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Integrity and Improvisation in the Music of Handel*

ELLEN T. HARRIS

There are two issues in Handel studies today that arouse active, heated, and, frequently, emotional debate—borrowing and performance practice. At first these topics appear to have little in common except for their ability to arouse extreme and exaggerated commentary from otherwise sober members of our profession. I believe, however, that these issues are related in a critical way that strikes at the heart of our perception of what makes a composition a "work of art" and, ultimately, what makes a composer an "artist."

A commonly held but infrequently spoken set of assumptions about music is that the composer as "artist" achieves god-like status by creating a "work of art" out of nothing. It follows that if a composition is a "work of art," it deserves our respect, if not our reverence. The score, as holy relic, must be translated into sound without additions or alterations, and performers as priests must struggle to attain the ideal of the perfect performance. Those who tacitly or unconsciously adhere to this philosophy argue for purity in performance; their unspoken assumptions about the nature of a work of art, however, remain largely concealed except for certain choices of word, such as the description of vocal ornamentation as "graffiti" by the late Jens Peter Larsen in his American Handel Society Address at the 1987 Maryland Handel Festival.[1] It follows, of course, that if a composition can be shown to have been formed out of more, or, rather, less, than

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* This article is a slightly altered version of a paper presented as the Second Annual American Handel Society Lecture in November, 1988, at the Maryland Handel Festival, The University of Maryland.

[1] "The Turning Point in Handel's Career," *Jens Peter Larsen: Handel Essays* in *American Choral Review* XXXI (1989), 55–62; see especially p. 57.

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divine dust, thus not meeting the standard of god-like creation, it cannot be considered pure, nor should it be treated like a relic.

The growing list of Handel's borrowings (because of these unspoken assumptions) has clearly affected opinion on the composer's stature, and already in 1983, as a result of the American Handel Society Conference that focused on this issue, Andrew Porter toyed with the idea of Handel as "merely the Great Arranger."[2] Thus, our image of Handel, his integrity as a composer and the integrity of his music, lies at the heart of discussions both about borrowings and performance practice.

The two issues may be seen to intersect in the following imaginary formulations. If Handel is an "artist" who created "works of art," then rhythmic and pitch variations in performance are a sacrilege akin to "graffiti." If, on the other hand, Handel is merely a "Great Arranger," not a composer in the sacred sense of the term, then ornamentation and improvisation do no harm. Lurking insidiously behind these formulations are the arguments that he who respects Handel as a composer will perform the music as it is written and, its obverse, which is even worse, that he who alters the notes or rhythms of Handel's scores in performance lacks respect for the music. No one today makes such an argument overtly, although Larsen came dangerously close in his address; nevertheless, the emotional and moralistic level of much of the debate on borrowings and performance practice implies that more is at stake than what appears on the surface. The underlying questions would appear to be three: 1) what criteria do we use to judge the integrity of a composer and his compositions; 2) do compositions that demand performing improvisations lack this integrity; and 3) is the musical "work of art" the score or the performance?

Handel's integrity was questioned very early on the borrowing issue, as has been documented recently by George Buelow in "The Case for Handel's Borrowings: The Judgment of Three Centuries."[3] For example, in 1887 Arthur James Balfour wrote in the *Edinburgh Review:*

> We are given to understand that his unacknowledged robberies from contemporaries and predecessors were of a kind and magnitude which must seriously affect our estimates of him, both as an honest man and an original genius. In support of this indictment, recent investigators have drawn up so formidable a catalogue of

[2] "Musical Events: Something Borrowed, Something New," *The New Yorker* (November 18, 1983), p. 186.

[3] As published in *Handel Tercentenary Collection*, ed. by Stanley Sadie and Anthony Hicks (London, 1987), pp. 61–82.

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> these borrowed treasures, that at first sight it would almost appear as if Handel rather compiled music than composed it. . . .[4]

Thus Andrew Porter's nightmarish 1983 vision of Handel as a Great Arranger rather than a Great Composer was previewed almost one hundred years earlier in 1887, and in those one hundred years we have not travelled far in our understanding of the borrowing process although scores of new borrowings, numerically and literally, have been added to the catalogue.

