

Music in the London Theatre from Purcell to Handel

This book is concerned with a hundred years of musical drama in England. It charts the development of the genre from the theatre works of Henry Purcell (and his contemporaries) to the dramatic oratorios of George Frideric Handel (and his). En route, it investigates the objections to all-sung drama in English that were articulated in the decades around 1700, various proposed solutions, the importation of Italian opera, and the creation of the dramatic oratorio – English drama, all-sung but not staged. Most of the constituent essays take an in-depth look at a particular aspect of the process, while others draw attention to dramatic qualities in non-dramatic works that also were performed in the theatre. The journey from Purcell to Handel illustrates the vigour and vitality of English theatrical and musical traditions, and Handel's dramatic oratorios and other settings of English words answer questions posed before he was born.

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BRUCE WOOD is Emeritus Professor of Music at Bangor University, and Chairman of the Purcell Society. He is the author of the most recent biography of Purcell (*Purcell: An Extraordinary Life*, 2009) and editor or co-editor of more than a dozen volumes of music by Purcell and Blow in the Purcell Society Edition and in *Musica Britannica*, with other editions published by Oxford University Press, the Church Music Society and Novello.

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Edited by Colin Timms, Bruce Wood

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COLIN TIMMS is Emeritus Professor of Music at the University of Birmingham, where he held the Peyton and Barber chair from 1992 to 2012. He won a British Academy prize for his book on Agostino Steffani (2003), on whom he has published extensively. In addition to many works by Steffani and Stradella, he has edited *Theodora* for the Hallische Händel-Ausgabe and completed the first edition of Handel's *Comus* (for Novello).

He is honorary president of the Forum Agostino Steffani (Hanover) and a trustee of the Gerald Coke Handel Foundation (London). From 1987 to 2015 (with two short breaks) he was honorary secretary of the Handel Institute (London), of which he edits the biannual *Newsletter*.

BRUCE WOOD is Emeritus Professor of Music at Bangor University, and Chairman of the Purcell Society. He is the author of the most recent biography of Purcell (*Henry Purcell: An Extraordinary Life*, published by the Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music in 2009) and editor or co-editor of more than a dozen volumes of music by Purcell and Blow in the Purcell Society Edition and in *Musica Britannica*, with other editions published by Oxford University Press, the Church Music Society and Novello.

Preface

The age of Purcell and Handel is one of the brightest in the history of music in England. The 350th anniversary of the birth of Henry Purcell and the 250th of the death of George Frideric Handel were marked in 2009 by a number of events, including a conference on the responses of both composers to literary texts. The conference, entitled ‘Purcell, Handel and Literature’, was a joint venture of the Purcell Society and the Handel Institute, in collaboration with the Royal Musical Association, the Departments of Music and Literature at the Open University and the Institutes of Musical Research and of English Studies of the University of London, which hosted the event at Senate House. Most of the papers read at the conference were concerned with settings of secular texts, and most of the compositions discussed, whether dramatic or not, were intended for performance in a theatre. Hence the origin and orientation of this book.

The editors are particularly grateful to the Purcell Society and the Handel Institute for their commitment to the publication of this volume and to Dr Victoria Cooper, without whose encouragement, as Senior Commissioning Editor for the Humanities at Cambridge University Press, the project might never have got off the ground. They also thank both the authors who have allowed their work to be published and those conference speakers whose papers were excluded by the theme of the book. Last but not least, thanks are due to Ashgate Publishing and the British Library Board for permission to reproduce images, to Peter Jones for engraving the music examples, and to everyone at the Press who has assisted in the process of publication.

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