HANDEL'S

Will

FACSIMILES
AND COMMENTARY

EDITED BY DONALD BURROWS

THE GERALD COKE HANDEL FOUNDATION
First published 2009 by
The Gerald Coke Handel Foundation
40 Brunswick Square
London w1n 1xe

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British Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data
A Catalogue record for this book is available
from The British Library

ISBN 978 0 9560 9980 8 (hardback)
ISBN 978 0 9560 9981 5 (paperback)

Designed in Baskerville by Geoff Green Book Design, Cambridge
Printed and bound by Henry Ling Ltd, Dorchester

Illustrations from the Gerald Coke Handel Collection

The facsimiles on pp. 61 and 62 are slightly reduced

The Gerald Coke Handel Foundation, founded by Gerald Coke's family and
named after him, promotes education and research in eighteenth-century
music, particularly relating to the life and works of George Frideric
Handel, by supporting the Gerald Coke Handel Collection
at the Foundling Museum.
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HANDEL AND HIS WILL

ELLEN T. HARRIS

Handel must have been pleased at the end of his Lenten oratorio season in 1749. Running from 10 February to 23 March, the season had included the first performances of Susanna and Solomon, as well as revivals of Hercules, Samson and Messiah, and was one of the strongest programmes that he had ever presented. It was also one of the most lucrative. Between 23 December 1748 and 30 March 1749 he had been able to deposit £2,170 into his cash account at the Bank of England, and the transfer of £2,000 of this to a stock account on 7 April indicates the money was not just revenue, but profit, as Handel at this time purchased stock solely for the purpose of long-term investment. Later in April he added to his public success with the Music for the Royal Fireworks. Written to celebrate the Peace of Aix-la-Chapelle ending the War of the Austrian Succession, the Fireworks Music was heard first at a rehearsal in Vauxhall Gardens on 21 April before a crowd estimated at about 10,000, and then at Green Park on 25 April.

This relatively new-found professional and financial security - public criticism and financial concerns had troubled him as recently as 1745 - gave Handel the occasion to consider others. On 4 May, less than two weeks after the performance of the Fireworks music, he offered a ‘Performance of Vocal and Instrumental Music’ to the Hospital for the Maintenance and Education of Exposed and Deserted Young Children (the Foundling Hospital), declining an invitation to become a Governor of the Hospital at this time, and choosing rather to ‘Serve the Charity with more Pleasure in his Way.’

The concert, which took place on 27 May and was attended by the Prince and Princess of Wales, led in the following year to the institution of annual charity performances of Messiah, to the great benefit of the Hospital.

These months seem to mark a watershed in Handel’s life. At the crest of an extraordinary and long career, having accumulated a substantial personal estate, not to mention a musical legacy that was worth preserving, and with the prospect of his sixty-fifth birthday on 23 February 1750 in view, Handel seems to have begun to think about putting his affairs in order. First, in the month before his birthday, he consolidated his investments, amounting to £7,700, into a single account. Immediately thereafter he must have been immersed in the oratorio season of 1750, which ran from 2 March to 12 April and enabled him, on 19 April, to deposit an additional £1,100 into his stock account. The inaugural charity performance of Messiah at the Foundling Hospital followed soon afterwards, on 1 May. Then, on 1 June 1750, Handel wrote his will.

In the eighteenth century wills were often composed only when the testator felt the hand of death upon him, but this seems a far cry from Handel’s situation. Although health problems had bothered him in the past, he does not seem to have been dealing with any illness or weakness at the end of the oratorio season in 1750. With the composition of Theodora the previous summer he had made a turn from oratorio topics celebrating the political state and national religion (as in Judas Maccabaeus and Solomon) to personal and reflective subjects focusing on religious freedom and an individual’s private relationship with God, a direction that he continued with his next and final oratorio, Jepthah, composed in 1751. This introspective turn in Handel’s oratorios may, of course, reflect his own preoccupations, but the changed political landscape following the suppression of the Jacobite uprising in 1745 and the Peace of Aix-la-Chapelle in

1749, two events that imparted a sense of strength and stability to the Hanoverian monarchy, had also reduced the call for works of patriotic fervour.

Seven months after Handel wrote his will, during the composition of Jephtha, failing eyesight seriously impeded his work, but there is no previous evidence of this disability. Rather, in February 1750 he had been ‘pleasing himself in the purchase of several fine pictures, particularly a large Rembrandt’ for his extensive art collection. Further, he made an extended trip to continental Europe in late summer and autumn of 1750, something he might not have undertaken if he had been suffering from serious physical or visual impairments. Perhaps, however, having turned sixty-five and knowing the dangers of long-distance travel, the prospective trip provided an additional impetus to write his will; in the event, he survived a coach accident between The Hague and Haarlem in which he was ‘terribly hurt’. Nevertheless, Handel seems to have written his will in 1750 not because his health was endangered, but because he had finally attained the professional security and financial resources to consider doing so, and it is this sense of writing from strength that best characterises the testament.

In his will Handel makes a straightforward declaration in a strong hand. Unlike testators who prepared their wills as death approached, he gives no directions as to his burial, nor, indeed, does he refer to himself at all; his sole purpose is to make bequests to others. Over the next nine years, Handel made four codicils to this will, the first three (on 6 August 1756, 29 March 1757 and 4 August 1757) seemingly prompted by the death of a named legatee. He signed the last codicil (11 April 1759) three days before he died. Only at this final stage did Handel broach the issue of his own burial. Having written a duplicate copy of his will, he must have requested that exact duplicates be made of the codicils as well. In both of the autographs sets the continued erosion of Handel’s signature over the five documents gives poignant testimony to his loss of vision.

