



THE HANDEL INSTITUTE

NEWSLETTER

The previous issue of this *Newsletter* included an article on an early performance of *Messiah* in Cork. This number begins with an account of a newly discovered manuscript of Handel's best known oratorio and a history of the

recent development of the site in Dublin where it was first performed. Reviews of opera productions in England and festivals in Germany, together with smaller items of news, make up the rest of this issue.

Colin Timms

THE 'WARREN' MANUSCRIPT OF *MESSIAH*

At the end of the chapter reviewing the secondary manuscript sources in *A Textual and Historical Companion to Handel's 'Messiah'* (London, 1965), p. 88, Watkins Shaw listed four scores 'of whose whereabouts we have no trace', including the following:¹

Score, three volumes, oblong, written by E. T. Warren, 1758, formerly belonging to the Society of British Musicians, and advertised for sale on 5-6 December 1865 by Messrs. Puttick & Simpson Ltd., 7, Blenheim Street, London, W.1.

The sale was in fact that of the whole of the musical library of the Society of British Musicians ('Recently Dissolved'), and the Warren manuscript, described as above, was listed as lot 544 in Puttick and Simpson's catalogue.² Through a contact made in 1999, we learned that this score was no longer lost, and by courtesy of the present owner, Mr A. W. Marshall, we were able to examine it.³

The sale catalogue description is correct: the manuscript is in three volumes of large 'Format I' type (c. 263 x 370 mm), each volume carrying the music for one Part of the oratorio, vol. 3 also containing an appendix of additional movements following the music of Part Three. At the conclusion of each Part the manuscript is signed by the copyist, 'E. T. Warren Scrip[si]t 1758', accompanied by the annotation 'N. 1' in Warren's hand (see Fig. 1), of which the import is at present obscure.

Some notice of the work of Edmund Thomas Warren as a collector and editor is given in the entries devoted to him in *The New Grove* (1980) and its second edition

(2001), and also by Alec Hyatt King, who adds an indication of his activities as a copyist.⁴ Further information about his life is hard to come by. The birth date of c. 1730 given in *Grove* seems to be no more than a plausible guess, repeated by Betty Matthews in her note of Warren's entry to the Royal Society of Musicians on 3 June 1764.⁵ There is no doubt that he died in 1794, but the exact date is not known, and we have not found an obituary. At some point he inherited the estate of Edmund Horne, a Captain of Marines, and took the name 'Warren Horne' (not, it seems, 'Warren-Horne' as indicated by King and *Grove*). His bookplate with that name has a coat of arms with a device of three hunting-horns (for 'Horne') quartered with the arms of Warren of Lodge Park, co. Kilkenny, as described in the 1912 edition of Burke's *Landed Gentry of Ireland*.⁶ He may therefore have been of Irish origin. His earliest known presence in London may be attested by the name 'Mr Warren' on one of the original tenor partbooks of Boyce's *Secular Masque*, probably dating from 1745.⁷ He is best remembered for having been the secretary of the Noblemen's and Gentlemen's Catch Club from its foundation in 1761 until his death. In that capacity, and always under the name 'Thomas Warren', he edited 32 volumes of catches and glees sung at meetings of the club, published annually from 1763 to 1794.

The *Messiah* manuscript is copied in Warren's hand throughout; a later hand added further basso continuo figurings for some movements in pencil, and there are also occasional pencil corrections of minor copying

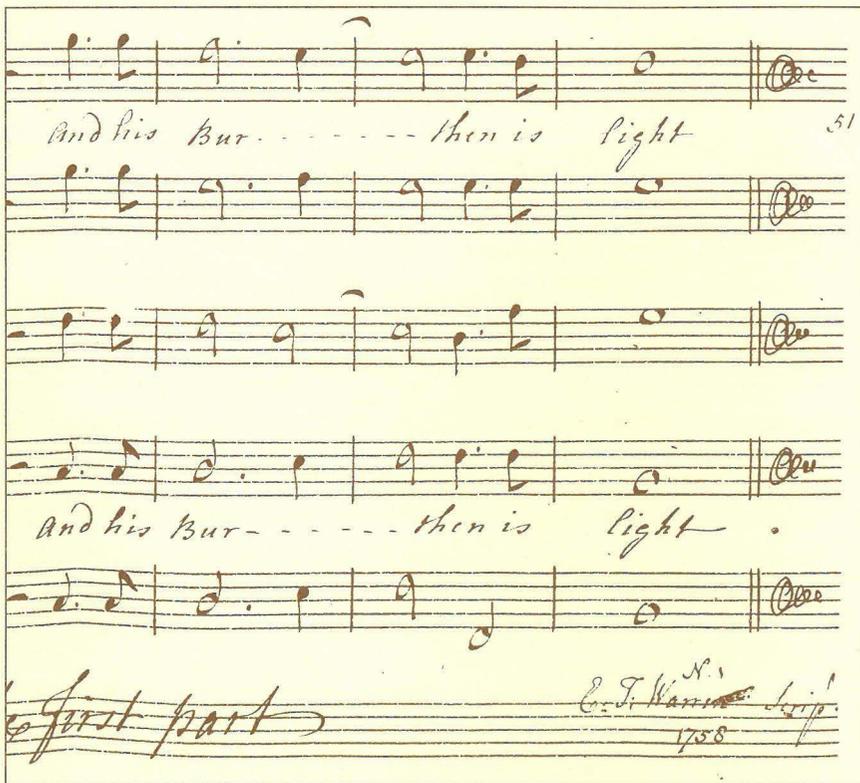


Fig. 1. End of Part I of *Messiah*, signed by the copyist, E. T. Warren. By permission of Mr A. W. Marshall.

