

Handel's Recorder

Recorder Sonatas

Musick for the Royal Fireworks

allegro

The image shows a page of handwritten musical notation for a recorder sonata. It consists of ten staves. The top staff is the recorder melody, and the remaining nine staves are for the basso continuo, featuring a dense and intricate line with numerous ornaments and accidentals. The tempo is marked 'allegro' in the top left corner. The notation is in a historical style, typical of 18th-century manuscripts.

Ruth Wilkinson (recorder) Miriam Morris (viola da gamba) John O'Donnell (harpsichord)

Handel's Recorder

The Musick for the Royal Fireworks set for the German flute, violin or harpsichord
(published by John Walsh)

14:07

| | | | |
|---|-----|----------------------|------|
| 1 | I | Overture | 1:53 |
| 2 | II | Allegro | 5:30 |
| 3 | III | Bourrée | 1:04 |
| 4 | IV | Largo alla Siciliana | 2:54 |
| 5 | V | Allegro | 1:22 |
| 6 | VI | Menuet 1 | 0:36 |
| 7 | VII | Menuet 2 | 0:45 |

Solos for a German Flute, a hoboy or violin with a thorough bass for the harpsichord or bass violin composed by Mr Handel (published by John Walsh)

Sonata No. 2 in G minor, HWV360

7:37

| | | | |
|----|-----|-----------|------|
| 8 | I | Larghetto | 1:46 |
| 9 | II | Andante | 3:06 |
| 10 | III | Adagio | 0:38 |
| 11 | IV | Presto | 2:06 |

Sonata No. 4 in A minor, HWV362

10:07

| | | | |
|----|-----|-----------|------|
| 12 | I | Larghetto | 2:10 |
| 13 | II | Allegro | 2:37 |
| 14 | III | Adagio | 1:45 |
| 15 | IV | Allegro | 3:33 |

Sonata No. 7 in C major, HWV365

10:06

| | | | |
|----|-----|------------------|------|
| 16 | I | Larghetto | 2:10 |
| 17 | II | Allegro | 2:19 |
| 18 | III | Larghetto | 1:46 |
| 19 | IV | Tempo di Gavotti | 2:11 |
| 20 | V | Allegro | 1:37 |

Sonata No. 11 in F major, HWV369

7:00

| | | | |
|----|-----|----------------|------|
| 21 | I | Larghetto | 1:48 |
| 22 | II | Allegro | 2:07 |
| 23 | III | Alla Siciliana | 1:00 |
| 24 | IV | Allegro | 2:04 |

Handel's Recorder

Four Sonatas for the recorder and basso continuo ♪

Musick for the Royal Fireworks for recorder and basso continuo

Ruth Wilkinson, recorder

Miriam Morris, viola da gamba

John O'Donnell, harpsichord

This recording of four recorder sonatas by George Frideric Handel and an 18th century transcription of his popular Royal Fireworks Suite is the work of three Melbourne musicians who have made an important contribution to the growth and popularity of early music performance in Australia for over thirty years. Ruth Wilkinson, recorder, Miriam Morris, viola da gamba, and John O'Donnell, harpsichord, have all been associated with teaching at the University of Melbourne and are proud to have guided many of today's younger generation of early music performers.

Together these three musicians have developed a musical partnership that is based on a mutual understanding and respect for interpreting historical performance practice from original sources and editions. This is uppermost in the current recording where their collective experience of playing together has produced an ensemble that approaches the music as a conversation between musical colleagues with a common sense of phrasing, articulation and ornamentation.

The recorder sonatas are particularly suited to this communication. The bass lines are written as an equal partner to the melody line and one could not exist without the other. The ensemble uses a "Bach" tuning system researched by harpsichordist John O'Donnell after his re-interpretation of the scroll found on the title page of the autograph of J S Bach's *Well-tempered Clavier*. This system of tuning allows each key its own character and particularly suits the fretted system of the viola da gamba.

The performers are very fortunate to have access to Australian instrument makers who have produced the outstanding instruments used in this recording. Just as the performers have made their own interpretation of these works by Handel based on the knowledge gained from research into historical sources, so our instrument makers (William Bright, harpsichord, Frederick Morgan, recorders and Ian Watchorn, viola da gamba) have crafted historically accurate instruments which have their own individual voices beyond mere reproduction of surviving historical instruments.

German born **George Frideric Handel** (1685-1759) was very popular in England as a composer of Italian Opera and enjoyed both fame and fortune. A man with a good head for business, he quickly caught a new wave as opera in the vernacular became more popular than his Italian operas: he began writing oratorios. While writing these popular high profile works Handel also wrote smaller scale gems such as solo sonatas for the violin, oboe, traverse flute and recorder.

The development of the book trade in the 18th century was an important factor in the wider distribution and availability of music to the amateur musician. Amateur referred to the highly educated and skilled class for whom music making was an essential part

of the life of “persons of quality”. Roger North, a contemporary observer and amateur writing circa 1726, noted the importance of publishing:

“And now through the art of graving, etching and printing, musick is come to great perfection, being thereby strangely propagated, much more than when all passed in manuscripts, which were not onely hard to get, but often slovenly wrote.”