Although certain conventions were typical of eighteenth-century wills in England, there was no fixed format. They generally began with a religious preamble that included an identification of the testator by parish and county. For example, the will of William Brinck (d. 1771), one of the witnesses who attested to Handel’s handwriting during the probate procedure, begins his will:

In the Name of God Amen I William Brink of Kensington Gore in the Parish of Saint Margaret Westminster in the County of Middlesex Esquire being of Sound Mind and memory Do make this my last Will and Testament in manner following; Viz. First I recommend my Soul into the hands of my Almighty Father who Gave it As to my Body I Desire it may be buried in a Decent manner but very Private at the Discretion of my Executrix hereinafter named As to the Worldly Estate wherewith it hath pleased God to bless me with I give and Dispose thereof as follows ...

In contrast, John Hedges (d. 1732), Treasurer to the Prince of Wales and patron of the painter Joseph Goupy, left a will in rhymed doggerel, without either religious preamble or initial identification of himself. It begins:

This 5th day of May
Being Airy and Gay
To Hipp not enclind
But of Vigorous mind
And my Body in Health
He dispose of my Wealth,
And of all I’m to leave
On this side of the Grave
to some one or other –
I think to my Brother –

Handel’s will, in contrast to either of these, steers a middle course that conveys the composer’s strong sense of self and also, in some ways, reflects his musical practice: he
neither snubs convention, nor is he subservient to it. He chooses enough standard wording at the outset to make clear his seriousness of purpose, crafting a concise and authoritative statement of his testamentary wishes that begins 'In the Name of God Amen' and continues that he, 'considering the Uncertainty of human Life[,] do make this my Will in manner following'. Throughout the will and its four codicils Handel identifies himself by name only ('I George Frideric Handel'), eschewing what would have been the more standard formula: 'I George Frideric Handel of Brook Street in the Parish of St George Hanover Square in the County of Middlesex Esquire'. One senses that he considered his name identification enough, and felt no need to make a declaration of his religious sentiments.

Many testators of this period, in addition to their major legacies, left small bequests for mourning clothes or rings to a wider group of friends and relations. Elizabeth Mayne (d. 1769), one of Handel's own legatees, made a gift of 'a Ring apiece of one Guinea value' to sixteen people, and John Gowland (d. 1776), the apothecary of Bond Street to whom Handel also left a bequest, left 'to each of my Servants that shall be living with me at my decease the Sum of five Pounds for Mourning [clothes]. Handel makes no such gifts of remembrance, choosing to make only monetary gifts, the smallest of which is £50. This is not to say that Handel was indifferent to how he would be remembered. He provided in his will for the preservation of his musical manuscripts, and in the final codicil he expressed a wish to be buried in Westminster Abbey, leaving £600 for a monument. He seems, however, to have considered personal mourning a matter that could not or should not be dictated from the grave.

The ordering of bequests in the will is also atypical. A married man generally would begin his will with legacies to his wife, moving on to his children, and then to other family and friends, only toward the end of the document making specific cash gifts and presents of clothing to his servants. As Handel never married and his nearest relatives were living in Germany, he appears instead to have organised his list of legatees according to the amount of time that he spent daily with each, moving in order from servants to colleagues, friends, and family.

The first bequest reads: 'I give and bequeath unto my Servant Peter le Blond my Clothes and Linnen, and three hundred Pounds Sterl: and to my other Servants a Year Wages'. LeBlond had probably served as Handel's valet for many years. After his death in 1757 Handel replaced him with his nephew John Duburk, who may have been one of the unnamed servants in this first bequest. As principal servant LeBlond, and later Duburk, would have seen to Handel's personal needs at home and abroad. Duburk, for example, is the highest-paid servant on the personnel list for performances of Messiah at the Foundling Hospital in 1758 and 1759. In a similar manner, LeBlond probably attended Handel at performances for many years and may also have travelled with him.

Handel's second bequest gives 'my large Harpsicord, my little House Organ, my Musick Books, and five hundred Pounds Sterl:' to his longstanding professional colleague John Christopher Smith. Born in 1683 as Johann Christoph Schmidt in Kitzingen, Smith met Handel on one of the composer's trips to visit his family in Halle, probably in 1716, and was invited by him to London. He was critically important to Handel, serving as his primary music copyist, and possibly also as orchestral manager and agent for the sale of his works, both in print and in manuscript. No one worked more closely with Handel over a longer period. At times it seems that the two must have sat side by side, Handel passing completed pages to Smith who would transform the composition autograph into a performance copy, a fair-copy 'conducting score' that would be used in the preparation of part-books for the performers and may, indeed, also have been used by Handel in performances as he directed the music from the harpsichord.

Smith's son, also John Christopher Smith, was born in Ansbach in 1712; he and his siblings joined their father in London in 1720. By 1725 Smith junior was studying with Handel and was soon assisting his father. When Handel fell ill in 1737, the younger
Smith substituted for him at the keyboard. While an active composer in his own right, Smith also managed Handel’s oratorio performances as the composer’s eyesight deteriorated, and had taken over completely by 1754; he continued performing Handel’s oratorios in London after the composer’s death. It has been thought that Handel vacillated about whether to give his bequest to John Christopher Smith senior or to his son. In the Coke copy of the will the legatee is named as ‘Mr. Christopher Smith Senior’, but the word ‘Senior’ is crossed out. Handel made no further clarification, however, and in the probate copy he simply wrote ‘Mr. Christopher Smith’ as if no additional identification was necessary – which could have been the case if (as seems likely) the senior Smith was known as Christopher and the junior Smith as John (or John Christopher). According to a biography of Smith junior that was published in 1799, Handel quarrelled with Smith senior somewhere around 1755–6 and ‘said that he was determined to put his [i.e. Smith junior’s] name in place of his father’s, in his will’, but this cannot explain the amendment made in 1750 and there is no doubt that in 1759 the bequest went to the elder Smith, passing to his son on Smith’s death in 1763. Since there appears to be no significant time lapse between the two copies of the will, Handel may simply have eliminated the ‘Senior’ as redundant and made the correction immediately in the copy, much as would have happened in the copying of his scores.