errors. The paper characteristics are typical of an English music manuscript of this date: the watermark is of the type designated F*2 by Clausen,⁸ and the pages have ten-stave rastra (apparently machine-ruled) with a total span of 235.5 mm. The volumes bear original pagination by the copyist. Volume 1 has music pages 1-130. The pages of vol. 2 are numbered from 1 to 155, but there are actually 154 pages because p. 152 was omitted from the series. In vol. 3 the music of Part Three occupies pp. 1-71, but the subsequent pages are not numbered; after nine pages of empty staves (the *verso* of p. 71 and one four-leaf gathering), the additional movements follow, and the manuscript is completed with a sequence of three four-leaf gatherings. If all of the pages had been numbered, including the empty-stave pages, these final gatherings would have been pages 81-104: the additional movements are written on pp. 81-91 of this sequence and followed by pages of empty staves.

The volumes are bound in brown calf-skin with gold tooling to the perimeter of the boards and red leather labels on the front covers, carrying titles in gold lettering 'MESSIAH/PART. I.' (*etc.*). The spine binding has six panels, with a red label in the second panel from the top ('MESSIAH') and a green label in panel three ('PART/I', *etc.*). The inside front cover of vol. 1 bears the bookplate of Thomas Bever (1725-91), an Oxford collector (and musician) who was a Fellow of All Souls College and an early owner of the score – possibly even the original owner.⁹ Although the manuscript does not contain any new music for *Messiah*, it is of considerable interest because it was copied during Handel's lifetime and before the publication of the full score of the work. The variant settings of the movements, and the individual readings of the music text, are also of interest in themselves, as helping to place the manuscript within the history of the transmission of the

music, relating this score to the other secondary manuscripts that Shaw lists in Schedule A of the *Companion*.

For many movements in *Messiah* Handel composed two or more settings. The main score in this manuscript has one setting for each movement, and the versions included there are as follows (the list may be compared with Shaw's Schedule A):

- Every valley shall be exalted
88 bars, amended to 84 bars
- But who may abide
Bass voice, 136 bars
- Pifa
21 bars, plus da capo
- But lo, the angel of the Lord
Aria
- Rejoice greatly
12/8, 113 bars
- Then shall the eyes/He shall feed/
Come unto him
All Soprano, B-flat major
- He was despised
Alto
- Thou art gone up on high
Soprano, 116 bars (entry on
crotchet)
- How beautiful are the feet
AA duet (Isaiah text) and
chorus 'Break forth'
- Their sound is gone out
Tenor aria
- Why do the nations
96 bars, 'da capo' direction
deleted
- Thou shalt break them
Tenor aria
- The trumpet shall sound
Dal segno aria
- O death, where is thy sting?
41 bars
- If God be for us
Soprano

Two movements in this list were subjected to alterations by Warren. He copied the longer version of 'Every valley shall be exalted' and then shortened it by deleting four bars in ink. He must have made the amendment immediately, because the bar-count that he added at the end of



the movement reads '84': perhaps he was making a literal copy from another source and showed the redundant bars for this reason. At the end of 'Why do the nations' Warren almost certainly wrote 'da capo', but this direction was erased and the stave-lines over which it had been written have clearly been repaired. In this case it seems probable that Warren copied the direction from his source and then decided that it was incorrect.

The main-text version has two annotations or cue-markings relating to alternative settings. Above 'He shall feed his flock' Warren wrote 'NB The 1st. stanza may be perform'd in F by Counter Alto, & the last as it stands for Treble, if so the above Recit° must be transpos'd 4 notes lower for Counter Alto'. In 'O death, where is thy sting?' ink cross-marks have been added at bars 4 and 23, which probably indicates that the copyist was aware of the shortened version of the movement.

The variant movements that form the appendix in vol. 3 are as follows:

- p. [81] And lo, the angel
Recit. accomp. 'Alterations. Viz this to be sung instead of the Air in the first part Page, 95'.
- p. [82] Rejoice greatly
C, 108 bars. 'This to be sung instead of the Air Page 108 in the first part.'
- p. [89] How beautiful
Soprano aria, 24 bars. 'This Air to be sung instead of the Duett in Part the 2d. Page 96 & the Chorus to be left out'.

As with many of the early manuscript copies of *Messiah*, the main sequence of movements reflects in general terms (though probably not in every detail) the oratorio as Handel gave it at his first London performances in 1743. Although Warren's precise musical source cannot be identified, the textual derivation of his copy can be determined fairly clearly.

An error in the viola part in 'The trumpet shall sound' puts the Warren manuscript in close relationship to the 'Sterndale Bennett', 'R.M.1' and 'Lennard' copies (see Shaw, *Companion*, p. 145); of these, probably only 'Sterndale Bennet' is earlier in origin than the Warren manuscript.¹⁰ In terms of the stemma given by Shaw (*Companion*, p. 137), this puts the Warren copy in the 'S/X' group of manuscripts: it has the characteristics of the hypothetical 'S' text but not the additional corrupt readings of the 'X' group (Shaw, *Companion*, pp. 143-4). Clearly the extant copy of *Messiah* which is closest to the Warren manuscript in variant movements and textual readings is 'Sterndale Bennett' (particularly since 'Warren' originally had the 'da capo' direction at the end of 'Why do the nations'), but 'Warren' cannot have been copied directly from 'Sterndale Bennett' (as it now stands) because they have different versions of the aria 'If God be for us'. Furthermore, while both copies amend Handel's text-setting (in words and music) in 'I know that my Redeemer liveth' and 'The trumpet shall sound', they have differences in detail in their treatment, suggesting that some editorial decisions may have been taken by the copyists, in addition to any amendments that may have been derived from 'S'.

