



THE HANDEL INSTITUTE
NEWSLETTER

In this issue we present an account of the Institute's activities from its inception to the present time, written by our Honorary Secretary, Colin Timms, whose tireless efforts and superb efficiency over these five years have been one of our most valuable assets; we are also immensely privileged to be able to publish for the first time an article by one of the country's most respected senior musicians, Sir Thomas Armstrong (now

in his 94th year), about T. W. Bourne, an important but now largely unknown figure in the movement for the performance of Handel's oratorios with the original orchestration; and a Winton Dean review always makes good reading, particularly when he is on the warpath, as he was when he saw the TV production of Peter Sellars' *Giulio Cesare*.

Terence Best (editor)

THE HANDEL INSTITUTE – THE FIRST FIVE YEARS

It was on 11 April 1987, during the Royal Musical Association conference at Westfield College, London, that the intention to form a Handel Institute was announced. As five years have elapsed since that date, now is a good time to look back at past achievements and forward to future tasks.

The impetus for the foundation of the Institute stemmed from a desire to improve the availability of good scholarly editions of Handel's music, particularly of his large-scale vocal works. A small group of scholars had for some time been exploring the possibility of establishing a new collected edition, but after thorough consultation with colleagues in Germany and America, where a similar desire was felt, the decision was taken to form a collaborative arrangement with the Hallische Händel-Ausgabe and to strive in that edition for the highest possible standards of scholarship and rate of publication. The Handel Institute is the body that emerged as a means of channelling British effort into the HHA.

Much has been achieved on that front. The organisational structure and working methods of the edition have been overhauled. The Editorial Board now includes the nominees of the Handel Institute and of the American Handel Society. The Board meets twice a year, once in Halle and once elsewhere, to review the progress of the edition, and two of these meetings (in November

1987 and November 1990) have been held in England under the auspices of the Handel Institute. The Institute has assisted in the revision and translation of the Editorial Guidelines and is responsible for the introduction of monitoring, by which each new edition is inspected by an independent scholar before being approved for printing. The revisions to the Guidelines ensure proper treatment of the verbal as well as the musical texts of Handel's works; opera volumes now include a libretto and translation, and prefatory material appears in English as well as German. Individual members of the Council of the Institute have been actively involved as editors, monitors, translators and consultants to the HHA. Much of this work remains hidden from view, but it is nevertheless a substantial contribution to Handel scholarship – and one of direct benefit to all lovers of Handel's music.

Although the collapse of the Communist *bloc* and the unification of Germany have inevitably had a profound effect on the HHA, the future of the edition now looks secure. With the generous financial support of the Akademie der Wissenschaften und der Literatur (Mainz) the edition will continue to be administered and prepared for publication in the editorial office at Halle, while publication and distribution will be handled by Bärenreiter at Kassel. This happy state of affairs is due very largely to the efforts of Bernd Baselt and his colleagues, with whom



the Handel Institute looks forward to further fruitful collaboration. A Handel edition was our *raison d'être*; it remains a top priority.

The Institute's contribution to the HHA is one sign of its commitment, as an educational charity, to promoting the study and appreciation of Handel's life and works. Another is the provision of awards for research. Handel Institute Awards are financed by funds made over to the Institute after the winding-up of European Music Year. Two awards have been given so far – one in 1989 to Pavel Polka (Prague) for the purchase of photographs for a book on Handel, the other to Richard G. King (Stanford, California) to enable him to study the collection of the nineteenth-century Handel biographer Victor Schoelcher in the Département de la Musique of the Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris.

No award was made in 1990 because the funds were put toward the cost of mounting a major international conference. Financial support for this was provided also by the British Academy and the Cicely Boyce Trust. The conference, which was held at King's College London on 24-26 November 1990, was the first public event promoted by the Institute. It was attended by over seventy people who, in little more than a day and a half, heard a professional concert of music specially selected for the occasion and fourteen papers by speakers from Britain and America, East and West Germany, Ireland, Italy and Japan.

The theme of the conference, Handel's Collections and their History, was carefully chosen so as to yield a coherent group of papers that could be published as a book. Most of the papers have now been prepared for publication by the Oxford University Press, and we hope that the book will be available by the end of 1993.

