No pictures in this issue, unfortunately, but three substantive articles that answer questions, whet the appetite or make one think. Readers who heard Katie Hawks’s pre-performance talk at the recent London Handel Festival production of Riccardo Primo can now enjoy a slightly revised version in print. It is preceded by two articles on collections. Lowell Lindgren provides an introduction to the Baillie collection of (mostly) eighteenth-century music manuscripts at the University of Edinburgh, which includes a cantata by Handel and numerous pieces by his Italian contemporaries. This brief article gives us a foretaste of the thorough catalogue on which he collaborated for several years with the late Anthony Hicks. But first, Graydon Beeks draws attention to the fact that the catalogues of the music and musical instruments that belonged to James Brydges, First Duke of Chandos, have been misrepresented or misunderstood in the secondary literature. By re-examining the manuscript in which they are preserved, he straightens the record on one of Handel’s most important English patrons. Finally, we publish a call for papers for the next conference of the American Handel Society and further information on the forthcoming Handel Institute conference, ‘Handel at Court’.

Colin Timms

NOTES ON THE CANNONS MUSIC CATALOGUES

The catalogues of the music library and musical instruments belonging to James Brydges (1674-1744), from October 1714 Earl of Carnarvon and from April 1719 First Duke of Chandos, provide important information about his musical establishment and Handel’s involvement with it. The portions of these catalogues that relate to Handel are well known, but confusion has arisen over the catalogues’ history and over the exact contents of the manuscript in which they survive. This essay is an attempt to clear up the confusion.

The two catalogues are preserved in MS ST 66 of the Huntington Library at San Marino, California. Incomplete transcriptions are included in the standard biography of Brydges, by Baker and Baker, under the titles (1) ‘Pepusch’s Catalogue of Musical Instruments belonging to His Grace, the Duke of Chandos, 1720’ and (2) ‘A Shortened and Modernized Catalogue of Music belonging to His Grace, James, Duke of Chandos, from the Original in the Handwriting of Mr. Noland, Subscribed by Dr. Pepusch in 1720’. Deutsch reproduced the first catalogue and extracts from the second, adding his own annotations, and his material was taken over into vol. 4 of the Händel-Handbuch, the comments being translated into German. It seems almost certain that Deutsch never saw the original document but relied on Baker and Baker. Unfortunately, he misinterpreted them on several points, while they in turn omitted two late additions in MS ST 66 that clarify the history of the manuscript and the development of the Cannons music collection.

Brydges seems to have begun developing his musical establishment in November 1715, a year after inheriting the title Earl of Carnarvon from his father, when he asked his wife to enquire about the availability of the composer and cellist Nicola Francesco Haym. Haym, who had previously been employed by the deceased Duke of Bedford, was soon joined by some other musicians, among them the German composer, violinist, keyboard player and theorist Johann Christoph Pepusch (1667-1752). Pepusch is first documented at Cannons, Brydges’ country estate at Little Stanmore in what is now

1. The author acknowledges the assistance and generosity of the Library staff, in particular Mary Robertson, the William A. Moffett Curator of British History.
5. The original document is transcribed complete in G. Becks, The Chandos Anthems and Te Deum of George Frideric Handel (1685-1759), PhD diss. (Univ. of California, Berkeley, 1981), 95-122.
Middlesex, in December 1717, but he may have been involved with the ‘Cannons Concert’ earlier. Handel is first reported at Cannons on 4 August 1717, and both he and Pepusch were there on 27 April 1718.7

Handel and Pepusch appear to have been treated as guests, neither receiving a regular salary nor being always in residence. This was in contrast to Haym and an increasing number of musicians, who were formally employed. Handel seems to have severed any regular ties with Brydges by February 1719, when he travelled to the Continent to recruit singers for the new Royal Academy of Music. Pepusch, however, remained, and his situation seems to have changed along with that of his patron. In April, after a long campaign, Brydges was finally granted the title First Duke of Chandos, and this change of status apparently led him to reorganize his growing household. Pepusch is first referred to as Director of the Cannons Concert on 21 May,8 began drawing a salary of £25 per quarter at Midsummer 1719, and also received a room on the first floor of the North Stables and a seat for meals at the Chaplain’s Table.9

One of Pepusch’s initial tasks seems to have been to inventory the duke’s collections of music and musical instruments. He apparently wrote out a catalogue of both in his own hand, beginning with the instruments at Cannons — first the keyboard instruments, from largest to smallest, then the strings (also from largest to smallest). He then listed the instruments at the duke’s London house in Albemarle Street; these consisted of a bass viol and three harpsichords, the last of which was gut-strung and seems to have been what in Germany was called a Lautenwerk.10 Pepusch noted that ‘This Instrum Stands at Boswell Court at My House’.11 Having thus organized and written out his catalogue, presumably in ink, Pepusch appended entries for additional instruments as they were acquired or discovered. Thus he added items 16 and 17, a bass viol and a bassoon, presumably located at Cannons.

