



THE HANDEL INSTITUTE
NEWSLETTER

Among the events being planned to commemorate the 250th anniversary of Handel's death next year is the publication of a facsimile edition of the composer's will. The volume will include an essay by Klaus-Peter Koch on people that it mentions, including members of Handel's family. In this *Newsletter* the same author provides information on other members of that family. John Greenacombe examines librettos of *Deborah* and challenges the view

that Italians sang in its revival in 1744. Two conferences touching on Handel in Rome took place in that city last October: Carrie Churnside and Donald Burrows report on these, while David Vickers and Terence Best contribute reviews of the Göttingen and Halle Handel festivals. Finally, we publish the last call for papers or panels for the conference in November 2009.

Colin Timms

HANDEL'S FAMILY

In recent years considerable new research has been undertaken in Germany on the genealogy of Handel's family, building upon literature on the subject from the nineteenth century. Biographical details of members of the younger generations will be given in an essay accompanying the forthcoming facsimile of Handel's will, edited by Donald Burrows. In this article I summarise, particularly for English-readers, what is now known about Handel's other close relatives, and provide a bibliography of the relevant literature. The following conventions are used: b. = date of birth; bapt. = date of baptism; bur. = date of burial; d. = date of death. The spellings of names sometimes differ substantially from one source to another, even in the various church registers. Diagrams of the 'family tree' are printed in Donald Burrows, *Handel* (Oxford, 1994, and subsequent editions).

Handel's parents

Handel's father, Georg Händel (bapt. Halle, 24 Sept 1622; d. Halle, 14 Feb 1697; bur. 18 Feb 1697) was twice married. First, on 20 February 1643, in Neumarkt, he married Anna Oettinger (b. c. 1610-11; d. and bur. Halle, 9 Oct 1682), who fell a victim of the plague in the city.¹ This was her second marriage: her maiden

name had been Kathe. After the death of his first wife Georg Händel married for a second time, on 23 April 1683, in Giebichenstein, where he had been medical officer ('Amts Chirurgus') since 1645.² His bride was Dorothea Taust (b. Dieskau, 10 Feb 1651; bapt. 13 Feb 1651; d. Halle, 27 Dec 1730),³ daughter of the late pastor (parish priest) of Giebichenstein; she was almost thirty years younger than her husband. From the first marriage there were three sons and three daughters, from the second marriage two sons and two daughters. The composer was a son of the second marriage, but he also maintained connections with his relatives from the first.

Children of Georg Händel's first marriage

1. Dorothea Elisabeth (bapt. Neumarkt, 13 Feb 1644; bur. Neumarkt, 21 Nov 1690). Her first marriage, on 16 August 1659, was with the barbier Michael Beyer (b. c. 1628; bur. Neumarkt, 8 Nov 1668) from Löbejün.⁴ (Georg Händel's professional medical role was also 'Barbier', usually translated as 'barber-surgeon'.) After his death she married on 27 February 1672 the medical officer ('Amts Barbier') Zacharias Kleinhempel (b. Danzig, 1648; bur. Neumarkt, 20 March 1698), who was one of Handel's three

¹ In Handel's time Neumarkt was just outside the city walls of Halle and was an independent administration.

² Like Neumarkt, Giebichenstein was then a separate place, about a mile to the north of Halle; it was incorporated into the city in 1900.

³ Dieskau is in the south-east of Halle and has belonged to the parish of Kabelsketal since 2004.

⁴ Löbejün is a town to the north of Halle.



godparents.⁵ There were eight children from her first marriage and eight from the second.

2. Gottfried (bapt. Neumarkt, 14 April 1645; bur. Barby, 7 April 1682), as the second-born, took up the profession of town doctor in Barby, at the confluence of the rivers Saale and Elbe.⁶ He married Magdalena Sophia Hartranfft, daughter of the parish priest of Barby, on 5 July 1674; the marriage was childless.
3. Anna Barbara (bapt. Neumarkt, 30 Aug 1646; bur. Weissenfels, 12 Sept 1680)⁷ married the Weissenfels town surgeon and barbier Matthes Benjamin Metzel on 9 July 1678. She and her second child died in childbirth; her husband was buried at Weissenfels on 19 February 1687.
4. Christoph (bapt. Neumarkt, 28 Jan 1648; bur. Neumarkt, 13 Oct 1648) died in infancy.
5. Carl (bapt. Neumarkt, 30 Sept 1649; bur. Weissenfels, 5 April 1713) was valet and personal barbier and surgeon to Duke Johann Adolf I of Sachsen-Weissenfels in Weissenfels. (The composer's father was also from 1688 'professional personal surgeon and confidential valet-de-chambre' to the duke.) In 1672, in Langensalza,⁸ Carl married Justina Margaretha Franckenberger (d. Weissenfels, 2 Oct 1699), daughter of a Langensalza Ratskämmerer.⁹ Seven children were born of this marriage – six sons and a daughter. After the death of his first wife he married again, in Weissenfels on 24 April 1700, Juliana Dorothea Dathe, the daughter of a local feudal scribe ('Fronschreiber'), presumably an employee of the lord of the manor. From the first marriage there were four sons, the eldest of whom died in infancy. Another son, Georg Christian (bapt. ?Halle, 7 Jan 1675; d. Weissenfels, before 1720) also practised in Weissenfels as a surgeon. His children, one of whom was an oboist in Copenhagen, were the subject of bequests in Handel's will.
6. Sophia Rosina (bapt. Neumarkt, 11 April 1652; d. Weissenfels, 13 July 1728). On 22 June 1686, in Langendorf, she married Philipp Pfersdorff (b. 1619; d. 8 Feb 1697), the administrator in Langendorf and Wiedebach (south of Weissenfels). Pfersdorff was also one of Handel's godfathers.¹⁰ One of their daughters, Dorothea Elisabeth (b. Langendorf, 13 March 1673; d. Giebichenstein, 17 Dec 1752), on 13 September 1686 married Georg Taust (1658-1720),

