



THE HANDEL INSTITUTE

NEWSLETTER

HANDEL INSTITUTE CONFERENCE

HANDEL AND HIS EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY
PERFORMERS

The tenth triennial Handel Institute conference will be held on 21-23 November in London, the first two days at the Foundling Museum, the third at the Open University regional office in Camden Town. The provisional programme and abstracts of the papers are given below. Bookings can be made at <http://www.gfhandel.org/handelinstitute/hi-conference2015.html> or on the form enclosed with this *Newsletter*. Early booking is advised.

SATURDAY 21 NOVEMBER
THE FOUNDLING MUSEUM
WC1N 1AZ

9.30 *Registration*

10.10 **Session 1: Singers and Players**

Helen Coffey

Continental musicians in Handel's orchestra: The London musical community in the eighteenth century

In an account of his travels to England in 1728, Pierre Jacques Fougereux remarked on his attendance at three of Handel's London operas, commenting not only on the fine Italian singers he heard there but also on the orchestra, which, according to him, included the best instrumentalists from Italy and Germany. As Fougereux noted (and as advertisements in London newspapers confirm), these skilled instrumentalists not only played in London's operas but made regular appearances in the concerts that were frequently given in the city. The prominence of instrumentalists from the Continent in London's competitive concert life was also confirmed by Charles Burney in his *General History of Music*, where he recounted that, along with a number of British musicians, the principal performers in mid-eighteenth-century London had included (amongst others) the violinist Carbonelli, the cellist Caporale, the oboist Sammartini and the flautist Weideman. Focusing on those instrumentalists who performed in Handel's theatre orchestra, this paper will consider the integration and

influence of musicians from the Continent in London's musical community. It will examine not only their professional activities but also their personal connections with other musicians in the city and thus demonstrate how these instrumentalists contributed to the musical life of the British capital.

David Hunter

To preposition singers: with whom do they work for, against, near, among, with, opposite, without, around, alongside, despite, contrary to, until?

Though the title of this year's conference may suggest that Handel had a proprietary, not to say exclusive, interest in the performers he worked with, the lives of singers prove otherwise. In positing the ways in which singers were connected with persons and groups beyond the composer/impresario/music director norm, I explore issues of belonging and relating. Spouses, siblings, parents, children, patrons, audiences, countries, styles, religions, languages, stage characters and agents all had their own demands. By taking a broader sweep than has been attempted to date, I show that the relationships between singers and their environment, so often summarized in terms of prepositions, is inadequate to the complexities of their situations. Compliance or complaisance in one area may be completely lacking in another (such as a willingness to perform with particular musicians in one venue but not another). Or, to take an obvious example, a singer who brought complete works or arias to London, expecting to perform them in a season or another work, exhibited a far different kind of relationship than the repertory and experience of a singer from the Chapel Royal.

By teasing out the implications of these differences we can delight in the diversity of musical experience, assessing it not only at the level of works and individual interactions but also in terms of relationships with audiences and more abstract concepts such as styles (musical), countries and religions.



11.45 Session 2: Singers and Opera in the 1720s (A)

Adriana De Feo

The roles for Giuseppe Maria Boschi in Handel's and Antonio Lotti's operas

The bass Giuseppe Maria Boschi (1675?–1744) was one of the most famous singers of his time; this is particularly remarkable in an era that favoured the high vocal registers. In 1707 he sang in Venice in Gasparini's and Lotti's operas at the Teatro S. Cassiano. Also in Venice he sang the role of Pallante in the first, triumphant performance of Handel's *Agrippina* (1709) at the Teatro S. Giovanni Crisostomo. The name of Boschi is linked with Handel's most important operas: in 1711 he sang the part of Argante in *Rinaldo* at the Haymarket Theatre in London; between 1720 and 1728 he played significant roles in the productions of *Radamisto*, *Giulio Cesare*, *Tamerlano*, *Rodelinda*, *Scipione*, *Alessandro*, *Siroe* and others, mounted by the Royal Academy. Boschi had also been active in Dresden, where he sang in Lotti's *Giove in Argo* (1717), *Ascanio, ovvero gli odi delusi dal sangue* (1718) and *Teofane* (1719); this last opera honoured the marriage of crown prince Augustus III of Poland to Maria Josepha of Austria, daughter of Emperor Joseph I, and was staged with the most famous virtuosos of the time – Margherita Durastanti, Vittoria Tesi and Francesco Bernardi.

My paper aims to analyse the particular dramatic roles written for Boschi by comparing Handel's scores with some of the parts written for him by Lotti in operas performed in Venice and Dresden.

Konstanze Musketa

'Sung by Signor Riemschneider': Johann Gottfried Riemschneider (1691-1742), Zachow's scholar and Handel's singer on the London opera stage

Handel and the two brothers Gebhard Julius (1687–1734) and Johann Gottfried Riemschneider (1691–1742) were scholars of Friedrich Wilhelm Zachow (1663–1712), the organist at the Marktkirche (St Mary's/Our Lady) in Halle. Gebhard Riemschneider (1657–1701), their father, was appointed Kantor at the same church; he was not only Zachow's colleague, but also his friend. The Riemschneider brothers were good singers, and they too became Kantors later on – the elder one in Halle at the Moritzkirche (St Maurice's), the younger, Johann Gottfried, at Hamburg cathedral, as the successor to the late Reinhard Keiser (1674–1739). By this time Johann Gottfried was already well known in Hamburg as an excellent singer. In the article on 'Händel' in his *Grundlage einer Ehren-Pforte* (1740) Mattheson called him 'unser bester Baritonist' (our best baritone). Riemschneider spent the 1729–30 season in London, where at the King's Theatre in the Haymarket he sang the bass parts in Handel's *Giulio Cesare in Egitto*, *Lotario* and *Partenope*. It is more than likely that the two former Zachow scholars knew each other from their time in Halle.

The paper examines Johann Gottfried Riemschneider's origins and career, the relationship between the Riemschneider, Zachow and Handel families, Riemschneider's work in Hamburg and his role as a performer of Handel's arias in London.

2.15 Session 3: Singers and Opera in the 1720s (B)

Randall Scotting

The other Senesino: Handel's singer in context

Operas written for the voice of Francesco Bernardi ('Senesino') by George Frideric Handel – including many of the best-known today, such as *Giulio Cesare*, *Orlando*, and *Rodelinda* – account for only one seventh of the 114 operas in which he is known to have performed during his thirty-three-year career. These works by Handel are largely how Senesino's voice and abilities have been defined to date. What of the other operas? What new information can they offer in regard to one of the most famous singers of the eighteenth century and his musical and dramatic abilities?

This paper will address elements of style, historical context, vocal range, and the technical and musico-dramatic demands of a selection of operas from Senesino's career by composers other than Handel, including, Giovanni Bononcini (1670–1747), Nicolò Porpora (1686–1768), Giovanni Maria Ruggieri (?1665–1724), Attilio Ariosti (1666–1729), and Giovanni Antonio Gaj (1690–1764). 'Handel's Senesino' will be placed in context and the singer's apparent strengths at various points in his career will be addressed, including his début and his final years on the stage. Conclusions will be drawn by contrasting these operas with the better-known works of Handel, offering a view of Senesino beyond the few works for which he is most recognised today. A more complete understanding of Senesino's career and abilities will provide insight into how he may have been viewed by audiences during his own lifetime.