The manuscript is also of interest because it includes a number of cues for the participation of oboes. These instruments were not included specifically in Handel's original composition score in 1741, though oboists probably participated in the London performances from 1743 onwards and may also have been included at Dublin in 1742. The only oboe music for the oratorio in Handel's hand occurs in the score of the chorus 'Their sound is gone out', composed in 1745. There are, however, oboe partbooks in the set of performing material that was copied for the

Foundling Hospital in 1759 under the terms of Handel's will, and these probably reflect the way that the instruments had been used in the performances of Handel's later years. In this source the oboes were used to double the violins in the opening Sinfony and the treble voices in the chorus movements. Another early manuscript source with some claim to authority, the 'Matthews' score, also has indications of oboe parts, applied in a different way (though on the same general lines).

The 'Warren' score provides yet another pattern for the use of oboes. At the opening of the Sinfony, for example, Oboe I doubles Violin I, while Oboe II doubles Violin II; the chorus 'And the glory of the Lord' begins with the same configuration, and then both oboes double the vocal part once the trebles enter. In some choruses (including 'Hallelujah') the oboes are cued to double the treble voices throughout. One interesting detail occurs at the beginning of the duet-and-chorus setting of 'How beautiful are the feet', where Warren cues in Oboe I to double Violin I and Oboe II to double Violin II: 'Warren' is the only source to have this arrangement (the 'Mann' manuscript, the only other relevant copy in this regard, cues both oboes to double Violin I).

More curious still is the addition of flutes in the Pifa, where Warren labelled his three staves 'Traversa e Vio. 1st/Traversa e Viol 2^{do} e Viola/Basso'. (In so doing, he also ignored Handel's distribution of the violin/viola parts.) Hitherto, there has been no evidence for the use of flutes in this movement (or anywhere in the oratorio) during Handel's lifetime, and there is no trace of them in connection with his Foundling Hospital performances. The authority for Warren's indications for the participation of flutes and oboes is unknown and probably undiscoverable: he may have taken the cues from some pre-existing source, or he may

have added them on his own initiative, according to his own taste. Since neither oboes nor flutes are mentioned in the 'Sterndale Bennett' score (and thus presumably were not found in 'S' either), the latter explanation perhaps seems more likely. Although some of the indications were added as cues, others (such as those for the Pifa) were part of the instrumentation specified during the copying of the score. Whether or not Warren's indications accorded with Handel's practice, they nevertheless reflect practical suggestions for the addition of oboes to the score from a musician working in Handel's London.

Donald Burrows and
Anthony Hicks

- 1 On the subject of other 'lost' scores, see Donald Burrows, 'Newly-recovered Handel scores', *Newsletter of the American Handel Society*, iv/3 (1989), pp. 1, 5.
- 2 Other items of interest in the sale are lot 12, the autograph of Arne's *Whittington's Feast* (his parody of Handel's *Alexander's Feast*), now in the Library of Congress, and

lot 190, a manuscript full score of James Harris's pasticcio *Menalcas*, described as 'an opera, adapted to the most celebrated Compositions'.

- 3 Mr Marshall had received the manuscript from his father, William Arthur Marshall (1906-97), who had purchased it in about 1930. The front flyleaf to vol. 1 bears an inscription presumably dating from that time, 'Messiah complete in 3 Vols / Score copied in 1758', accompanied by the price '45/-'. Mr Marshall senior collected musical instruments: see Lyndesay G. Langwill, *An Index of Musical Wind-Instrument Makers*, 6th edn (Edinburgh, 1980), p. 202.
- 4 A. Hyatt King, *Some British Collectors of Music* (Cambridge, 1963), pp. 20-21. King's information comes partly from the catalogues of the two main sales of Warren's collection in 1797 and 1810, to which references are given in King's Appendix B, pp. 132-3. King does not mention an earlier sale, recorded in *A Catalogue of Vocal and Instrumental Music ... carefully collected and preserved in bindings ... by Edmund Thomas Warren Horne ... which will be sold by auction, by Mr Raine ... on the 3rd July 1794*. A copy of this catalogue is reported to be in the Johnson collection of ephemera in the Bodleian Library, but has so far proved impossible to find. A xerox copy in the British Library is also inaccessible, having been erroneously catalogued with the shelfmark of another item.

- 5 Betty Matthews, *The Royal Society of Musicians of Great Britain: List of Members 1739-1984* (London, 1985), p. 151.
- 6 The description in Burke is 'chequy or and azure, on a canton gules a lion rampant argent', which, apart from the colours, agrees with the monochrome bookplate. The genealogy given by Burke includes Abel Warren (1691-1763) of Lowhill, co. Kilkenny, who married Olivia Caulfield on 6 August 1726 and had five sons and two daughters, only the eldest son John (?-1815) being named. Edmund could well be a younger son born c. 1730.
- 7 Bodleian Library, MS Mus. Sch. C. 107a. The exact date of the first performance of Boyce's masque, almost certainly given privately, is not known, but the earliest extant wordbook (in the Huntington Library, San Marino, California) is dated 1745, and the first documented performance of a song from the masque was at Covent Garden on 10 March 1746.
- 8 Hans-Dieter Clausen, *Händels Direktions-partituren* (Hamburg, 1972), p. 252.
- 9 See Richard Charteris, 'Thomas Bever and Rediscovered Sources in the Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek, Hamburg', *Music and Letters*, lxxxi (2000), pp. 177-209. The form of the bookplate is that illustrated in Plate III of the article, which Charteris suggests is Bever's earlier bookplate.
- 10 The watermarks in the paper suggest that 'Sterndale Bennett' was copied before 1750.

