

VOL. 19/20

2 CD Set

# THE MASTERWORKS

George Frideric Handel

## Imeneo



BRILLIANT  
CLASSICS

CD 2

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <p><b>1. Act 2, scene 2-3</b> <b>9'10</b><br/>                 Recitativo Rosmene:<br/>                 La mia mente or confusa vorria<br/>                 Aria Rosmene: Semplicetta, la saetta<br/>                 Recitativo Clomiri: Tirinto,<br/>                 era poc'anzi<br/>                 Aria Imeneo: Sorge nell'alma mia</p>     | <p><b>5. Act 3, scene 3-6</b> <b>9'41</b><br/>                 Recitativo Clomiri:<br/>                 Sarei lieta ancor io se Rosmene<br/>                 Aria Clomiri: Se ricordar ten vuoi<br/>                 Aria Imeneo: D'amor nei primi istanti<br/>                 Recitativo Imeneo: Perdonami, Clomiri,<br/>                 d'altro amore<br/>                 Arioso Imeneo: Se la mia pace a me<br/>                 Recitativo Tirinto: Sentimi, er pieta!<br/>                 Arioso Tirinto: Se la mia pace...<br/>                 Recitativo Rosmene: E questo il di per<br/>                 definir la lite?<br/>                 Duetto Tirinto, Imeneo:<br/>                 Se la mia pace...<br/>                 Recitativo Rosmene: La vita?</p> |
| <p><b>2. Act 2, scene 4-5</b> <b>8'36</b><br/>                 Recitativo Clomiri:<br/>                 Imeneo, lieto in viso tutto<br/>                 Aria Clomiri: E si vaga del tuo bene<br/>                 Recitativo Imeneo:<br/>                 Sembra un fanciullo, Amore<br/>                 Aria Imeneo: Chi scherza colle rose</p> | <p><b>6. Recitativo accompagnato:</b> <b>11'05</b><br/>                 Miratela! Che arriva cinta di<br/>                 Recitativo Imeneo: Misera!<br/>                 Arioso Rosmene:<br/>                 Al voler del tua fortuna<br/>                 Recitativo Rosmene: Parlai da stolta<br/>                 Duetto Rosmene, Tirinto:<br/>                 Per le porte del tormento<br/>                 Choir: Se consulta il suo dover</p>   |
| <p><b>3. Act 2, scene 6</b> <b>8'18</b><br/>                 Recitativo Argenio: Udisti gia<br/>                 Trio Imeneo, Rosmene, Tirinto: Consolami,<br/>                 mio bene<br/>                 Choir: E troppa bel trofeo</p>   | <p><b>4. Act 3, scene 1-2</b> <b>7'47</b><br/>                 Recitativo Tirinto, Imeneo:<br/>                 Alfin decidi!<br/>                 Aria Rosmene: In mezzo a voi dui<br/>                 Recitativo Imeneo:<br/>                 Se tua sara Rosmene<br/>                 Aria Tirinto: Pieno il core di timore</p>  |
| <p><b>Total time:</b> <b>54'51</b></p>   |  |

THE  
 MASTERWORKS

George Frideric Handel

Imeneo



# THE MASTERWORKS

George Frideric Handel

## Imeneo

### THE LIBRETTO

The Imeneo libretto is based on Stampiglia's Italian text for an earlier setting of the same subject (in Venice 1726) by Porpora. Handel himself adapted the text in 1738 to suit his new three-act pastorella. The plot is elementary: a love triangle. The heroine Rosmene has been rescued from pirate abductors by the young Athenian general, Imeneo. She is loved by him but is reluctant to return his affections because she is already betrothed to Tirinto. Rosmene is torn between love and duty. Co-incidentally, her younger sister Clomiri secretly pines for Imeneo. He only has eyes for Rosmene, who cannot make up her mind. The girls' father Argenio counsels Rosmene to renounce the one suitor for the other out of gratitude. The soprano struggles for three acts, finally making her decision only after feigning madness. She finally opts for Imeneo, assuring Tirinto that everyone will ultimately find happiness. The chorus endorses her dutiful choice.



# THE MASTERWORKS

### NOTES ON THE MUSIC.... Rudolf Palmer

Imeneo is a mature work, Handel's penultimate opera, composed in his mid-fifties. Its London failure certainly does not indicate the worth of Handel's score (in any event, Imeneo was wildly successful the next season in Dublin.)

Handel authorities have had praise for the music. Paul Henry Lang: "Imeneo contains delightful music. The harmonic scene is bold, its tunes charming, and the writing is always fastidiously elegant."

Winton Dean admired "its individual flavour which almost entitles Imeneo to rank as a minor masterpiece." Andrew Porter writes in the New Yorker: "that 'almost' seems needlessly cautious."

Imeneo is scored for two oboes, strings and continuo. Given this simple instrumentation, Handel was remarkably inventive. Two of Imeneo's signature airs involve all instruments in unison with the voice, a haunting effect (although one used elsewhere in Handelian operas). The composer also employs two, three and four-part string writing in solo arias, duets, a remarkable trio, and three "Greek" choruses (literally - the opera takes place in Athens, and figuratively - the Chorus takes no part in the action, but rather comments on it from the side.)



