



THE HANDEL INSTITUTE
NEWSLETTER

If the scope of this *Newsletter* is any indication, interest in Handel and related subjects continues to grow apace. The issue has a Midlands dimension: Brenda Sumner presents new information on Jennens's piano and the music room at Gopsall Hall, Leicestershire, while Donald Burrows reflects on the recent revival of 'Handel's *Comus*', first performed at Exton Hall, Rutland. The American Handel Society conference in Seattle is reviewed by Matthew Gardner, the Halle

Handel Festival by Terence Best and the Göttingen Handel Festival by David Vickers, who also reports on the 2011 Stanley Sadie Handel Recording Prize. Graydon Beeks contributes an appreciation of the American Handel conductor Paul Traver, and the issue ends with announcements about forthcoming Handel opera performances, Handel conferences and Handel Institute Awards.

Colin Timms

CHARLES JENNENS' PIANO AND MUSIC ROOM

The engineer John Grundy, of Spalding, Lincs., had a keen eye for detail. In a journal of 1750, although not a musician, he described the mechanism of an instrument that he referred to as a harpsichord but which was in fact one of the earliest Italian pianos to come to England.

Grundy was a prolific writer who completed seventeen journals. The majority are concerned with the various drainage, navigation and embanking schemes with which he was involved. Vols. 1 and 3-17, totalling more than 5,000 pages, were bought by Lord Brotherton of Wakefield in the early twentieth century and bequeathed by him to the University of Leeds on his death in 1930.¹ They are of interest primarily to students of engineering history: they enable Grundy's work projects to be reconstructed in some detail but contain very little relating to his private or family life.

The most important exception is vol. 4, which includes a detailed account of a journey that he made in 1750. He describes this journal as 'A Book of Minutes taken in a Journey to and from Chester and Liverpool through Leicester, Lichfield, Stafford and Nantwich, there and through Northwich and Stone back again from Thursday July the 12th to Thursday August the 12th 1750'. The volume contains a short account of the towns he stopped at and the curiosities he saw. On Friday 13 July, having breakfasted at Leicester, he called at Gopsall Hall, the

Leicestershire home of Handel's librettist Charles Jennens, before continuing to spend the night at Tamworth. In 1750 Gopsall Hall was in the later stages of being built, and Grundy, although 'not finding Mr Jennens at home', was able to look round at leisure.

The old manor and estate at Gopsall had been bought in 1685 by a Birmingham iron-master named Humphrey Jennens, who had developed his father's iron business and, with the wealth accumulated, invested in land and property. On Humphrey's death in 1686 Gopsall passed to his son Charles (baptised 1662; died 1747) and then, on the latter's death, to his son, also named Charles. Having been born and brought up at Gopsall, Charles junior (1700-1773) sought with the benefit of this bequest to replace the old manor house with a new hall in keeping with his wealth and status.

Grundy had known the manor house as a child, as he had been brought up in the small village of Congerstone, two miles away. His father, also an engineer, had surveyed the Gopsall estate and done the engineering work for the supply of water to the house. On his return visit in 1750, Grundy junior described in detail the location, 'pleasure grounds' and exterior of the new house.² Inside he described the hall, stairs, library, music room, chapel and, to a lesser extent, the 'chambers' upstairs. He was particularly impressed by the music room:

¹ Leeds University Library, Brotherton Special Collections, Brotherton MS Gen 2. Vol. 2 was bought from a dealer by the Institution of Civil Engineers in 1955.

² John Grundy, 'A Book of Minutes taken in a Journey to and from Chester and Liverpool': Brotherton MS Gen 2, vol. 4, pp. 3-25. Grundy's reaction to Gopsall is discussed in Brenda Sumner, 'Gopsall Hall: "Look on my works, ye Mighty, and despair"' (MA diss., University of Leicester, 2009).



The Musick Room which is the North end of the East Wing is about 51 feet long 25 feet wide & 18 feet high and is wainscotted with Deal Richly Carved, here is three windows on the Side & one very Large Bow Window at the end are very Richly Decorated with Stucco Work & casing in Wood. Fluted Pillasters etc the Doors & Door Case is of Mahogany & finished in the same Manner as the Library Door. The Cornish, Cove & Ceilings of Stucco Adorned with Compartmented Festoons etc & on the four corners of the Ceiling are the Heads of four Eminent Musicians two Foreign & English in Square Frames. The Chimney Piece is of Marble Embellished with musicke instruments on the Frieze. Over this a Large Tabernacle Frame with very rich Cartouches etc in each is also proposed to be a picture, the Cornish over. This Tabernacle frame is broke by a Pediment in which Mr Handel's Bust is to stand as made by Roubiliac. The Furniture of this room is very Grand & Expensive.



Fig. 1: The former music room at Gopsall Hall, Leicestershire, c. 1921. Photograph reproduced by permission of English Heritage.NMR.

In the music room Grundy saw an instrument that caught his attention because of its unfamiliar mechanism:

On each side the Fireplace stands a Harpsicord[,] of one of which is Tabercers?³ the other made in Italy by a Native of Venice & is called [blank]. Instead of Quill Jacks the strings are struck by small Hammers covered with Leather which makes the tone infinitely softer & more melodious than the Jacks & to prevent the Jar which the too long vibration of the strings occasions there is also small Hammers covered with Leather which falls on the strings to stop in due time the vibration thereof as well as to give due time to each note. This instrument is of very Curious Workmanship. It is said to be the first or second of the Inventor's making. It was sent from Italy by an Acquaintance of Mr Jennens from his travels there.

