



THE HANDEL INSTITUTE
NEWSLETTER

As well as an account of this year's Halle Festival, this issue contains the first of what we hope will be a series of abstracts of forthcoming dissertations on

Handelian topics, some thoughts by Donald Burrows on *Il Trionfo del Tempo*, and information on the Handel Institute and Byrne awards.

HÄNDELFESTSPIELE IN HALLE 1994

This year's Händelfestspiele were naturally overshadowed by the death of Bernd Baselt in October 1993; it seemed inconceivable that things could ever be the same without his skilful and experienced guidance. The Festival did take place, however, with Dr Hanna John as acting vice-president of the Georg-Friedrich-Händel-Gesellschaft, and a willing team of organisers, backed powerfully by the Oberbürgermeister of Halle, Dr Klaus Rauen, and by the authorities of the Land Sachsen-Anhalt. Many tributes were paid to Bernd at official functions, especially at the members' meeting of the Gesellschaft and the formal session of its managing committee (the Vorstand).

Most of us attended a performance which preceded the festival proper, a staged production of *I fidi amanti* (Venice, 1600), a madrigal comedy by Gasparo Torelli. This was delightfully presented by a gifted quartet of solo singers, with period instruments played by the Hallesches Consort, consisting of strings, recorders, lutes and trombones. The audience sat on tiered benches on the stage of the Opera House (with their backs to the auditorium); the rest of the stage was used by the singers, with the instruments in the wings.

The music was of high quality and historically fascinating: it was the moment of the birth of true opera, and here we saw one of the many alternatives being experimented with at the time. Some of the pieces were in the established polyphonic madrigal style, while others had sections with solos or duets accompanied by continuo. A narrative was delivered in German by two actors, who spoilt things by jokiness and comic business which were often tiresomely overplayed; but it was an enjoyable experience nevertheless.

An important element in the Festival's opening was, as usual, the presentation of the Handel prizes. This was

indeed a historic moment, since one prize went to the countertenor Axel Köhler (about to sing Guido in *Flavio*), the other to the organiser of Halle's period instrument orchestra. Not many years since, such things would have been unthinkable in Handel's birthplace.

Flavio, sung in Italian, was conducted by the Innsbruck-based Englishman Howard Arman and played by the Händelfestspielorchester on period instruments. Their contribution was excellent, with stylish, energetic playing and a near-perfect choice of tempi. The singing was first-rate, especially by the admirable Axel Köhler as Guido: his voice is powerful, he looks good and acts well. David Cordier made a splendid foil to him with a well-sung and delightfully decadent portrayal of Flavio which had just the right touch of humour; Hendrikje Wangemann was dramatic and moving as Emilia, Mária Petrašovská and Ulrike Helzel excellent as Teodata and Vitige; Nils Giesecke (Ugone) and Harry van der Kamp (Lotario) completed a fine cast.

The production was by Kate Brown, so the English contribution to this show was considerable. It is sad to report, however, that even after the savage criticism in recent years of the type of 'producer's opera' which has irritated so many people so much of the time, both in Handel and in other composers, it still soldiers on. Much of the production was unobjectionable, with naturalistic action and sets, and there were sensible period costumes; but Kate Brown could not resist having people on stage when they had no business to be, eavesdropping on the activities of those who were legitimately there, and often engaging in distracting business when the audience's attention should have been directed to the character who was singing.

In this respect much was made of the developing hostility between Lotario and Ugone. This was a clever

idea initially (and it led to our seeing the crucial blow delivered on stage - as it is in Corneille's *Le Cid*, one of the sources of the libretto); but because of its distracting effect while someone else was singing, it was still misconceived. A lot of this action was performed on an enormous raked construction built to resemble a garden maze, which moved round the stage at intervals in a rather ludicrous fashion: characters stood on it, hid in it, eaves-dropped and sang from it; it was all rather fussy.

