

THE HANDEL INSTITUTE

NEWSLETTER

Readers are doubtless aware of the death, in May, of our friend and colleague Anthony Hicks, an international authority on Handel and a founder member of The Handel Institute. We begin, therefore, with an obituary and a personal tribute from Donald Burrows, and with an appreciation by Laurence Cummings, musical director of the London

Handel Festival. David Vickers and Terence Best report on this summer's Handel festivals in Göttingen and Halle; we publish details of the forthcoming study day on the 'Handel Documents' project, and new snippets of information on singers in Handel's *Rodrigo* (1707) are presented by the undersigned.

Colin Timms

ANTHONY HICKS (1943-2010)

Anthony (Tony) Hicks died in London on 26 May, a month before his 67th birthday. He was born in Swansea, and through his Welsh mother he qualified as a Freeman of Llantrisant, where he was enrolled in 1966. He read Mathematics at King's College, London, graduating (BSc, AKC) in 1965; his ability as a mathematician may have come from his paternal grandfather, who was described in 1905 as an auditor. Tony's interest in music originated in his father, formerly manager of Swansea's Metropole Hotel, who was an amateur pianist; at King's he pursued his musical interests, playing the trumpet and conducting a college orchestra. After graduation his first post was with the Computer Services Division of ICT; he remained there until 1979, when he moved to Smith Brothers (stockjobbers) in the City.

In 1982 he joined the Management Services Division of the University of London, where he was successively programmer, team leader, systems analyst and senior analyst for the computer systems. Here he played a leading role in the specification, implementation and maintenance of the systems, dealing with the complexities created by an environment of large mainframe computers. He took early retirement in 1993, but his skills and experience remained available under a consultancy for two further years.

In parallel with his computing career Tony developed a scholarly interest in the music and life of George Frideric Handel. His first essays and reviews (of performances and musical literature) were published in musical journals during the 1960s, and he read papers at scholarly conferences in



Britain and America from 1970 onwards. In the first edition of *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* (1980) he was responsible for the work-list accompanying the article on Handel, and he collaborated with Stanley Sadie on the work-list for Mozart; in the second edition (2001) he was responsible for the complete article on Handel, and he contributed the articles on Handel's operas to *The New Grove Dictionary of Opera* (1992). He also collaborated with Sadie as joint editor of the *Handel Tercentenary Collection*, a volume arising from the London anniversary conference in 1985, and was the principal advisor to the curator for the Handel exhibition at the National Portrait Gallery in that year. He was the first secretary of The Handel Institute at its foundation in 1987, was a Council member thereafter, and subsequently a Trustee as well. In the years preceding the formal establishment of the Institute he acted as secretary to the Provisional Council, and was active in the negotiations over the new collaboration with the *Hallische Händel-Ausgabe*: one of his few visits to continental Europe was made in November 1983, when he was one of the Provisional Council's representatives at meetings in Halle. In 2007 he was appointed a Research Fellow at The Open University to work on a new collected edition of 'Handel Documents'; he continued to make a major contribution to this project until a few weeks before his death.

Tony was particularly active in the promotion of historically-informed performances of authentic versions of Handel's works, and played a leading role as advisor to the



Handel Opera Society in London, the Maryland Handel Festival (USA) and the London Handel Festival, often creating new music editions for specific performances; some of his important scholarship is embedded in programme notes for recordings and performances. As a critic his approach was forensic, applying logical thinking from his mathematical training to musical and historical issues concerning Handel. Apart from his contributions to *New Grove* and *New Grove Opera*, his lasting contributions to scholarship include important articles and book chapters on the late additions to Handel's oratorios (1983), Jennens's collaboration with Handel in the creation of the oratorio *Saul* (1987) and the Shaftesbury Handel Collection (1993), as well as the chapter on Handel's oratorios in *The Cambridge Companion to Handel* (1997). His musical publications included the first edition of Handel's music for *Comus* (1977, with Colin Timms), and a critical edition of Handel's first set of keyboard suites (1984); among the editions that he prepared for performance, the most significant was his reconstruction of the 1732 version of *Esther* for the London Handel Festival of 2008.

A personal memoir

My first contact with Tony came in the early 1970s, when I strayed into Handel scholarship. Through an unexpected chain of circumstances, I became interested in putting together a reconstruction of the *Anthem on the Peace* from its fragmentary sources, towards a performance with my choir and orchestra in Abingdon. I drafted an article on the subject – competent but hopelessly over-length – and optimistically submitted it to Stanley Sadie for publication in the *Musical Times*. In response I was told that it had been passed on to Anthony Hicks for comment, and that we should make contact. Tony was complimentary about my reconstruction of the anthem, which went beyond attempts that he himself had made, and suggested in detail how the article might be revised without losing the substance. It was published in December 1973, to coincide with its first modern performance, which Tony duly attended and reviewed; I met him for the first time after the première.