This description shows that the instrument 'of very Curious Workmanship' which Grundy saw was a piano. His account – and particularly his statement that the instrument had been 'sent from Italy by an acquaintance of Mr Jennens' – accords with our existing knowledge that

the shipment of a piano from Italy to Jennens was arranged by his friend Edward Holdsworth. On 24 August 1731 Holdsworth wrote to Jennens:⁴

We propose to spend some time in Florence before we leave Italy and then I will inform myself about Botro's harpsicords and of what value one of them may be. And if you insist upon my giving my opinion of the sweetness of his instruments you shall have it.

'Botro' presumably refers to Bartolomeo Cristofori (1655-1732), the inventor of the piano, whose firm was in Florence.

The purchase having been made, Holdsworth wrote to Jennens from Florence on 9 August 1732: 'Enclosed is the bill of lading for your harpsichord'. In the same letter he continued: 'I have bought for you a book of Sonatas compos'd here purposely for the Pianoforte, which I shall send for England with Mr Herbert's books when we leave this place'.⁵ Confirmation that the 'harpsichord' sent by Holdsworth was identical with the 'pianoforte' for which he was purchasing music comes in his letter to Jennens of 8 November 1732: 'I hope the Pianoforte Harpsichord is arriv'd safe'.

Grundy was not told, or did not remember, the maker's name (he left a blank for it in his account) and was misinformed about, or misremembered, the piano's provenance, possibly as a result of being shown round by a housekeeper in Jennens's absence; nor did he describe its casing or decoration. But about the instrument's workings he was helpfully precise. His account of its mechanism tallies with the report of Scipione Maffei, who interviewed Cristofori about his invention in 1711. Maffei wrote: 'Instead of the usual jacks that sound with quills, here there is a row of little hammers that strike the string from below, the tops of which, by which they strike, are covered with buckskin'.⁶ Grundy writes: 'Instead of Quill Jacks the strings are struck by small hammers covered with leather which makes the tone infinitely softer and more melodious'.

There can be scarcely any doubt that Jennens's piano came from the workshop of Cristofori, but the inventor himself died on 27 January 1732, at the age of eighty-one. Grundy was told that the instrument 'is said to be the first or second of the Inventor's making'. It could have been one that Cristofori had made earlier – he had developed his pianofortes by 1700 – but it may have been made instead by one of his two pupils who succeeded him in the business, Giovanni Ferrini or an unidentified member of the Del Mela family. Ferrini, apparently the better maker of the two, made pianos after his master's design and signed instruments prior to his master's death.⁷

There has hitherto been no evidence of a piano at Gopsall, but Jennens is known to have had a piano in London.

³ Grundy seems to have misheard or misunderstood what he was told about the harpsichord.

⁴ Jennens-Holdsworth correspondence [1729-1746]: London, Foundling Museum, Gerald Coke Handel Collection, 2702 [unpaginated]. Some relevant sections of the correspondence are printed in Donald Burrows, 'Handel and the Pianoforte', *Göttinger Händel-Beiträge*, 9 (2002), 123-42, at 128.

⁵ The sonatas were probably Ludovico Giustini's *Sonate di cimbalo di piano e forte detto volgarmente di marteletti*, op. 1 (Florence, 1732), said to be the first music written for the piano. Mr Herbert was Holdsworth's pupil and known to Jennens.

⁶ Stewart Pollens, *The Early Pianoforte* (Cambridge, 1995), 58.

⁷ Pollens, *op. cit.*, 43, 97.



Fig. 2: Pianoforte by Bartolomeo Cristofori, c. 1720. Photograph reproduced by permission of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

Grundy's account therefore raises the question as to whether Jennens took the piano with him when he moved between Gopsall and London or whether he had more than one instrument. He was accustomed to spend the season in London and the rest of the year in Leicestershire or on visits to friends elsewhere. It is not known whether his piano was initially shipped to Gopsall or to his London residence, his brother-in-law William Hanmer's house in Queen Square. Handel is reported to have played Jennens's piano in London both in 1740,⁸ ten years before Grundy saw it at Gopsall, and in 1756,⁹ by which time Jennens had his own London house in Great Ormond Street. Either Jennens took the instrument up and down the country, or he owned two pianos (which he was wealthy enough to afford).