Handel's uncle (his mother's youngest brother). From this marriage there were eight children: the surviving members of the family received bequests in Handel's will. Sophia Rosina's other daughter, Maria Sophia (b. Langendorf, 11 Sept 1678; d. Weissenfels, 1719), married in Langendorf on 21 September 1691 Caspar Mangold (d. 1725), the Sachsen-Weissenfels estate steward ('Gutsverwalter') in Langendorf and later Burgomaster in Weissenfels. Of their children, Georg Caspar Mangold (Weissenfels, 1693-1749) was from 1722 to 1746 a cellist in the Weissenfels Hofkapelle, and his son (of the same name) was court organist in Weissenfels in the 1740s. Sophia Rosina's son, Johann Christian Pfersdorff (b. Langendorf, 1681; d. Pirmasens, 1762), became the Head Forester in Pirmasens, which belonged in Handel's time to the territory of the landgrave of Hesse-Darmstadt and is today in the Rhine-Palatinate.

Children of Georg Händel's second marriage

1. A son, who died at birth in 1683 or 1684; research concerning his Christian name has been fruitless.
2. Georg Friedrich (bapt. Halle, 24 Feb 1685; d. London, 14 April 1759; bur. 20 April 1759), the composer; Georg Händel's youngest male child.
3. Dorothea Sophia (bapt. Halle, 8 Oct 1687; d. Gut Stichelsdorf, now part of Peissen, near Halle, 8 Aug 1718; bur. 11 Aug 1718). On 26 September 1708, in Giebichenstein, she married the graduate jurist Michael Dietrich Michaelsen (b. Bremen, 1681; d. Halle, 20 July 1748; bur. 22 July 1748). The marriage produced three sons and two daughters, but only one child, the daughter Johanna Friderica (b. Halle, 20 Nov 1711; d. Halle, 24 Feb 1771), reached adulthood. After the death of Dorothea Sophia, Michaelsen married Christine Sophia Dreissig (b. 1701; d. 24 Sept 1725) and then, after her death, married for a third time, on 18 September 1726, Sophia Elisabeth Dreissig (b. 1695), the elder sister of his deceased second wife. Johanna Friderica Michaelsen, Handel's niece and goddaughter (who later became the principal beneficiary of his will), was married in Halle on 6 December 1731 to Johann Ernst Flörcke (b. Jena, 9 July 1695; d. Nuremberg, 9 June 1762). In 1755 Flörcke became Ordinarius in the Faculty of Jurisprudence at the University of Halle, and from

⁵ For the record of Handel's baptism, see *Händel-Handbuch*, vol. 4 (1985), p. 8, and Otto Erich Deutsch, *Handel: A Documentary Biography* (London, 1955), p. 1 (with English translation).

⁶ Barby belonged to the duchy of Sachsen-Weissenfels from 1659 and was the government seat of the collateral line Sachsen-Weissenfels-Barby from 1680 to 1739.

⁷ Weissenfels, south of Halle, was from 1656 to 1746 the seat of the second-geniture rulers of Sachsen-Weissenfels. After the death of Duke August in 1680 the territory of the

archbishopric of Magdeburg, which was administered from Halle, passed to the electorate of Brandenburg and August's successor, Duke Johann Adolf I, ruled thereafter from the residence in Weissenfels.

⁸ Langensalza is a town in Thuringia, north-west of Erfurt.

⁹ A Ratskämmerer was responsible for the finances of the town council.

¹⁰ The third godparent was Anna Taust, Handel's aunt, who four years later married Christoph Andreas Roth, uncle of the 'Magister Christian August Roth' named in Handel's will.



1757 Director of the University. In 1762 he was taken as a hostage for the city of Halle in connection with the Seven Years' War (1756-63) and brought to Nuremberg, where he died.

4. Johanna Christiana (bapt. Halle, 12 Jan 1690; d. Halle, 16 July 1709; bur. 22 July 1709), the youngest sister, died unmarried and childless at the age of nineteen.

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Klaus-Peter Koch

DID ITALIANS SING IN DEBORAH IN 1744?

Handel's ambitious but, as it turned out, nearly disastrous subscription season of 1744-5 opened on 3 November 1744 at the King's Theatre with the first of two performances of *Deborah*, a work not heard in London since Handel himself gave it at Covent Garden in 1735. For the 1744-5 season he revised the oratorio for his new roster of singers, tailoring the part of Sisera, originally taken by an alto castrato, to suit the tenor John Beard, and cutting and substituting arias. Although the work itself appears to have been well performed, it was a box office failure – 'a desolate forsaken house' in the words of 'those that were present'.¹ The main reason for this lack of support seems to have been that Handel began his season before many of his subscribers had returned to London from the country. He also faced formidable competition from the playhouses, his opening night clashing with that of Garrick's *Richard III* at Drury Lane and with Quin's *Othello* at Covent Garden.

