

## BMC 37 - 38 - HANDEL: *The Six* CHANDOS ANTHEMS

The rise and fall of JAMES BRYDGES, first Duke of Chandos, provides as worthy a subject as any for a film or television drama. Within the space of ten years, from say 1710 to 1720, he rose to fame and riches, only to descend into relative obscurity following the loss of his wealth which was equally as dramatic as the gaining of it. Along the way he created one of Baroque London's most palatial mansions, and was responsible for bequeathing to posterity the inestimable gift of Handel's Chandos Anthems.

Born in 1673 the son of a Herefordshire squire, in 1696 he married his cousin, Mary Lake (c.1666-1712), who brought to the marriage the Manor known as Cannons at Little Stanmore, Edgware, outside the nearby city of London, as part of her dowry. Two years after his marriage to Mary Lake, Brydges became Member of Parliament for Hereford. He rose by force of personality, administrative ability and the favor of the Duke of Marlborough to become Paymaster of the Forces Abroad during the War of the Spanish Succession. The Paymaster was able to speculate with the monies he received, and by the time he left the post in 1713 Brydges had accumulated a fortune estimated at £600,000, a sum having in the year 1713 the same purchasing power as £58 million, or \$95 million today.

His first wife, Mary died in 1712, and in 1713 Brydges married his 43 year-old First Cousin, Cassandra Willoughby (1670-1735). Kneller's family portrait, which is signed and dated 1713, shows Brydges with his second wife, Cassandra. At about this time he began the enlargement of Cannons and restyled it from a Jacobean mansion to one in Georgian Baroque style. In 1714 the couple and Brydges' two sons (the only surviving children from nine born to him and Mary) moved into the first completed part of their enlarged and now palatial home. In October 1714 Brydges inherited the Earldom of Caernarvon, which had recently been bestowed on his ailing Father.

In 1717 Brydges was created first Duke of Chandos 'for no apparent reason', and in the same year on August 4<sup>th</sup>, he secured the services of Handel who joined the Chapelmaster, Dr. Pepusch, as composer-in-residence. The Duke maintained an excellent musical establishment of up to thirty first-class players among whom were named Francesco Scarlatti, brother of Alessandro, and Johann Christoph Bach, cousin of J.S. Bach.

The Church of St. Lawrence on the Cannons Estate had been almost entirely rebuilt in 1715 by Brydges. Only the tower of the original medieval church remained. A lavish patron of the arts, Brydges employed the fashionable artists of his day not only to decorate his great mansion of Cannons but also the church, and those same artists - Antonio Bellucci, Louis Laguerre, Francesco Sletter - were to create the dramatic church interior. Walls and ceiling were covered with paintings of biblical scenes, some brilliantly colored, others in sepia and grisaille. "Trompe - l'oeil" was used to considerable effect. The splendid woodwork included an organ case carved by Grinling Gibbons, and Handel would certainly have played on this organ.

The Chandos Anthems would have been performed in this church, and it seems likely that the Duke, excited by the progression of the interior frescoes, would have called upon Handel to provide suitable music for the first church performance, for Handel began work almost immediately on the Chandos Anthems (HWV 245-56). Less than two months later, on September 25<sup>th</sup> Brydges wrote to Dr Arbuthnot, Court Physician and well known patron of the arts: "*Mr. Handle has made me two new Anthems, very noble ones & Most think they far exceed the two first. He is at work for 2 more and some Overtures to be plaid before the lesson*".

The first two to which James Brydges refers are *O Sing unto the Lord a new song* (Anthem 4, HWV 249b) and *As Pants the hart* (Anthem 6, HWV 251b). The second pair consisted of *Let God arise* (Anthem 11, HWV 256a) and *My Song shall be alway* (Anthem 7, HWV 252). The next pair (about which "he is at work") were probably *Have mercy upon me* (Anthem 3, HWV 248) and *O be joyful in the Lord* (Anthem 1, HWV 246). It is likely *In the Lord put I my trust* (Anthem 2, HWV 247) and *I will magnify thee* (Anthem 5, HWV 250c) were completed before that winter. Of the eleven in total, the remaining Anthems were probably written during 1718.