Liam Gorry

'In which Senesino gained so much reputation as an actor, as well as singer'. Senesino and recitativo accompagnato: the Evidence

From John Hawkins in the 1770s to the present day scholars have consistently linked Handel's most famous castrato, Francesco Bernardi ('Senesino': 1686–1758), with *recitativo accompagnato*. Charles Burney in his *An Account of the Musical Performances in Westminster Abbey and the Pantheon* (1785), and in his *General History of Music* (1789), even included the reminiscences of Handel's original audience, which further strengthen this connection. But frustratingly there are no contemporary published accounts, and no known private letters, that confirm the singer's reputation in this area, and modern studies fail to give statistics. Yet if we turn to the music that Handel wrote for Senesino, we can instantly ascertain that the castrato must have been extremely gifted in the singing of *recitativo accompagnato*. A study of the music that the composer wrote for him at least leads us to the conclusion that Senesino was the most important performer of *accompagnato* in London during the 1720s and 30s.

This paper explores the facts associated with Senesino and the *accompagnati* that he sang on the London stage between 1720 and 1736. It takes account of: the *accompagnati* composed for the singer by Handel, Porpora, Bononcini and Ariosti; the statistics relating to Handel's overall usage of *recitativo accompagnato* in his *opere serie* and other works; a comparison between Senesino and contemporary singers in London; and the reasons for the relative decline of *recitativo accompagnato* in Handel's *opere serie* after 1733.



3.50 Session 4: Singers and Opera in the 1720s (C)

Hans-Dieter Clausen

Cuzzoni's Cleopatra, or the Limits of a singer's influence on his part

Francesca Cuzzoni arrived in London towards the end of December 1722 to sing the part of Teofane in Handel's opera *Ottone*, which had been rehearsed in her absence. Only a few things could be altered for her. While composing her next part, Emilia in *Flavio*, Handel was able to consider her vocal abilities from the beginning. But this opera had to be composed and rehearsed in an extremely short space of time, while the opera season was running. It was not before the end of the season that, in his next opera, *Giulio Cesare in Egitto*, Handel had the opportunity to create a part for her which took account of the whole of the singer's personality. It became one of Handel's most richly faceted operatic roles.

The complex creation process of the libretto and the score (hitherto not fully elucidated) will be examined to explore the composer's aims when he replaced, reshaped and reshuffled the arias (especially Cleopatra's arias), and to estimate how far the singer's abilities may have influenced this process.

Contemporary assessments of Cuzzoni's abilities come primarily from those later seasons in which she and Faustina Bordoni competed, and they tend to emphasize their differences. The Cleopatra part may give a more faithful impression of this multi-talented singer.

Wolfgang Hirschmann

Performing Handel on the German stage: The case of Riccardo Primo

On 3 February 1719 Handel's *Riccardo Primo* had its first Hamburg performance at the Gänsemarkt theatre in an adaptation by Christoph Gottlieb Wend and Georg Philipp Telemann; the new title was *Der misslungene Braut-Wechsel oder Richardus I., König von England* (TVWV 22:8). In accordance with the theme of this conference I will try to explain the special character of the Hamburg version from the necessity to adapt Handel's original to a completely different cast of singers. I will also try to show that, just as Handel composed his operas in a performer-sensitive way, so Wend and Telemann intended to make the very best of the performance situation in which they had to work. As will be seen, in the hands of Wend and Telemann and their Hamburg performers Handel's opera became a completely different stage event.

7.30 *Concert of Cecilian music, directed by Laurence Cummings, at St George's Church, Bloomsbury Way, London, WC1A 2SA*

SUNDAY 22 NOVEMBER
THE FOUNDLING MUSEUM

9.30 *Registration*

10.00 Session 5: Singers and Opera in the 1730s (A)

John H. Roberts

The London pasticcis of 1730-31: Singers, composers, and impresarios

In 1729, following the collapse of the Royal Academy of Music, a new opera company was launched under the joint management of Handel and Heidegger, who controlled the King's Theatre. During its first two seasons this company performed eight Handel operas and two *pasticci* of music by other composers, *Ormisda* (1730) and *Venceslao* (1731). The original performing scores of these *pasticci*, now in London and Hamburg, were part of Handel's personal collection, and it has usually been assumed that he was primarily responsible for their compilation. This paper argues, however, that Handel had little direct involvement in either *Ormisda* or *Venceslao* except as a performer. Both operas appear to have been based in some way on scores supplied to the Royal Academy in 1726 by the former London impresario Owen Swiney, then living in Venice, though the musical contents were largely replaced. Handel's singers probably provided most of the arias out of their own repertoires. The musical style of the recitatives shows that they cannot be by Handel but were the work of a single unidentified composer, perhaps Pietro Castrucci, leader of the Haymarket orchestra. The whole process may have been masterminded by Heidegger.

Judit Zsovár

Transforming One Another: Shaping Strada's Vocal Art – Inspiring Handel to New Compositional Thinking

The longest period of continuous collaboration Handel ever had with a leading singer took place between 1729 and 1737 with Anna Maria Strada del Pò, whom Burney defined as a soprano 'formed by [Handel] himself and modelled on his own melodies ... and he at last polished her into reputation and favour'. In the first years, Handel set Strada's maximum limits as far as range, agility, stamina, *messa di voce* and *legato* are concerned, which he then synchronized with the embodied character and dramatic context, thus achieving final unity. This meant an important shift in Strada's artistic profile, leading to full maturity as Handel revealed her true pathetic sense and mingled it with her dramatic vein: through the 'care he took in composing for her, and his instructions ... he rendered her equal at least to the first performer in Europe'. This process, however, resulted in mutual transformation.

As for Handel, he discovered the multi-coloured, unlimited entity of the female soprano voice, on the one hand, and a new freedom, on the other, to apply vocal skills according to his artistic aims without pressure of vocal exhibitionism. He could experiment with asymmetric phrases, or let the melody pass through the twelve semitones in the middle section of an aria, thanks to Strada's superb



intonation. Uncommon coloratura patterns requiring a wide range were linked to her voice; elsewhere her expressiveness and variety of timbre shone through the simplicity of a ten-bar lullaby. Furthermore, her powerful voice projection, together with her particularly high *tessitura* combined with sonorous lower notes, allowed Handel to compose richly orchestrated *castrato*-type arias for her. Strada's capacity for a thicker *legato* permeated compositional structures on a deeper level – a quality not generally found in the Handelian repertory of Faustina or Cuzzoni, nor in the composer's later works.

11.40 Session 6: Singers and Opera in the 1730s (B)

Graham Cummings

Handel, Giovanni Carestini and the 1734-35 London opera season

In the four seasons from 1733 to 1737 London was entertained by not one, but two competing Italian opera companies; that of Handel was pitted against the rival 'Opera of the Nobility', which had Porpora as its music director (1733–36). It was during these same four seasons that London applauded the singing of two of Italy's most renowned castratos – Giovanni Carestini, the *primo uomo* of Handel's company for two seasons (1733–35), and Carlo Broschi ('Farinelli'), who held the same leading position in the rival company for three seasons (1734–37). These two *virtuosi* had been vocal rivals since the Rome carnival season of 1722, when they both sang in the same operas by Porpora and Predieri. This rivalry continued for the next eleven years and was to resurface in London during the 1734–35 season, when Farinelli had a runaway success in a varied reprise of his former Venetian role of Arbace in Hasse's *Artaserse* (but as a *pasticcio* in London: Hasse/Porpora/Riccardo Broschi) and as Aci in Porpora's *Polifemo*. At the same time Carestini had a more muted success in two of Handel's finest operas of the 1730s, in the title-role of *Ariodante* and as Ruggiero in *Alcina*.

