



THE HANDEL INSTITUTE

NEWSLETTER

In this issue we record the tragic loss of yet another senior figure of the Handel fraternity, Bernd Baselt. There is an opera review by Anthony Hicks, and an important update by Julie Anne Sadie on the Handel House

Project, as well as news of the Hallische Händel-Ausgabe, of the 1993 Triennial Conference and of awards administered by the Handel Institute.

Terence Best (editor)

PROFESSOR DR. BERND BASELT, 1934-93

Our very dear friend and colleague Professor Bernd Baselt died of cancer on 18th October 1993. He had just passed his 59th birthday. The shock was the greater in that when we had last seen him in Halle and Göttingen in June he had seemed fit and well, enjoying his position as President of the Georg-Friedrich-Händel Gesellschaft and talking enthusiastically of future plans for the society, the Hallische Händel-Ausgabe (HHA) and Handel research in general. With the loss earlier in the year of Merrill Knapp and Walther Siegmund-Schultze, 1993 will be remembered by all of us as a most tragic year.

Bernd was born in Halle and lived there all his life. He studied with Max Schneider and Walther Siegmund-Schultze at the Martin Luther University in his native city, and took a doctorate with a dissertation on Philip Heinrich Erlebach. The music of the baroque period in central Germany remained his main interest: he was an authority on Zachow and Telemann, and edited a number of the latter's works; it was therefore a natural progression for him to become Germany's leading Handel scholar.

Bernd lived almost all his adult life in the German Democratic Republic. It is a tribute to his courage, hard work and unrivalled scholarship that he reached high academic office in spite of not being involved with the régime. When Walther Siegmund-Schultze retired, Bernd was the natural choice to succeed him as professor at the University.

Bernd's contribution to modern Handel scholarship

was of enormous importance. His most enduring monument must be the massive three-volume *Händel-Handbuch*, the catalogue of Handel's works (HWV) that he compiled while working full-time in his University post. It is a prodigious achievement, all the more remarkable because he had to overcome the formidable difficulties caused by restrictions on travel to the West which denied him regular and easy access to the Handel sources. A lesser man would have found the task impossible, but to Bernd it was a challenge – and indeed an example to the rest of us, for whom life was so much easier.

As Vice-President of the Georg-Friedrich-Händel Gesellschaft from 1987 to 1991, Academic Secretary 1990-1991 and finally President in 1991, Bernd guided the Society energetically. He was intolerant of incompetence and played a major part in ensuring that the organisation attained a truly international status. As a member of the Editorial Board of the HHA, and in his last years General Editor, he was influential in restructuring the working methods of the Edition, so that a proper system was established of monitoring the work of individual volume editors and having it checked both by Board members and by the staff of the Editorial Office. In carrying out all these tasks Bernd was indefatigable, and it was largely due to his efforts in pleading Handel's cause that after the reunification of Germany the future of the HHA was assured by the support of the Akademie der Wissenschaften und der Literatur in Mainz. His

edition of the pasticcio opera *Oreste* in the HHA is published; at the time of his death he was working on *La Resurrezione*.

Those of us who were privileged to be his close friends will long cherish the memory of the visits he so enjoyed to Great Britain and the USA, of his kindness and sense of humour, and of the hospitality we received from him and Elfriede in Halle. For us the loss is personal and deeply felt; but the greater, irreparable loss is for the world of Handel scholarship, especially for those of its activities which are centred in Halle. One thing is certain: the memorial he would most wish for is that the cause to which he devoted so much of his life - research into Handel's music, and the publication of the edition - should be carried on; but it will be a vastly harder task without him.

Terence Best

A PROSPECT OF BROOK STREET

Handel's London town-house at 25 Brook Street, Mayfair, remains much as Curtis Price described it in the autumn 1991 issue of *The Handel Institute Newsletter*. In March 1993 the Bond Street Arcade development in which it figured was finally abandoned. Neale House Investments, who were acting for the Co-operative Insurance Society (CIS), had not anticipated the effects of the economic recession and appear to have been without a coherent alternative plan for the site, which consists of the zone of properties

bounded by Brook Street, New Bond Street, Lancashire Court and Avery Row, of which Handel's house is the only Grade 1 listed building. A year passed before the CIS severed its connections with the development company and opened formal negotiations with the Handel House Association Limited (HHAL). Important progress is expected in May 1994.