In certain respects the life-style of "Princely Chandos" was, as contemporaries recognized, as grand as that of a German Electoral Prince. In 1720 however, the year in which the rebuilding of the Cannons Palace was completed, the almost miraculous rise in the fortunes of Chandos (as Brydges was styled from April 1717) crashed abruptly in what became known as the "South Sea Bubble" financial disaster.

When the South Sea Company had been set up in 1711, it was granted a monopoly on trade

with all Spanish territories, South America and the West Coast of North America. In 1720, the Government encouraged investors to trade Government stocks for South Sea Company shares and as these boomed, more and more people speculated in them, forcing the share price higher.

In much the same way as many Internet stocks today, the price was “talked up” based on nebulous, largely unfounded future prospects, and the price of nominal £100 shares rose to almost £1,000. In July 1720, with company shares at a vastly inflated, unrealistic and unsustainable level, confidence collapsed, and with it the share price. Investors lost considerable amounts and some even committed suicide. Chandos himself suffered major losses, signaling the end of his princely lifestyle. Needless to say, Handel left to seek his fortune elsewhere.

Chandos himself survived, though in greatly reduced circumstances. His wife Cassandra died in 1735, and a year later he married a 43 year-old widow (Lydia, Lady Davall) who revived the family fortunes by bringing with her a dowry estimated at around £40,000. Chandos died in 1744, and his third wife Lydia died in 1750.

The glories of Cannons barely survived its creator's death in 1744. The Palace was demolished in 1747 after the second Duke had sold off the great house and its effects in order to pay the accumulated family debts. The materials were auctioned for architectural salvage: the original colonnade now stands in front of the National Gallery in Trafalgar Square, London, and the gates at Trinity College, Oxford. The estate itself and the materials remaining on site were bought by William Hallett, a prosperous cabinet-maker turned gentleman, who built a country house (the 'old house' of what is now North London Collegiate School) on a relatively modest scale in 1760. The Cannons church of St Lawrence however remains today, its frescoes fully restored. And we are at least left with the musical legacy of Handel at Cannons for our present enjoyment.

The Anthems themselves are founded on the choice of biblical texts. Handel is known to have been very familiar with the Bible, and to have resented implications that texts should be provided for him by others. The texts are all based on Psalms, and while always preserving the spirit of the text, Handel will often combine two verses with a little judicious editing. Having selected the texts, the music is then composed to match their mood, much indeed as Bach did in his Cantatas, resulting in a wide variety of musical mood and texture.

The Anthems have an unusual scoring in common: three-part chorus supported by a three-part orchestra. Though records appear to show that the instrumentalists would have outnumbered the singers, as always with Handel it is the vocal parts which dominate. Noteworthy is the use of the oboe as a uniting thread of timbre, known to be one of Handel's favorite instruments.

### ANTHEM I - Psalm 100 (V: 1,2,3,4,5, Dox.)

**Sinfonia:** *Adagio - Allegro*

**Chorus:** (*Tenor, Choir*) O be joyful in the Lord, all ye lands. Serve the Lord with gladness, and come before His presence with a song.

**Soprano & Bass Duet:** Be ye sure that the Lord He is God; it is He that hath made us, and not we ourselves; we are His people, and the sheep of His pasture.

**Chorus:** O go your way into His gates with thanksgiving, And into His courts with praise: be thankful unto Him and speak good of His name.

**Soprano, Tenor & Bass Trio:** For the Lord is gracious, his mercy is everlasting, His truth endureth from generation to generation.

**Chorus:** Glory be to the Father, Glory be to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost. As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be World without end. Amen.

### ANTHEM II - Psalm 11

**Sonata:** [*Adagio*] - *Allegro ma non presto*

**Chorus** (*Soprano, Tenor, Choir*): In the Lord put I my trust! How say you then to my soul she shall flee as a bird unto the hill?

