clark (London and Rio Grande: The Hambledon Press, 1995), 251-310. In 1713, Haym dedicated *Teseo*'s libretto to Burlington; Heidegger's dedication (25 May 1715) of the *Amadigi* libretto to Lord Burlington states: "but this Opera more immediately claims Your Protection, as it is compos'd in Your own Family," a clear reference to Handel's residence in Burlington's house: Deutsch, *Handel*, 67. There can be no more explicit reference of the connection than Gay's "Trivia: Or, The art of Walking the Streets of London": "Yet *Burlington*'s fair Palace still remains; / ... / There *Hendel* strikes the Strings, the melting Strain / Transports the Soul, and thrills through ev'ry Vein" (II, 493-98): Deutsch, *Handel*, 70. It is not clear whether the invitation came from the Earl himself or his mother: see Gibson, *Royal Academy*, 62. Burlington was among the three (out of sixty-two) subscribers to the Royal Academy of Music who contributed £1000 and the only one not being a Duke: see list of original subscribers in Deutsch, *Handel*, 91. Writing from Dresden in July 1719, Handel reported to Burlington on his negotiations with singers for the Academy: "as soon as I have concluded something definite, I shall inform you of it, My Lord, as my benefactor and patron. Pray

Rochester and thus very close to Bishop Atterbury, organizer of the Jacobite plot of 1722.[113] John Arbuthnot, a regular of the Cannons circle with possible creative involvement in *Esther*, was a Tory. As Queen Anne's physician and confidante, he had taken an early interest in Handel and played a critical role in introducing the young foreigner to Burlington and Chandos.[114] Arbuthnot's two brothers, who had fled to France after the 1715 Rebellion, openly supported the Stuarts.[115] Another Jacobite Tory at Cannons was the architect James Gibbs, who designed the famous Cannons chapel alluded to by Pope.[116] Although social proximity to or employment by known or suspected Jacobites is not a proof of political allegiance to the Stuarts, it did carry symbolic weight. Handel's career in England began before the Hanoverian Succession and the *Oratorium* was composed only three years after the 1715 Rebellion, which established Jacobitism as a national phobia.[117] Handel must have been aware that in 1722 Giovanni Maria Bononcini, "a Roman Catholic and an associate of notorious Jacobites such as Atterbury and Katharine Sheffield, duchess of Buckingham, saw his great success come to an end primarily for nonmusical reasons."[118] Indeed, the composer's sensitivity on this matter did not escape attention from his first biographer: "On his arrival at Rome [in spring 1729], he received a very friendly and obliging letter of invitation from cardinal COLONNA, with a promise of a very fine picture of his Eminence. But, hearing that the Pretender was then at the Cardinal's, he

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continue, My Lord, your favours; they will be precious to me, and I shall always exert myself in your service to carry out your commands with zeal and fidelity": Handel to the Earl of Burlington, 15 July 1719: Deutsch, *Handel*, 94. The Reverend Dr Henry Brydges, brother of the Duke of Chandos, whose diaries confirm Handel's presence in Cannons, "worked closely with Francis Atterbury, Bishop of Rochester, who was exiled in June 1723 on charges of plotting with the Jacobites": Beeks, "'A Club of Composers,'" 209.

[113] *The Weekly Journal. Or, British Gazetteer*, Saturday 28 May 1720, 1615.

[114] Beeks, "'A Club of Composers,'" 215, 217. According to a letter from 16 June 1713, Arbuthnot was Handel's "great patron and friend, and has the composer constantly at his house": Donald Burrows, "Handel and Hanover," in *Bach, Handel, Scarlatti Tercentenary Essays*, ed. Peter Williams (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 35-59: 44.

[115] Robin Arbuthnot facilitated cash advances to the Pretender for the 1715 expedition: George A. Aitken, *The Life and Works of John Arbuthnot, M.D., Fellow of the Royal College of Physicians* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1892), 84.

[116] Jenkins, *Chandos*, 39.

[117] See Paul Kléber Monod, *Jacobitism and the English people, 1688-1788* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 195-232.

[118] Lindgren, "The Three Great Noises," 561.

prudently declined accepting both the invitation and the picture."[119] Three years later, there still was reason for him to be careful. Just months before the *Esther* revivals there was an invasion scare from France, a staunch supporter of the Stuarts.[120] And as late as in spring of 1732, intelligence from the Continent mentioned suspicious activity in favor of the Pretender.[121] Any allusion to Handel's past links with Tory and Jacobite circles was compromising his reputation and role as a cultural stronghold of the Hanoverian monarchy.

