



Nicholas McGegan pays a personal tribute, in this issue, to the well-known musicologist (but little-known Handel-lover) Philip Brett, who died in October. We begin, however, with two scholarly articles on Handel's choral and orchestral works of the mid-1730s. Ruth Smith sheds new light on the power and significance of Handel's setting of *Alexander's Feast*, a work that Brett performed, and Donald Burrows argues that it

was in 1735 that Handel first incorporated Italian roles into his oratorio performances. Ellen Harris responds to Andrew Jones's review (last issue, *Newsletter*, 13/2) of her edition of Handel cantatas from manuscripts in the Bodleian Library, and Andrew Jones replies.

Colin Timms

## TIMOTHEUS, ALEXANDER, SEMELE AND HANDEL

During the Oxford Encenia of 1733, at which Handel gave performances of his oratorios and premiered *Athalia*, Henry Baynbrigge Buckeridge, gentleman commoner of St John's, recited an ode in praise of Handel's sacred music.<sup>1</sup> The first two stanzas recall the power of the music of the most famous musicians in ancient history, Orpheus and Timotheus, in order then to celebrate Handel's music as being far more persuasive. The point of the distinction is not just Handel's greater compositional gifts, but the importance of the purpose of music. The music of Orpheus and Timotheus is secular and of doubtful worth, Handel's is sacred and of superior worth. This relative valuation of secular and sacred music was a commonplace of contemporary conservative music theory.<sup>2</sup>

The stanza about Timotheus in Buckeridge's ode

referred to his musical conquest of Alexander, conqueror of the world. In seventeenth- and eighteenth-century England Alexander was known for his unparalleled conquests and moments of exemplary generosity, but he had a largely negative press as a rash, vainglorious destroyer, a drunk, a womaniser and a murdering friend with a very unheroic tendency to let his feelings be played on.<sup>3</sup> Timotheus' playing on them was a story so well known that it could be referred to without explanation (as in Buckeridge's ode).<sup>4</sup> In 1697 Dryden had made it the subject of his St Cecilia Ode *Alexander's Feast*.

I have shown elsewhere how that poem tells the story of Timotheus' musical dominance in order to illustrate, magnificently, the conventional distinction between (inferior) secular music and (superior) sacred music.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Otto Erich Deutsch, *Handel: A Documentary Biography* (London, 1955), 320-22; Thomas McGarry, 'New Accounts of Handel and the Oxford Act', *The Handel Institute Newsletter*, 13/1 (Spring 2002), [6-7], showing that the oratorio on the day of Buckeridge's ode was *Esther*, and that *Athalia* was premiered on 10 July. I am grateful to Thomas McGarry for helpful comments on the first draft of this paper.

<sup>2</sup> See, for example, Ruth Smith, *Handel's Oratorios and Eighteenth-Century Thought* (Cambridge, 1995), 157-60.

<sup>3</sup> George C. Brauer jnr, 'Alexander in England: the Conqueror's Reputation in the Late Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries', *The*

*Classical Journal*, 76 (1980-81), 34-47; Richard G. King, 'Classical History and Handel's *Alessandro*', *Music and Letters*, 77 (1996), 34-63.

<sup>4</sup> James Gibbs, preface to Robert South, *Musica Incantans: or, The Power of Music* (London, 1700), cited in Robert P. MacCubbin, 'The Ironies of Dryden's "Alexander's Feast; or the Power of Musique": Text and Contexts', *Mosaic*, 18 (1985), 33-47.

<sup>5</sup> 'The Argument and Contexts of Dryden's *Alexander's Feast*', *SEL: Studies in English Literature*, 18 (1978), 465-90. By 1733 Timotheus' mastery would also have been familiar to literate English audiences from Alexander Pope's *An Essay on Criticism* (London, 1711), lines 374-83, praising Dryden's ode.

The musician has enormous potential power: to motivate the listener. Timotheus moves his listener, Alexander, first to silliness, then to absurdity, then to hooliganism. The culmination of his persuasiveness is Alexander's destruction of the Persian capital Persepolis, generally regarded as one of the most barbaric acts in ancient history. Timotheus is the paradigm of the morally irresponsible musician. He is aware of what he is doing; he is calculating; he is the musician as criminal. St Cecilia is introduced at the conclusion of the ode as corrective and exemplar. The musician's highest calling is to move the listener to holiness and virtue through religious music.