A description in Grundy's journal of a second item of interest in the Gopsall music room illuminates another aspect of Jennens's connection with Handel, his unrivalled collection of manuscript copies of the composer's works (the Aylesford Collection). Scholars have wondered why Jennens, who aimed to collect copies of every note that Handel wrote, sometimes ordered parts as well as scores of his compositions.¹⁰ The implication is that Jennens intended to perform them – or sponsor performances of them – with a group of musicians, rather than play them solitarily from a keyboard score, but there has as yet been no evidence to support this hypothesis or the possibility that Jennens could have assembled musicians to do so. A 'Musick Desk' that Grundy saw in the Gopsall music room indicates that

Jennens aimed for domestic performance by up to fourteen musicians, not counting keyboard:

In the Uppermost Tier betwixt the Windows is proposed to stand the Organ which is now making by Briggs in London & a Book Case in the Other of the same make & Size of the Organ for Musicke Books etc. One side of the Venetian Bow stands a Musick Desk of Mahogany, this Desk is made like a Table standing on four Feet Richly Carved within this Table are Drawers that Draw out on the Sides & Ends in which are Stands for the Books folded up & which are Raised to any height by the Player chooses, the Face of these Drawers are also richly carved as are the Mouldings & Freize, the above Stands are for Sitting Players. Upon this Table is a Sort of Desk of four Sides supported with four Carved Feet, on this Desk are laid the Books of the Standing Performers supported by a carved Moulding. On the top of this Desk which is Flatt are Sconces for Candles very Richly made & Double Gilt with Gold. This Machine cost upwards of 75£ & Fourteen Performers may Play at Once upon it. Answerable to this Desk is a very large Mahogany Table very Richly Carved which serves on Public Days & at the Upper End of the Room an Italian marble Slab Side Table. The Chairs are all Mahogany made in a New Fashion & very Richly Carved they cost 2¹/₂ Guineas per chair & the Armed One 5 Guineas.

This desk was clearly for use in musical entertainments, since fourteen players could use it at one time. Its existence serves to modify Burrows's view that Jennens was a 'socially-isolated person' and that he would have played Handel's works on the keyboard alone.¹¹ Joseph Cradock, of Gumley, recalled in his memoirs that 'in my early youth I was at times present at a musical treat, chiefly given by amateurs, at Mr Jennings' house at Gopsal in our County, who possessed a good organ, with Handel's portrait in front of it, and where Handel himself had frequently presided'.¹² Handel is also said to have been present at the first trial of *Jephtha* at Gopsall Hall, when 'the principal airs were sung by some neighbouring clergymen'.¹³

Jennens willed his 'Music Books' and his 'Musical Instruments of all Sorts' to his cousin's son Heneage Finch, Lord Guernsey, later third Earl of Aylesford.¹⁴ Given the existence of the 'Musick Desk', it seems likely that the 'Musical Instruments' included more than keyboard instruments. Their history after Jennens' death in 1773 is unknown. No instruments from Gopsall remain at Packington Hall, the present-day home of the earls of Aylesford. It would be interesting to know what became of them.

Brenda Sumner

⁸ Donald Burrows and Rosemary Dunhill, eds., *Music and Theatre in Handel's World: The Family Papers of James Harris, 1732-1780* (Oxford, 2002), 98-9.

⁹ Burrows and Dunhill, eds., *op. cit.*, 314.

¹⁰ John H. Roberts, 'The Aylesford Collection', *Handel Collections and their History*, ed. Terence Best (Oxford, 1993), 39-85: 'the Aylesford parts show no signs of having been used in performance, unless Jennens's figures are to be viewed in that light' (p. 42). Roberts dates Jennens's aim to acquire a 'sort of complete edition of Handel's music, for the most part necessarily in manuscript form' to 'sometime in the early to mid-1740s' (41).

¹¹ Burrows, 'Handel and the Pianoforte', 129.

¹² Joseph Cradock, *Literary and Miscellaneous Memoirs*, 4 vols (London, 1828), i, 124.

¹³ William Gardiner, *Music and Friends: or, Pleasant Recollections of a Dilettante*, 3 vols (London, 1838-53), i, 228-9.

¹⁴ '... my Music Books, which together with my Musical Instruments of all Sorts I give to my Noble Friend the said Heneage Earl of Aylesford': Jennens' will (transcript), Leicestershire Record Office, DG 22/5/8.



HANDEL'S *COMUS* COMES TO LONDON

At St George's Church, Hanover Square, on 28 April, the 2011 London Handel Festival presented the first modern performance of 'Handel's *Comus*'. This was a historic event in that it may well have been not only the first-ever public performance of the piece, but also the completion of the known repertory of major works by Handel. The performance was one of those presented in the Festival to commemorate Anthony Hicks. In contrast to Tony's habits, I did not record the timing of the evening, but certainly more than two hours of elevating entertainment were involved. The association with Tony was particularly apposite, since in 1977 he had published an edition of Handel's 'serenata' for the conclusion of *Comus*,¹ and in 2000 he had given a paper at the American Handel Society conference which reviewed the information that could form a basis for a modern revival.

For those who were not present at the University of Maryland in 2000, the most substantial information on the circumstances of 'Handel's *Comus*' is found in a short article by Tony published in 1976.² This was devoted mainly to the 'serenata' but gave some details of the first performance. To summarise the matter, in summer 1745 Handel broke a journey to Scarborough (for the benefit of his health) by staying for a time with the Earl of Gainsborough at Exton, Rutland. The earl's family was planning a performance of *Comus*, and Handel (although the object of his journey was 'quiet and retirement') agreed to compose a musical contribution to the event. The background to the performance is described in two contemporary letters, one of which had, as an enclosure, a cue-sheet itemising various other pieces of music by Handel that were included. It seems probable that Handel was present at the performance, though not as a participant.