Although I did not realise it at the time, that sequence of events reflected the best outcomes of Tony's scholarship and personality. Presented with a draft of someone else's work, he was always comprehensive in his comments, acute in his detection of mistakes or false arguments, and generous in making his own specialist knowledge available; if, in addition, he could influence a performance, he always took the opportunity. His passion for factual accuracy and clear thinking was both an asset and a burden: the work-lists for the articles on Handel and Mozart in *The New Grove* saw him in his element. But since much of his wisdom appeared in reviews of books and performances, his rather meagre list of major publications – articles, book chapters and music editions – gives little hint of the range of his influence or of his contribution. He was exasperatingly difficult to involve in the timetabled delivery of large projects, and it would be all but impossible to collect together the rich legacy of forever-unfinished articles that he gave as conference

papers, or his letters that *The Gramophone* declined to publish (he was assiduous in protesting at misinformation appearing in popular media through ignorance, carelessness or promotional spin).

That the Handel Institute is the principal beneficiary of Tony's financial legacy marks the final stage in the major contribution that he made to the Institute's establishment and sustenance. In the 1980s circumstances came together that both generated the need for the Institute and made its foundation possible. There was a substantial body of people with a range of interests and expertise in matters Handelian, and a realignment in the management of the *Hallische Händel-Ausgabe* on an international basis that required representation from a specialist British institution; the 'authentic' performance of Baroque music had matured and moved into the middle ground of public acceptance; Handel's operas and oratorios were receiving performances on an unprecedented scale, and international vistas opened up with the European Music Year and the Maryland Handel Festival. The character of The Handel Institute, as described in our aim 'to bring together in the Council a group of leading scholars who are based in Britain and have research interests in the subject-area', was evolved through Tony's activity and through his insistence that the Institute should enjoy a strong and independent status.

In April 1974 *Music & Letters* announced its first Grant for Publication, to support 'a new edition of O. E. Deutsch's "Handel: A Documentary Biography", which is to be prepared by Anthony Hicks'. In retrospect, it is not surprising that he surrendered the commission after a couple of years: by 1975 the massive task was more than could be achieved by one person, even someone with Tony's capacity for absorbing and sorting information. Thirty years later there was at last a prospect that something might be done (though by then the task could no longer be described in terms of 'a new edition of Deutsch'), given institutional and financial support for three staff and an office base. Tony's consequent appointment as a Research Fellow at The Open University gave him a status that he clearly appreciated, though it also undermined his line of defence that, as a critic, he had the independence of an 'amateur'. He served the Handel Documents project actively until a few days before his death, and it is tragic that he did not live to see this long-term ambition completed. He will be sorely missed as a colleague, on account of the rigour that he brought to Handel scholarship, and on account of the encyclopaedic knowledge that died with him.

Donald Burrows

The view from the harpsichord

Tony Hicks will be remembered for many things: his scholarship, his willingness to share information, his great passion for music and, above all, his steadfast determination that the performances of Handel's music by musicians all over the world should be as faithful as possible to the great composer's intentions. This manifested itself in some heated exchanges: no, there should NOT be organ continuo (or,



even worse, guitar!) in recitative or aria unless specified in the rubric as a special effect; appoggiaturas should be observed, where possible, and why, oh why, must opera directors persist in skewing Handel's act plans and enforcing their needless 'concept' on to the drama? However, these criticisms were off-loaded more often with a shrug of the shoulders than with any real sense of anger, and Tony's inimitable twinkling eyes revealed the greater truth that, even if the performances were not perfect, at least the music of his dearly beloved Handel was getting the public airing it deserved.

For the performer, it is, perhaps, his work as an editor that proves to be his greatest legacy. As musical advisor to the London Handel Society, Tony acted as mentor and friend, providing programme notes and translations, all at the drop of a hat, and countless editions of cantatas, operas and oratorios. These editions were practical documents. Footnotes were provided by way of correspondence, and even if time did not permit a new typesetting of a huge work, Tony would provide detailed accompanying notes that even the hard of understanding could cross-reference with Chrysander to produce a faithful rendition. Some of the highlights of this dedicated work include the text for the first recording of *Silla* with James Bowman and Denys Darlow, the edition of all three parts of *Muzio Scevola* (though even Tony drew the line at performing all three in one evening!), his edition of the 1732 *Esther*, recorded for the 25th anniversary of the London Handel Festival, and the majority of the operas performed at the Festival for nearly twenty years. His last edition, completed with his long-serving comrade-in-type, Peter Jones, was of *Saul*, an oratorio that was formerly a minefield of misinformation: we look forward to remembering Tony's enormous contribution to music with a special performance of this work in the 2011 London Handel Festival.

Laurence Cummings

GERMAN HANDEL FESTIVALS SUMMER 2010

GÖTTINGEN

Festivals that choose a theme each year must accept that there is a risk of tenuous programming, repetition of theme, confinement within topic, and problems in achieving precise and coherent artistic objectives. This year's Göttingen Händel-Festspiele suffered from all these maladies, the theme of 'Händel & Hannover' having been tackled successfully only five years ago. One wonders whether changes in sources of funding and a greater need to please the regional government in Hanover, doubtless combined with the problem of the global financial crisis, had a detrimental impact on the artistic planning and quality of this historic festival. One hopes that this year's tired event, with some smaller concerts less illustrious and imaginative than usual, was a temporary blip.