FISHAMBLE STREET: NEAL'S MUSICK HALL (1988-2001)

This year sees the development of the site in Dublin where the first performance of Messiah took place. Tim Thurston tells the recent history of this renowned location and comments on the outcome.

The Long Decline, and Some Criteria for Homage

In spite of the major role played in the resurgence of interest in early music in London in the 1960s and '70s by Irish musicians, John Beckett and Michael Morrow in particular, Ireland has lagged behind other European countries in this movement. Ensembles like the Dowland Consort and the Consort of St Sepulchre played a vibrant role in Ireland at that time, but very little early music was heard in Dublin until Emma Kirkby and Anthony Rooley gave a concert

in our national concert hall in 1987. It was greeted with delighted surprise by many Irish music-lovers: "Why haven't we heard this marvellous music before?" was the cry.

This experience and response led to the formation of the Early Music Organisation of Ireland, which from 1988 to 1992 ran five highly successful Dublin Early Music Festivals. As Artistic Director I had long wanted audiences to hear the fruits of Andrew Parrott's work, and in May 1988 it fell to me to collect him from Dublin airport. It was with some embarrassment to me that he asked to be shown Fishamble Street. All that could be seen was the arch and Kennan's house – 19 Fishamble Street (see Fig. 1 opposite) – both mid-19th-century structures and looking very run down. The site was owned at that time by

Dublin Corporation, but Kennan's, a family whose presence dated back to the late 18th century, was running an engineering business in the house and a factory. It was thought that some of the lower part of the north and east walls of this factory dated from the 18th century and formed part of the original Music Hall. With the 250th anniversary of the first performance of *Messiah* (13 April 1992) looming, I spoke at length with Brian Boydell, former Professor of Music at Trinity College and an expert on music in 18th-century Dublin, to see what we might do to improve the condition of the site.

In January 1990 there was a meeting between Dr Boydell and various other key figures in the Dublin cultural establishment with a particular interest in the project. Some key points were agreed:



Fig. 1. Kennan's house (19 Fishamble Street, Dublin), and adjoining arch.

1. As only a comparatively small part of the north and east walls remained, no rebuilding of the Hall should be contemplated (any rebuilding would have been highly conjectural anyway, as there are no good drawings from Handel's day).
2. An urgent external face-lift should be undertaken and plans be made for a concert – in the area of the former Hall itself, if possible – to celebrate the forthcoming anniversary.
3. The favoured idea for an appropriate, permanent memorial was a Handel 'courtyard' or 'garden', open to the public, of which the surviving walls would form a key feature.

Over the next couple of years a number of meetings were held with Dublin Corporation. Gaining vacant possession of the property from Kennan's Engineering proved a difficult task, and legal wrangles ensued. By the time of the anniversary the Corporation had carried out some external painting, and

choruses from *Messiah* were performed in Fishamble Street, outside the arch; this has since become an annual event.

The Planning Stage

The site is included in the western boundary of an area of Dublin known as Temple Bar, to the south of the river Liffey, which the Irish Government set up a company (Temple Bar Properties) to develop. In 1994 we began a long series of discussions with this company to try to ensure that our ideas for an appropriate permanent Handel memorial would be incorporated into any development plans. The building surrounding the site had been designated as residential above retail, but it seemed possible that the idea of a courtyard or garden within and around the likely 'footprint' of the original Music Rooms might be acceptable.

In 1995 Kennan's moved out, and ownership of the site was transferred to Temple Bar Properties, who commissioned the conservation group

Dublin Civic Trust to report and recommend on development guidelines for the site, and began submitting development plans to Dublin Corporation. This report and our recommendations provided a cultural basis for these plans. Over the next five years a number of submissions, appeals and alternative plans were considered. We and various other conservation bodies made representations to the Corporation with some key design criteria for the courtyard:

1. *The site and walls of the original Concert Rooms*

The footprint of the 1741 Concert Hall, insofar as it could reasonably be established, should be clearly maintained within the courtyard; a portion of the lower masonry of the walls should be left *in situ* as a key design feature.

2. *The design of the courtyard*

The arch should be restored as a public entrance to the site. The historical resonance of the original rectangular form should be a key feature, avoiding any curved walkways or diagonal walls (this was an aspect of an early submission that was appealed against). The opportunity to create a rare 'green lung' in Temple Bar should be a key design thrust, with appropriate planting to soften the more obvious modern aspects of the surrounding buildings. The height of buildings adjoining the proposed courtyard should be such as to permit a satisfactory level of light into the courtyard area. A sculpture should be a special feature, and there should be appropriate signage.

3. *Public access to the courtyard*

An Information Centre and Coffee Shop should be part of the development, and the general public should be permitted to enter the courtyard during its opening hours.