A full reconstruction of the Exton *Comus* has to be based on this cue-sheet, which shows where the various Handel items were inserted but gives few hints as to the extent of the literary content. It is clear, however, that the evening was basically a verse recitation, probably semi-staged, with songs and musical interludes. In 1745 Milton's original 'Masque presented at Ludlow Castle' was in any case perceived through the lens of the adaptation by John Dalton, with music by Arne, which had been successfully produced in the London theatres from 1738 onwards. The Exton production of *Comus* certainly included some of Arne's songs, in spite of the family's obvious predilection for Handel. In the background, also, is the revival of interest in, and respect for, the works of Milton and Shakespeare that had taken place in the 1730s.

All credit should be given to Laurence Cummings and the London Handel Festival for undertaking this revival,

and to Colin Timms for evolving a performing version on the basis of the fragmentary evidence. It was an inherently difficult venture to bring off, as Tony had recognised. The lengthy slabs of verse with musical transitions require actor-singers with a full understanding of what they are doing: my impression was that some of them did better than others. Some measure of 'production' is clearly required, though I was not sure of the intended time and place that were being presented.

The main question that arose from the performance, however, concerns how *Comus* can best be presented to a modern audience. Although the original Exton performance was apparently a semi-amateur enterprise, the participants and audience had probably attended performances of the Dalton-Arne version several times, and knew much of the verse already. However committed the actors, the text must be made to communicate in some way. There was a specific problem with the acoustics in St George's, and a more general problem in that the musical lilt of Milton's verse tends to relegate its content to the background. Clearly some members of the audience were bewildered by what was going on: the masque is more difficult to 'stage', in dramatic terms, than Handel's operas or oratorios. My suspicion is that the Attendant Spirits delayed the opening action for too long. Overall, the audience needs at least a synoptic summary of the plot, and there is a good case for a complete text as a wordbook. As to the musical element, the Arne items stood up well in company with those by Handel, though the 'serenata' in its proper place showed which composer, musically speaking, was boss.

Colin Timms is preparing an edition of the complete (all-singing, all-dancing) *Comus* for publication, and it deserves to be taken up by, for example, arts festivals with a dual drama-and-music programme. The April experience provided much food for thought about the work and its performance; for both performers and audience, however, it needs a few trials before the mettle of this 'new' work of Handel's can be fully appreciated.

Donald Burrows

REVIEWS OF CONFERENCES AND FESTIVALS

AMERICAN HANDEL SOCIETY CONFERENCE

This year's conference was spread across three days of the final weekend of the now 30-year-old American Handel Festival, in which thirty concerts were presented in Seattle during little more than a fortnight. A total of seventeen papers were presented over the weekend (24-27 March), four of which were given by scholars from European institutions, the rest by researchers based in the United States. Although the conference did not have a specific theme, many of the papers centred on works that were performed as part of the festival, especially *Acis and Galatea* and *Esther* (1720 version), both of which could be heard during the conference.

¹ *Music for Comus: The Words adapted from John Milton*, ed. Colin Timms and Anthony Hicks (London, 1977).

² Anthony Hicks, 'Handel's Music for *Comus*', *Musical Times*, 117 (1976), 28-9.



The first day of papers opened with a session on 'Singers and their Contexts' and included contributions from Kathryn Lowerre (on the professional networks of singers), David Vickers ('Reassessing the Italians in *Esther*: Handel's Bilingual Versions of his first English Oratorio'), Graydon Beeks (on Dame Nellie Melba's 1907 recording of 'Sweet Bird' from *L'Allegro*) and myself ('*Esther* and Handel's English Contemporaries'). In a second session, on 'Ancients and Moderns', Ruth Smith spoke on the history of the 'choice of Hercules' story in England and Robert Ketterer on 'Iphigenia at Covent Garden'. Minji Kim's contribution to the 'Oratorio and Ode' session offered some new light on the Israelite scenes of the 1720 version of *Esther*, while in session 4 Annette Landgraf traced the meaning of three names, 'Savages', 'Stocks' and 'Stones', in a Handel document.

The conference also gave a number of PhD students from US universities an opportunity to present their work: Corbett Bazler talked about the failed heroics of *Imeneo* and *Deidamia*; Angharad Davis proposed a new approach to the typology of Handel's borrowings, and Jonathan Rhodes Lee analysed elements of sensibility in *Acis and Galatea*. Throughout the conference several additional lectures and presentations were given, including the Howard Serwer Memorial Lecture by David Ross Hurley on patterns in Handel's da capo arias, and between paper sessions Donald Burrows gave a detailed report on the progress of the Handel Documents project, offering some fine examples of the difficulties of working with these sources.

The programme of concerts was varied and generally of a high standard, the main attractions being the two evening performances. The first was a production of *Acis and Galatea* on tour from the Boston Early Music Festival, led by Stephen Stubbs and Paul O'Dette, in which the masque was presented as a staged 'chamber opera', set in the context of an imaginary rehearsal in the picture room at Cannons and featuring Handel, Pope and Gay, as well as James Brydges. The performance of *Esther* (1720), given by Pacific MusicWorks and the Tudor Choir, was also directed by Stephen Stubbs. It was the first performance of the oratorio to follow the research findings of John Roberts, who gave a useful introductory talk beforehand. The concert took place in St James Cathedral, and although the acoustic was not really appropriate for the small forces of the oratorio, the performance was extremely well done. After the final session of papers on the Sunday morning, the Seattle Baroque Orchestra brought the conference and festival to a close with an afternoon concert of 'Grand Concertos'. Many thanks to Marty Ronish and Wendy Heller for organising a most enjoyable and stimulating weekend.