Some time before 23 August 1720 Pepusch had a copy of the catalogue made by a Mr Noland, who gave it the title ‘A Catalogue of Instruments Belonging to His Grace James Duke of Chandos’. After Noland had finished his copy, Pepusch presumably dictated a few addenda. After item 11 Noland added, in smaller letters: ‘There are besides these violins before mentioned 2 more at London’.

Before items 16 and 17, again in smaller letters, he added the words: ‘These two following instruments have been found at Cannons since I made my first Catalogue’. Items 18 and 19, respectively two French Horns and a Trumpet, were also entered in Noland’s smaller hand. He then wrote: ‘All these Instruments I have under my care Aug. the 23. 1720’, and Pepusch signed his name ‘J. C. Pepusch’. Presumably Pepusch retained his original catalogue while Noland’s copy was kept at Cannons.

A similar process can be traced in the catalogue of the music collection. Pepusch — or perhaps an earlier librarian — began by organizing the music into categories, beginning with sacred music followed by secular cantatas, opera songs and instrumental concertos. At some point, probably around items 95-102, music began to be entered in order of acquisition. When item 127 (‘A Concerto for the Hautboi Compos’d by J. C. Pepusch’) had been reached, this catalogue was copied out by Mr Noland with the title ‘A Catalogue of Anthems, Cantatas and Other Musick belonging to His Grace James Duke of Chandos &c’. This time, Pepusch himself wrote out the subscription: ‘All these Pieces of Musick I have in my care Augst the 23 1720 J. C. Pepusch’. Again, Noland’s copy presumably remained at Cannons while Pepusch retained his original. Noland’s copies of the two catalogues form the bulk of Huntington Library MS ST 66.

August 1720 marked the high point of Brydges’ financial fortunes, symbolically culminating on 29 August in the dedication of the chapel in the main house at Cannons. Having reached its peak at the end of June, the South Sea Company’s stock declined drastically during August and September, and in the latter month, also, the Sword Blade Company collapsed. Brydges had invested heavily in both. By October he reported that he had lost ‘near £700,000 of what I was six weeks ago master of’.12 He was not ruined by these stock collapses, but after September his fortunes went into steady decline. Over the next ten years he engaged in numerous speculations designed to recoup his losses, but he always lost more. Although he remained a wealthy man, he could no longer afford expenditure on the same scale as before, and he gradually retrenched.

The effect on the Cannons Concert was devastating, with most of the lay-offs coming in 1721. The ‘List of His Grace the Duke of Chandos’s Family At New Years Day 1720/21’13 included twenty-four musicians; twelve months

8 Letter from the Duke of Chandos to a Mr Culliford, who had recommended a kinsman for a place at Cannons: ‘... If the Gent. you mention is a good Musician, I don’t know but if he is willing to be one of my Concert (who consist for ye most part of Masters, & those who are not so perform as well) I shall have Room for him in a little Time: and in this case let him speak to Dr Pepusch, who is ye Director of it & will give Me an Acc. of his Performance’. US-SM, ST 57, vol. 16, p.163.
10 The instruments were not listed in the inventory of the Albemarle Street house dated 7 December 1721 when it was offered for lease to the Duchess of Hamilton: see US-SM, New Acquisition No. 1872. Brydges had purchased Ormond House in St James’s Square some time after 12 June 1719 and was in residence by August 1720: see Baker and Baker, op. cit., 214. The instruments may have been moved either to what was now called Chandos House or to Cannons.
11 Deutsch thought this annotation had been added by the duke and that it referred to a house in Boswell Court that Brydges had acquired through his first marriage to Mary Lake, who died in 1712. However, Brydges does not seem to have been using that house as a residence and was preparing to sell it in August 1720 (US-SM, ST 57, vol. 17, pp. 159-60). It seems much more likely that Pepusch was borrowing the instrument and that in the course of writing out the catalogue he simply used the first person when referring to his own house in Boswell Court.
12 Baker and Baker, op. cit., 211.
later only eight remained, and all except Pepusch were servants who doubled as musicians. In January 1721 an Audit Board, consisting of the Duke and Duchess of Chandos and the chaplain, Dr Baxter, began meeting regularly in an attempt to bring down expenses. On 22 September the Audit Board refused to honour the total of Pepusch’s claims for writing music and mending instruments: the bill was reduced from £49 4s. 2d. to £23 18s. 0d.15

