

Georg Friedrich Händel
Il Trionfo del Tempo e della Verità (The Triumph of Time and Truth)
An Oratorio in Three Parts, HWV 46b

Artist details:

Claron McFadden, soprano – La Bellezza (Beauty)
Elisabeth Scholl, soprano – Il Piacere (Pleasure)
Nicholas Hariades, alto – Il Tempo (Time)
Peer Abilgaard, alto – Il Disinganno (Disillusion)
Junge Kantorei
Barockorchester Frankfurt (original instruments – a¹=415)
Joachim Carlos Martini, conductor

Recording details:

Recorded: 31 May 1998 (at a public performance)
Venue: Kloster Eberbach, Eltville am Rhein, Germany
Producer: Junge Kantorei e.V.
Copyright: 2000, HNH International Ltd.
Pressing: 2000, HNH International Ltd.
Naxos 8.554440-42 DDD Stereo
TT – 50'50"/72'18"/56'32" – TT 179'40"

Editorial & Design details:

Liner notes: Keith Anderson (English), Joachim Carlos Martini (German), French translation: Claire Rottembourg-Goldberg – Cover painting: *Time unveiling Truth* by Jean-François Detroy (© National Gallery, London)

Frankfurter Rundschau – 19. Dezember 1998	2
The Sunday Times – 6. Februar 2000	2
Record Review – März 2000	3
BBC Music Magazine – Mai 2000	4
Classic CD – Mai 2000	4
Music & Vision (www.mvdaily.com) – 19. Mai 2000	5
Classics Today (www.classicstoday.com) – 4. Juni 2000	9
Early Music Review – Juli 2000	10
Frankfurter Rundschau – Montag, 24. Juli 2000	17

Frankfurter Rundschau – 19. Dezember 1998

Händels Oratorium „Il Trionfo del Tempo e della Verità“ stand da auf dem Programm, mit exquisiten Solisten (den Sopranistinnen Claron McFadden und Elisabeth Scholl sowie den Countertenören Nicholas Hariades und Peer Abilgaard) und dem opulenten „Barockorchester Frankfurt“ auf Original-Instrumenten. Absolut sicherer Plan: Nur Martini hat die Noten zu diesem Stück! Anhand verschiedener Autographen und Fassungen rekonstruierte er dieses Frühwerk Händels – ein allegorisches Spiel der vier Kontrahenten Schönheit, Weltlust, Zeit und Weisheit – integrierte Händels eigene, späte Nachbearbeitungen und gab noch jede Menge ebenso subjektive wie gelungene Ingredienzien dazu: Hier mal ein kleines Orgelkonzert, dort mal ein Glockenspiel, alles natürlich wissenschaftlich fundiert, aber deswegen nicht minder lustbetont. Bei dieser erst vor wenigen Tagen erschienenen Einspielung geht es so saftig zu wie in allen Pfingstprojekten Martinis.

Stefan Schickhaus

The Sunday Times – 6. Februar 2000

Joachim Carlos Martini elicits some fine playing and singing—you can't fail to be charmed by the carillon in *Piacere's* happy-go-lucky 'Un Leggiadro Giovinetto'. The soloists are excellent.

Stephen Pettitt

Record Review – März 2000

This is an important recording, both musically and historically. It allows the listener to hear superior music by Handel which, due to the lack of a published score, has never before been recorded, and it offers a fascinating testimony to Handel's creative response to the words professional crisis he faced during his life ... [when his] career as London's pre-eminent Italian opera composer was collapsing. [...] Joachim Carlos Martini's conducting brilliantly brings out the tensions between these divergent styles: the intimate lyricism and crisp articulation of the cantata, the brilliant vocal display and drama of the opera seria, and the lush orchestral and choral sound of the oratorio leap out at the listener. Martini further underlines stylistic differences by making abrupt transitions between sections of contrasting style. Such an interpretation demands great sensitivity and flexibility from the performers and the four soloists prove equal to the task, incorporating shifting rhythmic contours, phrase articulation and colours into their interpretation. [...] This recording is a valuable one, which offers thrilling performances and the opportunity to hear Handel at the crossroads of his career, poised between opera and oratorio.

