
The three research articles in this issue arise from Handel conferences that took place last year. At the Handel Institute conference in November, Donald Burrows stepped in for a scheduled speaker who was indisposed and delivered a paper based on his research of the previous week. His paper, published here, sheds new light on the career of a soprano who sang in the first Dublin and London performances of *Messiah*. This is followed by a revised version of Konstanze Musketa's announcement of a new reference to Handel in 1734 and by an edition of an overlooked poem of 1735 that mentions Handel and the translator George Oldmixon. These articles frame an account of the Continuo Foundation and Continuo Connect, which foster performance of baroque music, including Handel, across the UK.

Colin Timms

'ONE MRS. MACLEAN': THE BACKGROUND TO HANDEL'S ASSOCIATION WITH CHRISTINA AVOLIO

On 5 December 1741 Charles Jennens, who had recently arrived in London, wrote as follows in a letter to James Harris at Salisbury:

As soon as I came to Town, I heard to my great Satisfaction, that He had set *Messiah*, but this receiv'd some allay from the Account given me at the same time, that he had carry'd it into Ireland [...] Handel took only Miss Edwards & one Mrs. Maclean with him; & for the rest depends on the Dublin Choirs.¹

Jennens had a long-standing interest in Handel's music and career, but on this occasion he was particularly exercised about the fate of *Messiah*, for which he had provided the libretto. Handel had drafted the score of *Messiah* in August-September 1741 but, unlike *Saul* and *Belshazzar*, this oratorio proceeded towards eventual performance without any reference to Jennens: at the time of composition Jennens was still at home in Gopsal, a hundred miles away from London, and by the time he 'came to town' Handel was already in Dublin. Jennens's information as given on 5 December may have come from acquaintances in London or even a recent letter from Handel, but the tone of his comments indicates that he had not been informed of Handel's plans.

Particularly revealing is Jennens's reference to 'one Mrs. Maclean', implying that this singer was not previously known to him. Annotations on a surviving wordbook for Handel's first performances of *Messiah* at Dublin in 1742 name the singer as 'Mc'lean', but the newspaper report of her arrival in Dublin calls her 'Avolio':

Last Tuesday arrived in the Yatcht from Parkgate, Signiora Avolio, an excellent Singer, who is come to this Kingdom, to perform in Mr. Handel's Musical Entertainments.²

Subsequent references leave no doubt that just one person – the soprano Christina Maria Avolio – was involved.³ *The Dublin Journal* on 21 November 1741 reported that, *en route* to Dublin, 'Mr Maclaine' had played the organ at Chester Cathedral 'in the finest taste', and that Handel had 'engaged the above Mr. Maclaine [and] his Wife' to perform in his Dublin oratorios.⁴ On his autographs and performing scores Handel

¹ *George Frideric Handel: Collected Documents*, ed. Donald Burrows, Helen Coffey, John Greenacombe and Anthony Hicks, 6 vols. (Cambridge, 2013–), iii, 746.

² *The Dublin Journal*, 28 November 1741: *Handel: Collected Documents*, iii, 742.

³ Dublin wordbook (London, British Library, K.8.d.4); *Handel: Collected Documents*, iii, 812 and iv, 91–2.

⁴ *Handel: Collected Documents*, iii, 739.

consistently named her as [Sigr] Avolio, which was presumably her preferred professional identity.

These references in November-December 1741 are the first occurrences of her name(s) in *George Frideric Handel: Collected Documents*. When the entries were drafted I did not pursue the subject of her previous career, though I was aware, from Sartori's listing of Italian librettos, that she had sung in operas at Brussels in 1728 and St Petersburg in the 1730s and that she was by origin a German (Christina Maria Groneman), married to the 'impresario' Giuseppe Avolio.⁵ Further investigation has identified her also as a performer in operas at Hamburg and Kassel (1729), Prague (1730–31) and Moscow (1731); the joint careers of Giuseppe and Christina in St Petersburg have been well covered from documentary sources by Alice Pieroni.⁶ There is mention of her sister Elizabeth, too, as a performer (though not of comparable status) in Moscow and St Petersburg.

All this seemed very distant from the sudden commencement of a career with Handel's oratorios in 1741–2, but the chronological hole was filled by an encounter with an illustration in a book about the Edinburgh Musical Society, which showed an account-list from the Society's Sederunt [minute] Books with payments of salary to 'Mrs Avolio' in 1739–40.⁷ This led me to a thesis on the subject of Italian musicians in Edinburgh by Sonia Baxter which includes transcriptions of specific references to Avolio from the Sederunt Books.⁸ Using these as a starting-point, I re-examined the minute books, which turned out to provide further background and thus to shed some light on the circumstances of Avolio's association with Handel.