This probably marked the beginning of the end of Pepusch’s activity at Cannons, although he does not seem to have resumed regular work in the London theatres until the 1723/24 season.16 He was still listed among the duke’s family in the role of Master of the Music at New Year 1721/22, and a letter from him to Dr Baxter is dated ‘Cannons, Janvier le 3. 1721/22’.17 An ode by Pepusch is reported to have been performed at Cannons after the marriage of the duke’s eldest son John, Marquis of Carnarvon, to Catherine Tollemache, youngest daughter of the Earl of Dysart, at her father’s house in London during the evening of 1 September 1724, but the remaining references to the composer in the Cannons accounts are rather scattered, indicating only sporadic attendance.18 Exactly when he ceased providing even occasional services for the duke is unknown.

Dr Baxter wrote out a ‘Copy of Dr Pepusch’s subscription for his Catalogue of his Grace’s Instruments & Musick Books’ that reads: ‘Octob. 2. 1721 Delivered this Catalogue to his Grace and charge myself with the Custody thereof J C Pepusch’. Baxter wrote this on a loose sheet of paper now included with Noland’s copies of the catalogues in MS ST 66 but not reproduced in Baker and Baker, Deutsch or the Händel-Handbuech. On the same piece of paper, and probably at the same time, Baxter wrote:

Aug. 18. 1729 Then deliver’d to Dr Pepusch a Catalogue subscribe’d by him as above for him to look over his Music in Town and find whether he has any of the Pieces contain’d in it amongst his Books & Papers in order to his returning them. I set my name or the first Letters of it upon every Page of the Catalogue I then deliver’d to the Doctor. G Baxter.

This copy of the catalogue, presumably Pepusch’s original, has disappeared. Why Baxter waited until 1729 to make his query and whether he really suspected that Pepusch had purloined music or instruments is unclear. The few identifiable survivors from the Cannons music library, most of which surfaced only in 1981 at a sale of books and manuscripts from Stoneleigh Abbey in Warwickshire, appear to be presentation copies rather than performing scores or parts that might have held more interest for Pepusch as a practising musician. On the other hand, the good Doctor was already known as a collector and antiquarian.

Pepusch apparently kept his original catalogues up to date until he delivered them to the duke in October 1721, for on another piece of paper, also now part of MS ST 66, Dr Baxter wrote his ‘Observations upon comparing Two Catalogues of his Grace’s Musical Instruments One wrote by Mr Noland and subscrib’d by Dr Pepusch in 1720. Aug 23. The other wrote by the Dr himself and deliver’d to his Grace October: 23: 1721’ and ‘Upon the Two Catalogues of Music of the Date above written’. So far as the instruments are concerned, Baxter queried only the location of one of the two violins ‘made at London’. Regarding the music, Baxter wondered whether the Duke of Chandos owned two sets of Corelli’s opp. 1-4 and whether Pepusch had written seven trumpet concertos rather than five. He also listed five works found only in Pepusch’s catalogue and apparently added to the collection after 23 August 1720. These include Pepusch’s setting of the Magnificat, which was probably written for the dedication of the Cannons chapel near the end of the month, and Handel’s Suites de Pieces pour le Clavecin ... Premier Volume, which was published in November.

On 9 March 1732 the duke wrote a final letter to Dr Baxter, who had recently married and left Cannons for a new position in Bedfordshire. Having acknowledged Baxter’s return of the keys to several locked boxes containing papers and accounts, he went on to say:

I did not know you had given him [i.e., the duke’s secretary, James Farquharson] the Catalogue of Musick books and Instruments with Dr Pepusch is to deliver up, but now ye keys of ye Musick press are come, I’ll [sic] have those books that are in it examined by ye Catalogue, & he shall send to Dr Pepusch to make good such as are not there ...

The duke was presumably referring to Mr Noland’s copy of the catalogue. There is no further reference to the music library or musical instruments (except the organ by Abraham Jordan in the chapel) in the surviving Cannons documents, and it is not known what, if anything, Pepusch returned.

