

= Handel 's lost Hamburg operas =

In 1703 the eighteen @-@ year @-@ old composer George Frideric Handel took up residence in Hamburg , Germany , where he remained until 1706 . During this period he composed four operas , only the first of which , Almira , has survived more or less intact . Of the other three , the music for Nero is lost , while only short orchestral excerpts from Florindo and Daphne survive .

Handel was born and grew up in the town of Halle , where he received his early musical education and became an accomplished organist . In Hamburg he obtained employment as a violinist at the Oper am Gänsemarkt , the city 's famous opera house . Here , he learned the rudiments of opera composition , mainly under the influences of Reinhard Keiser , the theatre 's music director , and Johann Mattheson , its leading vocalist . The Gänsemarkt was largely dedicated to Keiser 's compositions ; his temporary absence in 1704 gave Handel his chance , and in quick succession he wrote Almira and Nero . The former was successful , the latter less so and was never performed after its initial run of three performances . Handel 's final Hamburg operas , Florindo and Daphne , originally conceived as a giant entity , were not produced at the Gänsemarkt before Handel left Hamburg for Italy in 1706 .

No music that can be definitively traced to Nero has been identified , although Handel scholars have speculated that some of it may have been used in later works , particularly Agrippina which has a related storyline and some of the same characters . Fragments of music from Florindo and Daphne have been preserved , although without the vocal parts , and some of these elements have been incorporated into an orchestral suite first recorded in 2012 .

= = Background = =

= = = Halle = = =

George Frideric Handel was born on 23 February 1685 in the German city of Halle . It is unclear what initial musical education he received ; his father , Georg Händel was not a music lover , and did not at first appreciate or encourage his son 's precocious talents . Nevertheless , by the age of ten Handel had become an accomplished organist ; his playing in the royal chapel at Weissenfels , where his half @-@ brother Karl was in the service of the Duke of Saxe @-@ Weissenfels , impressed the duke , who persuaded Händel senior that the boy should have a proper musical education . As a result , Handel began formal study under Friedrich Zachow , the organist of the Lutheran church at Halle .

Handel 's biographer Jonathan Keates writes that : " From [Zachow] Handel learned not only a great deal about the line and shape of an aria , about strong , adventurous bass lines and solid choral writing , but also about those delicacies of instrumental colouring which he later perfected in his own style " . Handel 's musical development also benefited from an early and lasting friendship with Georg Philipp Telemann , whom he met in 1700 . In February 1702 Handel enrolled at the University of Halle , perhaps intending to study law . In March of the same year he took up the post of organist at Halle 's Calvinist cathedral (Domkirche) , a prestigious appointment for one so young and indicative of his burgeoning musical reputation in the city .

At some time , possibly in late 1702 or early 1703 , Handel visited Berlin , where his father had held an honorary post as physician to the elector who , in 1701 , had become the Prussian king Frederick I. In Berlin Handel first experienced Italian opera , and may have met the Italian composers Giovanni Bononcini and Attilio Ariosti , who were writing operas for Frederick 's court . The king heard of Handel 's abilities , and wanted him to train as a future court composer , but Handel 's horizons had been broadened by his sojourn in Berlin and he was developing his own ideas for his future . He declined the king 's offer , and returned to Halle to fulfil his year 's contract at the Domkirche . With few career prospects available in his home city , Handel would have liked to go to Italy , but this , he realised , was not yet practicable , since he lacked both cash and contacts . Instead in the summer of 1703 he left Halle for Hamburg , a thriving free city which housed the leading opera house in

northern Germany .