On paper, things still looked pretty good. A new production of *Tamerlano*, conducted by the ever-stylish Nicholas McGegan, should have been a highlight. Indeed, the recently-founded festival orchestra was outstanding, and McGegan's grasp on proceedings was immaculate, with every aria and accompanied recitative judged perfectly. Thomas Cooley was in magnificent voice as Bajazet, and Franziska Gottwald had impressive stage presence and sang Irene fluently. However, the countertenors – both alumni of the London Handel Festival – were shaky. Clint van der Linde had evidently been instructed to play Andronico as an ineffectual wimp, and the situation was made worse by the fact that he was ill but had to plod on (because there was no cover). Christopher Ainslie is a fine singer but was miscast as Tamerlano (as almost all countertenors in this part usually are). Kristina Hansson was a blandly anonymous Asteria.

But the fundamental problem was Joahanna Garpe's amateurish production which, in order to fill the stage with action, resorted to hackneyed clichés of all kinds. Had one made a list in advance of every irritating misconception and tired attempt to be 'original' that has been seen in modern Handel stagings, one could have ticked them off one by one as this dire production unfolded. Luggage was unpacked and repacked; a gun was pointed at the beginning of an aria, thus weakening any climax at its end; Leone (nonsensically) undressed to his underpants to give us something to look at during his aria, and there were numerous *faux* slow-motion dream scenes revealing sexual repression: Andronico's 'Benché mi sprezzi', in particular, was ruined by a fawning orgy that turned one of Handel's loveliest arias for Senesino into a tiresome, irrelevant and mundane whinge.

As is normal with such insensitive directors, the emotions and motivation of the characters were utterly subverted by stage activities that ignored the musical and textual signals provided for them by Handel. Arias were sung to the 'wrong' people or to characters who should have been off-stage, and, of course, there was the obligatory and phenomenally stupid cut, insisted upon by the stage director to support her inadequate grasp of Handelian dramaturgy: the superb sequence of short arias towards the end of Act II, after Asteria has defied Tamerlano and briefly triumphed over him, was sacrificed on the altar of 'the director's concept'. One cannot blame the unfortunate singers, the fine orchestra or the excellent conductor for this dire staging, which could well serve as a textbook for bad modern productions. At least things got better once we arrived at Bajazet's 'Empio per farti guerra', from which point the director was forced to bow to the pressure of the quality of Handel's writing for the last twenty minutes of the opera.

In a decade of attending the Göttingen Handel Festival, this was not quite the worst production that I have seen (*Deidamia* in 2003 has that dubious honour), but it was probably the least engaging – hardly adequate for the composer's most gripping tragic opera. Göttingen has a reputation for mounting baroque-style stagings, but during the last ten years there have been only three; the other seven productions were all modern in one sense or another.



Curiously, the real turkeys have all been firmly in the modern camp – and not because I am an historical dogmatist! This *Tamerlano* was affected far more by the director's incomprehension of the libretto and mistrust of the characters' lines than by costume or stage design.

The remainder of the festival was a mixed bag. A peculiar concert by Nuria Rial and the Austrian Baroque Company included the Nine German Arias and some instrumental music by Telemann. Tied in with a recently released recording, this occasion had the air of a CD launch. Rial's singing was pretty and likable but did not travel far towards the pious heart of Brockes's devotional verses, and the elaborate instrumentation (five continuo players and a circus of obbligato instruments) did nothing to persuade me that Handel did not intend these songs for more economical forces (soprano, violin and simple continuo). I might have been more convinced, perhaps, if the Telemann pieces had been more than a vehicle for some painfully exaggerated recorder playing by Michael Oman.

A late-night concert by Constanze Backes (soprano) and the ensemble La Moresca was entitled 'Händel & Steffani', but with too little of the latter it was hardly more than an excuse to plough through Handel's familiar Roman cantatas *Armida abbandonata* and *La Lucrezia* – nothing to do with Hanover. The continuo playing, especially the perpetually clanking broken chords on the harpsichord, was grating, and Backes – a singer whom I have enjoyed on disc – sounded weak and embarrassingly out of her depth. This was an astonishingly bad concert from a technical point of view, yet the audience seemed pleased nonetheless.

A timetable clash meant that I was lecturing elsewhere when Richard Egarr gave a harpsichord recital in the old university hall, but I am reliably informed that it was excellently played and presented, with Egarr talking comfortably to his audience. Other events included McGegan's modern resuscitation of Hiller's Berlin arrangement of *Messiah*, which according to Graham Cummings was much more enjoyable than expected, and a performance of *Judas Maccabaeus* by the Schleswig-Holstein Festival Choir and Elbipolis Baroque Orchestra of Hamburg, conducted by Rolf Beck; a performance by these forces a few months earlier has been issued on CD by Deutsche Harmonia Mundi, so friends of The Handel Institute can judge for themselves whether the good reports that I received were fair. The local symphony orchestra contributed *Apollo e Dafne* (with the same Apollo as five years ago) and Pergolesi's *Stabat mater*; the performance, apparently, was not memorable.

As usual, I very much enjoyed my visit to this lovely, friendly festival. However, the poor production of *Tamerlano* and the uneven quality of music-making in peripheral events left me hoping that Göttingen will raise its game in 2011. It is reported that there is to be a baroque-style staging of *Teseo*; in truth, the vital factor for me is not baroque costumes versus modern conceptualism, but whether the result communicates Handel's creative convictions clearly and emotively to the audience. With their international-quality musicianship and artistic

programming, the smaller events are a major part of the charm of this festival. I sincerely hope there is a return to top form in 2011, McGegan's last year at the helm, and that healthy foundations are laid for the next music director, Laurence Cummings.

