



THE HANDEL INSTITUTE
NEWSLETTER

This issue is more varied than most in its content. First, we publish the abstracts of the papers to be read at our forthcoming conference, 'Commemorating Handel'. We hope that our regular readers – and others! – will find the line-up of speakers and range of subjects irresistible and will attend in large numbers. A booking form is included with this issue: please complete and return it in good time.

Later, Donald Burrows contributes a reaction to a controversy about *Messiah* that arose at this year's American Handel Society conference and attracted

attention even in *The New York Times*. He also announces the award of a major research grant for the assembly of a new, published collection of Handel documents, to supersede Deutsch's venerable *Documentary Biography*. David Kimbell reviews the second (and final) volume of Winton Dean's monumental study of Handel's operas, published at the end of last year, while David Vickers and Terence Best report on the summer Handel festivals in Göttingen and Halle. Quite a harvest!

Colin Timms

COMMEMORATING HANDEL

Handel Institute Conference, 24 November 2007

This forthcoming event breaks the mould in two ways. It is the first Handel Institute conference to step outside the triennial pattern established in 1990 and the first to be restricted to a single day. The triennial pattern was bound to fall, since the last HI conference was in 2005 and the next is the collaborative venture in 2009 (see back page). This concertina effect also goes some way to explain why this year's conference is more modest in scale – although we hope that it will nevertheless allow Handel-lovers to keep in touch during the build-up to the celebrations being planned for the composer's anniversary.

The theme of the conference was prompted by the 150th anniversary of the first of the great Handel festivals at the Crystal Palace and the 250th anniversary of Handel's death. The event thus affords an opportunity to reflect on previous commemorations – their concerns, meanings and effects – and to look forward to 2009 and beyond. Allowance has also been made for 'free' papers. The programme is given on the reverse of the enclosed booking form. If you would like to attend, please fill in and submit your form as soon as possible, so that the necessary arrangements can be made in good time. Meanwhile, to whet the appetite, here are the abstracts of the papers to be read.

Graydon Beeks (Claremont, California)

Sir George Smart's Performance of Handel's Messiah

Sir George Smart (1776-1867) was one of the most influential English musicians of the first half of the 19th century, not least because he was considered an authority on the 'authentic' way to perform the music of Handel. In the words of the 19th-century historian W. H. Husk, 'he was much sought after by singers wishing to learn the traditional manner of singing Handel's airs, which he had been taught by his father, who had seen Handel conduct his oratorios'. Smart was also the conductor of the Handel Festival held in Westminster Abbey in 1834. Little work has been done on the exact nature of Smart's performance style in Handel, primarily because little direct evidence has survived. In recent years, however, the British Library has acquired the full score from which he conducted *Messiah* and a vocal score of the work into which he wrote ornamentation for the soprano arias at the request of the celebrated soprano Jenny Lind (the 'Swedish nightingale'). This paper uses evidence from these sources, together with information from Smart's journals and descriptions of the 1834 Handel Festival, in an attempt to decipher what Smart and his contemporaries thought of as 'the traditional manner of singing Handel'.



Donald Burrows (Milton Keynes)
*Commemorating a Commemoration:
The Royal Music Library*

On 27 November 1957 Queen Elizabeth II presented the Royal Music Library to the Trustees of the British Museum, a gift commemorating the 200th anniversary of King George II's presentation of the Old Royal Library to the recently established Museum. Subsequently the Royal Music Library, with the rest of the Museum's library collections, was transferred to the British Library, and it remains today as an identifiable section of the British Library's music collection at St Pancras. The Handel material in the Royal Music Library, both manuscript and printed, is still one of the essential resources for our knowledge of his music; the fiftieth anniversary of the presentation provides an opportunity to reflect on its significance, the effects of its wider availability, and some of the puzzles about various stages in its history.

David Coke (Ripon)
*Roubiliac's 'Handel' for Vauxhall
Gardens – A Sculpture in Context*

Commemorative statues, even today, rarely celebrate living people; in Handel's lifetime such a thing was unthinkable under normal circumstances. However, the pleasure garden at Vauxhall in south-west London was far from normal. Its young entrepreneur, Jonathan Tyers, was a true patron of the arts, and it was he who, in the later 1730s, commissioned from Louis François Roubiliac a life-sized sculpture of Handel in the finest white Carrara marble. The sculpture was specifically created for the site that it occupied for some eighty years; there, as well as being the focus of a special effect, it fulfilled specific functions that informed its revolutionary design and were associated with the gardens' carefully honed public image.

Unusually for a statue, it is

probable that its subject was involved in the commission and that its benefits were enjoyed not only by Tyers but also by Handel and Roubiliac. Without his investment in this sculpture, Tyers would have found it harder to achieve the popular success that Vauxhall earned in the 1730s and '40s and Handel might have had greater difficulty in sustaining his public profile.

The sculpture fell out of favour after its removal from the gardens in the 19th century but has since been recognised as one of the great icons of British portraiture. It now enjoys pride of place in the British Galleries at the Victoria and Albert Museum, alongside other works of art associated with Vauxhall.

Matthew Gardner (Heidelberg)
*The Commemoration of Handel
through Film*

There have been numerous films and documentaries on various aspects of Handel's life. One of the earliest cinema films, *The Great Mr Handel* (1942), coincided with the 200th anniversary year of *Messiah*'s first performance and is centred on Handel's production of this work. Later films include the East German documentary *Georg Friedrich Händel* (1960), offering a general overview of his life, and the television film *Honour, Profit and Pleasure* (1985), which was clearly made with his 300th birthday in mind. Handel (as a character) has not only taken the lead role in films, but has also made appearances in such works as *Farinelli: il Castrato* (1994), where he is portrayed both searching for new castratos in Italy and in competition with the Opera of the Nobility. He has also enjoyed some popularity on the small screen in such documentaries as *Journey Through Time: Handel* (1999) and, more recently, *Auf der Suche nach dem jungen Händel in Rom* (2007), where his time in Rome and, to a certain extent, Italy in general is outlined by scholars. The above-

mentioned productions (and more) form a part of Handel reception, biography and/or commemoration. This paper offers an overview of the ways in which Handel and his music are portrayed in selected productions, and a more general historical review of Handel commemoration through films and documentaries.

