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**G.F.Handel Cantata HWV 150- "Ero e Leandro"**

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**Abstract:**

In this thesis, I focused on George Frideric Handel's cantata "Ero e Leandro". At first, I define the opera, cantata and oratorio, as well as compare the works, the development of the cantata as a music form, also about composer's impacts on his life and making a music creation. And as the main part of my bachelor thesis, I outlined the content and the music analysis of the cantata that I have chosen.

The aim of my work is to present and reflect the cantata which I had been singing.

**Key words:**

George Frideric Handel, cantata, Ero e Leandro, opera, oratorio

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## 1. Introduction

For choosing the content of my bachelor thesis I was searching for a repertory that fits my voice, also this was a recommendation from my mentor which I gladly accepted.

Since my introduction into opera singing at a very young age, I learned about the Baroque music and the mastery of G.F Handel<sup>1</sup>. Singing his arias and songs was a big challenge, but understanding and appreciating his music was a completely bigger one, that came with years of learning and experience.

As a main subject of my thesis is Handel's cantata "Ero e Leandro", the very dramatic and inspired story and perfectly added music. Before that I will clarify the cantata as a genre in the Late Baroque era, also the main differences between opera, cantata and oratorio as the most important vocal works.

The main reason for choosing the content, was the fascinating story of the cantata and the adapted music as well as my experience, performing it. Due to the opportunity of performing "Ero e Leandro" conducted by the great conductor and specialist of Baroque music era, Vaclav Luks, I gained appreciation and deeper understanding for the Baroque music and the way it is performed.

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<sup>1</sup>George Frideric Handel is the Anglicized spelling that he adopted, his original name is Georg Friedrich Händel

## 2. The Italian cantata in late Baroque period

The cantata<sup>2</sup>, a work to be sang, was a vocal form in the Baroque era as most important as the opera and oratorio.

It is a development of songs or monodies for solo voice and continuo<sup>3</sup> accompaniment, which took a place during the first three of four decades of the seventeenth century.

The early growth of this genre started to flourish largely in Rome. There the cantata gradually developed from monody with strophic variations into a clearly defined pattern of alternating recitatives and arias for one or more voices, supported by a continuo<sup>4</sup>.

Most of the Italian cantatas of this period were for solo voice, but some were written for more than one. In the late seventeenth century it included choral movements ranging from simple chorale harmonization to complex structures. One of the earliest and most successful composers of this music genre in Rome was Luigi Rossi. Rossi's cantatas were with simple range and strophic ariettas or *ariette corte* to works comprising a section of recitative *arioso* and aria.

Among the famous and important composers during the later years of the century were: Alessandro Stradella, Agostino Steffani who was best known for his chamber duets, Giovanni Legrenzi, Bernardo Pasquini and the most important of all, Alessandro Scarlatti.

Scarlatti composed more than six hundred cantatas, full of heroic harmonic progressions, especially the recitatives. In the music prevailed the endless imagination which manifests in the melodic characterizations. This was a model for the late generation of composers.<sup>5</sup>

The Italian chamber cantata was renowned as the most precious vocal music of the late Baroque period because it was composed for selected audience. The composer had freedom to use experimental harmonies and try perspective methods.

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<sup>2</sup>from the Italian word *Cantare* which means, to sing

<sup>3</sup>It is called Thorough bass. The Thorough bass leaves the upper voices to be free to express the text or the instrumental melody. The bass is played by one or more continuo instruments. Above the bass, the keyboard or lute fill the chords. Filling the chords-*ripieno*

<sup>4</sup>**GROUT, Donald Jay. *A History of Western Music*. 5th ed. London New York: Norton, c1996. 862 s. p. 273; pp. 295-299**

<sup>5</sup>**Nicholas Anderson. *Baroque music, from Monteverdi to Handel*. London Thames and Hudson, 1994 pp. 88-90**



The works were presented in an operatic manner a lyrical, dramatic or pastoral scene. In Italy, cantatas were improvised by the poet, the text was set to the composer's melody and then they were performed. Handel and Scarlatti were using and were excellent in this method.<sup>6</sup>

## **Cantatas in France and Germany**

Cantatas were also popular outside of Italy, most in Germany and France.

During the eighteenth century in France, composers like Jean-Baptiste Morin, Nicolas Bernier and Michel Pignolet de Montéclair published collections of French cantatas, but the most fertile composer was Louis-Nicolas Clérambault. In his lifetime, he published five books which included twenty-five cantatas in total. Jean-Philippe Rameau followed the example of Clérambault by composing cantatas like "Orpheus" and "Le berger fidèle" (The faithful shepherd).

These French cantatas were secular<sup>7</sup> genre, like it was in Italy. The texts were usually based on Greek mythology or pastoral<sup>8</sup> and love story.

France was a catholic country and the composers were still writing motets<sup>9</sup> in Latin, while the cantatas were written in the modern French language.<sup>10</sup>

German cantatas, on the other hand, developed in a very different way than the Italian one. The cantata was explanatory and meditative poetry on Biblical passages that were sung to music. The works were mostly sacred which served a very religious purpose, also they were in a great demand for the services of the Lutheran<sup>11</sup> Church in early eighteenth century in Germany.

