



## Silete venti, HWV 242 (26:51)

- 1 Symphonia & Recitative: Silete venti (6:09)
- 2 Aria: Dulcis amor (6:55)
- 3 Recitative: O fortuna anima (0:38)
- 4 Aria: Date sarta (9:55)
- 5 Aria: Alleluja (3:14)

## Laudate pueri Dominum, HWV 237 (19:21)

- 6 Aria & Chorus: Laudate pueri Dominum (3:43)
- 7 Aria: Sit nomen Domini (2:20)
- 8 Solo & Chorus: A solis ortu usque ad occasum (1:31)
- 9 Aria: Excelsus super omnes gentes Dominus (2:13)
- 10 Chorus: Quis sicut Dominus (1:16)
- 11 Aria: Suscitans a terra (2:34)
- 12 Aria: Qui habitare facit (2:00)
- 13 Solo & Chorus: Gloria patri (3:44)

## Gloria, HWV deest (16:10)

- 14 Gloria in excelsis Deo (2:32)
- 15 Et in terra pax (2:57)
- 16 Laudamus te (2:12)
- 17 Domine Deus (1:33)
- 18 Qui tollis peccata mundi (3:30)
- 19 Quoniam tu solus sanctus (3:26)

At the age of twenty-one, George Frideric Handel embarked on an expedition that would prove enjoyable, enlightening, profitable, and integral to his career. The Florentine prince, Gian Gastone de' Medici, had invited Handel to visit Italy. He packed up his things in Hamburg—where he had been employed at the Hamburg Opera for two years and premiered his first two operas (with German librettos)—and in August of 1706 began his journey to Florence, Rome, Naples, and Venice. Italy was the center of European music, and one of the most valuable traits of Italian music was the expressive style in which its composers wrote for the voice. Italian vocal writing was characterized by its qualities of suppleness, expansiveness, flexibility, and lyricism. Handel would quickly master the art, and Italian opera would become the bedrock of his career. But in Rome, where he spent most of his time between 1706 and 1710, papal decrees had closed the public theaters since 1698, the ban not lifted until 1709. Nevertheless, the musical styles of opera, barely disguised, were manifested in concert performances and in particular through the Italian cantata.

Opera had already become Handel's passion. His experiences at the Hamburg Opera and the intellectual and musical stimulation he enjoyed there with his friend and fellow composer, Johann Mattheson, had made permanent impressions. But now he was in Rome where opera was—at least for the time being—an unprofitable medium. The genre that would provide Handel with the most opportunity to grow and to succeed as a composer was the Italian cantata. In fact, Handel would compose more than a hundred such cantatas during the few years of his Italian journey. It was a popular genre, due in part to the constraints of the papal ban, and further supported by the patronage of foreign visitors and local aristocrats—ironically including church officials—who were eager to hear the considerable talent of Venetian singers put to good use, even if opera was out of the question. Performances of cantatas, which

in some cases were actually operas in all ways except by name, were often presented in the "academies" held in the private theaters of discerning (and wealthy) patrons of the arts. These academies were the outgrowth of the *scuole grandi* (charitable fraternities) popular in Venice during the previous century.

Nevertheless, and operatic restrictions notwithstanding, Handel was in Italy to hone what would become his mature musical style, absorbing technique at every turn, developing his traits of adaptability and malleability, and showing the Italians that he could one-up their skills and produce "Italian" music better than native composers. Perhaps recalling the intuitions he felt as a young boy, however, he was there for another reason, too. Donald Burrows, the most important living biographer of Handel, wrote that "Handel wanted to be where the music was, and where the patrons were"—that is certainly what he found. Whatever the reasons were that found him in Italy, it is without a doubt that it was there that he forged skills (musical, social, and political) that would serve him the span of his entire career.

