The Hero in Drag: Omphale, Dejanira, and the Emasculation of Hercules

Thomas Broughton's libretto for Handel's *Hercules* cites just two works as sources—the *Trachiniae* of Sophocles and Ovid's *Metamorphoses*—and for two centuries scholars took Broughton's claim at face value. When Anthony Hicks suggested in his program notes for the Maryland Handel Festival performance of *Hercules* on November 1, 1992, that Seneca's *Hercules Oetaeus* also seems to have influenced the libretto, it became clear that Broughton drew upon (or at least was influenced by) other texts in addition to those he acknowledged. The purpose of this article is two-fold: first, to explore a work recently identified as an influence upon Broughton's text by Todd Gilman—Peter Motteux's libretto for *Hercules*, a masque for John Eccles originally performed in Motteux's play *The Novelty* in 1697, and second, to identify yet another ancient text that served both Motteux and Broughton as a source: Ovid's *Heroides*.

Broughton's text for Handel relates the tale of the death of Hercules by his wife Dejanira. She believes that Hercules has saked Oechalia because he is enamored of Iole, who is now his captive. Broughton’s libretto differs profoundly from its classical sources in that Hercules is innocent, presumably of any adulterous acts, and the central theme has become Dejanira's unfounded jealousy. In a foolish attempt to win back his love, Dejanira sends Hercules a robe which has been poisoned by the centaur Nessus, which brings about his death.

While Broughton maintains the serious atmosphere of the Greek tragedy on which his text is based (with the exception of act 2, scene 5, which will be discussed below), Motteux's libretto for Eccles (whose music is lost) offers a predominantly comic version of the story, even though it relates details of Hercules's demise. The masque opens with a chorus welcoming Hercules to Lydia. Hercules's attention is diverted by Omphale, a different love interest whom he attempts to please by offering any favor. She asks him to learn to spin, which is followed by a spinning scene in which Omphale's attendants strip Hercules of his lion’s skin, replacing it with a white hood, a night-rail, and a white bib-apron. Dejanira enters with children and other atten-

dants and upbraids Hercules for making "ev'ry Whore but your poor Wife a Mother." After some weeping by their children and Hercules's snide comments about the merits of married life, Dejanira gives him a shirt and vest to put on. As soon as he does he feels a sudden heat and begins to rave, and finally flings himself into a heavenly fire.

Motteux's text conflates two episodes from the career of the mythical Hercules. The death of Hercules in *Trachis* described by Sophocles and Ovid is familiar to Handelians from Broughton’s re-telling. Motteux apparently transplants the story to Lydia, and attributes...
Handel Calendar

The American Handel Society welcomes news or information about events of interest to Handelians. If possible, please include the address and telephone number where readers may obtain details. Much of the information listed below has been taken from the web site “Hear Handel,” to the organizers of which the Newsletter is much indebted.

**Dixit Dominus.** April 1, 1998. Auditorium Maurice Ravel, Lyon, France. The King’s Consort, Robert King, conductor. Also May 22 at the Royal Scottish Academy, Glasgow, UK, and May 24 at Bainton Church, Driffield, Beverley, UK.

**Deidamia.** April 4. Tribeca Performing Arts Center, New York. Concert version. Will Crutchfield, conductor. Also April 5 at Caramoor, Katonah, NY.

**Acis and Galatea.** April 14, 15. Teatro Cultura Artistica, Sao Paulo, Brazil. Acis: Paul Agnew; Galatea: Sophie Daneman; Damon: Adele Ekens; Corydon: Paul Kirby; Polyphemus: Alan Ewing. Les Arts Florissants; William Christie, conductor. Also April 18: Sala Cecilia Meireles, Rio de Janeiro; April 21: Teatro Colon, Buenos Aires, Argentina; April 23: Teatro Municipal, Santiago, Chile; and May 20: Cremona, Italy.

