

Handel - Il Trionfo del Tempo e del Disinganno (Alessandrini) [2007]

Written by bluesever

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Disc 1 1.Part I: Sonata 2.Part I: Fido specchio, in te vagheggio (Belleza) 3.Part I: Io, che sono il Piacere (Piacere, Bellezza) 4.Part I: Fosco genio, e nero duolo (Piacere) 5.Part I: Ed io che' Tempo sono (Tempo, Disingamo) 6.Part I: Se la bellezza (Disingamo) 7.Part I: Dunque, si prendan l'armi (Piacere, Bellezza, Tempo, Disingamo) 8.Part I: Una schiera di piaceri (Bellezza) 9.Part I: I colossi del sole (Tempo) 10.Part I: Urne voi, che racchiudete (Tempo) 11.Part I: Sono troppo crudeli i tuoi consigli (Piacere) 12.Part I: Il voler nel fior degl'anni (Bellezza, Piacere) 13.Part I: Della vita mortale (Disinganno) 14.Part I: Un pensiero nemico di pace (Bellezza) 15.Part I: Folle, tu nieghi il Tempo (Disinganno, Piacere, Bellezza) 16.Part I: Nasce l'uomo, ma nasce bambino (Tempo) 17.Part I: L'uomo sempre se stesso distrugge (Disinganno) 18.Part I: Questa e la reggia mia (Piacere) 19.Part I: Sonata: Qual suono ascolto? (Bellezza) 20.Part I: Un leggiadro giovinetto (Piacere) 21.Part I: Ha nella destra l'ali (Bellezza) 22.Part I: Venga il Tempo, e con l'ali funeste tolga queste (Bellezza) 23.Part I: Crede l'uom ch'egli riposi (Disinganno) 24.Part I: Tu credi che sia lungi (Tempo, Bellezza) 25.Part I: Folle, dunque tu sola presumi (Tempo) 26.Part I: La reggia del Piacer vedesti, or vieni (Disinganno, Tempo) 27.Part I: Se non sei piu ministro di pene (Bellezza, Piacere, Disinganno, Tempo) Disc 2 1.Part II: Se del falso piacere (Tempo) 2.Part II: Chiudi, chiudi i vaghi rai (Piacere) 3.Part II: In tre parti divise (Tempo) 4.Part II: Io sperai trovar nel vero (Bellezza) 5.Part II: Tu vivi invan dolente (Piacere) 6.Part II: Tu giurasti di mai non lasciarmi (Piacere) 7.Part II: Sguardo, che infermo ai rai del sol si volge (Tempo) 8.Part II: Io vorrei due cori in seno (Bellezza, Disinganno) 9.Part II: Io giurerei che tu chiudesti i lumi (Disinganno, Bellezza) 10.Part II: Piu non cura valle oscura (Disinganno) 11.Part II: E un ostinato errore (Tempo) 12.Part II: E ben folle quel nocchier (Tempo) 13.Part II: Dicesti il vero, e benche tardi intesi (Bellezza) 14.Part II: Volgio Tempo per risolvere (Tempo, Disinganno, Piacere) 15.Part II: Presso la reggia ove il Piacer risiede giace vasto giardino (Bellezza, Disinganno) 16.Part II: Lascia la spina (Piacere) 17.Part II: Con troppo chiare note (Bellezza, Disinganno) 18.Part II: E voglio dir, mi pento (Bellezza) 19.Part II: Or che tiene la destra (Bellezza, Piacere, Disinganno) 20.Part II: Chi gia fu del biondo crine (Disinganno) 21.Part II: Ma che veggio, che miro? (Bellezza) 22.Part II: Riso pino nel cammino (Bellezza) 23.Part II: Si, bella Penitanza (Bellezza) 24.Part II: Il bel pianto del'aurora che s'indora (Disinganno, Tempo) 25.Part II: Piacer, che meco gia vivesti (Bellezza) 26.Part II: Come nembo che fugge col vento (Piacere) 27.Part II: Pure del Cielo intelligenze eterne (Bellezza) 28.Part II: Tu del Ciel ministro eletto (Bellezza) Deborah York (La Bellezza) Gemma Bertagnolli (Il Piacere) Sara Mingardo (Il Disinganno) Nicholas Sears (Il Tempo) Concerto Italiano Rinaldo Alessandrini – conductor

Handel's Italian oratorio seems to offer a great deal of fascination to continental-based ensembles presumably because the Italian texts make the works easier to perform well with non-Anglophone singers. But there are significant differences, between this work and the later oratorios. The later works use choruses and have quite strong narrative and moral elements. The English Oratorios were written for mainly English-trained singers whose style was expressive rather than virtuoso; in them the older Handel aimed for a new style.