The account-lists that are transcribed in the Sederunt Books show that in Edinburgh Christina Avolio received an annual salary of

£109, with quarterly payments of £27 5s. 0d. from the quarter-year beginning 1 May 1739 to that of May–July 1741.⁹ The arrangements for payment at the beginning and the end of the term are rather untidy. The first entry, recording an advance of £40, was subsequently made up to the regular salary as due on 1 August 1739 plus an allowance of £20 for travelling charges.¹⁰ At the end of the association, an entry for £27 5s. 0d. paid 'To Mrs Avolio her Sallary' till 1st May 1741' is followed by a rather complex statement of final settlement dated 21 September 1741:

To Mr Wardine £14 and to Mr Reid £2. 5 for Mrs Avolio p[er] her bills and to herself £8 sterl[ing] p[er] Receipt as her Sallary due 1st August - - - - [£]27. 2.-

The reference to 'sterl[ing]' suggests that she may already have left Edinburgh and that some intermediate payment process was involved. The circumstances of her departure are clarified by a minute from 24 July 1741:

At a Meeting of the Governer & Directors Upon Application from Mrs Avolio and Mr Barsanti desiring leave to be absent from the Society for two months Resolved that they should have leave to be absent for that time without any Stop of their Sallarys providing they return betwixt [date omitted] and the first of October But In Case they shall not doe so Then their Sallarys shall be Stopped from that time[.]

Francesco Barsanti was the director of the Society's concerts: he returned to Edinburgh but Avolio did not. The two may have travelled to London together and may already have left Edinburgh by the time of this meeting.

There is no documentation of the links through which Avolio came to Edinburgh, but the Sederunt Books give hints of the

⁵ Claudio Sartori, *I libretti italiani a stampa dalle origini al 1800: Catalogo analitico*, 7 vols. (Cuneo, 1990–94), Indici II: Cantori, 338, entry 'Groneman Avolio, Cristina Maria'. Giuseppe, however, is not included in Sartori's list of impresarios (Indici I, 471–82). All three of Christina's surnames are found in variant spellings: here I adopt Groneman, Avolio and McLean as diplomatic forms.

⁶ Alice Pieroni, *Attori italiani alla corte della zarina Anna Ioannovna (1731-1738)* (Florence, 2017). For biographical information on Christina I am also grateful for generous help from Michael Talbot and Rashid-Sascha Pegah.

⁷ Martin Hillman, *Thomas Sanderson's Account of Incidents: The Edinburgh Musical Society 1727-1801 and its impact on*

the City (Edinburgh, 2017), 21. I thank Peter Smaill for drawing this book to my attention.

⁸ Sonia Tinagli Baxter, *Italian Music and Musicians in Edinburgh c.1720–1800: A Historical and Critical Study*, PhD diss. (University of Glasgow, 1999): vol. ii, pp. 89–90 are devoted to 'Cristina Maria Avolio'.

⁹ References are given here by the dates of the entries in the relevant Sederunt Book of the Edinburgh Musical Society (that is, vol. 1, commencing in 1728). Two versions of the accounts for the period June 1738–June 1739 are included there, but the essential content is the same. I thank Bronwen Brown and the staff of the music room, Edinburgh Central Library, for arrangements to see the original document.

¹⁰ See Baxter, *Italian Music and Musicians*, ii, 89.

negotiations.¹¹ The expense of her employment required reductions in the salaries of the Society's regular 'Masters' (paid musicians), including Barsanti, as proposed on 24 January 1739:

The G[overnor] and Directors having taken to their Consideration the hiring of a Singer for the use of the Society took the funds of the Society also under their Consideration with the Annuall Burdens - assessing the same and finding they cannot afford £120 st[erling] for such Singer if the Sallarys to the M[aster]s are Continued at the Rate they are now Settled[,] and Considering also that the said Sallarys were Raised upon Mr Benidettos departure because the funds of the Society could allow of additions to them[,] are of oppinion that the said Sallarys ought to be Diminished as follows[:]
Barsanti's £40. Steuart £10: Mcgibbon 25: Mcpherson £12[,] Craig 20[,] Reich 18[.]

This came with a rider that, if income increased, 'the Society shall be able to pay their sallaries as they are now settled[,] that the same should be paid Accordingly[,] and they [the Directors] continue their Recommendation to Mr. Hugh Clerk to hire a Singer as soon as possible'. There are no clues to the identity of the person with whom Clerk was instructed to deal, or to Avolio's current location, though presumably she had arrived in Edinburgh by the end of April.

One consequence of Avolio's employment is recorded in a minute dated 14 February 1739:

Resolved Att a Meeting of the Gov[ernor] and Directors That the M[aster]s shall be acquainted that the Society has so near a prospect of hiring a Singer that they are to Enter upon their Sallarys as mentioned in the Minute of the 24th of Jan[ua]ry, so soon as their Current years service Ends as to Each of them Respectively[.]

For the 'Masters' the reduction in salaries was presumably unwelcome, though the most substantial casualty was Miss Udal[1], apparently a local singer managed by her father and trained by Barsanti. A resolution from the meeting on 24 January had instructed the Secretary 'to give Notice to Miss Udal that the Society shall have no service for her after the Currant year of her service is Expired', even though her salary was

modest compared with that proposed for Avolio. The chain of employment suggests that the Musical Society always needed to employ a soprano singer for their concerts, in addition to their 'Masters'. There is no mention of Giuseppe Avolio in the Sederunt Books. It is very unlikely that he was in Edinburgh: perhaps he had died, perhaps he and his wife had separated. However, there are a couple of clues to the new relationship for Christina, from references in the period preceding her arrival:

Appointed Mr Clerk and Mr Home to Inquair into any Claime Mr M^clean may have for a Sallery for performing in the Concerts this Twelve Months past and to Report
[Minutes, June 1738]

