

*A Kalmus Classic Edition*

George Frideric

**HANDEL**

**SUSANNA**

An Oratorio

MINIATURE SCORE

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## P R E F A C E.

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Previous attempts to bring out a complete edition of Handel's works yielded convincing proof of the difficulty of such an enterprise. And though an edition emanating from Germany has its peculiar obstacles to surmount, yet, at the commencement of our labours, many circumstances also happily concur to secure to this new edition a greater intrinsic perfection than can be attributed to any one published before. With regard to the sources at our disposal, we are placed in a favourable position, as compared with our predecessors. Whilst our most presumptuous wishes only extended to the inspection of those original manuscripts and other subsidiary aids, whose existence was already known, and which had been at the disposal of the previous English editors, a perfectly new source was unexpectedly opened to us by the conducting scores of Handel's works becoming known.

The sources hitherto known, that could be consulted for a critical edition of Handel's works, were the original manuscripts of almost all his works, and the beautiful copies of the oratorios taken by Handel's amanuensis, John Christopher Smith. Of both these collections, which have been for nearly a hundred years in the possession of the English Royal family, we were most liberally allowed to make the freest use, through favour of Her Gracious Majesty the Queen of England, and of His Royal Highness the Prince Consort.

The existence was known likewise of the Handelian manuscripts, which, by some now forgotten circumstance, came into the hands of Lord Fitzwilliam, and have for years become accessible to the public, as forming a part of his rich musical collection in the Fitzwilliam Museum at Cambridge. These had, however, been but little used. They comprise seven volumes, and contain mostly sketches or occasionally inserted movements. They have yielded some fruits for all the three issues of our first annual publication.

These sources might have sufficed, in case of need, for the formation of a reliable edition. However, Smith's copies, as well as the current editions, exhibit manifold deviations from the original manuscripts, — deviations which in themselves may claim to be authentic, but which could not be properly accounted for from the existing materials. Hence the loss of the separate vocal and instrumental parts which were used at Handel's performances, was greatly to be deplored: and, since such fragments of these as had come to light yielded but little information, the loss of the old conducting scores was still more a subject of regret. But they were not lost. When no one conceived the possibility of their having been preserved by Smith's descendants, they were offered for sale by a bookseller at Bristol in the year 1856, and thus came hereupon into the possession of M. Victor Schölcher, one of the most zealous members and promoters of our Society, by whom they are as carefully preserved as they are liberally held open for any scientific purpose.

This increase considerably augmented the labour: for the conducting scores were found to be full of remarks, alterations and additions, which were often only to be sifted by most careful investigation. But we may certainly regard it as fortunate, that the preliminary steps for the great undertaking of the German Handel Society happened to coincide with a state of things, which for the first time rendered a completely satisfactory edition possible.

During the construction of the authentic score from the above mentioned sources, a multitude of rough drafts and varieties of reading, of historical and practical remarks, has been gathered together. The publication of these, however, would have swelled the volumes considerably beyond their just limits. Another reason for not publishing this matter at present was, that the majority of the members wished, in the first instance, to possess only the music that is capable of performance. The Committee of Management, therefore, considered that they were administering the still slender funds of the Society most wisely, by publishing at first only the works themselves. But, in order to satisfy those who wish to penetrate into the Master's workshop, into the genesis of his compositions, and to be just towards the author himself, we are collecting all the information yielded by the manuscripts, or otherwise bearing reference to the works in question, and hope to publish it occasionally in additional volumes, when an increase in the number of members shall render this possible.

The oratorio of *Susanna* was composed between July 11th and August 24th 1748, in the 64th year of Handel's age, and was performed in London, at Covent Garden Theatre, in the Lent following. The accompanied recitatives, airs and duets, the trio and the overture appeared immediately afterwards in print. The complete scores were published by Randall, Wright and Arnold. In the choruses we have retained the original clefs; on the other hand, in the soli for soprano, alto and tenor, the usual simplification has been adopted, for the convenience of those unaccustomed to read scores. The original intention is as unequivocally preserved by the addition of the words *Soprano, Alto, Tenore*, as by the strange clefs.

The text of the oratorio has come down to us in a very incorrect state. Handel's manuscript has many errors of writing, and the editions exhibit all the caprices of orthography usual in that age. In restoring a correcter system of writing, care has been taken to expunge nothing which has any title to acceptance as an older form of language, or as having been intentionally so written by the composer. In the separately printed text, we have likewise endeavoured to bring as prominently forward as possible the dramatical plan of the action, as gathered from the statements in the original and in the older books of words, without, however, permitting ourselves any arbitrary additions thereto.

As in any abridgements of the oratorio which may be found necessary for public performances Handel's practice is the surest guide, this shall be shortly mentioned here. He gave one performance of *Susanna* in 1759, a few weeks before his death. On this occasion the second part of the overture was omitted; likewise all in the first part of the oratorio from Chelsias' song "Who fears the Lord" to *Susanna's*, "Without the swain's assiduous care" (pp. 24—46) i. e. five airs and several recitatives; likewise the chorus "Virtue shall never" (p. 56—65), which was used for other works, and the recitative of the 1st Elder from the words "Bear me resistless down" to the end (pp. 67—68): in the third part, all from Chelsias' air "Raise your voice" to Joacim's recitative "Sweet are the accents" (pp. 191—204), instead of which a short air with chorus from *Semele* "Endless pleasure" was interpolated. Thus it will be seen that Chelsias' part dwindled down almost to nothing: and it might be entirely omitted without occasioning any serious gap. But Handel never omitted any thing of importance from the songs and recitatives of the two Elders: and it would certainly be very detrimental to the understanding of the oratorio as a whole, should prudery induce a disregard of his example in this matter.

The German translation is by Dr. G. G. Gervinus. The arrangement for Pianoforte and the superintendence of the score at the place of printing were undertaken by Herr Julius Rietz. The restoration of the works themselves from the above mentioned sources was entrusted to the undersigned,

October 16th, 1858.

**Dr. Fred. Chrysander.**

# SUSANNA.

## An Oratorio in three acts

by

G. F. Handel.

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