This paper seeks to investigate what part Handel's music for Carestini played in the on-going competition between the two opera companies. In particular it examines some of the music that Handel composed for Carestini's characters in *Ariodante* and *Alcina* in terms of musical style, vocal content and scale, when compared with the music composed for Farinelli by Hasse, Porpora and R. Broschi.

Matthew Gardner

The singer as composer: Gioacchino Conti and Handel

When at the end of the 1734–35 season Handel's star castrato, Giovanni Carestini, left his company and returned to Italy, he was eventually replaced in April 1736 by the young Gioacchino Conti, who had been singing in Naples, Vienna, Venice and Genoa. Upon arriving in London, Conti did not, as would have been expected, make his *début* in a new opera or with an adapted part in a revival; instead Handel allowed him to sing arias drawn from works by other composers which he brought with him in a revival of *Ariodante*. Around the same time, he nevertheless also sang a leading role in the première of *Atalanta*. During the two seasons he was in London, Conti sang in revivals of three

further Handel operas (*Alcina*, *Partenope* and *Poro*), with Handel adapting music originally conceived for other singers; in three new Handel operas (*Arminio*, *Giustino* and *Berenice*) in which the composer created roles for him; in the Italian oratorio *Il trionfo del Tempo e della Verità*, and in the 1737 bilingual performance of *Esther*, where he performed music that had originally been written for Carestini. In the same season his participation was also planned for a revival of *Deborah* that did not take place. From October 1736, however, owing to the arrival in London of the more experienced Domenico Annibali, Conti most commonly sang secondary roles. The range of parts that he performed for Handel in a short space of time provides a useful insight into the composer's working practice with a new singer at a time when he was still facing serious competition from the rival 'Opera of the Nobility'. Based on a re-examination of Handel's autographs, performing scores and wordbooks, this paper explores the parts Handel composed and adapted for Conti during his fifteen-month stay in London, highlighting how the abilities of a singer and the need for a castrato played a key role in Handel's compositional process and casting decisions.

2.15 Session 7: Performing Oratorio

Natassa Varka

Charles Jennens's version of Joseph and his Brethren

Although *Joseph and his Brethren* is not the only Handel oratorio of which Jennens owned more than one manuscript score, it is unique in that the location of both scores is known. In the first of these scores Jennens made a staggering number of amendments to the words, music and structure of the oratorio, ranging from the alteration of tiny details to the deletion of around a fifth of the lines set by Handel. This heavily annotated score was then used as the source for the second score and its accompanying set of partbooks. As these manuscripts incorporate all of Jennens's amendments, they contain a version of the oratorio markedly different from any that Handel or Miller ever intended: they contain what is best described as Jennens's version of *Joseph and his Brethren*.

Jennens's numerous small-scale amendments shed more light on many aspects of his character, including his editorial mind-set, his approach to word-setting, and his attitude to Handel in the mid-1740s. The fact that he owned a second set of partbooks which contained the airs and duets that he had deleted shows that he thought them worthy of preservation and performance but did not consider them to have a place in the oratorio; an exploration of why he thought this leads to a better understanding not only of his approach to the adaptation of Scripture for oratorio, but also of his beliefs and commitments.

David Hurley

The 'altered da capo' air in Handel's Alexander Balus

Among the myriad formal structures manifested in the airs of Handel's oratorios is a ternary form in which the last section is newly written, as opposed to the *verbatim* repeat of the first section found at the end of the *da capo* aria. This form, for which I propose the term 'altered da capo' aria, while



sometimes mentioned by scholars, has never been the subject of a comprehensive study. This paper focuses on Handel's use of the altered da capo, exploring particularly the flexible array of recapitulation designs that it encompasses, and suggesting musical and dramatic reasons why Handel sometimes chose this form instead of the typical *da capo* structure. Because it is impossible to examine all of Handel's altered da capos in this paper, I will concentrate on the composer's use of this form in two arias in his oratorio *Alexander Balus*. I explore how the compositional freedom intrinsic to the 'altered da capo' is among the features that allow for the portrayal, sometimes subtle, of specific aspects of the protagonists' emotional and psychological states – particularly those related to erotic attraction, which plays such an important role in *Alexander Balus*, perhaps the most opera-like of Handel's biblical oratorios.

3.50 Session 8: Vocal style

Jonathan Rhodes Lee

Cibber and Frasi: Singers of sentiment

Handel's oratorios hit their stride at the same time that the so-called culture of sentiment produced its most influential works. With Richardson's famed *Pamela* (1740) and *Clarissa* (1748) bounding the oratorios' main decade, it is worth considering how this culture affected them, and particularly their performers. Women – and men's ideas about women – were at the centre of sentimental culture, and the expectations of sentimentalism shaped the careers of at least two of Handel's female singers of the 1740s: Susanna Cibber (1714–66) and Giulia Frasi (*fl.* 1742–72).

In this paper, I draw on histories of the British theatre that record how actors authored their professional and personal identities during Handel's period. Thespians expected consistency on stage, 'owning' roles for years and maintaining fictional identities through sequels. Off stage, self-authorship was vital to them, too; the line between performer and role frequently blurred, and (as Lisa Freeman has shown) the growing polysemy of the word 'character' reflected growing recognition of this conflation.

I demonstrate that Cibber and Frasi also needed to manage their on- and off-stage selves, and that both singing ability and persona affected Handel's composition and revision processes. These women specialized in the theatrical line of the sentimental heroine, moral centres of troubled worlds. A publicized sex scandal challenged Cibber's status as such; revisions Handel made to her parts show that this challenge shaped her work as oratorio alto no less than as stage actress. Frasi carved out her role as singer of sentiment in the years preceding her work with Handel; both her repeated casting as endangered heroine and a continuity of musical language show Handel's awareness of her public image beyond the oratorio. These women's off-stage and on-stage lives intersected, and their music, drama, and public personas reflected their status as women of feeling.

Suzanne Aspden

Sweet birds: The Handelian sound in the later eighteenth century

In 1779 Susan Burney, daughter of the historian, reported a conversation held with her beloved Pacchierotti about other singers: 'M^{rs} Sheridan seemed to him to have the advantage over all our female Singers – He said her Voice was more clear & more touching in its tone than Miss Harrops, & without affectation[;] he believed she had the most feeling, & sung Handel's Music best'. With these words, Pacchierotti (or Burney) seems to suggest a style of singing that is invoked again and again where interpreters of Handel are concerned, centred on a rhetoric of sweetness. Thus Fanny Burney similarly characterised Elizabeth Linley's (Mrs Sheridan's) voice as 'soft, sweet, clear & affecting'. And Daniel Lyons summarised Burney's remarks on Gaetano Guadagni by comparing him with another famous Handelian singer in much the same language: 'Handel was so much pleased with his sweet and full voice, that he engaged him to sing the fine arias in *Samson* and *The Messiah*, which he had composed for Mrs. Cibber's sweet and affecting voice'.