Matthew Gardner

GÖTTINGEN HANDEL FESTIVAL

This year's festival was a celebratory and sentimental farewell to Nicholas McGegan, who stood down as artistic director after two decades of outstanding service. Since 1991 McGegan has conducted nineteen of Handel's operas at Göttingen, many of them documented in influential première

commercial recordings. During the last decade the productions have alternated sharply in style: some have promoted conceptual *Regietheater* (not always convincingly), whereas other, more affectionate interpretations have tended to adopt modern approximations of quasi-baroque style.

Given this recent tradition, it was apposite that baroque style and modern conceptualism were entertainingly juxtaposed by producer and choreographer Catherine Turocy in her staging of *Teseo*. Conventional scenery and baroque garb (all recycled from previous productions, in authentic eighteenth-century manner!) set the stage for larkish pantomime jinks and camp comedy, but modern multimedia and creative multi-layered action were frequently in evidence. Medea conducted an affair with an elderly gentlemen in one of the theatre's boxes (in full view of most of the audience), as if to remind us that going to the opera in the baroque era was at least partly about the audience wanting to watch each other. The surtitle screen occasionally displayed Facebook updates from the sorceress and showed performers back-stage sharing social network updates on their mobile phones.

Several amusing videos portrayed back-stage shenanigans. The evening got off to a riotous start by showing McGegan sitting alone in the quiet theatre café, oblivious of the time, then frantically rushing round the theatre trying to find his way into the locked auditorium. At the image of the maestro hammering on the door in frustration and tears, he burst in to raucous laughter and rapturous applause before a note had been played. Another example was a digital screen across the back of the stage showing projections of Medea's dragon in Act V. If such a mixture of attractive baroque staging and high-tech imagery prevented *Teseo* from seeming profound, nobody (including me) seemed to mind a great deal, and underneath the veneer of congenial play-acting the production conveyed some thoughtful ideas.

Although it was sad to hear Susanne Rydén struggling badly in the title-role – her distinguished career may be coming towards its close – the rest of the cast was outstanding, especially newcomer Amy Freston (a fluent and authoritative Agilea) and Robin Blaze (whose lyrical renditions of Arcane's arias were lovely and immaculately embellished, differently on every night I saw). Italian-French soprano Céline Ricci performed Clizia as a commanding coquette, and Drew Minter (a Göttingen regular many moons ago) made a masterful return as the ineffectual Egeo: his comic timing and singing were flawless. Dominique Labelle stole the show as Medea, and her extraordinary singing was enhanced by the customarily superb playing of the festival orchestra. The sense of fun, fantasy and spontaneity in *Teseo* seemed the perfect way in which to celebrate the tenure of McGegan, who was visibly tearful on receiving a standing ovation from the orchestra.

He and the orchestra also performed *Athalia*, which they had given the previous evening in Halle, and in a reciprocal oratorio-sharing venture the Halle Festival Orchestra (and the Salzburg Bach Choir) brought their interpretation of *Jephtah* to Göttingen. Both oratorio projects were mixed bags.



Göttingen's *Athalia* featured gutsier choral textures from the NDR Choir, much finer conducting, subtler orchestral playing and excellent male soloists (especially the tenor Thomas Cooley as Mathan), but both of the sopranos were erratic: Isabel Bayrakdarian was technically bad as Athalia (even her sexy red frock and extreme pouting could not swing it for me), and owing to a serious throat infection the unlucky Meredith Hall struggled with the part of Josabeth.

The Halle forces boldly advertised their use of Kenneth Nott's new HHA edition of *Jephtha*, but this belied unwelcome licence-taking in the orchestra (far too much inauthentic flute doubling of violins) and anachronistic continuo; I long to hear the Angel arrive to the sound of a simple chord on harpsichord and cello instead of full-barrelled organ. There were several damaging cuts, and a single interval placed insensitively in the middle of Part 2. The soloists were variable, but Paul Agnew was superb in the title-role. I cannot recall seeing such a convincing portrayal of Jephtha's predicament: the freshness and sweetness of Agnew's voice seem to have benefited from his decision to reduce the amount of his concert work. The audience was smitten by countertenor Franco Fagioli as Hamor, but his unstylish singing and self-indulgent desperation to upstage his colleagues at every opportunity were not to my liking. Bernhard Forck's conducting started badly, but after the interval he was less able to resist musical sense as the emotional temperature of Handel's score increased.

The festival concluded with an extravagant gala concert honouring McGegan, who chose a programme of excerpts from operas that he had conducted at Göttingen and also threw in some fantastic performances of orchestral lollipops (items from the *Water Music* and *Music for the Royal Fireworks*). The vocal numbers were intelligently varied in dramatic mood and style, and also included an appealing range of obbligato contributions from the orchestra (cello, horn, flute, recorder and oboe). The spoils were shared equally by nine guest soloists, who each sang an aria and an ensemble. It was an emotional occasion, full of amusing and lively details, but it was poignant that both of the outstanding moments were serious examples of 'sublime' Handel: Wilke te Brummelstroete's simple yet spellbinding 'Verdi prati', and 'Io t'abbraccio', sung with almost unbearable intensity and beauty by Robin Blaze and Dominique Labelle.