To Mr: M^cLean of Sallery per order - -
[£]10. 10.-

[Accounts, June 1738-June 1739]

On 5 April 1742 Avolio had a benefit concert at the Fishamble Street music room in Dublin, advertisements for which promised 'The Vocal Part by *Signora* Avolio. The Organ to be Perform'd by M. M^clean' and gave Avolio's address as 'lodgings opposite the White Lyon [at] the bottom of Great Strand-Street'.¹²

Unfortunately, there is no information about the repertory that Christina Avolio had performed in Edinburgh: there, as in Bath, Dublin, Oxford, Salisbury and other cities outside London, evidence about concert programmes is scarce until the inauguration of local newspapers. The Society's minutes record income from five or six concerts in annual seasons, of which the 'Cecilia' concerts in November were the best attended and probably the most ambitious in terms of programme content. It is unlikely that even those included full performances of Handel's oratorio-style works. Only *Alexander's Feast* was available in a complete printed edition (1738); *Acis and Galatea* (more practical in terms of resources needed) followed to publication in 1743. The first recorded performance in Edinburgh of a theatre work by Handel was of *Acis and Galatea* in August 1750, followed by another by the *Lampes* in March 1751. The first documented performance by the Musical Society was also of *Acis and Galatea*, in 1753, followed in subsequent years

¹¹ It is possible that direct negotiations had taken place between contacts in St Petersburg and Edinburgh. In a similar way the Passerinis were subsequently engaged for the Edinburgh Musical Society under a contract dated 22 April

1749, though at that time they were still in St Petersburg; they did not arrive in Edinburgh until early 1751.

¹² *The Dublin Mercury*, 30 March 1742.

by more ambitious works (*Alexander's Feast*, *Deborah*, *Judas Maccabaeus*, *Samson*), involving requests to Handel and Smith for the provision of music from London.¹³

The critical factor in this expansion was probably the leadership of Niccolò Pasquali, who had directed oratorios in Dublin before moving to Edinburgh in 1752. In earlier years Handel's music would have been represented at the Society's concerts by the repertory available from Walsh's editions of songs and overtures. Given Avolio's previous career, we can assume that she sang Italian arias, but these would almost certainly have been complemented by English ones from the published scores of songs from *Acis*, *Esther*, *Deborah*, *Athalia* and *Alexander's Feast* (and probably also some items from published anthologies of English songs by other composers, as well as 'Scotch Songs' to the local taste). When she arrived in London, therefore, she could have presented herself as a professional singer with no current attachments to the London theatres but with concert experience in the repertory of Handel's music.

Presumably Avolio had already made some contacts in London before she left Edinburgh, and probably she travelled south with Mclean. Barsanti, if he also came to London, perhaps introduced her to Handel. We can assume that she had some form of audition with him, comparable to that for Christina Passerini at The Hague which is recorded in Handel's letter to Telemann in December 1750.¹⁴ The intriguing possibility is that this may have taken place before Handel commenced the score of *Messiah* on 22 August, which was completed on 14 September and followed soon after by the score of *Samson*. Possibly both 'I know that my Redeemer liveth' and 'Let the bright Seraphims' were written under the influence of a recent encounter with Avolio's voice and style of presentation. After his first performance in Dublin, Handel wrote to Jennens that 'Sgra Avolio, which I brought with me from London

pleases extraordinary': she had sung 'Sweet bird' in *L'Allegro*.¹⁵

For the second six-concert subscription and Handel's final three performances in Dublin she was joined by the contralto Susanna Cibber; Miss Edwards, if she came to Dublin at all, would presumably have been a supporting chorus singer.¹⁶ Both Avolio and Cibber were re-employed by Handel for his 1743 season in London, joined by Catherine Clive. Any tensions between the sopranos over 'prima donna' status were perhaps avoided by a clear contrast in musical characterisation: Clive was cast as Dalilah in *Samson*, but Avolio was given 'With plaintive notes' as well as 'Let the bright Seraphims'. She continued as a soloist into Handel's 1744 season at Covent Garden, this time presumably involving some musical negotiation with Francesina as the other soprano. For *Semele* Avolio received the role of Iris, but her participation in the later performances of the season is rather uncertain. Meanwhile she had taken up a new line with appearances as Hecate in *The Amorous Goddess* (music by Samuel Howard) in a long run at Drury Lane theatre beginning in February 1744, followed by a summer season at Ruckholt House which included performances of *Alexander's Feast* and Boyce's *Solomon*. She returned to Drury Lane for the short revival of *The Amorous Goddess* in October 1744, after which she seems to have had no regular career in London. In 1746 she had concerts at Salisbury in June ('with several Italian and English Songs') and at Bath in November; her last recorded appearance in London was in a benefit concert at the Swan Tavern, Cornhill, in April 1747.¹⁷

It is difficult to account for her apparent withdrawal from London's regular music-making after 1744. Handel was generally loyal to his solo singers, but perhaps Avolio did not fit with his plans for his King's Theatre season in 1744/45, for which Francesina was unquestionably the prima donna. Other circumstances may

¹³ See entries for December 1753, 27 April 1754 (*Deborah*), 1 February 1755 (*Judas Maccabaeus*) and 22 January 1756 (*Samson*) in *Handel: Collected Documents*, v and vi (forthcoming).