Richard G. King (Maryland)
Commemorating Handel Scholars

The year 2007 marks the 150th anniversary of the publication of Victor Schoelcher's landmark *Life of Handel*, one of the founding documents in Handel research. The 1850s also saw the publication of the first volumes of Friedrich Chrysander's Handel biography and edition. The work of both Schoelcher and Chrysander has received much attention in recent years, but they were by no means the only scholars active in Handel research in the second half of the 19th century.

This paper marks the anniversary of Schoelcher's monograph with a review and evaluation of his goals, methods and accomplishments; but the focus is rather on the work of other musicians and scholars active in the second half of the 19th century, who commemorated Handel in editions, arrangements, collections, or research and whose work is still largely unknown or underappreciated. Figures to be considered include William Ayrton, Michael Rophino Lacy, George Macfarren, Julian Marshall, and Edward Rimbault.

Annette Landgraf (Halle)
*The Handel Festival at the
Crystal Palace:
Cultural and Economic
Achievement Combined*

In 1851, when the Crystal Palace was erected for the London World Exposition, the capital of Britain was the largest city in Europe and the centre of the industrialised nations.

The construction of the greatest glasshouse in the world was possible only because of the standard of British technical achievement. The building symbolised the idea of culture in the Victorian age, at a time of unprecedented economic prosperity and with the British Empire at the height of its power. Culture and art thrived in parallel with the technical, political and economic supremacy of the Empire. The development of the Handel 'cult' through vast performances in the festivals at the Crystal Palace demonstrated the close connection between cultural advancement and the development of economic power. When British influence diminished, attitudes changed and the success of the festival declined.

The Crystal Palace was moved from Hyde Park to Sydenham in 1854. The first Handel festival took place there on 19 June 1857, the last in 1926. This paper is based mainly on the reports, reviews and announcements in *The Musical Times and Singing Class Circular* (1844-1902), *The Musical Times* up to 1926, and other music magazines. The paper describes the festival's history, the programme planning, the quality of the performances and the influence of the conductors. It also explores the expectations and reactions of the audiences, the advantages and disadvantages and the possibilities and limitations of such performances.

Konstanze Musketa (Halle)

The 1922 Halle Handel Festival

After the great Handel commemorations of 1859 and 1885, it was only in 1922 that a Handel festival again took place in Handel's home town. Organized by several of the town's musical institutions, it marked, as Hermann Abert had hoped, the beginning of a new era of Handel performances in Halle. Indeed, it was the first in the continuing series of Handel festivals,

which now number seventy. The rich and ambitious programme included the oratorios *Semele* and *Susanna*, the opera *Orlando furioso*, and several concerts with smaller works by Handel and other Halle composers of the 16th, 17th or 18th century. The programme booklet of more than 100 pages provides information on the concerts and other events, the locations, the performers, the organizers and their intentions – on all of which it is the purpose of this paper to comment.

John H. Roberts

(Berkeley, California)

Questions about Borrowing

In his classic study of Handel's dramatic oratorios in 1959 Winton Dean posed five questions about the composer's much-discussed habit of borrowing musical material from other composers and his own earlier works. In light of subsequent discoveries and changing attitudes, these questions can be reformulated and amplified to serve as the basis for future research and debate. I suggest that we need above all to ask: (1) How should 'borrowing' be defined in Handel studies? (2) What role did borrowing play in Handel's compositional process? (3) In what ways did the nature and extent of Handel's borrowing change over the course of his career, and why? (4) How do Handel's borrowing practices relate to those of his contemporaries? (5) How can the study of Handel's borrowing inform our understanding of his music? Some preliminary answers will be offered.

Wolfgang Ruf (Halle)

The Performance of Handel's Messiah by Johann Adam Hiller in Berlin

Hiller's performance of *Messiah* in 1786 was not the first in Germany but was by far the most important for the reception of Handel's works on the continent. Its success was due

mainly to the bookseller Friedrich Nicolai, a music-lover, anglophile and leader of bourgeois intellectual life in Berlin. Nicolai had planned a *Messiah* performance as early as 1771 but abandoned it for unknown reasons. In 1785 he was visited by Burney, who reported on the London commemoration and encouraged him to revive his idea. Nicolai had good contacts at the Prussian court and took advantage of the illness of King Frederick to organize the performance with the assistance of the court chapel and the approval of the crown prince Frederick William, a greater friend of Handel's music than his uncle.

The performance was special for many reasons: the outstanding venue, large orchestra, high-quality soloists, fine choir, guest conductor, mixed audience (royalty and public), language (Italian), arrangement of the music and the charitable nature of the event. The performance accorded well with new orientations in Prussian religious politics and with foreign policies of the 1780s, when Berlin looked for a strong Hanoverian (*i.e.*, British) ally in the so-called *Fürstenbund*, a German counterpart to Austria. The resonance of the concert in the press was remarkable, prompting further performances elsewhere in Germany and a more intensive preoccupation with *Messiah* and its composer. The Berlin performance marked a significant step in the process of Handel's canonization as a national figure in German culture.



SINGING THE 'HALLELUJAH' CHORUS, STILL

It is rare indeed for a Handel conference to be noticed in a large-circulation national newspaper, but such occurred in *The New York Times* for 23 April 2007 with a report on a session of the American Handel Society conference at Princeton three days earlier. The occasion was a panel session devoted to a controversial proposal by Michael Marissen (Swarthmore College), that aspects of the libretto and music of *Messiah*, particularly towards the conclusion of Part Two, were 'anti-Judaic'. Marissen has presented a detailed statement of his case in an article for the *Journal of Musicology*,¹ but a more populist summary had appeared as an article in *The New York Times* on 8 April (Easter Sunday), under the title 'Unsettling History of That Joyous "Hallelujah"'.²

Not surprisingly, this article caused considerable consternation and heart-searching, of a particularly unfortunate nature, since a performance of *Messiah* has in general been regarded as an experience that can be undertaken and received in a positive spirit by persons of many faiths, or none. It is difficult to believe that the timing of the article was accidental, and its effect in undermining popular confidence in *Messiah* is of wider cultural concern, beyond the circles of Handel specialists. A detailed scholarly response to Marissen's article is being prepared by Ruth Smith and John H. Roberts; in what follows I present some suggestions about how Handel may have

understood the closing movements of Part Two.