In the familiar account of Timotheus' reduction of the hero to a ridiculous puppet, Alexander is goaded to anger and then as quickly calmed down again. Dryden darkens the plot by reversing the sequence – Timotheus sends the king into a stupor and then rouses him to rage and to vengeance<sup>6</sup> – and makes the musician responsible for the culminating act of destruction. Dryden had a precedent in Timotheus' alleged actual arraignment for criminal moral irresponsibility and corruption. The historical Timotheus (Greek, from Miletus, 446-357 BC, not a contemporary of Alexander) was known from antiquity onwards as a daring and expressive musical innovator. He himself declared, 'I sing not the old songs, for my new songs are better; a young Zeus reigns, and Cronos' rule was long ago; away with the ancient Muse!'<sup>7</sup> According to Boethius, his innovations earned him a state trial in Sparta: in Book 1, chapter 1, of his *De institutione musica*, Boethius printed the state's supposed decree against Timotheus, which ordered him to dismantle his lyre and banished him from Sparta. Boethius' *De musica* was required reading for the Oxford BMus,<sup>8</sup> and by the time that Handel set Dryden's poem about Timotheus (*Alexander's Feast*, 1736) the decree had become available to the English reading public who had no Latin.

In 1724 Nicholas Tindal published an English translation of a set of essays on cultural aspects of Bible history by the French divine Augustin Calmet, which did sufficiently well to have a second edition the following year. In the essay entitled 'Dissertation concerning the Musical Instruments of the Hebrews', Calmet recounted the Spartan government's response to Timotheus' musical adventurism:<sup>9</sup>

The [Greek] *Lyra* at first had no more than three

Strings; afterwards a fourth was added, and at last they made them up seven. *Timotheus* coming to *Lacedæmonia* [Sparta] about some six hundred Years before the Birth of *Christ*, put on three more. But the *Ephori*, or Magistrates of *Sparta*, fined him for it, and obliged him before the whole Assembly, to take off the three Strings he had added; and then they hung up his *Lyra* in a publick Place, and banish'd him from *Sparta*. The words of the *Decree* pronounc'd against him are very remarkable:

WHEREAS *Timotheus* the *Melesian*, upon his Arrival in our City, out of a Contempt of our Ancient Way of playing upon Musical Instruments, and contrary to the received Usage and Custom of having seven Strings to the *Lyra*, has gone and added a much greater Number, and by that Means has corrupted the Ears of our Youth, and chang'd the Form and Nature of our Musick, which from being simple, plain, and grave, is now become too diversify'd, light and airy: And whereas he is likewise accus'd of spreading pernicious Doctrines in relation to the *Eleusinian Rites* of *Ceres*, and of having represented, before the Eyes of young People, the Pains of *Semele* in Travail, after an unbecoming and indecent Manner: It is agreed by the King and the *Ephori*, that *Timotheus* be forthwith condemn'd to cut off all superfluous Strings from his *Lyra*, and to leave no more than seven remaining: To the end all Persons may be deterr'd by his Punishment, from introducing into *Sparta* ill Customs and Usages, and to the End the Honour of the Sacred Rites may not be expos'd to ridicule.

There are several points in the decree which parallel writing on music in early eighteenth-century England and suggest why Tindal would have thought it interesting ('very remarkable') to a modern audience:

- contrast of 'plain, simple, grave' music (which is native, old, and good) with 'diversify'd, light, airy' music (which is foreign, new, and bad);
- association of old music with the 'right kind' of religious music;
- association of old music with 'our' national style of music, and resistance to change;
- fear of the corrupting power of musical innovation, especially in corrupting the young;

<sup>6</sup> Douglas Murray, 'Dryden's Inversion to Disorder in *Alexander's Feast*', *Scriblerian*, 16 (1984), 182.

<sup>7</sup> Warren Anderson / Thomas J. Mathiesen, 'Timotheus', *New Grove Dictionary of Music*, 2nd edn (2001), give an excellent account of Timotheus' innovations, style, position in Greek music and reputation.

<sup>8</sup> P. M. Gouk, 'Music', *The History of the University of Oxford*, iv: *Seventeenth-Century Oxford*, ed. Nicholas Tyache (Oxford, 1997), 621-40, at 622.

<sup>9</sup> Augustin Calmet, 'Dissertation concerning the Musical Instruments of the [ancient] Hebrews', in *Antiquities Sacred and Profane: or, A Collection of Curious and Critical Dissertations on the Old and New Testament*, trans. Nicholas Tindal (London, 1724, 2/1725), 78-9.



- fear of the corrupting power of musical expressiveness;
- the new style being introduced by a foreigner (Timotheus).

All these are terms of contrast and value used by English early eighteenth-century critics and theorists. The only music of Sparta was religious music, and the decree would have had particular meaning for conservative church music composers and writers, among whom the contrast of modern ‘airy’ and old ‘grave’ music was a staple lament.<sup>10</sup> But the application was wider than church music.