The cantatas were generally accompanied by orchestra or basso continuo, including obbligato<sup>12</sup> instruments. Often these works were set to poems either pastoral or love-related, where the accent is on the importance of the text.

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**6GROUT, Donald Jay. *A History of Western Music*. 5th ed. London New York: Norton, c1996. 862 s. pp. 337-338**

7Secular Attitude, activities that have no religious or spiritual basis

8Work of literature portraying an idealized version of country life

9Short piece of sacred choral music

**10Manfred F. Bukofzer. *Music in the Baroque era" from Monteverdi to Bach*. Von Elterlein Press November 4, 2008 p. 253-259/GROUT, Donald Jay. *A History of Western Music*. 5th ed. London New York: Norton, c1996. 862 s. p. 340**

11Protestant Christianity which is related with the theology by Martin Luther

12In classical music obbligato usually describes a musical line that is in some way essential to performance

Early cantata incorporated all the great musical traditions to their time including the Lutheran chorale, the solo song, the concerted style, and added to these the dramatic possibilities of operatic recitative and aria.

In the cantata, each movement reflects upon some aspect of the religious sentiment.

Among the German cantata composers, the most notable is J.S.Bach.

Between 1723 and 1729 he composed four complete annual cycles of cantatas, each with about sixty cantatas.

Erdmann Neumaster was an influential text writer for this vocal form. He was known for using the form of recitative and aria, which was new in the religious music. This idea affected Bach. In his cantatas, he used simple recitatives, an accompanied recitative and two da capo arias.

Bach treated chorale text and melodies in a different way in his cantatas.

In his cantata "Christ lay in the bonds of death" had eight strophes of the chorale which were set in variations on the hymn tune. The performing resources were arranged symmetrically around the quartet of soloist in the center: Chorus-Duet-Solo-Quartet-Solo-Duet-Chorus.

The text of the interior solos and duets often paraphrased strophes of the chorale. The opening chorus imaginatively combined concerto form with cantus firmus<sup>13</sup> technique. His cantatas intended for secular occasions were grouped under the title "Drama per musica".

Most famous is "Christmas oratorio" with eleven cantatas in secular works and the burlesque "Peasant Cantata" with examples of Bach's lighter music.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>13</sup>The cyclic mass, which became the standard type of mass composition around the middle of the fifteenth century, used cantus firmus technique as its commonest organizing principle.

<sup>14</sup>**GROUT, Donald Jay. *A History of Western Music*. 5th ed. London New York: Norton, c1996. 862 s. pp. 68-73**

## 2.1. Differences between opera, cantata and oratorio

In the eighteenth century, the two genres oratorio and cantata re-emerged, even though they were already important musical alternatives to opera in the middle of the sixteenth century. There were found differences between these two genres in the both centuries. As genres late in the period, they both bespoke the traditions from which they originally sprang and permitted new recombination of the musical elements of these same traditions.

All three genres were holding musical commonalities but were used for different circumstances of performance. They all contain recitative, choral movements, solo and duet arias.

Cantata, also known as "*serenata*" or "*dramma per musica*". Generally, the cantata is longer than opera aria or madrigal. It is a set to recitative and typically for solo voice and accompaniment ensembles and ritornellos.<sup>15</sup>

A cantata resembled a scene detached from an opera which offered a way for the composers to experiment and through different techniques and styles.

Opera<sup>16</sup> - also known as *Favola in musica*<sup>17</sup>, *drama in musica*. It is a dramatic musical work that is staged and acted throughout. The work is part of the Western classical music tradition which started to flourish in Italy at the end of the sixteenth century and soon spread through the rest of Europe. Opera incorporates many of the elements of spoken theater such as acting, scenery, costumes and sometimes includes dance. During the Baroque period, the themes were based mostly on history and mythology.<sup>18</sup>

Oratorio is a sacred, non-liturgical composition which is focused on a biblical subject. The text and the theme were often sacred, intended for a performance in a church. The oratorio was influenced by the opera in that way which is usually structured in several acts like an opera, while a cantata has more free structure. Opera tends to deal with mythology and history, including romance, murder, deception, on the other hand, the plot of an oratorio often deals with sacred topics,

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<sup>15</sup>Passage in Baroque music for orchestra and chorus. The opening theme always is played by tutti, and it repeats in the whole composition

<sup>16</sup>*Operare*- to act

<sup>17</sup>*Favola in musica*- Musical story

<sup>18</sup>**Manfred F. Bukofzer. *Music in the Baroque era" from Monteverdi to Bach. Von Elterlein Press November 4, 2008 p.97; Fimcho Muratovski and Petar Petrenko Оперски приказни (Opera stories) Skopje 2009 pp. 5-9***

making it appropriate for performance in the church. However, the opera is musical theater, while an oratorio is strictly a concert piece.

Oratorios are full of short-winded phrases, with typical *bel-canto*<sup>19</sup> style, organized in free rondo-like<sup>20</sup> structures, by repeating *arioso* choral and instrumental sections. An opera is intended to be acted out as a play in which all the dialogues are sung rather than spoken, on the other hand, cantata is also a drama but it is more like a musically explaining the story.

Cantatas might be classified as a sort of minimalistic opera. The opera as a work is the most extreme of the vocal works, with all the sets on the stage, acting and costumes. On the other hand, the oratorio is less dramatic than opera, without sets or costumes but with a larger chorus.