David Vickers

HALLE

It has long been accepted wisdom that a musicological conference should have an overall theme that is reflected in the individual papers on offer. This applies both to conferences that are independent of other activities and also to those that take place in the context of a musical festival, in which case the conference theme is normally reflected in some of the works performed. Another aspect of many conferences is the celebration of a significant anniversary, such as the birth or death of a composer.

I have always been of the opinion – though with little support from colleagues! – that it would be a good idea on occasion to have a conference with no specific theme, so that the organisers could feel free to invite scholars with something interesting to say on a subject that would otherwise be excluded from a theme-based event. It is, of course, true that in most conferences such papers are read as a kind of fringe activity – in some there are even sessions devoted to 'free papers' – but the idea could have a wider application.

These thoughts are suggested by the Halle Händelfestspiele of 2010, the 300th anniversary of the birth of Johann Sebastian's eldest son, Wilhelm Friedemann Bach. WFB has a Halle connection, in that he worked at the Marktkirche from 1746 to 1764, so the theme of the conference was 'Wilhelm Friedemann Bach and the Protestant Church Cantata after 1750', which I (and others) felt was not calculated to set the musicological world alight.

As usual, the conference was well organised and included some very distinguished speakers, such as the eminent Bach scholar Peter Wollny, who gave the introductory paper, preceded by a musical introduction consisting of an *accompagnato* and two arias from WFB's cantatas. There were fourteen further papers, and a second session is planned for 19-20 November in Leipzig – an interesting development, especially as the titles of the papers for that session were already listed in the June booklet. Some non-WFB-related papers were given by the Anglo-American contingent, including John Roberts on Handel in Florence and Donald Burrows and Graydon Beeks on William Croft.

For the opening ceremony of the Festival, in the Georg-Friedrich-Händel-Halle, there was a welcome change from tradition: the speeches and the award of the Handel prize took place in the foyer at 6.00 pm, followed by the concert in the hall at 8.00. This worked very well, especially as it gave time for hungry delegates to have supper afterwards (very necessary, as the traditional Burgermeister's party in the Town Hall has been abandoned). The concert, by the Händelfestspielorchester Halle, conducted by Karl-Heinz Steffens, was very charming, well played and well sung by



three soloists. There were instrumental works by Vivaldi and G. B. Mele (born 1701, died after 1752), and arias and duets by Handel (from *Orlando*, *Alcina* and *Ariodante*) and by other composers' operas based on Ariosto's *Orlando furioso* (Hasse, Porpora, Mele). A particularly interesting feature was the aria 'La tortora innocente' from the serenata *Angelica e Medoro* by two composers, Porpora and Mele.

The new staged production was *Orlando*, surely one of Handel's finest operas, although less often performed than *Giulio Cesare*, *Alcina* or *Ariodante*. The test of whether a performance is a success is a simple one: does it convey the greatness of the music? This one did, and I felt that for the singing and playing it was the best that we have heard in Halle for a long time. The title-role was taken by the English countertenor Owen Willetts, Angelica and Dorinda by Marie Friederike Schöder and Sophie Klussmann, Zoroastro by Christoph Stegemann, and Medoro by the young Russian countertenor Dmitry Egorov. Bernhard Forck conducted the festive orchestra with a fine sense of pace and style.

The production was less irritating than some recent ones, although there was a lot of activity involving shepherds, crooks, sheep-shearing and other rustic pastimes, and a number of woollen garments were slowly unravelled – to illuminate the progressive disintegration of the hero's sanity, perhaps? One never knows. Particularly tiresome was a video at the back of the stage that showed, among other things, a monkey repeatedly picking insects from a sheep's coat. Whether the sheep was supposed to be alive or dead was not clear; neither was the reason for the monkey's doing it. This use of video was the second in a Halle production in two years, the first example being the dreadful one in last year's *Serse* at Bad-Lauchstädt: all so silly, and not to be encouraged.

It is always a joy to go to the Goethe-Theater in Bad-Lauchstädt, and this year the show was a real novelty: selections from the three-act opera *Il palazzo incantato* by Luigi Rossi (1642), together with Monteverdi's *Il combattimento di Tancredi e Clorinda* (1624). Rossi's opera has a libretto by Giulio Rospigliosi, who later became Pope Clement IX – surely a one-off in operatic history! The subject is related to that of Handel's *Orlando* and *Alcina*, based of course on Ariosto. Rossi's music is stylistically in the mainstream of the period (late Monteverdi, Cavalli, etc.): it is charming, and in this extract there were four soloists – a soprano Angelica, a tenor Ruggiero, a mezzo Bradamante and a baritone Gigante (giant); the first three also sang in the Monteverdi. The group of instrumentalists, quaintly called (in the modern fashion) 'L'Arpeggiata', played the usual things – lutes, keyboards, gamba – plus crumhorns and some very noisy percussion. It was all over very quickly – just over an hour – but was a pleasing entertainment for a very hot summer's afternoon.