Berta Joncus

BBC Music Magazine – Mai 2000

Research has revealed that Handel's 1737 revision of his charming Roman allegory from 1707 was no mere revival. Its scale increased from two acts to three; *'Tempo'*, recast from alto to tenor, had much new music; and additional concertos, chorus, even carillon, titillated London taste. The music, though, retains Handel's earlier high spirits as he took Italy by storm, and they're reflected in this sparkling performance. Scholl (*'Pleasure'*), light and transparent, ornaments delicately Handel's heartfelt lines, McFadden adds a striking cadenza to *Beauty's* magnificently posturing 'battle aria', and both combine in a delicious duet with two oboes (uncredited in the booklet notes). Both countertenors are relative newcomers, and excellent—Hariades's *'Time'* flies round the earth in spectacular chromatic figurations. [...] No committed Handelian could resist this first performance in 260 years.

George Pratt

Classic CD – Mai 2000

Naxos offers the premiere recording of the 1737 version, complete with organ concertos, dueting harpsichords, and a carillon which turns *Pleasure's* bouncy 'Un Leggiadro Giovinetta' into a real shop-stopper. Handel had been out to heads, and how! [...] Among the quartet of soloists, Elisabeth Scholl and Peer Abilgaard are particularly impressive. Handelians will need this set to plug a gap; for the rest, snap it up: three hours of such vibrant music doesn't come much cheaper.

Paul Riley, Classic CD, May 2000

Music & Vision (www.mvdaily.com) – 19. Mai 2000

Beauty and Pleasure, Time and Disillusion

**WILFRID MELLERS examines Handel's oratorio
'Il Trionfo del Tempo e della Verità'¹**

Handel is, with Mozart, the supreme humanist in European music, for all his work was dedicated to the god-like potential latent in every man and woman, given rational enlightenment and a decent respect for other people, as well as fanatical regard for ourselves.

His morality is ethical rather than religious, since it turns on how to live the Good Life that allies personal fulfillment with communal responsibility. He seems to have been aware of this from adolescence: certainly from the time when, in his early twenties, he lived and worked in Rome under the patronage of a bevy of cardinals who admired his precocious talents. Born in Germany, trained in Italy, nurturer of the theatrical arts, and soon established professionally in England, he was the quintessential European, celebrating human life here and now: which is why he was fundamentally an opera composer who told sung stories about human creatures in their personal, social, and political relationships.

The technical virtuosity of his music, even whilst he was still a teenager, is attested by his astonishing setting of the *Dixit Dominus*, which became famous, and slightly infamous, for the sheer physical energy that made it an early 18th century *Rite of Spring*. It's probably not fortuitous that in the same year (1707) Handel embarked on a large-scale oratorio describing *Il Trionfo del Tempo e della Verità*: for although this piece is cast as a dialogue between abstract personifications of Beauty and Pleasure, Time and Disillusion, these abstractions have the immediate 'presence' of operatic characters in ever-shifting guises. Indeed, they make a

¹ Connors Publications – CP Press Publications, Publishers of Contemporary Classical Music, Church Music, New Editions of Past Masters, "Music of America" Reprint Series and Other Books. A & L Musical Enterprises, Inc., 503 Tahoe Street, Natchitoches, LA 71457-5718, voice: (318) 357-0924, fax: (318) 357-3299

quasi-philosophical statement of what all Handel's theatre music is 'about': namely, the simple but sublime paradox that our laudable courage must always be frustrated by our impermanence since willy-nilly, however god-like our pretensions, we grow old and die.

The opposing sides in this duologue are represented by two female soprano voices portraying Beauty and Pleasure, and by two male altos, probably super- rather than sub-human castrati, who signify Time and Disillusion. The exceptional quality of the young Handel's genius is evident in the fact that the women's narcissism, even at its most fatuous, inspires respect for its bravery: while the relative sobriety of the male or quasi-male voices convinces us that, but for the 18th century mean they advocate, we'd be doomed to self-destruction. We aren't surprised that Handel employs, for this grand theme, all the resources of classical Heroic Opera, involving recitative, arioso, aria, chorus, and ceremonial dance. In addition, he calls on the purely instrumental elements of his time's social musics: solo instruments, from virtuosic violins exploited for the bravura display they (and we) are capable of, to an insidiously tintinnabulating clarion indicative of Illusion; communal media like the concerted concerto grosso; and especially the organ concerto in which Handel himself presided as soloist. The work epitomizes a world's and an age's much-vaunted, well-accredited code of values.

The piece could be performed wherever two or three, or two or three hundred, are 'gathered together'; and it could, but need not, be enacted in some masque-like visual form, in theatre, civic hall, or church. The essence of the work, initiating Handel's Brilliant Career, is that it is at once particular and general.