Cantatas are similar as the oratorio but with far fewer voices. One other difference is that the arias, recitatives and *arioso* are more clearly visible there, than in the oratorio.

This kind of cantatas can be sacred and similar to an oratorio, but shorter in length. They are works earmarked to be for a smaller group of an audience, more of a private concert, opera is generally performed in a theater in front of a larger audience<sup>21</sup>.

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<sup>19</sup>Bel canto, (Italian: "beautiful singing") style of operatic singing that originated in Italian singing of polyphonic music and Italian courtly solo singing during the late 16th century and that was developed in Italian opera in the seventeenth, eighteenth, and the early nineteenth centuries.

<sup>20</sup>Rondo is a work or movement, often the last movement of a sonata, having one principal subject that is stated at least three times in the same key and to which return is made after the introduction of each subordinate theme.

<sup>21</sup>GROUT, Donald Jay. **A History of Western Music. 5th ed. London New York: Norton, c1996. 862 s p. 343;** [http://www.ehow.com/facts\\_5794030\\_difference-between-italian-cantata-opera.html](http://www.ehow.com/facts_5794030_difference-between-italian-cantata-opera.html)

### 3. George Frideric Handel



*Portrait of George Frideric Handel by  
Thomas Hudson, 1748*

George Frideric Handel (1685-1759) was one of the late Baroque composers who achieved the greatest success in later centuries. Born in Eastern Germany, the city of Halle. Handel came from a non-musical family and chose his musical career against the wishes of his father to become a lawyer.

As a young boy, Handel was very gifted and had a big interest in music. In Friederich Wilhelm Zachaow, he found a great organist and a teacher. Under his influence, Handel perfected himself not only organ but violin, harpsichord, oboe as well as counterpoint.

He especially was skilled in the Italian type of "double fugue"<sup>22</sup>, fugues with counter-subjects<sup>23</sup>, which were prominent in his improvisations.

At the age of seventeen, he reached his first musical position as an organist at the former Dome in Halle.

Handel's creative career can be divided into three periods. The first one is his period in Germany as a pupil, the second Italian significant journeyman period and third English master period.

In 1703 Handel decided to abandon his law studies and to move to Hamburg, Germany, a city which offered a very good opportunity for young musicians.

Within two years highlighted him-self as an opera composer, by joining the Hamburg opera's orchestra as a violinist as well as leading German composer, which that time was controlled by Reinhard Keiser. Handel had a very big oppor-

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22A fugue with two subjects, each similarly treated

Fugue is a contrapuntal composition in which a short melody, p is introduced by one part and successively taken up by others and developed by interweaving the parts.

23Second or subsidiary subject, mainly accompanying the subject or its answer in a fugue

tunity to compose and help the orchestra and singers. During that time, he composed four operas, but "Almira" was the only one to survive, an opera in the German and Italian libretto.

After Hamburg, Handel had an invitation from a Florentine Prince *Ferdinando de' Medici*, so he moved to Italy where he spent the next four years composing Italian oratorios, Latin church music, and more than hundred secular cantatas with Italian text. Since the opera was forbidden in Rome at the time, he dedicated himself on oratorios. "*Il Trionfo del Tempo*" (The triumph of time and truth) and "*La Resurrezione*" were his first contributions to the secular and sacred oratorios. Handel's early contributions to Italian opera were very significant for his future career. His first Italian opera, "Rodrigo" was produced in Florence. Later he composed the opera "Agrippina", which was a big success and he became equal to the most famed composers in the field.

When he wasn't in Rome, he was traveled and composed in in Naples, Florence and Venice. By this time he had met a lot of important Italian composers as Scarlatti, Corelli, Vivaldi and many more which some of them were a big influence on his way of composing. <sup>24</sup>

When Handel left Italy, he returned back to his native Germany, to become a successor of Agostino Steffani at the court of the Elector of Hanover. There he learned from Steffani the bel-canto writing, which he used in his Italian chamber duets and trios. Besides that, Handel composed two more German works, Passion Oratorio and a set of nine arias with obbligato instruments.

During the first visit to London, lasting eight months, Handel was favorably received at Queen Anne's court. At that time he composed his opera "Rinaldo", that was the first Italian opera, written specifically for the London stage.

In "Rinaldo" Handel used into practice his own earlier way of composing, but was also influenced by the work of the other composers. Several numbers are drawn from his Italian secular cantata. No other opera was performed during Handel's lifetime as often as "Rinaldo". Returning only briefly to Hanover, Handel was back in London because of the invitation to produce an English Court Ode for Queen Anne's birthday, so he was very honored and respected by her. <sup>25</sup>

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<sup>24</sup><http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/40060?q=handel&search=quick&pos=1&start=1#firsthit>

<sup>25</sup>BURROWS, Donald. *Handel*. 2nd. Oxford: Oxford university press, 2012. xvi, 635 s pp. 79-105

During his first stay in England, Handel composed four operas, but in the following five years he didn't write any. In the course of the break, he composed church cantatas and was one of the founders of the Royal Academy of Music. After the pause, he began his series for the Royal Academy with his opera "Radamisto" and continued with innovative a number of successful operas such as: "Ottone", "Giulio Cesare", "Tamerlano", "Rodelinda", and "Admeto". As well as: "Poro and Ezio" and "Orlando Furioso". Handel played tribute to the French ballet opera in "Ariodante" and "Alcina". The last phase of his opera production contained "Serse" and "Deidamia". In his last operas, Handel made a mixture of humorous and serious scenes and showed the maturity of his style. He also composed instrumental music, church music as well as English oratorio, which became surprisingly popular.

