

Institution: University of Chester
Unit of Assessment: 29: English Language and Literature
Title of case study: Handel's Literary Texts
<p>1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words)</p> <p>Dr Derek Alsop's research over eighteen years has become increasingly influential in shaping the public understanding of Handel and his work. Rather than taking the musicologists' view of the operas and oratorios, he has developed an innovative analysis of Handel's texts and sources from a literary-critical perspective. In addition to research publications, his work has been disseminated to a wider, public, audience in a series of commissioned articles for the <i>Literary Encyclopedia Online</i>, in his online 'Derek Alsop's Handel Archive' and in high-level contributions to the BBC, alongside other eminent Handel scholars. His sustained and original impact upon Radio 3's output on Handel has so far included three interviews and seven commissioned (scripted) programmes.</p>
<p>2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words)</p> <p>Derek Alsop has been researching Handel's texts and sources for eighteen years, and for the entire period of his tenure at the University of Chester (from 2001 to the present). Currently a Senior Lecturer and Category A researcher, Dr Alsop was Head of English from 2004-2010.</p> <p>There is a common theme to his research. Understandably, the field of Handel studies is dominated by musicologists, but this means there has been a limited understanding of the literary context that inspires and influences the creation of libretti. The typical critique of Handel's plots, for instance, shows little understanding of the literary conventions that inform eighteenth-century narrative. Early in his research, Alsop realised that whereas others tended to dismiss Handel's narratives as chaotic – influenced by macaronic and pasticcio practices – Handel's librettists had in fact adopted a more coherent approach to their plots than had been acknowledged. He was able to identify hitherto unknown literary sources and allusions, discovering a completely clear pattern of textual composition. Handel's writers were using methods of allusion and imitation common in the literature of the period.</p> <p>Alsop's programmes for Radio 3 have all been underpinned by research, particularly into Handel's operas and oratorios. Programmes have included: 'Handel's <i>Ezio</i> and the Second Period of the Royal Academy' (1995); 'Handel's <i>Semele</i>: an English Opera?' (1996); 'Handel's <i>Alessandro Severo</i> and Eighteenth-Century pasticcio opera' (1997); "'How Dark are Thy Decrees": The Sources of Handel's <i>Jephtha</i>' (1997); 'Handel, <i>Radamisto</i>, and the Royal Academy' (2000); 'Celebrity, Scandal and Opera Genius: Handel's <i>Rodelinda</i> and the Royal Academy' (2006).</p> <p>Comments from producers on completed programmes show why his work has been valued. In 1999 a Senior BBC Producer wrote to Alsop: 'This is to say a big thank you for all your work [...] I greatly enjoyed working with you and was extremely pleased with the way the programmes turned out. It's only now, with the benefit of your literary insight that I fully appreciate the quality of the musical interpretations [...]. I'll certainly be thinking of possibilities based on your areas of expertise when considering ideas I might put forward.' In 2000 a Senior Music Producer also praised Alsop's work: 'I was really pleased with this talk. You brought your excellent script vividly to life and the spoken inserts worked really well'.</p> <p>Alsop's most significant research publication in the field so far (listed in section 3) has been an article on the literary sources of Handel's oratorios, in 2004, for the leading international music journal, OUP's <i>Musical Quarterly</i>. Since joining Chester, he has developed the ideas that originated in his "'Strains of New Beauty": Handel and the Pleasures of Italian Opera, 1711-1728' (in <i>Pleasure in the Eighteenth Century</i>, ed. Roy Porter and Marie Mulvey Roberts (Macmillan, 1996)). This early work, written for those unfamiliar with Handel's operas, was the beginning of his commitment to disseminating his research beyond the academic community, initially through his</p>

Impact case study (REF3b)

work for the BBC. At Chester he has opened his work to non-academic communities both online and on radio. In 2011, he was asked by the editors of the *Literary Encyclopedia Online* to contribute an article on 'George Frideric Handel' (from a literary perspective) and then further commissioned to provide articles on the operas *Rinaldo*, *Giulio Cesare*, *Rodelinda*, *Tamerlano* and *Ariodante* (all published 2011/12). His blog, 'Derek Alsop's Handel Archive', makes all his work on Handel available to the public, including chapters, articles, online entries, notes, annotated discographies, and work in progress.

