

Music reviews

Georg Friedrich Händel
**Seven Arias a3 for transverse flute,
viola da gamba and continuo**
Ed. Günter and Leonora Von Zadow
Realisation and figures: Dankwart Von Zadow

In eighteenth century London it seems that it was a common practice to publish arias from the latest opera in a simplified version so that the public could play them. This set was published anonymously after 1736 (the year of the latest opera included) in The Hague, for Flauto Piccolo, or 'sixth flute' (descant in D), viola da gamba and bc. In this beautiful edition Günter and Leonora have replaced the 6th flute with a transverse flute. The viola da gamba takes the vocal line, an octave lower in five of the seven arias. We first played these arias on bass viol with a flute as specified, harpsichord and a continuo viol. We enjoyed them very much, though the keyboard player felt the pieces were not Handel's best work. The general consensus was that the vocal line, being often so low on bass viol, was not very audible in that line up. 'O scema mi diletto' from Radamisto (aria 5) is unexpectedly unusual, the 'voice' being in unison with the flute, without basso continuo for seven bars – a very angular phrase. However we subsequently saw *Agrippina* from The Met, in which a rather similar aria occurs at a dramatic moment!

On playing some a second time with different personnel I played the vocal line on treble viol (no flute available this time, so an oboe obliged). This seemed to balance better, though this harpsichordist did find the realisation rather dense, not leaving him room to use his imagination. I found these arias enjoyable to practice; they stretched me enough without being depressing! They are tuneful and rewarding to an amateur who normally plays the consort repertoire or continuo on bass viol. We will try them next with a descant recorder taking the flute part, perhaps without a keyboard. A very nice addition to the trio sonata repertoire.

Jenny Tribe