Howard Arman included some additional movements: the Siciliana from the B flat Oboe Concerto, HWV 301, introduced the garden scene in Act I; the original finale of the Organ Concerto Op.4 No.3 opened Act II; and to introduce Act III there was an interesting item which had us all fooled. It sounded reasonably genuine (was it an unfamiliar piece of late Handel? we speculated), but Howard was teasing us and later admitted that he had composed it himself.

There was an unfortunate clash of events that evening: *Flavio* was the big social occasion, followed by a superb reception given by the Oberbürgermeister, but at the same time there was a performance of *Solomon* with Carolyn Watkinson in the title-role. It was by all accounts excellent, but, alas, most of our Anglo-American group missed it.

The theme of the Kolloquium on the Saturday morning was 'Source and Performance Problems in *Flavio*'. Papers were read, among others, by Howard Arman, conductor of the performance, and Annette Landgraf of the Hallische Händel-Ausgabe Redaktion, who was responsible for the final form of Merrill Knapp's edition, used in the Halle production.

The annual visit to the Goethe-Theatre in Bad Lauchstädt is always one of the treats of the Halle Festival, and particularly mouth-watering this year was the chance to see Handel's first opera, *Almira*, a rarity indeed. Three British singers were involved, David Thomas as Consalvo, Jamie

MacDougall as Fernando, and Linda Gerrard as Bellante. The Fiori Musicali baroque orchestra of Bremen was conducted by Thomas Albert. Overall this was an enjoyable performance, and it was good to hear this important survivor of Handel's Hamburg music, in which the young man was already a master of melody and dramatic effect, if not always managing his resources as fluently as he did later. The abiding memory was of the strengths rather than the weaknesses, and it was of particular interest to hear the earliest versions of so many ideas that are familiar from later works.

There were good sets and sensible acting, and a generally unfussy production; the one weakness in this department was the old-fashioned habit of having long pauses between scenes, which one felt to be especially unnecessary in this early nineteenth-century theatre which still has its original machinery. The singing was excellent, and it was sad that at the first performance, which we attended, Anna Monoyios, the *Almira*, was taken ill after the interval and had to omit several arias; she sang them successfully in the second performance the next day. The playing of Fiori Musicali was competent, and Thomas Albert's direction efficient, if not quite displaying the flair of Howard Arman's *Flavio*. They gave us most of the opera, though some numbers were cut and a few were moved from their original position in the score. The most substantial cut was the opening of Act II, with its 'Parade of the Continents': some of this was performed as a burlesque outside the theatre during the interval - an original idea, but few of the audience realised what was going on.

The weakest feature of the performance was the overweighted continuo, which consisted of organ, harpsichord, two lutes and a harp, as well as bassoon, cello and double bass. There was too much organ, and in the arias with continuo only (very numerous in this opera), where the

ideal accompaniment is a solo cello and a harpsichord (or lute), we often had bassoon and organ, which made a bizarre and unpleasant effect. An interesting point which several people commented on is how different Handel's German recitatives are from his Italian ones: when accompanied by organ they sometimes brought Bach's cantatas to mind.

A quick journey back from Bad-Lauchstädt took us just in time to the Dom, the Calvinist cathedral where the 17-year-old Handel had his first post, as organist. The building is being restored and should look splendid when the work is completed. In the previous two years, as readers of this *Newsletter* will remember, we have had some hilariously bad oratorio performances in this church. This year a brighter light shone, in the person of Paul Traver, conducting his University of Maryland Chorus, a fine team of American soloists and the Philharmonisches Staatsorchester of Halle. The concert consisted of the 1751 version of *Alexander's Feast*, the *Alexander's Feast* Concerto, HWV 318, and the Dettingen Te Deum; and magnificent it was in all departments. Paul Traver, happily recovered from heart surgery, was his usual athletic self, giving us several passable demonstrations of the quick-step on the rostrum and being totally levitated for a second or two on more than one occasion. His singers and players responded with matching stylishness and panache, and we came away uplifted and refreshed, and ready for a hearty supper in the courtyard of the Händelhaus.