Publicity strategies

The political connotations of the April 17 advertisement were, thus, sufficiently alarming to account for Handel's swift response, namely the announcement of a new *Esther* production. In a process that Ruth Smith has aptly called "Hanoverianising" of *Esther*, Handel recast the work to project his

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[119] [Mainwaring], *Memoirs of the Life of the Late George Frederic Handel*, 113. James III's music ties to Rome went back to May-July 1717, when he attended entertainments by Cardinals Ottoboni and Pamphili, Handel's former patrons: Edward Corp, "Music at the Stuart Court at Urbino, 1717-18," *Music & Letters* 81 (2000), 351-63: 355. For the musical interests and cultural activities at James III's court in France and in Italy, see Edward Corp with Edward Gregg, Howard Erskine-Hill, and Geoffrey Scott, *A Court in Exile: the Stuarts in France, 1689-1718* (Cambridge UP, 2004), 202-14; and Edward Corp, *The Jacobites at Urbino: An Exiled Court in Transition* (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 76-85. The Stuarts had been honored in Rome's musical life for decades. Carissimi alone wrote *Lamento di Maria di Scozia* and the oratorio *La Morte di Maria Stuarda Regina di Scozia*, with a dedication to Cardinal Ottoboni, in 1706. Teatro Aliberti, in Rome, opened its seasons from 1721 to 1724 with two operas dedicated or presented to the exiled royal couple; and many Italian operas of the period are about deposed monarchs: Jane Clark, "The Stuart presence at the opera in Rome," in *The Stuart Court in Rome: The Legacy of Exile*, ed. Edward Corp (Aldershot and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2003), 85-93: 85-86.

[120] "In 1731 the move of French troops towards the Channel coast sparked off fears of invasion in London": Jeremy Black, "Jacobitism and British Foreign Policy, 1731-5," in *The Jacobite Challenge*, ed. Eveline Cruickshanks and Jeremy Black (Edinburgh: John Donald Publishers, 1988), 142-60: 144 (also 147).

[121] "In March 1732 the British envoy in Vienna found one of the senior Austrian ministers 'rather inclined to think something was meditating in favour of the Pretender, who might steal, he said, out of Civita Vecchia, and by appearing suddenly on board a fleet at Barcelona, set sail directly for England.' The British Consul in Genoa, who had reported frequent conferences between James and the French envoy in Rome, wrote in May of 'advice from Rome that the Pretender is in motion for a journey'": Black, "Foreign Policy," 148.

current affiliation with the Crown. Among other things, he inserted in strategic places of the story two of his anthems for the coronation of George II. The opening hate speech by Haman ("Pluck Root and Branch out of the Land") is replaced by a eulogy to Esther, including a Hallelujah and closing with the Anthem "My Heart is inditing a good Matter." For the new piece "Blessings descend on downy Wings," he borrowed from *Eternal source of light divine*, written for Queen Anne, the Princess Royal's godmother and model. He also omitted passages that could be read as subversive to the crown and the government. Smith offers in fascinating detail a Hanoverian reading of this new libretto. She also exposes ambiguous moments which Handel's rush to finish the project left unimproved.[122]

While her discussion centers on the final product, the score and libretto of *Esther* performed on May 2, the claim I make here is that the "Hanoverianising" of *Esther* had to begin at a rhetorical level. It was the public exposure of the link between Handel and *Esther* and Pope and Chandos that had created the problem. It was in public space then that Handel had first to reclaim his work. Hence the ad of April 19. What he offers here is more than the details of his production. First, he suppresses any reference to the work's origins. In place of Chandos and Pope, we find a neutral "Formerly composed by Mr Handel."[123] Compared to the advertisement immediately below, this amounts to a repudiation of *Esther*'s past. Second, he projects his royal connections. The line "By His Majesty's Command" appears regularly in advertisements of his productions. But compared to its position in them, the line in *Esther*, now pushed to the very top of the ad, becomes a marker: Handel's *Esther* enjoys royal favor and protection. And what should we say about the line "The Musick to be disposed after the Manner of the Coronation Service"? Handel promises to recreate the ritual that established Hanoverian monarchy. This is an extraordinary claim and, along with the first line, frames the ad with tokens of Hanoverian allegiance.

The third strategy is appropriation. The phrase "will be perform'd by the best Vocal and Instrumental Musick" on April 17 becomes in Handel's ad "to be performed by a great Number of the best Voices and Instruments." Quantity joins quality, as Handel affirms his superior command of material resources. The most intriguing contest, however, seems to be over the title of the work. Handel offers a longer and more specific one: "The sacred story of Esther: an Oratorio in English." Known as a composer of Italian Operas and performing in a theatre long associated with this genre (let alone using

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[122] Smith, *Oratorios*, 281-84.

[123] The omission becomes even more pronounced in *Esther*'s word-book, whose title page gives "*The Additional Words* by Mr. HUMPHREYS": *Esther, An Oratorio: Or, Sacred Drama* (London: T. Wood, 1732). Also, the reprinted libretto in a major periodical makes no reference whatsoever to its author(s): *The London Magazine: Or, Gentleman's Monthly Intelligencer* 1 (1732): 85-86.