¹⁴ 'J'avois justement le tems de pouvoir entendre chanter son Epouse': letter from Handel to Telemann, 14/25 December 1750: Otto Erich Deutsch, *Handel: A Documentary Biography* (London, 1955), 696–7 and *Handel: Collected Documents*, v (forthcoming).

¹⁵ Handel to Jennens, 29 December 1741: *Handel: Collected Documents*, iii, 758.

¹⁶ The only trace of Edwards in the scores from Handel's Dublin performances is found in the performing score of *Messiah*, where her name appears at the start of the middle section of the *dal segno* setting of the soprano aria 'How beautiful are the feet'. This makes no musical sense, and for his performances in 1742 and 1743 Handel had replaced the aria with a duet-and-chorus movement.

¹⁷ *Handel: Collected Documents*, iv, 469.

also have altered the pattern of her life. In June 1745 'Christian Avolio', described as a 'widow', was named as a surety for bail for the singer Elizabeth Frederica in a court case brought by Geminiani.¹⁸ This must surely have been her. Furthermore, Christina Avolio 'widdow' of the parish of St James, Westminster, married Guglielmo Pinto (of the same parish) at the Portuguese embassy chapel in London on 29 June 1745.¹⁹ At about the same time Guglielmo Pinto's son, the violinist Thomas Pinto, married Sibilla Groneman, who was subsequently Handel's second soprano soloist in 1748/49: it seems a remarkable coincidence that she had the same surname as Avolio.

Further uncertainties follow, concerning the identity of a possible violinist named Avolio at the King's Theatre in 1753/54 and concerning subsequent records of Giuseppe and Signora Avolio performing in Paris through to the 1770s. Perhaps a second generation was involved: at present it seems prudent to be cautious about identifying the violinist with the former impresario. But we can at least gain some sense of Christina's activity, apparently without him, during the period of her association with Handel, and of the likely importance of her experience with the Edinburgh Musical Society before she came to London in 1741.

Donald Burrows

'VARIOUS CURIOUS SUBJECTS': THE MENTION OF HANDEL IN THE TRAVEL DIARY OF JOHANN ANDREAS MANITIUS

Three years ago, an entry in the travel diary of the missionary Johann Andreas Manitius (1707–58), dated London 16 October 1734 and referring to Handel and his oratorio, was found in the course of a major digitalisation project at the archives of the Franckesche Stiftungen in Halle.¹ This interesting discovery was still unknown to Handel literature,² when a welcome opportunity arose to present it at the Handel conference in London (November 2023) to a well-informed audience that was thoroughly familiar with Handel's oratorios.

The writer of the diary, Manitius, was travelling on behalf of the Institutum Judaicum et Muhammedicum (Jewish and Mohammedan Institute), which had been founded in Halle, Handel's birthplace, in 1728 by the Pietist theologian and professor of Oriental studies Johann Heinrich Callenberg (1694–1760). The aim of this Institute, which was closely associated with the Franckesche Stiftungen, was to convert

Jews (mainly) and also Muslims to Christianity. Manitius was one of the missionaries who travelled through much of Europe to forge contacts with people who supported this purpose and to propagate discourses that had been published at the Institute by distributing them to Jews. One of these writings, 'Or le-Et Erev'(Light in the Evening), in Yiddish, by Johann Müller, was circulated relatively widely. The missionaries were required to record their activities – every day, if possible – in travel diaries, which were eventually sent back to the Institute in Halle and collected there, so that Callenberg and his colleagues could build up a picture of the progress of the missionary project. After the dissolution of the Institute in the late eighteenth century these diaries passed to the archives of the Franckesche Stiftungen, where they are preserved to this day.

As a rule, the missionaries, known as 'Studiosi', travelled in pairs; thus, Manitius set

¹⁸ See Cheryll Duncan, 'Geminiani v. Mrs Frederica: Legal battles with an Opera Singer', in *Geminiani Studies* (Ad Parnassum Studies 6), ed. Christopher Hogwood (Bologna, 2013), 403.

¹⁹ This would presumably have involved a Roman Catholic ceremony, though Christina came from a German Protestant background.

¹ Travel diary of Johann Andreas Manitius, 1 July to 31 December 1734: AFSt/H K 61, f. 111, 16 October 1734. See also the database at <https://www.franckehalle.de/de/studienzentrum/> (accessed 26 October

2023). I thank Dr Britta Klosterberg, director of the August Hermann Francke Study Centre, for information on the historical background and for the provision of materials, and Dr Jürgen Gröschl for valuable communications on the progress of research.

² At the suggestion of Prof. Dr Thomas Müller-Bahlke, director of the Franckesche Stiftungen, and Clemens Birnbaum, director of the Stiftung Händel-Haus, the digitalisation project and the discovery were reported in May 2021 in the German national press and on local Halle television.

off with a colleague named Johann Georg Widmann (1694–1754). They had already been on the road for several months when they finally took a ship from Rotterdam to London, where they arrived on 2 August 1734. Whereas Widmann left London after only a few weeks, Manitius stayed on into 1735. He paid repeated visits to Friedrich Michael Ziegenhagen (1694–1776), formerly a Theology student in Halle, who from December 1722 to the end of his life served at St James’s Chapel as preacher to the German community at court. Ziegenhagen was the most important point of contact for all the Pietists who came to London from Halle. Through him Manitius also became acquainted with members of the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge and with Joachim Heinrich Bernewitz (died 1748), a close friend of Ziegenhagen. These meetings eventually proved disappointing for Manitius, because both Ziegenhagen and the Society believed there was no prospect of converting the Jews and therefore would not guarantee support, as Manitius had hoped, for the printing of a book that he had translated.