In the interim, the Handel House Association's commitment to acquiring and restoring 25 Brook Street as a fitting memorial to Britain's greatest composer has gained momentum. The HHAL board now includes Gerry Byrne, Denys Darlow, Christopher Hogwood, Curtis Price, Julie Anne Sadie and Stanley Sadie. A committee of honour reflecting wide support at the highest levels has also been established, on which the Rt Hon The Earl of Harewood, The Earl of Stockton, Lord Armstrong of Ilminster, Lord Menuhin, Lord Weinstock, Dame Joan Sutherland, Sir George Christie, Sir Colin Davis, the Rt Hon Sir Edward Heath, Sir Denis Forman, Sir Charles Mackerras, Sir Claus Moser, Sir Michael Tippett and Professor John Last take their places. Professor Last (chairman of Northern-West Water, a commissioner of the Museums and Galleries Commission, a professor at City University and former chairman of the board of the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic) is head of an HHAL consultative committee currently made up of museum, heritage, architectural and financial advisers and is leading the negotiations with the CIS. In addition, members of the HHAL have met informally with a wide

range of influential Handelphiles, all of them interested in committing expertise and resources to the project.

To maximise the potential of a Handel House Museum, members of the HHAL have been undertaking a survey of European composer house museums, of which there are close on eighty. Among the many lessons already learnt is the importance of preserving the house as a valid artefact - our largest Handelian treasure outstanding - and of 'raising the ghost'. With few exceptions (Wagner notable among them) composers have lived modestly in flats and smallish houses. Such dwellings do not easily lend themselves to great numbers of visitors and the provision of incumbent amenities. Even when adjacent land is available, as with the Elgar birthplace outside Worcester, strong opposition to building visitor facilities is often raised - this despite the tasteful integration of amenities at such well-known historical sites as Wordsworth's Dove Cottage at Grasmere, in the Lake District. In urban contexts, adjacent buildings are whenever possible colonised in order to service and protect the integrity of the 'artefact'. This is the case at the Händel-Haus in Halle as well as the Beethoven-Haus in Bonn, the Mozart Geburtshaus in Salzburg and Wagner's Wahnfried in Bayreuth.

Adjacent buildings generally house essential services and storage, research and educational facilities, the offices of closely related societies, commercial enterprises (concert halls, shops and cafés), additional displays and



the museum administration. The rigorous restrictions pertaining to Grade 1 listed properties make it difficult to alter them substantially, even for seemingly defensible reasons. The acquisition of adjacent buildings, possibly of lesser historic significance, enables museums such as the Fan Museum in Greenwich to provide a greater variety of services (including a lift affording access to all floors) and to accommodate a greater number of people than a building originally designed as a private house would normally receive – thereby enhancing the interest and earning capacity of the museum, so essential to its long-term future.

Handel is believed to have lived alone on the three main floors of 25 Brook Street, with his servants lodged in the basement and garret. Although he rehearsed groups of musicians, supervised the copying of his scores and sold subscriptions to his performances there, his house was essentially a bachelor's home and, like other period town-houses, lacks services and safety provisions now considered essential in buildings open to the public.

Today, in addition to No. 25, the CIS owns the lease on No. 23, while the freeholder, the Corporation of the City of London, retains control of the double house 27-29 Brook Street; both Nos. 23 and 27-29 are classed as Grade 2. All three houses were built at the beginning of the 1720s by one George Barnes, and would in theory have been finished to a similar standard. No. 23 in particular retains important original features which are scheduled to be recorded jointly by the Survey of London and English Heritage in

order to assist in the eventual restoration of No. 25. The additional acquisition of No. 23 would make possible many of the services mentioned above, not least improved access via a second stairwell, access for school parties and deliveries from the rear of the building, and the installation of a lift. The largest of the houses is No. 27-29, of which only the ground and lower-ground floors are at present vacant; even so, it could house a 'Handel Hall' seating well over a hundred for chamber music concerts and conference events, with catering and other amenities below (and access to the museum).

As *Newsletter* readers will recall, the Bond Street Arcade development allowed only for a museum above an independent shop. Aside from the difficulties posed by the limit on the number of visitors who could be accommodated in an upstairs museum, research has shown that the public funds normally available for the restoration of a Grade 1 property would not be forthcoming unless the museum project encompassed the entire premises. The need for a grander scheme was confirmed by a preliminary marketing study, and the concept of a Handel House Museum evolved from a three-floor museum into one occupying the entire house and then to one involving the acquisition, possibly staged, of adjacent properties. The fact that No. 23 (like No. 25) is unoccupied and No. 27-29 partly available means that a unique opportunity exists to develop a state-of-the-art museum complex. To defer acquisition of the adjacent properties (or at least taking options on leases pending fund-

raising efforts) might be to sacrifice them altogether, given the improving state of the British economy and the inevitable attraction of locating a business in the vicinity of a new museum.

The challenge of 'raising the ghost' of Handel should stir the imagination of every true Handelian. Because of the fame Handel enjoyed during his lifetime, his music, portraits and busts have always been prized and are remarkably well preserved; many are already reasonably accessible in libraries, museums and galleries. Handel's documentable possessions are represented by his pocket watch in the British Museum, but many items associated with performances of his music, including subscription tokens and engraved portraits of his singers, survive. The portraits, the objects listed in his will and codicils, the inventory of his house and the sale catalogue of his art collection provide important evidence of possessions that at best can only be reproduced or approximated at this remove.