This paper will consider what it meant to sing with a 'sweet and affecting' voice, and why such terms – or, more intriguingly, such a sound – might particularly have attached to Handelian vocal style in the years after his death.

7.00 *Conference dinner at La Gourmandina, 57 Lamb's Conduit Street, WC1N 3NB*

MONDAY 23 NOVEMBER OPEN UNIVERSITY, CAMDEN NW1 8NP

9.30 *Registration*

10.00 **Session 9: Singers and Oratorio in the 1740s and 1750s (A)**

Andrew Shryock

Thomas Lowe, Another Tenor Voice

Handel's Dublin tour (1741–42) is generally regarded as a watershed in the composer's professional career, cementing the transition to large-scale theatre works in English. It seems Handel also may have regarded the journey as a scouting trip: the subscription series featured local voices, Handel remarked on specific soloists in correspondence, and he heard and employed singers who later appeared in London oratorio seasons. The tenor Thomas Lowe may have been among these individuals. Although a treble-voiced Lowe has been recorded as singing for Handel in the 1730s, the mature-voiced Lowe became known in 1740 as a singer of Thomas Arne's music and an actor at Drury Lane. Indeed, he was with Arne in Dublin while Handel was there in 1742, and the two probably met during this period. In this paper, I argue documentary evidence and manuscript sources suggest that Handel was sufficiently impressed with Lowe (and sufficiently needy) to include him in the 1743 London oratorio season. On returning from Dublin, Handel revised



works (*i.e.*, *Messiah* and *Samson*) to include substantive parts for his new tenor. While it is unknown whether or not Handel suspected early on what Charles Burney later observed about Lowe – ‘he could never be safely trusted with any thing better than a ballad’ – nevertheless it was this voice lodged in Handel’s mind as he composed many of the oratorios, anthems and songs that mark the second half of the 1740s. Thus, this paper explores early stages of a collaboration that influenced Handel’s works until nearly the end of his compositional career.

David Vickers

Handel and Giulia Frasi in context

The Milanese soprano Giulia Frasi arrived in London in autumn 1742 to join Lord Middlesex’s opera company at the King’s Theatre. Initially a second-rank singer, over the next few years she performed in many productions that represent the post-Handelian taste of managers, music directors and supporters of Italian opera ventures in London during the decade immediately after Handel’s decision to produce and perform only English oratorio-style works. However, from 1748 Frasi’s Italian opera activities were concurrent with her appearances as principal soprano in all of Handel’s concert seasons, and during the 1750s she also sang several times for Arne. After Handel’s death she continued to be the leading English oratorio soprano for his successors John Christopher Smith (junior) and John Stanley, performing both in revivals of Handel’s old works and in their own new oratorios. The gist of this has been related most comprehensively by Olive Baldwin and Thelma Wilson in the *ODNB*, but I have undertaken a fuller reconstruction of Frasi’s performance calendar of both operas and concerts in London from 1742 to 1774 and examined the extant manuscript and printed sources of music written for her (or at least sung by her in revivals and concerts).

Burney famously wrote that Frasi had a ‘sweet and clear voice’ and ‘a smooth and chaste style of singing, which, though, cold and unimpassioned, pleased natural ears, and escaped the censure of critics’. It is my intention to redefine Frasi’s attributes by presenting examples from Italian arias composed by Galuppi, Porpora, Gluck, Hasse, Pergolesi, Ciampi and Cocchi, and English music by Arne, Smith, Stanley and Hayes. I will argue that the repertory she performed across thirty years not only indicates changing styles and tastes in English musical culture at both the opera house and oratorio concerts, but also sheds valuable new light on musical and dramatic attributes familiar to us from the roles that Handel created for her (the Queen of Sheba, Susanna, Theodora, Iphis) – thereby enabling us to appreciate both Frasi’s career and Handel’s late musical achievements in a broader context.

11.40 Session 10: Singers and Oratorio in the 1740s and 1750s (B)

Olive Baldwin and Thelma Wilson

Who was Mr Brent?

In *Jephtha an Oratorio*, published by John Walsh in 1752, three solos for Hamor and his parts in a duet and a quartet are

given as sung by ‘M^r. Brent’, while a fourth solo is ascribed to ‘M^r. Brant’. William Barclay Squire began his *DNB* entry (1885) on the soprano Charlotte Brent by stating that she was the daughter of ‘a fencing-master and alto singer, who sang in Handel’s *Jephtha* in 1752’, and this has generally been accepted. Charlotte’s father, Charles, was indeed a fencing master, and a leading one. The author of *A Treatise upon the Useful Science of Defence* (1747) remembered that Brent took part in one of the finest fencing matches he had ever seen. Charles Brent was in his late fifties in 1752, rather old for Hamor the young lover, and is nowhere recorded as a singer. His only known ‘musical’ performance is as the player of the salt box in a burlesque St Cecilia ode for his daughter’s benefit at Ranelagh in 1763. This has led the *Cambridge Handel Encyclopaedia* to state confidently that he was a singer there.

But if not Charles Brent, who was the original singer of Hamor? This paper will examine the puzzle further and attempt to find a solution.

Patricia Howard

Learning about Guadagni’s voice from his Handelian roles

There are many problems involved in trying to discover what an eighteenth-century singer sounded like. Most of them are insuperable. Descriptions of a singer in performance are usually couched in vivid but ambiguous adjectives: does ‘sweet’ imply lack of volume? do ‘fiery and impetuous’ suggest ‘spirited but inaccurate’? does ‘polished’ indicate that he or she sang the right notes, that they sang in tune, or that they possessed some other quality prized by an eighteenth-century critic hidden within a metaphor? The most reliable evidence comes from examining the music performed. This can at the very least establish vocal compass, and may indicate the preferred tessitura, though whether this represents the preference of the composer or of the singer is another moot point. Notwithstanding the usual association of Guadagni with Gluck, the singer had his longest working relationship with Handel and sang more roles by him than by any other composer. An investigation of some ten roles written or (as is mostly the case) adapted for him enables us to make objective deductions about the nature of Guadagni’s voice. It is also possible to infer what Handel liked about his singing, what opportunities he provided, and how he ‘heard’ the castrato. And because Guadagni’s association with Handel occurred at such an early and formative stage of his career, we can trace how the qualities identified and nurtured by Handel persisted in the voice of the mature singer.

2.10 Session 11: Meanwhile, away from the Drama Graydon Beeks

Handel and his performing forces at Cannons

In the thirty years since the publication of my article ‘Handel and Music for the Earl of Carnarvon’, nothing has emerged to challenge the overall description of the establishment, gradual growth, and precipitous disbanding of the Cannons Concert. It is, however, possible to say more about individual members of the ensemble and to trace their careers as composers, instrumentalists and singers. The goal of this



paper to create a group portrait of the musicians for whom Handel composed his Cannons Anthems and *Te Deum*, *Acis and Galatea* and *Esther*.

Of the three composers known to have been active at Cannons, Nicola Francesco Haym was a salaried employee who seems to have been hired primarily as a cellist. Handel and Pepusch seem initially to have been treated as distinguished guests; only from late spring 1719 did the latter become 'Director' of the ensemble and receive a salary.