In 1999 a planning application that incorporated these points to a large degree was approved by the planning



Fig. 2. General view of the Handel Courtyard, Fishamble Street.

authorities, and Temple Bar Properties began the development with Burke-Kennedy Doyle, one of Ireland's leading firms of architects. The work on Fishamble Street was delayed by a number of circumstances. It is very close to the Wood Quay site, a centre of Viking Dublin, archaeologically rich, so all work had to be carried out under strict archaeological supervision. Attempts to restore the arch *in situ* resulted in its partial collapse. A public art commission was won by the Irish artist Laurent Mellet, but his statue was only ready for erection in September 2001.

The Final Result

At the time of writing all aspects of the development are complete save the statue. There has as yet been no public 'opening' of the Handel Courtyard, so no public or media reaction to its design. The thirteen years since I became involved in this initiative have certainly been full of frustration and delay, and the result – although it meets the letter of the planning criteria – will no doubt raise much comment, not all of it positive! My personal feeling is in many ways one of relief.

The overall effect may be seen in Fig. 2. The wall, varying from four to twelve feet in height, has been capped with copper and bears the inscription:

'ON 13TH APRIL 1742 GEORGE FRIDERIC HANDEL CONDUCTED THE FIRST PERFORMANCE OF THE MESSIAH ON THIS SITE'. The arch has been refurbished and will provide an impressive entrance to the Courtyard. No. 19 Fishamble Street now houses the Contemporary Music Centre, a vibrant organisation dedicated to serving Irish music of today, both at home and abroad. It is particularly good that a musical association with the site has been re-established in this way. The planting has potential to provide a peaceful and pleasing environment, though one is still much more aware of the modernity and height of the surrounding blocks. My last visits have been during the summer months, close to noon: whether one will feel sufficient light on a November evening remains to be seen.

The statue is impressive and will, I expect, make a powerful centre-point: the renowned Dublin wit will no doubt quickly provide a scurrilous nickname for the figure at the top! The Information Centre did not materialise: the tight investment criteria for the development meant that the retail space was put out to tender. The present owner of the 'Chorus' Coffee Shop has designed a pleasant space with a Handel theme. At least, tourists who come to pay

homage to Dublin's most famous musical event may now do more than stare at an unpainted arch and can walk on the hallowed ground, remembering the instruction to the 700 people who attended the first performance, that 'ladies should come without hoops and gentlemen without swords so that more may be accommodated'. How sad that Brian Boydell, who was well known for his marvellous stories of Handel's seven-month visit to Dublin, died last year.

Of course, much remains to be done to honour Handel's memory in our capital. There are remnants of a number of 18th-century organs, and the greatest tribute, in my view, would be to restore the one with the finest case – in St Werbergh's Church – about 200 yards from Fishamble Street. Some years ago I was involved in the setting-up of Ireland's first period-instrument ensemble, Christ Church Baroque. When I hear them play Handel's concertos on such a refurbished organ, I shall be more than relieved – I shall be truly delighted.

Tim Thurston

HÄNDELFESTSPIELE IN GERMANY

This year the two German summer Handel festivals reverted to their useful habit of one following the other almost immediately, so that keen Handelians were able to attend both.

Göttingen

The theme was 'Händel – Pastorale und Drama', which seemed to have only minimal relevance to the main musical events, although I understand that *L'Allegro* was originally planned to be part of the festival but never materialized.

The opera was *Partenope*, which proved an interesting experience after the curious production at the Linbury Studio Theatre a few weeks before (see below). It was done in the usual



Göttingen manner, with a sensible, period style of production by Igor Folwill, mercifully devoid of symbolism or contemporary relevance, and extremely well performed under the experienced direction of Nicholas McGegan with his Philharmonia Baroque Orchestra of San Francisco and a fine cast of singers. My only reservation is that Arsace was camped up beyond reason by Kai Wessel, who seemed to be sending up the whole process. Arsace is indeed a bit of a wimp, and the opera certainly has its comic side, but this interpretation made little sense. The Saturday matinée performance was preceded by a talk on the opera, delivered in English by Open University research student, David Vickers, in the cosy atmosphere of the opera-house Bierkeller. There was a sizable English-speaking audience, including tour parties from Britain and the USA, and David's excellent talk was very well received.

A complete performance (billed as the first ever) of the late Cecilian Vespers of Alessandro Scarlatti, directed by McGegan with the Arcadian Academy and the 20-strong Choir of the Age of Enlightenment, was very impressive: the music is fascinating, and of very high quality. A colloquium on 'Why historical performance practice?' offered thoughtful contributions from a number of scholars, but nothing revolutionary emerged from the discussion.

For many of us the high point of the festival was the overwhelming performance of *Saul* in the Stadthalle, directed by Peter Neumann, with first-rate soloists, the Kölner Kammerchor (whose English diction was impeccable) and the Collegium Cartusianum, also from Cologne. Everything came together to make this memorable: performers schooled in a whole generation's experience of authentic performance practice, a conductor with a sound instinct for the pacing of the music, and of course the sublimity of the work itself. Why is this glorious

oratorio so little performed?

What had been internationally announced as the big event was the gala concert at which the famous newly identified 'Gloria' was to receive its world première. There is no need here to examine once again the rights and wrongs of the shenanigans that led to a pre-world première in England and a pre-emptive publication of the score; suffice it to say that the Göttingen occasion was not spoilt by these events. Dominique Labelle, with McGegan and the San Francisco orchestra, gave a fine performance of the work, and the scholar who identified it as Handel's, Hans Joachim Marx, received due congratulation and applause. With Susanne Ryden and Ralf Popken, Labelle also gave a fine account of the cantata *Clori, Tirsi e Fileno*.