The odes and welcome songs, the choral anthems represent the English tradition. First compositions in English language were "Te Deum", "Jubilate" and "Birthday Ode for Queen Anne". Even during his lifetime, Handel's music was recognized as a reflection of the character of the English people. This capacity was best shown in the "Music For The Royal Fireworks"(1749), with which he celebrated the peace of the Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle. In England, Handel dedicated himself into composing oratorios, different from the earlier ones, written in Italy. The new sort of oratorios were with English texts, such as "Israel in Egypt", "Acis and Galathea", "Esther", "Judas Maccabaeus", "Messiah" which was the most celebrated and universally known, and others... "Jephtha" is his last oratorio and last complete work. This composition was interrupted by a partial loss of his vision. Completely blind by 1753, subsequently composes only revisions and a few insertions to existing works dictated to his assistant. Before his death, he visited Germany for the last time.

In August 1750 on a journey back from Germany to London, Handel was seriously injured. The cause was a cataract, and by 1752 he was completely blind. In 1759, Handel died at his home in London after his final performance of Messiah.

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**26**Manfred F. Bukofzer. *Music in the Baroque era" from Monteverdi to Bach. Von Elterlein Press November fourth, 2008 pp.167-175; Manfred F. Bukofzer. Music in the Baroque era" from Monteverdi to Bach. Von Elterlein Press November 4, 2008 pp. 314-349*

### 3.1. Style and technique

Handel's music gained the characteristics of the European style. With a great basis in the harmony and counterpoint. All originated from his early music education in the Lutheran church. He's writing generally is clear, and full of emotional intensity. Under Zachow, Handel perfected himself as an organist but also he was very important for him as a violin, piano, oboe and counterpoint teacher. He played a significant role in Handel's lifelong tendency to borrow and rework existing music. Zachow, who had a large collection of German and Italian music in manuscript form, encouraged the young Handel to copy and imitate different styles. Handel was also skilled in the Italian type of double fugue which means fugues with counter-subject, that he used in his important improvisations.

The secular music in Germany was very close to the modern music in Italy and France than the sacred music. This progressive, modern style was present in Handel's compositions as well as Bach and Domenico Scarlatti.

Like Bach, Handel copied compositions by German cantors and Italian masters. He didn't only copied cantatas by Zachow, but also piano music from other composers which depended on Italian style.

Handel was following Reinhard Keiser's path, who he met during his stay in Hamburg, which led him to the opera.

His first opera Handel composed in Kaiser's style with a brilliant trend and with a great adaptability. During his work in the opera company under Keiser, Handel composed the opera "Almira" which was a mixture of German and Italian in the libretto, that faithfully reflected in the style of the music.

The Italian opera had very strong and powerful influence on the opera in Austria and Germany. These countries made an effort to establish an opera in the German language, which only a few composers, composed at the beginning. As in the music, Italian opera left a mark in the theater. The Italian opera in Germany flourished in the late Baroque period, supported by musicians and Italian composers who lived in Germany.

While Handel was in Rome, learned mainly from the operas and cantatas composed by Alessandro Scarlatti, which were a rich free and varied melodic style, with flexible rhythms. With it, he gained the absolute mastery of the technique of writing for the voice, as well as the Italian lyric style. Handel's gift for melody is displayed in his arias, that were composed in his Italian period, which is simply



contrapuntal method. The melodies are very powerful that non-appearance of the harmony is not noticed.<sup>27</sup>

His music is always supported by the brilliance of the melody with extension, and considerable relation with the best Italian composers, while the French effect and influence is reflected in his overtures and dances. Also in his style is presented the English influence, Purcell's way of composing in the setting of anthems as well as the harmonic inflections which are heard in the English choral dramas, notably in the opera "Acis and Galatea" and the musical drama "Semele".

The greatness of the music is that the composer succeeded in uniting these styles and often quite different thematic elements are under good harmonic progressions.

Handel was aware that the trends are changing and he was trying to follow the modified style. The first effort of the gallant<sup>28</sup> in the music of Vinci and Pergolesi, was used in several arias. He used the repeated note basis with constantly harmonic movements.

Handel's moved to oratorio awakened an interest in the choral compositions of the earlier generations, a mixture of new and old styles. The gallant movement, appeared in his last oratorio "Jephtha". In the choral and orchestral works, he freed from the structural limitations of the formal aria.

In the chorus and orchestral works, the composer had a big freedom of limitations or restrictions of the aria and could make the pure sonority of assembled forces a necessary element of the music. Very typical of *Handelian* style are the choruses in which elemental thematic tags are developed into extended structures, through an innate confidence in the power of simple diatonic harmony. Well known examples are "Sing ye to the Lord" in "Israel in Egypt" and the "Hallelujah" chorus in "Messiah".

The borrowings began very early in his life with Keiser's operas, and took major proportions in such famous works as: "Israel in Egypt", "Ode for St. Cecilia's Day" and "Jephtha". Handel incorporated the borrowings so smoothly in his works that are unnoticed to the present day.