Graydon Beeks

16 Pepusch’s afterpiece The Union of the Three Sister Arts was first performed at Lincoln’s Inn Fields theatre on 22 November 1723 and several times repeated. According to the theatre accounts, as of 25 September 1724 he was earning a daily salary of 13s 4d; see ‘Pepusch, Johann Christoph’, in P. H. Highfill, K. A. Burnim and E. A. Langhans (eds), A Biographical Dictionary of Authors … in London, 1660-1800 (Carbondale, IL, 1984).
17 London, British Library, Egerton MS 2159, no. 41.
18 Whitelhall Evening Post, 3-5 September 1724.
19 On 29 July 1725 he was paid £23 16s for ‘his attendance on Sundays and all demands’ and another £26 4s ‘per advance’, and on 13 January 1726 he was paid £34 12s for his ‘attendance, singers &c and all demands, due Xmas last’: US-SM, ST 82, p. 173.
CANTATAS AND ARIAS IN
THE COLLECTION OF GRISELDA BAILLIE (1692-1759)

Nineteen musical manuscripts from the collection of the Baillie family, who resided at Mellerstain House in Berwickshire, were sold in 1948 to the University of Edinburgh. There they remained on open shelves in the Reid Music Library until the 1980s, when the librarian moved them into the Rare Book room. In the summer of 2003, when the Reid Library was closed for ever, they were transferred to the Special Collections Division of the Main University Library. Sixteen of the manuscripts were bought for Griselda Baillie (1692-1759) by her mother, Lady Grissell Baillie, between 1715 and 1735; the remaining three were collected in Rome in 1823-24 by Georgina Markham, who on 16 September 1824 married George Baillie of Mellerstain (from 1858 tenth Earl of Haddington). Georgina’s three manuscripts include twenty-nine arias and duets, fifteen of them by Rossini, and vocal embellishments in her own hand.

No scholar or performer outside the University of Edinburgh was aware of the Baillie collection until the Fifth Biennial International Conference on Baroque Music, held at Durham in 1992. In one session, the late Anthony Hicks mentioned that the librettist Paolo Antonio Rolli had forged several links with the Baillie family and Lowell Lindgren discussed the satirical ‘welcome’ that Rolli and other Italians had received in London between 1709 and 1759. When Noel O’Regan heard that Hicks had worked at Mellerstain, he revealed that the Baillie music manuscripts had been in the Reid Music Library for forty-four years and that they contained a considerable amount of music by Bononcini. Since, for Lindgren, any new source of Bononcini is like manna from heaven, he soon ordered microfilms of three of the Baillie manuscripts.

O’Regan organised the Sixth Baroque Conference in Edinburgh in 1994. While they were there, Hicks and Lindgren began to compile an annotated catalogue of the Baillie manuscripts. Within a year they had made a precise list of the contents of each volume, which they deposited in the Reid Library. At the Seventh Baroque Conference in 1996 Hicks spoke about ‘New Sources for Italian Music in Britain’; his two-page handout listed the thirty-six composers and the numbers of arias and cantatas in each of Griselda Baillie’s volumes. A relatively complete version of the annotated catalogue was finished in 1998. Two years later Helen Goodwill completed a dissertation for the University of Edinburgh, entitled The Musical Involvement of the Landed Classes in Eastern Scotland, 1685-1720; her documents and insights significantly increased our understanding of the cultural role of the Baillie family.

By 2000 only three components of our catalogue were unfinished. The first was the identification of watermarks, which has now been completed. The second was the identity of copyists, most of whom have now been matched with scribes known from other sources. The third was the collation of the manuscripts – the gathering structure – some of which remains to be determined. The introduction to the catalogue is likewise unfinished, but it will be concerned primarily with Griselda Baillie.

Both of her grandfathers were staunch Presbyterians who in 1683 had participated in the Rye House plot to kill King Charles and his brother James. In 1684 one of them, Robert Baillie, was caught, accused of high treason, then hanged, drawn and quartered. The other family members had fled to Holland before 1685, when Bach and Handel were born and the Roman Catholic James II became king of England. The sisters of James II, Mary and Anne, were next in line of succession and Mary’s husband, William III of Orange, governor of Holland, invaded England in November 1688; one of his horsemen, George Baillie, was the first Griselda’s father. A month later James II fled to France. King William restored Scottish estates to Presbyterians, including Mellerstain House to George Baillie and Redbraes Castle to his wife, Grisell Hume.

It is fortunate that Griselda recorded her family’s income and expenses in a household book, because they include valuable details concerning music in the life of her daughters, Griselda and Rachel. At Mellerstain, Griselda played the ‘spinit & virginals’, including ‘througb bass’, from the age of eight to seventeen, studied singing from nine to seventeen, and began learning the violin at the age of fourteen. She married three years later, but after only four years, because her husband was mentally unstable, they were separated by formal decree. That was in 1714, the year in which the Hanoverian George I succeeded to the throne of Great Britain and the Baillies moved to London. Between the ages of twenty-three and twenty-four Griselda took singing lessons with the alto castrato Antonio Maria Bernacchi, who composed three extant cantatas for her. From the ages of twenty-six to twenty-nine she studied voice and harpsichord with Pietro Antonio Sandoni, who supplied her with eleven cantatas and two arias. The three Bernacchi cantatas, the two Sandoni arias and three of the Sandoni cantatas survive in her manuscripts but not in any other known source.

