

Cantata for Soprano, Oboe and Continuo

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# Mi palpita il cor

George Frideric Handel



**GUILDHALL**  
SCHOOL

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*Performance Edition*

Full Score

(PFS)

**Editors**

Thomas Allery, Hannah Blumsohn, Ella Bodeker,  
Jens Franke, Lucy Neil, Jorge Silva

**Historical Performance Department**

Guildhall School of Music & Drama  
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## Introduction

George Frideric Handel was born in Halle, Germany, in 1685, and later naturalised as English in 1726. He was famed for his virtuosity and prolific output—works such as his *Messiah*, *Zadok the Priest* (performed at all British Coronations since that of George II), in addition to many others, have cemented his position as one of the finest and most eminent of the Baroque composers.<sup>1</sup> Following the success of his first London opera, *Rinaldo* (1710), Handel was invited to become the Master of the Orchestra at the newly-founded Royal Academy of Music in 1719, which ultimately led to him making London his permanent home. While it is true that the majority of Handel's most popularly enduring works were composed during his time in London, his earlier somewhat more Bohemian years travelling throughout Europe have provided us with many fine operas, cantatas and oratorios.

A close friend of Handel, the opera composer Johann Mattheson (1681–1764), wrote that the young composer travelled to Italy in 1706, and records show that Handel had saved 200 ducats for his venture.<sup>2</sup> Contrary to what was the norm for many composers at the time, during his time in Italy Handel did not work as a servant within musically-inclined aristocratic households, but lived instead as a house-guest of several eminent and well-connected patrons, from whom he received commissions. Although not much is known of Handel's travels in Italy prior to his arrival in Rome, an invitation to break his journey in Florence may have come directly from Ferdinando de' Medici, a highly respected patron and connoisseur of the Arts. Based in Florence, he bought works by Raphael, produced the first public exhibition of fine Arts in Florence (1705), and, as a result of his decision to hire the famed harpsichord maker Bartolomeo Cristofori in 1688, Ferdinando was instrumental in the invention and development of the fortepiano. Handel returned to Florence by invitation a year later to compose an opera (*Rodrigo*), a genre forbidden by Papal edict within Rome.<sup>3</sup> Julian Herbage states that

Handel's stay in Italy was undoubtedly the most formative period of his career. He enjoyed the hospitality of the most enlightened patrons that music has ever known, and lived in an atmosphere of cultured splendour that has rarely been surpassed [...] He had arrived in Italy as a German; he left accepted by the Italians as one who spoke their own musical language.<sup>4</sup>

There is no doubt that Handel was influenced profoundly by the composers Arcangelo Corelli (1653–1713) and Alessandro Scarlatti (1660–1725), both leading musicians in Rome at the time of his visit. Influences from Scarlatti's works, who was a renowned composer of vocal music, are seen as 'the medium by which Handel's vocal style reached its maturity'.<sup>5</sup> Ellen Harris states that the

basic assumptions underlying the Italian influence on Handel are fourfold: (1) the Italian style deeply and permanently affected Handel's musical style; (2) this is evident in Handel's music by the time he leaves Italy in 1710; (3) the

composers who most influenced Handel were Alessandro Scarlatti and Archangelo Corelli; and (4) the specific model for the changes in Handel's vocal music may be found in Scarlatti's cantatas.<sup>6</sup>

It was shortly after his time in Italy that Handel wrote the cantata *Mi palpita il cor*.<sup>7</sup> Doris Ornstein, a renowned harpsichordist who made a great contribution in the early stages of the Baroque music revival in the second half of the 20th century, wrote that

Handel's Italian cantatas, written when the composer was in his early twenties, have been praised for their masterful dramatic construction and extraordinary melodic beauty'.<sup>8</sup>

While his Italian cantatas have widely received praise and admiration for their form and beauty, they are rarely performed today. The most well-known, or rather, the most frequently recorded, is *Lucrezia* ('O Numi eterni'), a work considered to be amongst the greatest of the continuo cantatas. Of the seventy-two continuo cantatas accredited to Handel, this is the only one to have established itself into the 'mainstream' concert repertoire today. Ornstein believed this fame to be owed partially to the existence of a good performance edition.