Italian singers), Handel had to specify that *Esther* would be sung in English. His competitors, though, construed this as another ideological marker, presumably meaning "loyal" and "Protestant." The very next day, April 20, they changed their title to "Esther an Oratorio or sacred drama in English," the word "English" italicized. Handel stuck to his April 19 title until May 2. Following the successful premiere of the work, he changed it to "ESTHER: AN ORATORIO in ENGLISH,"[124] thus fully appropriating the first line of his competitors' ad. [**Figure 9**]

***Esther*'s cultural autonomy**

The examples above reflect conscious rhetorical and typographical choices projecting incompatible agendas. What gives them special poignancy is the visual juxtaposition of the two advertisements—alas absent in modern transcriptions. Readers of the *Daily Journal* on April 19 must have understood that a battle was staged before their eyes. Visually confronted with announcements of two *Esther* productions, one atop the other, they had to distinguish between their competing claims. The one was celebrating the past achievements of Britain's most extravagant nobleman. The other was offering itself as a cultural platform for Hanoverianism through a story of virtuous monarchy and a staging *alla* Coronation service. The reader's choice was between an *Esther* evoking a past of private patronage and Jacobite sympathies, and one affirming a solid present of Hanoverian monarchy.

On May 2, 1732, Handel did not simply offer a revised musical text nor the additions to *Esther* were on the whole dramatically motivated. The presence of "God save the King" at the end of Act 2, to give an example, musically seals the fate of Haman and removes suspense from his subsequent confrontation with the royal couple. And Winton Dean finds the anthems "mere padding to give an impression of novelty and size, and they slow up what little actions there is."[125] *Esther* was an artistic homage to a virtuous and self-correcting monarchy, and its textual features, however problematic, emerged out of a unique political and cultural milieu. On April 3, for instance, Londoners read that

> her Majesty will be left Regent during the King's Absence, in visiting his German Dominions; and likewise that his Majesty will set out for that Purpose the latter End of next Month.[126]

Regrets about George II's departure to Hanover[127] could be appeased through the story of a vigilant and resolute queen. Thus the opening eulogy to Esther, a scene that exceptionally concludes with the

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[124] *The Daily Journal*, no. 3535, Thursday 4 May 1732, [2].

[125] Dean, *Oratorios*, 207-08.

[126] *The Daily Journal*, no. 3512, Monday 3 April 1732, [1]; also in *The London Evening-Post*, no. 678, Saturday 1 – Tuesday 4 April 1732, [1]. George II finally departed on June 3: *The Daily Advertiser*, no. 418, Saturday 3 June 1732, [1].

Anthem "My Heart is inditing," was a gesture of confidence to Caroline ("Kings shall be thy nursing Fathers, and Queens thy nursing Mothers"). Far more significant, the normally suicidal choice of not staging a drama became an opportunity to blur the divide between state ritual and theatrical representation. Listeners did not need to see the Babylonian royal couple in costumes: George II and Caroline were seating opposite the stage. And when the chorus sang "God save the King," the same music performed in 1727 at Westminster Abbey and, as late as on February 17, at St. Paul, Ahasuerus and George II were becoming one. There is little surprize that the Royal family attended all six performances of *Esther* in May 1732.[128]

If *Esther*'s "historical importance exceeds [its] aesthetic stature,"[129] then Handel's production deserves historiographical autonomy from its textual origins. The Cannons masques were occasional works for private use ("the Musick will not be made publick"). The 1732 *Esther*, by contrast, was a public statement emerging from unique historical conditions and heavily drawing on a rich context. Aside from words and music, it involved beliefs, suspicion and anticipation, a mental atmosphere created and sustained through the press. The innovative features of *Esther* were indeed showcased and celebrated in its May 2 premiere. But its success predicated on their *anticipation* by London's high society,[130] which had emerged from the rhetorical and visual collision of the two advertisements on April 19 and sustained through intense publicity by Handel in the following twelve days.[131] Without this anticipation opera-goers might have resisted what was otherwise a non-staged religious opera. If *Esther*'s innovative profile had been shaped and projected two weeks earlier on the front-page of the *Daily Journal*, then it is fair to claim that English Oratorio was born in the most public of venues, the London press.

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[127] W. H. Wilkins, *Caroline the Illustrious: Queen-Consort of George II. and sometime Queen-regent: A Study of Her Life and Time*, 2 vols. (London: Longmans, Green, 1901), 2:112, 184.

[128] See Ilias Chrissochoidis, "His Majesty's choice: *Esther* in May 1732," *Newsletter of The American Handel Society* 22/2 (Summer 2007), 4-6.

[129] Dean, *Oratorios*, 191.

[130] "I saw indeed the finest Assembly of People I ever beheld in my Life": [?Hill], *See and Seem Blind*, 15.

[131] *The Daily Journal* alone reprinted Handel's advertisement six times (April 19, 25, 28 and 29; and May 1 and 2); and beginning on April 28, the ad appeared also in *The Daily Courant* (April 28 and 29; and May 1 and 2). Overall, the *Esther* production was advertised 19 times in the former and 17 in the latter papers.