As Handelians have faced the growing documentation illustrating Handel's extensive borrowings, they have often reacted emotionally. Indeed, the evolving response over the past century has strikingly paralleled the five stages of grief outlined by Elizabeth Kuebler-Ross in *On Death and Dying* (1969). The first stage of denial was clearly represented in the response to Sedley Taylor's book, *The Indebtedness of Handel to Works by Other Composers* (Cambridge, 1906) by Percy Robinson in *Handel and his Orbit* (London, 1908). Taylor revealed the extensive borrowings in *Israel in Egypt* from Erba's *Magnificat* and Urio's *Te Deum*, and Robinson countered that these actually were works by Handel in which Erba and Urio identify the geographical areas where the music was written.

The Handelian community then reversed the next two stages, passing first through the stage of bargaining. Here scholars were willing to accept the fact of borrowing, but only with the understanding that it was clearly limited in scope and explainable. Thus Handel's borrowing was closely linked to his serious illness of 1737 as a sad but true fact of his career that was bounded chronologically and primarily restricted in musical terms to the incipits that were now necessary to fuel Handel's impaired improvisatory talents. As Dent wrote in 1934:

> It is quite conceivable that his paralytic stroke affected his brain in such a way that he may sometimes have had a difficulty in starting a composition.[5]

In the 1950s Gerald Abraham and Winton Dean followed and elaborated on this argument.[6]

The third stage, or anger, can be typified by the following, somewhat contradictory and defensive point of view fabricated for this

[4] As quoted in Buelow, "The Case for Handel's Borrowings," p. 74.

[5] Edward J. Dent, *Handel* (London, 1934), pp. 100–02, as quoted in John H. Roberts, "Why did Handel Borrow?" *Handel Tercentenary Collection*, p. 85.

[6] Gerald Abraham, "Some Points of Style," *Handel: A Symposium* (London, 1954), pp. 262–74, and Winton Dean, *Handel's Dramatic Oratorios and Masques* (London, 1959), pp. 50–57.

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purpose. "Many of these so-called borrowings are simply conventional figures, not borrowings at all, and, after all, everyone was doing it." Inevitably, and not incorrectly, Bach's borrowings, listed in 1967 in Norman Carrell's book, *Bach the Borrower* and Gluck's borrowings, listed by Klaus Hortschansky in 1973 (*Parodie und Entlehnung im Schaffen Christoph Willibald Glucks*) are cited. Furthermore, borrowing is seen as common to artists in other fields, such as Shakespeare and Poussin. Why single out Handel? The conventional figuration of the so-called borrowings and historical context for these has been recently pursued by George Buelow in an important series of articles.[7] However, the strongest outburst has come only very recently from David R. B. Kimball, and it bears repetition here.

> Is it not time that Handelians who are caught up by this intriguing but as yet disappointingly barren topic [of borrowing] refined their terminology for dealing with it? There seems, prima facie, a strong likelihood that the phenomenon ranges from flagrant plagiarism, through various degrees and types of recomposition, through citations and allusions and half-conscious recollections, to sheer coincidence. Further, it seems proper to recall that Handel was one of the supreme improvisators in a great age of improvisation; and that entailed, I take it, not simply the obvious thing—an effervescent fantasy—but, more relevant to the present context, a sovereign mastery in working the traditional *figurae* of music rhetoric, a flair for bridging gaps and perceiving connections, and, not least, a prodigious musical memory. If all this is even half true, what are we to make of the data accumulating from the labours of the aficionados of 'borrowings'? An extraordinary and surely quite implausible picture threatens to emerge, of a composer engaged in the most arid mental contortions, dipping into scores of Vivaldi, Scarlatti, Gasparini, *et al.* as a hard-pressed undergraduate might into *The New Grove*, and browsing, extracting, dovetailing, covering his tracks to produce thematic motifs, textures and figurations that, in most cases, any half-competent composer of the period would have had at his fingertips anyway. I am not confident that much light will be shed on this enigmatic matter as long as we continue to talk flatly of 'borrowing', a term that contrives to be at once shockingly unimaginative and fantastically injudicious.[8]

[7] George J. Buelow, "Originality, Genius, Plagiarism in English Criticism of the Eighteenth Century" (paper delivered at Annual Meeting of the American Musicological Society, Philadelphia, 1984); "Handel's Borrowing Techniques: Some Fundamental Questions derived from a Study of 'Agrippina' (Venice, 1709)," *Göttinger Händel Beiträge* II (1986), 105–28; "Mattheson's Concept of 'Moduli' as a Clue to Handel's Compositional Process," *Göttinger Händel Beiträge* III (1987), 272–78; "The Case for Handel's Borrowings: the Judgment of Three Centuries," cited above (note 3).