Since the expenses for all her lessons are recorded in her mother’s household book, Griselda evidently continued to live with her parents. So did her sister Rachel and her husband, Lord Binning. This arrangement gave

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1 The purchases for Griselda appear to have begun in London in 1716 and to have ended in Italy in 1732-3; see The Household Book of Lady Grisell Baillie, 1692-1753, ed. R. Scott-Moncrieff (Edinburgh, 1911), 46, 48, 51 and 361-70. Almost every piece in Georgina Markham’s manuscripts bears her signature as well as ‘Rome’, ‘1823’ or ‘1824’.

2 The best source of information on the family is Griselda, Lady Murray of Stanhope, Memoirs of the Lives and Characters of the Right Honourable George Bailey of Jerviswood, and of Lady Grisell Bailey (Edinburgh, 1822). Grisell’s Memoirs were the main source for Scott-Moncrieff’s Introduction to The Household Book, pp. ix-lxxx.
rise to a deplorable incident. Twelve days before her twenty-ninth birthday, Griselda was awakened at dead of night by one of Lord Binning’s Scottish valets. With a pistol in one hand and a sword in the other, he said he would either ‘enjoy her’, that is, ‘taste the Bliss I long for’, or kill her. After her ‘ingenious Parley’ had detained him ‘above an Hour’, he grabbed her bed-clothes; then she ‘parry’d the Sword with one Hand, and with the other struck down the Pistol … then ‘fix’d her Feet upon his Breast, as he reclin’d himself, and over ‘turn’d him upon the Floor’. The family heard the racket as well as her screams, so the would-be ravisher fled.

Griselda’s sixteen extant manuscripts include 320 vocal pieces. Seventy of these are cantatas, almost all for a soprano with continuo accompaniment. Nineteen are by Giovanni Bononcini, who was certainly her favourite composer. As noted above, fourteen are by her teachers Sandoni and Bernacchi. Only eleven were written by other composers whom she may have known in London: five are by Nicola Porpora, two each by the Englishman Maurice Greene and the Scotsman Alexander Bayne, and one each by Ariosti and Handel. The only work not in Italian is a cantata in English by Greene, which Margherita Durastante sang as a farewell in her benefit performance at the King’s Theatre in 1724. Sandoni’s ‘Del timor d’un cor geloso’ is presumably the work he composed for Durastante’s benefit of 1721, because it has the same form and scoring as Handel’s ‘Cruel tiranno amor’, which was written for the same occasion.

Nearly three-quarters of the vocal pieces in Griselda’s manuscripts are operatic arias or duets. The earliest pieces are found in a manuscript that was copied at Rome in about 1694. It contains forty arias by Alessandro Scarlatti, only eleven of which are accompanied by a violin as well as the bass. The other fifteen manuscripts were mainly copied in London between 1715 and 1735, the years when Griselda collected them. More than three-quarters of their arias are accompanied by treble instruments (strings) and continuo, sometimes with wind instruments added. Bononcini’s Astario (1720) and Califurina (1724) clearly represent a matched pair of volumes, since each contains eighteen arias. Another pair consists of one manuscript entitled ‘Bononcini Cantate’, which includes eleven cantatas and thirty-eight arias composed by Giovanni and his brother Antonio Maria Bononcini, and another headed ‘Di Diverse Cantate’, which contains eleven cantatas and forty-seven arias by sixteen other composers. Comprising 416 and 489 pages, respectively, these volumes are by far the largest in the collection. By far the smallest is a manuscript containing a single aria, ‘Oh dei, che dolce incanto’, composed by Orlandini.

The operatic excerpts in Griselda’s collection include 216 solo arias and twenty-two vocal duets. The collection also contains twelve chamber duets, composed by Agostino Steffani, Carlo Luigi Pietragrua and Ariosti. Indeed, one volume contains only vocal duets, seven of which were composed for the chamber and five for operas by Handel, Ariosti, Bononcini, Gasparini and Scarlatti. Some of the pieces by Bononcini are autographs that he wrote specially for Griselda: the style of their vocal lines has already been studied, whereas the pieces composed for her by Bernacchi and Sandoni remain to be examined.

In the coming months I hope to finish this project and submit it for publication in honour and memory of my peerless collaborator, Anthony Hicks.