According to the abstract of Marissen's article, 'Handel's musical setting powerfully underscores these [anti-Judaic] tendencies of Jennens's libretto and adds to them, reaching a euphoric climax in the Hallelujah chorus'. Part of Marissen's argument stems from his interpretation of an 18th-century defence of Christianity that is known to have been in Jennens's library. Jennens was an assiduous collector of theological books and tracts, with an extensive library, and we have no way of knowing the extent to which he may have been sympathetic to, or influenced by, particular items, even if it is assumed that he read all of them. (I am amused to contemplate the consequences of the discovery, in another 200 years, of my copy of Gary Thomas's chapter in *Queering the Pitch*, which I have never got round to annotating with substantial and fundamental points of disagreement.) The broader question, however, concerns how the libretto texts that Jennens selected function in *Messiah* – that is, what they mean in context.

The structure of the *Messiah* libretto involves a narrative in Parts One and Two, then commentary (largely assuming the 'voice' of the individual believer) in Part Three; the complicating factor is that, partly for reasons of propriety and partly because there is a moral purpose, the narrative is presented in a rather oblique manner. The general chronological sequence from prophecy, through Nativity to Passiontide and Resurrection is clear enough, and the story continues through the Ascension ('Thou art

gone up on high') to Whitsun, when the Spirit returned to Jesus's followers and they went forth to proclaim the gospel: 'great was the company of the preachers', and 'their sound is gone out into all lands'. (Incidentally, Handel's initial treatment of 'their sound is gone out' annoyed Jennens: it was composed as the B section of an aria in the original draft score, omitted entirely in Dublin, then set as a rather winsome arioso for the first London performances; the subsequent stronger chorus setting was almost certainly composed at Jennens's insistence.)

However, this is not the end of the narrative in Part Two. The 'gospel of peace' meets with resistance, and the nations still furiously 'rage together': 'the kings of the earth rise up, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord and his anointed',² but 'He that dwelleth in heaven shall laugh them to scorn', and 'Thou [*i.e.* 'He'] shalt break them', and in the end 'the Lord God omnipotent reigneth; the kingdom of this world is become the Kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and He shall reign for ever and ever'.

How is this post-Pentecost section of *Messiah* to be interpreted? I suggest that Jennens completed the story as a whirlwind précis of the last books of the bible. The mixed reception that the gospel received is described in the Acts; the book of Revelation presents a vision of the Last Judgment and the establishment of 'a new heaven and a new earth'. Revelation is problematic because it is couched in rather extravagant and symbolic language; it was written at a time when Christians were under Roman persecution, which no doubt

¹ 'Rejoicing against Judaism in Handel's *Messiah*': the article had not been published by the time of the conference, but an advance copy was circulated to participants in the session, and quotations herein are taken from that version.

² While it would be stretching credibility too far to suggest an intended Jacobite reading for this text, Jennens's choice of verses from Psalm 2 may have been influenced by his personal outlook and circumstances. As a non-Juror, he was powerless to exert the type of political influence that would otherwise have been natural for a person of his social standing, while the dualism of 'nations' and 'peoples' in the opening lines of 'Why do the nations?' would have resonated as references to the government and the mob, both probably equally odious to Jennens. The shadings of domestic and ecclesiastical politics were, however, incidental to Jennens's main intention, which was to produce a libretto for a reflective oratorio on the 'mystery of Godliness'.



increased the need for compensatory reassurance that things would come right in the time-scale of eternity. 'The kingdom of this world is become the Kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ' is a statement about an ideal future, not about the present or an incident in the recent past.³

The difficulty in Jennens's libretto arises largely from his use of Psalm 2 as the means for taking the narrative from Whitsun to the Last Judgment. Psalm 2 would have been familiar to him because it is the psalm specified in the *Book of Common Prayer* for the service of Morning Prayer on Easter Sunday, chosen for that occasion because it expresses the mood of deliverance that matches the gospel for the day and includes appropriate references to 'the Son'.⁴ As a dramatic sequence of reactions and moods, it would be difficult to fault 'Their sound is gone out / Why do the nations? / Let us break their bonds / He that dwelleth in Heaven / Thou shalt break them / Hallelujah'. In terms of the *Messiah* narrative, the first part of this sequence works well. 'Why do the nations?', using the first two verses of Psalm 2, provides the reaction to 'Their sound is gone out' and culminates in 'The kings of the earth rise up, and the rulers take counsel together', who proclaim 'Let us break their bonds asunder' (Ps. 2, v. 3).

The subsequent section comprising 'He that dwelleth in heaven' and 'Thou shalt break them' is more controversial: here the continued employment of Psalm 2 (vv. 4 and 9) dramatises the outcome of the Day of Judgment with a reversion to the

God of Vengeance of the Old Testament. For that reason, more scrupulous present-day Christians are sometimes uneasy about this section of *Messiah*, though the libretto can be defended on the basis of some passages in the gospels, and within the musical design the movements are essential: an aria is needed between the two choruses, and it provides the tonal transition.

What is clear in the context of the *Messiah* libretto, however, is that the judgment on nations, people, kings and rulers is regulated by their reception of the gospel, with no special favours or disadvantages in relation to race or creed. The Last Judgment may be universal, but the focus is the individual, and in *Messiah* this fulfils the emphasis on 'we' in the previous penitential choruses of Part Two. It seems inconceivable that either Jennens or Handel had Judaism as a specific target in the use of these texts, and Jennens himself seems to have been sympathetic to the Judaic roots of Christianity. (His first-hand personal contacts with contemporary London Jews would probably have been very slight; as threats to Anglican orthodoxy, Jews would have seemed relatively insignificant compared to Deists, Roman Catholics, Quakers and Nonconformists.)