[8] Review of *Music and Theatre: Essays in Honour of Winton Dean*, ed. by Nigel Fortune, *Music and Letters* LXIX (1988), 378.

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Recently John Roberts has rejected this angry and defensive stance as well as the denials and excuses offered in previous stages, thereby ushering in what had previously only been hinted at by Balfour and Porter—the fourth stage, or depression. He writes that none "of the more personal explanations offered in the past prove very satisfactory"[9] and that "no other leading composer of the period is known to have borrowed on anything like the same scale as Handel."[10] He states that "such unadorned copying of another's work is usually associated by the [contemporary] theorists with lack of technical skill and lack of talent,"[11] and he concludes, "I would like to suggest another explanation for Handel's borrowing, one that has never been seriously proposed, though often hastily discounted: that he had a basic lack of facility in inventing original ideas."[12] At this stage, then, Handel's borrowings seem not only to illustrate his lack of integrity as an artist, but also to prove his lack of genius. Thus, each new discovery of a Handel borrowing from another composer is dreaded beforehand and depressing afterwards. One must wonder when and where it will end.

Before allowing ourselves to wallow too deeply in this stage, however, I would like to suggest that we pass on to the fifth and final stage of acceptance. Let us say it outright: Handel borrowed frequently from himself and others as an integral part of the composition process. The question this raises is: so what? And then, with more reflection: what is it that gives a composition its integrity? what makes a composer an artist?

These questions, of course, are not limited to music, and one is tempted to return to arguments from the stage of anger, illustrating that Handel is far from unique in terms of his creative process, so as to learn from scholars in other fields who have faced this problem. One obvious parallel to Handel is Shakespeare, not only because of his well-known borrowing practices, but because his art form of theatre, like music, exists in time, demands performance, and is descended from improvisation. I will try briefly to lay out the similarities.

Since at least the eighteenth century, scholars and critics have known that many, if not most, of Shakespeare's plays are based on previous literary sources. In this century, these sources have been compiled and edited in five volumes by Geoffrey Bullough (*Narrative and Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare*, 1961), who begins his introduction,

[9] "Why did Handel Borrow?" p. 87.
[10] Ibid, p. 86.
[11] Ibid.
[12] Ibid, p. 88.

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"In the past two hundred years considerable attention has been given to Shakespeare's indebtedness for elements of his plots and characterization to earlier English and foreign authors,"[13] thus using precisely the term, "indebtedness," that has bedeviled Handel scholars since the time of Sedley Taylor. Indeed, Shakespearian scholarship's equivalent of Sedley Taylor was an eighteenth-century female novelist who was the first to publish a number of Shakespeare's sources, and who argued that "Shakespeare spoiled many of his stories by complicating the intrigue and introducing absurdities."[14] Mrs. Charlotte Lennox's work, *Shakespeare Illustrated*, was published in London in 1753. In the nineteenth century Shakespeare's sources were treated in a less inflammatory way, in particular in Collier's two-volume *Shakespeare's Library* (1843) and Hazlitt's expansion of this in 1875. Bullough's twentieth-century compendium is now the *locus classicus* for Shakespeare's sources.

As Handel lived more than a century after Shakespeare, so are Handelians at least a century behind the Shakespearians. Not only is Sedley Taylor's work thus parallel to Mrs. Lennox's, but John Robert's nine-volume edition of *Handel Sources*[15] thus compares with the nineteenth-century efforts of Collier and Hazlitt. One can imagine that it will take the good part of a century before Handelians will be able to produce a complete compendium of sources similar to Bullough's. Looking into the future, therefore, we might be able to learn from Bullough's approach to the issue of borrowing in Shakespeare.

Let us take the familiar play of *Romeo and Juliet* as an example. Shakespeare's drama of about 1591 was based closely on a long English poem of 1562 by Arthur Brooke entitled *The Tragicall Historye of Romeus and Juliet.* Bullough summarizes the parallels:

> A patient reading of Brooke will show how much he had to offer: the background of upper-class life, of church customs, of feud and riot; and much detail as the story progresses: the advice of Romeo's friends, Mercutio at the dance, Juliet going to church with her nurse and maid, Friar Lawrence, Tybalt, the Nurse (who helps to bring them together, recovers Juliet from her swoon, and threatens to kill herself should the girl die), the mother's depiction of Paris, the father's anger at Juliet's refusal to marry him, their joy when she agrees, the Nurse's *volte-face*, Juliet's subterfuge to sleep alone, and so on to the end. In Brooke Shakespeare found his subject well laid out and ready for quick dramatization. . . .[16]

[13] Bullough, vol. I, p. ix.
[14] Ibid.
[15] John H. Roberts, *Handel Sources*, 9 vols. (New York, 1986–87).
[16] Bullough, I, 278.