**Giustino.** April 15, 27, May 9, 18. Komische Oper, Berlin.

**Rodelinda.** April 16, 18, 21, 23, and 25. First Church, Garden St., Cambridge, MA. Cambridge Lieder and Opera Society. Rodelinda: Cassandra Norville; Grimoaldo: Daniel Brenna; Edwige: D’Anna Fortunato; Bertrando: Susan Cooke; Garibaldo: Mark Risinger; Unulfo: Susan Forrester. Michael Beattie, conductor; Daniel Sullivan, director.


**Belshazzar.** April 20, 22, 26, June 24, 29. Semperoper, Dresden. Birgit Fandrey, Claudia Kunz, Angela Liebold, Iris Vermillion, Jochen Kowalski, Tom Martienssen, Rainer Busching, André Eckert. Jorg-Peter Weigle, conductor; Wolfgang Gussmann, Reinhard Heinrich, sets; Harry Kupfer, director.

**Belshazzar.** April 29. St. Paul’s Episcopal Church, Akron, OH. Belshazzar: Benjamin Butterfield; Ntocris: Tamara Matthews; Cyrus: Steven Ricardi; Zerachiah: Jeffrey Strauss; Gobiak: Michael McMurray. Apollo’s Fire, Jeannette Sorrell, Musical Director. Also April 30: St. Christopher’s Church, Rocky River, Cleveland, OH; May 1, 3: St. Paul’s Church, Cleveland Heights, Cleveland, OH; May 2, presented by the Renaissance and Baroque Society of Pittsburgh. Information and tickets, 1-800-514-2535


**Deidamia.** May 10, 21, June 13, 14. Theater Hagen, Hagen, Germany. Norbert Berman, conductor; Angela Brandt, producer.


**Serse.** May 20. Arsenal, Metz. Serse: Susan Bickley; Romilda: Sandrine Piau; Arsamene: Brian Asawa; Elviro: Stephen Richardson; Atalanta: Alison Hagley; Arnastre: Hilary Summers; Ariodate: Christopher Purves. Gabrieli Consort Orchestra, Paul McCree, conductor. Also June 5: Caen; June 6: Chatre de Poissy, Poissy.


**Göttingen Händelfestspiele.** May 28–June 2. Göttingen, Germany. Alexander Balus (May 29, 30); Tolomeo (May 28, 30, June 1, 2).


**47th Händelfestspiele.** June 4–9, 1998. Halle, Germany. Ballet Music (June 7); Barockmusik I-IV (chamber music, June 5, 6, 7, 8); The Choice of Hercules and Hase’s Alcide al Bivio (June 7); Dafne by Bononetti and Peranda (June 5); Ezio (June 4, 6, 7, 9); Fireworks Concert (June 9); Italian Vespers (June 5); Messiah (June 6, 7); Ode for St. Cecilia’s Day (June 6); La Passione di Gesu Christo by J. F. Reichard (June 5); Boro (June 4, 7); Catone and Semiramide riconosciuta (selections, June 8).

Handel Calendar, continued

**Solomon.** June 13. Santa Fe (Berkshire Choral Festival).

**Solomon.** June 24. York Minster (York Early Music Festival).

**Giulio Cesare.** July 10, 15. Bayerische Staatsoper, Munich.

**Tolomeo.** July 21–August 2. Horsham, Surrey, UK. Raglan Baroque Players, Nicholas Kraemer, conductor.

**Solomon.** July 27. Royal Albert Hall, London. Solomon: Andreas Scholl; Queen of Sheba; Susan Bickley; Zadok: Charles Daniels; Levite: Peter Harvey. Gabrieli Consort Orchestra, Paul McGrath, conductor (BBC Proms Festival).

**Partenope.** July 28, 31, August 2, 8, 10, 16, 20, 22. Glimmerglass (Alice Busch Opera Theater), Cooperstown, NY. Partenope: Lisa Saffer; Arsace: David Daniels; Harry Bicket, conductor; Francisco Negrin, producer.