The two women soloists, Beauty and Pleasure, have the trickiest assignments: for Beauty's mirror-aria, as she gloats over her own image, has to inspire admiration (involving both delight and wonder), whilst admitting to her idiocy; complementarily, Pleasure's wilful emptyheadedness must also persuade us that it's only common sense – a revered 18th century virtue – to make the most of the moment as or before it flies. Claron McFadden and Elisabeth Scholl have the vocal agility and at least a measure of the fantastic volatility needed to cope with the crazy coloratura: which sounds the more outlandish in dialogue with the relative austerity of Time and Disillusion, sung by Nicholas Hariades and Peer Abilgaard with purity of line and evenness of tone. It's the 'reality' of Time that

prompts the first sublime moment: in the aria *Urne voi*, evoking the nothingness that must remorsefully efface both Beauty and Pleasure: leading into a magnificent chromatic chorus (*Son larve di dolore*) in which the recognition of ‘reality’ becomes itself a positive virtue. So Part 1 ends with an Admission of man’s self-destructiveness, while also suggesting that reaffirmations of our however futile dreams are not merely manifestations of our frailty, but also tributes to our resilience. [[Listen, CD 1, track 20, 00:32 – 01:30.](#)]

Handel’s startlingly adult boyhood comes to fruition in Part II, in a sequence of duets and a consummatory quartet between the four protagonists, in which the women shilly-shally, as do we all, being reluctant to admit that we live in a vale of tears that might, if we could let it, offer salvation. Perhaps only tears can redeem our ‘mondo insano’; in any case Handel, young as he was, awards the palm, commonsensically rather than prissily, to Time and Disillusion, the climax coming in Pleasure’s double aria, *Lascia la Spina*. This is first sung as an aria dangerously precarious and slightly frantic: only to be repeated in a slow setting to the tune of the famous sarabande from the opera *Almira*, originally written when the composer was a mere 19. In this new theatrical context the noble melody, supported by solemn wind instruments, is sublime enough to bear the gravity of the paradoxical human predicament, becoming an altar-dance which may be presumed to entail both sex and sanctity: though some may think that the very slow tempo Joachim Carlos Martini adopts with the Barock-orchestra Frankfurt is slightly excessive, since it discourages the physicality of even a potentially holy sarabande. Still, the orchestral playing usually has the necessary equilibrium between majesty and vivacity: as becomes patent in Pleasure’s consummatory aria, *Come Nembo che fugge*, which comes close to resolving the paradox of our existence since, having no need of Bach’s death-haunted mysticism, it generates a potent *tragic energy* from its very ambiguity between life and death. Beauty’s final aria, at last submitting to ‘Heaven’s Minister Elect’, evades spiritual sanctions yet gets the best of both worlds in being grandly spacious, with plangent oboe obbligato to render incarnate human distress, while also being rationally *measured* (‘Largo e staccato’), as the Young Composer plays the Wise Old Man.

This performance inserts, between this climactic aria and the Final Chorus, an organ concerto (No 4 from opus 4, in F major): as

had become Handel's custom by the time, thirty years after the oratorio's pristine Roman appearance, he made his 'definitive' revision in 1737. The insertion of an organ concerto had a symbolic appositeness, since the organ of Handel's day was a 'box of pipes' scientifically tuned by proud Man to create a god-like concordance. That Handel himself officiated as soloist at the organ affirmed his identity as Maker and Master, a human being with overtly god-like faculties. No wonder he recognised the worth and the centrality of this music of his shining youth; and even made a second revised version, to an English text, in the penultimate year of his life. Today, after a span of almost three hundred years, the young music still shines in glory undimmed.

Copyright © 19 May 2000 Wilfrid Mellers, York, UK²

² WILFRID MELLERS, born in 1914, was educated at Cambridge University, where he read English, and then Music: composition, however, he learned mostly from Edmund Rubbra and Egon Wellesz. After the War he taught in the universities of Cambridge and of Birmingham, and in the early sixties at Pittsburgh University. From 1964 to his retirement in 1981 he was founding Professor and head of the Music Department in the University of York. On retiring from York he also spent much less time on composition, in which he mostly fuses the genres of 'classical', folk, jazz, and even pop musics. He has published 14 books, of which there are major studies of Couperin, Bach and Beethoven and others, together with an extensive corpus of journal articles.