On the Sunday morning the now customary Festival service was held in the Marktkirche, with a performance of J. S. Bach's cantata 'Brich dem Hungrigen dein Brot', BWV 39, followed by the members' meeting of the Gesellschaft in the University Hall. The big musical event of the day was Nicholas McGegan's Göttingen preview, a concert performance of *Giustino*, with Michael Chance in splendid form in the title-role and the



admirable Dorothea Röschmann as Arianna.* Other regular members of the McGegan team were Drew Minter (Amanzio) and Michael Dean (Polidarte), and there was a fine contribution from the English tenor Mark Padmore as Vitaliano. The Kammerchor Cantamus of Halle provided the chorus, and the players were the experienced Freiburger Barockorchester, which has worked so successfully with McGegan in recent years. The performance of this comparatively unfamiliar opera was stunning, and reminded us how much marvellous music lies in those Handel operas which are sometimes thought of as not quite in the top flight.

Back to the Dom for the evening concert, given by the prestigious French group Les Musiciens du Louvre, directed by Marc Minkowski. The programme was four of the Op.3 Concerti Grossi (Nos. 4, 6, 2 and 1) and a large group of instrumental pieces from Rameau's *Hippolyte et Aricie*. The church was packed and the applause thunderous, yet in the first half, the Handel concertos, I could not see why there was so much enthusiasm. I was totally unimpressed and unmoved by this performance, which seemed to be based on the principle 'Anything other groups can do, we can do faster'. The quick movements were raced through *il più presto possibile*, with no time for pointing the many subtle features of these splendid works, in spite of some exaggerated *rubato* and a greater use of *pianissimo* than is usual. Technically the playing was excellent, with good balance between strings and wind, but this could not compensate for the prevailing haste.

The slow movements inevitably came off best, and the Largo of No.1 was particularly beautiful, because it had time to breathe, although Minkowski used flutes instead of recorders. Indeed, there was little evidence of proper study of the source material, since the parts being used appeared to be a mixture of Walsh and Chrysander. In Op.3 No.6 we had

the traditional organ concerto movement (with the solo part so ornamented as to sound more like Babell than Handel): Minkowski is obviously unaware of modern research into this work, reflected in two recent recordings. As an encore, we had the finale of Op.3 No.5, taken at a tempo which I can only describe as ridiculous.

The Rameau in the second half was much better. Maybe that impression comes from the music being less familiar to a Handelian; but it was more relaxed, with some delightful soft playing and exquisite sounds from the wind, powerfully dramatic *tremolandi* from the strings, so important in this music, and an excellent sense of rhythm. Perhaps French Baroque music was more congenial to the French musicians? Whatever the reason, this half was much more impressive.

There were a number of other performances which, alas, it was impossible to attend (this Festival is always generous with its provision of concerts). Most of us had to miss the Stadtsingechor Halle, accompanied by the Manchester Camerata, in works by Vivaldi, Telemann and Handel (the Funeral Anthem), three chamber concerts in the Händelhaus, and two in the Town Hall - all of which were reported to be of the highest standard.

The last indoor performance was a gala concert to celebrate the tenth anniversary of Axel Köhler's début on the operatic stage; he was accompanied, as earlier in *Flavio*, by the period instruments of the Händelfestpielorchester under Howard Arman. There were instrumental movements from *Admeto*, *Alcina* and *Radamisto*, and arias originally composed for Senesino in *Admeto*, *Orlando*, *Rodelinda*, *Flavio* and *Giulio Cesare*; also 'Venti, turbini' from *Rinaldo*, which was not composed for Senesino, but who cared? - Köhler was in top form and was rapturously received by a packed house. The orchestra played as if to early instruments born: the obbligato

in the show-stopper 'Va tacito e nascosto' from *Giulio Cesare*, for instance, was immaculately played on a natural horn. While celebrating the apogee of the career of one of the world's finest countertenors, this concert demonstrated the Halle Festival's total acceptance of modern performance practice in Handel.

