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PETER PASQUALINO, A CELLIST IN HANDEL BANDS

David Hunter

One of the delights of having a book published is the receipt of helpful corrections from readers. Matteo Bonifacio, a Ph.D. student at the University of Turin, Italy, brought to my attention an error on page 110 of *The Lives of George Frideric Handel* (2015), where I name Marc'Antonio Pasqualini as a cellist who may have been part of the band put together by Matthew Dubourg for Handel's performances in Dublin, 1741–42.¹ The problem is that this Pasqualini died in 1691 and had been a well-known soprano castrato who sang in the Sistine Chapel choir and on the stages of Rome and Paris.² He was also a notable composer.

The correct identification, as pointed out by my correspondent, is Peter Pasqualino or Pasqualino de Marzis as he is known on his two musical publications.³ No evidence has yet been found for his parentage or that provides an explanation for the two main forms of his name.⁴ Though there is no article on him in *Grove Music Online*, *The Biographical Dictionary of Actors, Actresses* has one and it provides a starting point for our enquiry. If we may begin at the end, Pasqualino is reported to have died February 18, 1766 and to have been buried two days later, at St. Pancras.⁵ No age at death is given

1 I had been more cautious in my initial exploration of the topic, when I followed Brian Boydell in using the musician's last name only. "The Irish State Music from 1716 to 1742 and Handel's Band in Dublin," *Göttinger Händel-Beiträge* 11 (2006): 171–98, at 190.

2 For more on the singer see Margaret Murata, "Pasqualini, Marc'Antonio." *Grove Music Online*, accessed December 6, 2017. <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.ezproxy.lib.utexas.edu/subscriber/article/grove/music/21019>

3 *Six Solos for Two Violoncellos* (London, [1748]); *Six Solos for Two Violoncellos*, Op. 2 (London, [1751]).

4 The various permutations of spelling that are to be found or posited make searching for information on the cellist more complex than usual, with three medial vowels (a, e, i) and two terminal ones (i, o), as well as the appellation and the anglicized forename.

5 Philip H. Highfill, Jr., Kalman A. Burnim, and Edward A. Langhans, *A Biographical Dictionary of Actors, Actresses, Musicians, Dancers, Managers & Other Stage Personnel in London, 1660–1800* (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1973–), 11:232, gives as the source of death the "Notitia Dramatica" at the British Library (Add. MS 25390-2), and of burial as Daniel Lysons, *The Environs of London* (London, 1795), 3:373.

continued on p. 2

IN THIS ISSUE

Peter Pasqualino, A Cellist In Handel Bands – David Hunter
Joseph And His Brethren In San Francisco – Graydon Beeks

From the President's Desk – Graydon Beeks

Upcoming Conferences And Festival

Call for applications: J. Merrill Knapp Fellowship

JOSEPH AND HIS BRETHREN IN SAN FRANCISCO

Graydon Beeks



Mezzo-soprano Diana Moore (left) as Joseph with Nicholas McGegan (right) conducting Philharmonia Baroque Orchestra & Chorale. Photography by Frank Wing.

Handel's oratorio *Joseph and His Brethren* was written at the end of the summer of 1743 and premiered at Covent Garden Theatre in London on March 2, 1744. It was one of the more successful oratorios, achieving a total of ten performances under the composer's direction, but fell into disfavor after his death. Winton Dean, in particular, credited many of the problems with the work to the seemingly inept libretto by James Miller. More recent scholars, following the lead of Duncan Chisholm, have sought to rehabilitate Miller's work, pointing out that the omission of crucial pieces of information and the long lapse of time between the first two acts would not have bothered members of an 18th-century audience who were likely to have known their Bible well, and were in any event accounted for in the "Advertisement" that appeared in the printed wordbook.

No amount of effort will be sufficient to completely rehabilitate the quality of Miller's lines, which are at once convoluted and awkward, but Handel was to set similarly difficult texts by other authors. What probably doomed the work to failure in the later 18th and 19th centuries was the dominant aura of sentimentality and the lack of variety and distinction among the choruses. Hearing the work again in a fine performance by the Philharmonia Baroque Orchestra & Chorale under the direction of Nicholas McGegan made me appreciate what a good work it is in many ways, without making me forget entirely its weaknesses.

I heard the performance on Thursday, December 14, 2017 in the Herbst Theatre in San Francisco, CA, which was the first of four given in the Bay Area. The orchestra played superbly and the chorus, prepared by Bruce Lamott, its longtime director, sang with both power and finesse. The few moments of

continued on p. 5