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Figure captions

1. *The Daily Journal*, no. 3520, Monday 17 April 1732, [1].

2. *The Daily Journal*, no. 3522, Wednesday 19 April 1732, [1].

3. Otto Erich Deutsch, *Handel: A Documentary Biography* (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1955), 288-89.

4. *Händel-Handbuch. Band 4: Dokumente zu Leben und Schaffen*, ed. Walter Eisen and Margret Eisen (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1985), 199-200.

5. William Hogarth, "Taste," (1732).

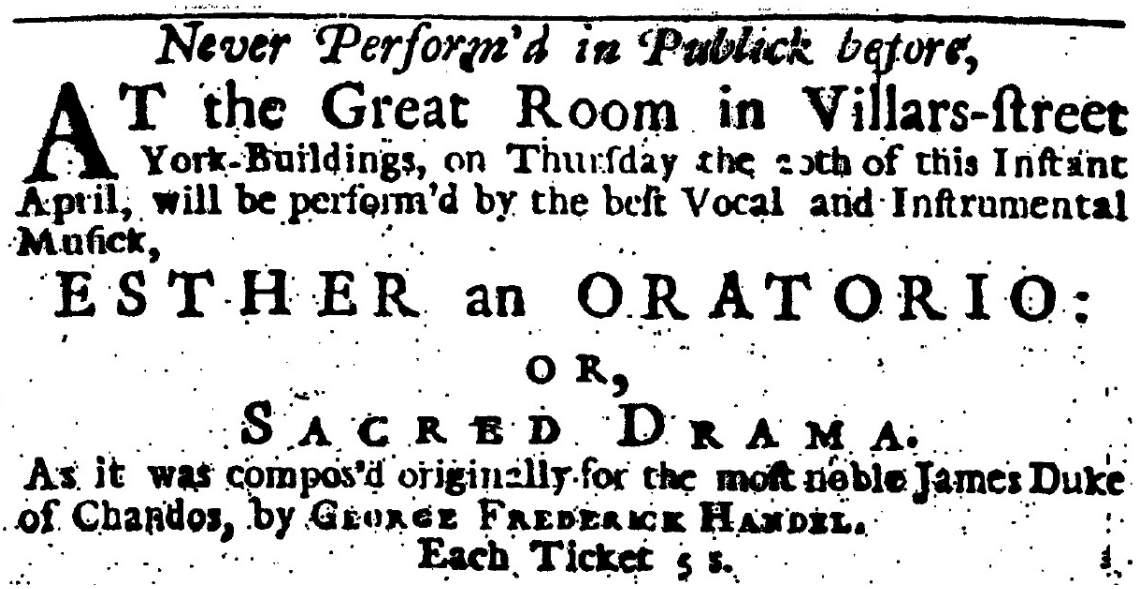
6. *Esther* Ms ("Captain Mathias" copy), Foundling Museum, Gerald Coke Handel Collection, accession no. 681.

7. *Esther: An Oratorio; Or, Sacred Drama. The Musick as it was Composed for the Most Noble James Duke Of Chandos. By George Frederick Handel, in the Year 1720. And Perform'd by the Children of His Majesty's Chapel, on Wednesday, Feb. 23. 1731* [= 1732] (London: [?], 1732), 3.

8. *Esther: An Oratorio* ... (detail).

9. *The Daily Journal*, Monday 17, Wednesday 19, Thursday 20 April 1732, all [1].

10. *The Daily Journal*, issues of April 1732, all [1].



Never Perform'd in Publick before,

AT the Great Room in Villars-ſtreet York-Buildings, on Thurſday the 20th of this Inſtant April, will be perform'd by the beſt Vocal and Inſtrumental Muſick,

ESTHER an ORATORIO:

OR,

SACRED DRAMA.

As it was compos'd originally for the moſt noble James Duke of Chandos, by GEORGE FREDERICK HANDEL.

Each Ticket 5 s.

Figure 1

***The Daily Journal*, Monday 17 April 1732, [1].**

By His MAJESTY's COMMAND.

AT the KING's THEATRE in the HAY-MARKET, on Tuesday the 2d Day of May, will be performed,

The SACRED STORY of ESTHER:

AN

ORATORIO in ENGLISH.

Formerly compoſed by Mr. HANDEL, and now reviſed by him, with ſeveral Additions, and to be performed by a great Number of the beſt Voices and Inſtruments.

N. B. There will be no Action on the Stage, but the Houſe will be fitted up in a decent Manner, for the Audience. The Muſick to be diſpoſed after the Manner of the Coronation Service.

Tickets will be delivered at the Office in the Opera houſe, at the uſual Prices.

Never Perform'd in Publick before,

AT the Great Room in Villars-ſtreet York-Buildings, To-morrow, being Thurſday the 20th of this Inſtant April, will be perform'd.

ESTHER an ORATORIO:

OR,

SACRED DRAMA.

As it was compos'd originally for the moſt noble James Duke of Chandos, the Words by Mr. POPE, and the Muſick by Mr. HANDEL.

