

# NEWSLETTER

of

## The American Handel Society

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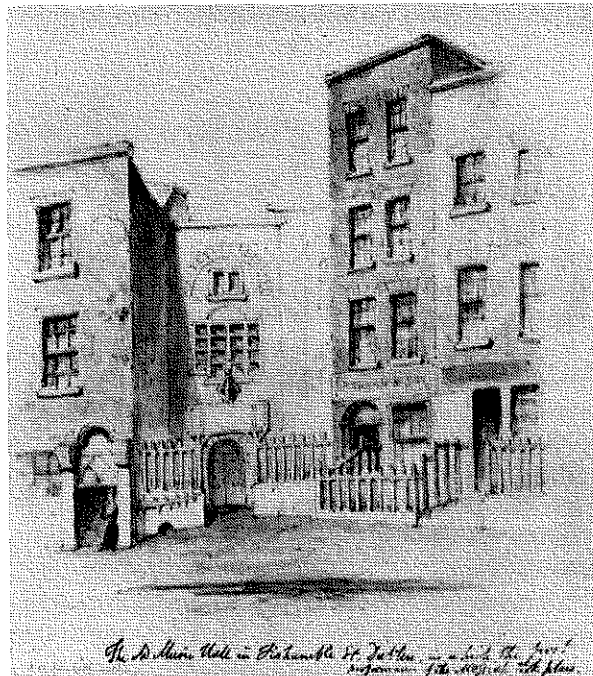
### *Messiah* Anniversary: Some Further Thoughts

In the August 1991 issue of this newsletter, the lead article celebrated the 250th anniversary of Handel's composition of *Messiah* with a brief summary of the current state of research on this oratorio and a description of three significant recent publications. Six months later, as we approach the same anniversary of the first performance of *Messiah* at the Music Hall in Fishamble Street, Dublin, on April 13, 1742, it seems appropriate to call attention to several other recent publications which were either omitted from the earlier article or have appeared since its deadline.

The first is a critical discography of *Messiah* prepared by Teri Noel Towe as part of the anthology *Choral Music on Records*, edited by Alan Blyth and published by Cambridge University Press in March 1991. In it, Towe discusses seventy-six complete or slightly abridged recorded performances dating from the beginning of the century. This discography is essential for both the serious collector of Handel recordings and the person searching for that one "perfect" recording of *Messiah*. In a related development, Koch International plans to issue this month a recording entitled "A Collector's *Messiah*." This anthology, on two compact discs, will reproduce rare and unusual early performances including the first commercial recording — an abridged "Every Valley" first released in 1898.

Towe's discography is cited to open an article by Andrew Porter entitled "Messiah: Two new perspectives," published in the fall 1991 issue of *Historical Performance. The Journal of Early Music America*. In it, Porter reviews at some length Donald Burrows's Cambridge Music Handbook for mentioned in my August 1991 article, and the Harmonia Mundi recording of *Messiah* listed in the "Recent Handel Recordings" column in this issue of the newsletter. The latter, conducted by Nicholas McGegan and containing nearly all of the recoverable alternative movements, permits the listener in possession of a programmable compact disc player to recreate the various performing versions presented by Handel. Porter has some caveats concerning both the quality of the performance and its completeness, and his review is especially important reading for performers and prospective purchasers.

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*The Music Hall in Fishamble St. Dublin, as built, the first performance 1742-1898, etc. etc.*

The Music Hall, Fishamble Street, Dublin.

Watercolor by E. W. Fairholt.

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### *Agrippina*

In A.D. 37, the year that Gaius Caesar, known as Caligula, became emperor, there was born to Cneius Domitius Ænobarbus (died A.D. 40) and Agrippina, daughter of Germanicus and grand-niece of Augustus, a son, Domitius Nero. Caligula died in A.D. 41 and was succeeded by Tiberius Claudius Drusus Nero Germanicus (Claudius). Book xi of Tacitus' *Annals* begins with accounts of the unspeakable behavior of Claudius' consort, Messalina and concludes with her very unpleasant death. Book xii reports the decision taken by Claudius' freed men, Pallas and Narcissus among them, that the proper consort for the fifty-one year old emperor was Agrippina, the widow of Domitius Ænobarbus; no matter that he was her uncle. Nero was eleven years old when his mother married Claudius; Claudius adopted Nero as his successor when the latter was twelve, and five years later his mother succeeded in poisoning the emperor and placing the seventeen-year

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Ledbetter, David. *Continuo Playing According to Handel: his Figured Bass Exercises*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990. 106 pages. Cloth: \$44.95; paper, \$19.95.