The decree was taken up a few months later to make the application to modern dramatic music, and in a more popular publication. On 12 February 1725, no. 94 of *The Plain Dealer*, published by Handel’s one-time collaborator Aaron Hill and his associate William Popple, called for truly dramatic music in place of ‘our emasculating present Taste, of the *Italian* Luxury, and *Wantonness* of *Musick*’, complained that ‘the Martial Spirit of our Nation, is effeminated, and gradually relax’d, by the Influence of this softening *Syren*’, and cited Cicero to the effect that ‘the Good or evil, in a State, depends greatly on the MUSICK, that is most encourag’d in it’, the worst kind being ‘Light and Wanton’, the best ‘Grave and Masculine’.<sup>11</sup> Praising the justly celebrated ‘Spartan Plainness and Austerity’ and ‘that Wise People’s Rigour, against *Innovation*’, especially introduction of ‘the modish Luxuries of their Neighbours’, the author approvingly quoted the order against Timotheus. Music as a shaper and an index of national character was a recurrent topic in the middle years of the eighteenth century,<sup>12</sup> and an article about it in another journal, *Common Sense* (14 October 1738),<sup>13</sup> brought together the story of Timotheus’ effect on Alexander, Handel’s account of the story in his *Alexander’s Feast*, and Handel’s possible shaping of British character with his music, stressing the musician’s need to identify with the nation state’s best interests.

The *Plain Dealer* did not, however, cite (as Tindal did)

the claim in the decree that Timotheus staged a music drama ending with the death in childbirth of Semele, ‘after an unbecoming and indecent manner’, which I think has not previously been noticed in Handel studies. Handel’s own *Semele* (1744) ends with a version of the same event – *in flagrante* rather than in travail, and closer to the myth.<sup>14</sup> Besides being a record of the first known music drama about Semele and providing Handel with a very ancient precedent, the decree marks the topic as outrageous. The condemnation by classical antiquity (as well as the raciness of Congreve’s original libretto) could help to explain the scholarly Jennens’ categorisation of Handel’s *Semele* as ‘a bawdy opera’ and Dr Delany’s non-attendance on grounds of profanity.<sup>15</sup> Tindal’s publication was not the only mention of Timotheus’ opera available to the eighteenth-century reader; Calmet footnoted the decree with a reference both to Boethius and to Isaac Casaubon’s *Animadversionum in Athenaei Dipnosophistas* (1600), of which Jennens had a copy.<sup>16</sup>

In his lifetime Handel was frequently compared (as Purcell had been) with Orpheus, most affecting of musicians until Handel surpassed him. In Buckeridge’s ode, and, naturally, by others after he had set *Alexander’s Feast*, Handel was compared with Timotheus, in similar terms. Timotheus was phenomenally able to instil and sway human emotions; Handel out-composes him. It is significant (and has not, so far as I know, been previously noted) that at the end of his ode Dryden reports Cecilia to have been, like Timotheus, a musical innovator. Timotheus increased the compass of the lyre; St Cecilia, in inventing the organ, ‘Enlarg’d the former narrow Bounds, / And added Length to solemn Sounds’, like Timotheus physically extending music’s power. But Cecilia outshines Timotheus in innovation as well as motivation: he only *extended* the compass of the lyre, she *invented* the most extensive and variously-sounding instrument ever known (‘Inventress of the Vocal Frame’). So Dryden makes clear that he does not follow the Spartans in condemning Timotheus for his expressiveness or novelty; it is the use to which

<sup>10</sup> ‘A strong under-current of counter-taste’ in England during the eighteenth century, identified by Percy Lovell, ‘“Ancient” Music in Eighteenth-Century England’, *Music and Letters*, 60 (1979), 401–15, and explored by William Weber, *The Rise of Musical Classics in Eighteenth-Century England* (Oxford, 1992), esp. ch. 2. See also Christopher Hogwood, ‘Thomas Tudway’s History of Music’, in *Music in Eighteenth-Century England: Essays in Memory of Charles Cudworth*, ed. Christopher Hogwood and Richard Luckett (Cambridge, 1983), 19–47, at 26 and 42; John Wilson ed., *Roger North on Music* (London, 1959), 266–8; Smith, *Handel’s Oratorios*, 70–88.

<sup>11</sup> For further critiques in this period of Italian opera as effete and corrupting, see Thomas McGahey, ‘“Warbling Eunuchs”: Opera, Gender, and Sexuality on the London Stage’, *Restoration and Eighteenth-Century Theatre Research*, 7, n.s. (1992), 1–22; idem,

‘Gendering Opera: Italian Opera as the Feminine “Other” in England, 1700–42’, *Journal of Musicological Research*, 14 (1994), 17–34.

