



THE HANDEL INSTITUTE  
N E W S L E T T E R

This special issue of the Newsletter is devoted mainly to abstracts of the papers which will be delivered at the Handel Conference in London in November. We also report on the recent Halle Händelfestspiele which were held against the background of the imminent

unification of Germany, an event which may have far-reaching implications for Handel scholarship. Other items include the announcement of the Institute's acquisition of the Alan Kitching Collection and the latest news of the development of Handel's London house.

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE  
ON HANDEL COLLECTIONS AND THEIR  
HISTORY

King's College London  
24-26 November 1990

With this important event, the Handel Institute can be said to be making its début, as this will be the first occasion when those interested in the work of the Institute can come together. We intend the Conference to be both a scholarly feast and a festive event: it starts in the evening of Saturday 24 November with a professional concert and a conference dinner and ends with lunch on Monday 26 November. We also hope to publish the Conference papers.

**Handel Collections and their History**

Most of Handel's major works survive in autograph manuscripts and conducting scores. There are also large collections of copies that were commissioned by his patrons and friends to adorn their libraries. Such copies often supply music that is not found in the composer's own manuscripts or the early printed editions. They are important both for their readings and for the reception history of Handel's music, reflecting both its classic status and the

particular enthusiasms of individual collectors.

While some manuscript copies have been closely studied, no one has attempted a conspectus of the collections since the late Jens Peter Larsen's *Handel's "Messiah": Origins, Composition, Sources* (1957). In many cases such fundamental issues as dating and the motivation of the original collectors have remained unexplored. The reconstruction of dispersed collections also deserves investigation. The Conference will break new ground by surveying the whole field of Handel collections and their history. Great Britain, whose rich holdings include the Aylesford, Lennard, Malmesbury and Shaftesbury collections, not to mention the Handel autographs in the British Library and at the Fitzwilliam Museum, is a fitting host for a Conference that brings together so much international expertise in the field.

*A separate leaflet about the Conference is included with this Newsletter. For your convenience, it incorporates a booking form.*

**Provisional Programme**

**Bernd Baselt (Halle):** *Early German Handel Editions during the Classical Period*

After the appearance of Arnold's edition of *The Works of Handel* (180 numbers published between 1787 and 1797), German musicians like Johann Friedrich Reichardt (1752–1814) and Johann Adam Hiller (1728–1804) also

began to popularize Handel's music as a great cultural heritage. Furthermore, the rise of biographical literature on Handel during the Classical period led to an increasing engagement in the editorial problems associated with his works, as witness the arrangements of some of his oratorios prepared by Mozart at the instigation of Baron Gottfried van Swieten in Vienna. From

about 1780 German publishers began to print more and more of Handel's works; these led, with the aid of composers and conductors like Mendelssohn, to the establishment of the German Handel Society Edition, initiated by the literary historian Georg Gottfried Gervinus (1805–71) and realised by the music historian Friedrich Chrysander (1826–1901).

**Hans-Dieter Clausen** (Hamburg): *The Treatment of Conducting Scores and Autographs in Handel's Performing and Revision Practice*

Besides a definition of the terms 'Handexemplar' and 'conducting scores', the subject of this paper will be the character and the extent of the collection of Handel's 'Handexemplare', their different functions and their delimitation against the autographs. The paper will also cast new light on the genesis of a number of conducting scores in relation to their twins, the harpsichord scores.

**Winton Dean** (Godalming): *The Earl of Malmesbury's Collection*

This is the most important collection of Handel manuscripts still in private hands, and the only one in the possession of descendants of the 18th-century owner. They were written by Handel's copyists for a friend of the composer, Elizabeth Legh of Adlington Hall in Cheshire. On her death in 1734 they were evidently returned to Handel, who gave them to another friend (a witness to three codicils of his will), Thomas Harris, uncle of the first Earl of Malmesbury. The collection consists of 36 volumes uniformly bound with the arms of Elizabeth Legh on the cover. They contain almost all the music Handel composed in England up to 1733, with the exception of the anthems and cantatas. Two volumes of cantatas that originally formed part of the collection became detached in the 18th century and are now in the Bodleian Library.