## SILETE VENTI HWV 242

Many performers and audience members alike believe that—in his operas, cantatas, and motets—Handel composed some of the most beautiful, supple, and intrinsically "vocal" music ever written. Countless examples can be found, and one of the best is his Latin motet *Silete venti*, composed in London sometime between 1724 and 1730. The date is uncertain, and theories propose that he composed the work for one of his London opera singers, or even perhaps for a Roman patron or cardinal during Handel's return visit to Italy in 1729. Much of the motet's music is borrowed from earlier works, but the result is no less splendid due to the recycling; in fact, *Silete venti* is one of Handel's most lavish motets. As each movement unfolds, we hear some of his most skillful text-setting, combined with rich orchestral timbres

all derived from a relatively economical ensemble of oboes, bassoon, strings, and continuo. And although the length of the work is less than thirty minutes, its framework is rather grand, beginning with an impressive overture, followed by pairs of accompanied recitatives and arias—all deeply expressive and operatic in scale—and culminating in a florid and technically demanding “*Alleluia*” that makes clear Handel’s intention that this superb and demanding music would be sung by a professional and virtuoso singer.

The motet begins with what appears to be a typical French *ouverture*. Sonorous harmonies, played in slow and stately dotted rhythms, are followed by a brisk fugato, the subject of which is typical of many of Handel’s more or less contrapuntal works. But then, in a moment of genius and astonishing effect, the flurry of notes is dramatically interrupted by the soprano who bids the blustering winds to be silent. We realize now that we have been listening to the sounds of a windstorm, no matter how melodic and musically satisfying its gusts may have been. What ensues is evidence of the respect and admiration Handel had for his best singers: The soprano, having brought the whole ensemble to a startling halt, takes complete charge of the proceedings, slowly and poignantly unfurling what will be one of the richest and most flawless of Handelian vocal tapestries. Graciously demanding that the rustling leaves stop their balletic dance so that her Christian soul can peacefully enjoy its repose, she spins a contemplative recitative accompanied by gentle waves of string figurations, all of which comes to a gentle close of such halting beauty and serenity that one wonders what could follow. The aria that does follow plays upon the blurred lines drawn between the love of Christ and the sort of mortal love that is often referenced—as a comparison or point of departure—in some of the most effective motets of Claudio Monteverdi or Alessandro Grandi. The succulence of the soprano’s entreaties to be pierced by the love of her Savior (“*Veni, veni transfige me*”) is magnified by some marvelous turns of chromaticism, all given a sense of dignity and nobility by a walking bass line.

The second recitative-aria pair begins with more animation, as if to express a greater confidence and almost ecstatic bliss. “*Date sarta*” was borrowed in small part from one of Handel’s *Chandos Anthems*, and their characteristic poise and elegance was not lost through Handel’s use of parody. Again, Handel’s mastery of walking bass lines is immediately evident, lending a majestic spirit of victory to the aria. As the winds begin to rise anew, the middle section erupts in a squall, short-lived, but intense, and amounting to a taste of the dazzling “*Alleluia*” that will follow. Whereas virtuosity of expression and dramatic control had been so far the charge of the soprano, she now is called upon to display brilliant technical virtuosity, modestly cloaked in the ease and lightheartedness of a romping gigue. The motet comes to a close, an exquisite jewel among Handel’s best works. Like a magical summer sojourn or an all too brief moment of sheer delight, we are sad to come to its end, but luckily, Handel would later reuse portions of *Silete venti* in the 1732 version of *Esther* and in the Organ Concerto in B-flat major.

### LAUDATE PUERI DOMINUM HWV 237

Handel spent most of his time between 1706 and 1710 in Rome where papal decrees had closed the public theaters. Opera was an unprofitable medium. The *fach* (genre) that would provide



Handel in 1727, attributed to Balthasar Denner (1685-1749)

him with the most opportunity to grow and to succeed as a composer was the Italian cantata. It was a popular genre, due in part to the constraints of the papal ban, and further supported by the patronage of foreign visitors and local aristocrats—even Church officials—who were eager to hear the considerable talent of Venetian singers put to good use, even if opera was out of the question. Performances of cantatas, which in some cases were actually operas in all ways except by name, were often presented in the “academies” held in the private theatres of discerning (and wealthy) patrons of the arts. These academies were the outgrowth of the *scuole grandi* popular in Venice during the previous century.