There was an appetite for the latest compositions by famous composers such as the newly naturalised Handel and the ever-popular Italians. There is evidence that the names of Handel, Vivaldi and Corelli were attributed to compositions that were written by less famous names. Behind this act of deception was the constant need to make money for the publishing houses.

John Walsh published a transcription of Handel’s *The Musick for the Royal Fireworks [and other works] set for the German Flute, Violin or harpsichord*. (In this recording the German cross flute is replaced by the voice flute, a recorder in D with the equivalent range and similar timbre to the flute.) It is not clear from studying the printed edition whether Handel himself made or approved the transcriptions contained in the edition; nor is the date of publication indicated. (Originally written for a wind band, the work was composed in 1749 for a performance to mark the end of the War of the Austrian Succession and the signing of the Treaty of Aix-La-Chapelle in 1748. The original scoring for the performance in London’s Green Park was for 24 oboes, 12 bassoons, 9 trumpets, 9 french horns, 3 pairs of kettle drums and side drums. Handel later scored the work for full orchestra).

The edition however confirms the fashion of reproducing pieces that must have been very familiar to the targeted public. In this collection we also find the Coronation Anthem *Zadock the Priest*, and marches from *Atlanta*, *Joshua*, *Saul* and the *Ode for St Cecilia’s Day*.

John Walsh was also the publisher of the edition used in this recording of four of Handel’s sonatas written for the recorder. In addition reference was made to the autograph manuscripts published by Studio per Edizioni Scelte, Firenze 1985. Dating and verification of the true authenticity of John Walsh’s publications is well debated and researched by Terence Best and David Lasocki. The dating of the Walsh edition is thought to be 1732. The dating of the autograph has also been subjected to much debate and was believed to have been written between December 1725 and April 1726 at the height of Handel’s success as a composer of Italian Opera in London.

By this time the recorder’s popularity was being replaced by the German flute and the recorder does not rate a mention in the title page which reads, *Solos for a German flute a Hoyboy or violin with a Thorough Bass for the harpsichord or bass violin compos’d by Mr Handel*. It is noted that this is *more correct than the former edition*. (The former edition does not include the gavotte that appears in the C major sonata.)

Sonatas 2, 4, 7 and 11 are designated in the score only as being written for *Flauto Solo*. ‘Flauto’ refers to the recorder in the 18th century and ‘German flute’ refers to the cross blown flute or traverse flute.

As was the common practice of the 18th Century a sustaining bass instrument could double the keyboard part. The title page of the Walsh edition confirms this common practice indicating that the solos be played with a thorough bass (*For the harpsichord or bass violin*). However, in the autograph Handel heads each work with the instructions *Sonata a Flauto e Cembalo* that may well be interpreted as being played without the sustaining bass instrument.

In this recording the viola da gamba is used as an important voice throughout Sonatas 2, 7 and 11. The blend of the subtle articulation of the viola da gamba, the more direct pluck of the harpsichord with the characteristic articulation of the recorder creates a desired timbral mix between melody and bass. Handel's bass lines are extremely interesting: not only because they plot harmonic change but also because they are equal in virtuosity and melodic interest with the upper voice. In Sonata No 4 in A minor the bass part is littered with characteristically keyboard figuration, and it certainly seems unnecessary to include doubling from another bass instrument. The figuring of the bass part is very detailed. As Handel was a tutor to the daughter of his patron, King George II, these sonatas were used as exemplars for her figured bass practice.

Handel cashes in on the popularity of his operatic works by borrowing from himself. In Sonata No 4 the opening bass line is very similar to an aria "Se non giunge" found in his cantata *Filiadorata* (c. 1707-9) and "Purritorno a rimirarvi" from *Agrippina* (1709). Another bass line which occurs in the Sonata 7 in C major is found in the Chandos Anthem, *As pants the Hart, tears are my daily food*. Organists are familiar with Sonata no 11 in F major which was rewritten as an organ concerto (C. 1735). No doubt this would have added to the popularity of these recorder sonatas with the audience targeted by John Walsh.

Within the standard and fashionable four movement sonata form (Sonata No 7 in C major is the exception being a five movement work) Handel created works of great lyricism and drama. To us the performers, the sonatas are like mini operas with all their rhetoric and drama. The slower movements are glorious arias without words and are contrasted with lively dance movements and imitative fuggetti. The sonatas are often like duets between bass and soprano with animated conversations being tossed back and forth and are always a joy to play.