Lowell Lindgren


4 The aria comes from Metastasio’s Temistocle, set by Orlandini for Florence (1737); see R. L. and N. W. Weaver, A Chronology of Music in the Florentine Theater, 1596-1750 (Detroit, 1978), 277. The manuscript was among those acquired by the Reid Music Library in 1948 but has since been mislaid.

LOOKING FOR RICHARD: WHY HANDEL WROTE RICCARDO PRIMO

Riccardo Primo was first performed in November 1727, a month after the coronation of George II. It was dedicated to the new monarch, and, with its many references to kingly virtues and British liberal values, was an ideal coronation opera. However, it was not initially composed for this occasion but six months earlier, before the unexpected death of George I. There has consequently been much speculation about Handel’s reason for choosing this subject, especially since the plot is static and the characterisation limited, and Rolli’s metaphors are interminable.

Four possible reasons were suggested by Winton Dean in 1964:

... this was an attempt, at one stroke, to honour Handel’s new country and new sovereign, to keep the prima donnas in harness and to restore the fortunes of the Royal Academy.

The second reason is not credible, for George I was still alive when Handel started composing Riccardo Primo. As for the prima donnas, the Academy had engaged Faustina Bordoni in 1726 in addition to Francesca Cuzzoni, but this is unlikely to have been a reason for choosing Riccardo: as Suzanna Ograbenšek has shown, the ‘rivalry’ between the singers was more reputed than real.2 It is doubtful, also, whether this opera, more than any other, was composed to restore the fortunes of the Academy.

Perhaps, then, Riccardo Primo was a celebration of Handel’s ‘new country’. The composer was granted naturalisation in February 1727, but since he had been living in England for well over a decade, his naturalisation merely recognised the status quo. Admittedly, this is his only British historical opera, but if he had been feeling really patriotic, he could have chosen as his subject a true ‘Brit’.


not a Norman who spent all but a few months abroad. He could have commissioned an Alfred, for example, as Thomas Arne was to do thirteen years later -- although Arne's Alfred is not pure patriotism, but politics.

Perhaps the choice of Riccardo Primo, also, was to do with politics. As Ellen Harris has observed, "the directors [of the Royal Academy] probably selected many, if not most, of these librettos with an eye toward analogies with events in the news." The news in early 1727 was largely concerned with friction over a Mediterranean island -- not Cyprus (as in the opera), but Gibraltar, and not the Byzantine empire, but nevertheless a Mediterranean power, of a different Christian hue, and ruled by a tyrant.

The seventeenth century saw an expansion in international trade. The London-based East India Company (EIC) became the dominant western company trading with the orient, eclipsing its main rival, the Dutch East India Company. A late runner in the East India race was the Ostend Company (OC), a firm founded in the Austrian Netherlands in 1715 and incorporated in 1722. Incorporation caused consternation in the House of Commons: the mercantile threat of the OC was an important issue for members with EIC connexions, such as the MP for Chippenham, Sir John Eyles, an erstwhile director of the EIC and a director of the Royal Academy in 1726-7. Furthermore, the OC was suspected of harbouring Jacobites. Jacobites were very much in Parliamentarians' minds: the plot in 1721 to replace George with the Old Pretender, which had led to the arrest and exile of Francis Atterbury, Bishop of Rochester, in 1722, had not been forgotten.

Friction between trading companies must be placed into the context of the Spanish Succession. The threat of a united France and Spain, which at the time included parts of the Netherlands, was a horrifying prospect: not only could most of the west European coastline become the territory of a rival trading power, it could also be controlled by inimical, Jacobite-friendly Catholics. Despite the 'lasting peace on earth' of the Treaty of Utrecht (1713), by the 1720s the War of the Spanish Succession was dormant but not extinct.

Gibraltar lies at the bottom of the Franco-Iberian coastline and is the gateway to the Mediterranean. It had been acquired accidentally by the British in 1704 and ceded by Spain in 1713; nevertheless, the Rock is something that the Spanish were ever keen to recover. When they allied with the Austrians in 1725, they simultaneously declared support for the OC, demanded the restoration of Gibraltar and started to harass the island. British politicians, including Royal Academy director William Yonge, petitioned throughout 1726 for reinforcements and supplies to be sent there. The situation reached crisis point at the beginning of 1727. In January George I opened Parliament with these words: ³

My Lords and Gentlemen,
I Acquainted you last Year with the Treaties of Peace and Commerce concluded between the Emperor and the King of Spain ...

... the Secret and Offensive Alliances concluded between them ... are so directly levelled against the most valuable and darling Interests and Privileges of this Nation, that we must determine either tamely to submit to the peremptory and unjust Demands of the King of Spain, in giving up Gibraltar, and patiently to acquiesce in the Emperor’s usurped and extended Exercise of Trade and Commerce, or must resolve to be in a Condition to do our selves Justice, and to defend our undoubted Rights ...