3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)

1. 'Artful Anthology: The Use of Literary Sources for Handel's *Jephtha*', in *The Musical Quarterly*, Summer 2002 Volume 86, Number 2 (OUP, 2004) pp.349-62. This article was peer reviewed.
2. 'Celebrity, Scandal and Opera Genius: Handel's *Rodelinda* and the Royal Academy' – a scripted interlude for BBC Radio 3, produced by Freya Mitchell, BBC Radio 3, 6/5/06. This broadcast was commissioned by the BBC.
3. 'Handel and Literature' [publicised as one of five episodes in the series 'The Great and Good Mr Handel'] – a scripted talk for BBC Radio 3, produced by Clive Portbury, broadcast 16/4/09 and 17/12/09. This broadcast was commissioned by the BBC.

4. Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words)

Derek Alsop has become a British media authority on Handel's work. BBC Radio 3 has over 2,000,000 listeners per week. The channel states that its service remit:

'is to offer a mix of music and cultural programming in order to engage and entertain its audience. Around its core proposition of classical music, its speech-based programming should inform and educate the audience about music and culture [...]. The service should appeal to listeners of any age seeking to expand their cultural horizons through engagement with the world of music and the arts.'

As a commercial organisation, and under increasing pressure to deliver value for money, the BBC has continued to commission Alsop to research and deliver programmes on literature and music, over thirty in all, including the work on Handel (see Section 2). The programme on 'Handel and Literature' (item 3 in section 3 above) was part of a prestigious series to commemorate the 250th anniversary of Handel's death. The other four contributors were world leaders in Handel studies: Jonathan Keates, distinguished writer, winner of the James Tait Black Memorial Prize and the Hawthornden Prize, and acclaimed biographer of Handel; Professor Donald Burrows (of the Open University), director of the Handel Documents project, and winner of the Handel Music Prize; Professor Ellen T. Harris, MIT Professor of Music, winner of the Otto Kindeldey Award from the American Musicological Society and the Louis Gottschalk Prize from the Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies; and Dr Suzanne Aspden, Faculty of Music, University of Oxford. The series was successful enough to merit a complete re-run in the same year of production.

'Derek Alsop's Handel Archive', made possible by the financial support of the University of Chester, enables the online community to have access to all of his work on Handel, published and unpublished. Since it was established in January 2013, the archive attracted 3,207 pageviews, and a worldwide audience (732 views in the USA; 303 views in Germany; 173 in Latvia; 160 in Poland; 134 in Russia; 97 in France; 76 in the Ukraine; 64 in Canada; 58 in Spain). The archive has started to attract comments: Francisco Hernández Diaz writes: 'I just came across your Blog Archive [...] I'm so happy I found it! Congratulations for your brilliant blog' (8th May, 2013).

The work for the *Literary Encyclopedia Online* was first commissioned in June, 2011, the editors writing to Alsop as someone able to bring a literary perspective to entries on Handel ('We are keen to include a profile of Handel in *The Literary Encyclopedia* and thought you would be an excellent person to approach', email received 7/6/11). The success of the first article on 'George Frideric

Impact case study (REF3b)

Handel' led to a further commission of five articles on selected Handel operas (see Section 5), with a further invitation to submit articles on other oratorios and operas, including *Radamisto*, *Flavio*, *Ottone*, *Messiah*, *Jephtha*, *Solomon* and *Saul*. This resource, available to public subscribers, will allow the author to publish commentaries on at least twenty important works by Handel.

5. Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of 10 references)

'Derek Alsop's Handel Archive', held by the English Department, contains letters and emails from BBC producers and editors (which corroborate the quotations in Sections 2 and 4); details of all publications, broadcasts, and published work (in print and online); print outs from the blog (statistics and user feedback cited in Section 4); and details of work in progress. The 'Handel's Literary Texts' blog contains a range of material to corroborate the statements made in Sections 2 and 4 and can be accessed at: drderekalsophandel.blogspot.co.uk