Classics Today (www.classicstoday.com) – 4. Juni 2000

This almost unknown, large scale (almost 3 hour) oratorio, *The Triumph of Time and Truth*, was composed by Handel in Rome in 1707 and revised by him for performances in London's Covent Garden in 1737 and then translated into English, revised again and presented, with new additions, in 1757. The performance recorded here contains, probably, everything Handel composed for this work in its various incarnations, and then some: A brief organ concerto by the composer is added to the second part's introduction and another pops up before the final chorus; a number from the serenata *Acis & Galatea* is inserted at one point; and a Saraband for two harpsichords from Handel's *Almira* is used as an interlude in Part III. Furthermore, some will recognize the beautiful aria from *Rinaldo*, 'Lascia ch'io piango' set to another text. All that aside, this windy work, in which four characters (here, two sopranos and two male altos) stand for Beauty, Pleasure, Time and Disillusion and duke it out until each characteristic opts to serve a better, higher cause, is definitely worth hearing. It contains the appealing, straightforwardly Baroque (if there is such a thing) style of Handel's early Italian cantatas, mixed with his later sophisticated choral writing and dramatic recitatives. The singers have plenty to do. Both sopranos, *Beauty* and *Pleasure*, – who sound uncomfortably alike and therefore cut somewhat into the drama – are excellent, with particular kudos going to Claron McFaddon's *Beauty* for her lovely trills (especially in #29, with continuo), and both male altos are agile, involved, and just a bit weak in their lower registers. The chorus, which is very big and appears to have been recorded from a far greater distance than the soloists, is splendid, as is the orchestra under Joachim Carlos Martini's leadership. The resonant acoustic makes the soloists sound a bit lonely, but otherwise, no complaints. Handel lovers should flock to this.

Robert Levine

Artistic Quality **8/8** Sound Quality

The Triumph of Virtue?

Anthony Hicks

This is the third recording of a Handel oratorio derived from a live performance under Joachim Carlos Martini and involving the chorus and orchestra he himself founded. In each case the recordings have been issued privately by the Junge Kantorei and subsequently re-issued by Naxos. It was possible to treat the earlier issues indulgently – they were *Athalia* (EMR 45, p. 19) and *Saul* (EMR 47, p. 25) – because the performances were passable and they offered cheap alternatives to better recordings at full price. The fact that *Athalia* was unaccountably boosted by the addition of an aria from *Deborah* and that *Saul* displayed an odd choice of variants did not matter very much. Indeed, one of the *Saul* numbers had not previously been recorded, and so added interest. Such tinkering did however indicate a touch of quirkiness in Martini's approach, and the product of his latest project is eccentric to the point of being seriously misleading. It purports to be the premiere recording of Handel's only Italian choral oratorio, *Il trionfo del Tempo e della Verità*, a radical revision of the Roman oratorio *Il trionfo del Tempo e del Disinganno* of 1707, composed in London in 1737 and revised in 1739. In a sense it is, since the music of the 1737 oratorio, here amounting to about 2h 11m, is virtually all present, but it is embedded in a highly personal compilation of 3 hours length. The additional 49m is made up of extracts from the 1707 version, variants of the 1739 revision and other more loosely associated material. The result is a sequence of music that at times specifically overrides Handel's considered rejection of elements of the 1707 version, and makes it impossible to appreciate the special qualities of the 1737 revision – wittier and more light-hearted than 1707. The booklet notes are muddled, sometimes factually in error, and do not provide a coherent explanation for Martini's treatment of the score.

It must immediately be said, however, that the set preserves a remarkable evening of music-making. I suspect the real reason for

Martini's compilation is a genuine fascination with all three versions of the oratorio – including the English version of 1757, *The Triumph of Time and Truth* – and a consequent desire to perform as much of their music as is possible in a continuous sequence. Besides being a fine musician, Martini obviously has the organisational and fund-raising skills to run his choir, fix his orchestra and arrange for professional recording, so why should he forego the opportunity to record some lovely music on the pedantic grounds that it does not strictly belong with the rest? In many ways the highlight of the performance occurs in Part 3. In 1737 Handel omitted his original sarabande setting of the aria 'Lascia la spina' (probably because it had become too well known as 'Lascia ch'io pianga' in *Rinaldo*) and replaced it with a short, sprightly setting. Martini duly performs the latter, but follows it with elaborated harpsichord arrangements of the sarabande in *Almira* from which the 1707 setting of the aria derives, and then the 1707 aria itself, hauntingly sung by Elisabeth Scholl. The interpolations become a sort of rapt meditation on the sarabande theme some 11 minutes in length. Here Martini's direction is indulgent, though generally it is stylish and sensitive. Scholl and McFadden make contributions of absolute commitment throughout, and the two countertenors, though capable of occasional sourness, are more than competent. The chorus, alas, sound as murky as ever, and does not seem comfortable with Italian, but its role in this piece is comparatively small.