<sup>12</sup> See now especially T. C. W. Blanning, *The Culture of Power and the Power of Culture: Old Regime Europe 1660–1789* (Oxford, 2002), 271–3.

<sup>13</sup> Partial citation in Deutsch, *Documentary Biography*, 468–9.

<sup>14</sup> For comment on a recent production of Handel’s *Semele* that emphasised Semele’s conflagration and omitted her (or rather, Zeus’) travail, see Robert Ketterer, ‘*Semele*’, *Newsletter of the American Handel Society*, 17/2 (August 2002).

<sup>15</sup> Winton Dean, ‘Charles Jennens’ Marginalia to Mainwaring’s Life of Handel’, *Music and Letters*, 53 (1972), 160–64; Deutsch, *Documentary Biography*, 584.

<sup>16</sup> See Ruth Smith, ‘The Achievements of Charles Jennens’, *Music and Letters*, 70 (1989), 161–90, at 171, n. 69.

Timotheus puts his music that condemns him.

As has frequently been noted,<sup>17</sup> in making a modern musical setting of Dryden's description of Timotheus' musical prowess, Handel was inevitably courting comparison, a comparison that his librettist eagerly invited:<sup>18</sup>

If this Entertainment can, in the least degree, give Satisfaction to the real Judges of Poetry or Musick, I shall think myself happy in having promoted it; being persuaded, that it is next to an Improbability, to offer the World any thing in those Arts more perfect, than the united Labours and utmost Efforts of Dryden and a Handel.

When they were using the parallel as more than a passing term of praise for Handel's expressiveness,<sup>19</sup> the composer's admirers followed Dryden in the discrimination with which they applied the comparison. Not only was Handel's music even more effective than Timotheus', his superiority was moral as well as technical. In his preface to the 1739 wordbook of his libretto of *Alexander's Feast*, Newburgh Hamilton, in common with previous writers in praise of Handel, celebrates him for improving men.<sup>20</sup> In Dryden's poem, which had an immense reputation as a lyric masterpiece and which Hamilton respectfully left substantively unaltered, Timotheus roused Alexander's passions, drove him to a frenzy of anger, played on his pride (which had famously caused him to kill his friend), instilled a spurious maudlin grief in him, made him destroy rather than fight, and sent him into a lascivious but impotent swoon over his whore. In his dedicatory poem Hamilton presents Handel doing the opposite, point for point:<sup>21</sup>

Be ever Your's (my Friend) the God-like Art,  
To calm the Passions, and improve the Heart;  
The Tyrant's Rage, and Hell-born Pride controul,  
Or sweetly sooth to Peace the mourning Soul;  
With martial Warmth the Hero's Breast inspire,  
Or fan new-kindling Love to chaste Desire.

But Hamilton does not, any more than Dryden did, imply criticism of Timotheus' modernism. Handel, whose attitude to (genuinely) 'ancient' music was as dismissive as Timotheus',<sup>22</sup> and who was constantly pushing out the bounds of genre and expressiveness, chose *Alexander's Feast* to embody what could be called his most innovative, certainly least conventional, work to date. As first performed, *Alexander's Feast* included concerted instrumental music, solo instrumental concertos, and settings of both English and Italian words including recitative, arioso, arias, duets and choruses, and employed Italian, French, German and English styles, up to seven-part chorus and an orchestra including harp, lute, lyricord, recorders, oboes, bassoons, horns, trumpets, drums and, of course, organ. In his music and through his librettist-mouthpiece Handel could be heard challenging Timotheus on every point: scale, innovation, motivation, and effectiveness.

Ruth Smith

## AWARDS FOR RESEARCH

Applications are invited for **Handel Institute Awards** to assist in the furtherance of research projects involving the music or life of **George Frideric Handel** or his contemporaries or associates. One or more awards may be offered, up to a total of £1,000. The deadline for the receipt of applications is **1 September 2003**. For further information, please contact the Hon. Secretary:

Dr Elizabeth Gibson,  
The Red House, Aldeburgh,  
Suffolk, IP15 5PZ  
Email: elizabeth@gibsons.free-online.co.uk

<sup>17</sup> Most recently by Suzanne Aspden, "'Fam'd Handel Breathing, though Transform'd to Stone': The Composer as Monument", *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, 55 (2002), 39–90.

<sup>18</sup> Newburgh Hamilton, preface to wordbook of *Alexander's Feast* (1736), cited in Deutsch, *Documentary Biography*, 399.