The collection is of major importance for several reasons. Elizabeth Legh's death gives a terminal date (the latest work is the opera *Arianna* of 1733). She annotated many of the volumes, on 14 occasions recording the date when she acquired them (the earliest in 1715) and twice naming the copyist as well. Several volumes contain unpublished music, some of which survives nowhere else, and at least one has vocal ornaments and amendments written by Handel himself.

**Graydon Beeks** (Claremont): *The Duke of Chandos's Handel Collection*  
James Brydges, Earl of Carnarvon and

later first Duke of Chandos, was Handel's patron from August 1717 until early 1719 and one of the original subscribers to the Royal Academy of Music. His interest in musical patronage seems to have flagged after 1721, but not before he had acquired copies of some 22 of Handel's works, 15 of which had been written for performance by his own private musical ensemble at Cannons near Edgware. These copies, almost all of which must have been in manuscript, are listed in two catalogues of the Cannons music library dated 23 August 1720 and 23 October 1721 respectively.

The entire contents of the music library were thought to have been lost until a portion turned up at the sale of materials from Stoneleigh Abbey, Warwickshire, in 1981. The Handel manuscripts were purchased by the British Library and by the late Gerald Coke. With the reappearance of this material it is possible to identify other manuscripts that have escaped from the collection during the last 250 years; to explain the significance of a manuscript of ten of the Chandos Anthems once owned by W.H. Cummings and last seen in 1921; and to suggest what the remaining lost manuscripts might be.

**Anthony Hicks** (London): *The Shaftesbury Collection of Handel Scores*  
A collection of 'Handel scores' at St Giles's House, Dorset – the seat of the Earls of Shaftesbury – is mentioned in O.E. Deutsch's *Documentary Biography* (1955), but its nature and full extent became known only when it was examined in 1983 by myself and Winton Dean. Collation with an inventory of 1761 showed that the collection had been preserved largely in the state in which it had originally been formed by the 4th Earl of Shaftesbury (1711-71), a noted patron of Handel. Most of Handel's works were covered by a combination of manuscripts and early printed editions (the manuscripts often specifically supplementing the prints); the manuscripts included music not otherwise extant. In 1987 the late Gerald Coke acquired the manuscript volumes for his Handel Collection (apart from two retained at

St Giles's House). The paper will give an account of the discovery of the collection and a description of its original state, and will mention significant features of the manuscript volumes.

**Donald Burrows** (Milton Keynes): *The Lennard Collection*

The principal 'Lennard Collection' consists of 67 volumes in the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge, which were donated by the Barrett Lennard family in 1902. All but one of the volumes are in large upright folio format and are kept in a bookcase that was supposedly Handel's own. Nothing certain is known of the provenance of the manuscripts or the bookcase before their appearance in a sale of the property of Thomas Greatorex in 1832. However, dates of origination for individual volumes can be established from watermarks, rastra and copyists. It appears that the collection was assembled from at least two components, one of them an early group of manuscripts dating from before 1740. Reasonable guesses may be made about when later volumes were added and about possible losses of volumes from the collection, and brief reference will be made to other Handelian volumes previously owned by Henry Barrett Lennard.

**John H. Roberts** (Berkeley): *Reconstructing the Aylesford Collection*  
The Aylesford Collection, originally assembled by Charles Jennens, included one of the most significant bodies of contemporary Handel copies along with many manuscripts of music by other composers, some of which Handel used as sources for his borrowings and pasticcios. After the collection was sold at auction in 1918, the Aylesford manuscripts were scattered among numerous libraries and collectors, principally in Britain and North America. This paper attempts to trace as many of these sources as possible to their present locations.