Through Ziegenhagen and his friend Bernewitz, however, Manitius heard about Handel’s oratorio. The diary entry for 16 October 1734 reads as follows:³

Mr Hendel [Saturday] 16 October [1734]
That preacher [has] set up his own oratorio here, which initially drew a large number of people [but which,] since one must pay an English shilling for a seat there, will probably not, as I hear today from Mr Bernewitz and my host, continue to attract such a numerous crowd. In order to entice curious souls, he tackles various curious subjects. He has already disputed on several occasions with a Socinian and a Jew, among others, and he plans to carry on like this. But I do not see this as the way to win over the souls of the Jews.

This entry, admittedly, contains inconsistencies, but there is no doubt that the ‘preacher’ concerned is actually ‘our’ Handel. Handel as a preacher who arranges disputations in order to convert Jews: what a thought!

However interesting it doubtless would be to learn something about Handel’s contact with his Jewish contemporaries, Manitius’ diary contributes hardly anything new on the subject. To all appearances it seems that it was only by

coincidence and, as we shall see, by mistake that Handel came to the attention of a missionary who had dedicated himself to converting Jews to Christianity.

The question arises as to how Manitius came to think of Handel as a preacher. One reason, certainly, is that he acquired his information second-hand: by the date of his diary entry, at least, he had not personally encountered Handel or his oratorios, and nobody appears to have told him that an oratorio was a new kind of musical composition. He therefore imagined that an oratorio was exactly what the word normally meant at that time: a prayer hall! This was the obvious interpretation, especially for a missionary like Manitius, and as we shall see, it was exactly the right one.

In fact, Manitius could not have known Handel’s oratorios, because works such as *Saul* (HWV 53), *Israel in Egypt* (HWV 54), *Messiah* (HWV 56), *Samson* (HWV 57) and *Judas Maccabaeus* (HWV 63), which today mould our image of Handel’s oratorios, date from after 1738 and thus were completely unknown when Manitius wrote his diary entry. The earliest English oratorio by Handel is acknowledged to be *Esther*, which, after a few performances at the Crown and Anchor tavern in London, was performed at the King’s Theatre in the Haymarket in early 1732. Handel’s second English oratorio, *Deborah* (HWV 51), was performed from March 1733 onwards, but since his oratorios were generally presented in the early part of the year, as an alternative to opera during the period of Lent, Manitius was unable to experience them – even if he could have brought himself to enter such a den of iniquity as a theatre (which he probably never did, even later on). *Athalia* (HWV 52), composed in 1733 and first performed in Oxford, was not known to the London public before 1735. On 15 July 1734 (or 6 July in the Julian calendar still used in England) – that is, a few weeks before Manitius arrived in London – Handel had finished his fourteenth opera season, his last at the King’s Theatre for the time being. He then moved to the Theatre Royal in Covent Garden, opening his new season only on 9 (20) November 1734; he did not resume oratorio performances there until March 1735. This goes some way to explaining why Manitius was so inadequately informed about them.

³ Travel diary of Manitius, f. 111, 16 October 1734.

How did Manitius feel when he learnt of Handel's true identity? Ziegenhagen, as court preacher, will have enlightened him, sooner or later, and Manitius would probably have been horrified that this oratorio was not a pious prayer hall but a theatre which he, like nearly all Pietists, profoundly detested.⁴ This negative attitude is reflected in a later diary entry, dated 1 November 1734, which concerns opera:⁵

In the evening I received another visit from Samuel Steck, a young man who got to know me yesterday morning; he is a musician who recognises something good [when he sees it]. He wants God to help him get out of his wretched service in the operas, because it is nothing but vanity.

Manitius' rejection of these 'vanities' could explain to some extent why he soon stopped taking interest in Handel and why his travel diary makes no further mention of the composer.

This article could have finished here, but a few days before the start of the conference in November I received a message from the

archives of the Franckesche Stiftungen that cast Manitius' entry in an entirely new light. Recent research revealed that the diary description of the person relates not to Handel but (much more closely) to John Henley (1692–1759), also known as 'Orator Henley'. Henley had come to London in 1721 and opened his oratory, an assembly room in Newport Market, on 3 July 1726; later he moved it into an old theatre in Clare Market, Lincoln's Inn Fields, where he charged a shilling for admission. His disputations were extremely popular with the public.⁶ A satire from the year 1727, in which it is suggested that Senesino should abandon the opera and sing psalms in Henley's oratory, points to the fact that this institution was famous/notorious in London. At first, Manitius had not written any name at the top of his earlier diary entry; later, when he inserted that of Handel, he must have been confused – probably because he had heard the composer being mentioned in connection with the ambiguous term 'oratorio'.