David Ledbetter's *Continuo Playing According to Handel* is intended as a practical tutor for beginners in figured bass realization, utilizing transcriptions, with commentary, of Handel's exercises in thoroughbass and fugal improvisation (sample realizations are appended). The book does not attempt a comprehensive treatment of continuo performance in Handel's works; the commentary contains sound advice and some excellent supplementary exercises by Ledbetter, but generally speaking does not discuss the fine points of Baroque accompaniment — quick adjustments in texture, dissonance treatment, proper doubling, expressive forms of arpeggiation, etc. — not even of continuo harmonization. It is true that many of the former are not directly suggested by, and in some cases not relevant to the exercises themselves. However, the title suggests a broader, more extensive discussion than that provided by Ledbetter, and these studies do bring up some interesting harmonization problems which Ledbetter does not mention: the penultimate bar, second beat of the Fugue Exercise no. 3 (pp. 48, 99), for example, may contain an interesting example of "prospective" figuring; the section on seventh chords (pp. 22-24) does not treat the stationary seventh; and the option of using an occasional 6-4 chord in a long chain of notes figured 6, a practice sanctioned by Mattheson in his *Grosse General-Bass-Schule*, is not suggested.

The exercises survive in two sources: the Fitzwilliam Museum autographs, published in facsimile by Alfred Mann (*Hallische-Händel Ausgabe, Supplement*, vol. 1), and a copy made by J. C. Smith Jr., part of the Gerald Coke Collection (described in passing by Ledbetter as "another autograph source," p. 64). It is unfortunate that no comparison is made between the two sources, since any substantive variants in the Smith Jr., copy might derive from his study with Handel.

The realizations are executed in a fluent chordal style and are eminently reliable, although individual exercises have been realized more successfully by Alfred Mann. Frequently, Ledbetter's top part rises well above the generally accepted upper limit for a continuo accompaniment (especially pp. 74, 78, 93, 94). Since these studies are not true accompaniments, Ledbetter's use of the upper range is perfectly acceptable; however, some brief caveat should have been included as a warning for the inexperienced player. Ledbetter's preference for ascending and descending scale patterns in the soprano, although often effective and implied by the exercises themselves, occasionally yields part-writing which — as the author himself admits — is not strictly correct (pp. 28f, 84). This sets a poor example for the beginner, who should learn to follow the rules scrupulously before attempting more sophisticated tech-

The speaker for the 1991 American Handel Society Lecture was Professor Paul Brainard of Yale University. Professor Brainard's lecture, entitled "Bach and Handel: Another Look," was given at the Folger Shakespeare Library in Washington D.C. on Friday, November 1, 1991. The following article is the author's synopsis of the lecture.

#### Bach and Handel: Another Look

The juxtaposition of the two names Handel and Bach has challenged historians with one of those topics that are seemingly inexhaustible, even as the quest for understanding the two men as individuals continues to open up new perspectives.

The first segment of the paper was mostly about Handel, because it addressed one of the very few areas in which we understand far less about him than about Bach: the vexed question of what Sedley Taylor called "Handel's indebtedness to works by other composers." It took as its point of departure the well-known fundamental distinction between Handel's method of appropriating *individual* ideas from existing music, and Bach's practice of adapting entire compositions to new uses. A corollary of this difference is that, with Bach, provided we have both the model and the adaptation, we are never in doubt about the intentionality of the process. With Handel, intentionality is precisely what is most often and most seriously in question. My discussion of this issue advocated, in sum, "a more 'holistic' view of compositions that are suspected of being meaningfully related," exercising care with "optical" resemblances and taking context more fully into account.

The second segment of the paper was concerned with word-tone relationships, beginning with the well-known fact that both Bach and Handel respond with equal alacrity to certain kinds of individual words, in the manner of the old madrigal. In qualification of this, it was proposed — as a highly tentative hypothesis, subject to extensive further study — that Handel appears to be far more selective than Bach in the kinds of "purple" (affective) words that he singles out for figural treatment. Thus, although he is just as enthusiastic as Bach in depicting "joy" and the like through typical responses like rapid coloraturas, he seems to be much less prone than Bach to give similar emphasis to individual words of sorrow, pain, grief, etc. Whereas Bach seems almost unable to leave these words alone, Handel more frequently passes over them without special attention. Obviously I am NOT suggesting that Handel does not choose to portray pain and the like (think of the power of his setting of "He was despised"), but merely that he seems to be less interested than Bach in the local figural implications of those particular kinds of words. Rather, his is an expressivity achieved only in the larger

## American Handel Society Recording Award

The American Handel Society has instituted an annual prize for an outstanding recent recording of a work by Handel. The prize committee welcomes recommendations for a new recording released during 1991 that is worthy of recognition. In addition to being a musically superlative performance, the recording should take into account current thoughts about eighteenth-century performance practice. Although the award need not be restricted to performances on "period instruments," the recording should utilize correct and stylistically valid continuo realization, ornamentation (where appropriate), etc.

The performance should use an accurate edition worthy of recognition by a scholarly society — one that reflects a version of the work which Handel himself knew. All things being equal, a recording that constitutes a significant contribution to Handel's recorded oeuvre is preferable. That is, if several recordings are eligible for the prize in a given year, an excellent performance of a previously unrecorded major work will carry more weight than a frequently recorded one. However, if a frequently recorded work otherwise meets the criteria established by the committee more than any other recording, it should claim the prize.

Suggestions for recordings to be considered by the recording award committee should be sent to David Ross Hurley, 5514 South Blackstone Avenue, Apartment 319, Chicago, Illinois 60637.