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A line by line comparison, although fascinating in what it reveals about Shakespeare's use of line, word, and image from Brooke, while at the same time continually proving Shakespeare's superiority, cannot be undertaken here; Bullough's summary must suffice, as must his conclusion: "Brooke's poem is a leaden work which Shakespeare transmuted into gold. . . . The surprising thing is that Shakespeare preserved so much of his source in vitalizing its dead stuff."[17]

The question of plagiarism is not entertained, and my guess is that contemporary Shakespearean scholars would be astonished if the question was put to them. After all, art is based in tradition and flourishes in culmination. I am reminded of a remark cited by Julian Rushton that "the true test of originality, as Auden pointed out, is not how little an author borrows, but how inimitable he himself is."[18] A bit cynical, perhaps, but it speaks to the question of culmination, and at least one dramatic line of the *Romeo and Juliet* literary tradition culminated in Shakespeare's play. Brooke's poem was merely a step along the way, and Shakespeare's accomplishment gives Brooke's work an importance it would never have had otherwise. Facilitators need culminators for their work to survive, and it is mere foolishness to think that artists in any field work without deep knowledge and use of the past. The relationship, similar psychologically to the parent-child relationship, may vary from copying, to building upon, to deliberate avoidance, but the consciousness, or at least subconsciousness, is there.[19]

One of the most egregious examples of borrowing in Handel's career is his use of material from every movement of Erba's *Magnificat* in his *Israel in Egypt.* Does it compare in any way to Shakespeare's borrowing of Brooke? Put simply, yes. Handel changes the order of events in terms of movements, he expands and contracts, adds a lot of his own material, but remains clearly indebted to Erba in nine out of eleven consecutive movements of Part II, which has eighteen movements overall. However, Handel transmutes Erba's lead into gold. At least, like Shakespeare, Handel has done *something* magical. For just as no one would judge Brooke's *Romeo* to be better, more original or more creative than Shakespeare's, *pace* Mrs. Lennox, I doubt that anyone who heard the performance of Erba's *Magnificat* at the 1987 Maryland Handel Festival could prefer it to Handel's *Israel.* The issue is important because it encourages us to take a critical look at the meaning of such terms as "plagiarism," "quotation," "modelling,"

[17] Ibid.

[18] *W. A. Mozart: Don Giovanni* (Cambridge, 1981), p. 44.

[19] See especially Harold Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry* (London, 1973).

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"borrowing," and "parody"; it forces us to consider what materials are appropriate for the creative artist to use; and it makes us address the issue of what gives integrity to a work of art.

Of all the terms that might be used to describe the use of pre-existent material, the only one that is thoroughly pejorative is "plagiarism." The others represent in musical terms techniques that are not simply acceptable but frequently commended. In "quotation" a familiar theme or tune is used rhetorically by the composer, and examples exist from throughout the history of music. In "modelling" the structure is borrowed in addition to thematic material, as is familiar from compositional techniques involving pre-existent material typical of the Renaissance mass, the chorale prelude, and even such specific pieces as Bach's E–major fugue from Book II of the *Well-Tempered Clavier* which is based structurally and thematically on J. K. F. Fischer's E–major fugue from *Ariadne Musica* (1702). "Borrowing" as a term is more vague, but it generally refers in music to the use of a pre-existent theme as the basis for a new composition, such as Bach's fugue on a theme by Albinoni, or Brahms's variations on a theme by Handel. "Parody" is usually reserved for the use of an entire composition—rhythms and chord progressions as well as themes and structure—a recognized procedure in the sixteenth-century mass and typical also of the Busoni-Bach compositions, and Stravinsky's parodies of Pergolesi and Tchaikovsky in *Pulcinella* and *The Fairy's Kiss*. "Plagiarism," however, implies theft, or the unauthorized and unacknowledged use of another's creative work with the intent to deceive, and it is a term that has been applied to Handel at least since the late nineteenth century, thus giving rise to the grief reaction. We therefore need to ask what do Shakespeare's use of Brooke and Handel's use of Erba have in common with clearly defined cases of plagiarism, such as, for example, Joseph Biden's use of Neil Kinnock's campaign rhetoric during the 1988 American presidential primaries? All involve the use of extensive material from a pre-existent source that is not cited and might have been considered obscure. The difference between it and "quotation" lies specifically in this apparently hoped-for obscurity. When Schubert quotes Beethoven in the *Wanderer's Fantasy*, Schumann quotes Schubert in the song *Widmung*, or Ronald Reagan quotes Franklin D. Roosevelt (in every case without citation) the astute listener is meant to recognize, acknowledge, and understand the meaning of the reference. In short, it is not the lack of acknowledgement that definitely identifies a plagiarism, it is the intent to deceive.