Konstanze Musketa

CONTINUO FOUNDATION AND CONTINUO CONNECT:

Helping baroque music to flourish over the long-term

In September 2020, six months into the cancellations caused by the pandemic, large numbers of UK musicians were forced to consider abandoning their careers as performers. In the period-instrument world, where precarious freelance existence is the norm, the threat of permanent damage to a world-leading tradition of excellence – described in an article about Continuo Foundation by *The Economist* (17 June 2021) as 'one of the glories of all British music' – was real.

This was the inspiration for creating Continuo Foundation, a charity with a mission to help these musicians weather the storm, rebuild their careers and, in the process, build audiences across the country by earning their living bringing music to their doorsteps.

Continuo Foundation attracted the early support of an outstanding group of Patrons and Trustees and an expert Advisory Panel of five,

including Handel Institute Council member Berta Joncus. The charity has raised, and made available, a total of £750,000 in grants to UK-based period instrument ensembles for concert tours and other exceptional artistic projects taking place across the country. The seventh round of grants is currently under way.

So far, Continuo Foundation has awarded grants to 85 UK period-instrument ensembles, supporting 145 artistic projects ranging from tours to recordings. These initiatives have benefited nearly 1,000 freelance musicians and brought uplifting music to nearly 100,000 audience members in 150 locations and online. More information about the ensembles and their projects is available on the Foundation website: www.continuofoundation.co.uk.

In addition to supporting musicians with funding, Continuo Foundation helps ensembles with professional development and publicising

⁴ In Halle the Pietists were even able to push through a general prohibition of theatres that remained in force throughout the eighteenth century.

⁵ Travel diary of Manitius, f. 121, 1 November 1734.

⁶ For Henley see Graham Midgley, *The Life of Orator Henley* (Oxford, 1973) and http://academickids.com/encyclopedia/index.php/John_Henley.

their work and concerts to a wider audience. To scale up these efforts, the Continuo Connect digital initiative was launched last year. The purpose of Continuo Connect is to raise the profile of baroque music, educate the public, and generate greater curiosity and interest in this kind of music.



This is done by bringing together both information about concerts and artists and engaging articles and interviews by and about musicians and their research. By making everything available in one place, and promoting the content on social media, Continuo reaches a wider and more diverse audience than any one ensemble can do on its own.

Through Continuo Connect, the Foundation is working to grow audiences for baroque music and help people discover artists they might not otherwise have found. The website, which is a platform underpinning this growth, empowers artists to share information about their concerts, projects and musical explorations. The site is found at www.continuoconnect.com.

Continuo Connect features professional period-instrument and specialist early music vocal ensembles – large and small – from across the country, including recipients of Continuo Foundation grants. As such, the concert listings on the ‘What’s On’ page are curated and quality-assured. This encourages concert attendance by

the public and booking of programmes by concert organisers, who see Continuo Connect as a menu of options for their future programming.

Concerts are listed on Continuo Connect by the ensembles themselves, at no cost to them, which means that a small, recently formed group has the same access to the site as an established one such as the Academy of Ancient Music. This also gives the public access to a far wider range of programmes, from intimate recitals to fully staged opera productions. At the last count, a quarter of the 900 concerts listed so far included music by Handel. New events are being added all the time, so there is much to discover.

Baroque musicians are known for combining musical talent with scholarship, and the ‘Features’ page provides a platform for sharing this research and generating interest in the concerts that are the product of their discoveries. For example, in-depth essays by Dr Pauline Nobes of Manchester Baroque describe the ‘detective work’ that led the ensemble to reconstruct the city’s first concert series from the 1744/45 season. Following promotion of the concert and essays on social media and in newsletters, the concert in Manchester was a sell-out.

Continuo Connect also provides the only directory of early music festivals and concert series across the country. The ‘Festivals’ page, launched in January 2024, is in its early days and is growing. In fact, the site is dynamic and is changing continuously, with new concerts, articles, interviews and festivals being added all the time.

In summary, Continuo Foundation and Continuo Connect provide crucial support to baroque musicians facing the many challenges of the current climate as well as contributing to the preservation and promotion of the UK’s rich tradition of excellence in baroque music. Continuo Foundation is an entrepreneurial non-profit organisation devoted to baroque music, something Handel the composer, and the entrepreneur, is likely to have admired.

Tina Vadaneaux
Founder and CEO,
Continuo Foundation

GEORGE OLDMIXON: 'THE UNBORN POET'

At last summer's Handel conference in Halle I read a paper about eighteenth-century translators of Italian librettos that were set by the composer in London. The only translators prominently credited in the relevant printed wordbooks are Samuel Humphreys, who tackled seven operas (among them, two pasticcios) performed in the early 1730s, and George Oldmixon, who translated the serenata *Parnasso in festa* (1734) and the oratorio *Il trionfo del Tempo e della Verità* (1737).

While working on this topic, I came across a poem by Humphreys that mentions Oldmixon and links him with Handel's operas. This poem is of interest for at least two reasons. First, although it was published in January 1735, it appears not to have been noticed by earlier Handel scholars.¹ Second, although Oldmixon is not known to have translated any opera libretto,

he is described in a footnote as 'the unborn Poet, who translates Mynheer Handel's Operas'.