Handel reacted by postponing the second performance, originally planned for 10 November, until the 24th, and in the intervening three weeks made several changes to the score. He may have been responding to criticism that some of the music imported into the work from *Esther* did not really suit the singers, particularly Mrs Cibber who sang the role of Jael. Thus the wordbook that Watts had printed for the first performance was put out of date and had to be 'doctored' to match the changes. Blank slips were pasted over the airs 'Cease, O Judah' (p. 9) and 'All his mercies' (p. 18); a new text, 'To joy he brightens', was pasted over Jael's air 'Flowing joys' on page 7, and two whole leaves (pp. 5-6 and 15-16) were cut out, to be replaced with new and abbreviated printings stuck on the guards left where the old leaves had been removed. Between the first and second performances the oratorio was shorn of half-a-dozen airs, four of them in Jael's part.

The details of these changes were chronicled by Winton Dean in 1959, but at the time of writing he had access to only a single copy of each wordbook. This would not in itself have been significant but for the fact that the copy for the second issue, in the Schoelcher collection in Paris, contains a separate sheet headed 'Alterations sung in Italian'. This single leaf, printed on both sides, gives an Italian text for eight arias, two duets, and several recitatives, with the names of the characters and cues to the appropriate pages in the English wordbook. The characters affected by the 'Alterations' are Barak, most of whose part is in Italian, Sisera (two

¹ Letter of 6 November from George Harris to his brother James: Donald Burrows and Rosemary Dunhill (eds), *Music and Theatre in Handel's World: The Family Papers of James Harris (1732-1780)* (Oxford, 2002), pp. 202-3.



arias), Deborah (two duets with Barak), 'First Israelite' (an aria in Part I), and an Israelite Woman (recitative and aria in Part III).

Schoelcher himself thought that the insert did not belong with the 1744 wordbook, but Dean was inclined to accept it at face value, and for what must have seemed like a rather convincing reason. Handel's second offering of the season was a revival of *Semele*, given two performances early in December, and the wordbook (known only from a single copy, also in Paris) shows that at these performances several of the original songs were replaced by Italian arias from Handel's own operas and sung in the original language. This, taken together with the Italian leaflet in *Deborah*, appears to have persuaded Dean that something happened between the first and second performances of *Deborah* which caused one or more of the original singers to withdraw, to be replaced by Italians who could not, or would not, sing in English.

Although there are several objections that could be raised against it, Dean's conclusion has not really been challenged. Clausen subscribes to it in his analysis of the performing score, even though the score itself does not provide any independent supporting evidence, and as recently as 2002 its acceptance by Donald Burrows gets him into a slight difficulty with his commentary on the Harris correspondence, where the *Deborah* performances are mentioned. The first objection is that the cases of *Semele* and *Deborah* are not really comparable. In *Deborah* the items printed on the 'Alterations' sheet were singing translations or versions of the English text and were largely confined to particular roles. In *Semele* the Italian arias are substitutes not translations, perhaps intended to 'ginger up' an unpopular work with some 'favourite' airs, and on the evidence of the wordbook they were sung by characters who, as Dean himself noted, seem to have sung the rest of their parts in English.

Secondly, of the five solo singers who participated in the first performance of *Deborah* on 3 November, four – Beard (Sisera), Susanna Cibber (Jael), Elisabeth Duparc ('La Francesina': Deborah) and Thomas Reinhold (Abinoam) – had all sung in Italian under Handel's own direction, and it seems most unlikely that a trained singer like Miss Robinson (Barak), whose own mother had sung in some of Handel's early Royal Academy operas, would not have been able to perform in Italian. So the fact that pieces might have been sung in Italian does not of itself imply that the performers were Italian. The Italian arias introduced into *Israel* in 1738 were sung by the same singers who had previously performed the work entirely in English, and the *Deborah* cast presumably sang the Italian arias in the revival of *Semele*.

Thirdly, the 'Alterations' leaf, if taken as evidence that Italian singers took part in the second 1744 performance, would imply not only that Robinson and Beard were replaced, but also that other Italians performed the 'Israelite' roles. But the two Israelites have nothing to sing

in 1744, although they appear in the wordbooks' *Dramatis Personae*, which was evidently copied from 1733.

Since 1959 more copies of the 1744 wordbooks have come to light – one for the first performance and four for the second – and not one of the second issue copies contains the sheet of 'Alterations'. By weight of numbers alone the balance has now shifted in favour of the four copies without the 'Alterations' being the norm and of Schoelcher being correct in thinking that the 'Alterations' sheet in his copy did not belong with it. This view is strengthened by the discovery of another copy of the 'Alterations' in the New York Public Library, where it is inserted in a copy of one of the *Deborah* wordbooks dated 1733. This makes better sense. The singers in Handel's revivals of 1734 and 1735, for which the '1733' wordbooks must have been used, were predominantly Italian – they included the castrati Scalzi and Carestini – and it is certain that portions of the oratorio were sung in Italian in those years. Although this means that there are now two unique copies, some ten years apart in date but each containing the same sheet of 'Alterations', the chance that both were issued with this identical, very ephemeral piece of paper, is highly improbable and can be discounted. One further small but telling point in favour of the 'Alterations' belonging to the 1730s is that it contains a cue to 'PAGE 26' of the full wordbook. Only the very first issue of the *Deborah* wordbook in 1733 has a page '26', and that is a mistake, corrected in subsequent issues to page '20'. The 1744 wordbooks both have twenty pages.