## Recent Handel Recordings

This list contains recordings released since the last list was printed in the April 1991 newsletter or for which information is only now available. Rereleases in compact disc format of older recordings have been included only if they seem of particular interest.

*Agrippina* (HWV 6)  
Sally Bradshaw, soprano  
Wendy Hill, soprano  
Lisa Saffer, soprano  
Nicholas Isherwood, bass  
Drew Minter, countertenor  
Michael Dean, bass-baritone  
Ralf Popken, countertenor  
Béla Sziágyi, bass  
Gloria Banditelli, contralto  
Capella Savaria  
Nicholas McGegan, conductor  
Harmonia Mundi France 907063

*Amadigi di Gaula* (HWV 11)  
Nathalie Stutzmann, mezzo-soprano  
Jennifer Smith, soprano  
Eiddwen Harrhy, soprano  
Bernarda Fink, mezzo-soprano  
Pascal Bertin, mezzo-soprano  
Les Musiciens de Louvre and Choir

## Handel Calendar

The American Handel Society welcomes news or information about events of interest to Handelians. If possible, please include the address and phone number where readers may obtain details.

*Messiah*, May 10, 1992, 3 pm, Kennedy Center ("Kennedy Center Tribute to Germany"). Benita Valente, Denyce Graves, Jeffrey Gall, Drew Minter, Curtis Rayam, David Arnold. The University of Maryland Chorus, the Smithsonian Concerto Grosso, conducted by Paul Traver. Pre-concert lecture by Andrew Porter, 1:45 pm. (202) 467-4600.

**Göttinger Händel-Festspiele**, June 4-8, 1992. Symposium, "Handel and European Churchmusic of his Time": Christian Bunners (Berlin), Friedhelm Krummacher (Kiel), Friedrich Wilhelm Riedel (Mainz), Hans Joachim Marx (Hamburg), Donald Burrows (Milton Keynes, Great Britain), Graydon Beeks (Claremont, California, United States). Performances: June 4, 5, and 7 - *Ottone, re di Germania* (Drew Minter, Lisa Saffer, Michael Dean, Juliane Gondek, Ralf Popken, Patricia Spence, the Freiburg Baroque Orchestra, conducted by Nicholas McGegan); June 6 - "Brockes" Passion (Nico van der Meel, Matthias Görne, Christine Schäfer, Graham Pushee, Wilfried Jochens, the Vocal Ensemble of St Jacobi, and the Cythara Ensemble, Hamburg, conducted by Rudolf Kelber. Göttinger Händel-Gesellschaft e. V., Hainholzweg 3-5, 3400 Göttingen, Germany, attn. Frau E. M. Starke.

**Händel-Festspiele, Halle (Saale)**, June 12-16. June 12 - *Giulio Cesare in Egitto*; June 13 - Coronation Anthems for George II (Choir of Westminster Abbey, the London Handel Orchestra, conducted by Martin Neary); June 13, 14 - *Alcina*; June 13 - *il pastor fido*; June 13 - *L'Allegro, il penseroso ed il moderato* (Robert-Franz Singakademie, Philharmonisches Staatsorchester Halle, conducted by Jürgen Böhme); 14 June - *Samson* (Ernst-Senff-Chor Berlin, Philharmonisches Staatsorchester Halle, conducted by Heribert Beissel); June 15 - *Ode for St Cecilia's Day* (Berliner Rundfunkchor, Berliner Sinfonieorchester, conducted by Max Pommer). Direktion der Händel-Festspiele, Kleine Brauhausstraße 26, O-4020 Halle (Saale), (046) 2 32 77.

**Maryland Handel Festival and American Handel Society Annual Meeting**, October 30-November 1. Featured performance - *Hercules*; conference topic - "Representations of Classical Antiquity in the First Half of the Eighteenth Century." Further information will be provided in the August newsletter. Maryland Handel Festival / American Handel Society, Department of Music, University of Maryland, College Park, MD 20742, attn. J. Parker. (301) 405-5570.

Another recent publication which is of special interest to performers is the chapter on *Messiah* by Peter Le Huray in his book *Authenticity in Performance. Eighteenth-Century Case Studies*, published by Cambridge University Press in 1990. While this useful discussion raises significant questions of performance practice and provides some tentative answers, it suffers from having appeared before Donald Burrows's edition of *Messiah* for Edition Peters, and his Cambridge Music Handbook. Le Huray refers his readers to the landmark Watkins Shaw edition of 1959 without indicating that some of its premises have since been called into question. For example, Shaw accepted the "con Rip:" and "senza Rip:" markings found in the conducting score as indicative of Handel's standard performing policy, while most scholars now generally agree that they refer only to performances in 1749, when Handel's orchestra contained an unusually large body of string players. Le Huray accepts Shaw's interpretation on the basis of the presence of violin *concerlino* parts in the surviving Foundling Hospital material, without noting (as Shaw does in *A Textual Companion to Handel's "Messiah"*) that there are no differences between these and the other Foundling Hospital violin parts, and that neither carry the "con Rip:" and "senza Rip:" indications. It is also misleading of Le Huray to state that all the solo tenors and basses employed in *Messiah* "seem to have been English," since both Gustavus Waltz and Henry Theodore Reinhold were English only in the same sense that Handel was.