**Semele.** August 16, 18, 20, 22. Tiroler Landesheater, Innsbruck, Austria. Jeffery Francis, John Bowen, Tomasson, Quentin Hayes, Graham Pusher, Patricia Bardon, Deborah York, Rosemary Joshua. Akademie für Alte Musik, RIAS Kammerchor, René Jacobs, conductor.


**Israel in Egypt.** September 11. Bremen Musikfest, Germany. Les Arts Florissants. Also September 12: Poissy, France; September 14: Warsaw Festival, Poland; September 16: Metz; September 20: Ambrony.


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1998 American Handel Society Conference Call for Papers

The 1998 Meeting and Conference of The American Handel Society will take place November 6–8 at the University of Maryland, College Park, in conjunction with the Maryland Handel Festival. The theme of the conference is "Handel's Women" and the featured works of the festival will be Handel's *Alexander Balus* and *Joshua*. The Society invites proposals for papers pertaining to but not restricted to the featured topic and works. Abstracts of no more than 300 words should be sent by April 1, 1998 to Professor Ellen Rosand, Chair, AHS Program Committee, Department of Music, 143 Elm Street, Yale University, New Haven, CT 06520.

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The Handel Institute Awards

Applications are invited for Handel Institute Awards (up to £1,000) in support of research projects involving the life or works of Handel or his contemporaries. Deadline September 1, 1998. Further details from:

Professor Colin Timms
Department of Music
University of Birmingham
Edgbaston
Birmingham B15 2TT
United Kingdom
Tel/fax: 0121-4145781
Email: C.R.Timms@bham.ac.uk

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Recent Handel Recordings

*Agrigippina* (HWV 6)
Della Jones
Alastair Miles
Derek Lee Ragin
Michael Chance
Donna Brown
English Baroque Soloists
John Eliot Gardiner, conductor
Philips 488 009-2 (438 019-2—438 012-2)

*Alexander Balus* (HWV 65)
Lynne Dawson and Clarion McFadden, sopranos
Catherine Denley, mezzo soprano
Charles Daniels, tenor
Michael George, bass
The Choir of New College, Oxford
The Choir of the King's Consort
The King's Consort
Robert King, conductor.
Hyperion CDA67241—CDA67242

*Arias (selections)*
Bryn Terfel, bass-baritone
Scottish Chamber Orchestra
Sir Charles Mackerras, conductor
Deutsche Grammophon 453 480-2

*Ariodante* (HWV 33)
Anne Sofie von Otter
Lynne Dawson
Ewa Podles
Veronica Cangemi
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Denis Sedov
Luc Goadoù
Choeur des Musiciens du Louvre
Les Musiciens du Louvre
Marc Minkowski, conductor
Archiw 457 271-2 (457 272-2—457 274-2)

*Ariodante* (HWV 33)
Edith Mathis, Norma Burrowes, sopranos
Janet Baker, mezzo-soprano
James Bowman, countertenor
David Rendall, Alexander Oliver, tenors
Samuel Ramey, bass
London Voices
English Chamber Orchestra
Raymond Leppard, conductor
Musical Heritage Society 534426k (reissue)

*Blind Love, Cruel Beauty: Vocal Duets of George Frideric Handel* (HWV 178, 181, 188, 188, 189, 192, 197, 199)
Pamela Murray, soprano
Pamela Domm, mezzo-soprano
Michael Beattie, harpsichord
Daniel Ryan, baroque cello.
Favella Lyrica
Koch International 3-7298-2H1

*Concerti grossi Op. 6* (HWV 319-324)
Collegium Musicum 90
Simon Standage, conductor
Chandos CHAN 0600

*Organ Concertos* (HWV 289-294, 306-311)
Paul Nicholson, organ
Frances Kelly, harp
Choir of Clare College, Cambridge, Timothy Brown, director
Brandenburg Consort
Roy Goodman, conductor
Hyperion CDA 67291/2