Finally we have the evidence (only fully available since 2002) of the reactions of individuals who were present at the 1744 performances and reported their impressions in letters addressed to James Harris in Salisbury.² James's brother George, who did not attend the first performance, wrote that it had been 'in all respects truly excellent'. But the Earl of Radnor, who had been present, was more critical, finding Mrs Cibber indisposed with a cold, 'yet not at all disliked', and Miss Robinson, while 'a very good singer upon the whole', had been 'pufft up too much'. After attending the second performance George Harris wrote to his brother that 'the 3 women performed their parts extremely well'. If he was not referring to Francesina, Robinson and Cibber, James Harris would not have known who was meant. Moreover, if there had been a last-minute change of cast, or if some of the music was sung in Italian, George would surely have mentioned this. Burrows in his commentary on this letter agrees with the identification of the '3 women', but having previously accepted Dean's scenario he is forced to surmise that the cast also included an Italian singer, who, if the other three were performing, would surely have been surplus to requirements.

John Greenacombe

² Burrows and Dunhill (eds), *op. cit.*, pp. 202-8.



ITALIAN HANDEL CONFERENCES (OCTOBER 2007)

La cantata da camera intorno agli anni 'italiani' di Händel: Problemi e prospettive di ricerca

The impressive new facilities of Rome's 'Parco della musica' were the venue for this conference (12-14 October) organised by the Università Tor Vergata, the Società italiana di musicologia and the Istituto italiano per la storia della musica. The conference was part of a series of events designed to commemorate Handel's Italian sojourn: 'Monsù Endel in Italia 1706-1709: Tre secoli dopo il viaggio italiano di Händel'. The aim was to discuss Handel's works and place them in context by examining the Italian tradition with which he became acquainted.

The first two speakers examined individual cantata manuscripts and speculated on the circumstances of their creation. Michael Talbot discussed a volume of eighteen cantatas by Tomaso Albinoni, now housed in Berlin, suggesting that it may have been prepared in Venice for sale to a visitor from northern Europe. Carrie Churnside looked at two elaborate Bolognese manuscripts featuring illustrations by the artist Carlo Antonio Buffagnotti and adduced a letter in the Modenese archives as evidence that they were produced around 1689 as gifts for the ruling families of Modena and Florence.

The transmission of cantatas between Rome and the Mantuan court of Ferdinando Carlo Gonzaga was explored by Paola Besutti, who used court records to show that Roman music was highly prized in northern courts. Daniela Di Castro then displayed a fascinating range of images of Italian Baroque instruments, focusing in particular on the kinds of harpsichord that Handel would have played. To remind us that music itself should be at the heart of what we do, there was a highly enjoyable evening concert of cantatas by Handel (*Aminta e Fillide*, *Ero e Leandro* and *Diana cacciatrice*), performed by the ensemble La Risonanza.

Next day, the director of this group, Fabio Bonizzoni, joined Ellen Harris in discussing questions of performance practice in Handel's cantatas. He and she have been working together to enable performers to benefit from the latest research, and their discussion highlighted the importance of accurate musical editions. Sara Dieci then examined the cantatas of Filippo Amadei in the tradition of instrumentally-accompanied cantatas (often featuring soloistic cello lines) that were particularly prevalent in Emilia-

Romagna. Continuing on the use of instruments, Livio Marcaletti discussed the practical importance of examining a score in conjunction with performing parts; in the case of six cantatas by Antonio Bononcini, preserved in Vienna, it appeared that such important indications as 'concerto grosso' and 'concertino' are missing from the score – a reminder that some primary sources are unreliable.

Marco Bizzarini gave a comprehensive assessment of the instrumentally-accompanied cantatas of Benedetto Marcello, stressing the importance of considering both text and music, examining the composer's re-use of material in cantatas and serenatas, and suggesting the addition of some fifteen works to Eleanor Selfridge-Field's thematic catalogue (1990). With catalogues in mind, Dinko Fabris and Giulia Veneziano discussed the creation of a database of Domenico Scarlatti's cantatas, using the latest information technology to enable searching of both poetical and musical incipits. Licia Sirch and Francesco Passadore used palaeographical analysis to establish that the cantatas in the Nosedà collection in Milan originated from two distinct sources – one Roman (connected to the Pamphili) and the other Neapolitan (from the Cardenas and Guevara-Bovino families).

We remained in Naples for the final paper, in which Paologiovanni Maione discussed cantatas in Neapolitan dialect, emphasising the need to examine them in the context of local families and traditions. The conference ended with a round table discussion on the project to create an electronic database of all Italian cantatas.

One left the conference significantly better-informed, thoroughly well-fed, and heartened that research into the Italian cantata around 1700 is in such rude health.