**Malcolm Boyd** (Cardiff): *Handel Material in the Mackworth Collection*  
A small collection of manuscript and printed music was assembled in the late



18th century at The Gnoll, the home of the industrialist Sir Herbert Mackworth (1737-91) near Neath, Glamorganshire. Included in the collection is some Handel material which, although not of prime importance, is not without interest.

**J. Merrill Knapp** (Princeton): *The Hall Handel Collection*

The Hall Handel Collection at Princeton has perhaps the largest number of 18th-century printed editions of Handel's music in the United States. Most of these are listed in Smith's *Descriptive Catalogue*, but roughly 30 per cent are not. There are some 40 18th-century librettos of Handel's works, about half of which are contemporaneous with the composer. The most important manuscript items are copies of *Belshazzar*, *Alexander Balus*, and *Joseph* made for Frederick, Prince of Wales, by J.C. Smith. In addition, there are a number of miscellaneous 18th-century manuscript volumes; a set of Arnold; 20 boxes of Hall correspondence with Handeliens all over the world; and other memorabilia.

**Percy Young** (Wolverhampton): *The Shaw-Hellier Collection*

As a student at Oxford during the late 1750s Samuel Hellier invested prodigally in copies of works by Handel and others which, in due course (as a country landowner in Staffordshire), he made compulsory exercise for his tenants. He educated his agent, John Rogers, to serve as village organist and director of music on his estate. The collection includes a number of interesting wordbooks of oratorios, relating to performances in London and Gloucester, and some manuscript scores, among them *Messiah* and the 'Dettingen' Te Deum, but consists mainly of printed musical editions, all in their 18th-century bindings. The collection still belongs to descendants of its originators but is now on deposit in the Music Library of Birmingham University.

**Enrico Careri** (Rome): *Handel and Geminiani: the Rubens and Titian of Music*

The relationship between Handel and

Geminiani is examined in the light of some little known documents. In some circles in England Geminiani was considered equal to his more celebrated colleague. For example, William Hayes compared Geminiani with Titian and Handel with Rubens. Today this equality of status seems inappropriate, but we must take due account of it in our study of 18th-century English music.

**Walther Siegmund-Schultze** (Halle): *Mozart's Version of Handel's Ode for St Cecilia's Day*

Handel's *Ode for St Cecilia's Day* (HWV 76), which was composed in September 1739 and first performed in November, has always been regarded as one of the composer's best works. Although it reached the Continent late, Baron van Swieten encouraged Mozart to revise it for his Viennese Handel academies at the end of the 1780s. The Ode was probably the last of Mozart's Handel revisions: it was perhaps written after his version of *Alexander's Feast* (another Cecilian work, which Handel had often performed with the Ode) and probably not performed in Mozart's lifetime. A modern edition appeared in the *Neue Mozart-Ausgabe* in 1969. This paper compares the revision with Handel's original and concludes that Mozart's version was important for some of his own works.

**Hans Joachim Marx** (Hamburg): *Abbate Fortunato Santini as Collector of Handel Manuscripts*

The first section of this paper will be concerned with Abbate Santini, the Roman priest and musician, as a collector and copyist of old music. His friendship with composers like Mendelssohn, Liszt and Zelter and with historians like Fuchs, Kiesewetter, Fétis and Goddard will be discussed. The second section will explore the range, importance and tradition of his collection, one of the greatest of the 19th century; the third section will investigate the Handel manuscripts – their provenance from private Roman collections (Ruspoli, Pamphili, Ottoboni) and their importance for research into Handel's Italian period.

**Keiichiro Watanabe** (Tokyo): *The Music Paper used by Handel and his Copyists in 1706-1710*

This contribution will examine the music paper used by Handel and his copyists during his Italian period. The papers themselves may be divided into a number of groups, reflecting regional and temporal differences. The watermarks are associated with various cities – Venice in 1706-7 and 1709-10, Rome and Naples in June-July 1708, and Venice again. Furthermore, the rastography is of eight different kinds, each of which can also be subdivided. The speaker will consider the distribution of the rastra in relation to the paper-types, examine the relationship between the extant manuscripts and the copyists' bills, and attempt to establish the origin of works that the sources contain.