*Four Coronation Anthems* (HWV 258-261), *Dixit Dominus* (HWV 232), *Foundling Hospital Anthem* (HWV 288), *Utrect Te Deum & Jubilate* (HWV 278, 279)
Choir of King's College, Cambridge
David Willcocks, Stephen Cleobury, directors

Choir of Winchester Cathedral, David Hill, director
Choir of Christ Cathedral, David Hill, Simon Preston, directors
London 455 041-2 (reissue)

*Harpischord suites* (HWV 425-435)
Anthony Newman, harpsichord
Sony Classical SBR 62894 (reissue)

*Hercules (i.e., Hercules, HWV 60)*
Kari Loraas, soprano
Doris Soffel, Hebe Dijkstra, mezzo-sopranos
Eberhard Buchner, tenor
Hermann Christian Polster, bass
Rundfunkchor Leipzig
Rundfunk-Sinfonie-Orchester Leipzig
Wolfgang Hauchold, conductor
Berlin Classics 0091132BC (reissue)

*Hercules (HWV 60)*
Jennifer Smith, soprano
Sarah Walker, Catherine Denley, mezzo-sopranos
Anthony Rolfe Johnson, tenor
John Tomlinson, Peter Savidge, basses
Monteverdi Choir
English Baroque Soloists
John Eliot Gardiner, conductor
Archiv Produktion 447 689-2; 447 690-2; 447 691-2 (reissue)

*Israel in Egypt* (HWV 54)
The Sixteen
Orchestra of the Sixteen
Harry Christophers, conductor
Musical Heritage Society 524435X

*Italian Secular Cantatas: Clori, mia bella Clori (HWV 92); Armida abbandonata (HWV 185); Delirio amoroso (HWV 99)*
Ann Murray, mezzo-soprano
Symphony of Harmony and Invention
Harry Christophers, conductor
Collins Classics 15052

*Messiah* (HWV 56)
Dorothea Roschmann, soprano I
Susan Gritton, soprano II
Bernarda Fink, contralto
Charles Daniels, tenor
Neal Davies, bass
Gabrieli Consort & Players
Paul McCreesh, conductor
Archiv: Deutsche Grammophon 453 464-2 (453 465-2—453 466-2)

*Messiah (HWV 56)*
Midori Suzuki, soprano
Yoshikazu Mera, alto
John Elwes, tenor
David Thomas, bass
Bach Collegium Japan
Masaaki Suzuki, conductor.
BIS CD-891/892

*Messiah* (HWV 56)
Huddersfield Choral Society
BBC Philharmonic Orchestra
Harry Christophers
BBC MM64-65; BBC Music Magazine, vol. 6, no. 4-5
"CD includes a multimedia CD-ROM Extra program for Windows PCs."
Brian Pidgeon, Max and Sarah Philips, producers

*Music for the Royal Fireworks* (HWV 351); *Concerto in F major* (HWV 351); *Concerto in D major* (HWV 355a); *Passacaglia, gigue and menuet from HWV 399* (arr.); *Occasional suite in D major* (arr.)
The English Concert
Trevor Pinnock, arranger, conductor.
Archiv 453 451-2

*Rinaldo* (HWV 7)
Ileana Cotrubas (Almirena)
Carolyn Watkinson (Rinaldo)
Jeanette Scovotti (Armida)
Where're you walk (selections)
John Aler, tenor
Julianne Baird, soprano
D'Anna Fortunato, mezzo-soprano
William Watson, tenor
Peter Castaldi, baritone
John Ostendorf, bass-baritone
Edward Brewer, harpsichord
Brewer Chamber Orchestra
Rudolph Palmer, conductor
Newport Classic NFD 85010

Compiled by Richard G. King

The J. Merrill Knapp Research Fellowship

The Board of Directors of the American Handel Society invite applications for the 1998 J. Merrill Knapp Research Fellowship, an award of $1,500 to be granted to an advanced graduate student or a scholar in an early stage of his or her career. This fellowship may be used on its own or to augment other grants or fellowships, but may be held no more than twice. The fellowship is intended to support work in the area of Handel or related studies. The winner of the award is given the opportunity to present a paper at the biennial meeting of the American Handel Society.