The tracks devoted to the sarabandes can of course be skipped, and the same applies to some of Martini's other interpolations from the 1707 score and to the two tracks entitled *Interludium* before Part 2, consisting of the Sonata for organ and orchestra from 1707 and the chorus 'Viver e non amar' from the 1732 Italian and English *Ads and Galatea*. (The text of the latter has no relevance to the *Trionfo* libretto but the piece gets in because it appears in the 1757 *Triumph* as 'Pleasure submits to pain'.) Anyone who wants to extract the pure 1737 version from Martini's compilation soon runs into difficulty, however, because some interpolations cannot easily be isolated and the Naxos documentation does not assist such an exercise. Partly this is Martini's fault, since the Naxos booklet is derived from his German original, but at least in the German version the texts of items not in the 1737 score are printed in italics, whereas the libretto as printed by Naxos makes no such distinction.

Naxos also provide a track-by-track synopsis, but again it does not indicate the extraneous numbers. Confusion starts with the first track, where Martini plays first the opening sonata of 1707 (with the trumpets parts added for *La resurrezione* in 1708) and runs without a break into the new Sinfonia of 1737, which loses its individuality as a result. Part I then proceeds as 1737, except for the insertion of the duet 'Il voler' from 1707 and a weird twist in Bellezza's first aria ('Fido specchio') where the *da capo* begins with the ritornello of 1707 (introducing a thematic element Handel had eliminated in 1737) and the 1737 text then returns. In Part 2 Bellezza's aria 'Venga il Tempo' is first sung in its original 1707 version, with dosing ritornello. Then follows, separately, the chorus 'O Tempo, padre di dolor', an addition of 1739 with music taken without change from the *Deborah* chorus 'O Baal, monarch of the skies'; it should replace the final ritornello of the aria. Next Martini plays an orchestral ritornello with a cello cadenza, which is what replaced the 1707 ritornello in 1737 but is meaningless as an isolated fragment. Part 3 also starts enigmatically, with the opening Sinfonia played twice, first with oboes doubling violins, then with flutes substituted. (In the German notes Martini calls the piece 'a light-footed gagliarda', evoking *A Midsummer-Night's Dream*, giving a vague due to his thoughts, but this phrase does not appear in the English text and there is no further elucidation.)

Perhaps the most serious muddle, involving actual misrepresentation, occurs in connection with Piacere's aria 'Un leggiadro giovinetto'. The 1707 setting has an organ obbligato and is introduced by the organ-and-orchestra Sonata and the tiny recitative 'Taci! qual suono ascolto!' for Bellezza. In 1737 Handel recomposed the whole sequence, replacing the Sonata with a short Sonatina in A major for violin and continue, and the aria by a new setting in the same key, with solo violin. In 1739 the Sonatina was rescored for solo carillon, and the violin solo in the aria replaced by a carillon part. Martini begins his sequence with the violin Sonatina and then continues with the carillon version in its written key, ignoring the fact that for Handel the carillon is always a transposing instrument. Thus the carillon Sonatina sounds in D instead of A and fails to link properly with Bellezza's recitative. In regard to the aria, Martini claims that 'with the help of the suggestions of Bernd Baselt on the carillon in the second *Händel-Handbuch* [we] have completed the

music assigned to it'. The reference to Baselt is to the inaccurate entry for HWV 46b (apparently the source of several of Martini's quirks) but Baselt cannot be blamed for the false claim of 'completion'. What Martini actually performs is the 1737 version of the aria, but he also has the carillon doubling the solo violin in places as well as playing a continue role unrelated to the part that Handel wrote.