Ornstein played a key role in bringing attention to the lesser-known works of early composers, and produced her own edition of *Mi palpita il cor*. However, she did not have access to all autograph scores and sources we have today, and her harpsichord realisation is written in an early revival style, prominent in the last century, which might be deemed old fashioned by many harpsichordists today. With this edition we attempt to build on Ornstein's legacy and provide a comprehensive edition, offering a range of parts, from a clean Urtext version aimed at the more experienced Baroque musician, to a performance edition, with a brand new realisation and dedicated study scores to aid the performers who are starting out their journey into the Baroque repertoire. The aim of this edition is to make this work accessible to all who would wish to play it, and hopefully see more performances of this work of extraordinary beauty and power.

Handel recomposed and remodelled *Mi palpita il cor* several times during the years 1710-1713. The work is known to exist in at least four versions in the *Händel Werke Verzeichnis*: HWV 132a scored for soprano and continuo, HWV 132b for soprano with oboe and continuo, HWV 132c for alto with flute and continuo, and finally HWV 132d, for alto with flute, oboe and continuo. Whilst up to six versions of the cantata and single arias are thought to exist,<sup>9</sup> they each show considerable variations, the origins of which are partially unknown. Handel was renowned for reusing and remodelling his own music, and so extracts of the score also appear in his oratorio *Samson*.<sup>10</sup> The origin of the libretto is not known. The cantata tells the story of a young man anguishing over whether or not his love, Cloris, will return his feelings.<sup>11</sup>

## Libretto Translation

RECIT:

Mi palpita il cor né intendo perché.

My heart throbs, and I don't know why.

ARIA:

Agitate è l'alma mia né so cos'è.

My soul is agitated, and I don't know what it is.

RECIT:

Tormento e gelosia, sdegno,  
affanno e dolore,  
da me che pretendete?  
Se mi volete amante, amante son.  
Ma, oh Dio, non m'uccidete,  
ch'il cor, fra tante pene,  
più soffrire non può le sue catene!

Torment and jealousy, disdain,  
pain and sorrow,  
what do you want from me?  
If you want me to be a lover, a lover I am.  
But, oh God, don't kill me,  
because my heart, amidst many pains,  
can suffer your chains no more!

ARIA:

Ho tanti affanni in petto,  
che qual sia il più tiranno  
io dir nol so.  
So ben che do ricetta  
a un aspro e crudo affanno  
e che morendo vò.

I have so many pains in my chest,  
which is tormenting me the worst  
I can't describe.  
I know well that I open myself up  
to a bitter and cruel pain  
that wants to kill me.

RECIT:

Clori de te mi lagno,  
e di te, oh Nume, figlio di Citerea,  
ch'il cor feristi  
per una che non sa che costa è amore.  
Ma se d'egual saetta  
a lei feristi il core  
più lagnarmi non voglio,  
e riverente innanti al simulacro tuo  
prostrato a terra,  
umil devoto, adorerò quel Dio che fè  
contento e pago il mio desio.

Chloris, I complain about you,  
and of you, oh God, son of Venus,  
that you pierced my heart  
for one that doesn't know what is love.  
But if, with the same arrow,  
you pierce her heart,  
I won't complain any more,  
and reverently in front of your image  
I will prostrate myself on the ground,  
humbled and devoted, to worship the God  
who fulfilled my desire.

ARIA:

S'un di m'adora la mia crudele,  
contento allora il cor sarà  
Che sia dolore, che sia tormento,  
questo mio seno più non saprà.

If one day the cruel one loves me back,  
my heart will be contented.  
What is pain, what is torment,  
this heart of mine will know no more.

## Sources

After his death in 1759, many of Handel's scores and autographs passed into the Royal Music Library, a collection of over 1000 manuscripts, started by George III and added to by subsequent generations of the British Royal Family. Included among these works are manuscripts for *Mi palpita il cor*. In 1957, 200 years after the donation of the Old Royal Library to the British Museum (which itself contained music connected to earlier monarchs), Queen Elizabeth II presented the Royal Music Library to the British Museum. The collection is now housed at the new British Library.<sup>12</sup>

In preparing this edition of the work, we consulted **R.M.20.e.4**, one of Handel's most complete autograph scores of *Mi palpita il cor*, now in the British Library. To gain a more complete view of the work, this score was compared with autographs from the Coke Collection housed at the Foundling Hospital (**MS 192**), and also three early editions made in the 19th century by Friedrich Chrysander.