<sup>19</sup> For which see, for example, James Harris to John Upton, 22 April 1738, *Music and Theatre in Handel's World: The Family Papers of James Harris 1732–1780*, ed. Donald Burrows and Rosemary Dunhill (Oxford, 2002), 47. The comparison outlasted the initial éclat of Handel's setting of Dryden's poem: see *An Ode to Mr Handel* (London, 1745), Deutsch, *Documentary*

*Biography*, 614–18, lines 35–7, and Thomas McGahey, 'Handel, Prince Frederick, and the Opera of the Nobility Reconsidered', *Göttinger Händel-Beiträge*, 7 (1998), 156–78, at 69–70.

<sup>20</sup> For Handel's potential to make people better, see Smith, *Handel's Oratorios*, 167–9, 209–10.

<sup>21</sup> Deutsch, *Documentary Biography*, 476. According to Aspden, "'Fam'd Handel'", 64–5, Hamilton suggests that 'Handel the "improver" ... affects the social virtues appropriate to a modern nation'.

<sup>22</sup> Letter to Johann Mattheson, 24 February 1719, cited in Deutsch, *Documentary Biography*, 86–8.



## CARESTINI AND THE ITALIAN MOVEMENTS IN HANDEL'S ENGLISH ORATORIOS

In a paper read at the Handel Institute conference in 1993 I drew attention to a printed leaf, inserted into a copy of the wordbook for *Athalia* dated 1733 and headed 'Part of SIGNOR CARESTINI in *Italian*', which clearly related to the first London performances of that oratorio in 1735.<sup>1</sup> I suggested that several Italian movements, hitherto tentatively dated 1737 and associated mainly with *Esther*, were in fact composed in 1735 and motivated by Handel's wish to give Carestini, the leading man (castrato) in his opera company, a musical role in the English oratorios featured in March-April 1735 during Handel's season at Covent Garden. It seemed likely that some of the arias might have been used in both *Esther* and *Athalia*, and the inserted leaf for *Athalia* indicated that the arias were complemented by new Italian recitatives and by the performance of some pre-existing English arias furnished with Italian texts.

Recently, while reading through the London newspapers for 1735 in connection with the preparation of a new edition of the opera *Ariodante* for the *Hallische Händel-Ausgabe*, I came across a reference that seems to support my interpretation. A paragraph in *The London Daily Post and General Advertiser* of 4 March 1735 reads as follows:

We hear that Mr Handel has prepar'd several Oratorios, which are to be perform'd this Lent, and has made several Additions to that of *Esther*, in which the Part that Signior Carastini is to perform, is intirely new; as also

two Concerto's for the Organ, in which Mr Handel will perform the Solo Parts. The whole, excepting the Part of Signior Carastini, is to be perform'd in English.

The London newspaper concerned was the one that carried the principal advertisements for London theatrical performances this season, including Handel's. The paragraph was not included in Otto Erich Deutsch's *Handel: A Documentary Biography* (1955): it had possibly eluded him because it occurred in the course of the general news section of the paper.

In 1735 Handel gave his oratorios in the sequence *Esther*, *Deborah*, *Athalia*; no wordbook dated 1735 is known for any of these performances. So far as we can tell, it seems probable that for *Esther* and *Deborah*, as for *Athalia*, remaining stocks of wordbooks from previous years may have been sold with insert sheets similar to that in the *Athalia* wordbook. The '1732' *Esther* wordbook and the '1733' wordbook for *Deborah* may thus have continued in use. No copy of the *Esther* wordbook with a similar inserted page naming Carestini is presently known, nor any copy of the *Deborah* wordbook, though three of the surviving exemplars of the latter incorporate various forms of amendment that probably relate to Handel's performances some time between 1733 and the next dated wordbook for *Deborah* in 1744.

However, the existence of the inserted page in *Athalia* opens up a question about a similar leaf that is bound into the copy of the 1744 *Deborah* wordbook in the Schoelcher Collection at the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris.<sup>2</sup> Schoelcher himself thought that the leaf might have been derived from a wordbook

of the 1730s and had subsequently been misbound into the 1744 copy, but Winton Dean suggested (in *Handel's Dramatic Oratorios and Masques* (1959), 243-4) that it did indeed refer to 1744, relating to a parallel insertion of Italian movements into *Semele* shortly afterwards.

As recently as last year I followed Dean's interpretation in the commentary to one of the extracts from the correspondence of James Harris.<sup>3</sup> It now seems to me more probable that the inserted leaf, headed 'ALTERATIONS sung in *Italian*', did indeed originate in 1735, providing an Italian-language role for Carestini as Barak and also an Italian-language role for another singer as Sisera. The print style of the leaf closely matches that of the 1735 *Athalia* leaf, and the page-number references to the text of the main wordbook relate better to the 1733 issue of *Deborah* than to that of 1744.