A further article which sheds some light on *Messiah* is Martin Picker's "Sir Watkin Williams Wynn and the Rutgers Handel Collection," published in the December 1991 issue of *The Journal of the Rutgers University Libraries*. Wynn, a Welsh Baronet who lived from 1749-1789, was a notable patron of the arts active from the time of his majority until his death. He was one of the directors of the Concerts of Ancient Music and of the 1784 Handel Commemoration, and his collection of Handel prints and manuscripts was described by Burney in his account of that great event. The bulk of the collection was acquired by Rutgers around 1950, and was described by Picker in the December 1965 issue of the same journal. A single manuscript volume containing Part II of *Messiah* in the hand of John Matthews surfaced in 1988, and was described by Donald Burrows in the December 1989 issue of this newsletter. Picker's latest article places Wynn's collection in the context of his other activities and, in a postscript, describes a printed volume of organ concertos at Rutgers not from the Wynn collection, which was originally owned by Anglo-American organist, singer, composer, and teacher Raynor Taylor (1747-1825), who as a chorister in the Chapel Royal was said to have been present at Handel's funeral.

Finally, yet another lost manuscript of *Messiah* has come to light. This is a copy made shortly after Handel's death by the English organist, theorist, composer, and teacher Marmaduke Overend (died 1790), a student of

William Boyce and, from 1760 until his death, organist at Isleworth, Middlesex. His library was sold in 1791, and the *Messiah* manuscript, bound in distinctive blue morocco leather, reappeared in various sale catalogues over the next two centuries. It surfaced most recently as Lot 385 in Christie's sale of June 26, 1991, from which it was purchased for the Gerald Coke Collection, where it will be available for scholarly study.

Graydon Beeks

*Agrippina from page 1*

old lad on the throne. From this lurid bit of history, Vincenzo Cardinal Grimani, who knew his Tacitus (and Suetonius) very well indeed, fashioned a brilliant, intrigue-laden libretto for the twenty-four year old Handel to set to music. *Agrippina* probably had its first performance in January, 1710, and contemporary accounts report a brilliant success.

In January and February, 1992, the Washington Opera presented twelve performances of Handel's *Agrippina* at the John F. Kennedy Center's Eisenhower Theater in a production "originally conceived and directed for the Cologne Opera by Michael Hampe." Hampe (we assume it was he) devised an elegant theatrical conceit: staging the opera as a Napoleonic period piece. This was an ingenious idea given the Empire's fixation on the Roman imperial style. It had a kind of recursive historical logic and provided an excuse for some very beautiful costumes — especially Ottone's absolutely smashing general's uniform. The sets too were stylish, but alas, the curtain was rung down for each change of venue.

The role of Nerone (Nero) sung by Jon Garrison, a tenor specializing largely in the standard nineteenth-century repertoire, was vocally miscast as an arrogant, girl-crazy thirteen-year old: a proto-Cherubino with a scheming mother. Hampe seems to have half understood the problem, because in this production Nerone first appears riding a hobby horse and playing peek-a-boo with Agrippina. At other times he was made to cuddle up to her in ways that male teenagers avoid, and which in the case of a big, strapping, mature tenor looked and sounded like Oedipus run amok. Dale Travis, a baritone, sang the role of Ottone (the future emperor Otho). That Handel set this role for an alto reflected operatic convention and perhaps his and Grimani's understanding that Otho was eighteen at the time of the action. Handel (or perhaps Grimani) decided that Narcissus (Narciso) should be an alto, but Hampe dropped him into the cellar too. By so doing, Hampe missed the great vocal and theatrical fun of the bass Pallas and the alto Narciso (Jonathan Green) playing off one another. The two superfluous baritones obliterated the contrast provided by low roles for Claudius (Claudio) and Lesbo. Fortunately, there is only one ensemble that was affected: the quartet "Il tuo figlio," in which Narciso sank, from time to time, below the bass, and Nerone's enthusiasm at being named Caesar was audibly dampened by its demotion into the tenor range.

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The new recording of *Agrippina* directed by Nicholas McGegan [see "Recent Handel Recordings" in this issue of the Newsletter] uses all of the music to be found in Chrysander's edition, and runs three hours and thirty minutes. To equate it with the theater, one must add two intermissions of fifteen minutes, making a total of four hours. The program for the Kennedy Center production advised the audience that the "running time is approximately two hours, forty-five minutes including one intermission." In fact the performance ran about three hours and fifteen minutes in spite of the fact that one intermission was omitted, many arias were dropped (including most of those for Narciso and Pallante), B sections and reprises of at least six arias were not sung, and the recitative was so drastically curtailed that at times the intrigue became almost unintelligible. The time saved was wasted in the simple recitatives, sung mostly at full voice and therefore far too slowly, and in dropping the curtain twice for scene changes. Occasionally the scene change behind the curtain not only wasted time, but spoiled a dramatic effect. In act I, we are not introduced to Poppea until scene xiv. At the end of scene xiii, which takes place in the "Square of the Capitol," Ottone, with the stage to himself, speaks of empire and "un divin volto e amato," and sings of his hopes and dreams. The scene changes and for the first time we see Poppea — in her boudoir seated in front of a mirror, singing an apostrophe to her lovely pearls. Clearly the theatrical intent is to make Ottone's dream manifest in the flesh and to do it instantaneously in the sense that movie-makers cut from scene to scene for dramatic effect. Instead, we sat in the dark and listened to dull thumping behind the curtain.