The last concert I was able to attend, again in the Händel-Halle, was billed as featuring the great countertenor Andreas Scholl. This was a fully choral concert, with the impressive forces of the Akademie für alte Musik Berlin and the Vocalconsort Berlin, conducted by Marcus Creed. The first half was devoted to J. S. Bach – the orchestral Suite in C,

robustly played, and the cantata 'Geist und Seele wird verwirret', with alto solo; Scholl was of course excellent, but I found this work and the performance rather lacking in sparkle. In the second half we had JSB's splendid double-choir motet 'Der Geist hilft unser Schwachheit auf', which came over strongly, and the evening ended with Handel's 'Dixit Dominus', which was given a powerful performance, though often too fast for my taste. As there is only one alto aria in this piece and two of the other three works had no vocal solo whatever, I felt that the hype about Scholl was overdone: he had comparatively little to do.

In previous years there has always been a large Festival programme book, giving details of all the events (and major articles on them) but not verbal texts, which were sold cheaply as leaflets at each concert. This year there was an overall programme booklet in smaller format, including lists of the concerts and performers but only brief articles, and another programme in the same format for each concert, with essays and texts. It is unfortunate that we were unable to collect booklets for concerts we did not attend.

Terence Best

ARCHIVE NOTES ON SINGERS IN *RODRIGO*

In the previous issue of this *Newsletter* Terence Best discussed the question of the singers in the first performance of Handel's *La Resurrezione* in Rome in 1708, a question complicated by the fact that the wordbook of the oratorio does not include a cast-list. By contrast, the librettos of the composer's two operas for Italy – *Rodrigo*, or, more correctly, *Vincer se stesso è la maggior vittoria* (Florence, late 1707), and *Agrippina* (Venice, 26 December 1709) – do provide cast-lists, and so the identity of the singers is known to us. The line-up for *Vincer se stesso* is given as follows:

Rodrigo	Il Sig. Stefano Frilli [soprano castrato]
Esilena	La Sig. Anna Maria Cecchi, detta la Beccarina [soprano]
Florinda	La Sig. Aurelia Marcello [soprano]
Giuliano	Il Sig. Francesco Guicciardi [tenor]
Evanco	La Sig. Caterina Azzolini, detta la Valentina [soprano]
Fernando	Il Sig. Giuseppe Perini [alto castrato]

Dean and Knapp inform us that:

... Cecchi, Marcello and Azzolini were in the service of the Duke of Mantua but had moved to Florence when Mantua was involved in the War of the Spanish Succession. Marcello later joined the service of Princess Violante of Bavaria, Ferdinando de' Medici's wife. Guicciardi's patron was the Duke of Modena, Frilli's the Elector of Bavaria. Frilli had sung in Pistocchi's *Narciso* at Ansbach in 1697 and died in August 1744 at the age of eighty. Their known activity in Florence was confined to



the first decade of the century, apart from Marcello, who was still singing there in 1716.¹

The mention of both a princess and an elector of Bavaria may occasion some surprise, but Violante Beatrice (1673–1731), the younger sister of Elector Maximilian II Emanuel (1662–1726), had married the music-loving Grand-Prince Ferdinando De' Medici in 1688-9 and moved immediately from Munich to Tuscany.² She spent the rest of her life in Italy where, as many librettos attest, she became a prominent patron of music and musicians in her own right. Her papers, which are preserved in Florence,³ contain new information on some of the singers in *Vincer se stesso* and *Agrippina*: this article is concerned with the former; a sequel will deal with the latter.

Stefano Frilli

A singer named 'Frilli' (no first name) was paid for performing in St Mark's, Venice, at Christmas 1696,⁴ but the earliest unequivocal references to Stefano Frilli occur in the wordbooks of Francesco Antonio Pistocchi's *Il Narciso*, in which he sang at Ansbach in 1697, and Giacomo Antonio Perti's *Apollo geloso* (Bologna, 1698).⁵ By 1700 Frilli was in the service of Ferdinando De' Medici.⁶ At Florence, possibly his native city, he sang in 1705⁷ and in three operas in 1707-8, of which *Vincer se stesso* was the first; the others were anonymous settings of *I prodigi dell'innocenza* (libretto based on Girolamo Frigimelica Roberti's *Ottone*) and *Statira* (libretto by Apostolo Zeno and Pietro Pariati).⁸ The Florentine theorist and diarist Nicolò Susier noted Frilli's death on 28 August 1744: 'at the age of 80 ... the said Frilli was a very good ('bravo') soprano who served the elector of Bavaria for a long time. He leaves a lot of money'.⁹

The 'carteggio' of Violante Beatrice includes four letters with new information on the castrato. The earliest (Letter 1, below) describes him – unusually, for a singer – as a 'professore di musica' and implies that in December 1697 he delivered a letter from Violante to Maria Camilla Pallavicini Rospigliosi in Rome; Dean and Knapp state that he sang in Venice at Christmas,¹⁰ but this now seems unlikely. Two years later, on 5 December 1699, Violante recommended him to Anna Isabella Gonzaga, duchess of Mantua (2), where he appeared soon afterwards in

Benedetto Vinaccesi's *L'innocenza giustificata*;¹¹ she seems to have travelled to Mantua with him.