The next bequest is to James Hunter (b. 1712), named by the eighteenth-century music historian John Hawkins as one of Handel’s ‘intimate friends’. Hunter descended from two important Huguenot families of merchant traders, the Hunters and the Lannoyys, but both his parents died before he turned three years old. The youngest of three orphaned sons, he had no clear promise of support and struck out on his own as a very young man; he married in 1748 at the age of 16 or 17, undoubtedly without the approval of his guardians and extended family. He made his way as a merchant trader for a time, but fell into bankruptcy in 1741. Nevertheless, by 1745 he was able to purchase a dye house in Old Ford, and for the rest of his life profitably sold scarlet-dyed cloth to the East India Company.

Although he earned his living in trade, Hunter’s main love seems to have been music. His name appears on subscription lists for Handel’s Alexander’s Feast (1738) and Op. 6 Concerti (1740), and for Boyce’s Solomon (1743). Hawkins states that ‘at great expense [Hunter] had copies made for him of all the music of Handel that he could procure’. This collection can be tentatively associated with the so-called Lennard Collection at the Fitzwilliam Museum. As Donald Burrows has shown, the main body of the collection, begun about 1736, ‘was discontinued for some reason in 1741’, a date that can now be tied to Hunter’s bankruptcy. During his years of financial crisis Hunter himself copied a few of Handel’s scores, probably not for the purpose of earning a living but rather to fill the gaps in his own collection for which he could no longer pay, or perhaps to cover the cost of copies that he had already ordered, by work in kind. Hunter’s will directed John Walsh, Handel’s music publisher, ‘to sell ... all the Musick Books’, but following his death all of his belongings, including the music books and musical instruments, were auctioned on 30 November 1757 and there is no record of the purchasers.

The most intriguing aspect of the bequest to Hunter in both copies of the will is the obliteration of one phrase that has resisted all efforts to decipher. The ineffectiveness of digital scanning in recovering the deleted text suggests that the cancellation occurred very soon after the wills were written, since there appears to be no distinction between the ink used for the blacking out and the writing underneath. It seems, therefore, not only that both copies of the will were written in close succession, but that Handel’s decision to cancel part of the bequest to Hunter occurred quickly thereafter. This much only can be said about the deleted text: as the form of the original bequest would have matched that of the previous two (tangible gifts followed by a monetary gift), the excised portion of Hunter’s bequest must have involved one or more objects. Either
Handel had an abrupt change of mind about making the gift at all, or he decided to give the object(s) to Hunter immediately.

The obliteration in the will, and the circumstance that Hunter had predeceased Handel, were both issues that had to be taken up in probate, and both were answered by the servant Duburk. He testified (as found in the affidavit kept with the Probate Copy) that, when the will was located after Handel's death, 'it appeared obliterated in the Bequest wherein to M' James Hunter in the very same Manner and Form as it now appears and the Dep[onen]t further says that he well knew the said James Hunter the Legatee and the said James Hunter died in the Lifetime of the said Mr. Handel the Tesator'.

Given this situation, the £500 that Handel had bequeathed to Hunter fell back into the residue of the estate.

Handel concluded the original will with a set of bequests to his family and the appointment of an executor from the family to oversee the distribution of the estate. He gives £100 each to two cousins, Christian Gottlieb Handel and Christian August Roth, £500 to his cousin Dorothea Elisabeth Taust, a widow, and 'to Her Six Children each two hundred Pounds [Sterlings]'. Most importantly, he names his niece Johanna Friderica Floercke sole executrix and bequeaths to her the rest and residue (Handel wrote 'next and residue') of his personal estate, specifically mentioning his stock accounts. This bequest contains the only other difference (in addition to the crossed-out 'Senior' in the bequest to John Christopher Smith) between the two autograph copies of the will. In the Coke Copy, Handel first referred to his stock as 'South Sea Annuity's', but crossed this out and wrote instead 'Bank Annuity's 1746'. Sub [i.e. first subscription] (The text is incomplete on the page in the Coke Collection: the end of the amendment ran over onto the adjoining leaf which has since become separated.) Only the amended version appears in the Probate Copy, again indicating that it was written after the Coke Copy. When writing the Coke Copy, Handel had evidently forgotten that in February 1750 he had consolidated all of his accounts into 4% 1746 Annuities. The mistake is understandable from a number of points of view, but in particular Handel may have thought of his stock accounts as South Sea Annuities in the same way that brand names today are sometimes used as the generic term regardless of manufacturer (as in 'xerox' for 'photocopy'). Handel's first investment after arriving in England had been in South Sea stock, and each time he made new investments he chose South Sea Annuities, only permanently divesting himself of this stock in 1748. At the time of his death, however, the identification of 4% annuities was not accurate either, for on 2 January 1753 he had transferred all of his stock into a 3% consolidated account.

Handel accomplished two important goals in his will. He identified the people for whom he wanted to make provision after his death - his servants, his closest professional colleague, his friend Hunter, and his family - and he established the legal means of enacting his wishes through the creation of the written document and the appointment of an executor. Having achieved these ends in a particularly clear and concise manner, he concluded the will as simply as he had begun: 'In witnes whereof I have hereunto Set my hand this 1 Day of June 1750 ... George Frideric Handel'.

This document stood without alteration for six years. Then in 1756 and 1757 Handel made three separate codicils in quick succession. Although in each case the revision to the will seems to have been prompted by the death of a legatee, he closely follows the order of the original will in making alterations and substitutions, as well as increased bequests. Only thereafter does he take the opportunity to name additional legatees.