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**27David Schulenberg. *Music of the Baroque*. 3th ed. New York, Oxford, August 2013 pp.167-147;**  
<http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/40060pg14#S40060.14>

**28**In music, gallant refers to the style which was fashionable from the 1720s to the 1770s Returning to simplicity, an appeal of the complexity of the Baroque era.

In his chamber cantata he experimentally explored the whole range of his music from the idyllic to dramatic style. His majority cantatas numbering more than hundred, belong to the Italian period. Alessandro Scarlatti was his affective model. His cantatas served him not only as an exercises in bel-canto style, but helped him to complete the mastery of the Italian style. <sup>29</sup>

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<sup>29</sup>Manfred F. Bukofzer. *Music in the Baroque era" from Monteverdi to Bach. Von Elterlein Press November 4, 2008 pp.314-349;*  
<http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/40060pg15#S40060.15>

### 3.2. Handel's most important works

The creation of Handel's composition is very rich with operas, other vocal works, oratorios, instrumental pieces, English church music, secular cantatas with instruments and basso continuo, concertos, many pieces for keyboard, orchestral works.

ORATORIOS                      first performance

- Esther                              1718-20 in Cannons Finished early 1720, but perhaps an earlier version performed 1718.
- Deborah                        17th of March 1733 in London
- Saul                                16th of January 1739 in London
- Israel in Egypt                4th of April 1739 in London
- Messiah                         13th of April 1742 in Dublin
- Samson                         18th of February 1743
- Judas Maccabeus 1st of April 1747
- Joshua                         9th of March 1748
- Theodora                       16th of March 1750
- Jephtha                         26th of February 1752 in London
- St.John Passion    1704, Hamburg

"Messiah" is an English oratorio, and Handel's most famous work. It is his third oratorio about Christ (the other are "La Resurrezione" and "Brockes Passion") with libretto compiled by Charles Jennens. In Dublin was the first performance as a charity *matinée*<sup>30</sup> in 1742. During Handel's life, he produced thirty-six performances of "Messiah". The oratorio was established as Britain's favorite work through its performances at the Founding Hospital. "Messiah" became an annual Founding fun-raising event, and Handel left a score and performing parts to the Hospital .<sup>31</sup>

"Jephtha" is his last English oratorio premiered in 1752 at Convent Garden theater, with three performances in six weeks, that also included "Joshua", "Hercules", "Samson", "Judas Maccabaeus" and "Messiah". The libretto is written by Tomas Morell and it is based on a biblical book of Judges.

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<sup>30</sup>matinée means, an afternoon performance in a theater

<sup>31</sup>**The Cambridge Handel encyclopedia. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013. xxii, 836 s. pp. 415-419**

While he was composing the oratorio was increasingly troubled by his gradual loss of sight. "Jephtha" is remembered for the dramatic recitative "Deeper, and deeper still" and the aria "Waft her, angels, thro' the skies" one of his most beautiful arias. <sup>32</sup>

Serenatas, masques, odes, English dramas

- Aci, Galatea e Polifemo first performance 1708, Naples
- Acis and Galatea first performance 1718, Cannons
- Alexander's Feast or The power of music first performance 19th of February, London
- Semele first performance 10th of February 1744
- Hercules first performance 5th of January 1745, London

"Semele" is a music drama, first performed in 1744 in Covent Garden theater. The libretto is written by William Congreve. The work contains elements of opera, classical drama and oratorio. "Semele" was performed four times during its original run, and twice again later the same year, during Handel's lifetime. Today the work is frequently fully staged and receives regular performances at many of the world's opera houses, as well as performances in concert form. <sup>33</sup>

## OPERAS

| Title             | First performance              |
|-------------------|--------------------------------|
| -Almira           | 8th of January 1705, Hamburg   |
| -Nero             | 25th of February 1705, Hamburg |
| -Rodrigo          | 1707, Florence                 |
| -Agrippina        | 26th of December 1709, Venice  |
| -Rinaldo          | 24th of February 1711, London  |
| -Teseo            | 10th of January 1713, London   |
| -Silla            | 1713, London                   |
| -Amadigi di Gaula | 25th of May 1715, London       |
| -Radamisto        | 27th of April, 1720 London     |
| -Il Floridante    | 9th of December 1721, London   |

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<sup>32</sup>The Cambridge Handel encyclopedia. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013. xxii, 836 s. pp. 357-361

<sup>33</sup>The Cambridge Handel encyclopedia. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013. xxii, 836 s. pp. 577-579