Most of the professional instrumentalists were second-tier members of the Italian Opera orchestra, of which Haym had been principal cellist. Some of them apparently became available when the Opera ceased to function in summer 1717, and many returned to the opera house when the Royal Academy of Music and its orchestra were established in 1719. Among the non-professional players, some were servants who were also skilled musicians. At least one of these, Charles Pardini, subsequently enjoyed a professional career. A few were young men apprenticed to Pepusch, and several of these also went on to musical careers that intersected with Handel's.

The singers seem to have been either former cathedral choristers waiting for positions to open at one of the London cathedrals or in the Chapel Royal, or young men who had some experience of singing in the theatre, often under Pepusch's direction. James Blackly, for whom Handel wrote many demanding solos, came from the latter background, but his subsequent career remains a mystery. So too is the identity of the soprano who sang the roles of *Galatea* and *Esther*. Circumstantial evidence points to Margherita de l'Epine, who around this time became Pepusch's wife after having been his partner for many years.

Alison DeSimone

Handel's greatest hits: The composer's music in eighteenth-century benefit performances

On 26 March 1729 the soprano Ann Turner Robinson sponsored an elaborate evening of vocal and instrumental entertainments for her benefit. Robinson filled the Theatre Royal in Drury Lane with arias from at least eleven of Handel's operas. Her decision to feature his music was professionally strategic: not only was he currently abroad recruiting singers for a new opera company, but with the closure of the Royal Academy his operas had not been heard in nearly a year. Robinson's specially organized concert offered English audiences a chance to marvel at her vocal talents while admiring some of the 'greatest hits' of a beloved, and greatly missed, composer.

This concert was just one of many benefit evenings that featured Handel's music during his nearly fifty years in London. Singers, instrumentalists, and actors performed a wide selection of his works in their benefits, events that were organized and executed according to the desires of the featured beneficiary. Performers chose from various popular plays, arias, dances, and instrumental works to maximize their profits and appeal to fickle audiences. Yet a survey of advertisements from between 1700 and 1759 reveals certain patterns in the Handelian selections. These performances offer tantalizing clues about the value that musicians and their

audiences placed on Handel's music outside its original performance contexts.

Using advertisements, public accounts and the music itself, I reconstruct benefits that featured Handel's music, with a focus on benefit concerts given by two musicians: Robinson, who sang for him during the first Royal Academy season, and Jean Christian Kytch, the King's Theatre's leading oboist and a close friend of the composer. These examples show that performers featured Handel's music in different ways, but, as I argue, with the same crucial purpose: to identify themselves with the composer's greatest hits during periods of professional and musical uncertainty in London.

Berta Joncus

'Bliss is only found ... when Beard and Frasi sing': Handel, celebrity singers and Ranelagh Garden concerts

The singers John Beard and Giulia Frasi, by performing Handel's music in early Ranelagh Gardens concerts, both strengthened the Gardens' programme and articulated their own celebrity profiles.

Modelled after the Vauxhall Gardens, Ranelagh Gardens created a native pseudo-Arcadia where music was deployed to transport visitors to a realm of pleasure and foster fealty to British taste. Beard embodied these conceits, dramatising in airs and cantatas the *Lover* and the *Patriot*. Handel's music was carefully selected to strengthen this representation, with the support of Frasi. Deployment of this music advanced in stages: at the 'reopening' of the Ranelagh Rotunda in 1743 with a production of *Samson*, at 1746 concerts honouring the Duke of Cumberland, possibly at Beard-Frasi breakfast concerts between 1748 and 1752, and at high-profile benefits in 1757 and 1759.

This vocal partnership culminated in Handel's *Acis and Galatea*, mounted in 1757 as a Marine Society benefit that reportedly drew an audience of over two thousand. This splashy event is probably what encouraged Beard to use Handel's *L'Allegro* with beefed-up forces for his next benefit. The castrato Tenducci, and Leopold Mozart on his son's behalf, followed Beard in paying homage to polite British taste by programming Handel's English-language compositions in benefits.

4.20 Session 12: Leading performance

Eduardo Sola Chagas Lima

Handel and the notion of an orchestra leader

This paper contemplates Handel's engagement with the idea of an orchestra leader in the context of the musical scene in eighteenth-century Great Britain and Ireland. In particular, it considers how this engagement relates to his close and personal relationship with the English violinist Matthew Dubourg, for whose skills as a leader he demonstrated significant appreciation. Although Dubourg's life and few compositions rarely arouse the interest of musicologists, his well-known prominence as an accomplished violinist has much to say when it comes to orchestra leading, and his connection with Handel also sheds invaluable light on the latter's choice of performers.



This study is mainly based on a twofold investigation. Firstly, it discusses the various leading practices employed in eighteenth-century Britain, paying special attention to existing research on the Corellian tradition that was brought to the British Isles by Francesco Geminiani and other violinists during the diaspora of Italian musicians. As one of Geminiani's most notorious pupils, Dubourg embodied the idiosyncrasies of this foreign tradition, and he also adopted orchestra leading as one of the main aspects of his career as a violinist. Secondly, the paper explores Handel's choices of leader for the performance of his choral works, acknowledging examples of his own conducting from the harpsichord and other potential instances of shared leadership. Finally, the study discusses an occasion on which these two aspects intersect: the Dublin, 1742, performance of *Messiah*, led by Dubourg. In analysing this well-documented example, I draw parallels with other eighteenth-century performances of Handel's choral work.

The paper concludes with an evaluation of Handel's use of an orchestra leader, in which I argue that some of his performance preferences may have been influenced by both the practices in fashion throughout Britain at the time and his personal relationship with the musicians of his choice.

Peter Holman

'Handel several times reproved him till he wept': the composer as musical director

In the course of research for my book *Before the Baton: Conducting and Musical Direction in Georgian Britain* I have reconsidered the many anecdotes about Handel's dealings with his performers, testing them against what is known about his methods of direction. One of them, providing the title for this paper, comes from a contemporary annotation to the entry devoted to the violinist Giovanni Stefano Carbonelli in an early nineteenth-century dictionary of musical biography; Carbonelli is known to have led Handel's oratorio orchestra in the 1740s. Handel seems to have begun by using the normal methods of his time, directing from the first harpsichord in Italian opera and beating time in large-scale choral music. However, there is evidence that he increasingly tried to exert an unusual amount of control over his performers, singers as well as instrumentalists. I will argue that to achieve this he reduced the authority of his orchestral leader, and eventually devised a method of directing oratorios (a genre combining features of opera and choral music) that enabled him to play rather than beat time. To do this he used a harpsichord connected to a large organ by a 'long movement', allowing him to communicate with his singers aurally rather than visually; they were all placed out of his sight at the front of the performing area. This system, used by his followers until the early nineteenth century, had the added advantage of enabling him to dispense with additional keyboard players, whose abilities he doubtless felt inferior to what a newspaper report of one of his Dublin performances referred to as 'his own inimitable hand'.