Carrie Churnside

Georg Friedrich Händel a Roma

Handel arrived in Rome from Hamburg towards the end of 1706, and it is arguable that the works he composed there in 1707 marked the inauguration of Handel the composer as we now know him: 1707 was the year of *Dixit Dominus*, *Il trionfo del Tempo* and a tranche of splendid Italian cantatas. It was therefore very appropriate that the German Historical Institute in Rome should have marked the 300th anniversary with a conference (17-20 October) celebrating the association of the 'Saxon' with the city.

The programme involved participants from Britain and the United States, as well as Italy and Germany. As it turned out, some of the most 'on-topic' papers came



from the Americans: John Roberts on the subject of Handel's recomposition of musical material from German composers in his Italian works, and Ellen Harris on the subject-matter of the cantatas. From the Italians, there was an intriguing paper from Saverio Franchi about the political alignments of the Roman patrons. Otherwise the focus was mainly on contiguous areas to the conference theme: other composers and patrons of the period, and contexts in years surrounding Handel's period of residence. An anthology of the papers will be published next year in *Analecta musicologica*.

Considerable credit must go to Sabine Ehrmann-Herfort and her colleagues at the German Historical Institute (which has one of the best music research reference libraries in Rome) for initiating and hosting the conference. It was not their fault that, at the end of it all, I was still rather in the dark about what Handelian research is being conducted at the moment in Italy, and indeed why most interest in the subject of Handel in Rome has been shown by foreigners (Goddard, Streatfeild, Hall, Dixon, Kirkendale). The activities of simultaneous translators lent a certain stiffness to the conference presentations: papers were rendered into Italian and German, but not into English. This may also explain why, outside the formal sessions, there were many lively conversations between English-speakers and Germans, while the Italians mainly spoke to each other.

The conference also provided a welcome opportunity to see the sights and sites relevant to Handel's Roman career. In company with two colleagues, American and German, I toured the churches and the palaces, assisted by the map from Ursula Kirkendale's recent article on the Ruspoli connection.¹ There was also a coach visit to Ruspoli's country palace at Vignanello, which is further from the city than I had imagined. Most interesting of all was a concert of Italian cantatas in the palace that Cardinal Ottoboni occupied by virtue of his office as Papal Chancellor. Again this provided a surprise, for the highly resonant acoustic in the large room militated against any subtlety in the communication of the texts, even to my position in a relatively forward row of the audience. Either I have misconstrued the performance conditions for the cantatas, or they were originally performed in a different 'chamber'.

Donald Burrows

GERMAN HANDEL FESTIVALS (SUMMER 2008)

GÖTTINGEN

Plans for this year's Göttingen Händel-Festspiele did not work out quite as originally hoped, for early this year one of the major corporate sponsors underwent a change of management that caused a review of policy on where to invest their charitable giving. In the event, however, the festival sorted things out and went ahead with more or less the original ambitious programme (slightly bigger and longer than usual), albeit with a few of the more expensive British and American artists substituted by more economically manageable musicians.

For example, instead of a leading English baroque orchestra and well-known Handel conductor tackling *L'Allegro, il Penseroso ed il Moderato*, we heard the Milton-Harris-Jennens ode performed by the Hanover-based orchestra *Musica Alta Ripa* and the Norddeutscher Figuralchor, conducted by Jörg Straube. One might have been rather anxious about this most English of Handel's English theatre works in the hands of Teutonic players and choral singers, but the quality of both was most impressive: the many pastoral and cosmopolitan effects (such as the curfew bell, the hunting horn and the pealing organ) were sensitively judged, and the entire performance was paced lovingly and warmly. Straube conducted with neat underlying dramatic awareness, with few pregnant pauses, and his choir's diction and commitment to the poetry were unsurpassable.

It certainly helped that a young team of British soloists was engaged: *Il Penseroso* was beautifully sung and aptly characterised with contemplative serenity by soprano Joanne Lunn (the middle section of her 'Sweet bird' was perhaps the most exquisite I have ever heard), and *L'Allegro's* numbers were by turns impish, convivial and playful in the hands of Anna Devin (soprano), Andrew Staples (tenor) and George Humphreys (bass). I particularly liked the way in which Staples and Humphreys sang lighter airs such as 'Haste thee, nymph' and 'Mirth, admit me of thy crew' with a good-natured wink at the audience rather than the over-histrionic desperation for comedy or bluster that one sometimes encounters; their understated amusement was droll and typically English, and thus well-nigh perfect for the occasion. The only drawback was the adventurous inclusion of two organ concertos and one of the Op. 6 concerti grossi, as Handel had done for the first performances of *L'Allegro* in 1740. It was good to experience this fascinating experiment at reconstruction, although less inquisitive listeners grew restless and even some of the more curious members of

¹ Ursula Kirkendale, 'Handel with Ruspoli: New Documents from the Archivio Segreto Vaticano, December 1706 to December 1708', *Studi musicali*, 32 (2003), pp. 301-48, reprinted in Warren and Ursula Kirkendale, *Music and Meaning: Studies in Music History and the Neighbouring Disciplines* (Florence, 2007), pp. 361-415.



the audience longed for the ode to resume without further delay.