The fate of his three domestic instruments - two harpsichords and a chamber organ - is the subject of continuing debate. However, instruments by the same makers or of close provenance, corresponding to those depicted in the portraits by Mercier, Wolfgang the Younger and Goupy, exist and could in some cases be borrowed or copied. The art collection is a subject for future research, if not to locate the actual works of art, then to identify similar works by the same artists on similar subjects which the Handel House Museum might seek to borrow or reproduce. The uniqueness of Handel's passion for



art should be reflected in any re-creation of his home, and the liberal inclusion of appropriate pictures would contribute greatly to the authenticity of its ambience.

In addition to the lively interest in Georgian furnishings, there are today a number of interconnecting circles of specialists associated with national museums, English Heritage, the National Trust and the Georgian Group, whom the HHAL might consult, and ample collections from which they might ultimately be allowed to borrow. With particular regard to the house, there are compelling reasons for attempting to re-create several rooms in some detail, notably the parlours and Handel's bedroom, and possibly also, in view of his well-known love of food, his kitchen. These, the rooms that visitors would most vividly remember, would draw them back to the house again and again. The goal of reinstating the spirit if not the exact substance of Handel's house is widely considered to be achievable, and the sound of music in the house would surely conjure up visions of the man himself.

What roles, then, might Friends of the Handel Institute play, individually and collectively? In the beginning, scholars will be invited to act as specialist advisers to a museum designer and the museum staff on aspects of Handel's life and works; others will want to help to found and take an active part in a friends' organisation. In the longer term, Handelians will surely be eager to collaborate with museum staff on exhibitions reflecting new thinking and research, as well as on conferences in the museum and publications on its behalf. Those

with sufficient time may like to consider working in the museum, either as volunteers or as part-time employees.

The museum will need a veritable army of part-time warders, as well as shop assistants with a keen knowledge of Handel and his music. There will be frequent call for tour guides who can conduct pre-booked parties in foreign languages and keyboard players who can give demonstrations on reproduction instruments. For the senior posts, specialist training and experience in museum management, collection care (curation), library science (and specifically museum documentation), public relations and marketing will be essential.

In view of the unrivalled collection of primary sources deposited in the British Library, it may be asked whether the museum should aspire to be a centre of research or should merely reflect the latest thinking in Handel scholarship. At the very least, the museum staff will require a working library and appropriate conditions to maintain and store the museum collection. The larger question, with its far-reaching implications for the museum's acquisition policy, can be fully addressed only when the project becomes viable. The directors of the HHAL will expect to take soundings from established Handelians, and their decisions on this and related issues will reflect the influence of those who choose to become actively involved in the project which, along with the critical edition and documentation of Handel's music, is surely the most important Handelian venture of our time.

Julie Anne Sadie

SIROE IN LONDON ARIODANTE IN WALES

In 1992 the London Handel Festival collaborated with the Opera Department of the London Royal College and Royal Academy of Music in a successful production of *Il pastor fido* (1712 version), the Festival's first presentation of a Handel opera. This useful combination of forces, using student singers with a professional period-instrument orchestra, came together again for the first British revival of *Siroe* in four uncut performances with alternating casts and conductors (Britten Theatre, Royal College of Music, 23-26 November 1993), the last on the Friday before the Handel Institute Conference.

Singers with a touch of distinction could be found in each cast, notably the counter-tenor Ricard Bordas (*Siroe*) and soprano Marie Vassilou (*Emira*), with the two sopranos for *Laodice* (Janet Fairlie and Fiona Vaughan) and Tomas Tomasson in the small bass role of *Arasse* also showing good promise. The extensive Metastasian recitatives were delivered in the original Italian with intelligence, and both Denys Darlow and Michael Rosewell conducted sympathetically; but a sense of drama emerged only fitfully from Richard Gregson's light-handed direction and Emma Thistlethwaite's Persian-inspired designs.

David Alden's determinedly interventionist direction of *Ariodante* in the new production by English National Opera was discussed by Winton Dean in the autumn 1993 *Newsletter*. In 1994 it



was taken over for a few performances by the Welsh National Opera, including two at the New Theatre, Cardiff (I saw that of 26 February 1994). A new cast sang in Italian. Ian MacNiel's sets, rebuilt to suit the smaller theatres of the WNO circuit, retained their effect of faded baroque grandeur. (What Mr Dean called the 'upturned boat' of Act 2 is supposedly the exterior of the hall in which Acts 1 and 3 are set, though it is not clear why the action takes place on the roof.)