As nature abhors a vacuum, so do stage directors detest quiet, mistaking it for entropy. Predictably, the performers regularly upstaged each other during arias and from time to time even managed to upstage themselves (Poppea dabbing herself with a large powder puff during "Vaghe perli," or Agrippina trying to help Poppea dress while singing "Non hò cor che per amarti"). Beyond that, there were myriad infelicitous details and even an anachronism or two as when immediately on Nerone's exit after his "Con saggio tuo," Agrippina pumped her right fist and forearm in imitation of Jimmy Connors's reaction to winning a difficult point. The directing occasionally lurched into the sophomoric as when Nerone repeatedly went out of his way to trip a beggar while distributing alms in the Forum, or when he made a flying leap into Poppea's bed from a closet where he had been hiding. At other times it went out of its way to insult the audience's intelligence, as in Poppea's "Bel piacere," when she and Ottone undress one another. The right look, the right tempo, the right gesture would have been just as erotic.

In the lead article of volume 1 of the *Händel-Jahrbuch* (1928), Hermann Abert complained that since the first modern production of a Handel opera in Göttingen in 1920, "there has been a wild hunt by producers, directors, and conductors for the long buried Handel opera

scores so that each could have a premiere; most notably each of them has found an arranger who has, alas, simply butchered the work for his purposes. At present it seems to us quite clear that in spite of all the real enthusiasm, this new Handel movement has been subject to the three forces of our times: speculation, snobbery, and modishness." Though the Kennedy Center's production of *Agrippina* was a far cry from the performances Abert knew in the 1920s, his words still apply; indeed, "[the production] disrupted the inner workings of the composition." *Plus ça change ...*

Brenda Harris as Agrippina and Janice Hall as Poppea sang and acted very well. David Evits and John Ostendorf, both redoubtable singers of Handel's music, seemed uncomfortable and not at their best. Comment on the work of Jon Garrison, Jonathan Green, or Dale Travis would be out of order, because they were singing roles not intended for their voices.

Howard Serwer

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Book Review from page 2

niques; with slight changes in the soprano part, an alternate, "correct" version could easily be produced.

One objectionable aspect of these realizations is the over-abundance of ties which often seems to contradict harmonic and metrical imperatives. In fact, Ledbetter states categorically, "If you are playing these exercises on an organ, you should tie any common tones between chords" (p. 4). Admittedly, continuo-type textures on the organ are generally more sustained in style and execution than those on the harpsichord. Nevertheless, a pointed articulation of upper parts is often desirable on the organ to delineate rhythmic and melodic structure. An excessive sustaining of common tones only makes an organ accompaniment thick and unwieldy.

In a few instances, the realizations contravene the implications of Handel's figuring or the actual intervals represented (pp. 77, 88, 98). In the first example, the use of 2 alone is admittedly ambiguous, but given the musical context and clear pedagogical plan of the series, 2 most probably means 5-2, realized by Ledbetter as 6-4-2. The latter is introduced and used extensively in the following piece; thus it seems likely that the composer intends a definite distinction between [5]-2 and 6-4-2. In the second instance (p. 88, bars 38-40), Handel's vertical sequence of compound figures obviously indicates the desired chordal spacing, since the passage is an almost exact repetition of an earlier progression, but with the figuring rearranged into abnormal configurations: 8-#-9, 8-#-7, 5-6, etc. Handel's intent is clarified by the careful positioning of figures in the autographs (*Hallsche Händel Ausgabe, Supplement*, vol. 1, pp. 32, 33), which is not always followed in the transcription and the realization of this exercise (pp. 35, 88).

Ledbetter resorts to the expedient of three-part texture fairly often in these realizations, whereas *enquatre* continuo treatment is usually more instructive. The commentary often implies, quite unjustifiably, that three-part texture is the only or best method to execute certain

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progressions (pp. 10, 22, 44).

The use of terminology is another drawback of the commentary: "stretto" is used twice in the analysis of a piece which hardly contains a real stretto passage (p. 54), "dominant chord" is used in the broadest possible sense (p. 35), and there is nothing particularly "galant" about conjunct parallel thirds over a dominant bass pedal (p. 36). Usage of this type might prove somewhat confusing to the beginning theory student, as would the implication that any compound figure with #4 in it indicates a diminished seventh chord (p. 36). Ledbetter seems to confuse the *regola dell' ottava* with common sequential clichés of continuo harmony which happen to have a bass in conjunct motion (p. 7); at one point he practically equates the *regola* with a "scale sequence" (p. 17). Also, example 11 on page 22 is radically different from any *regola* I have seen in a Baroque thoroughbass tutor.