## Editions and Parts

In order to make our edition as accessible as possible, we have provided a range of scores and parts, each of which may be used interchangeably with the others. In the continuo line, the figures contained within the Urtext edition are Handel's own, whilst the performance edition contains additional suggested figures. Our work includes:

1) an Urtext edition:

- Full score featuring oboe, soprano, and figured basso continuo part (UFS)
- Oboe part (UOb)
- Figured cello part with vocal lines included during recitatives (UVcl)

2) a performance edition:

- Full score, featuring an oboe line with editorial suggestions, soprano, and figured bass with keyboard realisation, for harpsichord, piano, or organ (PFS)
- English vocal study part, with oboe, figured bass, and word-for-word translation under the Italian text, and additional prose translation (PSopEng)
- French vocal study part, with oboe, figured bass, word-for-word translation under the Italian text, and introductory notes and translation in French (PSopFr)
- Oboe part with editorial suggestions (POb)
- Cello part, with original and editorial figures, and vocal lines in recitatives (PVcl)
- Theorbo part featuring realisation of the recitative accompaniment in French tablature (PThFr)
- Theorbo part featuring realisation of the recitative accompaniment in Italian tablature (PThIt)

## EDITORIAL NOTES

### General

In the middle aria, R.M.20.e.4 features a 6/8 time signature, but mostly uses 12/8 bars with a smaller divider bar line halfway through. Our version is in 6/8, but could be played in longer two bar phrases. Editorial slurs and ties have been added throughout the work using dotted lines, with suggested trills added in brackets. Editorial accidentals are placed above the note. Accidentals in brackets are cautionary.

### Libretto and Vocal Line

The starting point for any singer preparing an 18th-century work should always be the text. This provides the context for characterisation, it can offer the performer ideas for the colouring the voice and actioning their prose, and serve to illuminate the fluidity of vowel sounds and rhythms within the text (which, in Handel's case, often compliment the musical rhythms).

After developing an understanding of the context with the help of a poetic and a word-for-word translation, the focus shifts to the notation. The vocal line is based closely to the autograph R.M.20.e.4, with editorial choices restricted to a minimum, mainly in places where the text underlay was not altogether clear.

Included within our edition are two vocal study parts, for English- and French-speaking singers. They include a word-for-word translation written directly on the vocal line under the original Italian, helping with the learning of a text not in the singers' mother tongue.

### Oboe

In both oboe arias, presumed ties are included within the Urtext version, whilst any suggested slurs and trills can be found in the performance edition. Additional editorial slurs are based on Handel's slurring in similar passages. Where the source was unclear regarding the placement of slurs and articulations, a reasonable decision was taken based on contemporaneous sources.

In the middle aria, we have added ties in the end of bars 33-4, and in the middle of bars 43-4 to match the earlier melody.

Inconsistencies are seen in the manuscript in the falling semiquaver figure in bars 9, 35 and 54. Handel wrote no accidental for the E in bar 9, but an E flat in bar 35 and an E natural in bar 54. Bar 9 has been presumed to be an E natural.

In the final aria, the suggested paired semiquavers can make performance easier and sound cleaner in long, fast semiquaver passages. A tie is assumed going into bar 18, to match the previous bar.

In cadential trills (placed in brackets), it is suggested to tie the note before the trill over, turning it into the upper note of the trill.

Bar 45 has been assumed to contain an E natural, as it fits the harmony better than an E flat and may better follow the E natural from the previous bar. As Handel wrote a cautionary E flat in bar 46, this may be a reasonable assumption. At the end of bar 47, we have assumed a change back to C natural, and the end of bar 48 is assumed to revert to B flat. Bar 48 also features an added crotchet rest that is not in the manuscript, which we added in order to complete the bar.

Bar 50 (the final bar before the *da capo*) is poorly legible in the manuscript. Our solution, therefore, represents an educated guess.

## Keyboard Realisation

In preparing the bass-line for the Urtext edition, the figures, where available, were compiled from both R.M.20.e.4 and MS 192, the latter of which is more extensively figured, but contains only the first recitative and aria of the current version. Regarding the third movement, none of the sources consulted contain figures. The figures included in the performance edition are editorial suggestions which is hoped will be useful for performers wishing to realise their own accompaniment from the bass line alone.

In the first movement, the tie between bars 2-3 is found in MS 192 and R.M.20.e.4. These have been retained to indicate that sense of continuing line, but players may wish to re-strike them, depending on the text, word stress, and context.