He begins the first codicil by increasing Peter LeBlond's bequest from £300 to £500, John Christopher Smith's from £500 to £2,000, and his cousin Christian Gottlieb Handel's from £100 to £300. Although it is impossible to provide a general formula for translating monetary amounts from the eighteenth century into today's currency because the objects in our daily lives have changed so significantly (Handel did not, for example, need to factor in the cost of a car or electricity), one can gain a

88 Handel used the feminine form (the addition of the suffix -n or -in) of his niece's surname, writing it as 'Floerken'; this practice is no longer followed. He did the same thing in dictating the third codicil, by referring to the sister of his cousin as Christiana Susanna Handelin.
general idea if the figures are multiplied by one hundred. In other words, the new bequest to Smith amounted in today’s currency to something approximating to £200,000 or £400,000. Handel’s generosity was possible because the continued success of his annual oratorio performances from 1750 to 1756 had enabled him almost to double the value of his stock account at the Bank of England from £7,700 in February 1750 to £15,000 (or about £1,500,000 today) in June 1756. Even these figures probably underestimate the modern equivalent values.

His cousin Christian August Roth having died, in this first codicil Handel transferred the legacy to his widow, and doubled it from £100 to £200. He also planned for the contingency of her death, stating that ‘if she shall die before me, I give the said Two Hundred Pounds to her Children’. As his cousin Dorothea Elisabeth Taust and one of her children had also died in the meantime, he redistributed their legacies, increasing his bequests to the five surviving children from £200 to ‘Three Hundred Pounds apiece’. Handel also added two new bequests, recognising the contributions of two of his oratorio librettists. Thomas Morell, a doctor of divinity who held various posts during his lifetime and ‘supplemented his income with a variety of publications’, had been Handel’s librettist for Judas Maccabaeus (first performed in 1747), Alexander Balus (1748), Theodora (1750) and Jephtha (1752); Handel left him £200. Newburgh Hamilton, who received £100, served as steward to the Earl of Strafford and had prepared for Handel important adaptations of texts by John Dryden and John Milton: Alexander’s Feast (1736), Samson (1743) and the Occasional Oratorio (1746).

Handel’s failing eyesight made it impossible for him to undertake the task of preparing this codicil on his own. For assistance in this matter it seems most likely that he appealed to his friend Thomas Harris, who had been called to the Bar at Lincoln’s Inn and was a Master in Chancery, and it was probably Harris who engaged John Hetherington, a lawyer of Middle Temple and clerk in the First-Fruits Office (which oversaw the taxation of income to clergy), as scribe. Hetherington not only had the correct professional qualifications, but Handel knew him, which would have been a comfort. Only a few months before, on 29 May 1756, Hetherington and Harris had been at the London house of Charles Jennens, a patron of the arts and another of Handel’s librettists (see below), when the composer had recounted events from early in his life and, although blind, played on Jennens’s forte-piano. In preparing the codicil, a process that may have taken a number of days, Handel must have laid out his intentions, after which Hetherington would have used his own notes to draw up the document. On 6 August 1756 this was ‘read over to the said George Frideric Handel and was by him Sign’d and Publish’d in our Presence’, as stated in the declaration appended to the codicil, which was then countersigned by Harris and Hetherington, presumably on the same occasion.

One of the most important revisions in this codicil was the addition of ‘George Amyand Esquire of Lawrence Pountney Hill[,] London[,] Merchant[,] Co-executor with my Niece mention’d in my Will’. This change may have been recommended by Harris, as it would have been difficult, perhaps impossible, for Johanna Floercke to oversee the execution of the will from Halle. Amyand, of Huguenot descent, was an eminent banker and merchant trader. A Member of Parliament for Barnstaple from 1754, he was created baronet in 1764. Harris and Amyand may have been personally acquainted. In 1765 ‘Mr Emyand’ (probably Amyand’s brother) is listed among the guests at the London home of Thomas Harris’s older brother James, and in 1777 Amyand’s youngest daughter married Thomas Harris’s nephew James Harris (that is, the son of his brother James), later first Earl of Malmesbury. In addition to making Amyand a co-executor, Handel gave him ‘Two Hundred Pounds which I desire him to Accept for the Care and Trouble he shall take in my affairs’.

Handel had a single purpose in preparing the second codicil (22 March 1757): to take account of the death of ‘my Old Servant Peter LeBlond’. He put LeBlond’s
nephew John Duburk in his place as the recipient of a £500 legacy, and raised the next underservant, Thomas Bramwell, to a named position in the will with a bequest of ‘Thirty Pounds in Case He shall be living with me at the time of my death and not otherwise’. Beginning with the first bequest of his original will, Handel had recognised and rewarded the assistance of his servants. Now that his blindness made their continuai help essential, he apparently updated his will on their account alone. Once again Hetherington wrote out the document, and he and Thomas Harris witnessed it.

For the third codicil (4 August 1757) Hetherington appears not to have been available, so a John Maxwell (who cannot be positively identified) joined Harris as a witness and substituted for Hetherington as scribe (would that his hand was as clear). Christian Gottlieb Handel, to whom Handel had left £500, had died, so the composer now bequeathed £300 apiece to Christian Gottlieb’s sisters (Christiana Susanna and Rahel Sophia). He also made some tangible gifts, clarifying the ownership of things currently in his possession or purchased by himself. To John Rich, the manager of the theatres at Lincoln’s Inn Fields and Covent Garden, he left ‘my Grea. Organ that stands at the Theatre Royal in Covent Garden’. This was presumably the organ that Handel had purchased in 1745 for the King’s Theatre, which had probably been adapted for Covent Garden in the following year.34 To Charles Jennens, who had provided Handel with the librettos for Saul (first performed in 1739), L’Allegro, il Penseroso ed il Moderato (1740), Messiah (1742), Belshazzar (1745) and, probably, Israel in Egypt (1759), he gave ‘two pictures, the Old Man’s head and the Old Woman’s head done by Denner’. And to his friend Bernard Granville, he left ‘the Landskip [landscape], a view of the Rhine, done by Rembrandt, & another Landskip said to be done by the same hand which he made me a Present of some time ago’. A distinctive aspect of this codicil is its indication that Handel was having some difficulty remembering names, or in communicating them to an amanuensis. The Earl of Shaftesbury had written to James Harris in a letter of February 1757 that ‘Handel’s memory is strengthened of late to an astonishing degree’, but in this document the composer identifies only one of his female cousins, Christiana Susanna, by name, referring to the other as the ‘Sister living at Pless near Teschen in Silesia’.35 The codicil also leaves a blank space for Bernard Granville’s first name.