Several useful items are conspicuously absent from the bibliography; one wonders about the value of any listing of late Baroque thoroughbass treatises, however limited in intent, which omits Mattheson and St. Lambert. Nevertheless, Ledbetter's book is a welcome contribution to the small number of modern pedagogical works on figured bass. Except as noted above, the format and accuracy of the transcriptions is highly satisfactory. Hopefully, these fine practice pieces will become known to a wider group of keyboard players and early music specialists. Ledbetter offers excellent suggestions for further practice in the compositions of J. S. Bach.

Patrick J. Rogers

Recordings from page 3

Marc Minkowski, conductor  
Erato 2292-45490-2 (2 discs)

*Floridante* (HWV 14)

Drew Minter, countertenor  
Mária Zádori, soprano  
Katalin Farkas, soprano  
Annette Markert, mezzo-soprano  
István Gáti, baritone  
József Moldvay, baritone  
Capella Savaria  
Nicholas McGegan, conductor  
Hungaraton 31304-06 (3 discs)

*Giulio Cesare* (HWV 17)

Jennifer Larmore, contralto  
Barbara Schlick, soprano  
Bernarda Fink, mezzo-soprano  
Marianne Rørholm, soprano  
Derek Lee Ragin, countertenor  
Furio Zanasi, bass  
Dominique Visse, countertenor  
Olivier Lalouette, bass  
Concerto Köln

René Jacobs, conductor  
Harmonia Mundi France 901385.87 (3 discs)

*Siroe* (HWV 24)

D'Anna Fortunato, mezzo-soprano  
Andrea Matthews, soprano  
Steven Rickards, countertenor  
Julianne Baird, soprano  
John Ostendorf, bass  
Brewer Chamber Orchestra (performed on original instruments)  
Rudolph Palmer, conductor  
Newport Classics NCD-60125 (3 discs)

*Orlando* (HWV 31)

James Bowman, countertenor  
Arleen Auger, soprano  
Catherine Robbin, contralto  
Emma Kirkby, soprano  
David Thomas, bass  
Academy of Ancient Music  
Christopher Hogwood, conductor  
L'Oiseau-Lyre 430 845-2 (3 discs)

*Alcina* (excerpts) (HWV 34)

Nancy Argenta, soprano  
CBC Vancouver Orchestra  
M. Huggett, conductor  
CBS Enterprises SMCD 5091  
[also on disc: incidental music to *The Alchemist* (HWV 43)]

"Heroic Arias"

Arias from *Alcina* (HWV 34), *Amadigi* (HWV 11), *Ariodante* (HWV 33), *Giulio Cesare* (HWV 17), *Giustino* (HWV 37), *Ottone* (HWV 15), and *Rinaldo* (HWV 7a)  
James Bowman, countertenor  
The King's Consort  
Robert King, conductor  
Hyperion CDA-66483

Incidental music to *The Alchemist* (HWV 43)

Emma Kirkby, soprano  
Judith Nelson, soprano  
Patrizia Kwella, soprano  
David Thomas, bass  
Academy of Ancient Music  
Christopher Hogwood, conductor  
L'Oiseau-Lyre 430282-2  
[also on disc: incidental music to *Comus* (HWV 44)]

*La Resurrezione* (HWV 47)

Nancy Argenta, soprano  
Barbara Schlick, soprano  
Guillemette Laurens, mezzo-soprano  
Guy de Mey, tenor  
Klaus Martens, bass  
Amsterdam Baroque Orchestra  
Ton Koopman, conductor  
Erato CD 2292-45617-2 (2 discs)

Recordings from page 7

*Acis and Galatea* (HWV 49a)

Dawn Kotoski, soprano  
David Gordon, tenor  
Glenn Siebert, tenor  
Jan Opalach, bass  
Seattle Symphony Chorale, Seattle Symphony Orchestra  
Gerard Schwartz, conductor  
Delos 3107 (2 discs)

*Athalia* (HWV 52)

Joan Sutherland, soprano  
Emma Kirkby, soprano  
James Bowman, countertenor  
David Thomas, bass  
Academy of Ancient Music  
Christopher Hogwood, conductor  
L'Oiseau Lyre 215427 (2 discs)

*Saul* (HWV 53)

Lynne Dawson, soprano  
Donna Brown, soprano  
Derek Lee Ragin, countertenor  
John Mark Ainsley, tenor  
Alastair Miles, baritone  
English Baroque Soloists and Monteverdi Choir  
John Eliot Gardiner, conductor  
Philips 426265-2 (3 discs)

*Messiah* (HWV 56)

Joan Rodgers, soprano  
Della Jones, mezzo-soprano  
Philip Langridge, tenor  
Christopher Robson, countertenor  
Bryn Terfel, bass-baritone  
Collegium Musicum 90  
Richard Hickox, conductor  
Chandos CHAN 0522/23 (2 discs)