According to one anecdote, when Handel was presented with the officially appointed texts for the Coronation anthems in 1727 'he murmured, and took offence, as he thought it implied his ignorance of the Holy Scriptures: "I have read my Bible very well, and shall chuse for myself"'.⁵ It is very unlikely that Handel shared Jennens's interest in

theological literature or was troubled by the minutiae of current doctrinal controversies. Nevertheless, he had been brought up as an orthodox Lutheran in Halle, with clergy on his mother's side of the family; he was successively a communicant member of the Lutheran and Anglican churches, and church music formed part of his professional activity: in addition to any private reading of the Bible, he would have heard scriptural passages read in church, and the sermons arising from them. There is surely little doubt that he understood, and was familiar with, the narrative that was presented to him in the *Messiah* libretto.

The words for the 'Hallelujah' chorus, however, were not encountered very frequently in Anglican practice, since the Prayer Book lectionary avoided the 'Apocalypse' (*i.e.* the book of Revelation), except for 'certain Proper Lessons appointed upon divers Feasts' (All Saints and St John), which did not include the relevant passages.⁶ Jennens cleverly assembled the text for the chorus from verses in two different chapters of Revelation, refining a general-theme from different topic-areas of this rather intractable literary source; the subject of this theme was the eventual triumph of good over evil that was to follow the Last Judgment.⁷

There is, furthermore, one piece of evidence which suggests that Handel specifically understood the subject of the 'Hallelujah' chorus in this way. In 1749 he employed the chorus as the final movement of the anthem that formed Part Three of the concert that

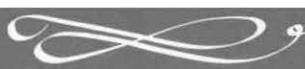
³ It seems particularly inapplicable as a reference to the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans in AD 70.

⁴ The lectionary during Handel's lifetime was that of the 1662 Prayer Book, but the association of Psalm 2 with the Easter Day service goes back to the first English Prayer Book of 1549.

⁵ Charles Burney, *An Account of the Musical Performances in Westminster-Abbey* (1785), 'Sketch of the Life of Handel', p. 34.

⁶ This is the case with the 1662 lectionary as it stood during Handel's lifetime; a later revision introduced some passages from Revelation for Morning Prayer on 23 and 29 December.

⁷ The verse about 'the Kingdom of this world' is taken from the response to the seventh (and last) angel-trumpeter in Revelation 11; the remainder of the text comes from the song of deliverance in Revelation 19.



he gave on 27 May in support of the Hospital for the Maintenance and Education of Exposed and Deserted Young Children, known as the Foundling Hospital. He adapted most of the movements of the Foundling Hospital anthem from previously composed music, with alterations to the texts, but the 'Hallelujah' chorus retained its *Messiah* text unchanged. The chorus movement, and its original function in the oratorio, would have been less familiar to the original audience than it is to us, since *Messiah* had only been performed six times in London before the Foundling Hospital concert, over a seven-year time-span, though one of those occasions had been the single performance that Handel had given at the end of his recent Covent Garden oratorio season, on 23 March 1749.

The 'Hallelujah' chorus makes a rousing conclusion to the anthem and indeed would have generated a spirited ending to the concert, but its textual connection to the topic of the anthem is not immediately apparent. The newspaper advertisement for the concert described the anthem as 'Several Pieces composed for the Occasion, the Words taken from Scripture, and applicable to this Charity and its Benefactors':⁸ the anthem text begins 'Blessed are they that considereth the poor and needy: the Lord will deliver them in time of Trouble', and continues in similar vein.⁹

I think it most likely that the idea of using the 'Hallelujah' chorus as a climax to the anthem came to Handel through a recollection of one of the most vivid passages in the gospels describing the Day of Judgment, in which charitable behaviour is presented as one of the indicators for salvation:¹⁰

When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory; and before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one [person] from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: and he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: for I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me. Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink? When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me. Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels: [...] And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal.

The relevance of this to the theme of the Foundling Hospital anthem is obvious and indeed became yet more explicit a couple of years later when Handel added another movement to

precede the chorus, with a text referring to the 'charitable' as follows: 'The people will tell of their wisdom, and the congregation will show forth their praise; their reward also is with the Lord, and the care of them is with the Most High'. By that time *Messiah* itself had made a contribution to London's charitable programme through Handel's performances of the oratorio at the Foundling Hospital. Perhaps Charles Burney was more perceptive than he realised when he wrote of *Messiah* in 1785 that 'this great work has been heard in all parts of the kingdom with increasing reverence and delight; it has fed the hungry, clothed the naked, fostered the orphan, and enriched succeeding managers of the Oratorios, more than any single production in this or any country'.¹¹

Donald Burrows

Review

WINTON DEAN, *HANDEL'S OPERAS 1726-1741*

Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2006

The first thing, clearly, is to congratulate Winton Dean, and to rejoice with him, on the completion of his heroic labours on the Handel operas; taken together with his work on the oratorios it has been one of the great enterprises of 20th-century musical scholarship, and it is nobly achieved. The second thing (with difficulty suppressing a parenthesis, wondering what on earth OUP strategists have been doing with their brains in recent years) is to thank the Boydell Press and to congratulate them too for producing the book so handsomely. Those who care to

⁸ *The General Advertiser*, 19 May 1749.

⁹ This is Handel's form of the text; the printed word-book for the Foundling Hospital concert had 'consider' instead of 'considereth'.

¹⁰ Matthew 25, vv. 31-41 and 46; text as in the Authorised (King James) Version of the Bible.

¹¹ 'Sketch of the Life of Handel', p. 27.



discriminate between '-ise' and '-ize' verbs will be saddened that that distinction has vanished from the present volume; so too has the 'Oxford comma' cherished by Chief Inspector Morse. In other respects the new volume matches up admirably to the exemplary standards of style, layout and sheer physical presence set by OUP in the Dean (and Knapp) volume on the earlier operas.

As the Preface explains, the present volume is 'the second half of what was originally intended as a single-volume study' begun in collaboration with John Merrill Knapp, of which the first half appeared in 1987 as *Handel's Operas 1704-1726*. The methodology is unchanged; the general chapters that introduced the first volume remain in force; and the scheme of the book is similar, with contextualizing narrative chapters (and now two Epilogues) framing and punctuating the studies of the five (Royal Academy after the arrival of Faustina) plus seven (Second Academy) plus six (Covent Garden) plus four (after Covent Garden) operas that are the subject of the book, and a meaty set of appendices.