No major rethinking of the production was apparent, but there were some changes for the better. Felicity Palmer's assumption of the role of Polinesso (a counter-tenor at the Coliseum) was a tremendous asset. Not only was this the right voice for the part (written by Handel for the mezzo-soprano Maria Negri) but the right person; even when silent, Miss Palmer conveyed a sense of brooding evil. The character's physical assault on Dalinda during 'Se l'inganno', one of the gratuitous excesses at the Coliseum, had happily been removed. Della Jones was an accomplished Ariodante, and in the smaller roles the WNO singers were more assured than their ENO counterparts. Marc Minkowski's conducting inclined to extremes of tempo, but he always allowed the emotional power of the music to emerge.

Anthony Hicks

HALLE HANDEL EDITION (HHA)

After the death of the General Editor, Bernd Baselt, the Vorstand of the Georg-Friedrich-Händel Gesellschaft met on 19 November 1993, with Dr. Hanna John, Vice-President, in the chair. Professor Klaus Hortschansky of Münster was appointed to be joint General Editor with Dr Siegfried Flesch of Halle, who has been hitherto in charge of the Editorial Office (the Redaktion) and has had many years' experience of working on the edition. This meeting was followed on 27 November by a gathering of the HHA Editorial Board in London, with Dr. Flesch in the chair. The meeting confirmed the determination of all members to proceed with the edition as planned.

Volumes which appeared in 1993 were Series II volume 4, *Rinaldo* (versions of 1711-1717), edited by David Kimbell; Series III volume 9, Anthems for the Chapel Royal, edited by Gerald Hendrie; and the revision of Series IV volume 1, Keyboard Works I (the Suites of 1720), edited by Terence Best (original 1955 editor Rudolf Steglich). These are now available from Bärenreiter. The 1994 issues will be Series V volume 3, Cantatas with Instruments I, edited by Hans Joachim Marx, and Series II volume 1, *Almira*, edited by Dorothea Schröder. In 1995 will appear Series I volume 8, *Esther* I (version of 1718), edited by Howard Serwer; Series V volume 4, Cantatas II, edited by Hans Joachim Marx; and Series I volume 29, *Theodora*, edited by the late Cecil Hill. 1996 will see the issue of Series II volume 4/2, *Rinaldo* II

(version of 1731), edited by David Kimbell; Series II volume 15, *Tamerlano*, edited by Terence Best; and Series I volume 21, *Belshazzar*, edited by Siegfried Flesch. The revision of the early instrumental volumes is to continue, with Series IV volume 5, Keyboard Works II (the Suites of 1733), in preparation, and Series IV volume 3, Flute and Recorder Sonatas, to come, both edited by Terence Best.

HANDEL INSTITUTE CONFERENCE

27-28 November 1993

The autumn 1993 issue of the *Newsletter* contained abstracts of the papers to be read at the Conference on 'Handel in the 1730s'. With the exception of Bernd Baselt's paper, which was not available, they were delivered as advertised; Professor Baselt's place was taken by Professor Howard Serwer on 'The Italians in *Esther*', an abstract of which is given below. It is not proposed to publish the papers in book form, as we did with the 1990 conference on 'Handel Collections', because a number of them were derived from material that their authors are planning to publish elsewhere. There was an average attendance of 60-70 people at each session of the conference, which must count as a considerable success; King's College made us very welcome, as always, and the catering was excellent. The scheme of holding regular Handel conferences is now well-launched and will continue.

Howard Serwer

The Italians in *Esther*

Handel first presented the public version of *Esther* on 2 May 1732 and revived it seven times up to 1742. After some nine years, he rethought it entirely for a 1751 revival, then modified the latter for 1757. One of the characteristics of the 1735, 1736, and 1737 versions is that they were bilingual. The conducting score includes Italian contrafacts of some numbers, while the copies in the Shaftesbury and Lennard collections contain, in their supplements, five further Italian arias not found in the conducting score or the autograph. Lacunae in

the conducting score and the absence of librettos make it hard to reconstruct the revivals from 1735 to 1740, but the apparent motivation for the bilingual productions was a yielding to the expectations of Handel's London audience. The contents of the 1732 and 1733 librettos, our knowledge of the casts of *Esther*, and his other English language theatrical entertainments of the 1730s point to a growing command of the genre that he himself invented, and a reluctance to abandon the work that had started it all. Only in 1752 did he finally remove the Italians from *Esther* and turn it into an English oratorio.

HANDEL INSTITUTE AWARDS 1994

Applications are invited for awards of up to £1,000 to assist in the furtherance of research projects involving Handel's music or life. Deadline 1 September 1994.

Applications are invited also for THE BYRNE AWARD (up to £1,000), which is intended to support performance of Handel's music and assist performers at the start of their careers. Further particulars on both kinds of award from Professor Colin Timms, Department of Music, The University of Birmingham, Edgbaston, Birmingham, B15 2TT.

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