A notable manifestation of the flexibility of Handel’s social and musical skills is the fact that he was engaged to compose music for the Roman Catholic liturgy within only a few months of his arrival in Rome. He was, of course, a rather staunch Lutheran, and remained so all of his life, not even conceding to the implications by the British monarchs (later in his life) that he should consider a conversion to the Church of England. The Latin church-music he composed in Rome is superb. His lifelong reputation could have been set on the basis of the stunning “*Dixit Dominus*” alone, composed in 1707. But many more equally compelling works come from those years, including the “*Laudate, pueri, Dominum*” of 1707. It represents (perhaps intentionally?) a veritable catalogue of Italian musical forms, all masterfully employed by Handel. Each movement has a different texture including *ritornello* form (first movement), trio sonata texture (“*Sit nomen Domini*” and “*Qui habitare facit*”), typical imitative polyphony (“*A solis ortu usque*”), concerto grosso style (“*Excelsus super omnes*”), homophony (“*Quis sicut Dominus*”), continuo aria (“*Suscitans a terra*”), and the hybrid style of the final movement with its predictable return to the music of the

first movement at the words "*Sicut erat in principio*" ("as it was in the beginning").

## GLORIA HWV deest

It is a rare occurrence in the field of musicology that "new" works by the greatest composers of western music are discovered. In the cases of Bach and Handel, it seems almost unimaginable that such a discovery could be made, considering the centuries of research that have yielded what we assume to be exhaustive detail about their lives, careers, and works. But in the last few years, we have been fortunate to enjoy several such discoveries, one of which is Handel's setting of the Gloria, for soprano accompanied by two violins and continuo. It had been in a collection in London's Royal Academy of Music since the middle of the nineteenth century, but on March 15<sup>th</sup>, 2001, was it announced that Hans Joachim Marx of the University of Hamburg had authenticated the work's authorship, and that a new jewel in the diadem of Handel's vocal works had been found. The identification was made mostly through the existence of distinct similarities of compositional elements among Handel's works. The list of "quotes" from other compositions of Handel that appear in the Gloria is quite significant. Suffice it to say for our purposes here that the evidence is essentially indisputable.

Determining the origin of the work, and especially its premiere, however, is more difficult. Most factors point to an occasion in June of 1707 while in Rome. One of his generous Roman patrons was the Marchese (later Prince) Francesco Maria

Ruspoli, whose palace and country estates were the venues for performances of Handel's works. Handel had been engaged by Ruspoli between 1707 and 1709 to compose a new secular cantata each week for performances every Sunday. But the Church scrutinized even these private productions. For example, in 1708 Ruspoli was commanded to replace a female singer with a castrato for the role of Mary Magdalene in a performance of Handel's *La Resurrezione*.

Ruspoli was generous to his favorite musicians. For about a month and a half in the middle of May 1707, Handel lived at Castello di Vignanello, Ruspoli's country estate located about forty miles northwest of Rome. At the same time, the great *virtuosa* soprano, Margherita Durastanti, was also in residence, in Ruspoli's employ. Handel composed several motets, and a setting of the *Salve Regina*, for Durastanti to perform at Ruspoli's liturgical celebrations. On June 13<sup>th</sup> of that year, a Mass was celebrated—with particular ceremonial splendor—for the feast day of Saint Anthony of Padua, which coincided with the 475<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the canonization of St. Anthony. It is believed that the Gloria was premiered then. Notable among its six sections are the marvelous Handelian liveliness of the first movement; the lovely melodic turns accompanied by gently supportive strings in the "*Et in terra pax*" that reminds us of many slow movements from Handel's *Concerti grossi*; the expansiveness of the "*Laudamus te...Domine Deus...Qui tollis*" sequence; and the unquestionably vigorous and sparkling "finale" quality of "*Cum Sancto Spiritu...Amen*."