Each of the narrative chapters is a model of how such things can be done. The story the author has to tell is a complex one – a tangle of financial, diplomatic, personal and artistic strands. But because his command of the material is consummate, he is able to steer us through the confusions clearly, unfalteringly and persuasively. On the way he shares with us his thoughts on the strangeness or incompleteness of some of the evidence; he stands back at intervals to reflect on matters (for instance, to compare the arts of Cuzzoni and Faustina, or to diagnose the shortcomings of the operas of the late 1720s), so encouraging us to think about the story he is telling, not simply to absorb information from it. Happily, the years have done nothing

to dampen his relish for those picturesque details with which his narratives have always been animated.

Chapters on individual operas begin with a very full synopsis, and in his Preface Dean reminds us why he made what some reviewers found the quixotic decision to include in these synopses all the stage directions: namely, that they provide valuable information about how the operas were actually staged. That is worth knowing, because Handel, like all great opera composers, did not just set words to music; he will have seen in his mind's eye the stage picture, the gestures and movements of the singers, and it is highly likely that he will have set that inner picture to music, too. Dean's synopses enable anyone who is prepared to take the trouble to perceive the close imaginative unity of spectacle, poetry and music in the service of the dramatic idea, which, in its very different dramatic idiom, is as characteristic of Handel as it is of Verdi or Wagner.

Besides, they are often a rather good read. The pace and tone of voice in the author's prose, as he recounts, very fully and calmly, these preposterous and wonderful tales, give them something of the quality of the improvisations of a bard or the reminiscences of a far-travelled uncle. Drearier tracts are likely to be punctuated by enlivening asides: of the unscrupulous matriarch Cleopatra III in *Tolomeo* a footnote informs us that she was 'at once [Ptolemy's] mother and his aunt twice over, his father's sister and the widow of his father's brother'; or of Segeste's aria-less exits in *Arminio*, 'if there was a door he doubtless slammed it'.

A highlight of most chapters is the discussion of the libretto, and particularly of the relationship between it and its models. This commonly focuses on the question of how the adaptations were carried out, and why they took the form they did. The question is primarily an

artistic one, but in part it is tactical, and the answer to it invariably sheds much light on the opera. Occasionally the author ranges wider afield, and he finds material for reflection in unlikely places; for instance, in the Brunswick libretto of *Giustino*, staged under the musical direction of Georg Caspar Schürmann in 1741, which he commends as offering an effective reordering of some of the details in a score with which Handel fidgeted inordinately.

Some readers of the first volume were a little impatient of the manner and substance of Dean's commentary on the music, and will possibly not feel differently about this volume. Given the multitude of ways in which one might reasonably write about the music of an opera, especially when it consists overwhelmingly of solo arias, any one of which would merit a little (or sometimes a large) essay in its own right, that impatience is uncalled for. Dean has chosen to see the music through the eyes of those characters who sing it. Not only is he unapologetic about this, he insists that it is the most important key to understanding the greatness of Handel as an opera composer – and he has surely earned the right to make that judgment. So what his musical commentaries amount to is not the application of some analytical or theoretical methodology, but an invitation – indeed an exhortation – to use our ears, to coordinate what our ears tell us with what we have read about action and spectacle in his synopsis, and thereby to enjoy more fully the humane and civilized art which Handel practises.

His musical insights are of course most keen in the operas he loves best, and they tend to lead to observations that have, or ought to have, a bearing on how the music is performed. In *Ariodante*, for instance, they lead him to note that two of Polinesso's four arias are 'credos' and that Lurcanio is a



character who throws himself into everything so wholeheartedly that it is jolly well deserved when, uniquely in Handelian opera, he wins over a reluctant mistress during the course of a duet. All the time Dean is encouraging the singer, the conductor, the producer, to ask, 'What does this constellation of music, poetry, action and spectacle mean? What does Handel intend me to be doing here? How should I be doing it?'

The lesser operas might sometimes have benefited, I felt, from the application of the principle enunciated in the first Epilogue (see below), of giving Handel the benefit of the doubt. I harrumphed to read Dent's opinion of *Arminio* being so authoritatively endorsed – at least in large part – especially when one aria (Sigismondo's last), of which I feel confident a comprehensive encomium might easily be written, was singled out for particular disdain. Something else that made me uncomfortable was the occasional remark about arias that 'do not advance the action', or words to that effect. I am sure this is shorthand for something like 'do not advance the stage action, or illuminate what is going on emotionally or psychologically in the mind of the character, or reflect in a timely way on the point that we have reached'. Nevertheless it does offer hostages to fortune – fortune in the form of a crazed dramaturge rather than Giustino's lady with the wheel.

As a lover of Metastasio I was gratified to find a more generous appraisal of the great poet than we have sometimes had from Dean in the past – though the *poeta cesareo* would have been outraged to find himself described as a 'librettist', even as 'the most successful librettist of the age'. The *Ezio* chapter is among the best in the book. From the study of its autograph one thought-provoking discovery to be made is that in his late pre-performance revisions Handel went back closer to the Metastasian text,

reinstating arias, amplifying some of the recitatives, and in the process changing them from *semplice* to *accompagnato*.

Dean diagnoses as tellingly as one would anticipate in what respects Metastasio was a 'problem' from Handel's point of view. And his remarks bring us on to intriguing territory. I imagine much of his criticism would have been met by Metastasio with a 'but of course! I am the dramatist, the composer is my guest, my assistant, the dresser of my verses'. Metastasio (who also knew what worked in the theatre, albeit a different theatre) would have described from a radically different perspective those arias that 'not infrequently halt [the action] in its tracks with moral pronouncements or parallels drawn from nature or the predicament of steersmen, nymphs or shepherds'. What one really wants to know is how Handel viewed them, or, to be a little less speculative, how Handel's music encourages or requires us to view them when we perform them. To describe them as 'moral pronouncements' is to make them sound like finger-wagging from the pulpit. But in essence they are surely reflections on where we are and what we are doing, reflections that Metastasio himself regarded as an exact parallel with the chorus of Greek tragedy (though that is rather special pleading), but in any case of a kind which was absolutely basic to the 18th-century sense of how civilized people behave. Add to that the fact that these reflections or meditations assume an idealized musical form, and it seems relatively unimportant whether the actual words set are, say, 'we should crush this insurrection at once' or 'a wise ruler must always know when to act decisively' or 'a gentle brooklet can be stopped in its course by a fallen branch but...'