Let me be direct: I think it would be impossible to credit an argument equating the intent of Shakespeare and Handel in their use

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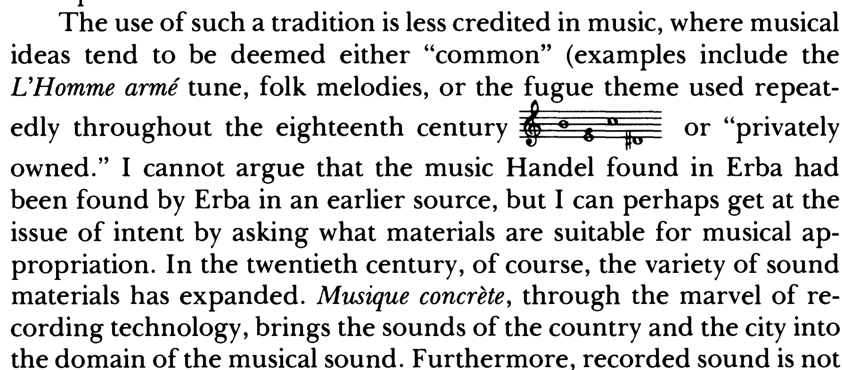
of pre-existent material with the intent of Senator Biden. First of all, Biden's use of Kinnock did not improve the pre-existent material in context or content. He attempted to pass off an oratorical style better than his own as his own. Shakespeare and Handel, on the other hand, improved the material they used in content and/or context. But there is much more to the difference than this. As Balfour wrote in 1893, "It cannot be right for a great writer to appropriate the work of a smaller one, and at the same time wrong for a small one to appropriate the work of a great one."[20] And, indeed, this distinction is avoided in all artistic discussions. That is, one does not say that Dryden plagiarized when he used Shakespeare's *Anthony and Cleopatra* as the basis for his play *All for Love* because Shakespeare's play is better; nor does one call it plagiarism that Nahum Tate based his *Brutus of Alba* on Dryden's *All for Love* (sometimes line by line) because Dryden's play is better than his. One is simply forced to accept the existence of a literary tradition whereby new works were frequently based on earlier works, whether these were well-known or not.

When Da Ponte began to write the libretto of *Don Giovanni* he based it closely on an earlier libretto by Bertati. Bertati, however, had based his libretto on previous dramas by Goldoni and Molière, and Molière's play of *Dom Juan* was itself based closely on a Spanish play by Tirso de Molina, the first surviving written dramatization of this story. Besides these literary derivations, including Shadwell's *The Libertine*, there existed throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries an active improvisatory tradition based on the same story in both the *commedia dell'arte* and the Parisian fairs. In a sense, the literary versions are simply written-out or frozen improvisations. None can be viewed as plagiarized, whether they are better or worse than their predecessors.

The use of such a tradition is less credited in music, where musical ideas tend to be deemed either "common" (examples include the *L'Homme armé* tune, folk melodies, or the fugue theme used repeatedly throughout the eighteenth century  or "privately owned." I cannot argue that the music Handel found in Erba had been found by Erba in an earlier source, but I can perhaps get at the issue of intent by asking what materials are suitable for musical appropriation. In the twentieth century, of course, the variety of sound materials has expanded. *Musique concrète*, through the marvel of recording technology, brings the sounds of the country and the city into the domain of the musical sound. Furthermore, recorded sound is not

[20] As quoted in Buelow, "The Case for Handel's Borrowings," pp. 74–75.