Terence Best

**I must apologise for an error in the report on last year's Halle Festival (Newsletter, Vol. 4, No. 2), where Dorothea Röschmann was not credited with her stunning performance as Dalinda in Orlando: the error was due to a last-minute change not being made in the Festival programme book.*

Dissertation abstract

DANCE IN HANDEL'S ITALIAN OPERAS:

THE COLLABORATION WITH MARIE SALLÉ*

Fifteen of Handel's 42 serious operas and eleven pasticcios included dance, and ten of these were written and produced in London. During his career as an opera composer, Handel was the only London composer working in the Italian style known to have made repeated use of dance in his productions and to have written his own dance music. His continued interest in the Terpsichorean art was doubtless influenced by the English taste for mixed entertainments and the increasing popularity of theatrical dance, as demonstrated by the rise of pantomime in the 1720s.

This dissertation examines the fruits of Handel's collaboration with the talented dancer Marie Sallé, whose work demonstrated an interest in developing the expressive potential of dance. Such a close association between an Italian opera composer and a dancer seems to have been without precedent in London and therefore merits closer investigation than it has hitherto received. Handel's



London operas of the 1734-35 season (*Il pastor fido* with its newly-added prologue *Terpsichore*, *Arianna in Creta*, *Oreste*, *Ariodante* and *Alcina*) are examined in order to demonstrate how Handel and Sallé built upon traditions of French, English and Italian theatre while producing works that had no direct precursors on the London stage.

Sallé's London repertoire and reception are assessed in the context of contemporary theatrical practices there. Her attempts at reform were hampered by the English taste for comic dancing, yet she was able to achieve outstanding success at Covent Garden during the season before she was to collaborate with Handel, creating works such as *Pygmalion* and *Bacchus and Ariadne* in which classical, rather than farcical, stories were depicted by dance alone.

Subsequent chapters examine each of Handel's 'Sallé' operas in detail, discussing their reception, performance history, sources and predecessors, musical sources, staging and the dramaturgical function of dance in each of them. Despite the rich legacy of English dance notations, there are none for any of Handel's dances. Scores, librettos, contemporaneous critics and audience members furnish little detailed information on the performance practice of theatrical dance in opera, but the librettos and scores of Handel's operas teach us a great deal about his structural, dramatic, and musical approach to dance.

Handel composed a wealth of dance music for the 1734-35 season, often revising the structure and content of the dance scenes. The sources of *Ariodante* and *Alcina* also demonstrate that he fixed the details of the dances relatively late in the process of creating a score; this was presumably for practical reasons, and suggests close consultation with the dancers.

Baroque theorists, although they do not always concur on the details, confirm that individual dance types reflected specific passions. Handel's choice of dance rhythms suggest that

some care was taken that the dances either reflected upon the preceding action or hinted at future developments. The dances were a significant part of his 'Sallé' operas, for they highlighted the more intense moments of the drama (*Ariodante*, Act II), strengthened the irony of some scenes (*Ariodante*, Act I and *Il pastor fido*, Act II) or provided a catharsis in the Act III finales.

Handel drew upon a number of theatrical traditions, yet the relationship between each of his operas and its sources and predecessors is distinctly different. In appending the prologue *Terpsichore* to his opera *Il pastor fido*, he was following the conventions of French opera and, less directly, of English dramatic opera; indeed, he had a specific French model, Collin de Blamont's *Les fêtes grecques et romaines* (1723), which he followed fairly closely. The combination of a French prologue and an Italian opera, however, had no known precedent on the London stage. Handel's use of dance in *Il pastor fido* itself, drawn from his past experiences in Hamburg and from English pastoral tradition, was fairly conventional. The dances in Act I of *Oreste* were most directly inspired by the popular comic entr'acte dances in the London theatres. Although the dream sequence in *Ariodante* was ultimately not staged as part of that opera, the highly sophisticated integration of the dances into the drama surpasses the treatment of sleep scenes in many earlier French, Italian and English musical dramas. The dances in *Alcina* were derived from a very specific Italian tradition surrounding settings of the sixth and seventh cantos of Ariosto's *Orlando furioso*, yet they also demonstrate a connection with English conventions.