The Handel-Milton connection was explored also in Nicholas McGegan's fine performance of *Samson*. As heard a few weeks later in Halle, Tom Cooley was an eloquent title-hero (plenty of despair and power in 'Total eclipse', but plenty of light and beauty in 'Thus when the sun'), and William Berger sang Manoah with commendable maturity and subtlety. Franziska Gottwald made a mess of the recapitulation in 'Return, O God of hosts', but otherwise was reliable. The extrovert Wolf Matthias Friedrich was ideally cast as the brawny bully Harapha. Sophie Daneman's Dalila was well-acted, bringing to mind the fact that Handel composed the role for the actress Kitty Clive rather than for an operatic soprano (although Daneman also did a fine job vocally as the Israelite Woman and combined to fine effect with the trumpeter David Staff in 'Let the bright seraphim').

The NDR Choir was disappointingly perfunctory and lack-lustre: they sounded disengaged from the music and seldom looked up from their Novello vocal scores, despite McGegan's energetic and perceptive conducting (apparently the choir improved in subsequent performances at Dresden, Kassel and Halle). *Samson* is a difficult oratorio to pace, and McGegan did an outstanding job of balancing its reflective pathos and gradually intensified dramatic conflicts. One can hardly complain at his choice of Handel's abridged 1753 version of the oratorio, for during the fortnight the excellent Göttingen Festival Orchestra (a sort of multi-national period-instrument super-group) had also to play in numerous performances of *Orlando*, Mendelssohn's arrangement of *Acis and Galatea* and various other concerts.

Catherine Turocy's production of *Orlando*, with baroque-style costumes, elegant mechanical scenery and magical effects aplenty, was a theatrical delight from start to finish. Not only did we experience Zoroastro's ascending magical chariot at the end of Act II and a live hawk flying above the audience's head to deliver the magic potion to him, so that Orlando's senses could be restored; there was also a rare fidelity to the pastoral-heroical-magical libretto, with lovingly created characterisations and a delightful absence of pretentious 'producer's opera' concepts.

After the performance one eminent opera critic from a British broadsheet complained to me that 'there was no production', but that is precisely why I enjoyed its honesty and faithfulness to Handel's music. Although the characters of Dorinda and Zoroastro both seem to me to be more complex and profound than they became in Susanne Rydén and Wolf Matthias Friedrich's overtly comic and camped-up performances, the production was otherwise a joy from start to finish

because it allowed the viewers to interpret dramatic ideas and contemplate characterisation for themselves, instead of thrusting incongruous and distorted dramatic interpretations upon them. Thankfully, the only message from the director was that *Orlando* is a truly wonderful and beguiling opera that can stand up for itself without artificial preservatives.

Turocy's use of members of her New York Baroque Dance Company as Zoroastro's magical helpers was an imaginative idea that made possible a very moving *scena ultima* in which they gently implored Zoroastro to restore Orlando's sanity. McGegan conducted the arias and accompanied the recitatives at the harpsichord with his customary enthusiasm and affection for Handel's operatic language. The two *violette marine* in the Act III sleep scene made a rough-and-ready sound on the opening night but improved during the run of performances. The cast was vocally uneven at times: Dominique Labelle as Angelica and Diana Moore as Medoro were uniformly excellent every night, whereas countertenor William Towers sounded stretched and unconvincing in the title-role's heroic or volatile moments (his softer singing was much better).

Two other British countertenors gave very different chamber concerts during the festival. Amidst a programme of music by Purcell and Lawes arranged for voice and viol consort, Michael Chance and Fretwork thought it a good idea to perform Cleopatra's 'Piangerò la sorte mia' and, bizarrely enough, it was not too bad! Chance does not sing quite as effortlessly as he used to, and he sounded uneasy in Purcell and Lawes songs, but his strange choice of encores (a haunting folksong arrangement by Britten, and Weill's 'Mack the Knife') elicited his finest singing and rightly brought the house down. Robin Blaze, on the other hand, remained content with songs by Purcell and Dowland (accompanied by lutenist David Tayler), singing such perennial favourites as 'Sweeter than roses' and 'In darkness let me dwell' with spontaneity and ease.

Chamber concerts by harpsichordist Matthew Halls (Handel suites and Babbalanza arrangements of arias from *Rinaldo*) and the London Handel Players (instrumental arrangements of oratorio airs) showed exactly how such programmes should be prepared and delivered, whereas Emma Kirkby and London Baroque's concert of Arne songs, chamber sonatas and the so-called 'Handel Gloria' was lifeless and boring – although it was not helped by being scheduled in the large Stadthalle, in order to sell more tickets. One could not help wondering whether Kirkby and the instrumentalists would have been better served in a smaller, more intimate venue in which they – and the repertory – would have had a better rapport with their audience.

The festival concluded with the modern première of the nineteen-year-old Mendelssohn's arrangement of



Acis and Galatea. Those familiar with either Handel's original scoring or Mozart's lovely re-orchestration were in for a rude shock: some of the orchestral effects seemed outrageous, and it was difficult not to laugh as Mendelssohn threw everything at it, including the kitchen sink. Some of the most extreme orchestral effects were reserved for Polyphemus, who was sung with great gusto by Wolf Matthias Friedrich. Friedrich sang three roles in the festival, and this is the one to which he was best suited. The other singers were generally good, although tenor Christoph Prégardien seemed to be struggling. The expanded Göttingen Festival Orchestra and large NDR Choir gave a good account of Mendelssohn's enthusiastic response to Handel's music. Commercial recordings of both Mendelssohn's *Acis* and the 1753 *Samson* are to be released by the German company Carus, and next year's festival is to include a performance of *Alexander's Feast* and a staging of *Admeto*.