|                                   |                                |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| -Ottone, Re di Germania           | 12th of January 1723, London   |
| -Favio, Re de' Longobardi         | 14th of May 1723, London       |
| -Giulio Cesare in Egitto          | 20th of February, 1724, London |
| -Tamerlano                        | 31st of October 1724, London   |
| -Rodelinda, Regina de'Longobardi  | 13th of February 1725, London  |
| -Scipione                         | 12th of March 1726, London     |
| -Alessandro                       | 5th of May 1726, London        |
| -Admeto, Re di Tessaglia          | 31st of January 1727           |
| -Riccardo primo, Re d'Inghilterra | 11th of November 1727          |
| -Siroe, Re di Persia              | 17th of February 1728          |
| -Tolomeo, Re d'Egitto             | 30th of April 1728             |
| -Lotario                          | 2nd of December 1729           |
| -Partenope                        | 24th of February 1730, London  |
| -Poro, Re dell'Indie              | 2nd of February 1731, London   |
| -Ezio                             | 15th of January 1732, London   |
| -Sosarme                          | 15th of February 1732, London  |
| -Orlando                          | 27th of January 1733, London   |
| -Arianna in Creta                 | 26th of January 1735, London   |
| -Ariodante                        | 8th of January 1735, London    |
| -Alcina                           | 16th of April 1735, London     |
| -Atalanta                         | 12th of May 1736, London       |
| -Arminio                          | 12th of January 1737. London   |
| -Giustino                         | 16th of February, London       |
| -Berenice, Regina d'Egitto        | 18th of May 1737, London       |
| -Faramondo                        | 3rd of January, 1737           |
| -Serse                            | 15th of April 1738             |
| -Imeneo                           | 22nd of November 1740          |
| -Deidamia                         | 10th of January 1741           |

"Rinaldo" was Handel's first Italian opera, composed for London's stage. The libretto of the Englishman Aaron Hill and the Italian poet Giacomo Rossi, was based on incidents from the epic poem "Gierusalemme liberata" written by Torquato Tasso. Aaron Hill, designed an amazing staging, taken the form an English theatrical tradition of operatic masques. There were thunder lighting, fireworks and lightning, which the audience was entertained. "Rinaldo" was per-

formed fifty-three times during Handel's lifetime. This opera was the first of his London operas to be performed in Germany, Hamburg in 1715.

"Alcina" is an Italian opera *seria*, with text adapted from the anonymous libretto "L'isola di Alcina", first set to music by Riccardo Broschi. Handel finished the work on eighth of April, during the middle of a run of five performances of "Athalia". "Alcina" was composed during Handel's travels to Italy and received eighteen performances, also was frequently staged and was recorded seven times. <sup>34</sup>

Handel is a composer on many German and Latin sacred music compositions  
As well as English church music.

- chamber music and trios

- many songs

He composed many secular cantatas with instruments and many with basso continuo. One of his most famous cantatas are: "Ode for the Birthday of Queen Anne", "Tu fedel? Tu costante?", "Mi palpita il cor", "Alpestre monte", "Oh numi eterni", "Nella stagion che di viole e rose", "Della guerra amorosa", "No se enmenará jamás", "Parti l'idolo mio" and many more...His most excellent secular cantata is "Apollo e Dafne".

Handel left many instrumental works, for harpsichord and instrumental ensemble.

- Concertos for oboe and orchestra; many for organ and orchestra; organ solo;

- Suits, overtures, individual movements

- Trio sonatas

- Music for wind ensembles

- Solo sonatas (violin, flute)

- Keyboard music

- Music for musical clocks

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<sup>34</sup>The Cambridge Handel encyclopedia. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013. xxii, 836 s. pp. 16-18

Among his orchestral pieces the most famous are:

- "Water music"

- "Music for the Royal Fireworks"

"Water music" is a suit of twenty-two orchestral movements, meant for outdoor performance. It was composed for the royal water party on the River Thames. When King George I embarked on an open barge (canal boat) at Whitehall Stairs and proceeded up river to Chelsea. Around fifty musicians were playing Handel's music in another barge. All movements have three different orchestrations and key-centers. The music has the highest quality, with pleasant contrasts. Many of the movements are Handel's most popular pieces. <sup>35</sup>

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<sup>35</sup>BURROWS, Donald. *Handel*. 2nd. Oxford: Oxford university press, 2012. xvi, 635 s pp.202-330

## 4. Cantata HWV 150 "Ero e Leandro"

### Story

The Cantata, "Ero e Leandro" also known as the first verse of the recitative of the cantata "Qual ti riveggio, Oh Dio", was composed during composer's period in Italy, Rome. It is highly dramatic cantata in recit-aria-recit-aria-recit-aria-recit. The libretto is consider that is written by Cardinal Pietro Ottoboni<sup>36</sup> and the story was adapted from a Greek myth called "Hero and Leander", published in Venice in 1635 by Lucrezia Marinelli.

Several themes of this work, Handel used in his sonata op. one, no. two and in his "Utrecht te Deum" for the setting of "Vouchsafe, O Lord", as well as in his opera "Agripina", Agripina's aria "Non ho che cor amarti" was taken, almost entirely unchanged from the second aria of the cantata, "Se la morte, non vorrà".

Hero and Leander (Ero e Leandro) is a Greek romantic myth full of emotions that inspired many artists of all kinds.

According to the myth, Hero was a very beautiful young priestess of Aphrodite the Goddess of love and beauty. By the will of her parents, Hero lived alone in the tower in the ancient Greek town Sestos. Before meeting Leander, she was in celibacy, neither entering dances or meetings. But there was a festival in honor of Adonis and Aphrodite, where Hero decided to attend. There she met her loved one Leander (Leandro) a young and beautiful man from Abydos, a town on the Asian side of the strait which separates Asia and Europe, opposite shore of the town Sestos. It was a love at the first sight. Because their love was not allowed, they became secret lovers.