**Paul Everett** (Cork): *Italian Source Studies and Handel*

In the investigation of manuscript repertoires, including several of the Handel collections under review in the present conference, the appraisal of physical characteristics (principally handwriting, paper-types and rastography) is an essential means of discovering relationships of various kinds between textually discrete documents. The advantage of assessing the handwriting of composers and copyists is self-evident. But what of paper-types and stave-rulings? To what extent can such data be relied upon as evidence of similar provenance, dating or even contemporaneity of the sources and their texts?

Drawing on his experience of Vivaldi manuscripts and other Italian sources, the speaker will offer some observations on the usefulness and limitations of non-textual data, particularly the extraordinary value of rastrological findings.

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**The Händelfestspiele in Halle, June 1990.**

The extraordinary events in Eastern Europe in the last nine months have been as dramatic in the German Democratic Republic as anywhere else, and it was inevitable that this year's Handel Festival in Halle should be overshadowed by the prospect of

important economic and political change. Our private conversations with friends there were as much devoted to their views on their uncertain future as to Handel and his music, but perhaps no change from the practice of previous years was as moving as the service which took place in the Marktkirche on the Sunday morning as an official part, for the first time, of the Festival ceremonies. After a prelude and fugue by Zachow played on the restored Reichel organ on which that worthy musician taught the boy Handel, the central part of the service was an impressive sermon set in the middle of a performance of the Cannons version of the Chandos anthem "As pants the hart"; the sermon drew skilful parallels between the words of the anthem and the aspirations of the East German people over the last 40 years.

The Festival was, as always, very crowded with events, and it was impossible for one reviewer to hear everything; I had to miss, for instance, both *Messiah* performances directed by Stephen Simon, and much else besides.

Several tendencies established in recent years were confirmed: the first is the principle of singing castrato parts at their correct pitch, and the second is to sing works in their original language, so *Il Trionfo del Tempo* and *Sosarme* were given in Italian, *Jephtha*, *Semele*, *Messiah* and *Theodora* in English; the only concession to an earlier Halle tradition was that *Tamerlano* was performed in German. Several English solo singers took part in the performances, Jennifer Smith in *Jephtha* and Gillian Fisher in *Semele*; the German singers generally handled Italian well, but were often less at home in English.

The Festival began with a powerful performance of *Jephtha*, with Hans-Jürgen Wachsmuth in the title-role, in place of the advertised Peter Schreier. An innovation was a chorus consisting of only 13 members, plus some boys and girls as the attendants of Iphis. They sang with clarity and style, and the whole performance was an impressive start to the proceedings.

The official opening concert included the particularly interesting feature of some of the arias and a duet

which Handel composed for *Tamerlano* but never performed – three of these must have been receiving first performances. They were superbly sung and much applauded, and a lively account of the Water Music (suites in D and G) rounded off the concert.

*Semele* was given by the University of Maryland Chorus, with the Collegium Instrumentale of Halle, and some local soloists, including the admirable counter-tenor Axel Köhler, as well as Gillian Fisher as *Semele*, and the Maryland singer Robert Petillo. The show was conducted with his unique blend of passion and balletics by Paul Traver, who had performed it (also with Gillian Fisher) back in November at the Maryland Festival. The long first act led to renewed discussion among the cognoscenti present, following on the question debated at the colloquium in Maryland, about the true nature of this work – opera, oratorio or neither?

*Il Trionfo del Tempo e del Disinganno* of 1707 received a performance which brought out splendidly the extraordinary invention and imagination of the young Handel, struggling with a rebarbative text which has more of philosophy than feeling, but I found the performance, in the resonant University Hall, to be too heavy; I longed for the lighter touch and delicacy of period instruments here, instead of having the music belted out at full power.