The remaining two letters have a bearing on *Vincer se stesso*. Letter 3 reveals that Frilli entered the service of the elector of Bavaria in 1701 on Violante's recommendation. He served him as a chamber music singer ('musicò della mia camera') for six years in Brussels, where Max Emanuel had set up court in 1692 as governor of the Spanish Netherlands, before returning to Florence with the elector's blessing. He arrived in summer 1707 (4), in time to learn the role of Rodrigo in *Vincer se stesso*, which opened in October or November.

Aurelia Marcello

Aurelia Marcello made her début in 1706 in Venice, her birthplace, and sang regularly throughout northern Italy until 1721; she also appeared in Naples in 1709-10 and ended her career at Munich in 1722 in the title-role of *Adelaide*,¹² the opera composed by Pietro Torri for the wedding of Prince-Elector Karl Albrecht and Maria Amalie, daughter of Emperor Joseph I. In Florence Marcello sang in four operas in 1706-8 (including *Vincer se stesso*) and six in 1714-16.¹³ She was in Violante's service in 1716-21¹⁴ and was described in 1720 as a 'virtuosa di Camera della Principessa Violante di Baviera, governatrice di Siena'¹⁵ (the princess had been made Governor of Siena in 1717).

The new documents on Marcello are letters of recommendation on her behalf from Violante Beatrice to potential patrons or protectors elsewhere. Although they date from 1716-18 and thus have nothing to do with 'Rodrigo', they show that the princess held the soprano in high regard – and not only as a singer. On 3 April 1716, when Marcello was preparing to appear in Reggio, Violante informed the duchess of Modena that she evinced 'a great talent in singing, a judicious propriety in her actions and an extraordinary modesty in her bearing' (5). In December of the same year she assured the governor of Livorno, where she was to appear in the autumn of 1717, that Marcello had performed on many occasions in the theatre at Florence and had 'sung even in my rooms' (6). On 30 March 1717 Violante wrote that the soprano 'enjoys my protection' (7), and on 13 December 1718 she recommended her to a potential patron in Milan (11).

¹ Winton Dean and John Merrill Knapp: *Handel's Operas 1704-1726* (Oxford, 1987), 109.

² On the patronage of Ferdinando De' Medici, see Mario Fabbri: *Alessandro Scarlatti e il Principe Ferdinando De' Medici* (Florence, 1961), and Robert Lamar Weaver and Norma Wright Weaver: *A Chronology of Music in the Florentine Theater, 1590-1750* (Detroit, 1978).

³ Archivio di Stato, Archivio medico del principato. Research in Florence was made possible by study leave from the University of Birmingham and a Research Award from The Handel Institute. The material in this essay is part of a larger study of Violante's patronage, in preparation.

⁴ Olga Termini: 'Singers at San Marco in Venice: The Competition between Church and Theatre (c.1675-c.1725)', *RMA Research Chronicle*, 17 (1981), 65-96: 91.

⁵ Claudio Sartori, *I libretti italiani a stampa dalle origini al 1800*, 7 vols (Cuneo, 1990-94), librettos 16245 and 2255, respectively; see

also 'Indici, II: Cantanti', 292.

⁶ Warren Kirkendale, *The Court Musicians in Florence during the Principate of the Medici* (Florence, 1993), 652.

⁷ In Clari's *La difesa della verità e dell'innocenza*: Sartori, *I libretti italiani*, libretto 7877a.

⁸ Weaver and Weaver: *A Chronology*, 210-13.

⁹ 'd'anni 80 ... detto Frilli è stato bravo soprano e servi per molto tempo l'Elettore di Baviera. Lascia molti danari': Weaver and Weaver, *A Chronology*, 304.

¹⁰ Dean and Knapp, *Handel's Operas 1704-1726*, 668.

¹¹ Sartori, *I libretti italiani*, libretto 3317.

¹² Sartori, *I libretti italiani*, 'Indici, II: Cantanti', 397-8.

¹³ Weaver and Weaver, *A Chronology*, 207-13 and 226-9.

¹⁴ Kirkendale, *The Court Musicians*, 653.

¹⁵ Weaver and Weaver, *A Chronology*, 364.



THE LETTERS

The initials 'VB' stand for Violante Beatrice. The abbreviations 'V. A.' (or 'A. V. ') and 'V. S.' stand for 'Vostra Altezza' / 'Altezza Vostra' (Your Highness: YH) and 'Vostra Signoria' (Your Lordship or Ladyship); other abbreviations are expanded in italic. The number in brackets at the end of each Italian extract is that of the file in which the document is preserved; in most files the leaves are not numbered.

1. Maria [Camilla] Pallavicini Rospigliosi to VB

Rome, 21 December 1697

The honour that Signor Stefano Frilli, professor of music, has done me [by presenting] YH's very kind document will give me a very powerful incentive to assist him at every opportunity ...

L'onore che mi ha reso il Signor Stefano Frilli, professore di musica, della benignissima carta di V.ra Altezza, sarà a me un potentissimo stimolo di assistergli in ogni sua occorrenza ... [6278]

2. VB to [Anna Isabella Gonzaga], duchess of Mantua

Florence, 5 December 1699

As Stefano Frilli is going there to demonstrate his virtuoso talent in the operas to be presented in that city, I did not want to disappoint his confidence in my good offices with YH, so I am allowing myself to travel there with him in full force, assured by YH's well-known kindness ...