I have likewise received Information from different Parts ... that the placing the Pretender upon the Throne of this Kingdom is one of the Articles of the secret Engagements ... what an Indignation must this raise in the Breast of every Protestant Briton! ...

... The King of Spain ... has now ordered his Minister residing here, to depart immediately from this Country, leaving a Memorial, that is little short of a Declaration of War, wherein he again demands and insists upon the Restitution of Gibraltar. He does not himself deny the Offensive Alliance, nor his Engagements to support the Ostend Company ...

... The certain and undoubted Intelligence I have, that it is now resolved to attempt an Invasion upon these Kingdoms in Favour of the Pretender, by an Embarkation from the Coasts of Spain, gives Me Reason to believe, that tho' the Siege of Gibraltar may probably be undertaken, the publick, avowed, and immense Preparations made for that Purpose, are chiefly calculated ... to disguise the intended Invasion ...

Gentlemen of the House of Commons, These Considerations must awaken in you all such a Sense of our common and immediate Danger, as will, I doubt not, inspire you with a Zeal and Clearfulness in raising the Supplies necessary ...

In the end the Spanish backed down, owing to lack of Austrian support.

Riccardo Primo, which concerns a Mediterranean island taken over by the English, slightly unintentionally, from the tyranny of an unreasonable power, was composed at the climax of the Gibraltar affair. This crisis involved many of the Royal Academy directors in a political or mercantile capacity. England had never quite shaken off her Armada mentality: polemic still portrayed Catholics as superstitious and idolatrous, and their leaders as despotico and tyrannical, always looking to conquer and forcibly convert the British to Catholicism. The lasting impact of 'papal tyranny' on the British psyche is even apparent in a play, from a century later, on the life of the Duke of Marlborough, which includes the following lines: 'Shall John again be

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4 Orient refers to Asia Minor and anywhere farther east. Harris's work has inspired much of the present article.


6 R. Hatton, George I, with a foreword by Jeremy Black (New York, 2001), 271; Harris, op. cit., 425

king? As soon the Papal tyrant hold again Empire o’er John, and cancel Magna Carta'.

The Duke of Marlborough was an impressive and an important figure in the politics of the later Stuarts and earliest Hanoverian. He inspired many poetastic odes in which he was compared to various great English kings – Arthur, Edward III, Henry V – but not Richard I. However, for unknown reasons he was the dedicatee of Francesco Briani’s Isacco tiranno (1710), the libretto for Venice on which Riccardo Primo is based.10

Although he died in 1722, Marlborough had been well known to various of the Academy directors. He has been identified with the hero of Handel’s Floridante (1721), of which the libretto is also by Rolli and the plot shares similarities with Riccardo Primo. A tyrant who has fallen for Floridante’s bride is bent on destroying his rival but thwarted by the constancy of two royal women and the alliance with the hero of a good prince, Timante of Tyre. In Silvani’s La costanza in trionfo (1706), the libretto on which Floridante is based, the action was set in Europe, not Asia Minor, and Timante was Prince of France. It has been argued that the character of Floridante is a reference to Marlborough and his treating with France (against the wishes of George I).11

Floridante was first performed in December 1721, the year of the Atterbury plot, and clearly touched political nerves. The Oxonian Dr William Stratford wrote to his friend Edward Harley, son of Marlborough’s bête noire, that:

... some things have happened [in Floridante] which have given great offence ... There happens to be a right heir in it, that is imprisoned. At last the right heir is delivered and the chains put upon the oppressor. At this last circumstance, there happened to be a very great and unreasonable clapping ...

Perhaps there were some Jacobites in the audience; alternatively, the clapping could have come from supporters of the Prince of Wales, the dedicatee of the libretto who by then had fallen out with George I. If the opera referred to a contemporary political figure other than Marlborough, this must have been George, Prince of Wales, rather than, say, the Old Pretender. Thus both Marlborough and the Prince of Wales would have had some connexion with Rolli’s Floridante.

George was also Rolli’s dedicatee of the final, performed version of Riccardo Primo, this time as king, and Marlborough provides the link, however vague, between Isacco tiranno and its London versions. If Richard represented the Duke of Marlborough in the Venetian opera and, as he certainly did, George II in the second version of Riccardo Primo, what about Richard in the first version, that of early 1727? According to Reinhard Strohm:13

It would hardly have been suitable to compare the ageing George I with the youthful idealised figure of Richard Lionheart ... Everything suggests that Handel’s opera was conceived at the outset for the Prince of Wales.