*Messiah* (in German; Mozart orchestration, K. 572)

Donna Brown, soprano  
Cornelia Kallisch, soprano  
Roberto Sacca, tenor  
Alastair Miles, bass  
Gächinger Kantorei Stuttgart, Bach Collegium Stuttgart  
Helmuth Rilling, conductor  
Hänssler Classic Exclusive Series 98.975 (2 discs)

*Messiah* (HWV 56; contains all of Handel's alternate versions)

Lorraine Hunt, soprano  
Janet Williams, soprano  
Patricia Spence, mezzo-soprano  
Drew Minter, countertenor  
Jeffrey Thomas, tenor  
William Parker, bass-baritone  
University of California, Berkeley Chamber Chorus  
Philip Brett, director  
Philharmonia Baroque Orchestra

Nicholas McGegan, conductor  
Harmonia Mundi HMU-907050.52 (3 discs)

*Belshazzar* (HWV 61)

Anthony Rolfe Johnson, tenor  
Arleen Auger, soprano  
Catherine Robbin, contralto  
James Bowman, countertenor  
David Wilson-Johnson, bass  
Richard Wistreich, bass  
The English Concert and Choir  
Trevor Pinnock, conductor  
Archiv 431 793-2AH3 (3 discs)

*Belshazzar* (HWV 61)

Felicity Palmer, soprano  
Maureen Lehane, mezzo-soprano  
Paul Esswood, countertenor  
Robert Tear, tenor  
Thomas Sunnegardh, tenor  
Peter van der Bilt, bass  
Staffan Sandlund, bass  
Stockholm Chamber Choir, Vienna Concentus Musicus  
Nikolaus Harnoncourt, conductor  
Teldec/Warner Classics 2292-42567-2 (3 discs) [reissue]

*Theodora* (HWV 68)

Roberta Alexander, soprano  
Jard van Nes, mezzo-soprano  
Jochen Kowalski, countertenor  
Hans-Peter Blochwitz, tenor  
Annton Scharinger, bass  
Vienna Concentus Musicus and Arnold Schoenberg Choir  
Nikolaus Harnoncourt, conductor  
Teldec 2292-46447-2 (2 discs)

*Alexander's Feast* (HWV 75a), Harp Concerto in B-flat Major (HWV 294b), Organ Concerto in G minor, op. 4, no. 1 (HWV 289c)

Nancy Argenta, soprano  
Ian Partridge, tenor  
Michael George, bass  
Andrew Lawrence-King, harp  
Paul Nicholson, organ  
Tragicomedia  
The Sixteen Choir and Orchestra  
Harry Christophers, conductor  
Collins Classics 7016-2 (2 discs)

Handel Cantatas: *Carco sempre di gloria* (HWV 87), *Lungi da me pensier tiranno* (HWV 125b), *Siete rose rugiadose* (HWV 162), *Udite il mio consiglio* (HWV 172)  
Derek Lee Ragin, countertenor  
Ensemble Divitia Cologne  
Channel Classics CCS 0890

*Clori, Tirsi e Fileno* (HWV 96)

Lorraine Hunt, soprano  
Jill Feldman, soprano

Abstract from page 2

(contextual) affective sense, not by local color. Bach's response to sorrow is of *both* kinds simultaneously. (Illustrations were chosen from the four arias in Bach's St. John Passion that partly share the same poetry as Handel's "Brookes" Passion.)

As a further aspect of the text-music relationship, the question of declamation was considered. Although Handel's accentuation of English is often criticized, other writers, notably Winton Dean, have countered with at least the implication that misaccentuation in Handel needn't matter to us. How much it mattered to *Handel* is, however, the more important question. Early on in his career, his questionable renderings of English (for example, in the Utrecht Te Deum) may well be attributable to his simply not knowing the language very well. Later, after decades of speaking English, however imperfectly, one doubts that he could possibly still be as totally unacquainted with the language as his treatment of it in arias and choruses — not, by the way, in recitatives — might seem to suggest. For instance, it seems very unlikely that "He SHALL feed his flock" is the way Handel himself would, without some external reason, accentuate those words in normal speech in 1742. (Both during the formal presentation and in the ensuing discussion, speculation about possible reasons for the accentuation, both musical and theological, remained inconclusive.)

In this same context, we should not overlook the fact that questionable or downright wrong accentuation can be found not only in Handel's English settings, but in his Italian (again barring recitatives), and even in his German ones. And it appears to be really true that the misaccentuations don't "matter" in Handel, for the reason that in much of his music we are dealing with a new aesthetic that has greatly loosened vocal music's ties to natural speech, and in which considerations of "tune" can easily outweigh those of speech-accent — even to the point of an outright reversal of the Monteverdian dictum "che la parola sia padrona dell' armonia, e non viceversa." Bach, by contrast, still subscribes to that old ideal of word-supremacy; and it is both rarer, and of considerably greater moment, when we find him composing in blatantly unnatural speech-rhythms. (BWV 109/5 and 111/2 were investigated as sample cases in point.)