If *Handel's Operas 1726-1741* is in one sense only part of a single opus, it is at the same time, as readers of the Handel Institute's *Newsletter*

will scarcely need telling, not so much a book as an encyclopaedia. The author's central concern is to give an account of the genesis of each opera, and to offer sane, humane and sympathetic criticism of it. Surrounding this core is a prodigious wealth of materials designed to serve the needs of anyone approaching the repertory on virtually any tangent. Its predecessor volume has already made a signal contribution to the editions of the operas appearing in the HHA, and in future the same will be true of this one: the fastidious critical scrutiny of the sources is one of its major achievements. More marginal material is to be found in appendices, but Dean rarely fails in his main text to highlight the important or savoury details in this material, surely whetting the appetite of anyone with an incipient interest in, let us say, the 'borrowings' that John Roberts and others have been uncovering in such profusion, or the history of 'reception', or the evidence for Handelian performance practice, or the metamorphoses over the generations of enduringly popular dramatic themes, or whatever.

The author takes leave of his awe-inspiring labours in two Epilogues. The first, in part autobiographical, is an account of how he came to discover the power and mastery of Handelian opera. It was a journey for which the first stimulus came from his personal involvement in a staging of *Saul* in the 1930s: 'It presently dawned on me that the mighty dramatist of the oratorios was unlikely to have sprung from nowhere [...] The creator of more than forty operas [...] must surely have learned a great deal about what was effective in the theatre [...]'. The moral of this was, that a composer of supreme gifts, who chose to make the opera house the focus of his formidable energy for the best, if not the wisest, thirty years of his life, and who experienced opera night after night in the theatre, working or failing to work, ought to



be trusted to know what he was doing. While that does not mean that every one of his operas will be a masterpiece, it does mean that we can approach them in the confidence that they will reward our best attention.

At very least a Handel opera will be a treasure house of glorious music. But this music has been written, not simply by a great composer exulting in his strength and in the accomplishment of his fellow artists: his musical gifts are applied – to explore the deepest recesses of a human heart in the throes of ‘dramatic’ experience, or to illuminate the personality of the singing character (as personality was understood in those days), or to make vivid in epigram or imagery the reflections that arise from the action; and the music does all these things within an overarching dramatic framework that is not self-evidently absurd.

It follows that the task of the exegete is to help the world enjoy these truths. Winton Dean has pursued that task with uncompromising scholarly idealism for half a century and more. Our musicians, generally speaking, have risen valiantly to the same challenge. The record of the theatre men is distinctly more dodgy, as a second Epilogue, ‘Handel’s Operas on the Modern Stage’, reveals. It is an entertaining and probably well-judged read. After taking a rather severe line on Oskar Hagen and his colleagues in Göttingen in the 1920s, the author is relatively gentle with the self-important knaves (in whose direction he has aimed a number of biffs in the main text) who get their hands on too many of our contemporary stagings. But I suppose gentleness is the prerogative of riper years.

David Kimbell

GERMAN HANDEL FESTIVALS

GÖTTINGEN

Since the early 1990s Göttingen has specialised in presenting Handel’s lesser-known operas, but this year the festival produced the perennial *Giulio Cesare*. Performed in the Stadthalle concert hall instead of the Deutsches-Theater, perhaps in order to put more bums on seats, Igor Folwill’s staging used the awkward space quite well and, in particular, depicted Cornelia and Sesto with great sensitivity and gravity. It was wonderful to see Cécile van de Sant act as a beautiful Cornelia who could plausibly set the pulses of numerous Egyptians and Romans racing, and even better to hear ‘Priva son d’ogni conforto’ sung with elegantly sustained sweet melodic lines. Diana Moore sang Sesto’s arias with dynamically charged passion and was physically hurled about to a shocking extent by her brutal Egyptian captors (she showed us her bruises at breakfast next morning).

The highlight of the performance was without doubt the emotionally telling delivery of the duet ‘Son nata a lagrimar’. Sophie Daneman sang Cleopatra with agility and obvious relish, but her characterization was frequently a shade too superficial, and it was disappointing to see Folwill following modern tradition rather than Handel’s score by ending Act II with ‘Se pietà di me non senti’. As a result, the beginning of the so-called ‘Act III’ had to be reordered into an incoherent mess. This was the major misconception in a generally effective production, although the Parnassus scene was ruined by the on-stage band being inaudible (since the house orchestra was in the middle of the stage, the Parnassus musicians were placed off-stage, perhaps to create aural contrast), a situation made worse by the audience’s laughter at Folwill’s tawdry comic staging of the scene.

In the title-role, Kai Wessel was a last-minute replacement for Gerald

Thompson, a young American countertenor who apparently fell ill shortly before he was due to arrive for the rehearsals. Wessel was surprisingly good in Cesare’s more lyrical love arias, showing some nice ornamentation in ‘Se in fiorito ameno prato’ and discreetly playing to his strengths in the more powerful music. It was nice to see a production in which Cesare was portrayed as a dignified and authoritative leader rather than a bullying idiot. Nicholas McGegan directed the music with his usual enthusiasm and panache, and the recently formed Göttingen Festival Orchestra played superbly.

McGegan and his orchestra, including specially invited members from the world’s leading period-instrument ensembles, were also on excellent form in a performance of *Solomon*. It was good to hear this oratorio given complete, without cuts and with Handel’s own sequence of movements in the later stages of Part III. The music for the title-role seldom fits the countertenor voice comfortably, but Tim Mead sang the part with commitment and clarity. Claron McFadden and Dominique Labelle were impassioned harlots in the judgment scene, and McGegan conducted the trio with dramatic sensitivity. The decision to retain all of the Levite Priest’s airs was vindicated by Roderick Williams’s exceptional technique and musicality. The Winchester Cathedral Choir got around the notes of the choruses well enough but failed to deliver the words with sufficient enthusiasm and dramatic feeling. It seems harsh to criticise young boys when their ability to sing complex counterpoint in tune is admirable, but the lay clerks, too, had their inexpressive faces in their copies and seemed peculiarly uninterested in the act of performing. However, none of these problems is noticeable in the excellent commercial recording (taped live the following evening in Dresden, and just released by Carus).