David Vickers

HALLE

The German language sometimes surprises us with its ability to express complex ideas with brevity. The theme of this year's festival was 'Geistliche Musik im profanen Raum', which translates literally as 'Religious music performed in secular surroundings'. In Handel's case this means works such as oratorios given in theatres or palaces rather than in churches, and the introductory essay in the programme book began with the famous quotation '... in which Solemnity of Church-Musick is agreeably united with the most pleasing Airs of the Stage'. Not, one might think, a very rich subject for academic discussion, yet in the event it inspired a varied and stimulating festival.

The opening concert, during which the Handel prize is traditionally awarded, gave us an impressive performance of the Dettingen Te Deum by the Händel-festspielorchester and choir, with local soloists, directed by Martin Haselböck. In contrast to last year the English diction of soloists and choir was generally good, and the work came over very well, contradicting for me, at least, the rather sniffy view of it traditionally taken by some commentators. The concert opened with the D-major Concerto HWV 335a (later quarried by Handel for the *Fireworks Music*), and in this performance it concluded with the finale of the Organ Concerto in G minor/major, op. 4 no. 1. The occasion was graced by a group of very young children dressed as little Mozarts (wrong period?) performing some dance routines; their contribution was quite charming (although they were

not always quite sure what they were supposed to be doing) and lightened the rather formal nature of the occasion. The speeches that introduced the award ceremony were shorter than usual, which was welcome, and the Handel prize was awarded to Christopher Hogwood, who made a gracious acknowledgement in English.

The staged production in the opera house was *Belshazzar*. Of all the dramatic oratorios this one, perhaps, lends itself best to such treatment, and overall it was quite impressive. The greatest virtue of the production, with one exception, was that it let the greatness of the work come across; the exception was a tasteless interpretation of the orgy scene in Act I, with Belshazzar's people dressed as eighteenth-century fops, feebly behaving with all kinds of silly vulgarity, with a climax in which two scantily-dressed girls writhed at great length around each other during the magnificent duet between Belshazzar and Nitocris: how can people do this to such music? It was redeemed, however, by the powerful singing of the chorus, with very clear English and perfect diction, excellent playing from the orchestra, and good soloists: the only disappointment among the latter was the usually first-class Romelia Lichtenstein as Nitocris, whose singing was indeed superb but whose English diction was weak.

An early example of a religious work given 'im profanen Raum' is of course *La Resurrezione*, which was performed in the sumptuous surroundings of Marquis Ruspoli's Palazzo Bonelli on Easter Day in 1708. A fine performance by Michael Schneider's La stagione Frankfurt, who can always be counted on to produce the goods, was unfortunately not given in a secular location, but in the vast echoing spaces of the Dom [cathedral], and for those of us who were placed well towards the back it was very difficult to enjoy for acoustic reasons – a rather unfortunate contradiction of the theme of the festival. Earlier in the day, and in the same circumstances, we had heard Alessandro Scarlatti's Passion oratorio *La Colpa, il Pentimento e la Grazia*, which had also been performed in 1708, on the Wednesday of Holy Week. The pairing of these works has happened before in modern times (by Nicholas McGegan in Göttingen some years ago), but although the Scarlatti has some well-crafted and quite dramatic music, it always seems to me to be vitiated by its feeble libretto (by Cardinal Ottoboni).

With the Festspielorchester Göttingen and the NDR choir, McGegan brought his performance of *Samson* from Göttingen to the Konzerthalle and gave the work in the long version of the first performance in 1743 (with a few minor cuts, it must be said). In spite of the longueurs that many critics have found in this version (including, it seems, the composer himself), it was truly magnificent: when one's reaction to a performance is



“what a glorious masterpiece”, that says it all, and we await the recording with pleasurable anticipation. The soloists, led by Thomas Cooley and Sophie Daneman, were outstanding, as was everything else, particularly the expert pacing of the piece by McGegan.

It is always good to be able to go to the Goethe-Theater in Bad Lauchstädt, which is a delightful experience in terms of the place (including the unbelievably cheap hot sausages and beer at the stall near the lake), as well as for the music. This was a production of *Dido and Aeneas*, filled out with dances and other instrumental pieces by Purcell. The choir was the Cantus Thuringia and the tiny orchestra the Capella Thuringia, and except for the American soprano Margaret Hunter, as Belinda, the cast was German. They sang well, although with some pronunciation problems, and the whole show was delightful, although the interspersed extra instrumental pieces and dances made the opera seem a little scrappy from the point of view of the plot, highlighting problems inherent in the work itself.

There was a performance of Monteverdi's *Orfeo* that I was unable to see but which was favourably received by those who did. The last concert that I was able to attend was given in the Handel House under the title 'Dolce è pur d'amor l'affanno', the first line of one of the composer's cantatas (HWV 109). The programme consisted of alto cantatas by Handel (including that one), Caldara and Benedetto Marcello, beautifully sung by the countertenor Jürgen Banholzer, accompanied by an extraordinary instrumental group called La Gioia Armonica consisting of a cello, a theorbo, a violone, an organ, and a psalterium – a dulcimer, played with little sticks and making a tinkling bell-like sound. The upper (violin) parts in the pieces were played on this instrument – utterly inauthentic but totally delightful: the capacity audience in the concert room was ecstatic, as was I.