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always replayed exactly but frequently altered in speed, pitch, duration, and even direction. Vladimir Ussachevsky, a pioneer in the electronic musical medium, once said that he was fascinated with sound not for what it was but for what it might become through manipulation. To what extent is this point of view, so obviously relevant to electronic music, true of artists from all periods? To what extent did Shakespeare, Handel, and Da Ponte become fascinated with Brooke, Erba, and Bertati not for what they were but for what they might become as a result of manipulations to content and context? The intent, thus, is not to deceive but, like a sculptor, to mold and shape elemental material into an object that could not have been imagined from the original condition of the material itself. And this is true whether the material is clay, molten steel, or found objects.

The question of intent is, of course, problematic, and inquiries into the intent of an artist are highly suspect especially in discussions of the meaning or purpose of individual works. But we cannot rob artists of intent, which is critical to their integrity as artists. Most recently this has been discussed in depth by Richard Wollheim in his 1987 book *Painting as an Art*, which he begins in this challenging and delightful way:

> The title that I have chosen for these lectures, 'Painting as an Art,' draws its sense from the other contrasting ways in which people can, and do, paint. Let us take stock of them. So, there are house-painters: there are Sunday painters: there are world-politicians who paint for distraction, and distraught business-men who paint to relax. There are forgers—an interesting group. There are chimpanzees who have brush and colour put invitingly within their reach; there are psychotic patients who enter art therapy, and madmen who set down their visions: there are little children of three, four, five, six, in art class, who produce work of explosive beauty: and then there are the innumerable painters of street-scenes, painters of Mediterranean ports, still-life painters, painters of mammoth foyers of international hotels and the offices of exorbitant lawyers, and who once, probably, were artists, but who now paint exclusively for money and the pleasure of others. None of them are artists, though they fall short of being so to varying degrees, but they are all painters. And then there are the painters who are artists. Where does the difference lie, and why? What does one lot do which the other lot doesn't? When is painting an art, and why?[21]

Wollheim discusses this issue over more than 350 pages, and I cannot do justice here to his arguments. In essence, however, he rejects any

[21] Wollheim, *Painting as an Art* (Princeton, 1987), p. 13.

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externalist theory that would determine when a painting is a work of art on the basis of reputation or on the basis of content. That is, he opposes the idea that artistry can be conferred upon a painting. In music this can be explained simply by recognizing that Bach's compositions were no less works of art when they were not recognized as such than they are now. Similarly the use or rejection of certain techniques, forms or harmonies does not determine whether a composition is a work of art. Wollheim argues that the status of "work of art" must derive not from the painting as an object but from the activity of painting itself. Simplistically put, it is the intention of the artist while painting that determines whether his work is art. This intention involves two important components. The first is what Wollheim calls "thematization" or the "acquisition of content or meaning." The second is an individual style, "a condition that must be met by any painter who is also an artist."[22] Artistic intention thus arises from "the attempt to organize an inherently inert material" by means of an individual style "so that it will become serviceable for the carriage of meaning."[23]

Wollheim discusses borrowing as one possible way of bringing meaning to a painting. He does not raise the moral issue that so disturbs Handelians. Rather he states the role of borrowing in straightforward terms. ". . . A borrowing enters the content of a painting only if, in putting to new use some motif or image from earlier art, the painting reveals what this borrowing means to the artist. If these conditions are not met, then the text or the borrowing remains outside the content of the painting: it is a mere association to it, perhaps of great historical, or sociological, or biographical, but of no aesthetic, significance."[24]

This is a lead Handelians must follow. As terrifying as it might seem, we need to reach for Handel's intentions and to look for meaning. Asking ourselves over and over whether Handel borrowed more or less than contemporary composers and whether contemporary audiences were aware of the borrowing and ultimately whether Handel maintained his morality as a composer will bring us no nearer an understanding of whether Handel was a great artist. The questions should rather be whether the borrowings are important to the content of Handel's compositions—whether they add to or are merely superficial to the content. Instead of wallowing in self-pity, we need to ask what Handel borrowed when. To what extent are sacred and secular sources limited to similar situations in Handel's music? When are there cross-overs between sacred and secular traditions and why?

[22] Ibid, p. 26.
[23] Ibid, p. 25.
[24] Ibid, p. 188.

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When is the borrowing clearly cued by text? In short, to what extent are the borrowings personally meaningful to Handel and the "thematization" of his composition?