Leander swam every night across the Hellespont<sup>37</sup> just to be with her. Hero every night was lighting the lamp at the top of the tower, to guide his way through the dark sea. This secret romance lasted the whole summer. When the winter came, the sea changed, even the sailors drew up their ships. But nothing prevented Leander. One stormy winter night, the waves tossed him into the sea. The furious

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<sup>36</sup>An Italian Cardinal, known as a great patron of music and art

<sup>37</sup>Hellespont is a significant waterway in north western Turkey that forms part of the continental boundary between Europe and Asia, and separates Asian Turkey from European Turkey



wind blew out Hero's light, Leander lost his way and was drowned. The next day his body reached the foot of the tower.

When Hero saw her lover's death body, she threw herself into the sea to her death to be with him. Her body reminded besides his. <sup>38</sup>



*"Ero e Leandro" by Etty William*

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<sup>38</sup>*The Cambridge Handel encyclopedia*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013. xxii, 836 s. pp.514-515;  
<https://archive.org/stream/heroandleander18781gut/18781.txt>

#### 4.1. Musical analysis of the cantata

The cantata is taking a place on the shore of the sea where Hero's complaint over the death body of Leander, describes a highly dramatic scene. The composer in the cantata, portrayed two characters, the girl Hero and the narrator. The narrator is taking only the last recitative that in fact, the work is ending.

Every aria starts with recitative *semplice*<sup>39</sup>, supported by continuo (harpsichord or violoncello). The melody of the composition and the strong words in an old Italian language explain the feelings and emotions of the tragic situation.<sup>40</sup>

The cantata contains three arias and four recitatives. It opens with the first recitative, being joined by continuo accompaniment, playing by violoncello or harpsichord, in g-minor 4/4 measure. The recitative is in continuation and proceeding without a break, explaining the dramatic situation, when Hero saw the death body of her lover. The recitative ends by slowing down the melody and change of the dynamic in piano. It ends with the verse "*Ecco su queste arene esangue, e morto*" -Here you are dead and bloodless on the sand.

After the end of the recitative follows the introduction of the first aria. Which is also in g-minor but in 3/8 measure. It is meant for a small orchestra. Two oboes, violin solo, first and second violin, viola, violoncello and harpsichord.

The first sentence and main melody are playing by the first oboe together with violin solo and first violin unisono.<sup>41</sup> The melody is dance-like trace by semiquavers. The solo violin has the main role, playing alone dissolved chords. From twenty-second bar join the first and second oboes, viola, cello and harpsichord, supporting the solo violin. In order to announce the beginning of the soprano, the melody slows down. The first verse of the text, the soprano is expressing the detest of the evil sea waves. The melody of the singer is almost the same as the introduction of the aria, with some material changes. The text of the whole aria is describing the anger and hate of the sea waves and her sorrow for her lover.

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<sup>39</sup>Recitative *semplice* or *secco* is accompanied recitative only by keyboard or other chordal instrument in the form of basso continuo

<sup>40</sup>**The Cambridge Handel encyclopedia. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013. xxii, 836 s. pp.514-515**

<sup>41</sup>Performing at the same time in octaves or unison

*I. Aria*

Oboe I  
Oboe II  
Violino solo  
Violino I  
Violino II  
Viola  
Soprano  
Violoncello  
Tiorba Cembalo

7 4 3 7 6 5

1. Musical demonstration  
First aria of the cantata the  
introduction and the first  
verse

Em - pio — ma - re, on - de cru - de - li,

In the first a part of the aria is processed the same material. The melody is in moderate tempo, gracefully, with accents. The singer most of the time is supported by the solo violin playing in third.

The culmination is reach in the one hundred fourteenth bar. In the one hundred twenty-first bar, the singer ends the first a part, the instruments continue to play the same introduction as the beginning which leads to the new part b.

The second b part of the aria has a big contrast of tempo *Adaggissimo*<sup>42</sup>, with completely different material and text. It starts in g-minor and with chromatic modulation the melody is going to f-minor. From one hundred sixty-eighth the melody changes in d-minor and keeps the same scale until the end. The second b part ends in d-minor with slowing down the tempo, support by the solo violin and continuo. When the second part ends, the aria starts from the beginning and it is ending in one hundred forty-eighth bar.

<sup>42</sup>Meaning in music: Very slow

After the ending of the first aria follows the second recitative of the second aria. Again soprano, supports by continuo. In 4/4 measure in Es major with tonic pedal.<sup>43</sup> The melody ends in f-minor. In the text of the second recitative is describe their strong relation and love they had, as well as expression of anger of the death and the crude love. The second aria is in *poco allegro*<sup>44</sup> e *staccato*<sup>45</sup>, in 4/4 measure in c minor. Marsh-like music with staccato notes. From seventh bar violin solo is playing unisono with cello solo in third. In the nineteenth bar starts the singer accompanying with all instruments, with the same melody as the introduction of the aria. The text of the first part is a monologue of Hero, "Se la morte non vorrà, meco usar la crudeltà, he già teco praticò. Pria del tempo, idolo amato, a te verrò" -If death wouldn't be cruel with me, as she was with you

2. Aria  
Poco allegro e staccato

already. Beforehand, beloved idol, I shall come to you".

2. Musical demonstration -Second aria of the cantata the introduction and the first verse of the voice

The melody contains repeating of the melody, changed material as well. The singer and two oboes are playing together in third interval, in tempo as well as using *ritardando*.<sup>46</sup> Most of the time, the solo violin and the singer are playing/singing the same material alternately.

