



The American Viola Society

Viola Repertoire Guide
George Frideric Handel (1685–1759)/Henri Casadesus (1879–1947)
Concerto in B Minor for Viola and Orchestra

Date of Composition: c. 1924

Date of First Performance: American Premiere: December 10, 1926, Samuel Lifschey (viola), Philadelphia Orchestra, Leopold Stokowski (conductor), Philadelphia, PA, USA

Duration: 16 minutes

ASTACAP Level: 7

Dedication: None

Genre: Baroque-style (Twentieth Century)

Instrumentation: Solo viola, 2 flutes, 2 bassoons, strings

Publisher:

- Viola and Piano:
- Eschig, 1311, 1924
 - Polskie Wydawnictwo Muzyczne, PWM 6700, 1969 (Stefan Kamasa edition)
 - Summy-Birchard/Alfred Publishing, Suzuki Viola School, Volume 7, ISBN 978-0874874938, 2000 (William and Doris Preucil edition)
- Orchestral Version:
- Eschig, ME 1643, 1925



Select Recordings:

- William Preucil (viola) and Doris Preucil (piano): Suzuki Viola School, Volume 7, Summy-Birchard/Alfred Publishing 978-0874875485, 2002
- Pinchas Zukerman (viola), English Chamber Orchestra, Pinchas Zukerman (conductor): Columbia Masterworks M 33979, 1976
- Rudolf Barshai (viola), Moscow Chamber Orchestra, Rudolf Barshai (conductor): Melodiya D5460/D5461, recorded 1958
- William Primrose (viola), unidentified chamber orchestra, Walter Goehr (conductor): Columbia 68975D–S68977D, 1937

Details: The publication in 1924 of a recently “discovered” viola concerto by Handel aroused immediate interest but also immediate suspicion as to the work’s origins. Samuel Lifschey’s queries to the British Museum and Library of Congress in 1926 failed to uncover the manuscript sources. Lifschey turned to Henri Casadesus, receiving the reply in a letter dated October 12, 1926, that the work “was written for the viola. I was the one who realized the bass and did the orchestration. It is based on the 12 Grand Concertos. . . . The most important information I can give you is to say that the Concerto is an entirely original composition for the viola.” Despite Casadesus’s assertions, further doubt was cast in the liner notes for William Primrose’s premiere recording: “[Casadesus] gives no information as to where and how he discovered the original. . . . Casadesus’ reconstruction is probably a very free one but he has retained the Handelian feeling very convincingly, and it might well be taken for an original work.” The dubious authenticity did not deter prominent violists from taking up the work, including Emanuel Vardi, Paul Doktor, Rudolf Barshai, and William Primrose, who recorded the work twice and frequently performed it. Additional research has not yet uncovered any material in the concerto that can be attributed to Handel, and the work is considered to have been entirely composed by Casadesus.

Edition Notes: There are published cadenzas for the third movement by Paul Doktor (Anglo-American Music Publishers, 1984) and H. Hanesyan (Eschig, M.E. 7322, 1962). Alan Shulman also prepared a cadenza for the third movement (William Lincer Collection at the Juilliard School), and rumors persist as to the existence of cadenzas by Emanuel Vardi.