The pastoral theme of the festival was rescued from oblivion by a rather heavy-footed performance of Mozart's arrangement of *Acis and Galatea*, performed on modern instruments by local forces under Arwed Henking. Nothing wrong with modern instruments, of course, provided they are played with a proper sense of style and tempo; but alas, that was not the case here. Among the smaller events were a fascinating recital by Robert Hill on a harpsichord and a 'Lautenclavier' (harpsichord with gut strings), and a delightful 'Nachtkonzert' of solo cantatas by Handel and Scarlatti, and harpsichord solos by Handel and Babell (including his 'Vo' far guerra' arrangement), given by Robin Blaze and Laurence Cummings. In all, a satisfying feast of music by Handel and others, well attended and enthusiastically applauded.

Halle

For Handel's birthplace this was an important anniversary year – the 50th Händelfestspiele. Very senior politicians were scheduled to attend the opening ceremony, to wit, the German Chancellor Gerhard Schröder and the British Prime Minister Tony Blair. However, since the date of the

ceremony (8 June) was the day after the British general election, Mr Blair was unable to be there; he was represented by the British ambassador, who made a charming and witty speech. Both Chancellor and ambassador emphasized the present-day friendship between Britain and Germany and, as has often been done before, cited Handel's life and work as a noble example of the relationship. The proceedings were relaxed and dignified, and the sentiments expressed from the platform warmly received.

The concert that enshrined the ceremony, conducted by Nicholas McGegan, was not so successful, because its programme was rather scrappy and ill-coordinated. The wedding anthem for Frederick, Prince of Wales, and Princess Augusta von Sachsen-Gotha was fine, and was, of course, related to the political background of the occasion. The choir of Winchester Cathedral, with four distinguished soloists, sang well enough, but the acoustics of the Georg-Friedrich-Händel-Halle were not kind to them, and the performance failed to sparkle. The other items were concerti grossi by Handel (Op. 6, No. 4) and Castrucci; some dull organ solos by Wilhelm Friedemann Bach, played by Wolfgang Kupke with a most curious and unappealing registration on the large instrument recently installed in the hall; Handel's organ concerto Op. 7, No. 6, played more stylishly by Gary Cooper on a chamber organ, and selected items from *Jephtha*. The concert as a whole left a rather unsatisfactory impression.

Among the operas were radically opposed new productions of *Rodrigo* and *Tamerlano*, and a revival of last year's *Radamisto*, with a new singer, Stephen Wallace, in the title-role. *Rodrigo*, directed by the former countertenor Axel Köhler, was another of those modern stagings played for laughs, with an excess of fussy and irrelevant stage business that distracts one from the singing –

although this was generally good, except for the extraordinary soprano of Robert Crowe (Rodrigo), a voice that seemed harsher and more prone to shrieking than when we heard him as Nerone in *Agrippina*: as Dr Johnson might have said, it is remarkable that it could be done at all at that pitch. But the stupidity and vulgarity of the stage action, which reached its nadir in some supposedly hilarious business involving a soiled baby's nappy, were a total turn-off. The audience, however, seemed to love it, and many must have gone out into the night saying, 'What fun Handel's operas are – just like pantomime'. One good thing is that a new score was used – the one being prepared by Rainer Heyink for the Halle edition (*HHA*), with the complete Act III and a reconstruction of the opening of Act I.

Tamerlano, on the other hand, was magnificent. Directed by Jonathan Miller in the lovely Goethe-Theater at Bad Lauchstädt, this production was at the other pole of performance practice and was sung by a fine cast, including Thomas Randle as Bajazet. The sumptuous costumes were based on 18th-century images of Oriental dress, and the stage action was minimal, which made the climactic scenes, where more movement is needed, that much more dramatic. The tragedies of Racine and his contemporaries, from whose traditions this libretto and many others of the period were derived, must have been acted like this. The singing and playing, by The English Concert directed by Trevor Pinnock, were superb, providing an enthralling experience of a great masterpiece.

Perhaps the action was at times a little too minimal, and the sets could have done with more props – a proper throne for the throne-room scene, for example, and a table for the supper scene. It was also a mistake to have only one interval, so that each half was too long and Handel's carefully contrived climaxes at the ends of Acts I and II were sabotaged, with

especially unfortunate consequences in Act II, which had to end with Asteria's 'Cor di padre' instead of Handel's last-minute (but masterly) substitution of 'Se potessi un di placare'. Apparently the three theatres presenting this production – Bad Lauchstädt, the Garnier (Paris) and Sadler's Wells (London) – insisted on this division.

Many readers will have seen the production at Sadler's Wells and have read English press reviews. What was interesting was the reaction of some of the German press and of critics who attended the Bad Lauchstädt performances. While some liked the production, others complained that this kind of performance meant that there was no 'production' at all – the singers 'just stood and sang'. For some of us this is precisely the point (Handel had no stage-director) and was one of the plusses of the show, even if we acknowledged that a little more might have been done on the acting side. Many, however, compared it unfavourably with the *Rodrigo* production, and I was verbally assaulted by one journalist at Bad Lauchstädt for daring to say that it was a fine performance: 'absolutely dreadful' was his verdict, in impeccable English. When someone informed him that I was the editor of the score, he spat angrily, "Editors should stick to editing" – rather than, so I concluded, having the temerity to pass judgment on things they can know nothing about.