The tangible gifts give further evidence of an attribute of Handel’s will that seems congruent with the priority that he gives his servants. By and large, those who have ample means of their own do not receive monetary gifts, which would explain why Handel left cash bequests to his oratorio librettists Morell and Hamilton, but not to Jennens and some others. Rich’s profits from Covent Garden were considerable, while Granville and Jennens, both avid collectors of Handel’s music as well as of art, were independently wealthy.36 The composer also enjoyed collecting art: the inventory of his collection auctioned after his death (which did not, of course, contain the two portraits by Balthasar Denner or the two landscapes said to be by Rembrandt that he had bequeathed by will) contains 80 paintings.37

The final bequest in this third codicil is the gift of ‘a fair copy of the Score and all the parts of my Oratorio called The Messiah to the Foundling Hospital’. Handel had by then been presenting annual charity performances of Messiah at the Foundling Hospital for eight years, and in 1754 the Hospital had sought to preserve the ‘great Benefit’ they had received from these performances by asking the composer to initiate an Act of Parliament that would grant them proprietary rights to Messiah.38 Handel refused, but his bequest of a score and ‘all the parts’ gave the Hospital the performing material that would be needed to continue the concerts after his death. In the event this material, specially copied for the Hospital, was not used, because the performers continued to use their old music copies.

The last codicil (11 April 1759) differs from the preceding ones in no: having been necessitated by the deaths of named legatees, but rather by Handel’s own failing health.

35 For Shaftesbury’s letter, see Burrows and Dunhill, Music and Theatre, p. 321.
Signed three days before he died, it is his death-bed testament. Consistent with the will and prior codicils, he again remembered those who had done him service. He adjusted the gifts to his servants, leaving all of his wearing apparel to Duburk (written here as Le Bourk), a provision that he had previously made for his late servant LeBlond; increasing the bequest to Thomas Bramwell (who apparently had continued to live with Handel – see the third codicil) by £70 to a total of £100; and giving to his ‘two Maid Servants each one years Wages over and above what shall be due to them at the time of my death’. He doubled the bequest to Amyand to £400 and added gifts for Hetherington (£100) and Thomas Harris (£300). For the first time he gave general consideration to his musical colleagues. He made a munificent gift of £1000 to the Fund for Decayed Musicians, to support musicians and their families in need, which was administered by the Society of Musicians.39 In 1738 Handel had been one of the founders of this Society (which continues today as The Royal Society of Musicians of Great Britain), and from its inception he had taken part in annual concerts for the benefit of the Fund. He also made a separate bequest to the violinst Matthew Dubourg, who had led the orchestra during the Dublin season of 1741–42 which included the first performances of Messiah, and had arranged performances of Handel’s music in Dublin after that time; he had also led the orchestra for Handel’s London oratorio season in 1743.

Next, he focused on former and current neighbours. These bequests open what has otherwise been a closed door, making it possible to trace a number of Handel’s social connections in London and revealing a network of interrelationships between his friends and associates. The largest gift (£500) among this group of beneficiaries went to James Smyth, the owner of a perfumery on New Bond Street. That he was a friend can be assumed, but Handel may also have used his professional services, for perfumers were at this time closely aligned with both personal grooming and pharmaceuticals. Smyth was one of the last people from outside the composer’s household to see him before his death on 14 April. In a letter to Bernard Granville informing him that ‘on Saturday last died the great and good Mr. Handel’, he described the composer’s last days:

He took leave of all his friends on Friday morning, and desired to see nobody but the Doctor and Apothecary and myself. At 7 o’clock in the evening he took leave of me and told me we would meet again; as for that he had now done with the world.40

The apothecary referred to was probably John Gowland, also of New Bond Street, who had been apothecary to the Prince of Wales from about 1741 to the time of his death in 1751. Handel acknowledged him with a gift of £50. Another legatee, John Belchier of Sun Court, Threadneedle Street, an eminent surgeon at Guy’s Hospital, may have been the doctor; however, as he was also a friend, Handel’s bequest of ‘Fifty Guineas’ could have been an acknowledgment of this friendship.41 Twenty-five years later, Charles Burney asserted that Richard Warren, a distinguished physician who had worked at Middlesex Hospital, had attended the composer in his final illness.42 Dr Warren does not appear in Handel’s will, but he lived nearby; as he was appointed physician to George III in 1762, he may also have had a professional association with Gowland, who was made apothecary to George III in the same year. Handel also made a gift of 50 guineas to Benjamin Martyn who, like Smyth and Gowland, lived in New Bond Street. Martyn was a writer who served as secretary to the Board of Trustees for establishing the colony of Georgia and was employed by the fourth Earl of Shaftsbery to write a biography of the first Earl. As a friend of Handel’s, he was a useful source of advance information about the oratorio seasons: in 1757 Thomas Harris needed to ‘send to Mr. Martyn to know Handel’s scheme of performances’.43

This codicil seems to flow largely as stream-of-consciousness, with additions as Handel remembered them. Following the gifts to musicians, his male servants, and friends (not separately categorised as before, but intermixed), and with a sense of conclusion, he turns to his own burial. Then, rather abruptly, he appears to remember the
women in his life, grouping his maid servants together with women of greater social standing, as he had done with the comparable male legatees earlier in the codicil. Finally, his gift of £200 to Mr Reiche, ‘Secretary for the affairs of Hanover’, was probably made, as with so many of the bequests, in gratitude for both friendship and professional assistance. It recalls Handel’s connection with the House of Hanover that was almost of fifty years’ standing, through Kings George I and George II in London, and back to his appointment to the Electoral Court at Hanover itself in 1770.