Portandosi costà Stefano Frilli per dimostrare il suo virtuoso talento nell'opere che devono rappresentarsi in codesta città, io non ho voluto defraudarlo della fiducia da lui riposta ne i miei ufici presso V. A., onde me fo lecito passarli seco con tutta efficacia, affidata dalla sperimentata bontà dell'A. V. ... [6279, f. 245]

3. Maximilian II Emanuel, Elector of Bavaria, to VB

Mons, 1 May 1707

Stefano Frilli, a singer in my chamber music who [came here] six years ago accompanied by a recommendation from YH and has served me throughout this period to my complete satisfaction, now wishes urgently to spend some time in his native land in order to attend to his own affairs. I have willingly acceded to this reasonable request, and as a sign of my total satisfaction with his faithful and diligent service I wanted him to be accompanied by the present [letter], so that in this way he is similarly recommended to YH ...

Stephano Frilli, musico della mia camera, il quale sei anni sono fu accompagnato dalle raccomandazioni di V.ra Altezza, avendomi servito nel corso di questo tempo con intiera mia soddisfazione, tenendo egli presentemente l'urgenza di passare per qualche tempo in patria per accudire a propri affari, gli ho concessa volentieri questa [g]iusta dimanda; ed anche per attestato del pieno gradimento da me avuto nel di lui fidele e assiduo servizio, l'ho voluto accompagnare colla presente, affin che ne resti parimente raccomandato all'Altezza V.ra ... [6281]

4. VB to Maximilian II Emanuel (Mons)

Florence, 19 July 1707

Stefano Frilli, one of Your Electoral Highness's chamber music singers who has been back here for some time, with your kind permission and with the honour of having been accompanied by your very gracious letter (in which I am glad to see that you are satisfied with his good service), never stops revering and praising the generous, very kind entertainments to which the incomparable goodness of Your Electoral Highness deigned to be partial ...

Tornato qua per qualche tempo Stefani Frilli, musico di camera di V. A. Elettorale, con benigna permissione di Lei stessa e con l'onore d'essere accompagnato da una Sua umanissima lettera, ov'io godo di vederLa sodisfatta del di lui buon servizio, non lascia di riverire ed esaltare i generosi clementissimi trattamenti di che degnossi parziale la bontà incomparabile dell'Elettorale A. V. ... [6281]

5. VB to Maria Benedetta, duchess of Modena

Florence, 3 April 1716

The singer Aurelia Marcello has met with such praise in the operas at the theatres here, where she displays a great talent in singing, a judicious propriety in her actions and an extraordinary modesty in her bearing, that I, considering her not unworthy of the valuable patronage of YH during the time that she will spend at the performances in Reggio, take the liberty of asking you, with this most heart-felt intercession, to honour her with your great human kindness. ...

Ha qua incontrato tanto lode la cantatrice Aurelia Marcello nelle recite di questi teatri, ove fece conoscere un gran talento nel canto, una giustiziosa proprietà nell'azione, e una modestia non ordinaria nel costume, che io, reputandola non immeritevole del pregiabil patrocino di V. A. per il tempo che ella si tratterà alle recite di Reggio, mi fo lecito di impetrargliene l'onore della di Lei somma umanità con le mie più cordiali intercessioni. ... [2060]

6. VB to Sergeant General Tornaquinci, Governor of Livorno

Florence, 29 December 1716

I have a cordial regard for the singer Aurelia Marcello who, by having appeared many times in this theatre and having sung even in my rooms, gave ample evidence not less of great talent in her profession than of modesty and respectful attentiveness. Desirous, therefore, that she be shown consideration over there and that it be known that she enjoys my protection, I recommend her in a particular manner to Your Lordship, begging you to take to heart the interests of one who, I hope, will not take advantage of them. ...

Mi trovo d'avere un cordial riguardo alla cantatrice Aurelia Marcello, la quale, nell'aver recitato più volte in questo teatro e cantata pure nelle mie stanze, diede pieno saggio non meno di gran talento nella sua



professione che di modestia e d'attenzion rispettosa; ond'io, bramando che costà pure sia la medesima considerata, et anco si sappia che gode la mia protezione, la raccomando in modo particolare al favore di V. S., pregandoLa d'aver'a cuore le convenienze di essa, la quale spero che non saprà abusarsene. ... [2060]

7. VB to Maria Benedetta

Florence, 30 March 1717

It was with such kindness that YH was pleased to receive my most ardent offices on behalf of the singer Aurelia Marcello, who was previously in the opera performances at the theatre in Reggio, that, now she is returning there to give new evidence of her talent, I cannot but repeat the inconvenience to YH, beseeching you with all my heart to honour the said singer with your kind patronage on every appropriate occasion. [She] enjoys my protection and will, I hope, prove me worthy of your gracious regard, for here she has always shown that, together with her great ability as a singer, she possesses a laudable modesty ...