— Jeffrey Thomas

## GEORGE FRIDERIC HANDEL: Silete venti HWV 242

Soprano solo; Oboe I & II; Bassoon; Violin I & II; Viola; Basso continuo

Symphonia <i>Largo—Allegro</i> Accompanied Recitative <i>Larghetto</i>	Silete venti, nolite murmurare frondes, Quia anima mea dulcedine requiescit.	Silence, ye winds, Let your rustling leaves be still, For my soul rests in joy.
Aria <i>Andante ma larghetto</i>	Dulcis amor, Jesu care, Quis non cupit te amare, Veni, veni transfige me. Si tu feris non sunt clades, Tuæ plagæ sunt suaves, Quia totus vivo in te.	Sweet love, dear Jesus, Who does not wish to love you? Come, come pierce me. If you hit, you do not wound, Like carresses are your blows, For within you do I exist.
Accompanied Recitative	O fortunata anima, O jucundissimus triumphus, O fœlicissima lætitia.	Oh happy soul, Oh most blissful victory, Oh supreme joy.
Aria <i>Andante—Allegro—Andante</i>	Date certa, date flores Me coronent vestri honores, Date palmas nobiles. Surgant venti et beatæ Spirent almae fortunatæ Auras coeli fulgidas.	Offer garlands, offer blossoms, Crown me with your honors, Extend the regal palm frond. Let the winds stir, And let the souls of the blessed ones Inhale heaven's glorious atmosphere.
Aria <i>Presto</i>	Alleluja.	Alleluia.



**GEORGE FRIDERIC HANDEL: Laudate, pueri, Dominum HWV 237****Soprano solo; SSATB chorus; Oboe I & II; Violin I & II; Viola I & II; Basso continuo**

Aria & Chorus	Laudate, pueri, Dominum; laudate nomen Domini.	Praise the Lord, ye servants; O praise the name of the Lord.
Aria	Sit nomen Domini benedictum ex hoc nunc et usque in saeculum.	Blessed be the name of the Lord from this time forth for evermore.
Solo & Chorus	A solis ortu usque ad occasum laudabile nomen Domini.	The Lord's name is praised from the rising up of the sun unto the going down of the same.
Aria <i>Allegro</i>	Excelsus super omnes gentes Dominus, et super caelos gloria ejus.	The Lord is high above all nations and his glory above the heavens.
Chorus <i>Grave</i>	Quis sicut Dominus Deus noster, qui in altis habitat, et humilia respicit in caelo et in terra?	Who is like unto the Lord our God, that hath his dwelling so high, and yet humbleth himself to behold the things that are in heaven and earth?
Aria	Suscitans a terra inopem, et de stercore erigens pauperem: ut collocet eum cum principibus, cum principibus populi sui.	He taketh up the simple out of the dust, and lifteth the poor out of the mire; That he may set him with the princes, even with the princes of his people.
Aria	Qui habitare facit sterilem in domo, matrem filiorum laetantem.	He maketh the barren woman to keep house, and to be a joyful mother of children.
Solo & Chorus <i>Allegro</i>	Gloria Patri, gloria Filio, et Spiritui Sancto. Sicut erat in principio, et nunc, et semper, et in saecula saeculorum. Amen.	Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost. As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be; world without end. Amen.  Psalm 113 (Latin Vulgate Psalm 112)

**GEORGE FRIDERIC HANDEL: Gloria HWV deest****Soprano solo; Violin I & II; Basso continuo**

Aria	Gloria in excelsis Deo.	Glory be to God in the highest.
Aria	Et in terra pax hominibus bonæ voluntatis.	And in earth peace to men of good will.
Aria	Laudamus te; benedicimus te; adoramus te; glorificamus te. Gratias agimus tibi propter magnam gloriam tuam.	We praise thee; we bless thee, we worship thee; we glorify thee. We give thanks to thee for thy great glory.
Recitative <i>Adagio</i>	Domine Deus, Rex coelestis, Deus Pater omnipotens. Domine Fili unigenite Jesu Christe: Domine Deus, Agnus Dei, Filius Patris:	Lord God, heavenly King, God the Father almighty. O Lord, the only-begotten Son Jesus Christ: Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father:
Aria	Qui tollis peccata mundi, miserere nobis: Qui tollis peccata mundi, suscipe deprecationem nostram: Qui sedes ad dexteram Patris, miserere nobis:	Thou that takest away the sins of the world, have mercy upon us: Thou that takest away the sins of the world, receive our prayer: Thou that sittest at the right hand of the Father, have mercy upon us:
Aria <i>Andante—Allegro</i>	Quoniam tu solus sanctus, tu solus Dominus, tu solus altissimus, Jesu Christe: Cum Sancto Spiritu in gloria Dei Patris. Amen.	For thou only art holy, thou only art the Lord, thou only art the most high, Jesus Christ: With the Holy Ghost in the glory of God the Father. Amen.