The scholarly conference, on the theme of the festival, was introduced by some items from *La Resurrezione*, *Esther* and *Judas Maccabaeus*. The papers were varied and generally of good quality; John Roberts ('*Messiah* as a Christian narrative') and Donald Burrows ('A Sacred Oratorio for the Theatre: An Experiment that nearly Failed') dealt with aspects of Handel's most famous work, and other papers were concerned with post-Handel performances of *Messiah* and *Israel in Egypt*; Karl Böhmer discussed Alessandro Scarlatti's oratorios and their influence on Handel.

As always, the festival was full of good things – rather more than a single correspondent could attend.

Terence Best

THE STANLEY SADIE HANDEL PRIZE 2008

Semele: Early Opera Company,
dir. Christian Curnyn (Chandos)

The Stanley Sadie Handel Prize is awarded annually to a distinctive new recording of music by Handel. The successful recording must combine interpretative quality with insight into the composer's genius, so that the prize is an indication both of the quality of the performance and of its contribution to Handelian knowledge or understanding. Previously known as The International Handel Recording Prize, the award was renamed in 2005 in memory of Stanley Sadie, who had been one of the founder panel members. The prize is awarded by an invited panel of respected scholars and journalists, each of whom has a special and informed interest in Handel's music. This year's panel included judges from Australia, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Russia, England and the USA, who selected carefully from amongst all the new Handel recordings released during the previous calendar year.

The prize for 2008 has been won by the Early Opera Company (directed by Christian Curnyn) and Chandos Records for their recording of Handel's English music drama *Semele* (CHAN 0745(3)). The cast consists of Rosemary Joshua (*Semele*), Richard Croft (*Jupiter/Apollo*), Hilary Summers (*Ino/Juno*), Brindley Sherratt (*Cadmus/Comnus*), Stephen Wallace (*Athamas*) and Gail Pearson (*Iris*). In the absence of any other complete recording of the first performance version using expert Baroque singers and period instruments, the panel felt that this recording represented a very important addition to the discography of Handel, as well as being 'a sheer sensual delight'.

The judges also congratulated the close runner-up – *As steals the morn*, by Mark Padmore (tenor) and The English Concert (Harmonia Mundi USA) – and commended the first performance version of *Tamerlano* by the Orchestra of Patras, directed by George Petrou (Dabringhaus und Grimm), and the second volume of Handel cantatas (*Cantate per il Cardinale Ruspoli*) by La Risonanza (Glossa).



RAMEAU'S DEBT TO HANDEL

Readers may be interested to know that Graham Sadler's paper 'From Themes to Variations: Rameau's debt to Handel', delivered at the Handel Institute conference entitled 'Performing Handel – Then and Now' (November 2005), has been published in "*L'Esprit français*" und die Musik Europas: *Entstehung, Einfluß und Grenzen einer ästhetischen Doktrin*, ed. Michelle Biget-Mainfroy and Rainer Schmusch (Hildesheim: Olms, 2007), pp. 592-607.

NEW VOCAL SCORES OF HANDEL FROM BÄRENREITER

Recent catalogues from Bärenreiter, publisher of the Hallische Händel-Ausgabe, announce the publication in 2008 of the following new vocal scores, based on full scores already issued as part of the HHA. They appear in good time for next year's Handel anniversary:

Athalia (oratorio), piano reduction by Andreas Köhs (publication March)

Amadigi (opera), piano reduction by Martin Schelhaas (April)

Oreste (pasticcio opera), piano reduction by Hans-Georg Kluge (May)

Rodrigo (*Vincer se stesso è la maggior vittoria*) (opera), piano reduction by Andreas Köhs (October)

Further information from Bärenreiter:

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CALL FOR PAPERS

Conference on Purcell, Handel and Literature

Senate House, University of London

Friday and Saturday, 20-21 November 2009

Institutes of Musical Research and English Studies,
School of Advanced Study, University of London.
Departments of Music and Literature,
The Open University.
The Handel Institute. The Purcell Society.

Proposals are invited for papers of 20 minutes duration; a proposal should be presented as an abstract of not more than 250 words. Proposals for thematic round-table sessions will also be considered. All proposals should be submitted by **30 October 2008** to valerie.james@sas.ac.uk. Please include your name, contact details and (if applicable) your institutional affiliation within your proposal.

An outline programme for the conference will be prepared and circulated early in 2009, so that accepted participants can plan their travel arrangements. Funding for the conference will be sought, but this is likely to be limited: participants are therefore requested to seek support from their own institutions, where this is possible. If a large number of good-quality proposals on topics germane to the conference theme are received, an additional day may be scheduled on Thursday 19 November. For further details of the conference theme, see previous issues of this *Newsletter*.

The conference programme committee, which will review and consider all proposals, comprises representatives from all of the sponsoring institutions: Robert Fraser, Delia Da Sousa Correa, Donald Burrows (OU/Handel Institute); Sandra Tuppen, Bruce Wood (Purcell Society), Katharine Ellis (IMR), Sandra Clark (IES), Colin Timms (Handel Institute). Specialist proposals may be referred to other members of these institutions, but final decisions on the programme will be taken by the committee.

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).
