

# NEWSLETTER of The American Handel Society

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## 2019 AMERICAN HANDEL FESTIVAL

*Nathan Link, Centre College*



On February 7–10, 2019, the American Handel Society held its biennial American Handel Festival at Indiana University Bloomington. The conference was exceptionally well-run, in large part thanks to the efforts of Ayana Smith, local events coordinator, with the support of Dana T. Marsh and the Jacobs School of Music Historical Performance Institute, IU’s Department of Musicology, and the AHS program committee: Norbert Dubowy (chair), John Roberts, and Sarah Van der Laan (Associate Professor of Comparative Literature at IU).

After a tour of the Musical Arts Center and Opera Theater, the conference opened Thursday night with the Howard Serwer Memorial Lecture, presented by Ellen Rosand (Yale University). Her paper, “Handel’s ‘Music,’” explored the fascinating topic of the rare moments in Handel’s operas and oratorios in which the characters within the story are actually singing—that is, when the singing heard by the performers and audience is perceived as literal song by the characters within the story, as opposed to the speech, thought, or emotion that operatic and oratorio arias usually represent. Rosand pointed to several markers by which actual song within operas and oratorios are demarcated as such, and discussed the profound impact the presence of real music within a story can have upon the plot.

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## HANDEL’S *SEMELE*: THE ENGLISH CONCERT AT CARNEGIE HALL, APRIL 14, 2019

*Mark Risinger, New York, NY*



*Front left to right: Elizabeth DeShong (Ino), Soloman Howard (Cadmus), Brenda Rae (Semele), and Christopher Lowrey (Athamas) singing the quartet “Why dost thou thus untimely grieve” in Part I with Harry Bicket directing The English Concert. Back: The Clarion Choir. Photography by Steve J. Sherman.*

The opportunity to hear excellent performances of Handel’s music by The English Concert has become a regular feature of the Carnegie Hall season. In recent years, *Rinaldo*, *Ariodante*, and *Radamisto* have figured among the concert offerings, almost always with outstanding casts of singers and players. This spring’s choice was *Semele*, and it was perhaps the most successful of the series thus far. Harry Bicket assembled a marvelous cast of singers, leading The

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