Among Handel’s female legatees, the first bequest is to ‘Mrs. Palmer of Chelsea, Widow of Mr. Palmer, formerly of Chappell Street, One Hundred Pounds’. Elizabeth Palmer (née Peacock, b. 1722–d. after 1764) was the widow of Ralph [Raph] Palmer, the third-generation person to carry this name. Her parents had been servants, and the Palmers legally separated her from the family inheritance so that her husband could only leave her a life interest (but with permission to sell any of his estate) on his death in 1755.\(^{44}\) From the time of their marriage in 1747 they lived in a large house in Curzon Street, within Handel’s parish of St George, Hanover Square. Palmer was an avid collector of art and books, but much of the collection, like the house itself, was sold by Elizabeth after his death, presumably in order to raise sufficient money to secure a stable income. Significant items from Palmer’s collection can still be traced.\(^{45}\) After her husband died Elizabeth moved to the corner of Park Street and Chappell Street (now Alford Street), and then to Chelsea.\(^{46}\) The nature of Handel’s specific association with the Palmers is unknown.

After leaving an additional bequest to his two (unnamed) maids, Hancel adds two further bequests to women: 50 Guineas each to ‘Mrs. Mayne of Kensington Widow Sister of the late Mr. Batt’ and ‘Mrs. Donnalan of Charles Street Berkley Square’. Elizabeth Mayne (née Batt, 1695–1768) married John Mayne, Lord of the Manor of Telfont Evis, Wiltshire, in 1722. As the Batt family was part of the social circle of the Harrises in Salisbury, she might have met her husband in those environs. After he died in 1726, leaving her with two young children, she divided her time between Wiltshire and the Batt family residence in Kensington. Handel had probably met Mrs Mayne through her brother, Christopher Batt, who died in 1756. According to family tradition, Mayne befriended Handel ‘at the time of his persecution’, probably in the early 1740s when he faced significant public opposition.\(^{47}\) She was a skilled harpsichordist; her childhood music book survives in the British Library, meticulously labeled ‘Elizabeth Batt 1704’ in Gothic script.\(^{48}\)

Anne Donnellan (?1700–1762) was a close friend of Mary Delany (née Granville, later Pendarves, 1700–1788), the sister of Bernard Granville, through whom she undoubtedly met the composer.\(^{49}\) After the death of her father Nehemiah Donnellan, Lord Chief Baron of the Exchequer of Ireland (d. 1705), her mother had married Philip Perceval (brother to John, later first Earl of Egmont), and it was he who brought the family to London in the late 1720s. Mrs Delany’s later correspondence records a number of social events (at all of their houses) at which she, Donnellan and Handel were present.\(^{50}\) Anne Donnellan had a fine reputation as an amateur singer: Lord Orrery warned the Bishop of Cork in 1736 not to be surprised if Lord Burlington ‘quis his Nitch’ and ‘thinks himself at Miss Donnallan’s Feet as soon as ever “Verdi prati” [from Handel’s Aïda] reach his ears’.\(^{51}\) Donnellan never married (the title of Mrs was used for women above a certain age, like ‘Madame’ in French); at her death she left to the British Museum a miniature portrait of Handel by Rupert Barber.\(^{52}\)

Like the first and second codicils, this last codicil appears to have been written out by John Hetherington, but neither he nor Thomas Harris served as witnesses. The likely reason for their abstention is that they were both named for bequests in the codicil, although the use of legatees as witnesses was not at all uncommon. John Christopher Smith the younger signed as one witness; the other is an unidentified person named Rudd.\(^{53}\)

\(^{44}\) The information on the Peacock family comes from a note dated 11 February 1747 written by Ralph Verney, first Earl Verney and first cousin to Ralph Palmer, on the back of a letter to him (British Library microfilm of letters of the Verney family, Claydon House). The legal documents concerning the disposition of the Palmer real estate are in East Sussex Record Office, FFE 8533–8564, and the Chancery copy of Ralph Palmer’s will survives at PROB 11/814.

\(^{45}\) Examples include Rembrandt’s Man in Oriental Costume (Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York) and an illuminated Bible from the second half of the thirteenth century (British Library: Burney 2).

\(^{46}\) The rate-books from St George, Hanover Square, now at the City of Westminster Archives Centre, identify the Palmer residences in the parish.


\(^{48}\) British Library, Add. MS. 19695.


\(^{52}\) A record of the gift dated 11 June 1764 is found in the ‘Department of Antiquities and Coins. Donations 1756–1836’ at the British Museum, Medieval and Later Antiquities Department; the portrait itself is now lost. The Chancery copy of Donnellan’s will survives (PROB 11/817).