The recitatives in Handel's score present a real tangle of possibilities. A few are outright fragments – they stop in mid-phrase. Others do not lead harmonically into the air they appear to precede. In some instances Handel allows a choice between a lengthy recitative and an abbreviated option and, in still others, one must select between entirely different recitatives – different texts, different music entirely!

The five solo characters, as depicted by Handel, are fascinating. Although at first glance a roster of three sopranos and two basses seems limited, the vocal assignments are wonderfully contrasting. For his hero, Imeneo, Handel creates delicious possibilities. Lewis suggests the title role be sung by a “tenor/baritone” (a species unknown to Georg Frideric Handel). The present recording employs a lyric bass as Imeneo, using Handel's own later suggestions for occasional transpositions. Apart from the obvious distinction of portraying the title character – a rare honor for a bass in 18th century opera – the character himself is a complex yet likeable young man. Imeneo's airs display him alternately in pensive, amorous, self-mocking, and even swashbuckling scenes. His dilemma is engaging and interesting: he is everyone's favourite but the soprano's (and she, naturally, is the sole object of his affection). As the opera



proceeds, the situation ultimately devolves on Rosmene's own quandary – the choice between love and obligation. But as Imeneo anxiously awaits her decision for three acts, his da capo airs display a wide range of his feelings about love. The two distinguished, “Di cieca notte” (Act I, Scene 2) and “Sorge nell'alma mia,” (Act II, Scene 3) pleased Handel enough so that they resurfaced the following season in *Messiah*. The former, with its forboding unison strings in 6/8 meter reappears recognizably as the 4/4 bass air “The People that Walked in Darkness.” The latter, which Burney singled out as “of great spirit in a style quite new,” was lifted intact for Dublin as the florid “Why do the Nations So Furiously Rage.”

Most of Tirinto's major airs lie in the first act, suggesting early on that to him will go the heroine's hand. She is, after all, his betrothed. But once Imeneo appears, setting up Rosmene's conflict, it is the bass' solo music which dominates the stage, suggesting that matters will go his, not Tirinto's, way in the end. Rosmene's soprano airs highlight the final act. It is she who in the end must make the important decision. It is in this third act that Handel offers two most unusual, and highly effective, devices: a small 28-measure arioso “Se la mia pace” (Act III, Scene 4) which is Imeneo's final appeal to Rosmene. It is



repeated verbatim by Tirinto (however Handel marks this repeat “allegro”.) The tune returns a third time as a breathless duet in which the two suitors are pitted against each other. Rosmene’s response is a most remarkable movement: an extended accompanied recitative, her great Decision Scene.

Feigning madness, the soprano invokes the Gods help to help her at last decide between her two young men: “Miratela!” (Act III, Final Scene). Says Winton Dean: “The Mad scene in act III is a brilliant parody of this old operative device and at the same time a revelation of the real emotional disturbance in Rosmene’s heart. The accompanied recitative in particular, with its wild modulations and snatches of haunting melody, has an almost Hamlet-like ambiguity.”



## CD 1

<b>1. Overture</b>	<b>5'15</b>	<b>5. Act 1, scenes 5-6</b>	<b>11'50</b>
		Recitativo Clomiri:	
		Se non era il tuo braccio	
<b>2. Act 1, scene 1</b>	<b>12'03</b>	Aria Clomiri: v'e un infelice	
Arioso Tirinto: La mia bella		Recitativo Imeneo:	
Recitativo Argenio: Tirinto!		Paventar non degg'io che non	
Recitativo Tirinto:		Aria Imeneo: Esser mia dovra	
Dal di ch'io la perdei		Choir: Vien Imeneo fra voi...	
Aria Tirinto: Se potessero			
<b>3. Act 1, scene 2</b>	<b>10'30</b>	<b>6. Act 2, scene 1</b>	<b>8'52</b>
Recitativo Argenio:		Arioso Rosmene: Deh, m'aiutate,	
Cerere onnipotente		o Dei!	
Choir: Vien Imeneo fra voi		Recitativo Argenio:	
Recitativo Tirinto: Valoroso Imeneo!		Vogliono i tuoi maggiori	
Aria Imeneo: Di cieca notte allor		Aria Argenio:	
		Su l'arena di barbara scene	
<b>4. Act 1, scene 3-4</b>	<b>9'03</b>	<b>Total time:</b>	<b>57'48</b>
Recitativo Imeneo: Rosmene,			
alfin dovresti			
Aria Rosmene: Ingrata mai no fui			
Aria Tirinto: Mi chiederesti meno			



# THE MASTERWORKS

VOL. 19/20

2 CD Set

George Frideric Handel

## Imeneo

**Opera in 3 acts (1740)**

*Imeneo:* **John Ostendorf,**  
bass-baritone

*Rosmene:* **Julianne Baird,** soprano

*Tirinto:* **D'Anna Fortunato,** mezzo-soprano

*Clomiri:* **Beverly Hoch,** soprano

*Argenio:* **Jan Opalach,** bass

**BREWER CHAMBER ORCHESTRA & CHORUS,**  
**Rudolph Palmer**

STEMRA DDD

Recording: 1986

Licensed from Vox Classics, USA

BRILLIANT  
CLASSICS



99777-19/20

VOL. 19/20 HANDEL Imeneo

VOL. 19/20 HANDEL Imeneo

99777-19/20