The only *composer* for which this approach has been taken is Charles Ives. For example, Peter Burkholder in his 1983 dissertation devoted more than 200 pages to a study of "Ives's Use of Existing Material," in which various processes, including paraphrase, cumulative settings, quodlibet, collage, and patchwork are distinguished. In 1979, previewing Wollheim's argument, Christopher Ballantine wrote, "In Ives, previously existing music . . . is introduced into a new composition for the sake of its *semantic connotations*."[25] In his conclusion, Ballantine touched on the issue that has overwhelmed Handel scholars:

> Could the musico-philosophical significance of these works have been conveyed without the use of those musical quotations? The question is important, for it is at the heart of numerous criticisms of the music of Ives. (Elliott Carter, for example, has said: 'It is to me disappointing that Ives too frequently was unable and unwilling to invent musical material that expressed his own vision authentically, instead of relying on the material of others.') The precise and rigorous answer to our question must be No.[26]

Handel scholarship has not proceeded beyond the position held by Elliott Carter about Ives. In 1906 Sedley Taylor wrote about Handel's borrowing from Erba, "What strikes one as really surprising is that, considering the great amount of correction expended on what was after all only a moderately meritorious piece of work, Handel should not in this instance have preferred independent composition to so tiresome a process of adaptation,"[27] and eighty years later John Roberts has acknowledged that Handel's borrowings most often could not have saved him time.[28] That is, in response to the question of why Handel borrowed, we have steadfastly looked only at external causes, such as illness, time-constraints, and lack of talent and have ignored the obvious contradictions to these theories. Handelians must accept the fact of Handel's borrowing, and acknowledge the integrity of Handel's compositional methods by looking for the internal or aesthetic reasons for Handel's practices.

[25] Christopher Ballantine, "Charles Ives and the Meaning of Quotation in Music," *The Musical Quarterly* LXV (1979), 168.

[26] Ibid, p. 183.

[27] Sedley Taylor, *The Indebtedness of Handel to Works by Other Composers* (Cambridge, 1906), p. 92.

[28] Roberts, "Why did Handel Borrow?" p. 90.

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Let us just briefly ask this question about Erba's *Magnificat.* Why did Handel choose to use it when and where he did, assuming that if he copied it in about 1735, as stated by Anthony Hicks in the 1987 Maryland Handel Festival Program, it was available to him over a period of time during which it might have been incorporated into a number of works besides *Israel.* Asking this question makes us face the issue of whether Handel had a store of sources at hand that he dipped into willy-nilly as his inspiration flagged. Hicks writes of the *Magnificat,* "The music is typical of the late seventeenth century in its mixture of airy concerto style in the solos and severe formal counterpoint in the choruses, the latter still retaining elements of modal harmony. . . . It was surely this 'antique' flavor of the music that interested Handel and which he wished, for whatever reason, to recreate in *Israel in Egypt.*"[29] But considering Handel's alterations to Erba's score, was it really the music that attracted him? Ballantine, addressing this issue in Ives's music, writes that "it has been claimed that Ives chose all or some of his borrowed material for thematic and formal [that is, musical] reasons,"[30] and he quotes one commentator about Ives's combination of two familiar tunes that "the melodic similarities undoubtedly influenced his decisions to combine these particular tunes."[31] He concludes, "But one could as easily argue that Ives needed these tunes ["The Red, White and Blue" and "The Battle Hymn of the Republic"] for their significance and he therefore sought for melodic similarities, possibilities of contrapuntal combination, and so on. In short, such claims cannot invalidate the possibility that when Ives used borrowed material he exploited it for his own connotative purpose."[32] Is this possible in Handel's case? Can we follow Wollheim and Ballantine into this area of analysis? The results with Erba are fascinating. After all, Handel chooses to combine a setting of Mary's New Testament hymn of thanks to the Lord (Matthew I:46–55) with Moses's Old Testament hymn of thanks to the Lord (Exodus XV:1–18). The first borrowing pairs the Old Testament text: "The Lord is my strength and my song, He is become my salvation" with the New Testament: "And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my savior," which is Erba's second movement. The Old Testament: "He is my God, and I will prepare him a habitation" is coupled with the New Testament: "My soul doth magnify the Lord," Erba's first movement. The next movement contrasts "The Lord is a man of War, Lord is his name" with "For he that is mighty hath magnified me, and holy is his

[29] Program Booklet, 1987 Maryland Handel Festival, pp. 25–26.
[30] Ballantine, "Charles Ives," pp. 183–84.
[31] Ibid, p. 184.
[32] Ibid.