**Tenor Aria:** God is a constant sure defense against oppressing rage, as troubles rise, His needful aids in our behalf engage.

**Chorus:** Behold! the wicked bend their bow and ready fix their dart, lurking in ambush to destroy the man of upright heart.

**Tenor Aria:** But God, who hears the suffering poor, and their oppression knows, will soon arise and give them rest in spite of all their foes.

**Chorus:** Snares, fire and brimstone on their heads shall in one tempest shower; this dreadful mixture his revenge into their cup shall pour.

**Tenor Aria:** The righteous Lord will righteous deeds with signal favour grace, and to the upright man disclose the brightness of his face.

**Chorus** (*Soprano, Tenor, Choir*): Then shall my song, with praise inspired, to Thee, my God, ascend, who to Thy servants in distress such bounty didst extend.

**ANTHEM III - Psalm 51: (3-6, 10, 12-15)**

**Sinfonia:** *Andante - Allegro*

**Chorus:** Have mercy upon me, O God, after Thy great goodness; do away mine offences according to the multitude of thy mercies.

**Soprano & Tenor Duet:** Wash me thoroughly

**Chorus:** Thou shalt make me hear of joy and gladness, that the bones which thou hast broken may rejoice.

**Soprano Aria:** Make me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away spirit from Cast me not away from Thy presence, and take not thy Holy Spirit from me. O give me the comfort of thy help again, and establish me with thy free spirit.

**Chorus:** Then shall I teach thy ways unto the wicked, and sinners shall be converted unto thee.

**ANTHEM IV - Psalm 96: (1,3,4,9,11, Ps 93:4)**

**Sinfonia:** *Grave - Allegro*

**Chorus (Soprano, Tenor, Choir):** O sing unto the Lord a new song! O sing unto the Lord, all the whole Earth.

**Chorus:** Declare His honor unto the heathen, and his wonders unto all the people.

For the Lord is great and cannot worthily be praised. He is more to be fear'd than all Gods.

**Tenor Aria:** The waves of the sea rage horribly, but yet the Lord who dwells on high is mightier.

**Soprano & Tenor Duet:** O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness.

**Chorus (Soprano, Tenor, Choir):** Let the whole Earth stand in awe of him.

**Chorus:** Let the Heavens rejoice and let the Earth be glad, let the sea make a noise and all that therein is.

**ANTHEM V - Psalm 145: V (1,2,4,17,19,20-1)**

**Sinfonia:** *Andante - Allegro*

**Chorus (Tenor, Choir):** I will magnify Thee, O God my King, and I will praise Thy name for ever and ever.

**Tenor Aria:** Every day will I give thanks unto Thee and praise Thy name for ever and ever.

**Chorus:** One generation shall praise Thy works unto another and declare Thy power.

**Soprano Aria:** The Lord is righteous in all His ways and holy in all His works. He will fulfill the desire of them that fear Him.

**Tenor Aria:** The Lord preserveth all them that love Him, but scattereth abroad all the ungodly.

**Chorus (Tenor, Choir):** My mouth shall speak the praise of the Lord: and let all flesh give thanks unto His holy name for ever and ever, Amen.

**ANTHEM VI - Psalm 42 (Vs 2,4,5,6)**

**Sonata:** *Andante - Allegro*

**Chorus (Soprano, Tenor, Bass, Choir):** As pants the hart for cooling streams, so longs my soul for thee, O God.

**Soprano Aria:**

Tears are my daily food, while thus they say: where is now thy God?

**Tenor Recitative:**

Now, when I think thereupon, I pour out my heart by myself, for I went with the multitude and brought them out into the house of God

**Chorus:** ... in the voice of praise and thanksgiving among such as keep holy day.

**Soprano & Tenor Duet:**

Why so full of grief, O my soul?

Why so disquieted within me?

**Chorus (Tenor, Choir):**

Put thy trust in God, for I will praise him.

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