For this reviewer, *Tamerlano* was to be the highlight of the Festival, since he is also its editor. It was conducted by Christian Kluttig in fine style, with excellent singing and playing, and some good characterisation, though too much was made of trying to find comedy in *Tamerlano* himself, superbly as he was sung by Axel Köhler. A grievous cut in the second act deprived us of three glorious numbers – "Cerco in vano", "Par che mi nasca" and (unbelievable!) "A suoi piedi"; but most of the rest was done. Bajazet's death-scene was superb, and a particular point of interest was that we had Handel's final performing version of the end of the opera, with the recitative "Barbaro, or manca solo" and the final Coro as the only items after the death-scene, and it worked triumphantly, in spite of the doubts

expressed by many critics.

The production, alas, was typical of what we have come to expect of so much modern opera performance: the set looked like a cross between an engine-shed and a 1930s film studio, and there was a good deal of totally meaningless business with small mattresses which were in turn laid on, laid under, and thrown by one character at another; the singers also had great fun training the film-studio spotlights on each other as they sang. The meaning of all this was unclear to anyone I spoke to, as was that of the pretentious programme which was sold to the audience.

At the annual meeting of the members of the Georg-Friedrich-Händel-Gesellschaft Donald Burrows gave fraternal greetings from the Handel Institute, and we formally presented the Händelhaus with a gift from the Institute, a CD player.

I was not able to attend the A Cappella concert given by Paul Traver and his Maryland singers, but it was reported to me that they sang with their usual enthusiasm, and were rapturously received by a capacity audience. A concert of Schütz choral works, exceedingly well performed with accompaniment of period instruments, made a pleasing contrast to everything else, and Donald Burrows conducted local forces in a well-structured and dramatically powerful *Theodora*; in spite of much hard work, Donald never quite overcame the problem of the German singers' English pronunciation, but since the programme book printed the libretto in both languages, no-one minded.

A charming concert of Elizabethan lute songs and baroque flute sonatas brought another English artist, Robert Spencer, to the delightful concert-room in the Händelhaus.

The "Wissenschaftliche Konferenz" was devoted to "Dramatischszenische Aspekte der Musik Georg Friedrich Händels", and for two mornings papers were read, in both English and German, on this topic, dealing mostly with the operas, but also with the oratorios. The conference was wound up with an admirable paper in English by Percy Young on the Handel tradition in Cambridge from Randall in Handel's

time to modern scholars such as Dean, Sadie and Burrows.

For a conclusion to the Festival there were two choices – the usual open-air concert with fireworks in the Galgenbergschlucht, or Stephen Simon conducting a concert performance of *Sosarme* in the Kursaal at Bad Lauchstädt. I chose the latter, and was very pleased to have done so, for it was a total delight. We sat in a semicircle in the exquisite rococo hall, very close to the performers, who revelled in the occasion and sang radiantly, even though some of them had sung for four successive nights. There were no recitatives, but an ingenious programme book which “told the story” scene by scene helped everyone to follow the plot.

So we all returned home exhausted yet refreshed by some marvellous music, but a little pensive about the problems which our Halle friends sensed were in store for them.

Terence Best

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#### A New Jennens Letter

A hitherto unknown letter of Charles Jennens was offered for sale at Sotheby's on 17 May 1990. It was bought by the dealer Richard Macnutt on behalf of the Pierpont Morgan Library, New York. The letter, written from London on 13 December 1733, is addressed to “John Ludford Esq. at Arbury near Coventry” and is mainly a polite refusal by Jennens to employ a servant recommended by Ludford. It has, however, a brief postscript of Handelian interest, giving some emphasis to Handel's difficulties in promoting opera at the King's Theatre in the season of 1733-34 with the first production of the rival “Opera of the Nobility” about to take place. Jennens comments: “How two Opera Houses will subsist after Christmas, I can't tell; but at present we are at some difficulty for the Support of One; & M<sup>r</sup>. Handel has been forc'd to drop his Opera three nights for want of company”. John Ludford, who died around 1775, was the owner of an estate at Ansley in Warwickshire, very close to Nether Whitacre, the manor of which was owned by Jennens's father and where Jennens himself was eventually buried. Not far away is the Gopsal estate

which Jennens was to inherit in 1747. Ludford and Jennens had presumably come to know each other as neighbours. Also close to Ansley is Arbury Hall, seat of the Newdigate family, into which Ludford had married: his wife was Juliana Newdigate, sister of Sir Roger Newdigate, the founder of the Oxford poetry prize. The fact that the letter was sent to Arbury rather than Ansley suggests that Ludford was staying with his wife's family at the time. A further discussion of the letter will appear next year in *Göttinger Beiträge IV*.