Agreement has recently been

reached also on the publication of a *Handel Iconography*, a project close to the heart of the Institute's late patron, Gerald Coke. A starting-point is provided by W. C. Smith's typescript on the subject, which some readers will know, but the new study, by Anne French, will be based on a thorough re-examination and re-evaluation of all the sources. The preparatory work is now under way and should be finished by the end of 1993: we look forward to publication in about 1995. Other publishing projects are planned or in progress and are being actively pursued.

Another important function of the Handel Institute is the publication of the twice-yearly Newsletter in which this round-up appears. The main purpose of the Newsletter, which is now in its third year, is to inform readers of Handelian developments that might otherwise be known by only a small group of people. Regular items include news of publications, conferences and recordings, information about the American Handel Society and the Maryland Handel Festival, and accounts of the festivals at Halle and elsewhere. The developments concerning Handel's house in Brook Street, reported in the last issue, are a good example of a more topical story – and of the kind of thing that can arise and consume the time and energy of Council members.

In the immediate future Council intends to pursue the projects in hand and promote more of the same. Much effort will continue to be put into the HHA and into the promotion of other publications. Plans are already being made for a second conference at King's College around 27-29 November 1993 – of which more will be said in future Newsletters. In the longer term Council hopes that the Institute will be able to acquire its own premises or office, build up a library of

Handelian research materials and promote other kinds of educational event.

Council is very keen to establish and foster relations with all lovers of Handel's music. The Institute has always depended on the good will and financial support of interested parties, and Council hopes that the recent creation of the 'Friends of the Handel Institute' will help generate a sense of identity and purpose among its supporters. If you have any views or suggestions concerning the Handel Institute or its work, we should be interested to hear from you: please write to the undersigned at the Department of Music, The University of Birmingham, Edgbaston, Birmingham, B15 2TT.

Colin Timms

T. W. Bourne (1862-1948) – a forgotten pioneer

Although it is only recently that Handel's own orchestration of *Messiah* has been brought back into fairly general use, attempts to restore the original accompaniments were made many years ago, much earlier than is generally realised. Even when Mozart's version was first published in England in 1803 there were already murmurs of disapproval, and F. G. Edwards called attention to some of these when he discovered an article published in *The Sun* in March 1805, which is worth quoting: "The Messiah", the writer states, 'was last night performed at Covent Garden Theatre with new accompaniments composed by Mozart. We entertain a very high respect for the genius of Mozart, but we also hold the unrivalled powers of Handel in due reverence, and therefore must enter our protest against any such alterations in works which have obtained the sanction of time and of the best

musical judges. There is an *integrity* in the productions of this great Master, the result of the most powerful talents in his art. His harmonies have a firm and united character. The accompaniments of last night, though manifesting taste and feeling, did not assimilate with the grandeur and energy of the original subject. We trust, therefore, that when "The Messiah", or any other work of Handel, is performed, it will appear without change or interpolation.'

In spite of these doubts the Mozart edition seems to have been generally used during the nineteenth century, perhaps mainly for practical reasons. Skilled continuo players were not easy to find, although they existed in cathedrals where figured-bass scores like those of Boyce were still in daily use; and many organs in places where the oratorio was performed were tuned to a pitch that made co-operation with an orchestra difficult. Even so, reservations were felt about some of Mozart's additions, and the more fanciful counterpoints were sometimes, perhaps often, modified, because they were felt to be stylistically unsuitable. I remember my father making adjustments in the orchestral parts for this reason in the years just before 1914.

Already towards the end of the nineteenth century discussion of the matter had become widespread among Handelians, and interest was further stimulated by the discovery of the Foundling Hospital parts in 1894 by H. Davan Wetton: among those who were specially involved were Ebenezer Prout, J. E. Borland, Otto Goldschmidt, H. Barratt Lennard, J. F. Bridge, R. A. Streatfeild and T. W. Bourne. I believe Bernard Shaw and Samuel Butler were also concerned. But it was Bourne who proved to be the most active, and he undertook to prepare a version for Frederick

Bridge's performance with the Royal Choral Society in the Albert Hall on January 2nd 1899. The bulk of the work involved, with detailed research, was done by Bourne himself, and all Handelians are greatly indebted to him. It is indeed regrettable that since his death in 1948 the man and his achievement have been almost entirely forgotten. Others have completed, with resources not available to him, the task that he carried to near-fulfilment, and his work has been absorbed into that of subsequent editions: but he himself never received the credit that was due. As I was fortunate enough to enjoy his friendship during the latter years of his life I wish to put on record some facts about the man and what he did.