The realisation provided in the performance edition is an example of one possible way of realising the bass part, and the harmony suggested by the figures where they are provided in the sources and can be played on any keyboard instrument:

harpsichord, piano or organ. Where there are no figures in the sources—for example in the third aria—the harmony suggested in the realisation is implied by the bass progressions and the harmony created by the upper parts. The realisation is intended for players who do not feel confident in realising an accompaniment directly from the figured bass, or performers that would like some ideas on possible ways to accompany from the bass line. In the final movement the realisation demonstrates a variety of ways to treat the accompaniment of the quaver rest in the bass. There are examples of playing this in parallel tenths, playing on the rest, and accompanying with a single note in the right hand. Again, accompanists should feel confident in using a variety of ways to accompany this gesture according to the decisions made in a given performance, taking into consideration the stresses of the text.

As far as arpeggiation and spreading of chords is concerned, in recitatives, harmony is notated in full-length notes matching the length of bass notes. Players may wish to re-strike chords or arpeggiate according to the strong syllables in the text. Players should be aware of the text and its meaning and use arpeggiation to support singers to convey the natural strong syllables in the text.

## Theorbo Realisation

The two theorbo parts contain sample theorbo realisations of all the recitatives, notated in French and Italian tablature respectively. Whenever possible, chord voicings have been chosen that are effective and idiomatic on the instrument.

No realisation of the arias is included, on the grounds that the theorbo player is most likely to realise these in a *tasto solo* fashion, with the occasional striking of chords (such as at final cadences).

In the Italian tablature, fretted notes on string 7 (restricted to a G# at fret 1) are represented by a short, ‘floating’ line above the conventional tablature.

F# tuning for string 8 is required.

When a melodic instrument is employed to play throughout the recitatives, theorbo-players may wish to avoid transposing the bass line down an octave (e.g. Recit I, bar 7, last eighth note: F# to bar 8, beats 1-2: a).



## Editorial Team

This edition of Handel's *Mi palpita il cor* has been prepared by members of the Guildhall School of Music & Drama's Historical Performance Department (2019/20). Under the tutelage and guidance of Nicholas Parle and Dionysios Kyropoulos, the following students and Junior Fellows have worked closely together to create this edition: Thomas Allery (harpsichord); Hannah Blumsohn (oboe); Ella Bodeker (soprano); Jens Franke (theorbo); Lucy Neil (cello); and Jorge Silva (harpsichord).

## Acknowledgements

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.london.handel.festival.com>

<sup>2</sup> [https://www.hyperion-records.co.uk/dc.asp?dc=D\\_SIGCD423](https://www.hyperion-records.co.uk/dc.asp?dc=D_SIGCD423)

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Julian Herbage, 'The Oratorios' in *Handel: A Symposium*, ed. Gerald Abraham (1954), p. 74.

<sup>5</sup> Ellen T. Harris, 'The Italian in Handel', *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, Vol. 33, No. 3 (1980), p. 469.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid, p. 470. An in-depth study into the influences of Scarlatti in Handel's writings can be found in this work.

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.chandos.net/chanimages/Booklets/AV2197.pdf>

<sup>8</sup> Doris Ornstein, 'On Preparing a Performing Edition of Handel's Cantata: Mi Palpita il Cor', *Bach*, Volume 29, No. 1 (1998), p. 9.

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.girolamo.de/single/g11009E.html>

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.allmusic.com/composition/mi-palpita-il-cor-cantata-hwv-132>

<sup>11</sup> Edward Blakeman, *The Faber Pocket Guide to Handel* (2009), p. 226.

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.bl.uk/collection-guides/royal-music-library>



# Mi palpita il cor

George Frideric Handel

Adagio [recit.]

Soprano

Harpisichord

Mi pal - - - pi-ta il cor nè in-ten -

do per - chè nè in-ten - do per - chè

Allegro [aria]

Soprano

Harpisichord

a - gi - ta - ta è l'al - ma mi - a a - gi -



4

ta

7 7 7 7 7 6 6 6

7

ta è l'al-ma mi - a è l'al-ma mi - a a-gi - ta

6 6 7 6 6 7 7 6 6 6 6

11

6 # 6 5 #

14

ta è - l'a-l-ma mi - a nè

6 # 6 6 6 # 6

17

so cos' è no nè so cos' è nè so no nè so cos' è

5 6 # [6] 5 6 #

Recit.