Anthony Hicks

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#### The Alan Kitching Collection

In April Mr Kitching signified his intention to present to the Handel Institute the performing materials originally prepared for the Unicorn Opera productions of the following Handel operas:

*Agrippina, Amadigi, Arianna, Arminio, Flavio, Floridante, Giustino, Il Pastor Fido, Lotario, Orlando, Partenope, Poro, Sosarme and Tolomeo*

These have now been transferred and are the property of the Institute, with Mr Kitching retaining the rights over his English translations. The material consists of full scores, vocal scores and orchestral parts. There will be a short delay while the material is checked and put into good order, after which it will be available for hire: any urgent enquiries for the use of the material should be addressed to the Secretary.

As outlined by Winton Dean elsewhere in this Newsletter, Mr Kitching was a pioneer in the modern revivals of Handel's operas, and for some of the operas the Unicorn performing materials may be the only modern ones in the English-speaking world. The material for each opera naturally reflects the circumstances of the production for which it was prepared, in its choice of movement versions and cuts: a general idea of the structure of the ‘Unicorn versions’ can be derived from the synopses in Alan Kitching's book *Handel at the Unicorn* (1981). The vocal scores have Mr Kitching's English-language texts. This is not the context in which to engage with the artistic issues surrounding the

most appropriate language for theatrical performance, but it may be said that Alan Kitching's English versions have proved both stylish and singable, with a good feeling for appropriate literary gestures (often equivalent rather than strictly literal) and the placing of good vowel sounds.

While the Kitching material forms a good practical resource which should encourage further revivals of the operas, it is also more than that. The Unicorn revivals are themselves part of the history of Handel performances, and the performing materials preserve the record of the artistic choices made for those revivals. Thus the collection is also archive material, for which the Institute willingly accepts the role of curator, with the intention that it shall be available for study as well as for performance. A small collection of independent archive material, including photographs of the Unicorn Opera productions, has been presented along with the performing materials. The Institute is most grateful to Mr Kitching for his generosity in donating his collection.

Donald Burrows

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#### Alan Kitching and the Unicorn Theatre

In the history of the rediscovery of Handel's operas, the names of Alan and Frances Kitching deserve a permanent niche. Between 1959 and 1975 their Unicorn Theatre Group, starting literally from scratch, revived no fewer than 15 operas. Frances Kitching died after conducting the first eight and seeing the enterprise well launched; Alan, the producer, translator and guiding spirit, carried on and later wrote a fascinating book about it.

Several things are remarkable about this “adventure”, as he called it. The first is that it took place at all: the stage production of a Handel opera before an enthusiastic audience on a budget of £170 was an enterprise that strained the bounds of probability. Handel's operas were a highly spectacular form of art involving elaborate stage mechanism and the greatest singers of their age, and written in an obsolete convention that for nearly two centuries had been dismissed as hopelessly impracticable. How could

they be brought to life by a semi-amateur company in a minute theatre in Abingdon?

Second was the choice of repertory. Instead of concentrating on the few operas that had gained a limited success elsewhere, the Kitchings went to the opposite end of the spectrum. Of their fifteen operas one (*Agrippina*) was a British première (Handel never performed it in London), four (*Floridante*, *Giustino*, *Sosarme* and *Lotario*) were first revivals anywhere since Handel's day – and that of *Lotario* is still unique – and the others were all first modern revivals in Britain. Not all these operas are masterpieces, though that could be claimed for at least half a dozen, but every one more than justified its stage revival and several came up fresher than anyone could have expected.