<sup>43</sup>The pedal tone or organ point is a comfortable sustained tone in the bass, which one or more dissonant harmony sounded in the other parts

<sup>44</sup>*Poco allegro* means a bit faster. The word *allegro* mean cheerful, lively

<sup>45</sup>With each sound or note sharply detached or separated from the others

<sup>46</sup>Gradually slowing in tempo



The same introduction as the beginning is repeating again for introducing the second b part of the second aria. The second b part of the second aria contains different text and music material.

The second text of the b part is explaining that she is going to find her death in the sea, just to be with him. It starts in E flat major and from one hundred first bar modulates in g-minor as well as ending in g-minor. In this part, the melody is making big contrast from piano to forte.

24

90 Vc. solo

Sopr.

Bassi

che se me - te a me s'a - scun - de, di tro -

91

var - la in mez - zo all' on - de, di tro - var - la in mez - zo all' on - de, la tua

92

fe - già m'in - se - gnò, la tua fe - già m'in - se - gnò, di tro -

102

var - la in mez - zo all' on - de, la tua fe - già m'in - se - gnò,

3. Musical demonstration - The gradation of the melody from the second part of the second aria

After the melody returns back to piano as it ends with *ritardando*. After the end of the b part, the aria starts *da capo* (from the beginning) and ends in eighty-seventh bar.

As the second aria ends, opens the recitative of the third aria in g-minor in 4/4 measure, from sixth bar the melody modulates in c-minor, then in d-minor from tenth bar as well as ending in d-minor. Again with a continuation and drama the soprano is explaining that her beauty doesn't mean anything without him, that he can takes it with him to the deep sea.

The third aria starts in *Adagio*<sup>47</sup> tempo, in g-minor 4/4 measure and it is the most dramatic aria. In the first a part the text explains the last words of Ero, and the feeling that she is giving up of her life. "He is dead, how can I live now with this suffering".

The melody is full of tension and tightness, slowly grading and playing with the minor scale in all switches. From twenty-fifth bar after the corona<sup>48</sup> follows the second part a1 with small changes in the music material, with contrasts and modulation from g-minor from thirtieth bar modulates in d-minor. Explaining that her life is not worth without him. This aria starts from the beginning again and ends in twenty-fifth bar.

After the end of the last aria, starts the recitative sang as the narrator. The last recitative is in piano dynamics, performs with half voice, very dramatic and tense with breaks between the verses. It starts in f-minor and modulates in E-flat major ends in c-minor. Situation explains by the narrator, how Ero, drowned herself into the sea, and took her life just to be with the loved one.

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47In a slow tempo

48Synonym of pause or fermatta



*Hero Finding Leander, by Ferdinand Keller*

## 4.2. Analysis of the interpretation

The spirit of the Baroque period is characterized with clearness and brightness. The music is very contrapuntal, and every musical line has its place. Gesture is an essential element for performing. The cantata is sort of an opera aria, but the challenge is to present the story and melody without any acting, but with a good interpretation and facial expressions. The successful performance is achieved when both aspects are united, the gestures and the eyes have the main roles as well as emphasis on the textual expression engendered an interest in certain aspects of vocal delivery.<sup>49</sup>

For interpretation of the cantata the most important is the Italian text. The meaning of the text and its intonation, has helped me in the interpretation, especially in the recitatives. It is very important to know the translation on every word of the text. During the whole cantata, the main character Hero is presenting her emotions when she saw her beloved, describing her desperation and hopelessness without him. So elaborated story has helped me to achieved a good performance.

The whole cantata is written in a middle register. Throughout the piece are presented semiquaver notes. The tempo is changing and melody is modulating depending on the mood of the text as well as the beats of the notes. The interpretation should be very dramatic with continuation and flowing melody. It is a big challenge for the singers to reach the perfection of the technique and certainty, also to interface the perspective of well pronunciation for a good expression.

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<sup>49</sup>John Butt. *Music education and the art of performance in the German Baroque*. Cambridge University Press, 1994 pp.69-80

## 5. Conclusion

With the content that I chose, I acquired the knowledge of Baroque opera, Handel, as a significant personality, his itinerant life and how that affected him as a person. The way he transmitted the ideas in his music, and the influence of other composers on his way of composing.

A cantata resembled as a form that offered a way for the composers to experiment and through different techniques and styles.

The three very important vocal works, had their own differences and musical commonalities. All three genres featured recitative, solo and duet arias, choral movements, many of the same forms, and even dance elements.

As a reflection of the whole searching and analysing on this theme, I understand more regularities of Handel's music. It was also interesting to read and listen to more performances as well as comparing with my recording. In fact, all those new things that I learned can help me for a better performance of the cantata, including the vocal lines, the Italian text as well as the elaborated story. I must say that I feel like Handel is taking the voice as important as the orchestra, that gives a remark of a flowing melody with the same enthusiasm.

The main subject of my thesis, the cantata "Ero e Leandro", demanded a huge dedication on every significant aspects of the work. Through the cantata I can see the way how Handel expressed his emotions and experienced the perfectly adapted melody to the dramatic story. The myth of "Ero e Leandro" inspired many artists, and there is no doubt that Handel ideally presented it.



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