If the *Deborah* leaf does indeed date from 1735, it helps us to reconstruct something of the rather obscure performing history of that oratorio during the 1730s. Taken as evidence in conjunction with the implications of the newspaper paragraph, it suggests that Handel performed *Deborah* in all-English versions not only in London and Oxford in 1733, but also in his single London revival in 1734. Most likely in 1734 Handel thought it impractical to incorporate Carestini into his performance of *Deborah*: it was in the next season that Italian roles were grafted into his English oratorio performances, as part of a consistent and novel policy to give his audiences the best of both worlds.

Donald Burrows

<sup>1</sup> An expanded version of this paper was published in Klaus Hortschansky and Konstanze Musketa (eds.), *Georg Friedrich Händel – Ein Lebensinhalt* (Halle an der Saale, 1995); see also my study of the 1735

revival of *Athalia* in David Wyn Jones (ed.), *Music in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Aldershot, 2000).

<sup>2</sup> I thank David Vickers for pointing this out to me.

<sup>3</sup> *Music and Theatre in Handel's World: The Family Papers of James Harris 1732-1780*, ed. Donald Burrows and Rosemary Dunhill (Oxford, 2002), 205.

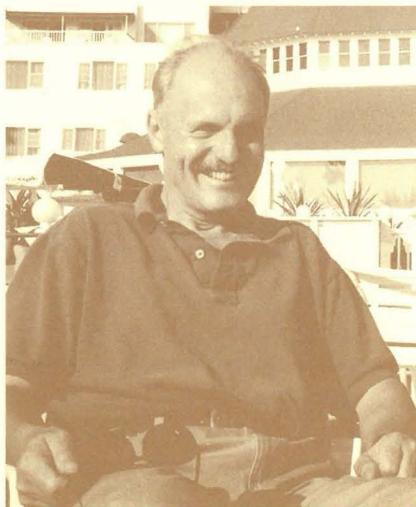
## PHILIP BRETT (1937-2002)

### AN UNSUNG HANDELIAN

It was a sad day for many of us, in the UK and the US, when Philip Brett passed away. His love of music, as a performer and musicologist, ensured that he had a very wide circle of friends on both sides of the Atlantic. Renaissance scholars knew him as an expert on William Byrd, while for those studying more modern music he was one of the leading lights on the subject of Benjamin Britten. For those interested in the politics and social history of music he led the field in Queer Studies. In all these areas he was a meticulous academic, but one who was not afraid to rock a few boats or puncture a bubble or two of scholarly hypocrisy!

Others who knew him at Cambridge, or students in his various areas of expertise, can discuss his scholarly work far better than I. I shall confine myself to personal reminiscences, which, appropriately enough, are mostly concerned with Handel. Almost as soon as he came to the University of California at Berkeley, Philip got involved in practical music-making. It must be said that the faculties of many American universities do not smile on the performance of music within their hallowed walls. Those professors brought up in the starchy and rather Teutonic traditions that used to be found on the East Coast frowned on the playing of music, especially by other faculty members. Some regard it as a lesser art, rather as a botanist might feel about a gardener. Others are simply jealous and sniffily dismissive, perhaps as a way of covering up their own shortcomings. After all, a sexologist is not automatically a great lover!

Philip, of course, could not have cared less, and the atmosphere at Cal was generally most genial. There were other faculty members, like Alan Curtis, who were happy to pitch in. As a result, there was a very great



Philip Brett

photo Ruth Smith

deal of music being played and sung by students, graduates and faculty alike. Philip's main responsibility was the University Chorus, which also sported a Chamber Choir. With these groups he performed a great number of works, including several pieces by Handel. All these happened before I moved to Berkeley, but former students remember two performances in particular. One was *Susanna*, and the other the *Ode on St Cecilia's Day*.

Both were given in the early 1970s, not long after he arrived. At that time it was not easy to get hold of performing materials for an obscure work like *Susanna*, but Philip managed it and gave what was probably a US première. One of the girls in the chorus was a young soprano called Jill Feldman, who went on to have a great career in France, singing with Bill Christie. Around this time people were beginning to experiment with original instruments, so Philip, not wishing to be left out, incorporated as many as he could into his orchestra for the performance of the *Ode*. The results would probably not satisfy us today, but it was a promising start.