Tickets to be had at the Place of Performance at 5 s. each.

To begin exactly at 7 o'Clock.

Figure 2

***The Daily Journal*, Wednesday 19 April 1732, [1].**

the year 1720, 8 *Suites de Pièces pour le Clavecin* of his composition were engraved in London in 4to *oblongo*. See *Mattheſonii Crit. Mus.* Part I, p. 45. More about him is to be expected in Herr Mattheson's musical 'Ehren-Pforte'.

P. 309. Walther's book was the first German dictionary of music, and the first of all such dictionaries with biographies of musicians. The preface is dated 16th February 1732. Mattheson's *Grundlage einer Ehren-Pforte* did not appear until 1740.

—

FROM VISCOUNT PERCIVAL'S DIARY, 17th April 1732

I carried him [my son] and my daughters to the rehearsal of the Opera of *Flavius*.

Egmont MSS., I. 257. From the entry in the diary, it seems that the final rehearsal of *Flavio* was held at midday.

—

Flavio is revived at the Haymarket Theatre, 18th April 1732.

Cf. 14th May 1723. Of the original cast, only Senesino sang, in the part of Guido. Strada sang Emila and Montagnana sang Lotario, the parts originally taken by Cuzzoni and Boschi, while Signora Bertolli and Signor Pinacci probably sang Durastanti's and Gordon's original parts of Vitige and Ugone. How the two contraltos, Signorine Bagnolesi and Campioli were employed in the parts of Flavio (Signor Berenstadt) and Teodata (Mrs. Robinson) is uncertain. *Flavio* was performed on 18th, 22nd, 25th and 29th April.

—

FROM THE "DAILY JOURNAL", 19th April 1732

Never Perform'd in Publick before,

At the Great Room in Villars-street York Buildings, To-morrow, being Thursday the 20th of this Instant April, will be perform'd, ESTHER an ORATORIO *or, Sacred Drama*. As it was compos'd originally for the most noble James Duke of Chandos, the Words by Mr. *Pope*, and the Musick by Mr. *Handel*. Tickets to be had at the Place of Performance at 5s. each. To begin exactly at 7 o'Clock.

The earlier advertisements give the name of George Frederick Handel only, without distinguishing between words and music. The advertisement was repeated on the 20th. For the concert-room, cf. 26th December 1711; this, however, was not the end of this concert-room, as Hill's nephew hired it for an amateur performance in June 1735 (Brewster, p. 141). Cf. 23rd February 1732. The cast of this unauthorized performance is not known.

—

FROM THE SAME

By His MAJESTY'S *Command.*

At the King's Theatre in the Hay-Market, on Tuesday the 2d Day of May, will be performed, *The Sacred Story* of ESTHER: an *Oratorio* in

English. Formerly composed by Mr. *Handel*, and now revised by him, with several Additions, and to be performed by a great Number of the best Voices and Instruments.

N.B. There will be no Action on the Stage, but the House will be fitted up in a decent Manner, for the Audience. The Musick to be disposed after the Manner of the Coronation Service.

Tickets to be delivered at the Office of the Opera house, at the usual Prices.

This advertisement was inserted in answer to several which announced the performance for 20th April. It was Handel's own performance, carefully designed to meet competition. It is usually assumed that Handel confined the performance to the concert style under compulsion: according to Burney, the Bishop of London, still Gibson, opposed the idea of a "sacred story" performed on the stage. There is no proof for this tradition. For the Coronation Service see 11th October 1727.

—

T. Wood announces the libretto of *Esther* for 2nd May 1732 (*Daily Journal*, 25th April).

The libretto calls the work "an Oratorio: or, Sacred Drama", as did the advertisements of the unauthorized performance on 20th April, but it follows the wording of the official production on 2nd May in the description: "The Musick formerly Composed by Mr. Handel, and now Revised by him, with severall Additions", supplementing it with the note: "The Additional Words by Mr. [Samuel] Humphreys".

—

Walsh advertises "A Second Collection of the most Favourite Songs in . . . Sosarmes", *Daily Post*, 29th April 1732.

Cf. 11th March 1732.

—

FROM THE "DAILY COURANT", 2nd May 1732

By His Majesty's Command.

At the King's Theatre . . . this present Tuesday . . . will be perform'd ESTHER, an ORATORIO, In English. Formerly composed by Mr. *Handel*, and now revised by him, with several Additions, and to be performed by a great Number of the best Voices and Instruments.

. . . . . .

To begin at Seven o'Clock.

The advertisement in the *Daily Journal* speaks of "The Sacred Story of Esther: an Oratorio in English". Repeat performances on 6th, 9th, 13th, 16th and 20th May. Spring revivals in 1733, 1735, 1736, 1737 and 1740.

—

Figure 3
Otto Erich Deutsch, *Handel: A Documentary Biography* (London, 1955), 288-89.