The festival offered some interesting rarities. A semi-staged performance of Johann Friedrich Agricola's *Il filosofo convinto in amore*, first given in 1750 at Frederick the Great's court and now performed in the rococo Kursaal at Bad Lauchstädt, was a delight, a combination of spoken dialogue and very competently written music. We also had a concert performance of Johann Gottlieb Naumann's *Cora und Alonzo*, an opera about love and sacrifice among the Incas composed for Dresden in

1779. It is very pretty and sophisticated, with some fine wind-writing that must have seemed quite advanced at the time.

I missed John Eliot Gardiner's *Messiah*, which was very well received, but heard two other oratorios, including a superb rendering of *Belshazzar* in the Marktkirche, with the fine English tenor Mark Padmore in the title-role, well supported by other soloists and the Collegium Vocale Gent, conducted by Philippe Herreweghe. The following night, Padmore had to sing the title-role in *Jephtha* at short notice, which he did very well. This was conducted in the Cathedral by Howard Arman with the MDR (radio) choir and orchestra; the direction was rather slack, however, less impressive than in *Belshazzar* the evening before.

The last performance I saw was of Gluck's *Orfeo*, in its Vienna version of 1762 with the Dance of the Furies from the Paris version. It was mounted on the stage at Bad Lauchstädt, but the production was badly misconceived. The orchestra was on-stage with its back to the audience, so that the strongest sounds came from the horns in the back row. As Gluck's horn parts are no great shakes, this was rather trying, especially as the chorus was all but inaudible because they were mostly way up-stage. The American counter-tenor Johnny Maldonado sang well, but it was a dismal evening, mercifully quite short.

Much else happened in this huge festival: no reviewer could possibly have attended all the events. One major figure in Handel scholarship was especially honoured – Friedrich Chrysander, who died 100 years ago. There was a small but interesting exhibition about him in the Händelhaus, and several papers at the scholarly conference were devoted to his work. The theme of the conference was 'Händelforschung – Händelfestspiele', which suitably celebrated both Chrysander's colossal achieve-



ment and the 50th anniversary of the Halle festival. The keynote paper by Donald Burrows ('From Chrysander to 2001: The Progress of Handel Scholarship') was an excellent survey of Handel research in the 20th century.

Terence Best

HANDEL OPERA IN ENGLAND

PARTENOPE

Early Opera Company

The anti-heroic 'comedy' *Partenope* has been getting a good press recently. A new staging by Netia Jones for the Covent Garden Festival preceded the première of Igor Folwill's production at Göttingen (see above) by only one week. Both directors apparently believed that they had something original to say, but both were ironically let down by strikingly similar flaws. They confirmed that *Partenope* is not an *opera buffa*, and that its characters require credibility before humour. It was particularly annoying to watch Arsace fall helplessly in a heap on the floor every time he got upset, and I am convinced that Handel did not intend us to laugh during the rage aria 'Furibondo spira il vento'. But Jones disagreed, as did Folwill, both ruthlessly mocking the character with disappointing predictability. Hopefully there will one day be a production of *Partenope* in which Arsace is not an effeminate wimp but a guilty hero who, much to his own amazement, really still loves Rosmira.

Likewise, it would be refreshing for Emilio to be faithfully portrayed as an impetuous aristocrat forced to learn some manners, instead of a stereotypical bully or a Neanderthal imbecile. The Early Opera Company production was sung in a practical English translation, some of the text even being lifted directly from the 1730 wordbook, but toward the end

Arsace and Rosmira gave us a touching discussion about their feelings that was entirely fictional and superfluous.

Although Jeni Bern's singing was marvellous, *Partenope*'s image as a power-dressing career woman did not resemble a queen over whom princes might fight duels or start wars. The countertenor William Purefoy's Arsace looked ridiculous in a *Dad's Army* uniform but sang well, despite forgetting his lines in 'Sento amor con novi dardi'. The advertised Rosmira was withdrawn owing to illness, so Louise Mott sang her arias from the orchestra pit while another last-minute volunteer successfully mimed Rosmira's actions on stage. The tenor Stephen Rooke acted Emilio's role brilliantly, but his singing was variable. Diana Moore sang the trouser role of Armindo, and came across with credibility as *Partenope*'s eventual husband – one of the toughest tests in any production of the opera. The bass role of Ormonte was omitted without much loss to the plot, but if an expendable character is completely removed, how are his lines in ensembles to be sung? Yet the biggest stars were a troupe of tropical fish, shown on a giant screen, who upstaged everything else in Act II, despite some promising acting and singing from mere humans.

Christian Curnyn's tempos settled down after a shaky start and a ludicrously fast 'L'Amor ed il Destin'. Handel did not write top Cs very often, and it was a shame that one could only *almost* hear them amid the mad rush. The talented Early Opera Company orchestra demonstrated a respectable blend of style and sense but was far too small: there was a theorbo, and the oboists played recorders in the Act III sleep scene ('Ma quai note di mesti lamenti': one of the few places, incidentally, where Handel specifically designates the use of a theorbo in the autograph and performance manuscripts), but a lot of the scoring was simply omitted.

Partenope without horns, trumpets, or flutes is like tennis without a net – or a ball, for that matter. Perhaps the reasons were purely economic, but when are well-intentioned groups going to realise that Handel's operas do not work with a company of players more suited to Joshua Rifkin's *B Minor Mass*? Or did Tropical Fish TV take up too much of the budget?