But *Il Trionfo del Tempo e del Disinganno* is young man's music, full of dazzling bravura elements and designed to be sung by some of the chief virtuosi of the day. Handel's Italian cantatas and oratorios have a commonality with his early Italian operas. In fact Handel mined his cantatas and Italian oratorios when writing his first operas in London.

So we should expect bravura performances and virtuoso feats when listening to the music as well as da capo sections suitably ornamented.

As regards plot, well there isn't any; at least not when compared to the English dramatic oratorios. The allegorical text was written by Cardinal Pamphili and it is more of a debate than an actual dramatic event. Beauty has sworn to be faithful to Pleasure but after much debate she is turned away from Pleasure by Time and Disillusionment - strictly non-Illusion, hence the role is usually referred to as Truth. Cardinal Pamphili had a good ear for melody and rhythm in his written Italian, but his plot is exceedingly thin and very repetitious.

Luckily Handel clothed this in brilliant music. This was his first Italian oratorio and you would think it must have pleased both his Roman patrons and their audiences. But we know little about the work's first performance and it seems to have made little or no impression in the surviving record. Having mined the work for the operas *Agrippina* and *Rinaldo* Handel then let the piece sleep until 1737 when it was performed in London in a lengthened version, with chorus, called *Il Trionfo del Tempo e della Verita*. Then finally, in 1757, the blind composer aided by John Christopher Smith re-worked the piece with a new English libretto by Thomas Morrell to become *The Triumph of Truth and Time*, the very last Handelian oratorio.

The work requires virtuosity from all those concerned; not just the singers but the

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instrumentalists as well. It opens with a dazzling concerto grosso-type overture and from then on, the instrumentalists are required to contribute solos to many of the arias.

One of the most notable episodes is the Sonata following the recitative *Quest e la Reggia mia*. Here Handel includes a solo for organ which effectively transforms the piece into an organ concerto. This also enables us to get a glimpse of Handel's astounding technique at the keyboard, with which he pleased and amazed his patrons.

Rinaldo Alessandrini and his group attack the work with virtuosity, gusto and energy. Alessandrini's speeds are remarkably brisk. He manages to get through the piece in 133 minutes: faster than Mark Minkowski at 139 and Emmanuelle Haim at 146. But his players and singers cope admirably and for most of the time you feel caught up in the excitement. The work seems neither hurried nor rushed. Only occasionally did I wish that Alessandrini could profitably have lingered over some details.

The two soprano soloists, Deborah York as Beauty and Gemma Bertagnolli as Pleasure have nicely differentiated voices. York is all hard brilliance, bright tone and good articulation. Bertagnolli, whilst as technically accomplished as York, has a softer, darker warmer sound as Pleasure. So that the vocal casting seems to work well with the type of characters portrayed. Sara Mingardo has a lovely dark-toned voice as Truth. Nicholas Sears as Time is attractive and stylish but perhaps not quite comfortable with some of Alessandrini's tempi.

The performance is not without eccentricity - most notably the rather mannered playing in *Lasci la Spina* - better known in its later incarnation as *Lascia ch'io pianga*.

Overall, though, this performance is greater than the sum of its parts; each individual contributing to the wonderfully vivid effect. There are a number of other recordings of the work in the catalogue. The most recent is Emmanuelle Haim's account, but David Vickers, in his Gramophone review described her account of the work as wilful with many of the da capo repeats marred by unstylish excesses.

This 2001 account from Alessandrini was very well received in 2001. It is still extremely welcome now that it has been reissued and should be high on everyone's list. If you are looking for an affordable and recommendable recording of Handel's first oratorio then look no further.

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You will not be disappointed by this lively and vivid account. ---Robert Hugill,
musicweb-international.com

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