In absolute contrast, the youthful Dresden chamber choir *Körnerscher Sing-Verein* was the brightest aspect of a generally disappointing performance of *Belshazzar*. Peter Kopp is a fine interpreter of baroque music, and the Dresdner Instrumental-Concert played with colourful attack and muscular resonance, but long pregnant pauses between movements often killed the drama, and a few tempi were at odds with the meaning of the text and the lyrical implications of Handel's rhetorical writing. For example, the closing anthem 'I will magnify thee' was strangely rushed and perfunctory, despite Robin Blaze's best efforts to draw something poetic from the moment. Blaze's 'Destructive war' was a spectacular *tour-de-force*, but the other soloists did not convey much musical or dramatic distinction. Paul Agnew's committed acting was let down by some rough singing; Jutta Böhnert seemed unwilling to regard Handelian oratorio as living drama (she sang Nitocris as if it were the worst kind of Victorian *Messiah*, barely looking at other characters and doing nothing to communicate her words), and the German countertenor Henning Voss sounded technically out of his depth as Daniel.

The local forces of the Kammerchor Skt. Jacobi, which in recent years has improved significantly under its director Stefan Kordes, and the Hanover baroque ensemble *Musica Alta Ripa* made a much better job of the *Brockes Passion*. For the first time in my experience, the preponderant succession of arias for the Daughter of Zion glided by in compelling fashion, owing to the glorious singing of Dutch soprano Johanette Zomer. Nevertheless, the decision to perform the entire *Passion* without interval or cuts was harsh on the audience, who had to remain stoically still on hard pews for three hours.

Rather more fun was had at the première of John Roberts's new

HHA edition of Handel's pasticcio *Giove in Argo*, given by Alan Curtis and *Il Complesso Barocco*. Things started badly, with horn players struggling, singers seeming inhibited and the tenor Zachary Stains sounding strained, but after half an hour the mezzo-soprano Mary Ellen Nesi and soprano Laura Chericci lit up the evening with some terrific dramatic and musical displays. Chericci's flirtatious performance of 'Tornami a vagheggiar' was highly amusing, and Nesi's singing was of the highest order. Although the match between plot, characterization and dramatic concept seemed far removed from Handel's 'proper' operas, *Giove in Argo* is clearly not a mere novelty but an entertaining piece that works well in performance. As was appropriate for the Buxtehude tercentenary year, Ton Koopman gave an organ recital and Cantus Cölln performed *Membra Jesu nostri*.

At the time of writing, plans for 2008 are exciting: it is hoped that McGegan will present *Orlando* and *Samson* and that The English Concert will perform *L'Allegro* and a recital of arias with Carolyn Sampson.

David Vickers

HALLE

The theme of this year's Festival was 'The Triumph of Time and Truth – Myth and Allegory in Handel', so one of the central performances was of his 1707 oratorio. This took place too late for me to hear it, but Ruth Smith, who had given an inspired paper on the work at the accompanying Conference, assures me that it was spectacular and rapturously received.

The opening ceremony was introduced very charmingly by the Principessa Ruspoli, a member of the famous patrician family that was so important to Handel during his stay in Rome. The presentation of

the Handel prizes was deferred to a later occasion, so we got on with the music, performed by the Händelfestspielorchester under Federico Maria Sardelli. The *Concerto a due cori* (HWV 333) began the proceedings, and was well done. Then we had selections from *L'Allegro* (debate among the *cognoscenti*: "Is this piece an allegory or a myth?" – it has many mythological references). The performance was good musically, but the selection was not convincing owing to lack of contrast.

One of the major events was the Halle première of the pasticcio opera *Giove in Argo* (*Jupiter in Argos*, if you will). The work had been reconstructed by John Roberts for an HHA edition, now in preparation, and recently performed in Göttingen (see above). Semi-staged in the elegant Frankesche Stiftung, it was captivating. The performance, conducted by Alan Curtis, was superb, with an especially bravura display by Laura Chericci as Calisto. The work clearly has a future on the Handel scene.

The Goethe-Theater in Bad Lauchstädt was the setting for a fully staged production of Purcell's *King Arthur*, given by a mostly English cast (essential for the large amount of spoken dialogue), accompanied by the Lautten Compagny of Berlin. The performance was a revelation of how effective these semi-operas can be: the acting was suitably melodramatic (even ham), as befits Dryden's text, and the music was splendidly done.

The Halle première of your correspondent's new HHA edition of *Riccardo primo*, given in concert form by a glittering cast led by Lawrence Zazzo in the title-role, with the Kammerorchester Basel, was conducted by Paul Goodwin, who received the Handel prize before the performance began. Some of it went too fast, I thought (I had already heard it in Paris in February), but overall this was a fine achievement.



Another major event was the première of Donald Burrows's HHA edition of *Ariodante*, conducted again by Sardelli. The singing and playing were excellent, and the staging was more sensible than many that we have seen in recent years, in that the drama was allowed to develop through the music – and in all Handel there is not much better music than this. The Scottish setting at the beginning was tartan-kilted, and there was a concession to the sending-up tendency of modern stagings in the introduction of a golfing theme, including a traditional sword-dance in which swords were replaced by golf clubs. Caitlin Hulcup was magnificent as Ariodante – her 'Scherza, infida' had this silly old buffer in tears – and the glorious masterpiece was greeted with acclaim at the end.