= = = Hamburg = = =

= = = The Oper am Gänsemarkt = = =

The Hamburg Opera , otherwise known as the Oper am Gänsemarkt , was the first public opera house to be established outside Italy . The brainchild of the exiled Duke of Schleswig @-@ Gottorf and his Kapellmeister , Johann Theile , it was designed by Girolamo Sartorio , and modelled on the Teatro Santi Giovanni e Paolo in Venice . Its construction was opposed by the clergy and cathedral hierarchy , but enthusiastically supported by the city 's municipal authorities . Built in 1677 on a lavish scale , with a reported capacity of 2 @,@ 000 , it boasted an exceptionally deep stage and was , according to Handel scholars Winton Dean and John Merrill Knapp , one of the best @-@ equipped theatres of its time .

Dean and Knapp write that the theatre 's history was " enlivened and envenomed by a maelstrom of controversy , pursued in pamphlets , broadsheets , sermons and prefaces to librettos ... and by financial crises which persisted on and off throughout the sixty years of its existence " . A preponderance of biblically inspired works in the earliest years was soon replaced by a range of more secular subjects , often drawn from Roman history and myth , or from recent events such as the 1683 siege of Vienna . Performances tended to be of considerable length , often extending to six hours . The 18 @-@ year @-@ old Handel entered this hectic environment in the summer of 1703 , to take up a place in the theatre 's orchestra as a ripenio (ensemble) second violin .

= = = Keiser and Mattheson = = =

Handel joined the Hamburg opera house when it was experiencing a period of considerable artistic success . This blossoming followed the arrival of Reinhard Keiser , who had become musical director at the Gänsemarkt in about 1697 , and in 1703 succeeded Johann Kusser as the theatre 's manager . Born in 1674 , Keiser had studied under Johann Schelle and probably Johann Kuhnau at the Thomasschule zu Leipzig . In 1694 he was employed as a court composer at Brunswick , where in three years he composed seven operas , at least one of which (Mahumeth) was performed in Hamburg . According to Handel 's biographer Donald Burrows , Keiser was a good judge of popular taste , with a flair for writing Italian @-@ style arias . Between 1697 and 1703 , prior to Handel 's arrival , about a dozen more Keiser operas had been staged at the Gänsemarkt . Despite his on @-@ stage successes , Keiser was an unreliable general manager , with expensive private tastes and little financial acumen , often at odds with his creditors .

It is possible that Keiser , who had connections in the Halle area , had heard of Handel and was directly instrumental in securing the latter 's post in the Gänsemarkt orchestra ; certainly he was a considerable influence on the younger man in the three years that Handel spent in Hamburg . Another important Gänsemarkt colleague was the house composer and singer Johann Mattheson , who noted Handel 's rapid progress in the orchestra from back @-@ desk violinist to harpsichord soloist , a role in which , said Mattheson , " he showed himself a man ? a thing which no one had before suspected , save I alone " . Mattheson was less complimentary on Handel 's early efforts at composition : " He composed very long , long arias , and really interminable cantatas " , before , it seems , " the lofty schooling of opera ... trimmed him into other fashions " .

= = = Almira = = =

In 1704 , Keiser temporarily left Hamburg , seeking refuge from his creditors in nearby Weissenfels . He took with him his most recent opera composition , Almira , a setting of a libretto by Friedrich Christian Feustking (1678 ? 1739) , thus denying this work to the Gänsemarkt ? Keiser produced it in Wiessenfels in July 1704 . In these circumstances the temporary management turned to the 19

@-@ year @-@ old Handel and requested a fresh setting of Feustking 's libretto . Handel complied ; his version was premiered at the Gänsemarkt on 8 January 1705 , and ran for 20 performances ? a marked success .

The fictional plot appears to have originated from Giuseppe Boniventi 's opera , L 'Almira , with a libretto by Giulio Pancieri , performed in Venice in 1691 . The relatively light @-@ hearted story , typical of 17th @-@ century dramatic conventions , is told in three acts and records the machinations surrounding the newly crowned queen Almira 's secret love for her secretary , Fernando , in opposition to her dead father 's dying wish that she marry someone from the family of her guardian Consalvo . Keates writes of the work : " The whole thing belongs very much to its Venetian baroque world ... full of intrigue interlaced with comedy and ballet . " These features , even the mixture of languages between Italian and German , often recur in Handel 's later work . The music , which has been preserved largely through a conducting score prepared by Telemann , reflects Handel 's debt to Keiser and displays a variety of traditions : a French @-@ style overture , German @-@ influenced orchestration , and Italianate vocal writing . Dean and Knapp summarise the score as " very uneven in style , quality and technique , with abundant promise but intermittent fulfilment " .