\(^{53}\) In modern transcriptions of the will Rudd’s initials are usually given as A. J., but the Chancery scrawl in 1755 wrote A. S. If the contemporary scribe was correct, as seems likely, this witness might possibly be the Samuel Rudd who appears in 1755 as a recorder in short-hand at the Old Bailey court (The Public Advertiser, 27 January 1755).
With death in view, Handel asked ‘permission of the Dean and Chapter of Westminster to be buried in Westminster Abbey’ and requested that ‘his Executor may have leave to erect a Monument for me there’, making provision for a sum of up to £600 to cover its cost. He further requested that his burial should take place ‘in a private manner’. On the day Handel died Amyand paid £45 5s. 6d. towards the ‘Fees for the Funeral of George Frederick Handel Esq.’ in the South Cross of Westminster Abbey; charges that were paid later include 6 guineas for a gravestone and further payments of £17 17s. 2d. and £3 in fees to the clergy. The funeral took place on 20 April, and ‘though he had mentioned being privately interred, yet, from the respect due to so celebrated a man, the Bishops, Prebends and the whole Choir attended’. It was estimated that ‘there were not fewer than 3000 Persons present on this Occasion’. The French émigré sculptor Louis François Roubiliac, whose statue of Handel erected at Vauxhall Gardens in 1737 was among his first works for London, was commissioned to create the monument; it turned out to be his last work. Roubiliac is said to have taken a death mask of Handel to serve as his model for the sculpture, which Hawkins described as ‘the most perfect resemblance [in which] the true lineaments of his face are apparent’. The Dean and Chapter of Westminster were paid an additional fee of £25 for a site for the monument, but no record survives of payment to Roubiliac, who died on 11 January 1762. The monument was dedicated on 15 July 1762.

On the day of Handel’s death, which was Holy Saturday (the day before Easter Sunday), Amyand not only took care of arranging Handel’s funeral but also appeared before the Prerogative Court at Doctors’ Commons to swear to the ‘Truth of this Will and to the several Codicils hereunto annexed’. On 22 April two more witnesses appeared personally to testify that ‘they very well knew George Frideric Handell ... and are well acquainted with his Manner and Character of handwriting having often seen him write ... [and] that they do verily believe the whole Body and Contents of the said Will and the said Name George Frideric Handel thereto subscribed to be all of the proper handwriting of the said George Frideric Handel Esq.’ deceased.

Both men, William Brinck Esquire of the Parish of St James Westminster, and Edward Cavendish, Gentleman of the Parish of Paddington, must have had regular dealings with Handel, probably in a professional or mercantile capacity, but whatever these might have been is unknown today. Finally, on 24 April Duburk testified to the discovery of the will and its codicils ‘locked and sealed up together’ in Handel’s bureau, to the obliteration found at that time in the bequest to James Hunter, and to the death of Hunter before Handel. On 26 April probate was granted to Amyand with the ‘power reserved to make the like grant to Johanna Friderica Floercken ... when she shall apply for the same’. The official registration of Probate at the Bank of England on 30 April then cleared the way for Amyand to begin paying out the bequests from Handel’s account. The first, on 2 May, was to [John] Christopher Smith for £2,470.

Stock accounts at the Bank of England were not recorded in cash value but rather at a fixed (par) value of £100. The actual value fluctuated with the market, so it is necessary to find the trading price on any specific day to know the cash value of an account. During the period that Amyand made payments from this account, from 2 May to 31 October 1759, consolidated 5% annuities were selling under par at about £80, and thus the cash value of the £17,500 of stock in Handel’s account was about £14,000. Trading value for the annuity closed at 80% on 2 May, and at this price the £2,470 in annuities transferred to Smith would have approximated (at £1994 10s.) to the bequest of £2,000, but if Amyand actually sold the stock at a value of 81, which could easily have happened over the course of the day, it would have equalled £2,000. Similar accounting needs to be done for payouts to other named legatees, such as Duburk and James Smyth.

Many of the recipients of stock, however, are not named legatees. The payout to ‘Peter Gillier Senior & Co.’ refers not to a personal legacy, but to authorised agents for the Society of Musicians, whose minutes record that the £1,254 ‘of the reduced Bank

54 The Dean and Chapter of Westminster, Fee Book, p. 123; Simon, Handel, p. 233.
55 The Universal Chronicle, 28 April 1759; Deutsch, Handel, p. 821.
56 The London Evening Post, 24 April 1759; Deutsch, Handel p. 841.
57 Simon, Handel, p. 47.
58 Simon, Handel, p. 47; Malcolm Baker, ‘Roubiliac, Louis François (1702–1761)’, ODNB.
59 Brinck’s will, proved on 2 October 1771 and cited above, indicates a man of some wealth. He left £1,000 a piece to a sister-in-law and her daughter, and the residue of his estate to his sister.
60 See Harris, ‘Handel the Investor’, for a full description of these accounts and the trading prices on specific days.
Annuities, now standing in the names of Mr. Thomas Wood, Mr. Peter Gillier, and Mr. Christian Reich, in the books of the company of the Bank of England, were transferred to them by Amyand 'in full satisfaction and discharge of the Legacy of One Thousand Pounds, given and bequeathed by the said George Frederic Handel': that is, £1,254 of 3% annuities sold at 79% equalled £1,000.61 Some of the other recipients may also have been proxies. As is the case with Handel's stock accounts during his life, most of the names can be identified as brokers to whom Amyand probably sold the stock for cash. Since some of the people named in Handel's will did not hold stock accounts at the Bank of England, which would have been necessary for a stock transfer, they must have been paid in currency.

On 19 September 1759 the Taust family in Halle sent a bill of exchange to Amyand for the payment of the bequest that Handel had left them. Amyand refused payment, however, since it was drawn for £1,500 rather than £1,200 (10 October 1759). The issue seems to have been that the Tausts read Handel's bequest of £500 to each of the five living children at the time of the first codicil in 1756 as a gift per stirpes (that is, as a total gift of £1,500 to be divided among any living children of his cousin Dorothea Elisabeth Taust), whereas Amyand read it as a gift per capita, or £300 to each living child, of which there were four at the time of Handel's death, with the amount bequeathed to any child who predeceased Handel falling into the residue bequeathed to Handel's niece (as was also the case with the lapsed bequest to Hunter).