Rodrigo-Ouvertüre und die nachfolgenden Tanzsätze anonym unter dem Titel *Musick in the Play call'd the Alchimist by an Italian Master* veröffentlicht und im *Post-Man* (8.–11. Juli 1710) angekündigt.
(Smith 1954, 286; Smith 1960, 8; Price, 787 f.; Händel-Hdb., I, 503 f.)

11. März 1732
Walsh kündigt im *Daily Journal* „The Favourite Songs in the Opera called Sosarmes" mit der „Overture in Score" an.

– Die Ausgabe enthält sechs Arien und zwei Duette.
(Smith 1960, 70)
Vgl. 29. April 1732

17. April 1732
Viscount Percival, Diary
I carried him [seinen Sohn] and my daughters to the rehearsal of the Opera of Flavius.
(Egmont MSS., I, 257)

18. April 1732
Wiederaufführung von *Flavio* am Haymarket Theatre.
Wiederholungen: 22., 25. und 29. April.
Besetzung:
Flavio – Antonio Gualandi, Alt
Guido – Senesino, Mezzosopran
Vitige – Anna Bagnolesi, Sopran
Ugone – Antonio Montagnana, Baß
Lotario – Giovanni Battista Pinacci, Tenor
Emilia – Anna Strada, Sopran
Teodata – Francesca Bertolli, Alt
Vgl. 14. Mai 1723

19. April 1732 (I)
The Daily Journal

Never Perform'd in Publick before,
At the Great Room in Villars-street York Buildings, To-morrow, being Thursday the 20th of this Instant April, will be perform'd, Esther an Oratorio or, Sacred Drama. As it was compos'd originally for the most noble James Duke of Chandos, the Words by Mr. Pope, and the Musick by Mr. Handel. Tickets to be had at the Place of Performance at 5s. each. To begin exactly at 7 o'Clock.

– Die Anzeige wurde am 20. April 1732 wiederholt. Nach Burney und Schoelcher waren bereits frühere Anzeigen erschienen, die nur Händel, nicht aber den Textautor nennen.
Vgl. 23. Februar 1732
(Burney, II, 775; Schoelcher 1857, 104; Smith 1954, 279; Dean 1959, 205)

19. April 1732 (II)
The Daily Journal

By His Majesty's Command.
At the King's Theatre in the Hay-Market, on Tuesday the 2d Day of May, will be performed, The Sacred Story of Esther: an Oratorio in English. Formerly composed by Mr. Handel, and now revised by him, with several Additions, and to be performed by a great Number of the best Voices and Instruments.
N.B. There will be no Action on the Stage, but the House will be fitted up in a decent Manner, for the Audience. The Musick to be disposed after the Manner of the Coronation Service.
Tickets to be delivered at the Office of the Opera house, at the usual Prices.

– Mit dieser Anzeige kündigte Händel seine eigene sorgfältig vorbereitete Aufführung an.
Nach Burney soll sich der Bischof von London (Gibson) der Aufführung einer „Sacred story" auf der Bühne widersetzt haben.
(Burney 1785, 286; Larsen 1957, 19; Dean 1959, 205 f.)
Vgl. 11. Oktober 1727

25. April 1732
The Daily Journal

Thomas Wood kündigt das Textbuch zu Händels Aufführung von *Esther* am 2. Mai 1732 an.

– Im Textbuch ist *Esther* als „Oratorio: or, Sacred Drama" bezeichnet, wie in den Anzeigen der nicht autorisierten Aufführung. Die folgenden Angaben entsprechen der Anzeige von Händels Aufführung am 2. Mai: „The Musick formerly Composed by Mr. Handel, and now Revised by him, with several Additions. ... The Additional words by Mr. Humphreys."
(Dean 1959, 219 und Appendix G)

29. April 1732
The Daily Post

John Walsh kündigt „A Second Collection of the most Favourite Songs in ... Sosarmes ..." an.
(Smith 1960, 71)
Vgl. 11. März 1732

2. Mai 1732 (I)
The Daily Courant

By His Majesty's Command.
'At the King's Theatre ... this present Tuesday ... will be perform'd Esther, an Oratorio, in English. Formerly composed by Mr. Handel, and now revised by him, with several Additions, and to be performed by a great Number of the best Voices and Instruments. ... To begin at Seven o'Clock.
Vgl. 19. April 1732 (II)

Figure 4
***Händel-Handbuch. Band 4: Dokumente zu Leben und Schaffen*, ed. Walter Eisen and Margret Eisen (Kassel, 1985), 199-200.**

Figure 5
William Hogarth, "Taste," (1732).