Bourne's family must have been a fairly well-to-do one, with some social pretensions. They owned a comfortable property, in those days almost a country property, in North Finchley, and carried a coat-of-arms, which appeared on silver and china and survived to be used by Bourne himself as a book-plate. They were able to send their son to Shrewsbury and New College, Oxford, and it was at school that his love of music was first fully stimulated. He went into the chapel one morning and the organ was being played: the music was unknown to him, but he soon realised that he was being carried away by it, that what he was hearing was everything that music should be; only later did he discover that it was a concerto of Handel. From that moment Bourne set himself to the study of the art, its theory and practice, at the keyboard and with more than one stringed instrument, especially the double-bass, on which he became a first-rate performer. As an undergraduate he was active in music-making, and a programme of 1886 shows him as President directing a concert of 18th-century music at the University Musical Club. A later one,

in 1905, includes a group of three pieces by him, played by C. E. Winn. Some of these were published, but they are not highly individual, and I suspect that, like Samuel Butler, he felt inclined to destroy what he wrote if it didn't closely enough resemble the music of Handel.

By that time Bourne had begun to think of himself and to be accepted by others as a specialist in 18th-century music. In 1889, in that capacity, he was given a post in the Library of the British Museum, where he could have done valuable work at a time when it was much needed. But trouble arose, and in the following year he resigned, in circumstances of controversy. Among his papers, carefully preserved in a vellum envelope, is a document signed by some of his colleagues, including some famous names, expressing confidence in Bourne. "Nothing that has recently happened," they say, "has in any way diminished either our good-will towards you or our esteem . . . we feel that in a very difficult position you have acted with dignity and self-respect."

The experience left its mark, and Bourne from that moment decided to work as an independent, amateur, but highly fastidious musical scholar, which his personal circumstances enabled him to do. He composed, made many excellent editions, arranged music for his own orchestra, directed many concerts among semi-amateur groups, and prepared music examples for Sir Frederick Bridge's Gresham Lectures. From what one knows of Bridge's methods of work it would not be surprising to find that Bourne also wrote the lectures. His reputation as a scholar reached a point where he was approached by Chrysander with a view to possible collaboration – a proposal which, I believe, came to nothing.

Bridge's Albert Hall performance



of *Messiah*, for which Bourne had prepared the material, was received, by all accounts, with interest and approval, but no widespread enthusiasm. Bourne did, however, consider with Novello's the possibility of a printed edition, and went some way with the writing of a keyboard continuo part, which was never completed (see *End-Note*). With the abandonment of this project Bourne turned to the editing of other less well-known Handel works, and to his own compositions. His *Messiah* material was left in Novello's library, where it remained undisturbed until the early twenties, when I published an article on the subject in *Music and Letters*. As a result of this article my attention was called to the material by Harold Brooke, and I used it for performances in St Alban's Abbey in about 1926, in Exeter about 1930, and in Oxford in 1935. For the first two of these performances I prepared a pianoforte continuo part, now lost; for the Oxford performance the continuo was played on a harpsichord by John Ticehurst. The movement towards acceptance of the original accompaniment was now gaining impetus, but was set back by a brilliant if controversial performance of the work by Sir Thomas Beecham, using his own version of Mozart.

Bourne's later years were spent in The Red House, Blakeney, Norfolk, where he lived the life of a leisured and fastidious scholar with many interests as well as music. He was a keen sailor, and at one time well-known as a wild-fowler on the sea-marshes. He was an expert clock-maker, and owned a collection of fine clocks which he kept in mint condition. It was almost an obsession with him that they should all strike exactly together: if one clock fell out of unanimity Bourne would be restless until it was brought back into line.

But music, and especially Handel,

was his real life. He played and composed; he established and directed a small chamber orchestra for which he wrote and arranged a lot of music; he played his 18th-century bass-viol for other conductors; it is hardly too much to say that he created a Baroque revival in that Norfolk community long before the movement became generally fashionable.