AMADIGI

New Chamber Opera

This production of *Amadigi* was mounted in the Warden's Garden at New College, Oxford. The civilized clinking of wine glasses initially resembled that at a Glyndebourne picnic, without the tiresome inconvenience of having to enter an auditorium to hear the opera. The overture began when the audience was still chatting, and as they took their seats few people saw any good reason to let Handel spoil their socialising. I doubt whether a 1720s Haymarket audience fell into reverent silence immediately upon hearing the orchestra strike up, so this was an oddly distorted glimpse of authenticity that proved not in the least upsetting.

Michael Burden, well known for his writings on Purcell, has produced several baroque works for New Chamber Opera. On this occasion the action took place along a central strip of the garden, flanked on either side by the audience. A summer-house was a convenient piece of scenery, an obelisk symbolized the sorceress Melissa's power, and there was a fountain in the pond which, we were informed, was to play a crucial role.

Unfortunately, rain stopped play: during Melissa's 'Ah spietato! e non ti muove' the umbrellas went up, and the impressive soprano Miranda McDonnell could no longer see or hear the small orchestra, which was housed under a gazebo behind the audience. When the performers reached the end of the A section, they stopped. Such an interruption of one



of the opera's best arias was much lamented, but after moving into the college's famous chapel, Melissa carried on with the B section twenty minutes later and finished the aria to great applause. One might think that such an event would eclipse the rest of the work, but this charming small-scale production of Handel's 'magic' opera turned out to be a magical antidote to run-of-the-mill opera-house Handel.

The work was sung in an English version by Andrew Jones, but the sentiments of the original libretto were thoroughly and faithfully preserved. We so rarely see a Handel opera performed simply, that a performance such as this shines like a beacon. Although the orchestra was very small, and an oboe played the florid trumpet part in 'Desterò dall'empia dite', the playing was delightful and always appropriate to the drama. In an intimate and small-scale performance some compromises need not be condemned.

A uniformly excellent team of singers employed natural gestures, and the central conflict between true love and jealousy was allowed to flow from Handel's music unhindered by foolish characterisation. Dardano's 'Pena tiranna io sento al core' was particularly beautifully sung by countertenor Mark Chambers, while Victoria Joyce's performance as Oriana was ideal – one could believe that friends could become bitter rivals and mortal enemies over her, and that a jealous sorceress could imprison her in a tower. The sorcery itself was not neglected, either: metal sheets were wobbled to create howling wind effects, and masked Furies dressed like volcanic Papagenos encircled the intrepid lovers. This faithful and loving performance of *Amadigi* proved how unnecessary gimmicks and concepts are in a Handel opera production. If only wealthier and more familiar organisations would follow New Chamber Opera's example.

David Vickers

CANONS PARK, EDGWARE

The London Borough of Harrow is developing a project for the restoration of Canons Park, which was established in the early 18th century around the opulent seat of James Brydges, first Duke of Chandos, Handel's sometime patron. In addition to restoring the park, the project will involve repairing historic structures, reinstating original planned vistas, replanting a double row of oaks along the processional route from Chandos Place to St Lawrence's (the parish church on the duke's estate), repairing railings around the church and reinstating an 18th-century gate to the churchyard. The project will cost just over £1 million, and grant aid is being sought from the Heritage Lottery Fund and English Heritage. Readers are encouraged to visit this under-used and under-recognized public park. Offers of assistance or expressions of interest may be addressed to Amy Hunt, Conservation Manager, London Borough of Harrow Environmental Services, PO Box 37, Civic Centre, Harrow, HA1 2UY; tel: 020 8424 1468; email: Amy.Hunt@harrow.gov.uk.

HANDEL HOUSE MUSEUM

No. 25 Brook Street, the London home of George Frideric Handel, will open as a public museum on Thursday 8 November, bringing to fruition many long years of dedicated work. The Museum will be open from Tuesday to Sunday, but closed on Monday. The first issue of the Handel House Museum News (September 2001) includes information on the art, furniture, curtains and harpsichords in the House, as well as on the forthcoming Events and Education programmes; for further information, telephone: 020 7495 1685; email: mail@handelhouse.org; see website www.handelhouse.org. The opening will be marked on 22 November (St Cecilia's day) by a Celebration Concert at 7.00 pm in St George's,

Hanover Square, in which many leading Handel interpreters have agreed to perform; telephone booking on 020 8244 3561.

HANDEL INSTITUTE AWARDS

The Council of The Handel Institute is pleased to announce research awards to: Berta Joncus (Oxford), for work on the career of Kitty Clive, London's most famous comic singer-actress of the mid-18th century; and Olga Komok (St Petersburg), for research into London concert life in the first third of the 18th century.

STUDY DAY and CONFERENCE

The Handel Institute plans to hold a study day in London on 9 March 2002, to provide a background to the composer's setting of the Brookes Passion and his oratorio *Esther*, both of which are to be performed in the London Handel Festival.

The next Handel Institute conference will take place in London in late November 2002; the theme will be Handel in Houses and Cities – an exploration of the places (in the broadest sense) where the composer lived and worked, and of his relation to them. The Hon. Secretary (address below) would be happy to provide further information on either event, when available, or to receive (by 1 March) offers or abstracts (about 100 words) of conference papers (about 25 minutes).

The Handel Institute is a registered charity (no. 296615). Correspondence relating to the Newsletter should be sent to the editor, Professor Colin Timms, Barber Institute, University of Birmingham, Edgbaston, Birmingham, B15 2TS, England (C.R.Timms@bham.ac.uk). All other correspondence should be addressed to the Hon. Secretary, Dr Elizabeth Gibson, The Red House, Aldeburgh, Suffolk, IP15 5PZ (elizabeth@gibson.free-online.co.uk).