This then is a frustrating issue: for £15 it gives you three hours of Handel's music pretty well performed and much of it never before recorded. One can hardly declare it unwelcome. The downside is that the musical sequence recorded is not what it purports to be and comes without adequate documentation or indeed any clear justification for its content. It will inhibit for many years any attempt to record the 1737 *Trionfo* in a more accurate form. My annoyance is no doubt intensified because I happen to know the piece quite well, having edited the 1737 score for its first modern revival under Paul Nicholson in April 1998, as part of the London Handel Festival. Since my concern was to produce a text as close as possible to what Handel performed in 1737 – anything else in my view would have been an offence to both performers and audience – I find it hard to enter the mindset of someone who takes a wholly different view of the editorial task. Despite the 'historical awareness' brought to bear on early music over the last thirty or so years, the misrepresentation of major baroque works in performance still seems to be an on-going phenomenon – as witness the bizarre patchwork of various versions currently being presented by Opera North as 'Handel's' *Radamisto*. (I have just heard the relay on Radio 3.) A serious analysis of why this happens – it is seldom a matter of finance – would be interesting.

Anthony Hicks published the full score of his edition of Handel's II trionfo del tempo e della Verita last year in a limited edition of 40 copies. It contains the complete 1737 score, a libretto with translation, an editorial commentary and an appendix of variants including the carillon versions of the Sonatina and the aria 'Un leggiadro giovinetto'. A few copies are still available at £25 + post: enquiries to King's Music. CB

Erwiderung auf diesen Artikel von Joachim Carlos Martini an den Herausgeber der “Early Music Review”:

Dear Sir,

yesterday I had the opportunity to read the review written by Mr. Anthony Hicks concerning the concert-take of “Il Trionfo del Tempo e della Verità”, apparently published by “Naxos” during the last weeks.

His partially bitter remarks induce me to send to you an extract of my letter³ answering to a letter of Mr. Anthony Hicks, in which he referred to a score I had sent to him some weeks before. This score contains the version – as I suppose – of the revival of “Il Trionfo”, given in March 1739. I entitled my score with the following words: “Il Trionfo del Tempo e della Verità”, HWV 46 b (London 1737 and 1739).

Mr. Anthony Hicks complained of the fact, that the CD-take of our performance of “Il Trionfo” had spoiled his intention, to record the London concert in his edition of the 1737-version of “Il Trionfo” and he called my version a “personal compilation”.

³ Auszüge aus diesem Brief von Martini an Hicks:

[...] We had planned this project during my preparations for “Saul”, that is to say in 1996. When I had the pleasure in 1997 to meet Mr. Winton Dean after our performance of “Athalia” in Halle, I told him about our “Trionfo”-project, and when I learnt by a letter of Mr. Winton Dean (15th January 1998) about the project of the “London Handel Society”, I wrote immediately to Mr. Denys Darlow, to inform him about this coincidence. But I have never got any answer. So I am feeling myself a little bit helpless. I do not know, what I have should done better! [...] As to my version your judgement (“a personal compilation”) is right in many respects. I never intended to perform a version you can call a “Urtext”-Version, but a version which gives all the wonderful aspects of this theme so often composed by Handel and which is trying to reflect the special concert-atmosphere in the lifetime of Handel (improvisation about “Saraband”). But in my booklet I told to the audience about my intention and about the consequences of my different decisions. (“Tu giurasti”, “Ricco pino”, “Viver, e non amar” etc., etc.) As I know there exists neither any autograph, nor any copy of the 1737, 1739 versions. I know only the remarks published by Otto Erich Deutsch, who wrote: “The cast is not known, but it may have been ...” (23rd March 1737) and “... with several Concerto’s on the Organ and other Instruments” (3rd March 1739). “O Tempo” I found by the kind help of Dr. Michael Pacholke (Halle), Mr. Winton Dean and Mr. Roland Schmidt (Carl-von-Ossietsky-Universität, Hamburg). If there are any more informations about “Il Trionfo del Tempo e della Verità” I would be very eager to know about it! [...]

In my letter I tried to explain my points of view, and I am very sorry to say, that Mr. Anthony Hicks didn't give me any answer.

Now as before I am convinced, that there are no hints about the 1739-version of "Il Trionfo", except for the press item of 3rd March 1739, speaking of a revival including an organ concert and several instrumental "interludes" (Otto Erich Deutsch).

In my opinion we nowadays are only able to guess, to maintain or to claim a conviction without being really sure about the reality of the performance of "Il Trionfo", given in 1739.

I think, it should be decisive for an honest judgement of somebody's work to include the different social positions and artistic intentions. As I tried to make Mr. Anthony Hicks understood, I am no scholar, but a conducting musician, who wishes to give to the public an idea about the incredible wealth of Handel's music. Maybe I passed over a certain boundary in scientifically respect, but I am not so very sure about it!