Soprano

Tor-men-to e ge-lo - si - a sde-gno af - fan-no e do-lo-re da

Harpisichord

4/2

4

me che pre-ten-de-te? Se mi vo-le-te a - man-te a-man-te io sono ma oh Di-o

# 4/3

8

non m'uc-ci-de-te ch'il cor fra tan-te pe-ne più sof - fri-re non può le sue ca-te-ne.

b b # #

[Aria]

Oboe

Soprano

Harpsichord

6

10

[tr]

Ho tan-ti af-fan - ni in pet - to che qual sia il più ti -

15

ran - no che qual sia il più ti - ran -

19

- no dir io dir nol so io

23

dir io dir nol so ho

27

Musical score for measures 27-30. The system consists of three staves: a vocal line (treble clef), a piano accompaniment (treble and bass clefs), and lyrics. The key signature has two flats (B-flat and E-flat). The lyrics are: tan - ti af fan - ni in pet - to che qual

31

Musical score for measures 31-34. The system consists of three staves: a vocal line (treble clef), a piano accompaniment (treble and bass clefs), and lyrics. The key signature has two flats (B-flat and E-flat). The lyrics are: sia il più ti - ran - no il più ti - ran -

35

Musical score for measures 35-38. The system consists of three staves: a vocal line (treble clef), a piano accompaniment (treble and bass clefs), and lyrics. The key signature has two flats (B-flat and E-flat). A fermata is placed over the first measure of the vocal line. The lyrics are: - - - no io dir io dir nol - so no



39

nol so nol so che qual sia il più ti - ran -

43

no io

47

dir io dir - nol so.

51

Musical score for measures 51-54. The system includes a vocal line with a melodic line and a piano accompaniment with chords and a bass line.

55

Musical score for measures 55-59. The system includes a vocal line with lyrics and a piano accompaniment.

So ben chedo ri - cet-to so ben chedo ri -

60

Musical score for measures 60-64. The system includes a vocal line with lyrics and a piano accompaniment.

cet - to a un a - spro e cru - do af - fan - no e che mo - ren-do io vò mo-ren -

65

do io vò mo-ren

69

do e che mo-ren - do io vò.

Da Capo

[Recit.]

Soprano

Clo-ri di te mi la-gno e di té o nu-me, fi-gliodi Ci-te -

Harpsichord

4

re-a, ch'ilcor fe - ri-sti per u-na che non sa che cosa è a-mo-re ma se d'e-gualsa -

8

et - ta a lei fe - ri-sti il co - re più la-gnar - mi non vo-glio e ri - ve - ren - te in -

4  
2

11

nan-ti al si-mu-la-cro tu-o pro-stra-to a ter-ra u - mil de - vo-to a-do-re-rò quel

15

Di - o che fè con - ten - to e pa - go il mio de - si - o.

4  
2

7

#

Allegro [Aria]

Oboe

Soprano

Harpsichord

6  
4  
2

6

6  
5

5

7  
4

4

[*tr*]

6  
4

7

6

6  
5

7

S'un di m'ad-or - a

6

6

6  
5

10

la mia cru - del - e con - ten - to al - lo - ra il cor sar - à

7 6 4/3

13

al - lor con - ten - to

6 6b 4/2 6

16

con - ten - to al - lo rail cor sa - rà al - lor con - ten -

6 6 7b 6/5

19

to il cor sa-rà

4 4# 6 6 4 6 4# 6 5

22

s'un di m'a-do - ra

6 6 6 4 6

25

la mia cru- de - le con-ten-to al-lo - rail cor sa - rà il cor sa -

7 6 6 9 8 6 6 5

28

rà con-ten - - - to con-ten-to al -  
 6 6/5 5 6

31

lo - ra il cor sa - rà s'un di m'a - do - ra la mia cru -  
 4/2 6 6/4 5/3 6 3b 4/9 3b/8 4/9 3b/8

34

de - le con-ten - to al - lor il cor sa - rà  
 6/4 5/3 6 7 6 6/4 5/3



37

[tr]

6  
5

6

6

6  
4

6 6

40

che sia do-lo - re che sia tor-men - to que-sto mio se - no più

6 6 5

4 4

6 6

4 2

6 6

6 b

43

non sa-pra que - sto mio se - no più non sa-pra

6 5 6 b

4 3 5

9 6

6 6b

5 5

3b

46

che sia do - lo - re      che sia tor - men - to      que - sto mio se - no

6      #      6  
5

49

Da Capo

più non sa - pra      que - sto mio se - no più non sa

7      6      7      #      6  
5      6      4      #      ♯