The quality and depth of this year's 'extra-curricular' concerts were much improved. Christophe Rousset gave a fine harpsichord recital of music by Couperin, Duphly and Handel and also directed Les Talens Lyriques in an engaging concert of cantatas and chamber music by Montéclair, Domenico Scarlatti and Handel; soprano Eugénie Warnier was less impressive than the instrumentalists, but the first French ensemble to perform at the festival in many years was accorded a lively reception. Another excellent chamber concert was given, before my arrival, by Ruby Hughes and the London Handel Players, directed by McGegan's successor, Laurence Cummings. The future of the Göttingen festival appears to be in safe hands, and there are exciting (but unconfirmed) plans for 2012.

David Vickers

HALLE HANDEL FESTIVAL

The theme of this year's festival was 'Handel and Dresden', and the centre-piece was *Ottone* (1723). The opera is based on the libretto used by Lotti in his *Teofane*, which was performed in the Saxon capital in 1719 and must have been heard by Handel when he went there to recruit singers for London. A concert performance of *Teofane* was given as part of the festival.

The opening concert reverted to the pattern of earlier years, in which the Handel Prize was awarded at a ceremony that took place during a break in the music. The prize-winner was Wolfgang Ruf, who retired a few years ago from the professorship at Halle University, the presidency of the Georg-Friedrich-Händel-Gesellschaft and the general editorship of the HHA, which he and I shared. The music played during the evening was very curious and, in the opinion of many (including your correspondent), something of a disaster. It was performed by the Staatskapelle Halle, conducted by Karl-Heinz Steffens.

After a lively beginning – the overture to the *Song for St Cecilia's Day* in Mozart's arrangement – we had Brahms's fine set of variations on a theme from Handel's B-flat keyboard suite (HWV 434). In its original form as a piano solo (1861) this work was inspired by Brahms's acquaintance with the recently published second volume of his friend Chrysander's Handel edition (1859), and is deservedly popular. On this occasion, however, it was for some bizarre reason performed twice – first in an orchestral arrangement by the English composer Edmund Rubbra, then in an extraordinary rendering for piano and orchestra composed and played by the American jazz pianist Uri Caine, which was unbearably crass. The suite from Richard Strauss's *Der Rosenkavalier* was a blessed relief. The prize ceremony followed the interval, and the long evening was concluded with a fine performance of Elgar's Overture in D minor, an arrangement for modern orchestra of the opening movement of Handel's concerto Op. 3 No. 5.

Ottone was a triumph. It is a much finer work than has been suggested, and it was very well sung and played. The production was sensible and realistic, with no tiresome extras doing silly things on stage, as we have seen *ad nauseam* in our time, and it was generally well paced. It was disappointing, therefore, that the director, whose approach was generally so refreshing, lapsed into old ways when a character sang one of the opera's most sublime arias while endlessly folding some clothes; there was also a rather silly picnic scene for the duet between Gismonda and Teofane, and a hint of sexual attraction between Ottone and Gismonda. Overall, however, this was one of the best Handel opera productions that we have seen in many years, and it was also the first performance of the recently published HHA edition of the score, edited by Fiona McClachlan. The cast was led by Matthias Rexroth in the title-role and Romelia Lichtenstein as Gismonda, with the Händelfestspielorchester, conducted by Marcus Creed.



The Dresden connection was represented by the Czech composer Jan Dismas Zelenka (1679-1745), who worked and died there. A concert by Collegium 1704, from Prague, gave us a charming quartet of his for oboe, violin, bassoon and continuo, and a motet for alto and continuo. Powerful renderings of two of Handel's finest Italian cantatas, 'Ah! crudel, nel pianto mio' and *Il duello amoroso* ('Amarilli vezzosa'), sung by Raffaella Milanese and Markéta Cukrová, concluded an original and utterly delightful concert.

Then there was Bad-Lauchstädt, that lovely spa with its famous Goethe-Theater. This year there was a double bill, with *Rinaldo* in the theatre in the afternoon and, after a buffet supper, Lotti's *Teofane* in a concert performance in the gorgeous Kursaal (1780) on the same site. It was not until we were in the theatre that I realised that *Rinaldo* was to be performed with marionettes. At first I found myself disappointed at the prospect, but as the afternoon progressed, I became hooked (no pun intended). The puppets were life-sized and dressed in a sort of Crusaderish costume, with charming rustic scenery – no cod-20th century sets in a warehouse! The singers, all first class, were in the upper galleries at the side of the theatre, and the acoustics were excellent: it all worked splendidly. As always, *Rinaldo* was great fun, with glorious music, so the whole experience was magical. And of course, one virtue of the marionette presentation is that there were no unnecessary extras on stage.

Teofane suffered from being accompanied by a substantial modern orchestra, the Dresden Staatskapelle, and in consequence the performance was rather heavy. The cast was led by the experienced countertenor Kai Wessel and a fine team of women; only the soprano Robert Crowe, as Adelberto, was harsh and shrill on the ear (it seems he is well past his prime). The music is well written and the performance was competent, but the contrast with Handel's version of the story in *Ottone* emphasised the difference between talent and genius.

