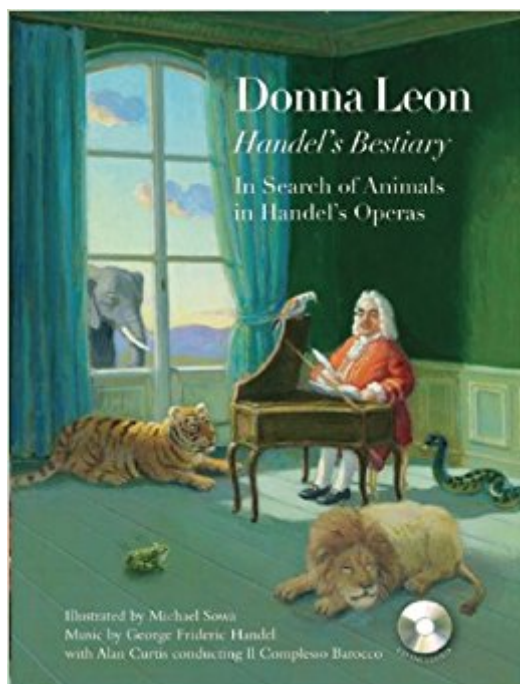


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# Handel's Bestiary: In Search Of Animals In Handel's Operas



## Synopsis

When acclaimed novelist Donna Leon is not conjuring up tales of crime and corruption in Venice, or reveling in delicious cuisine, she is listening to music. For Leon, patron of conductor Alan Curtis and his celebrated orchestra Il Complesso Barocco, that usually means the work of her favorite composer, George Frideric Handel. Over the years, Leon has noticed that the great musician filled his operas with arias that make reference to animals; rich in symbolism, the perceived virtues and vices of the lion, bee, nightingale, snake, elephant, and tiger, among others, resonate in his works. In *Handel's Bestiary*, Leon draws on her love of Handel and her expertise in medieval bestiaries; illustrated collections of animal stories; to assemble a bestiary of her own. Twelve chapters trace twelve animals through history, mythology, and the arias. Each is joined by whimsical original illustrations by German painter Michael Sowa, and an accompanying CD includes each aria, expertly recorded by Il Complesso Barocco. A fascinating, utterly original book, *Handel's Bestiary* springs to life with Leon's knowledge, passion, and wit.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

International Praise for *Handel's Bestiary*; A wonderful book. A compendium colorfully illustrated by Michael Sowa, to be enjoyed not only by musical connoisseurs. *Der Spiegel* (Germany); What Leon tells us is a real joy, and many of the details are unfamiliar. If as you read you listen to the music by Il Complesso Barocco that accompanies it, you are in for a sensual treat - and one which will also broaden your horizons. *Stern*

(Germany)&#147;The book, wittily illustrated by Michael Sowa, is accompanied by a CD of arias recorded by Il Complesso Barocco. A real tour de force!&#151;News (Austria)&#147;As an expert on medieval bestiaries &#150; moral lessons and fables about animals - she cleverly describes how Handel portrays specific characteristics of these animals in his music. Naturally a CD with all twelve animal arias is included &#150; musical fun, with enchanting pictures by the German painter and illustrator Michael Sowa.&#151;Hamburger Abendblatt (Germany)&#147;A charming little compendium. As clever as it is entertaining. Leon doesn't turn to modern biologists to make the case for her menagerie. Rather she reminds us what Pliny and Herodotus knew about lions, that in the Middle Ages people thought bees were a small kind of bird, and describes - without being in the least patronizing - the bewilderment with which 18th century Europe saw its first elephant trunks.&#151;Westdeutsche Allgemeine Zeitung (Germany)&#147;A great reading and listening pleasure.&#151;Ruhr Nachrichten (Germany)&#147;A &#145;total work of art&#151; with text, music, and beautiful illustrations by Michael Sowa &#133; Donna Leon manages to combine three things in her book: 1. her profound knowledge of ancient nature writing (such as Pliny the Elder) and medieval bestiaries (e.g. Isidore of Seville), 2. Her passion for George Frideric Handel, and 3. her years of friendship with the conductor and Handel expert Alan Curtis. &#133; Most whimsical and linguistically at the highest level. Rating: Great.&#151;KulturRadio (Germany)&#147;The lovely tones, amusingly entertaining words and impish drawings yield a wonderful mixture.&#151;Sandameer (Austria)&#147;Charming &hellip; [Handel's Bestiary] would make a thoughtful and unusual gift.&#151;Joanne Sydney Lessner, Opera News

I bought this little book because I like Michael Sowa's paintings. There are not a lot of options for seeing them. So, even though the images are small, I am happy with the book.

Good CD with songs well recorded. Book well written.

I found interesting and useful information. I am a biologist and classical singer, and this situation made this book very interesting for me. However, it would be better to have more details about voice types, plots, historical facts, etc.

You will want to listen to Handel's music again and again and the search of animals was really brilliant. Donna Leon has been one of my favourite writers since Death at la Fenice. "It's always

better, in this world, to be a little suspicious"

She combines a fabulously executed book with wonderful music to accompany..truly a collector's item !!!! so happy to have found this on .. :)

compilation of excerpts from Handel's operas about animals. As a big fan of the illustrator, I found the book to be informative and delightful.

Cleverly done

Gave it as a gift and it was enjoyed by the entire family.

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