Handel and Sallé applied these theatrical traditions in an innovative context, for dance had been assuming a declining role in London *opera seria* productions and was generally included as an entr'acte entertainment, rather than as an integral part of

the production. The experiments of 1734-35 may have served as an inspiration for London operas of the 1740s, in which dance was to assume a more prominent role.

Sarah McCleave

* *PhD dissertation, University of London (King's College), 1993*

A QUESTION OF TERMINOLOGY

Lexicography is always chasing a moving target. While on one hand it is often clear what a noun 'should' mean, on the basis of its philological derivation or its use as a marker of historical practice, in real life the applications of words are constantly being changed by usage: it is only a matter of time before widely-used 'incorrect' usage becomes the new norm. At any given moment, the same word may have currency in a number of different usages, and it is often difficult to predict which one will win and become the new standard.

It is therefore understandable that the word 'oratorio' has been a matter of some contention in Handelian literature, for your definition of the word depends on where you stand over its use. 'Oratorio Seasons' became the basis of Handel's professional career from 1743 onwards in London (and arguably two years earlier in Dublin), and these established a tradition of performance. Not surprisingly, the slack (or generous) use of the word 'oratorio' encompassed all the works performed during these seasons, or any works performed in what became established as Handel's 'oratorio manner', though works such as *Hercules* and *Semele* (and *Acis and Galatea*) fall outside the stricter definitions of what an oratorio is. Furthermore, the situation is confused because 'oratorio' is a word of Italian origin, which one would suppose to have indicated something precise in Italy but not necessarily identical to the art-form as developed by Handel in England.



It appears, however, that Italian usage, though rather less capricious than English, was not uniform over the word 'oratorio' during Handel's lifetime. An interesting contribution to our understanding of this situation is found in a recent article by Carolyn Gianturco about Handel's various versions of *Il Trionfo del Tempo*, published in the *Journal of the Royal Musical Association*, cxix/1 (1994).

Il Trionfo del Tempo (and its final English form as *The Triumph of Time and Truth*) has always presented an interesting problem of categorisation, because it is clearly rather different in subject-matter from Handel's other oratorios, though sharing the same musical-generic forms of recitative, aria and chorus. It is a drama (though presumably not acted) with allegorical characters: Pleasure, Time, and 'Truth' each seek to influence Beauty, and in the end virtue (in the guise of Time and Truth) triumphs. The original form of Handel's oratorio, as composed for Cardinal Ottoboni, has come down to us as a work in two 'Parts': the autograph of Handel's 'Sonata dell Overtura' for the work is accompanied by a title-page in the hand of one of his Roman copyists which describes the work as an 'Oratorio', and the same word is used in the similar title-page to the early authentic copy (probably Handel's performing score) now in Münster.

Gianturco provides descriptions of oratorio from Giuseppe Gaetano Salvadori (1691) and Arcangelo Spagna (1706) which seem to furnish acceptable evidence for the legitimacy of the use of 'oratorio' for a work in two parts: she also most usefully draws attention to a tradition of *dramma morale* which provides a background to the allegorical type of work that we find in *Il Trionfo del Tempo*. However, she is unhappy about the application of the word 'oratorio' to a work that is in two parts (rather than the 'normal' dramatic three parts), and adopts some rather radical arguments in an attempt to resolve what she sees as a

conflict between Handel's work and the implications of the most likely contemporary Italian usage of the word 'oratorio'. She argues that the two-part form of the work as we have it now may be a second version, adapted from an original three-part version.