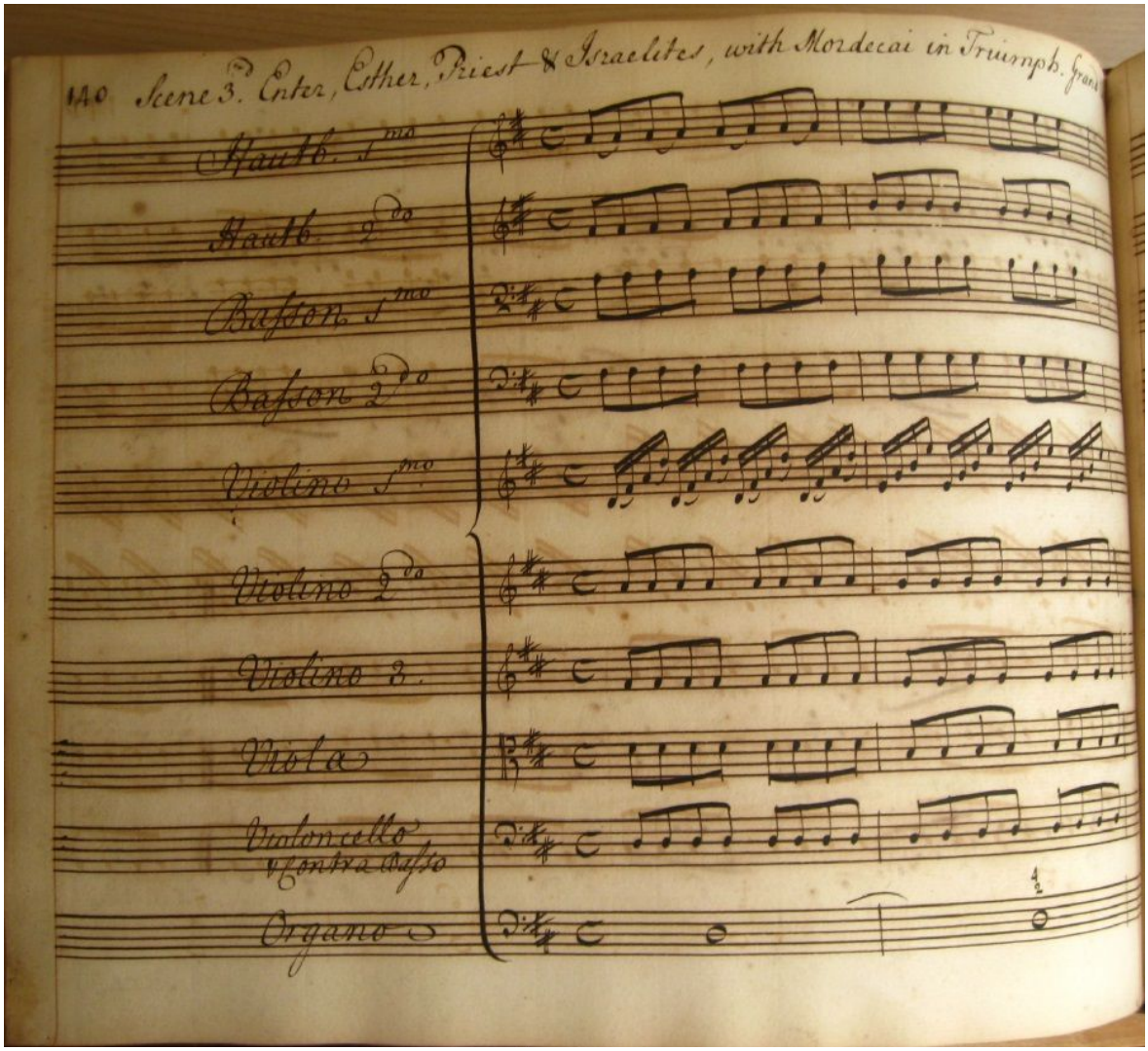
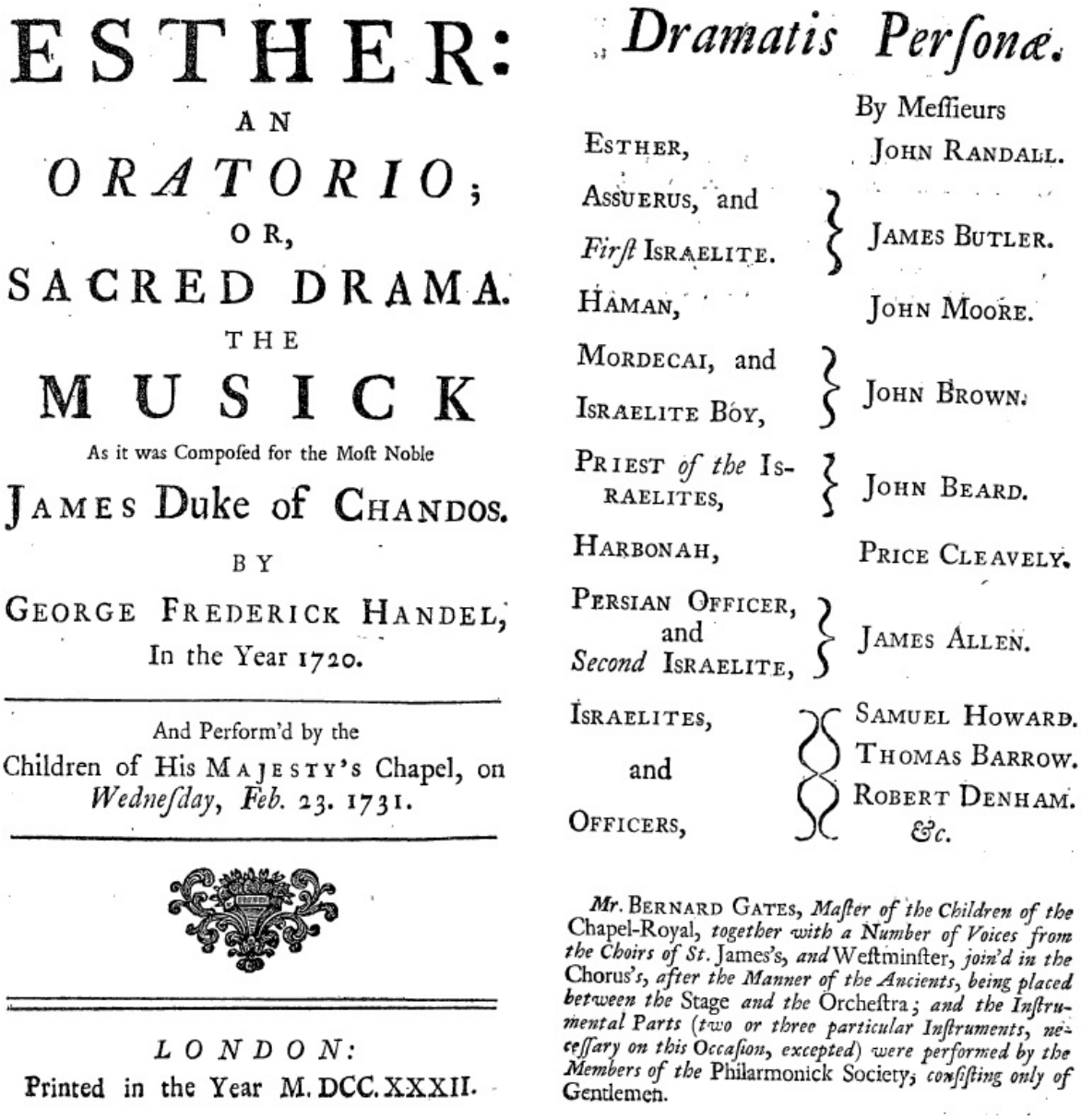