Although Bourne cared most for music composed before Mozart, his tastes were not narrow. He was knowledgeable about a great deal of early music, and played as much as he could find of Frescobaldi, Pachelbel, Muffat, Kuhnau and others. About Bach his feelings were cool and reserved. He respected and admired Bach's genius, but he didn't love his music, which seemed to him often intellectual and calculated; he disliked what he regarded as a morbid element in Bach's personality, which he felt to be encouraged by some of the pietistic Lutheran texts that the composer chose or was required to set. Bourne gave my son his vocal score of the St Matthew Passion, and over that agonised recitative which tells of Peter weeping bitterly Bourne had written the one word "bestial!" He also thought that Bach and Scarlatti had opened the way to chaos in music by exploiting the *appoggiatura*, a view possibly shared by Haydn (e.g., the last few bars of the "Representation of Chaos").

Bourne was a man of strong principles and some prejudices, freed by financial independence from any need to compromise; he chose to live in obscurity, seeking no publicity, and no reward other than that of satisfaction in doing the work that he enjoyed. After his wife died he left the Blakeney house and moved to a smaller place and a very private life. Before his death he gave his most treasured MSS to the Bodleian

Library, together with a portrait of Handel as a young man. He gave me the beautiful 18th-century chamber organ on which he had played almost every day; the instrument is now in the Lady Chapel of Christ Church Cathedral in Oxford. Some of his published music is in the hands of friends, and his editions of some Handel works were obtainable until recently.

Bourne would not have cared much that his work received little recognition in his lifetime, but he would have been pleased, I believe, to know that it contributed in no small way to the enjoyment and understanding of Handel's music, which had been the great good thing of his own life.

Thomas Armstrong

End-Note

Sir Thomas says that the *Messiah* edition which Bourne had proposed to Novello's never materialised; but some time after the turn of the century Novello's published a set of orchestral parts carrying the legend "Original Edition, edited by T. W. Bourne". The plates of these were corrected and used for Watkins Shaw's edition of 1958; Dr Shaw has kindly communicated to me that as he worked on his edition he became convinced that Bourne's orchestral parts were based on those in the Foundling Hospital, since they contained many of the textual errors of that source.

Terence Best

Giulio Cesare Televised

Television is hardly the place where one expects to encounter a Handel opera. That was not the only peculiarity about the film of *Giulio Cesare* shown on BBC 2 on 5 January. For one thing it was given complete – indeed a little more than complete – in



Italian (with English subtitles); and it is a long opera, with nearly four hours of music. For another the action was transferred to a bomb-damaged hotel in modern-day Egypt, with the hero metamorphosed into the President of the United States and the other characters adjusted accordingly. The basis was the stage production by Peter Sellars, first performed at Purchase, New York, in 1985 and subsequently in Brussels, which I have not seen; my remarks are a response only to the televised version, though some may be relevant to the original conception. Both raise major issues.

First, what was the point of shifting the action? Anachronism is not automatically to be condemned (after all, in Handel's time the costumes were not those of the first century B.C.), but some reason is required for such a violent wrench, apart from a crude urge to shock pedants and attract philistines. The climate of the London theatre in 1724 has singularly little in common with today's world of bombs, terrorists and hostages. Was a political message intended? If so, the opera does not support it. The claim has been made that the shift clarifies the plot and the motives of the characters. Apart from the arrogant implication that the opera is otherwise beyond the comprehension of a modern audience, this is simply not true. By constantly introducing characters charging about in scenes where they are not supposed to be present at all, and much other extraneous activity, the production served only to muddle the issues. Sometimes it made no sense on the most elementary level. When Caesar first sets eyes on Cleopatra he declares (in the aria "Non è si vago e bello") that her face is more beautiful than any flower in the meadow; yet her face was completely concealed by a thick black veil.