The last work I heard was the *Occasional Oratorio* – another first performance of an HHA edition (by Merlin Channon, who unfortunately was not well enough to attend). It was superbly performed in the Marktkirche by English soloists, the MDR Rundfunkchor and the English Concert, conducted by Howard Arman, to a packed and appreciative audience. The piece has not generally had a good press, because, as its title says, it was a tub-thumping, occasional work, designed to rouse a London audience fearing a Jacobite invasion; but Handel's skill in making a coherent structure out of much recycling of old favourites, especially 'Zadok the priest' and plums from *Israel in Egypt*, as well as some new music, came off spectacularly well.

The scholarly conference, on the theme of Handel and Dresden, produced a number of interesting papers, some given by British or American scholars: Donald Burrows on a mysterious Handel copyist, Graydon Beeks on Ariosti, John Roberts and Ben Byram-Wigfield on Handel and Lotti, Michael Talbot on Vivaldi and Reinhard

Strohm on central European opera in the mid-18th century. As always, there were more events than any individual could attend and the festival was a well organised feast of good things, mostly musical but also culinary!

Terence Best

PAUL TRAVER (1931–2011)

The American conductor and scholar Paul Traver died on 27 March 2011, his eightieth birthday. A 1953 graduate of the Catholic University of America, he received his doctorate from Stanford University and joined the faculty of the University of Maryland in 1957, remaining there until his retirement in 1999. In 1967 he founded the University of Maryland Chorus, which over the next forty years performed a wide array of major choral works, often with the National Symphony Orchestra and its musical director, Antal Dorati. A particular highlight was a 1988 collaboration with Dorati and an 'all-world' orchestra in a series of performances of Beethoven's *Missa solemnis* in Berlin, Moscow, Dresden and London over the space of six days. In 1985 Paul was named a Distinguished Scholar-Teacher by his University and became the first recipient of the University of Maryland President's Medal, recognizing his sustained contribution to the quality of life on campus. A kind and generous man, he was mentor to an impressive roster of conductors and scholars.

Paul Traver became known internationally, especially to Handelians, through his contributions to the prestigious Maryland Handel Festival, of which he was a co-founder and artistic director and on which he collaborated with his colleague, Howard Serwer, for twenty years. During that period he conducted every one of Handel's English oratorios, beginning in 1981 with *Messiah* and proceeding, between 1982 and 2001, to perform each oratorio in chronological order of composition. This pattern was interrupted in 1984 to present *Messiah* as it had been performed at Westminster Abbey in 1784 as part of the first Handel Commemoration festival; a commercial recording of this performance, conducted by Dorati, was subsequently released.

In 1985 Traver and Serwer collaborated with John Merrill Knapp in the foundation of the American Handel Society, which initially sponsored a scholarly conference in connection with the Maryland Handel Festival and for the past ten years has continued to do so in collaboration with a variety of institutions. Since Serwer and Knapp passed away some years ago, the death of Paul Traver marks the end of an important period in the history of Handelian activity in the United States.

• Graydon Beeks



THE STANLEY SADIE HANDEL RECORDING PRIZE 2011



Apollo e Dafne (HWV 122)

Apollo: Thomas E. Bauer *baritone*
Dafne: Roberta Invernizzi *soprano*

La Risonanza
Fabio Bonizzoni *direction*

The judges awarded this year's first prize to Fabio Bonizzoni, La Risonanza and the Spanish label Glossa for their recording of Handel's dialogue cantata *Apollo e Dafne*. This is the seventh and final volume of La Risonanza's 'Le cantate italiane di Händel' and the third in the series to be awarded the prize; another three volumes came second.

Probably started in Venice but completed at Hanover in 1710, Handel's setting of the enchanting tale of the braggart Apollo falling head over heels in lust with the reluctant nymph Daphne inspired some of the composer's most attractive and emotionally diverse early writing. The cantata is one of his most popular 'Italian' compositions, and this captivating performance forms a fitting conclusion to Bonizzoni's project to record all Handel's Italian-period *cantate con stromenti*. Thomas E. Bauer and Roberta Invernizzi are to be praised for their outstanding singing, which is always aptly characterised and suavely stylish, while the playing of La Risonanza is gently dramatic and always beautifully detailed. The disc also includes an excellent performance of the dramatic soprano monologue *Agrippina condotta a morire* and the seldom recorded bass cantata 'Cuopre tal volta il cielo', the latter sung by Furio Zanasi.

The judges also congratulate this year's close runners-up: a revitalising performance of *Giulio Cesare in Egitto* conducted by George Petrou (on Dabringhaus und Grimm), the Avison Ensemble's intelligent interpretation of the Op. 6 concerti grossi (Linn) and the Early Opera Company's elegant account of the anti-heroic opera *Flavio* (Chandos). It is hoped that the winner and all the artists and labels nominated in this year's competition will continue to explore and produce fresh insights into Handel's music.

