

Sektion III

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Handel, Hagen, and Werktreue: in search of a historically-informed approach to musical alterations in a Handel revival

Oskar Hagen's revivals in the 1920s of *Rodelinda*, *Ottone*, *Giulio Cesare* and *Serse* in Göttingen (and to a lesser extent Hans Joachim Moser's 1922 *Orlandos Liebeswahn* in Halle) are viewed today as – at best – historical curiosities indicative of the prevailing Expressionist aesthetics of their time and – at worst – cautionary tales for today's directors of Handel operas, "frightful manglings" (Paul Henry Lang) of Handel's original musical and dramatic intentions. Not only recitatives and da capos but also entire arias and scenes were transposed, cut or entirely eliminated, and musical material from his other operas inserted. Of course, Handel himself used all of these same techniques when reviving his own works, for any number of practical and aesthetic reasons, making the application of *Werktreue* to his music particularly problematic, and indeed the presentation of versions as Handel performed them in their premieres is only a default position for scholars preparing editions of his works. Given that modern performers are often faced with a similar mix of the practical and aesthetic when reviving Handel's works, a middle way between the Scylla of Hagen and the Charybdis of slavish first-night adherence is almost always necessary. This paper will re-examine Hagen and Moser's patterns of revision in their 1920s revivals in the context of Handel's own practice, and will propose a preliminary set of practical guidelines for directors and conductors who desire to be historically-informed when making similar decisions in tailoring performing editions of Handel's operas for the 21st century.