= = Lost works = =

= = = Nero = = =

= = = = General = = = =

The success of Almira prompted the Gänsemarkt management to follow it almost immediately with a second Handel setting , Die durch Blut und Mord erlangete Lieb ; oder , Nero (" The love obtained through blood and murder ; or , Nero ") generally known as Nero , again based on a Feustking libretto . The libretto survives intact , but the music is entirely lost . Dean and Knapp record that a copy of Handel 's manuscript score was held in the library of the Hamburg impresario J.C. Westphal until 1830 , when it was sold and thereafter disappeared . The whole work incorporates 20 ensembles and 57 arias .

= = = = Libretto = = = =

Feustking 's libretto was written entirely in German , its probable sources being the ancient histories of Tacitus and Suetonius . The text has been widely criticised for its low quality ; Friedrich Chrysander wrote of it : " There is no spirit in the verse , and one feels vexation in setting such stuff to music " . A later critic , Paul Henry Lang , cites the " miserable quality " of the libretto as the principal reason for the opera 's failure . Dean and Knapp suggest that the main fault is that Feustking fatally over @-@ complicates the main story by incorporating sub @-@ plots , unnecessary extra characters , and " every stock device known to the operatic repertory " . These intrusions include disguises , mistaken identities , a much @-@ ridiculed philosopher , a comic servant and a play within the play . Many of the characters are historical , including Nero , Octavia , Poppea , Nero 's mother Agrippina , and Seneca the philosopher . Several of these appear in Handel 's later (1709) opera Agrippina . Another real @-@ life figure who appears in Nero is Anicetus , who historically is held to have murdered Agrippina on Nero 's behalf . Described in the libretto as des Kaysers Mignon oder Leibling (" The emperor 's little one , or darling ") , Anicetus is Handel 's only openly gay operatic character .

= = = = Characters = = = =

As listed and described in Burrows et al . : George Frideric Handel : Volume 1 , 1609 ? 1725 :

Collected Documents (2011) .

Nero , Roman emperor

Agrippina , the emperor 's mother

Octavia , the emperor 's wife , subsequently repudiated

Sabina Poppea , a Roman noblewoman , Nero 's mistress

Tiridates , Armenian crown prince

Cassandra , crown princess of Media , in love with Tiridates

Seneca , Imperial privy counsellor

Anicetus , Nero 's " mignon " or favourite

Graptus , the late emperor Claudius 's freedman

A flamen or priest

Choruses of priests , Roman people

Dances of combatants , arsonists , Harlequins and Punchinellos , knights and ladies

===== Plot =====

The main story , told over three acts , follows generally that of Busenello 's libretto for Monteverdi 's 1642 opera *L'incoronazione di Poppea* . It recounts Nero 's various schemes to replace his current queen Octavia with his mistress Poppea , against the urgings of his mother Agrippina and the philosopher Seneca . A sub @-@ plot introduces Tiridates , crown prince of Armenia , another historical figure who , in the opera , is betrothed to the fictional Cassandra but is secretly pursuing Poppea in rivalry with the emperor . Octavia and Cassandra provide each other with mutual support in their trials , while Agrippina allies with Octavia and narrowly escapes death from a piece of falling masonry . In turn , she tries unsuccessfully to persuade Seneca to kill Nero . As a stratagem to secure Tiridates 's love , Cassandra disguises herself and informs him of her death , which news temporarily deranges him . Anicetus further complicates matters by falling in love with Octavia . As these events develop , the servant Graptus provides a mocking , ironic commentary . Nero 's play , " *The Judgement of Paris* " , and a representation of the burning of Rome occupy much of Act III . After these many digressions the opera concludes with the banishment of Octavia , the incarceration of Agrippina , the return of his senses to Tiridates when he learns that Cassandra is alive , and a joyful and triumphant double coronation : Nero and Poppea , and Tiridates and Cassandra .