The Stanley Sadie Handel Recording Prize is an annual award given to a distinctive new recording of Handel's music, chosen by an invited panel of scholars and journalists from a comprehensive list of recordings released during the previous calendar year. The winner must combine interpretative quality with penetrating or valuable insight into the composer's genius, so that the Prize indicates both the quality of the recording and the significance of its contribution to Handelian knowledge. Originally known as the International Handel Recording Prize, it was renamed in 2005 in honour of one of its founder panellists. The panel this year comprised:

Ivan A. Alexandre (*Diapason* and *Le nouvel observateur* – Paris)
Nicholas Anderson (producer and writer; *BBC Music Magazine* – Taunton)
Angela Baier (Handel scholar – Munich)
Sandra Bowdler (Festival Baroque Australia; opera critic – Perth)
Hugh Canning (*The Sunday Times*, *International Record Review* – London)
Colin Coleman (Assistant Librarian, Gerald Coke Handel Collection – London)
Mikhail Fikhtengoltz (Handel scholar and arts administrator – Moscow)
Matthew Gardner (Handel scholar, *Ruprecht-Karls-Universität* – Heidelberg)
Philippe Gelinaud (Handel scholar, *Opéra Magazine* – Paris)
Stephen Hastings (Editor, *Musica* – Varese)
Lindsay Kemp (Director, Lufthansa Festival of Baroque Music; *BBC Radio 3*; *Gramophone* – London)
Francis Knights (Editor, *Early Music* – Cambridge)
Michael Pacholke (musicologist, *Hallische Händel-Ausgabe* – Halle)
Benedikt Poensgen (Director, Göttingen Handel Festival)
David Vickers (The Handel Institute; Royal Northern College of Music; *Gramophone* – Huddersfield)
Carlo Vitali (musicologist; *Amadeus*, *Opernwelt*, *Musical America* – Bologna)

David Vickers

ANNOUNCEMENTS

ENGLISH TOURING OPERA

Between 8 October and 25 November, English Touring Opera will be performing *Flavio* and *Xerxes* in Bath, Buxton, Cambridge, Exeter, Harrogate, Lincoln, London (Royal College of Music), Malvern, Snape Maltings and Wycombe. For details, see: englishtouringopera.org.uk

HANDEL CONFERENCE IN TOURS

'Handel after Handel: The Making, Lasting Fame and Influence of Handel and the Handelian Figure'

Université de Tours (France), 18-20 October 2012

Call for papers

The aim of this conference is to envisage the 'resonance', influence and lasting fame of the figure and work of Handel, both during his lifetime and beyond, in a diachronic and interdisciplinary perspective. The conference is not restricted to specialists in Handel but is intended to attract musicologists in general and historians, as well as specialists in English studies, aesthetics, literature and film.

Possible topics include: stylistic echoes of, and borrowings from, Handel; aesthetic filiation; adaptations and translations of Handel's works; ideological, political, aesthetic and generic issues; the making up of the 'natural



genius' persona through, in particular, the writing of biographies; the writing of the 'history of Handelian music'; iconographic and sculptural representations of Handel; the influence of Handel on the rise of the 'classical' canon; literary uses of the Handelian topos; Handel in books and films; the critical reaction against Handel; the modern rediscovery of the Handel repertory and of performance issues relating to it; 'staging' and recording Handel's operas and oratorios today; Handel societies and their ideologies; parodies of Handel's works and stylistic devices; re-orchestrations of Handel; Handel as a 'queer' icon.

The programme committee comprises Michael Burden (University of Oxford), Pierre Degott (Université de Metz), Pierre Dubois (Université de Tours), Albert Gier (Universität Bamberg), Sylvie Lemoël (Université de Tours) and Laurine Quetin (Université de Tours).

Proposals for papers (maximum 500 words) should be sent by **1 March 2012** to:

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HANDEL INSTITUTE CONFERENCE

'Handel at Court'

London, 24-25 November 2012

Call for Papers

The idea for this, the ninth Handel Institute conference, is prompted by the Diamond Jubilee (June 2012) of Queen Elizabeth II, but the theme is intended to embrace every aspect of Handel's relations with patrons, colleagues and audiences and also of his activities as a performer and composer in the places where he worked or visited, including Halle, Hamburg, Florence, Rome, Venice, Hanover, Düsseldorf, London, Dublin and elsewhere; the Institute will also consider offers of papers or panel sessions on other subjects.

The conference will take place at The Foundling Museum, Brunswick Square, WC1N 1AZ, but we hope to fit in a visit to the projected Jennens exhibition at the Handel House Museum, which is expected to open around the same time. Costs will be kept to a minimum, and we are considering offering some financial assistance to young scholars who wish to attend.

Papers should comprise up to about 4,000 words and take about 25–30 minutes to read. Proposals for papers or panel sessions (maximum 300 words) should be sent to Colin Timms (address below) by **Friday 16 March 2012**.

HANDEL INSTITUTE RESEARCH AWARDS

Applications are invited for **Handel Institute Awards** to assist in the furtherance of research projects involving the music or life of **George Frideric Handel** or his associates or contemporaries. One or more awards may be offered, up to a total of £1,000. Awards will not be made for the payment of university or college fees.

There is no application form. Applicants should submit an outline of their project, a breakdown of their estimated expenditure, and a note of any other funding (for the same project) applied for or received; they should also ask two referees to write on their behalf (references will not be solicited). Applicants and references, sent by email or post (addresses below), must arrive by **1 November 2011**.

All applicants will be contacted as soon as possible thereafter. Any materials such as microfilms that are bought with an award will become the property of The Handel Institute when the applicant has finished using them.



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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