5.30 *Conference ends*

CONFERENCE REPORT

THE AMERICAN HANDEL SOCIETY AND THE SOCIETY FOR SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY MUSIC

Iowa City, 23–26 April 2015

This year's biennial American Handel Society (AHS) Festival and Conference took place over four days in Iowa City and, in a new venture, was a joint meeting with the Society for Seventeenth-Century Music (SSCM). The extensive programme, with just under thirty papers, three concerts and the Howard Serwer Memorial Lecture, necessitated a number of parallel sessions to fit everything in. Although the conference was organised and hosted by the University of Iowa, the paper sessions were held in the Sheraton Hotel. Following a pre-conference round-table discussion on editing early opera, aimed primarily at students from the university, the main conference began in the afternoon of 23 April with a warm welcome from Professor David Gier, director of the University of Iowa School of Music.

The opening afternoon included a plenary session on 'Baroque Lives', with papers from Beth Glixon (University of Kentucky) on the life and career of Vittoria Tarquini, John H. Roberts (University of California, Berkeley) on 'Rosenmüller in Exile', and Colleen Reardon (University of California, Irvine) speaking about 'Girolamo Gigli and the Professionalisation of Opera in Siena'. Glixon's paper was especially enlightening, offering new insights into Tarquini's career, her rumoured relationship with Handel and details of her marriage to Jean-Baptiste Farinel, and drawing on extensive archival research to correct numerous inaccuracies that persist in modern literature. Following an enjoyable reception in the hotel restaurant, the first concert of the meeting, Monteverdi's *Vespro della Beata Vergine* (1610), was given at the nearby St Mary's Catholic Church by the University of Iowa Kantorei conducted by Timothy Stalter. Supplemented by some professional soloists and instrumentalists and some members of the School of Music faculty, the student performers did a fine job; it was especially encouraging to see a group of young people from a mid-west university enthusiastically engaging with early music.

Day two of the conference began at 6 am with students reading the complete works of Virgil (in English translation) in the pedestrian area of the city centre. I did not witness the start but managed to pause for a few moments around lunchtime to hear a short passage. The conference papers began at a more civilised 9 am with a morning of parallel sessions divided into two groups, one for the AHS, the other for the SSCM. The AHS session was divided into two subsections. The first, on 'Handel's Heroes', included papers by Jonathan Rhodes Lee (University of Chicago) on 'Handel Heroics' and by Regina Compton (Eastman School of Music), who presented some of the results from her recently completed PhD dissertation on the secco recitative in Handel's Royal Academy operas (for which she was later awarded the International Handel Research Prize in Halle).



Recitative, especially secco recitative, is an often overlooked musical element of Handel's stage works, falling victim to a stronger interest in arias. Compton's paper, 'How to Enrage Alexander; or Towards an Understanding of Recitativo Semplice and Theatrical Gesture', showed how closely Handel's secco recitative is linked to gesture on stage and to his dramatic intentions, with implications for performance practice (such as tempo and continuo realisation) as well as for our understanding of how Handel may have understood the characters.

The second part of the morning was entitled 'Transmission and Transformation', with Rebekah Ahrendt (Yale University), talking about 'The Babel[!], between Hanover and London', followed by a fascinating account from Stephen Nissenbaum (University of Massachusetts, Amherst) on 'How the March from Handel's *Riccardo Primo* became an Early Methodist Hymn'. *Riccardo Primo* had closed in late 1727 after a limited run of only eleven performances, yet in 1742 the music of the March in Act III appeared without identification of its provenance as 'Jericho Tune' in *The Foundery Collection* of Methodist hymns compiled by John and Charles Wesley. Nissenbaum convincingly argued that Charles Wesley probably attended a performance of *Riccardo Primo* and that the scene in which the March appears may have left a strong impression; he also considered why the tune became so popular and discussed the possible reasons for it being entitled 'Jericho Tune'.

During the lunch break delegates were invited to view a display in the Special Collections department of the Rita Benton Music Library, before the afternoon began with a plenary session on 'Perspectives on French Style'. The three papers by experienced scholars in the field offered a wealth of information and created a nicely balanced session. Following Jonathan Gibson's discussion of 'The Eloquence of Disorder in the Lullian *Tragédie en musique*', focusing especially on the collaboration between Lully and his librettist Quinault, as well as on the aesthetic distinction between the notions of 'natural' and 'artificial' expression, Shirley Thompson (Birmingham Conservatoire) explored Marc-Antoine Charpentier's 'choirs', discussing their size and disposition and resolving a number of questions about performance practice through a detailed re-examination of the sources. Graham Sadler (University of Hull) brought the session to a close with a paper on 'Agostino Steffani and the French Style', demonstrating what Steffani may have learned from Lully while visiting Paris and how he integrated this into his Italian operas for Munich and Hanover, in addition to identifying specific French pieces that may have influenced Steffani's work.

The evening included two events. First, there was a concert of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century organ music given by Hans-Ola Ericsson (organ) and Lena Weman (flute) at the Riverside Recital Hall on the university campus (which involved a short journey on a yellow American school bus). Although the concert was generally well played, the combination of organ and flute does not work especially well for Handel's flute sonatas; it was interesting, however, to hear some music by Johan Helmich Roman and Johann

Agrell, together with works by J. S. and C. P. E. Bach. Secondly, the conference banquet took place at the hotel, providing a good opportunity for members of the two societies to mingle.

Saturday's programme began with a second morning of parallel AHS and SSCM sessions. The four Handel papers made up a session on 'Handel and the Oratorio', beginning with Annette Landgraf (Halle) on 'Esther II from 1735–1740', a work she is editing for the Hallische Händel-Ausgabe. Following its first performance in 1732, the second version of *Esther* was revived and adapted, with varying degrees of alteration, on numerous occasions during the decade. While referring to existing scholarship, Landgraf gave her own independent account of a plausible reconstruction and ordering of the movements. Donald Burrows's detailed account of Walsh's editions of *Messiah* answered a number of questions on the early history of the oratorio's publication, separating what is known about the early printed editions and what might plausibly be based on the musical evidence, as well as establishing new details about the working relationship between Handel and Walsh. My own paper on 'The London Revisions of Handel's First Roman Oratorio: *Il Trionfo del Tempo e della Verità* (1737) and *The Triumph of Time and Truth* (1757)' was followed by Kenneth Nott's (Hart School of Music) on 'The Synthesis of Traditions, Genres and Styles in Handel's *Jephtha*'. The paper showed how three strands – victory narrative, realistic characterisation and spiritual depth – are uniquely synthesised in *Jephtha*, demonstrating how Handel and Morell integrated a complex and poignant human story with a 'moralists Old Testament victory pattern'.

In the afternoon the two societies again joined forces for a plenary session – on 'Birds, Women, and Seventeenth-Century Devotion'. Brian Scott Oberlander (Northwestern University) discussed 'Songs for the Pious Lark: Music, Nature and Devotional Practice in Early Seventeenth-Century France', before Margaret Murata (University of California, Irvine) spoke on 'Old Testament Women in the Roman Oratorio'. Referring to such characters as Esther, Susanna and the daughter of Jephtha, she offered an overview of the use of Old Testament figures in seventeenth-century Rome and thus provided insight into the way in which characters or topics later set by Handel had been treated in a different time and place. The afternoon ended with the Howard Serwer Memorial Lecture, delivered by Nicholas McGegan, who for many years was music director of the Göttingen Handel Festival. His entertaining and insightful account of 'Handel in my Lifetime' traced the development of Handel performances over about the last forty-five years with recordings of singers before, during and after the move towards Historically Informed Performance. The evening's concert meant another short trip on the bus to West High School, where the Chamber Singers of Iowa City gave the Paul Traver Memorial Concert – a performance of *Judas Maccabaeus*, conducted by David Puderbaugh.