I went to Berkeley in 1985 as musical director of the Philharmonia Baroque orchestra, a group that had been established in 1981 by Laurette Golberg. Philip was a regular continuo player, and whenever we

needed a chorus he would lend the Chamber Choir of the University. As a result I tried to find several opportunities each year to invite him to bring over the choir. In 1986 we performed *L'Allegro*, and in the following seasons we gave the *Ode on St Cecilia's Day*, *Alexander's Feast*, *Susanna* and *Messiah*; the last two resulted in recordings.

*Susanna* was actually recorded live over several performances, with a 'patch' session afterwards to smooth over any remaining rough spots. As it happened, this turned out to be very necessary, since on the first concert day it rained. This is a relatively rare event in September in California. Several members of the audience brought umbrellas into the hall, and these they managed to drop in many of the quietest passages, probably as a result of trying to hard not to! The recording did well and was nominated in the USA for a 'Grammy' in the Choral Music category, and it won a *Gramophone* award in the UK. Philip's contribution was to direct a chorus whose diction was exemplary and dramatic, besides playing the organ in the orchestra. He performed the same double act for the *Messiah* recording a few years later. In the meantime we had also recorded Corelli's *Concerti grossi*, op. 6, in which, also, he played continuo with great flair.

Although I doubt whether Philip would have classed himself as a virtuoso. He was always ready to play the occasional solo. He loved the organ concertos of Handel, and we gave several performances during his last years in Berkeley. When he decided to leave, after about twenty years at Cal, we were shocked and surprised. It was, however, typical that he should choose to move to a less prestigious university in order to be together with his partner, George Haggerty, with whom he wrote an article on *Athalia* (*Music & Letters*, 68 (1987), 112-27). They would make the occasional return visit, but for the



last decade of his life his interests were centred in Southern California, first at Riverside and finally at Los Angeles.

His successor, John Butt, continued the performance traditions and standards set by Philip and added his own virtuosity on the organ and harpsichord. Nevertheless, Philip remained sorely missed. There was a lingering hope that he might one day return or choose to retire somewhere nearby, so that we could have the pleasure at least of seeing him and enjoying his witty and erudite conversation. But sadly it was not to be. The harrowing news of his final weeks was widely disseminated among his friends around the globe. All of us who knew him have lost a great friend and colleague; the wider world has lost an excellent scholar, musician and human being.

Nicholas McGegan

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## HANDEL'S CANTATAS FOR ALTO AND CONTINUO

Ed. Ellen T. Harris (OUP, 2001)

Professor Harris responds to  
Andrew Jones's review

I am grateful for the notice of my edition in the Autumn 2002 issue of the *Newsletter* and for the kind praise that Andrew Jones offers for a number of its attributes. However, he also raises concerns about my use of the Bodleian MSS Mus. d. 61 and 62 as a primary source, especially with regard to the eight cantatas that also survive in autograph. He writes, 'Fidelity to a copyist rather than respect for the composer is a debatable policy'. I should like to respond to this statement (on which a number of Jones's specific criticisms rest).

Obviously, a composer's autograph

manuscript takes priority in terms of creating a correct and critical reading of a musical text. My decision to present readings based on the Bodleian volumes instead of the autographs derived from two considerations. First, the continuo cantatas will appear in a critical edition as part of the *Hallische Händel-Ausgabe*, edited by Andrew Jones. I look forward to the appearance of these volumes and saw no reason to anticipate them.

Second, the Bodleian cantata volumes represent an important and unique source. Not only is this collection the earliest of its kind in England, predating the later group of interrelated, 'atelier' copies by decades, but it also contains a unique set of cantatas that includes more works for alto (more generally, low treble) voice than any other collection made at any other time. Two cantatas appear here in unique transcriptions for alto. The collection also contains unique ornamentation. Both the range and the ornamentation may have been specially intended for Elizabeth Legh, the patron for whom the volumes were copied. Miss Legh was an amateur musician; she played the harpsichord and may also have sung. Perhaps Handel himself oversaw the inclusion of transpositions and ornamentation for her use, but, regardless, the Bodleian cantata collection represents an important historical document, providing a specific example of the reception and alteration of Handel's cantatas during his lifetime.

Editing from the Bodleian cantata collection does not imply disrespect for Handel. The musical score, even the composer's autograph, does not permanently fix a musical work. We can no longer replay the performances that Handel heard (in terms of ornamentation, key, rhythmic nuance, timbre, etc.), but we do have musical documents that illustrate some of the flexibility inherent in the performing tradition. The Bodleian cantata collection represents just such a

document and, I believe, deserves separate publication. Comparison with the autograph versions will be facilitated once the *HHA* cantata volumes, edited by Jones, become available.