===== Performance history =====

Nero opened on 25 February 1705 , with Mattheson in the title role . Its staging so closely after *Almira* 's run indicates that it was probably composed , in part or in whole , during 1704 . There are no surviving accounts of its public reception , but it clearly proved less successful than its predecessor , running for just three performances before the theatre closed for the Lenten season . When the Gänsemarkt reopened the opera was not revived , and was never performed again .

===== Music =====

Although there is no extant music that can be positively identified with *Nero* , there is a possibility that some of it may have been used in later works . John E. Sawyer , in his analysis of *Agrippina* , reveals that this work , composed five years after *Nero* with similar characters , " contains the highest proportion of borrowed material of any of the composer 's major dramatic works " , and Dean and Knapp speculate as to whether it also incorporates borrowings from *Nero* . According to the Handel scholar Charles Cudworth , the suite of dances that follows the overture to Handel 's 1707 opera *Rodrigo* (his first after leaving Hamburg) , could very well have begun as ballet music in *Nero* or another of the lost Hamburg operas . The musicologist Bernd Baselt has raised the possibility that Handel 's Harpsichord Suite in G Minor , HWV 453 , is an arrangement of the overture to *Nero* . A version of this suite , reconstructed for orchestra by Peter Holman , is included in a selection of Handel 's Hamburg music , issued by Hyperion Records in January 2012 .

= = = Florindo and Daphne = = =

= = = = General = = = =

Following its closure at the start of the 1705 Lenten season , the Gänsemarkt did not reopen until August , by which time Keiser had returned from Weissenfels to produce his opera Octavia . From this point , Handel 's regular connection with the theatre appears to have diminished . Although he remained in Hamburg for a further year , his main source of income was from private lessons , as he saved for his long @-@ desired visit to Italy . He nevertheless accepted a commission from the Gänsemarkt to compose a setting for a large @-@ scale opera based on the Greek myth of Apollo and Daphne . With its rambling plot and an assortment of dances and other set pieces ? almost 100 musical numbers in all ? the work was eventually divided into two separate operas , for performance on successive nights . The two sections were given the formal names *Der beglückte Florindo* (" Florindo made happy ") and *Die verwandelte Daphne* (" Daphne metamorphosed ") , but are generally known as Florindo and Daphne . It is not known when Handel wrote the music . He may have completed it in 1705 ? 06 while still in Hamburg , or it may have been composed in Italy after arriving there in the latter part of 1706 .

= = = = Libretto = = = =

The text is by Heinrich (sometimes rendered as " Hinrich ") Hinsch , an established Gänsemarkt librettist whose stated intention was adapting stories to provide " a pleasurable poetic experience " , to " [titillate] the senses of its audience without attempting to address their reason or understanding " . In this case he took as his base material the episode of Phoebus (Apollo) and Daphne as told in Book 1 of Ovid 's *Metamorphoses* , but added a plethora of new characters and incidents which move the story significantly away from the Ovidian original . The main language is German , but the presence of several ensembles and arias in Italian leads Dean and Knapp to speculate that Hinsch may have used an Italian libretto as his source . The Florindo and Daphne libretti were published in the *Händel @-@ Jahrbuch* , in 1984 and 1985 respectively , and in facsimile form in 1989 as part of a 13 @-@ volume edited by Ellen T. Harris .