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name," Erba's third movement. Indeed, all of the texts when compared are relevant to each other, and one cannot help but wonder whether Handel was deliberately reinterpreting the Old Testament (Moses's Song) through the New Testament (Mary's Song), in the manner of a Christian theologian. I will not take this further at this time, but I will ask whether Handel scholars have ever seriously considered that a borrowing may have, at least for Handel, imparted a special meaning to a composition and been used for that purpose. To take one last tantalizing example, I think one must ask whether it is merely a coincidence that Handel's borrowing in *Israel* at the text "He led them forth like sheep" derives from a movement in Alessandro Stradella's serenata "Qual prodigio" with the words, "I will still follow; I will not try to release my feet from the bonds of fidelity" ("Io pur seguiró; che sciogliere il pié dai lacci di fé non tento").

However, just as the act of borrowing does not reduce the integrity of Handel's compositions, neither does the use of a borrowing with semantic meaning *increase* the integrity. In a large sense, borrowing is simply not an issue at all, for artistic creation never means fabrication out of nothing. At least until the twentieth century, composers, like authors, shared a language of grammar. Musical motives, like speech patterns, were common property. Furthermore, previous combinations of that raw material, in terms of story, image, harmony, or phrase, were available for further shaping and manipulation. Like a sculptor, who can work with clay, clothes hangers, or old tires, the composer and author have their choice of mediums. The question is of method and intent rather than medium, but while Handelians have been so busy adding to Handel's catalogue of borrowings, they have learned precious little about his compositional process, even to the extent of whether it was affected in any way by the use of freely invented or borrowed material. Indeed, the Handelian community should be embarrassed that the best work on compositional practice in Handel's music to date has come from the Bach scholar, Paul Brainard.[33] It is necessary to take a page out of Handel's book, and borrow freely from the methodologies of analysis used by scholars studying Shakespeare, Ives, Poussin, and Picasso. Happily the younger generation of scholars has picked up this loose thread, and we can hope that they will in the near future offer many insights into Handel's practice of composition. Only with such analyses will it be possible to address the issue of integrity by having moved from the question of *what* to the question of *how*.

[33] Paul Brainard, "Aria and Ritornello: New Aspects of the Comparison Handel/ Bach," in *Bach, Handel, Scarlatti. Tercentenary Essays*, ed. by Peter Williams (Cambridge, 1985), pp. 21–33.

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I have said, following Wollheim, that true artistry or integrity is determined by the process of composing; it is not determined by the external attributes of the composition, nor by its reception or performance. The performance of a musical or dramatic work, and similarly the manner of exhibiting an artistic work, will affect our appreciation of a work of art, but it will not affect its integrity. Performance practice can be determined historically, and it is possible to delineate boundaries within which a performance or exhibition approximates the conditions of the original. We know that Handel's music was performed with improvised keyboard continuo, and with vocal and instrumental ornamentation. We also know that at least some of this was not always in good taste. That does not mean we should eliminate all improvisation and ornamentation, nor does it mean that we must ornament badly to be authentic, although in an absolute sense the latter would be correct. In all humanly performed live music there is an element of improvisation, at least in terms of tempo and dynamic, if not in terms of melody and harmony. This does not discredit the composer or the composition, neither of which is divine and has no need to be protected from sacrilege. When the artist finishes his work, the only thing completed is the process, not the product. The work of art continues to live and grow in the hands of performers, scholars, and listeners, but the integrity is locked in with the completion of the process. The only thing that stands in danger of losing integrity from a performance is the performer himself.

In sum, by focusing on issues external to the composing process, the Handelian community has lost sight of what matters to the composition. We need to study compositional process in order to begin to understand Handel's compositional intent, while recognizing that the assessment of intention is a slippery business at best; we need to ask whether Handel's borrowings add a semantic meaning to his compositions and are part of his aesthetic purpose rather than simply a crutch; and we need to see performance practice as a means of communicating the content and meaning of a composition, not as a symbol of its relative integrity, which is unaffected by performance. It is not the use of or need for ornamentation, but the score, serving as a guide to performance, that represents the integrity of a composition. But the integrity itself belongs to the composer, not the score. Ornamentation, even bad ornamentation, is not graffiti, and I am willing to take bets that Handel was more than a Great Compiler.

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