Figure 6
Esther Ms ("Captain Mathias" copy), Foundling Museum, Gerald Coke Handel Collection, accession no. 681.



ESTHER:

AN

ORATORIO;

OR,

SACRED DRAMA.

THE

MUSICK

As it was Compoſed for the Moſt Noble

JAMES Duke of CHANDOS.

BY

GEORGE FREDERICK HANDEL,

In the Year 1720.

And Perform'd by the

Children of His MAJESTY'S Chapel, on *Wedneſday*, *Feb.* 23. 1731.

LONDON:

Printed in the Year M. DCC. XXXII.

Dramatis Perſonæ.

	By Meſſieurs
ESTHER,	JOHN RANDALL.
ASSUERUS, and *Firſt* ISRAELITE.	JAMES BUTLER.
HAMAN,	JOHN MOORE.
MORDECAI, and ISRAELITE BOY,	JOHN BROWN.
PRIEST *of the* ISRAELITES,	JOHN BEARD.
HARBONAH,	PRICE CLEAVELY.
PERSIAN OFFICER, and *Second* ISRAELITE,	JAMES ALLEN.
ISRAELITES, and OFFICERS,	SAMUEL HOWARD. THOMAS BARROW. ROBERT DENHAM. *&c.*

Mr. BERNARD GATES, *Maſter of the Children of the* Chapel-Royal, *together with a Number of Voices from the Choirs of St.* James's, *and* Weſtminſter, *join'd in the* Chorus's, *after the Manner of the Ancients, being placed between the* Stage *and the* Orcheſtra; *and the Inſtrumental Parts* (*two or three particular Inſtruments, neceſſary on this Occaſion, excepted*) *were performed by the Members of the* Philarmonick Society, *conſiſting only of* Gentlemen.

Figure 7
***Esther* wordbook (London, 1732), title page, 3.**

E S T H E R.

A

Sacred DRAMA.

Figure 8
Esther: An Oratorio ... **(detail).**

April 17
non-Handel

ESTHER an ORATORIO:
OR,
SACRED DRAMA.

April 19
Handel

The SACRED STORY of ESTHER:
AN
ORATORIO in ENGLISH.

April 20
non-Handel

ESTHER an ORATORIO:
OR,
SACRED DRAMA in *Engliſh*.

April 25-
May 2
Handel

The SACRED STORY of ESTHER
AN
ORATORIO in ENGLISH.

May 4
Handel

ESTHER:
AN
ORATORIO in ENGLISH.

Figure 9
***The Daily Journal*, 1732, all [1].**

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