The conference paper, which will appear in the *Händel-Jahrbuch*, 70 (2024), presents new biographical information on both Humphreys and Oldmixon and discusses the implications of the former's comments on the latter. It also analyses some features of their translations and of several anonymous translations of the 1730s, to see whether any of them could have been written by Oldmixon (or indeed Humphreys). Owing to limitations of space, the *Jahrbuch* article will not include the full text of the poem. It is therefore published complete here, apparently for the first time since 1735 and partly in the hope that it will stimulate further research into the authorship of the many anonymous translations of Handel's opera librettos.

Verses occasioned by Reading Mr. Pope's four Essays on Man, and his Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot. By Mr. Humphreys

How! four essays on man, and one on fools,
And each adjusted by perfection's rules!
Not one low thought in this, nor one in those,
To give some duncely comfort to thy foes!
Still must thy muse's undiminish'd flame 5
Fix a new æra of some blockhead's shame!
Inhuman *Pope!* thy critics well may chafe;
When thou art keen what coxcomb can be safe?
 Could'st thou (but ah! thou canst not) ape the dunce,
Thou should'st in charity be dull for once; 10
Did but our fools hear men of genius say,
'I've seen some wretched lines, in *Pope*, to day,'
Not warmer joys would animate the clan,
Could they expatiate, like thy muse, on man.
 'Tis well the sons of dulness now may share 15
The smiles of patrons – I could mention where.
Were none regarded whom true satire lasht,
Colley had droop'd, and *Duck* might still have thresh'd;
And tho' thy late epistle has been read,
Paris, they say, resolves to show his head. 20
Let then that *Paris* either rhyme or fiddle,
Let *Welsted* lye, and honest *Tibbalds* piddle;
Let *Budgel's* frenzy start from *Bee* to *Bee*,
What are such animals as these to thee?
What canst thou suffer from so mean a race, 25
Whose malice is humanity's disgrace?

¹ *The London Magazine: or, Gentleman's Monthly Intelligencer*, 4 (January 1735), p. 35.

What tho' around thee stalk pale envy's bands,
 With brains of froth, and stink-pots in their hands?
 Can thy strong fame be wounded to the quick,
 Because thy foes make half a nation sick? 30
 If frogs at *Phœbus* in their fens repine,
 Shall *Phœbus*, at their croaking, cease to shine?
 Who asks if nature, by mistake, has plan[n]'d ill
*Handel's Oldmixon**, or *Oldmixon's Handel*?
 Ev'n opera frequenters own, at once, 35
 That one's a savage, and that one's a dunce.
 Let then thy petulant opposers rage,
 Thou still shalt live the glory of our age;
 And late posterity ('tis more than hope)
 Will honour *Britain* for producing *Pope*. 40
 Thy pleasing precepts, then, again dispense
 In learned numbers, and in ethic sense;
 Compleat the progress to thy care consign'd,
 Thou great *Columbus* of the human mind!
 Point out our passions to our opening view, 45
 And kindly teach us to refine them too;
 Shew virtue's paths inviting to be trod,
 And teach a mortal to resemble God!
 When this great theme thou dost once more resume
 May no pert fop invade thy grotto's gloom; 50
 May honest *Thames* his waves no longer fate
 To waft a coxcomb to thy rural gate;
 Be thy sequester'd hours ne'er render'd sad,
 By rhymes on crutches, or by *prose run mad*;
 Leisure with dignity be thine to share,
 And heaven protect thee with peculiar care.

* *The unborn Poet, who translates Mynheer Handel's Operas.*

Notes (references are to line numbers)

1 Alexander Pope wrote only one *Essay on Man*, but it is in four 'epistles'. It was published in 1733-4. Humphreys' 'one on fools' is an allusion to Pope's *Dunciad* (1728-9), which is referred to both directly (e.g., lines 4, 9 and 36) and indirectly (lines 10, 'dull', and 15 'sons of dulness').

14 '... like thy muse, on man': this is another reference to Pope's *Essay on Man*.

18 'Colley': a reference to the playwright, actor and poet Colley Cibber (1671-1757); 'Duck' is the poet Stephen Duck (c. 1705-56).

20-21 'Paris' has not been unidentified but was presumably an individual known as both a poet and a violinist.

22 'Welsted': the poet Leonard Welsted (1688-1747); 'Tibbald': the editor, playwright and poet Lewis Theobald (1688-1744).

23 'Budgel': the writer Eustace Budgell (1686-1737). In February 1733 Budgell founded a weekly periodical named *The Bee* that ran until June 1735: hence Humphreys' 'from *Bee* to *Bee*'.

31-2 'Phoebus' is a name for both Apollo and, as here, the Sun.

34 'Oldmixon' is undoubtedly the translator George Oldmixon. The questions raised by the footnote to Humphreys' poem are addressed in my *Händel-Jahruch* article and in the paragraph below.

36 The implication appears to be that Humphreys regarded Handel as the savage and Oldmixon as the dunce.

50-52 The 'grotto', the Thames and the 'rural gate' are references to features of Pope's villa near the River Thames at Twickenham.