Sunday morning was made up of two further plenary sessions focusing on seventeenth-century music. The first, on 'Operatic Networks', comprised papers by Jennifer



Williams Brown (Grinnell College) on 'Il ritorno di Cavalli in patria' and Jonathan Glixon (University of Kentucky) on Cavalli's *Erismena*, examining the ways in which the opera changed via two traditions of transmission when it was revived across twelve cities between 1656 and 1673. The second session, which included papers by Markus Rathey (Yale University) and Janette Tilley (CUNY/Lehman College), was devoted to the German composer Heinrich Schütz.

On the whole the conference was an informative and enjoyable experience. However, it seemed regrettable that the plenary sessions were mostly dominated by seventeenth-century music. This may have been due to the respective size of each society, but in the interests of bilateral exchange it would have been good to have had at least one plenary session on Handel, had sufficient suitable papers been available. Thanks are due particularly to Robert Ketterer from the Department of Classics at Iowa University, who acted as local organiser, to the programme committee composed of representatives from both societies, and to the numerous student volunteers who helped keep everything running smoothly.

Matthew Gardner

GERMAN HANDEL FESTIVALS

GÖTTINGEN

The theme 'Heroines!?' (sic) may have seemed nebulous and open to various interpretations, extending from the amoral anti-heroine Agrippina to the virtuous martyr Theodora, but it certainly suited the two gala concerts at the Stadthalle, both full of lollipop arias, sung by Sarah Connolly (with Göttingen's hand-picked international all-star baroque orchestra) and Ann Hallenberg (with Il Pomo d'Oro, an Italian band directed by the violinist Riccardo Minasi). Both mezzos sang standard favourites from *Ariodante*, but Hallenberg's coherent programme also explored music by multiple composers from operas devoted to the three different historical Agrippinas. Much of the repertoire was arcane but rewarding (Legrenzi, Perti, Porpora, Orlandini, Sammartini, Graun), and the performances were sensational. It was a pity that the assumed box-office allure of a spoken introduction to each half of the concert by the crime author and well-known baroque opera aficionado Donna Leon did not prevent the event from being poorly attended. The reason for the small audience is that the recital overlapped with a performance of the completely sold-out production of *Agrippina* at the Deutsches Theater, a few hundred yards away.

The opera was produced by stage director Laurence Dale, whose former career as a professional tenor apparently informed his first-hand awareness of the stagecraft and acting skills necessary for a theatrical entertainment that was both eloquently communicative and boldly comic (yet never farcical). The production marked the first performances of

John E. Sawyer's long-awaited HHA edition, and some alternative versions of scenes from the appendix were used; some recitatives were discreetly abridged, but the original long version of Agrippina's uneasy soliloquy 'Pensieri, voi mi tormentate' was preferred. Another hallmark of the production was the powerful acting of the mezzo Ulrike Schneider (Agrippina) and bass João Fernandes (Claudio), whose roles were portrayed as somewhat more vulnerable and complex than usual. Schneider's chic costume and headdress concealed a much older woman whose use of sexual seduction as a manipulative weapon to plot her son Nerone's progress to the throne became tragic on account of her fading beauty. The secret signs of her real age, such as wispy white hair, were revealed to powerful effect in 'Pensieri', which reinforced the desperation of her prayer to the gods that her plotting be blessed with success.

Dale's staging yielded other insightful and unexpected characterisations, not least the clear hints of fondness between the emperor and his scheming wife when she warns him at the end of Act III not to trust his courtiers (Handel and J. C. Smith recalled Agrippina's music nearly half a century later in 'Wise men, flatt'ring, may deceive us'). Ida Falk Winland's Poppea was a suitable mixture of vanity and ambition, fixated by a string of pearls in 'Vaghe perle', and yet one could see why – at least in this version of the story – she remained loyal to the honourable Ottone, sung with unaffected directness by Christopher Ainslie. Some of the finest singing came from the supporting cast: Jake Arditti's high countertenor register was impressively firm and characterful as the flame-haired and ideally precocious Nerone (though the ironic comedy of his distributing alms to the poor did not quite come off), and both Owen Willetts (Narciso) and Ross Ramgobin (Pallante) sang with polished musicality.

There was plenty of obsessing from the outset about who was sitting on the throne, and the extra-curricular shenanigans that seem to be *de rigueur* for all productions served rather than hindered the plot and characterisation. Thus, such dramatic inventions as Nerone's sadistic rape and murder of a servant girl whom Poppea had used as a convenient substitute after blindfolding the bratty would-be emperor, rather than distracting us from the essential on-stage business, functioned in a consistent and illuminating way. The clichéd subversion of the *lieto fine* that seems essential nowadays was refreshingly avoided, even though in *Agrippina* such irony would arguably be more apt and justifiable than usual. Accordingly, it was a brilliantly clever masterstroke to allow the drama to conclude with a faithful observance of its happy ending, only for a witty epilogue to unfold during the audience's loud applause: the grisly historical fate of almost every character was demonstrated with various murders, leaving the innocent good guy Ottone as the last man standing to pick up the laurel wreath. Of course, this does not quite match Roman history, but this amusing epilogue was a fantastic way to make some useful points about the characters as found in Grimani's libretto and Handel's music.

Musical proceedings were in the safe hands of Laurence



Cummings and the excellent festival orchestra. After some years of collaboration, there has been a happy ripening of their artistic partnership. This was abundantly clear also in a magnificent performance of *Theodora*. Cummings's pacing, shaping and balancing of the orchestra were a core element in a supremely convincing interpretation. The NDR Choir has improved its level of visual communication, engagement with the drama and English pronunciation, and there were some sonorities and harmonic details in choruses that I had seldom noticed in previous performances of the oratorio. Part 1 was performed with an emotional and dramatic poignancy that, perhaps inevitably, could not quite be sustained all the way through Parts 2 and 3. *Theodora*'s mortification upon being told that she is to be imprisoned in a brothel was sung with a perfect synthesis of passion and virtue by Carolyn Sampson. It is no easy feat to ensure that the middle section of 'Angels, ever bright and fair' raises goose-bumps on such jaded Handelians as the undersigned, but Sampson & Co. moved me profoundly. The experienced Susan Bickley sang Irene's airs with impeccable serenity; Lisandro Abadie's Valens was shrewdly acted as a cynical man of civic authority (not the mere pantomime villain that less intelligent basses sometimes resort to), and the honey-toned timbre and smoothly seamless divisions of the young tenor Rupert Charlesworth were a true delight; I cannot recall hearing 'Descend, kind Pity, heav'nly guest' sung with better technique and appropriate sentimentality. Robin Blaze is always an intelligent musician with words and phrasing, but on this occasion he had vocal problems and battled increasingly as the evening wore on. With the sad exception of a struggling Didymus, this *Theodora* was near-perfect.

David Vickers

HALLE

This year's festival was extended over a period of sixteen days under the new dispensation laid down by the municipal authorities, which means that the opening ceremonies took place before the Anglo-American group had arrived in time for their first engagement, which has traditionally been the meeting of the Editorial Board of the HHA.