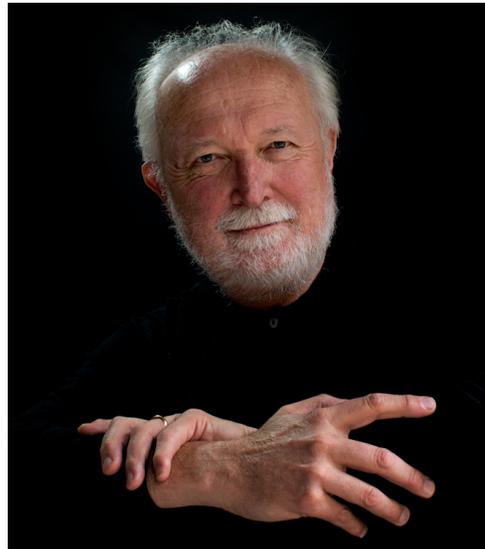


Ruth Wilkinson



Miriam Morris

John O'Donnell



The musicians

Ruth Wilkinson is a recorder, viol and violone player whose musical expertise and passions are based on the performance of music from the 12th to the 18th centuries. Her performances have been praised for their musical integrity, imagination and brilliance. Ruth studied early music at the Schola Cantorum Basiliensis in Switzerland with Hans-Martin Linde and Jordi Savall

As a member of many of Australia's leading early music ensembles including La Romanesca, Capella Corelli and Consort Eclectus she has toured extensively throughout Australia, Europe and South East Asia for Musica Viva. Ruth is also a member of the popular Melbourne based Ludovico's Band.

Ruth has recorded numerous CDs on ABC Classics, (Ludovicos Band), Move and Larrikin labels (Capella Corelli and La Romanesca) including a solo recording of French recorder music by Dieupart entitled Countess of Sandwich and a duo recording Concert à deux with baroque violinist Cynthia O'Brien in the church of Santa Maria Nuova in Cortona, Italy.

Ruth's playing commitments are complemented by the teaching of Recorder and Historical Performance Practice at the Early Music Studio of the University of Melbourne. In 2012 she was made an honorary associate of the Monash University School of Music. She has produced a generation of talented professional recorder players.

John O'Donnell is Monash University Organist, Founder/Director of the celebrated Ensemble Gombert, Musical Director to the Canterbury Fellowship and keyboard player of Capella Corelli. He performs regularly as conductor, organist, harpsichordist and pianist, and is also active in music research and editing. John tours Europe regularly, performing mostly on historic organs. He is the first person ever to perform Bach's complete keyboard works (organ and harpsichord) in public.

His recordings of the complete keyboard works of Johann Caspar Kerll (which he had previously edited for the Viennese publisher Doblinger) and organ works of Bach have met with international acclaim, an album of the latter named "Best Recording of the Year" (2000) in the London *International Record Review*. During 2009 John conducted a highly-acclaimed season of Handel's opera *Xerxes* with Victorian Opera, for which he was nominated for a Green Room Award, and in 2014 he directed four performances of the oldest extant opera, Peri's *Euridice*, newly edited from the original print, at the Woodend Winter Arts Festival.

Miriam Morris is a viola da gamba player of international repute. She pursues a varied career as a soloist and chamber musician. In addition to her work with early music ensembles, she has appeared as a specialist baroque performer with the major symphony, opera and chamber orchestras of Australia, including the Australian Chamber Orchestra and Pinchgut Opera. She is often heard on the ABC and has played in Arts Festivals throughout Australia. She plays with Consort Eclectus, Convivio and Les Goûts-Réunis and has performed throughout Australia and in the US, New Zealand, England and Sweden.

Miriam teaches the cello and viola da gamba at the University of Melbourne and has taught at the Victorian College of the Arts and Monash University. She has pioneered the teaching of viols at primary and secondary level in ensemble-based programmes in South Australia and Victoria and currently teaches viols and cello at Presbyterian Ladies College. Miriam wrote the previous cello syllabus and Technical Work Book for the Australian Music Examinations Board and has written the technical component for the most recent cello syllabus published in 2009. Her numerous publications include both cello and viol tutors.

Miriam's solo CD of solo works and songs of Tobias Hume on the 'Move' label received international critical acclaim. Consort Eclectus recorded its first CD in 2007 with commissioned works by Australian composers Natalie Williams and Calvin Bowman.

The recording

Recorded by ABC Classic FM at the Iwaki Auditorium, Melbourne between 9 and 24 November 2010

Produced by Haig Burnell and Engineered by Alex Stinson

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Studio photos by Carol Pedersen

Photo of Ruth Wilkinson by MAMO Photography

Photo of John O'Donnell by Terry Lane, Melba Recordings

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The editions used are from John Walsh (18th century) and the autograph manuscripts published by Studio per Edizioni Scelte, Firenze 1985

All the instruments used on this recording are Australian made.

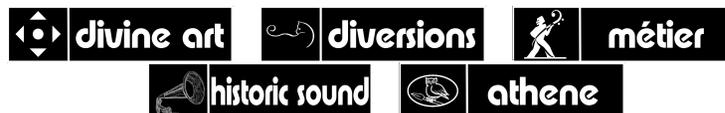
Two recorders after Jacob Denner – Alto in F and Voice Flute in D – were made by Frederick Morgan, Daylesford, circa 1980;

Harpsichord by William Bright, Barraba, 1995, after Dulcken ;

Bass viola da gamba by Ian Watchorn, Melbourne, 1997 after Cheron



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**At the recording session at the Iwaki Auditorium
Haig Burnell : John O'Donnell : Miriam Morris : Ruth Wilkinson : Alex Stinson**