I have to confess that I do not find this very convincing: although the sources suggest that *Il Trionfo del Tempo* may have gone through some practical amendments between composition and first performance, they nevertheless seem to me to indicate that the original (as performed) was in two parts. Gianturco also calls in support the fact that the work-list in Mainwaring's *Memoirs of the Life of the late George Frederic Handel* (1760) puts *Il Trionfo* not among the oratorios but with the Serenatas, the latter being traditionally two-part works. My guess is, however, that whoever was responsible for the classification in the work-list did not really know how to cope with *Il Trionfo*, which was in Italian and (in its first version) had never been performed in England: the allocation of the work to its particular category was a matter of impatience rather than of considered judgement. (It is curious that Charles Jennens, who was fairly severe in his own use of the word 'oratorio', also referred to the first version of *Il Trionfo* as a Serenata in his annotations to his copy of Mainwaring's work-list: he was, however, happy to leave *The Triumph of Time and Truth* among the list of oratorios.) For the moment, I am happy to continue to describe the first version as an Oratorio, extending the bounds of the English usage of the word to include moralistic allegorical stories treated as musical works in two parts. It seems that the Italian copyists were also happy enough to call the work an oratorio in 1707.

A further subtle question arises about the correct description of Handel's later versions of *Il Trionfo* performed in London - the revised Italian version given in 1737/9 and

the English version that followed twenty years later. Both were given in Handel's normal London theatre seasons (the last version in the course of what was by then an established oratorio season), and the performances of both versions were advertised in the London newspapers as oratorios. The 1737/9 Italian version, expanded to three parts, is described as an 'Oratorio' in the printed word-book for the performances, and that for 1757 similarly appears on the title-page as 'The Triumph of Time and Truth. An Oratorio'.

Although there must be considerable doubt as to the extent of Handel's creative contribution to the final version, which was performed in the last years of his life when he was much debilitated by blindness, it nevertheless seems possible that Handel co-operated with Thomas Morell and J. C. Smith the younger in decisions about some of the additional material that went into the English version. These expansions have sometimes been criticised for weakening the flow of the earlier versions, but Gianturco takes the opposite view. Her conclusion is as follows:

These intensifying and developing changes raise the 1757 libretto to a different dramatic level with respect to the two earlier Handel librettos..... Because of its acts, stage directions and scene changes, it would seem that the librettist did indeed conceive it as a work for the stage. Is *The Triumph of Time and Truth*, then, a *dramma in musica*, an opera? I would say yes....It does fit neatly into the category of moral opera.

In terms of earlier Italian usage, Gianturco may have a case. But in terms of the usage specific to the contemporary understanding of musical genres in London in the late 1750s, it would surely be wrong to describe *The Triumph of Time and Truth* as anything other than an oratorio. In 1732, a member of the audience at the first of Handel's



London theatre oratorio productions had been surprised by the lack of stage action or presentation:

So away goes I to the *Oratorio*, where I saw indeed the finest Assembly of People I ever beheld in my Life, but, to my great Surprise, found this Sacred *Drama* a mere Consort, no Scenary, Dress or Action, so necessary to a *Drama*; but *H...l*, was plac'd in a Pulpit, I suppose they call that (their Oratory) by him sate *Senesino Strada Bertolli*, and *Turner Robinson*, in their own Habits; before him stood sundry sweet Singers of this our *Israel*.

Twenty years later Handel's regular seasons had established what we might describe as a 'London norm' for the use of the word oratorio: the term referred to public performances (usually in the theatre) of musical works based on biblical or elevated stories, given without 'Action on the Stage'. Handel performed oratorios at Covent Garden; operas happened, in Italian, with full costumes, scenery and stage action, at the King's Theatre, Haymarket. If the manager of Covent Garden theatre had allowed *The Triumph of Time and Truth* to be advertised as an opera, he would probably have been faced with a riot from discontented patrons, anticipating the famous one that occurred six years later (for different reasons) at a performance of Arne's *Artaxerxes*. The meaning of the word 'oratorio' in England had by 1757 been established by Handel's practice.

Donald Burrows

AWARDS FOR RESEARCH AND PERFORMANCE

Applications are invited for the next round of **Handel Institute Awards** of up to £1,000 to assist in the furtherance of research projects involving Handel's music or life. Deadline 1 September 1995.

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. Deadline 31 December 1994 (this is a second announcement).

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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