‘The unborn Poet’

The meaning of Humphreys’ footnote is not immediately clear. The implication is that Oldmixon had translated Handel operas by the time the poem was published, but this is not borne out by any evidence. In my conference paper I suggested that *Parnasso in festa* may have been regarded as an opera (because it had been produced at the King’s Theatre) and that Humphreys may have been referring to Oldmixon’s youth (he was in his early twenties in 1734). Another plausible interpretation has occurred to me since. Although, by January 1735, Oldmixon had translated *Parnasso in festa* into English verse, he had certainly not published and probably not written any poetry of his own. Perhaps this is the sense in which he was the ‘unborn’ poet. Alas! since he seems *never* to have published any writings of his own, he may have remained unborn to the end of his days.

Colin Timms

RECENT ADDITIONS TO THE GERALD COKE HANDEL COLLECTION

The Gerald Coke Handel Foundation continues to acquire antiquarian and modern materials to add to the Collection at the Foundling Museum, enabling it to maintain its position as a premier research resource.

One significant recent acquisition is the purchase of an early eighteenth-century Italian manuscript of more than eighty Italian opera arias by various composers, including Handel, Alessandro Scarlatti, Lotti, Gasparini, Caldara and Benedetto Marcello. The manuscript was copied in the first decade of the century by a number of hands. Interesting questions are raised, in particular, by the Handel aria (‘Ho un non sò che nel cor’ from *Agrippina*), which has a brief annotation in the hand of the composer, and by the aria ascribed to Marcello, by whom no stage work is currently known.

Among other items added to the collection in 2023 are a 1747 edition of *Judas Maccabeus* (Smith no. 2), a 1790 catalogue of publications by the Thompson family of music publishers, and a large silver commemoration medal from the Birmingham Musical Festival of 1834. A French edition of a set of parts for six of Handel’s overtures published in the composer’s lifetime (c.

1749) has been purchased: the *Second recueil de Six ouvertures des opera de Xerces, Rinaldo, Pharamond, Berenice, Radamiste et Ptolomée: pour les violons, flutes et hautbois, en quatre parties séparées* is now accession number 15131. The collection also benefited from the generous donation of a group of 32 late eighteenth-century single movement printings of oratorio movements: only two of these were duplicates of items already in the Collection, and several were not in RISM.

A sketch in ink by Giovanni Battista Cipriani (1727–85), depicting an allegorical study as a title page, has been purchased (accession no. 15687); the sketch depicts angels and putti around a sheet, on which a cruder hand has added a spurious publication title ascribed to Handel. The sketch relates to Cipriani’s *Allegorical study for a Memorial print*, oil on canvas, depicting an image of Handel on the sheet, which was already in the Collection (accession no. 5224).

The Collection has acquired on long-term loan a Handel autograph manuscript of the hunting song ‘The morning is charming’ (HWV 226). The words of the song were written by Charles Legh, and the manuscript has belonged to the Legh family of Adlington Hall, Cheshire, since Handel presented it to them in 1751. Now that Adlington Hall has been sold, the family has passed it into our care. It has been digitalised and added to the online catalogue as accession no. 15350.

Katharine Hogg

HANDEL INSTITUTE ANNOUNCEMENTS

TERENCE BEST (1929–2024)

The Trustees and Council of the Handel Institute regret to report the death on 10 January, at the age of 94, of their colleague and friend Terence Best. A founder-member of the Institute, Terence was an editor and scholar of great distinction. He served as co-general editor of the *Hallsche Händel-Ausgabe* and played a pivotal role in fostering relations with both our German and our American colleagues. A full appreciation will be published in the next issue of this *Newsletter*.

CONFERENCE AWARDS

Conference awards help individuals attend a conference to read a paper or present a poster on a Handel-related subject that has already been

accepted by the organisers. Awards relate to the cost of travel and/or accommodation. Preference is given to postgraduate students and early-career academics. For further details and an application form please go to the website <https://handelinstitute.org>. Applications must be submitted before expenditure is incurred and should be addressed to Dr Helen Coffey (helen.coffey@open.ac.uk). The deadlines are **30 April**, **31 August** and **30 November**.

RESEARCH AWARDS

Applications are invited for Research awards of up to £2,000 in support of a project relating to the music or life of George Frideric Handel or his associates. The Institute encourages applications from any student or scholar, irrespective of age or background. Awards cannot be used for the payment of university or college fees. Further details and the application form are found at <https://handelinstitute.org>. All applications must be submitted to Dr Helen Coffey (helen.coffey@open.ac.uk) before expenditure is incurred. The next closing date is **30 November 2024**.

OPERA AWARDS

The Handel Institute offers grants of up to £5,000 towards a staged production in the UK of an opera by Handel. 'Opera' means a work that Handel considered to be an opera – one of his works in Italian that he performed with sets, costumes and action and which contains at least some music by him. The production company may be professional or amateur or a mixture of both. The next closing date for applications is **30 November 2024**. For further details please visit the website <https://handelinstitute.org>. Any preliminary enquiries may be addressed to Dr Ruth Smith (res1000@cam.ac.uk).

FRIENDS OF THE HANDEL INSTITUTE

The Handel Institute promotes the study and appreciation of the music and life of Handel and his contemporaries and associates. Friends of the Handel Institute receive two issues of this *Newsletter* each year. The annual subscription is £20 (registered students £10). For further information go to handelinstitute.org or email treasurer@handelinstitute.org.