More seriously the production

debased the characterisation, especially of the two central figures. Caesar emerged as a silly-ass President completely devoid of dignity, rushing around giving orders to very little effect (is that how Americans think of Kennedy or Nixon?). Cleopatra is indeed a schemer and a flirt, but she is more than a money-grubbing tart. For the final aria "Da tempeste", which expresses her release from personal and vicarious anguish in terms of a ship reaching harbour after storms, she stripped to a bikini, posed between an American warship and a Shell tanker, waggled her hips and tossed dollar bills into the air. Such an approach destroys the universal quality of the opera, on which of course its greatness depends, by tying it to a trivial interpretation that constantly contradicts the text.

The extreme fidgetiness of the action may have been partly due to the medium, the camera darting to and fro concentrating attention on anything but the singer. Nearly every aria was subjected to frantic irrelevances of one kind or another, which almost always distracted the eye and sometimes the ear as well. The da capo of "Va tacito e nascosto", an aria whose whole theme is stealth, was half-drowned by noise as Caesar hurled showers of missiles, including a carafe of water, at Ptolemy. There was a sado-masochistic element in the form of copious blood-letting, chiefly from Sesto, who enlivened one aria by elaborately slicing his own arm and later plastering his face with Ptolemy's blood. Cleopatra also indulged in self-laceration and extracted venom from snakes, which she subsequently drank. The blood for the deaths of Achilla and Ptolemy was supplied by other persons pouring a jar of synthetic red liquid over the bodies. And so on. One could only conclude that Sellars considered it a silly opera.

The musical side, under Craig Smith, was another matter. Its foundation was the complete 1724 score, a welcome change from most modern productions, which almost invariably make heavy and damaging cuts. Nothing was cut, but two arias were replaced by discarded and unpublished pieces from the autograph, and one (for no obvious reason) by an insertion from *Lotario* not authorised by Handel. None of these was an improvement, but it was good to hear the unfamiliar music. In addition Nerina (the eunuch Nireno in 1724) sang one of the arias inserted for Sorosina in February 1725. It was typical of the lack of meaningful contact between production and score that Nerina, though unmistakably female, was constantly spoken of (and billed) as a male, just as, when the text specified swords and daggers, we were confronted by pistols and sub-machine guns – and far too many of them. Most of the singing was of high quality, especially that of James Maddalena (Achilla, dressed like Fidel Castro), Lorraine Hunt (Sesto) and the two countertenors Jeffery Gall and Drew Minter (Caesar and Ptolemy). Susan Larson, occasionally uncertain of pitch, sang Cleopatra's music adequately but lacked the overwhelming allure, vocal and physical, that the part demands. A major defect of the whole performance was an excess of unstylish ornament in da capos and even cavatinas, and some interminable slow cadenzas. Some of the tempos too were on the slow side, and the pace of the action was sapped by unnecessary pauses. The Dresden State Orchestra provided excellent support. But, though there was much to enjoy in the marvellous score, nothing could compensate for the desolating vulgarity of the producer's approach.

Winton Dean



Messiah Exhibition at Pallant House

To commemorate the 250th anniversary of the first performance of *Messiah*, there will be an exhibition from 30th June until 19th September 1992 at Pallant House in Chichester. The Curator is Mr David Coke, son of the late Gerald Coke, our first Patron. He writes:

The exhibition will provide a unique chance to see a substantial group of paintings, prints, manuscripts, music and ephemera associated with the best-loved piece of English choral music. The star of the show will be the

autograph manuscript from the British Library; I don't know for sure, but I think that this could well be the first time it has ever left London. Other loans will be coming from the National Portrait Gallery, the Thomas Coram Foundation, the Bodleian Library, and various private collections.

There will also be a performance of the oratorio in Chichester Cathedral on 19th July. Further details may be had from Mr Coke at the Pallant House Gallery Trust, 9 North Pallant, Chichester, West Sussex, PO19 1TJ.

The Autumn issue of the Newsletter will include reports on the European Handel festivals of 1992 and news of forthcoming volumes of the HHA.

If you wish to become a Friend of the Handel Institute, the minimum contribution is £10 per annum (students £5). In return you will receive two issues of the Newsletter and have the satisfaction of knowing that you are supporting the work of a registered educational charity. We also welcome larger donations and gifts made by deed of covenant. Please address all contributions and related enquiries to the Hon. Treasurer, Handel Institute, Shelley House, 3 Noble Street, London, EC2V 7DQ.

ISSN 0962 - 7960

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