Further related to the question of declamation is a stylistic trait that seems common in Handel, relatively rare in Bach. It appears to be the product of Italian operatic conventions and versification schemes; but in Handel it operates not only with Italian texts, but with English and German ones as well. The term proposed for it was "bar-ostinato," meaning the insistent reiteration of a measure-oriented rhythm of one or two bars' length, often with punctuation by rests between the statements. (Examples studied included "Künftger Zeiten" and "Das zitternde Glänzen" from Handel's German Arias and, as a relatively rare example in Bach, the aria BWV 68/2. Further reference was made to a group of eight arias from *Scipione*, all of which are

wholly or predominantly in settenario verse and feature a quasi-formulaic or ostinato-like rendering of the settenario line.)

It was further pointed out that Bach seems to be most inclined to accept declamatory imperfections in recycled or "parodied" compositions (examples from the B Minor Mass were cited in illustration). A similar conclusion applies to Handel: from study of a number of sets of "borrowings" or concordances in the extensive listings of Bernd Baselt, George Buelow and John Roberts, I propose that we may more readily condone (or, as it were, explain away) many of Handel's lapses of text underlay when we recognize them as the concomitant of melodic family relationships.

A final set of observations was prompted by the chance occurrence of my having looked up the name Bach in the index of Winton Dean and Merrill Knapp's recent book on the Handel operas. I found that most of the references to Bach occurred in discussions of particular movements in Handel, and that a striking number of them used descriptive terms such as "Bach-like" or words to that effect in describing Handel's music (a number of examples were cited). The clear inference from these passages is that most of Handel is not "Bach-like." We all know that in principle, but seldom explicitly acknowledge just how fundamental were the differences between these two composers of vastly different temperament, artistic ideals, and career-dictated compositional choices. Isn't it significant that Bach's music was criticized more than once during his life for its excessive complexity, while Handel's music drew at worst the isolated comment that it was "plus savante que touchante?"

I doubt that Handel, even if he had known Bach's music well, would ever have indulged in the language of Bach's critics — certainly not in public; but it seems indisputable that in much of his music Handel did seek to cater to precisely the same new taste ("neuer Gusto") to which those critics, often explicitly, subscribe — that is, the "naturalistic" aesthetic of the Enlightenment with its demand for tunefulness, accessibility, simple harmonies, uncomplicated textures. Unlike most of the exponents of these supposed virtues, Handel never stooped to superficiality.

(The talk ended with comparisons of pieces that I think of as model illustrations of the differing stylistic and expressive languages of Handel and Bach respectively. They included the Sarabandes of Handel's G minor harpsichord suite and Bach's third English Suite, and a second pairing of "Mourn, Israel" from *Saul* and the opening chorus "Kömmt, ihr Töchter" from the St. Matthew Passion. Comparison of the latter two pieces is perhaps "a way of saying in music what so many of us have attempted to grasp in words." A concluding quotation was read from the Handel biography of Paul Henry Lang, in whose memory the 1992 American Handel Society meetings were held, and whose Handel/Bach discussion is, in my view, one of the most penetrating in print).

Paul Brainard



Recordings from page 7

Drew Minter, countertenor  
Philharmonia Baroque Orchestra  
Nicholas McGegan, conductor  
Harmonia Mundi HMU-907142

*Dixit Dominus* (HWV 232)  
Lynne Dawson, soprano  
Lynda Russell, soprano  
Charles Brett, countertenor  
Ian Partridge, tenor  
Michael George, bass  
The Sixteen Orchestra and Chorus  
Harry Christophers, conductor  
Chandos CHAN 0517  
[also on disc: *Nisi Dominus* (HWV 238) and *Silente Venti* (HWV 242)]

*Concerti for Organ and Orchestra*: op. 4, no. 2 (HWV 290),  
op. 7, nos. 9-11 and 13 (HWV 295)  
Simon Preston, organ  
The English Concert  
Trevor Pinnock, conductor  
Deutsche Grammophon 431708-2 (2 discs)

*Water Music* (HWV 348-350)  
Orchestra of St Luke's

Sir Charles Mackerras, conductor  
Telarc CD-80279

*Music for the Royal Fireworks* (HWV 351), *Alexander's Feast* (HWV 75a), *Concerti Grossi*, op. 6, nos. 1 (HWV 319) and 6 (HWV 324)  
The English Concert  
Trevor Pinnock, conductor  
Deutsche Grammophon 431707-2 (2 discs)

7 Sonatas for Recorder and Continuo (HWV 358, 360, 362, 365, 367, 369, 377)  
Hugo Reyne, recorder  
Jérôme Hantai, viola da gamba  
Pascal Monteilhet, theorbo  
Pierre Hantai, harpsichord and organ  
Harmonia Mundi HMU-905211

Sonatas in G minor (HWV 360), A minor (HWV 362), C major (HWV 365), F major (HWV 369), B-flat major (HWV 367b) and D minor (HWV 367a)  
Michala Petri, recorder  
Keith Jarrett, harpsichord  
RCA 110558

Gregory C. Wrenn

# The American Handel Society

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