As to the "Naxos" documents I am helpless, because till now I had no opportunity to read them. I know about the edition only be the help of some reviews.

As to the choir I would like to underline that, in contrast to the "Barockorchester Frankfurt" and the soloists, all singers are amateurs and not – as often is to notice – paid choir-singers. To work in the level of a choir with amateurs is my personal decision in the intention to maintain a certain culture of singing, which dated for the rest from Handel himself and which is in danger to be destroyed by the manner of falling back only upon professional or semiprofessional soloists.

On principle I think it is very important to reflect upon the traditional ways of performing Handel's oratorios. In the intention to make the plot understood to an audience, for which the words, phrases and literary pictures of Handel's time are rather far away, I decided to characterise the acting persons and their ways of thinking and feeling by own specific continuo players. It is because of this, we took the carillon as a

Frankfurter Rundschau – Montag, 24. Juli 2000

**Joachim Martini, Junge Kantorei,
Barockorchester Frankfurt:
Händels „Il Trionfo del Tempo e della Verità“**

Das Thema trifft jeden und ist epochenübergreifend: Was richtet die Zeit mit den Menschen an, und können sie ihrem ungerne gesehenen Verfall entgehen? Die avantgardistische Musik meint wohl „ja“, zumindest dort, wo mit Tönen versucht wird, die Zeit zu dehnen, stillzustellen oder aufzuhalten. Zu so viel Idealismus war Georg Friedrich Händel innermusikalisch nicht in der Lage und außermusikalisch dürften ihm und seinen Zeitgenossen vermutlich die Puderquasten und Salbentöpfe von damals auch nicht so gute Möglichkeiten geboten haben, den schönen Schein allzu lange aufrecht zu erhalten.

Also ein Triumph von Zeit und Wahrheit, wie ihn das Barock bei aller Schönheitsverliebtheit doch immer wieder formulierte, und erst recht eben in *Il Trionfo del Tempo e della Verità*, diesem dreistündigen Oratorium von 1757, das Joachim Martini mit der Jungen Kantorei und dem Barockorchester Frankfurt im einstigen Zisterzienserkloster Eberbach aufführte.

Für Händels Thema war das der treffendste Ort, an dem früher sicher das barocke Kirchenlied erklang: „Schön sind die Blumen, schöner sind die Menschen / in der frischen Jugendzeit; / Sie müssen sterben, müssen verderben, / Jesus bleibt in Ewigkeit.“ Jetzt erklang das Thema in artistisch-mythologischer Verkleidung: Der Nutzlosigkeit der Jugendkonservierung bewusst geworden, schneidet sich die Schönheit die blonden Locken ab, wirft sich ein Bußgewand um und wird Einsiedlerin.

Vorher hat natürlich ein Kampf getobt zwischen Amüsement und La Bellezza auf der einen und Zeit und Il Disinganno – der Enttäuschung – auf der anderen Seite. Die Schönen und Amüsanten sind zwei berücksichtigenden Sopranstimmen überantwortet, der plastischen, sehr leichten und doch strahlenden von Claron McFadden, und der genau auf dem Scheitelpunkt von rund und geradlinig befindlichen von Elisabeth Scholl. Die zeitbewussten Spielverderber klingen als von Männern gesungene Altstimmen entsprechend q-

ponent: Musikalisch sind sie ein idealer Kontrast, zumal Nicholas Hariades und Peer Abilgaard zwei für ihre gattungsbegrenzte Disposition ungemein weiche und volle Stimmen bieten.

Joachim Martinis Chor und Orchester sind natürlich historisch klein dimensioniert, immer rhythmisch gespannt und bei aller Schlankheit doch zu plastischer Tuttihomogenität befähigt. Die Raum-Akustik des extrem gut tragenden Kirchenschiffs ist ein perfekter Volumen- und Resonanzvergrößerer, so dass jeder schmalbrüstig-krümelige Eindruck unterbleibt. Eine Live-Aufnahme, die als Studio-Produktion nicht besser sein könnte, zum Preis von einer Hochpreis-CD.

Georg Friedrich Händel: Il Trionfo del Tempo e della Verità. Claron McFadden, Elisabeth Scholl, Nicholas Hariades, Peer Abilgaard (Gesang), Junge Kantorei, Barockorchester Frankfurt, Joachim Carlos Martini. Naxos 3 CD 8.554440-42.

usk (Bernhard Uske)