### Dr Jones replies

Ellen Harris is quite right to stress the importance and intrinsic interest of the two volumes from Elizabeth Legh's collection that are now housed in the Bodleian Library. And as an illustration of 'the flexibility inherent in the performing tradition', her publication of the ornamented version of the first aria in *Dolc'è pur d'amor l'affanno* is to be welcomed, as I said in my review.

She describes the Bodleian cantata collection as 'an important historical document, providing a specific example of the reception and alteration of Handel's cantatas during his lifetime'. However, if her primary intention was to make this document available to musicians, would it not have been more useful and illuminating to publish all fifty-five cantatas, rather than just the sixteen for alto? And even with this intention in mind, it would presumably still be necessary to distinguish between flexibility in the performing tradition and the more mundane matter of scribal error – unless one took the decision to present diplomatic editions.

Harris does make this distinction, but – ironically – she occasionally reaches wrong conclusions. Continuo figurings believed to be incorrect, for example, are printed in round brackets, and the 'corrected' realisations are notated musically; but some of these 'corrections' are simply wrong: in the review I mentioned sixteen such mistakes in *Son gelsomino*.

Harris's answer to the question in my second paragraph would probably be, at least in part: "but I also wanted to provide a volume of Handel



continuo cantatas for altos to sing". In this respect, too, I welcomed the publication in my review. But behind my criticisms lay a serious concern: how will the authorship of the cantatas be described when they are performed, whether live or in recordings? Both the cover and the title-page are commendably explicit about the basis of the editions: *G. F. Handel[:] Cantatas for alto and continuo[.] 16 Alto Cantatas from the manuscripts in the Bodleian Library, Oxford*. I suspect, however, that neither performers nor concert promoters nor record producers will appreciate the significance of the important preposition 'from' in the middle of the title; they are more likely to assume that the music as printed represents Handel's intentions (I am referring here to the most fundamental level of intentionality: the pitch and duration of notes), and will simply ascribe the cantatas to him. For the most part this will be unproblematical, since the Legh manuscripts are reasonably accurate. But there are differences from the autographs, and I remain concerned that versions that differ – however slightly – from Handel's should be presented as his in performance. Neither in her edition nor in her response to my review does Harris claim that such differences of substance can be attributed to Handel.

A similar concern lay behind my comments on the continuo realisation, errors in which represent not the flexibility of a performing tradition but simply misunderstandings of the composer's harmonic practice. I willingly concede that the harmonic implications of Handel's two notated lines (voice and bass) are occasionally difficult to discern; and one

can hope that a continuo player will be alert to the possibility of mistakes in the printed realisation and will have the confidence to correct them. But the performer can surely expect to be helpfully guided, rather than misled, by the editor. On Handel's behalf I shall be heartbroken if I hear bars 82-3 on page 128, or bar 16 on page 144, performed as Harris has printed them.

I ought, however, to thank Ellen Harris for her generous optimism about the speed of the editorial process. Probably the Editorial Board of the *HHA* has a more realistic view of my capabilities in this respect. In any case, I am quite sure that singers and continuo players will be performing from her edition for many years before the *HHA* volumes (not yet commissioned) are published.

*This exchange is now closed (Ed.).*

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## FRIENDS OF CANONS PARK

Readers of this *Newsletter* will be aware that the London Borough of Harrow is planning to restore Canons Park. The park was established in the early 18th century around the opulent seat of James Brydges, Handel's patron and later first Duke of Chandos, and is listed for its historical features in the English Heritage register of parks and gardens in England and Wales. The restoration project was described in vol. 12/2 (Autumn 2001).

Harrow council has been awarded a Heritage Lottery Fund grant of over £100,000 to pay for the preparation of a detailed bid in September. This bid,

for approximately £1 million, will include detailed plans for: tree management; historical information sign-boards; restoration of the temple and the King George V memorial garden; work to footpaths, fencing and railings – and a ten-year management and maintenance plan. A new footpath will run parallel to the existing grass causeway from Whitchurch Lane, near St Lawrence's Church, north through the park toward Canons Drive; the causeway may have been one of five carriage driveways between avenues of trees laid out by the Duke of Chandos.

Land surveyors are already at work, in the park and in their offices, drawing up detailed plans of the existing layout. Archaeologists are planning digs and studies, and hoping to find the remains of an earlier Tudor house. They also intend to provide opportunities for the public to visit the site and see work in progress.

Members of the local community are creating a group – the **Friends of Canons Park** – to assist the council in the restoration project. 'Friends' will receive a newsletter with information on the scheme's progress and on Friends' activities, and will enjoy a 'higher profile input to Council business in setting priorities for expenditure on the park'.

Readers wishing to join the Friends or add their name to the park mailing list should contact the project manager, Zvi Barzilai, at:  
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