A rather under-powered performance of *L'Allegro* by Halle forces under Wolfgang Kupke was vitiated by very poor English diction by both choir and soloists, which rendered the text ninety-per-cent unintelligible. The tercentenary of the death of Buxtehude was commemorated by the oratorio *The Last Judgment*. The performance (on original instruments, including cornets, and with a small choir) was dramatic and intense. The work was impressive and seemed typical of German choral music around 1680, but its attribution to Buxtehude is apparently uncertain. The Opera House was the venue for an interesting concert by the Venice Baroque Orchestra, in which we heard some Vivaldi concertos and a fine rendering of Handel's *Apollo e Dafne*, sung by Vito Priante and Yeree Suh. Other events, which I had to miss, included *Messiah*, *Semele*, a revival of last year's *Admeto* and a quatercentenary performance of Monteverdi's *Orfeo*.

The scholarly conference on the festival theme offered a variety of papers, all of good quality. Several of them, including Ruth Smith's 'Psychological realism in *Il Trionfo*',

were outstanding. John Roberts described the reconstruction of *Giove in Argo*, Donald Burrows spoke about Handel's compositional technique in three arias in *Ariodante*, and Graydon Beeks suggested that the 1757 *Triumph of Time and Truth* can be regarded as a career retrospective.

Once again, a most rewarding festival and conference, extremely well organised. The only problem was the usual one of having too much to see and hear – not a bad thing, after all.

Terence Best

THE 'HANDEL DOCUMENTS' PROJECT

We are fortunate that the historical period and circumstances of Handel's career have left behind a substantial documentary trail. His public performances in London were advertised in newspapers; his professional and social connections were such that his activities were reported in private correspondence and in the archives of courts and patrons; even his musical scores are 'documents' in providing dates of composition and evidence of the composer's relationship with particular performers.

During the last fifty years an indispensable reference work for the texts of contemporary documents has been *Handel: A Documentary Biography* by Otto Erich Deutsch, published in 1955. Deutsch's work was a remarkable achievement in its range and coverage, especially since it was prepared in post-war Britain where libraries and archives had only gradually returned to their normal functions. However, the *Documentary Biography* has also been a source of increasing frustration. It is not surprising that, given the quantity of material it covers, the book has a considerable number of errors both in the

transcriptions of documents and in the commentaries; furthermore, much new material has been discovered since 1955. Some new documents were included in vol. IV of the *Händel-Handbuch*, published in 1985, but in other respects this presented a rather uncritical German translation of Deutsch's text.

While the *Documentary Biography* forms a fundamental resource for a 21st-century collection of Handel documents (in the same way that Deutsch built upon material collected a century earlier by Victor Schoelcher), what is needed now is not simply a 'new Deutsch' but a fresh and concentrated review of the documents that are currently known, interpreted with the benefit of modern scholarship. Although the need for an up-to-date and accurate collection has been recognised for many years, it has been difficult to overcome the problems posed by the size and complexity of the task. When Winton Dean endowed a fund for the Handel Institute, it was his wish that it should be devoted in the first instance to the preparation of a new published documentary collection, but the practical problems of realising this objective were large: the people with the best relevant experience were heavily involved in other activities, and the project would require such major resources as an office base, staff, and materials, if it were to be undertaken in a professional and humane manner.

After a certain initial hesitation, I prepared a bid for a major project grant from the Arts and Humanities Research Council, for 'George Frideric Handel: The Collected Documents', under the aegis of The Open University and incorporating support from the Winton Dean Fund. In a highly competitive situation, I am pleased to report that this bid has been approved. The project will be based at The Open University's London regional centre in Camden Town, within easy reach of the British Library and the Gerald Coke Handel Collection (at The Foundling



Museum). I shall be the project leader; the other permanent staff are Anthony Hicks (Visiting Research Fellow) and Helen Green (Research Assistant), and we shall also be relying on assistance from Terence Best (Visiting Research Fellow), especially in the area of foreign-language documents.

The major funding is for a period of three years, and by the time you read this, the project will be under way. It concentrates the mind to realise that, if the work were to be completed in three years, we would have to cover more than two years of Handel's life every month. For various reasons, the outcome is planned at the moment as a book, and we hope that three years of efficient research activity will take us near that goal. A successful result in terms of comprehensive coverage will, however, need assistance from beyond the immediate project team, not only from Handelians but also from people with specialist knowledge of 18th-century archives. We shall be issuing an 'open-house' appeal for information about new documents that may come within our scope – but not yet, as during the first year we shall be fully occupied with the task of collecting and checking already known material.

Donald Burrows

FORTHCOMING CONFERENCES

30 November 2007

Annual Study Day on 18th-Century English Music

at **The Foundling Museum,
40 Brunswick Square, London, WC1 1AZ**

For details and booking, contact Claire Sharpe (c.sharpe@ram.ac.uk; 0207 873 7323)

1-2 December 2007

Music and the Book Trade from the 16th to the 19th Century

at **The Foundling Museum,
40 Brunswick Square, London, WC1 1AZ**

Speakers: Donald Burrows, Iain Fenlon, Anna Jones, Richard Luckett, Rupert Ridgewell, Stephen Roe and Jeremy Smith. For further details and booking, contact the Antiquarian Booksellers Association (admin@aba.org.uk; www.aba.org.uk; 0207 439 3118)

25-27 January 2008

John Rich and the 18th-Century London Stage: Commerce, Magic and Management

at the **Royal College of Surgeons,
Lincoln's Inn Fields, London, WC2A 3PE**

Speakers include: Robert D. Hume, Donald Burrows, David Hunter and Sarah McCleave. For further details and booking, contact Vanessa Rogers (info@johnrich2008.com; vanessalrogers@yahoo.com; 020 7482 4808)

20-21 November 2009

Purcell, Handel and English Literature

at **University of London Senate House,
Malet Street, London, WC1E 7HU**

This conference – organized by: the School of Advanced Study, Institutes of Musical Research and English Studies, University of London; the Departments of Music and Literature, The Open University; The Handel Institute, and The Purcell Society – will be one of the final events in the year marking the anniversaries of Henry Purcell's birth (1658 or 1659) and Handel's death (1759). The intention is to bring together participants with interests in music and literature. It is anticipated that a Call for Papers will be issued in 2008.

The Handel Institute is a registered charity, no. 296615. All correspondence should be sent to the Newsletter editor, Professor Colin Timms, Barber Institute of Fine Arts, University of Birmingham, Edgbaston, Birmingham, B15 2TT, England (C.R.Timms@bham.ac.uk).