Since the Prince of Wales was in his mid-forties, he was hardly a ‘youthful idealised figure’ and is unlikely to have been the dedicatee – a suggestion for which there is no basis.

The dedication to the Duke of Newcastle of George Sewell’s New Collection of Original Poems, Never Printed in any Miscellany (1720) includes the following lines:

E’en I the least, the lowest of the Stage,
To your own fav’rite Theme the Lyre had strung,
And great Plantagenet triumphant sung,
First of his Line, which mighty in extent,
Shines forth in George, and brightens by descent.

The ‘fav’rite Theme’ was A Subject recommended to the Author for a Tragedy, by the late Mr. Addison (1728), published by Sewell’s brother Gregory as The Tragedy of Richard I.14 Richard is the ‘great Plantagenet’ who ‘shines forth in George’. Since the Duke of Newcastle was not on speaking terms with the Prince of Wales, the ‘George’ is more likely to have been George I than the prince. If this was the case, there was a literary link between Richard the Lionheart and George the Farmer.

Given the precarious political situation, with clouds of war looming over the British seascape, a potentially inflammatory dedication to the Prince of Wales would surely have been out of the question. Rolli (and Handel) had already, intentionally or otherwise, sailed close to the wind with Floridante. It is more likely that, in the interest of national unity and security, the first version of Riccardo Primo was a nod to the king. No doubt it was a relief that the performed version could be dedicated to Rolli’s preferred George, who had just succeeded to the throne.

The opera was a reminder to the king of the strategic importance of small Mediterranean islands as staging posts to the east. Harris observed that the subjects of the Royal Academy operas from 1724–28 were predominantly oriental15 and concluded that this had to do with the interests of the directors and the struggles for supremacy in trade with the orient. Riccardo Primo must be seen in this context. It was conceived in early 1727 perhaps to show support for oriental trade, for Gibraltar and for the British monarchy in the face of Franco-Spanish tyranny.

This article was originally a pre-performance talk for the London Handel Festival. I am grateful to Ruth Smith for her help and advice.

Katie Hawks

9 T. Cooke, A Poem, in Three Cantos Occasion’d by the Death of the late Duke of Marlborough (Braintree, 1722): ‘Mars fires his Troops, the British Lyons roar ... / Britain’s true Son, Retainer of the Blood / That in bold Arthur’s Veins and Edward’s flow’d’ (pp. 12-13).
10 W. Dean, Handel’s Operas, 1726-1741 (Woodbridge, 2006), 65, note 12.
12 Ibid.
14 Gregory Sewell makes clear in his preface that his play is a reflected light-beam from Handel’s opera.
15 Harris, op. cit., 421-2.
AMERICAN HANDEL FESTIVAL 2013

Call for Papers

The 2013 American Handel Festival will take place at Princeton University from Thursday 21 to Sunday 24 February. In addition to academic panels and lectures, the festival events will include a performance of Handel’s Dixit Dominus and Alessandro Scarlatti’s Stabat Mater by the Princeton University Chamber Choir, conducted by Gabriel Crouch, and a concert by Henry Bicket and The English Concert. On 24 February there will be an option to hear Bicket conduct a performance of Handel’s Radamisto at Carnegie Hall.

The American Handel Society invites abstracts for papers to be given in the academic sessions. Any topic connected with Handel’s life or music is welcome, including seventeenth-century antecedents, Handel’s contemporaries in Germany, Italy or England, and the reception of Handel’s music. Abstracts of no more than 500 words may be sent electronically (the preferred method) to robert-ketterer@uiowa.edu or by regular mail to Professor Robert Ketterer, Department of Classics, 210 Jefferson Building, The University of Iowa, Iowa City, IA 52245, USA. The deadline for submission is 1 September 2012. Decisions by the program committee will be communicated by mid-October.

HANDEL INSTITUTE CONFERENCE

LONDON, 23-25 NOVEMBER 2012

‘Handel at Court’

The conference begins on Friday 23 November, at 5.30 pm, with a private view of the Charles Jennens exhibition, curated by Ruth Smith, at the Handel House Museum, 25 Brook Street, London W1K 4HB.

The paper sessions will be held on Saturday 24 and Sunday 25 November at The Foundling Museum, Brunswick Square, WC1N 1AZ. Preceded by registration, the first paper will begin at 10.00 am. The speakers will include Graydon Beeks, Terence Best, Donald Burrows, Graham Cummings, Matthew Gardner, Liam Gorry, Helen Green, David Hunter, Annette Landgraf, Konstanze Musketa and John Roberts.

The conference timetable, the abstracts of the papers and a booking form will appear in the next issue of this Newsletter.