The preface to the Florinda libretto explains Hinsch 's choice of titles : " The first of [the two parts] presents the Pythean festival , instituted in honour of Phoebus (Apollo) , and the betrothal of Florinda and Daphne which took place on the same day , so it receives the title ' Florindo made happy ' . The other part represents Daphne 's stubborn resistance to Phoebus 's love , also the abhorrence she feels for all love , and finally her metamorphosis into a laurel tree , from which it receives the title ' Daphne metamorphosed ' " .

= = = = Characters = = = =

As listed and described in Burrows et al . : George Frideric Handel : Volume 1 , 1609 ? 1725 : Collected Documents (2011) .

Phoebus (Apollo) , in love with Daphne

Daphne , daughter of the river @-@ god Peneus . Loved by Phoebus , betrothed to Florindo

Florindo , son of the river @-@ god Enipeus . Betrothed to Daphne , secretly loved by Alsirena

Lycoris , a Thessalian nymph , in love with Florindo

Damon , a Thessalian shepherd in love with Lycoris

Galathea , an aged nymph , Daphne 's confidante

Alsirena , daughter of the river @-@ god Apidinus , secretly in love with Florindo

Thyrsis , a noble Arcadian shepherd , Damon 's friend

Cupid , Vulcan , Peneus , Enipeus : gods

Chorus : Thessalian shepherds / shepherdesses , Cyclops , Tritons , Naiads

===== Plot =====

Florindo opens with celebrations to mark Apollo 's victory over the dragon Python . Apollo boasts that he is more proficient with the bow than Cupid . This offends the latter , who mischievously wounds Apollo with a drugged arrow which causes him to fall in love with Daphne . She , however , has pledged her love for Florindo , who is at the centre of a complex tangle of infatuations : he is secretly loved by Alfirena and more openly by the scheming shepherdess Lycoris , who in turn is the object of the shepherd Damon 's desires . The various would @-@ be lovers are consoled or advised by Damon 's friend Thyrsis , and by the ageing nymph Galathea , who has herself not quite given up on love , though her advances to Thyrsis are rejected . Daphne and Florindo prepare to marry , but Apollo remains hopeful and continues his suit . Lycoris is prepared to await the outcome of events , but Damon , Galathea and Alfirena are in despair , as the opera ends with another spectacular celebration in honour of Apollo .

The second opera , Daphne , begins as the wedding of Florindo and Daphne gets under way . Cupid , bent on more mischief , wounds Daphne with a special arrow , forged by the god Vulcan , that causes her to renounce all love . She abandons the wedding and announces that she will join the goddess Diana and become a huntress . This sparks a series of schemes and counter @-@ schemes as both Apollo and Florindo continue to pursue Daphne while the other would @-@ be lovers manoeuvre for position . Lycoris assures Apollo that Daphne 's abandonment of the wedding was a signal that she favours him . Lycoris also steals Daphne 's cloak and , wearing it as a disguise , makes advances to Damon , having first ensured that Florindo overhears . Florindo is enraged by what he believes is Daphne 's duplicity , and denounces her . Damon confirms the story . Daphne , bewildered , pleads with her father Peneus to prove her innocence ; he responds by transforming her into a laurel tree . Cupid blames Apollo 's pride for the fiasco , but gives him the laurel as his " special tree " . Florindo now accepts Alfirena , and Lycoris , having confessed her scheming , is united with Damon . Only the guiltless Daphne ends up losing everything .

===== Performance history =====

Dean and Knapp record that in the spring of 1707 Keiser surrendered the lease of the Gänsemarkt to Johann Heinrich Sauerbrey , who thus became responsible for the staging of the double opera . It may by this time have been in rehearsal , and the difficulties involved in such a complex and elaborate work may have necessitated several postponements . The consensus among experts is that the two parts were first performed on consecutive evenings in January 1708 , as they are the first works in Mattheson 's opera list for 1708 . There are no surviving records of the public 's reception , the length of the original run , or of any revivals . Whether Handel was present at any time during rehearsals or performance is uncertain ; he may have returned from Italy , fresh from the opening of Rodrigo in Florence , to supervise the production of Florindo and Daphne in Hamburg . Dean and Knapp suggest the works may have been directed from the harpsichord by Christoph Graupner , although Anthony Hicks in his Grove Handel biography , says that so unusual a project would not have been attempted without the composer 's presence .