Si compiacque V. A. d'accogliere con tanta umanità i miei vivissimi uffici a pro della cantatrice Aurelia Marcello, che fu altra volta alle recite dell'opera nel teatro di Reggio, che tornandovi ora la medesima a dar nuovo saggio del suo talento, non posso non rinnovare all'A. V. l'incomodo, pregandoLa con tutto l'animo d'onorare di benigno patrocinio in ogni conveniente occorrenza la cantatrice sudetta, che gode la mia protezione e che, per quanto spero, saprà farmi degna dei di Lei graziosi riguardi, avendo qui sempre dimostrato d'aver unita alla sua grande abilità nel canto una lodevol modestia. ... [2060]

8. Maria Benedetta to VB

Modena, 16 April 1717

I have received YH's esteemed offices – presented to me on her own behalf by the *virtuosa* Aurelia Marcello, who has come here to give new evidence of her skill in the forthcoming opera, to be presented at the fair in Reggio – with the concern that I have, and ought to have, ever to be of service to you. YH may rest assured, then, that I shall not fail to regard the said *virtuosa* with a very particular eye ...

Ho ricevuti gli uffizi pregiatissimi di V. A. che mi sono stati presentati in suo favore dalla virtuosa Aurelia Marcello, venuta qui per dar nuovo saggio del suo sapere nella vicina opera da farsi per la fiera di Reggio, colla premura che ho, e che devo aver, sempre di servirLa. Sia però certa l'A. V. che non mancherò di riguardare con occhio particolare la sudetta virtuosa ... [2059]

9. VB to Sergeant General Baron Alessandro Del Nero, Governor of Livorno

Lappoggi,¹⁶ 5 October 1717

The singer Aurelia Marcello, who enjoys my protection,

is going to the performances of the opera at the theatre there. Desiring that she be given special consideration on every appropriate occasion, I recommend her to the favour of Your Lordship, who will give me great pleasure if you take a very partial interest in her. ...

Si porta alle recite dell'opera in codesto teatro la cantatrice Aurelia Marcello, che gode la mia protezione; et io, bramando che sia distintamente considerata nelle sue convenienti occorrenze, la raccomando al favore di V. S., la quale mi farà gran piacere del averLe un parzialissimo riguardo. ... [2060]

10. VB to Marchioness D. Antonia Grunemberg Silva (Livorno)

Lappoggi, 5 October 1717

The singer Aurelia Marcello is going there to enjoy new aspects of YL's obliging gentility during the course of the performances in the theatre. And I, desiring some capital in favour of the young woman, who is under my protection and deserves it (owing to her good qualities), turn to recommend her strongly to you, charging her to respond with the most grateful appreciation for your affectionate attention towards her. ...

Viene a godere nuovi tratti dell'obbligante compitezza di V. S. la cantatrice Aurelia Marcello nel corso delle recite in codesto teatro; et io, bramando un capital sì favorevole all'istessa giovane, che è sotto la mia protezione e che sa meritarselo con le sue buone qualità, torno a raccomandarla vivamente a V. S. per dover corrispondere alle di Lei amorevoli attenzioni verso la medesima con la più grata riconoscenza. ... [2060]

11. VB to Maria [space] Del Frato (Milan)

Florence, 13 December 1718

I regard with quite cordial affection the singer [Aurelia] Marcello, from whom I have received every proof of respectful attention. Therefore, wanting this singer, who is in the performances at the theatre there, to receive every appropriate favour for her advantage, I recommend her ardently to the gentility of YL, with the promise that this *virtuosa*, who is dependant on me and has given ample evidence of ability in her profession, will be shown consideration and be protected by a kindly spirit. ...

Riguardo con propensio ben cordiale la cantatrice Marcello, dalla quale ebbi ogni riscontro di rispettosa attenzione; onde, bramando alla medesima che si trova alle recite di codesto teatro ogni opportuno favore per le sue convenienze, la raccomando vivamente alla gentilezza di V. S., da cui promettermi, che sarà di buono genio considerata e protetta questa virtuosa mia dependente, che qui diede pieno saggio d'abilità nella sua professione. ... [6288]

Colin Timms

¹⁶ Lappoggi is a Medicean villa outside Florence, given to Violante Beatrice after the death of her husband Ferdinando.



STUDY DAY

DOCUMENTS ABOUT HANDEL (AND OTHERS)

Monday 6 December 2010

The Open University London Regional Centre,
1-11 Hawley Crescent, Camden Town, NW1 8NP

This study day celebrates the preparation of a new collected edition of contemporary document texts relating to George Frideric Handel. The research project 'G. F. Handel: The Collected Documents', supported by funding from the Arts and Humanities Research Council and the Winton Dean Fund of the Handel Institute, is based at The Open University's London Regional Centre. Since 2007 the project team has been collecting and transcribing the known repertory of documents about Handel and his music from the composer's lifetime. The results will be published by

Cambridge University Press in 2012 as a major reference work (at present planned as three volumes), containing transcriptions of all the documents with annotated commentaries.

Speakers at the Study Day will include staff from the Project and other researchers who have been working in related areas. The day will also include contributions that review parallel situations with documents about other composers. The provisional programme includes the following:

- Donald Burrows and Helen Green** (Open University): The Handel Documents project
- John Greenacombe** (Open University): The trail of Handel in London
- David Hunter** (University of Texas): Discovering the pro-, con- and non-Handel audience
- Cliff Eisen** (King's College, London): Otto Erich Deutsch and Mozart documents
- David Mateer** (Open University): A Handel singer in court
- Fiona Richards** (Open University): Boyd Neel's Handel performances

For details of the practical arrangements (*e.g.*, timetable, refreshments) please contact Helen Green (helen.green@open.ac.uk; 020 7485 6597).



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).

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