Third, and most striking, was the style. Whereas German productions since 1920 and most of those elsewhere had sought a compromise between the old convention and modern operatic practice, musical and theatrical, and fallen clumsily between two stools, the Kitchings looked to the performing style of the Baroque theatre. Although unable in many respects to reproduce this, by approaching the operas as it were with the grain rather than against it they demonstrated the validity of the works and the convention. From one point of view this policy was no more than common sense; the operas naturally worked best on their own terms; but it is a common sense that has been decidedly uncommon in some more august circles.

The Unicorn Theatre, a modern recreation from the fourteenth-century monastic buildings of Abingdon Abbey, where most of the productions took place (two were given in Abingdon's Abbey Hall and one in the Kenton Theatre at Henley-on-Thames), had advantages and disadvantages. Both the stage and the auditorium were cramped (and the seating inflicted not a little posterior discomfort on the audience). But the miniature stage area, together with the absence of a front curtain, established close contact between singers and audience (as the forestage did in the Baroque theatre) and eased the strain on small voices. There was no

pit; the orchestra sat in a loft above the stage, where the conductor could not be seen by the singers; the link was the continuo player's spinet at the side of the front stage. The size of the loft severely restricted the numbers of the orchestra. This was in scale with the chamber dimensions of the whole performance; but the elimination of trumpet, horns and even oboes and bassoon in some early productions drained the colour out of Handel's scoring, though this was remedied later.

From the beginning the Kitchings took some sensible and far-reaching decisions. They refused to transpose the castrato and other high male parts into the lower octave. They set themselves against the mutilation of the da capo aria, preferring to omit whole arias rather than serve up bleeding chunks. If the cuts were occasionally excessive, weakening some aspect of plot or characterisation, they left no jagged edges. The singers were encouraged to ornament their da capos without transgressing the style of the period or floundering into that of Mozart or Rossini. Costumes and stage deportment were modelled on 18th-century practice, and so was the language of Alan Kitching's translations. All the operas were given in English, except for an experiment in *Agrippina*, when the recitatives were translated but the arias sung in Italian.

Of course the standard of performance varied, especially that of the singing in the early years. The modern equivalent of a Cuzzoni or Faustina, even if she exists, is not to be procured on a shoestring budget. The decision to begin with *Orlando*, a spectacular magic opera as well as a major masterpiece, was bold to the point of recklessness, and it would be idle to pretend that the result was satisfactory, especially as the singers were allowed to play for laughs in unsuitable places in the belief that any audience reaction was preferable to a bored silence. This however was soon corrected. A predominant impression of the whole series is that, while many things were on the right lines from the beginning, given the limitations of the theatre, the musical standard after a bumpy start improved almost beyond

recognition, especially in the last five operas, where the professional element among the singers and orchestral players was greatly strengthened. A number of singers who have since gained wider fame, among them Felicity Lott, Eiddwen Harrhy, James Bowman and Philip Langridge, enjoyed early successes at Abingdon. This strengthening of the forces of course greatly increased the expense, and it was largely for financial reasons that the series came to an end with *Lotario* in 1975. But by then Alan Kitching had proved his point. If these wonderfully rich operas were viable and capable of captivating modern audiences when their wings were half-pinioned by inevitable limitations, how much more should they be able to hold their place when supported by all the resources of a modern opera house.

Winton Dean

#### Handel's House

The development of the area at the junction of Brook Street and Bond Street which contains Handel's house is about to begin. The developers (the Co-operative Insurance Society) announced some time ago their intention to open the upper floors of the house as a Handel Museum or Centre, and the management company overseeing the development (Neale House Investments) are seeking to obtain possession of the upper floors. A meeting has taken place in which possibilities for uses of the rooms were discussed with the developers, at which the London Handel Festival, the Royal Society of Musicians and the Handel Institute were represented, and further meetings are planned.

Anthony Hicks

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