Another tradition established some years ago is that, whenever possible, the opera production is the première staged performance of a recently published HHA volume. This year it was *Lucio Cornelio Silla*, edited by myself and only recently published (I took it over when the previously appointed editor withdrew because of ill health). Many readers of this *Newsletter* will remember a fine performance of the work, with the legendary countertenor James Bowman in the title-role, at the Royal College of Music in 2000; it was based on a performing edition prepared by our late colleague Anthony Hicks and then recorded on CD. I was privileged to use Anthony's score as a mark-up copy for my edition, which is in the standard HHA format with a Preface and Critical Report. The work is very little known, and has had a bad press – Winton Dean described the libretto as 'the worst that Handel ever set' – and we do not even have any evidence

that the opera was performed when it was composed in 1713 in honour of the Duc d'Aumont, the French diplomat who was in London to negotiate the end of the War of the Spanish Succession, finalised in the Treaty of Utrecht.

The work is set in the time of the cruel Roman dictator Lucius Cornelius Sulla ('Silla' in Italian), who died in 78 BC, so it was almost inevitable that a modern staging should have been set in the Fascist era, with the dictator as a Mussolini figure (quoted as such in the programme book). This was a reasonable idea, and it worked quite effectively on the stage, although the modern habit of using back-projection video to illustrate the stage-director's ideas – scenes of carnage in the Second World War, including Lancaster bombers representing the figure of God who at one point orders Silla to carry out a massacre – was tiresome and rather silly. The work was given complete and without intervals, as it is very short (just over two hours). One particularly ridiculous (and one imagines unstageable) scene at the end of Act III – where, according to the libretto, Silla gets into a boat to travel to Sicily but is immediately shipwrecked, then rescued by his long-suffering wife Metella, who just happens to have another boat handy – was replaced by the dictator playing with a toy boat in his bath while conspirators tried to assassinate him. The historically accurate ending, in which Silla surrenders his office and begs for pardon from everyone, was done in such a confused way that most of the audience could not have understood what was going on – a pity, because it is the only Handel opera in which the traditional *lieto fine*, which so often seems absurd to a modern audience, actually reflects historical truth: Sulla really did it! The opera contains a great deal of fine music which transcends the absurdities of the plot, and this came over very well. The cast was excellent, led by Filippo Mineccia in the title-role and the wonderful Romelia Lichtenstein as his suffering wife Metella, while the orchestral playing under Enrico Onofria was first-class.

The Festkonzert, on the first Thursday evening in the large G. F. Händel-Halle, was given by the amazing French countertenor Philippe Jarousky, whom I had never heard before. Accompanied by the orchestra Orfeo 55, directed by Natali Stutzmann, he sang arias in English and Italian from Handel's operas and oratorios, sensibly arranged in that there was no pause or applause between items, only at the end of each half, when the sell-out audience erupted in cheering. There was a delightful touch at the end, when Jarousky and Stutzmann, who laid down her baton, joined to sing the wonderful duet for Sesto and Cornelia in *Giulio Cesare*. Jarousky's singing is breathtakingly wonderful, such as I have not heard for a long time; it was an extraordinary experience, and I found myself in tears through most of it.

The other concerts I attended were of a consistently high quality. In the impressive Aula of the University the cantata *Aminta e Fillide* was given concert-fashion, as one would expect, but the two principals tried to liven things up with coy gestures which were mostly rather infantile (I think this is sometimes called 'semi-staged'); this became tiresome in the end.

A visit to the lovely Goethe-Theater in Bad Lauchstädt is



always a must, especially when combined with a nice meal at one of the many eateries in the village. The opera was *Alessandro*, well staged and sung (by a fine cast led by Max Emmanuel Cecic in the title-role), and accompanied by the excellent Armonia Atenea, led by George Petrou, who conducted with a fine sense of style. The staging created some comedy with the bitchiness between Rossane and Lisaura, following what we suppose to have been the rivalry between Faustina and Cuzzoni; but as so often these days, there was too much fussy movement that had nothing to do with the drama. You will know what I mean, dear reader, as we see so much of it these days.

Two other events I attended were the 1742 Dublin version of *Imeneo*, given in the Händel-Halle in a concert version conducted by Fabio Biondi, and a performance by the gorgeous Italian soprano Roberta Invernizzi, accompanied by a fine chamber group called I Turchi. She sang arias composed for Faustina Bordoni by Italian composers, including Bononcini, Sarro and Mancini: not in the same league as Handel, of course, but all beautifully written and full of charm.

The musicological conference, entitled 'Handel and his Interpreters', focused on the ways in which his music has been given in the last two centuries. (The forthcoming conference in London has a similar title but is devoted to those who performed for Handel.) Of the Anglo-American group John Roberts examined the London pasticcios of 1730-37; Suzanne Aspden elaborated on Burney's complaint that excessive emphasis on Handel's music had hindered the modernisation of English taste in the second half of the eighteenth century, and Matthew Gardner talked about Handel's use of Conti, who succeeded Carestini as his leading castrato in 1736. Quite novel, and fascinating, was Graydon Beeks's account of Nellie Melba's 1907 recording of 'Sweet bird' from *L'Allegro*, which we heard in full, and Donald Burrows was in great form, as usual, as he discussed Malcom Sargent's 1956 performance of *Messiah*, using a recording of a televised talk by Sargent on the question of Handel's scoring: only half a century ago, but how far we have come since then! David Vickers gave a thoughtful account of the alterations that Handel made for the revivals of *Partenope* and *Arianna*, and of their artistic and dramatic significance.

So an enjoyable festival, as always, and the friendship and hospitality of our colleagues in Halle remains as delightful as ever.

Terence Best

HANDEL INSTITUTE AWARDS

RESEARCH AWARDS

Handel Institute Research Awards are intended to support 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.

Closing date for applications: **31 December 2015**

Details at gfhandel.org/research/grants_research.html

CONFERENCE AWARDS

Handel Institute Conference Awards are intended to help individuals who wish to attend an overseas conference to read a paper on Handel (or on a Handel-related subject) that has already been accepted by the conference organisers. They are open to UK residents who wish to attend a conference elsewhere and to overseas residents who wish to attend one in the UK. Awards will relate to the cost of travel and/or accommodation. There is no deadline, but applications must be submitted before expenditure is incurred. Preference will be given to postgraduate students and early-career academics.

Details at gfhandel.org/research/grants_conferences.html

HANDEL OPERA PRODUCTION GRANTS

The Handel Institute offers up to £5,000 for a production of any opera by Handel, to be staged by the end of 2018.

Closing date for applications: **30 November 2015**

Details at tinyurl.com/otk5yp9

CONFERENCE on MUSIC IN EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY BRITAIN

The Thirty-First Annual Conference on Music in Eighteenth-Century Britain will take place on Friday 27 November 2015 at the Foundling Museum, London, from 10.00 am to 5.30 pm. Tickets: £16 in advance; £21 on the day.

The closing date for submitting a proposal for a paper is Friday 25 September. Presentations will focus on all aspects of music in eighteenth-century Britain. A programme for the day will be available on the Foundling Museum's website from October (www.foundlingmuseum.org.uk). Last year's programme is currently at <https://sites.google.com/site/mecbconf/>.

Please contact handel@foundlingmuseum.org.uk to submit a proposal, buy tickets or request further information.