The resolution of the disagreement with the Taust family is not entirely clear, but Amyand appears not to have countenanced any further discussion. On 11 October he transferred £9,000 into an account for Johanna Friderica Floercke. This amount probably represents all of the money sent to Germany, with Floercke in her designated, if not sworn, role of executrix acting as proxy for Handel's family. At a trading value of £82 (on 12 October the annuity was selling at 82¼), this amount of stock would have been worth £7,380. If the bequests of £200 to the Roth family, £600 to the sisters of Christian Gottlieb Handel, and £1,200 to the Taust family are subtracted from the cash value of the stock transfer, £5,380 is left as a cash bequest to Handel's niece.

The cash bequests from Handel's will, not including the 'residue' to Floercke or the gift to Hunter, total £8,450, or about £10,562 of stock at a selling price of £80. Adding this to the £9,000 of stock transferred to Floercke would require £19,562 of stock. But if the £2,000 in bequests to family is subsumed in this payment, then the remaining cash bequests total only £6,450, or about £8,622 of stock. If this is added to Floercke's £9,000 the total sum becomes £17,062 and that amount, given the fluctuations in price, closely matches the £17,500 of stock in Handel's account at the time of his death. Once the cash bequests were disbursed, additional currency would have been needed for payment of the servants' wages, as Handel willed, as well as any outstanding debts and funeral costs. These expenses could have been met in part from the sale of stock, and from the sale of Handel's household goods and art collection, but there was probably also some additional money that had been kept in the house or in a cash account with a neighbouring merchant.62 On Wednesday 31 October Amyand closed the account at the Bank of England with transfers to three non-legatees, two of whom can positively be identified as brokers; probably all three transfers resulted in cash that was used to complete the execution of Handel's will.

Handel's will provides us with insights into Handel the man. Its direct and concise wording reflects his straightforward, and sometimes blunt, manner. He was not a man for superficial niceties: as so often in his music, he cuts directly to the heart of the matter. What is not included is also important. For example, Handel is said to have altered his intention to leave a bequest to Joseph Goupuy, formerly a close friend, after the artist drew and published a vicious caricature of the composer. An anecdote printed in 1776 about this incident claims that Handel would not forgive Goupuy because he had 'abused his Friendship' and endeavored to give his patrons 'an ill Impression of him'.63

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62 Handel's remaining household goods (see note 5, above) were bought by Dubusk for £48 on 7 August 1759, and his art collection was auctioned by Mr. Langford on 28 February 1760. A copy of the sale catalogue of the art collection is in the Frick Art Library, New York: see Simon, Handel, pp. 289-90, also Hugh McLean, 'Bernard Granville, Handel and the Reynolds', The Musical Times, 126/60 (October 1985), pp. 503-601.
Whether or not these statements actually represent Handel's words, they certainly reflect the priorities of his will: to honour his family and friends, to acknowledge those who had assisted him in various ways, to maintain the stability of those charities he had been engaged with during his life, and to assure his musical legacy.

The will also illustrates Handel's general adherence to the custom of having capital and responsibility pass down chronologically and from male to female. John duburk receives a bequest following the death of his uncle, but is not named previously when his uncle, especially if they were working together, was his senior. Similarly, Handel's legacy to the Roth family passes first from the father to the mother and then to the children. His gift to John Christopher Smith, understood in this context, seems even more clearly to point to Smith senior, something that Handel first makes explicit and then takes as understood. It may also be that this practice lies behind his gifts to Mrs Mayne and Mrs Palmer, both of whom are identified by the male relative who would traditionally have taken fiscal responsibility for them. Mayne's husband had died in 1726 and, given his residence in Teffont Evias, it is unlikely Handel knew him, but it is probable that he knew her brother Christopher Batt as well as Palmer's husband Ralph. His gifts to these women may, therefore, be understood in some sense as transferred bequests from their late male protectors. The exclusion from the will of Mary Delany, a known friend and supporter of Handel, may speak to the same issue. Not only was she living in Ireland at the time of Handel's death, and therefore out of Handel's immediate neighbourhood, but she was also a married woman and Handel had made her brother Bernard Granville, equally a close friend, a legatee.

These cultural norms did not, however, dominate Handel's will, as they did those of so many others. Rather, they exist in parallel to, and sometimes in competition with, his own extraordinary sense of responsibility and charity. Factors governing Handel's choice of legatees included type of income (he favoured those who earned their living, however wealthy) and geographical proximity to him during his last years. For example, he did not leave a gift of any type for James Harris, who lived in Salisbury and had inherited wealth, but he did mark his gratitude to Harris's younger brother Thomas (a prosperous London lawyer) who had assisted him with his will. He acknowledges the contributions of three of his oratorio librettists by making monetary or tangible bequests based on the stability of their income and their proximity to him at the time of his death. That he left nothing to Thomas Broughton, who compiled the text of *Hercules*, may have been primarily because he no longer lived in London; in addition, he held a good position within the church. It is interesting to note that although Handel supports the Fund for Decayed Musicians and leaves a monetary bequest to the violinist Dubourq, he leaves nothing to any of his singers. Some of these, for example Susanna Cibber and John Beard, had more than adequate means of support, but Handel may also have felt that, unlike his librettists or orchestral musicians, his solo singers had received due acknowledgment from the public.

Handel's request to be buried in Westminster Abbey and to have a significant monument erected in his memory certainly speaks to his sense of self, which although strong was not misplaced. More important than the burial or monument, however, was the bequest of his 'Musick Books' to John Christopher Smith, making it possible, at least in the short term, to perpetuate performances of his music after his death. His autograph manuscripts then passed from father to son, undoubtedly in a way that Handel would have anticipated, and their subsequent gift from the younger Smith to George III preserved them for posterity. Although Handel's important charitable legacies continue today in the work of the Royal Society of Musicians and in frequent benefit performances of *Messiah* worldwide, his greatest bequest to future generations was surely the preservation of his music. In our receipt of this gift, we have all become legatees of the 'great and good Mr Handel'.