

Foreword

When Handel wrote his famous 1736 concerto for harp, two flutes, string ensemble and continuo, the result was a charming concerto of modest proportions. In fact, it was used as incidental music for the ode *Alexander's Feast*, later revised by Handel for other performances in 1739, 1742 and 1751. By modern standards, we would hardly consider his opus to be a virtuoso vehicle for the concert harp. Handel's notation appears rather "sparse" on the page compared with later transcriptions of the work.

The original Handel harp part resembled nothing like the rather grandiose transcriptions done by harp masters Carlos Salzedo and Marcel Grandjany. The triple-strung harps of Handel's day had a much smaller bass range than the modern concert harp and were more lightly strung, enabling the performer to "dance lightly" on the strings. With all respect to the genius of Messrs. Salzedo and Grandjany, certain aspects of their interpretations were heavily influenced by the greater range, string tension and technical capabilities of the late romantic double-action pedal harp. This instrument had not been invented by Handel's time.

In this transcription of Handel's famous harp concerto, I have attempted to capture the "spirit" of the original version. However, the chords have been filled out slightly, some tasteful ornamentation, passing tones, octave adjustments and harpistic flourishes have been added here and there. I have tried to maintain some of the customary inner voicing that has become traditional in the performance of this work. First and second ending indications have been added in order to facilitate page turns in some repeated sections.

It is not my intent to produce any sort of "historically accurate" document that rigidly adheres to the rules of Baroque counterpoint, even though numerous historical sources were consulted in the development of this transcription. Rather, I am providing a more "reasonable" solo version of this wonderful concerto that can be played on a harp similar in size to what was available in the late Baroque era. It is my hope that students, teachers, and Baroque lovers will enjoy this version.

Please note: Full-sized lever harps typically range from 36 to 40 strings. Wherever any bass note exceeds the "low C" of the 36-string lever harp, I have indicated that note in parenthesis. However, harps that possess the additional bass strings should play these notes at all times. This transcription can also be played on a 34-string lever harp (low C) with only minor alterations in a few upper notes.

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Albany, New York
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Explanation of Ornamentation in This Edition

Some optional ornamentation has been included in this transcription of the Handel Harp Concerto in order to enhance the performance. Below is a brief explanation of the intended execution of each ornament.

The lower mordent: play the note indicated, play the adjacent note below, and then return to the original note in this manner:



The upper mordent: play the note indicated, play the adjacent note above, and then return to the original note in this manner:



The trill: begin with the adjacent note above the indicated note and wiggle back and forth rapidly between the two notes in this manner:



The turn: begin one note above the indicated note, play the original note, play one note below and then return to the original note in this manner:



The long turn: play the first long note, then execute the turn as described previously, beginning one note above the original note.



Detached notes: pluck the notes separately and distinctly without placing them.



Performance Notes

The harper will note that some sections of each movement are marked *tutti* and others *solo*. Each *tutti* section refers to places where the orchestra would be playing with the harp should this arrangement be used in actual orchestral performance. In a solo rendition of the concerto, these *tutti* indications can be ignored.

A modest cadenza that is within the technical capabilities of most high intermediate-level harpers has been included in this transcription. However, the harper may substitute any cadenza of his or her choosing, as desired. Since a true Baroque cadenza is a display of individual style, improvisatory skill and technical prowess, there is no such thing as a “definitive version” of the harp cadenza.

Small ornaments such as upper mordents, lower mordents, trills, and turns have been indicated throughout. These are optional and may be omitted by the performer. The harper should also feel free to add other tasteful ornaments.

It was the custom during the Baroque period for the performer to “dress up” the *da capo* section of the main theme with interesting ornamentation or flourishes; not to do so was considered dreadfully boring as well as stylistically inappropriate.

Page turns have been planned at “reasonably manageable” places in the music. However, the performer should feel free to photocopy any page as desired in order to tape a “fold out” page onto this book, if needed, to eliminate the page turns completely.

Suggested fingerings, dynamics and tempo markings have been included as a matter of convenience. However, the performer should always use whatever fingerings, dynamics and tempo best facilitate performance, no matter what this book says.

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Concerto in B-Flat Major Opus 4 Number 6

Arr. D. Rees-Rohrbacher

(First Movement - Lever Harp Version)

G. F. Handel 1685-1759

Andante allegro ♩ = 72

Tutti 4 *f*
Fix E \flat 5

Solo 4 *mf* *f*
b.d.l.t. b.d.l.t. 1 ord.

p *f* *p* *mf* *p*

mf

p *mf* E \flat 4

18

3 4

mf

21

E \flat 3

p

3 4 3 2 1 2 2 3 4

24

Tutti

p

4 2 1 2 1 2 3 4 4 1 4 3 2 1 2 3 1

27

mf

E \flat 4

E \flat 3

F#4

31

F#2

E \flat 5

E \flat 3

p

mf

+ + + +