The theatre 's management was clearly concerned that the public might find the double opera too heavy in undiluted form . Accordingly , a comic intermezzo in Low German dialect (platte @-@ deutsch) was devised by Sauerbrey to precede the performance of Daphne . The critic and essayist Romain Rolland , in his life of Handel , termed this a " mutilation " , carried out " for fear that the music may tire the hearers " .

===== Music =====

A few fragments of music from the twin operas survive . The Newman Flower collection at Manchester Central Library holds three arias and a chorus , in full orchestral score but with the vocal parts missing . A blank stave with a soprano clef suggests that the three arias were written for

soprano voice . The chorus has been identified by Baselt with " Streue , O Braütigam " , from Act 1 of Daphne . Two of the arias are tentatively associated with " Mie speranza , andate " from Act 1 of Florindo , and " Mostrati più crudele " from the third act of Daphne . The third aria has not been identified .

The Royal Music Collection at the British Library houses the manuscripts of instrumental pieces , mainly dances , that belong to Florindo and Daphne . A group of eight short pieces have been catalogued as two four @-@ movement suites , HWV352 and HWV353 . The British Library collection includes a further group of four movements , scored for string orchestra , which has been catalogued as HWV354 .

As with Nero , it is possible that music from Florindo or Daphne was recycled by Handel for use in later works . The overture to the opera Rodrigo consists of eight French @-@ style dances , which Cudworth believes might have begun life as ballet music in one or other of the lost Hamburg operas . In 1709 ? 10 Handel composed the cantata Apollo e Dafne , which has common ground with the earlier operas . Harris makes the point that when writing the cantata , Handel would have recalled his earlier setting , and perhaps borrowed from it . Dean and Knapp provide further example of works in which the Florinda and Daphne music may have re @-@ emerged : the oratorio Il trionfo del Tempo e del Disinganno (1707) ; the opera Radamisto (1720) ; and the overture in B flat , HWV336 , which Baselt conjectures might have been written as the overture to Florindo . This last @-@ named has been combined with HWV352 ? 354 and HWV356 to form the Suite from the operas Florindo and Daphne , which in 2012 was adapted and recorded by The Parley of Instruments under Peter Holman .

= = Afterwards = =

Handel 's Hamburg years provided him with a composing apprenticeship , particularly although not exclusively as a writer of opera . The influence of Keiser , which began during this period , was significant throughout Handel 's career . Apart from his lifelong habit of " borrowing " fragments from Keiser 's operas for use in his own works , he adopted and retained many of his mentor 's compositional characteristics ; according to Hicks , " [Handel] never relinquished French forms for overtures and dance music , and his use of orchestral colour , particularly the occasional instrumental doubling of the voice colla parte , was derived from German models " .

The loss of much of Handel 's early work was first noted by his earliest biographer , Mainwaring (1760) , who refers to " a great quantity of music " from Hamburg and Italy , adding that it was not known how much of it still existed . On departing from Hamburg , Handel spent a further three years in Italy before settling in London , where he remained the dominant composer of Italianate opera for the following thirty years . After his Hamburg initiation , Handel composed more than forty operas , beginning with Rodrigo in 1707 , and ending in 1740 with Deidamia . These works were quickly forgotten after Handel 's death ; modern revivals did not begin until the 1920s . Dean and Knapp believe that , despite the years of relative neglect , Handel 's achievements as a composer of opera entitle him to rank alongside Monteverdi , Mozart , Verdi , and Richard Wagner as one of the supreme masters of the genre .