In awarding the fellowship, preference will be given to advanced graduate students; to persons who have not previously held this fellowship; to students at North American universities and residents of North America; and to proposals on specifically Handelian topics.

Applicants should submit a resume, a description of the project for which the fellowship will be used (not to exceed 750 words), a budget showing how and when the applicant plans to use the funds, and a description of other grants applied for or received for the same project. In addition, applicants should have two letters of recommendation sent directly to the Society at the address below.

Applications for the 1998 Fellowship must be postmarked no later than March 15, 1998 and should be sent to:
Professor William Gudger
Department of Music
The College of Charleston
Charleston, SC 29424-0001

Applicants will be notified of the decision by May 15, 1998.

Paul Eswood (Goffredo)
Charles Brett (Eustazio)
Ulrich Cold (Argante)
La Grande Ecurie et la Chambre du Roy
Jean-Claude Malgoire, conductor
Sony Classical SMK 94502 (reissue)

The Rivals Queens: Opera Arias and Duets, from Admeto (HWV 29); Alessandro (HWV 21); Riccardo primo (HWV 23); Siroe (HWV 24); and Tolomeo (HWV 25)
Catherine Bott
Emma Kirby
The Brandenburg Consort
Roy Goodman, conductor
Hyperion CDA66950

Rodrigo (HWV 5)
Il Complesso Barocco
Alan Curtis, conductor
Accademia Musicale Chigiana: Monte dei Paschi di Siena

Samson (HWV 57)
Lynda Russell, Lynne Dawson, sopranos
Thomas Randle, Mark Padmore, tenors
The Sixteen
The Symphony of Harmony and Invention
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Samson (HWV 57)
Alexander Young, tenor
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Thomas Stewart, bass
Etio Flagello, bass
Helen Donath, soprano
Sheila Armstrong, soprano
Jerry J. Jennings, tenor
Munchener Bach-Chor
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Karl Richter, conductor
Musical Heritage Society 534666M (reissue)

Saul (HWV 53)
Donald McIntyre (Saul)
Ryland Davies (Jonathan)
James Bowman (David)
John Winfield (Abner)
Margaret Price (Merab)
Sheila Armstrong (Michal)
Stafford Dean (Apparition of Sammael)
Gerald English (An Amalekite, High priest)
Leeds Festival Chorus
English Chamber Orchestra
Sir Charles Mackerras, conductor
Musical Heritage Society 534883K (reissue)

Sonatas for violin and continuo (HWV 358, 359a, 361, 364a, 368, 370, 371, 372, 408, 412)
Rachel Barton, violin
David Schrader, harpsichord
John Mark Rozenzval, cello
Cedille Records CDR 90000 032

Tra le fiamme: Italian cantatas. Tra le fiamme (HWV 176); Aria di la passeggiata (HWV 105); Ah! che pur troppo e vero (HWV 77); instrumental music
Ellen Hargis, soprano
Byron Shenkman, harpsichord
Margot Tindemans, viola da gamba
Seattle Baroque Orchestra
Wildboar WLD 9004

Water music (HWV 348-350; plus Telemann, Wasser-Ouverture)
The King’s Consort
Robert King, conductor
Hyperion CDA60967

Water & Fireworks music (HWV 348-351)
London Classical Players
Roger Norrington, conductor
Virgin Veritas 7243 5 45265 2 7
The Hero in Drag from page 1

Dejanira's jealousy to an earlier adventure of Hercules involving a different woman. Omphale, daughter of Iardanus, was a queen of Lydia who succeeded her husband Tmolus to the throne. She bought Hercules when he was sold into slavery, and he performed many great tasks for her, including overcoming the Cercopes, killing the outlaw Syleus, destroying the city of Itoni, and slaying a great snake that was ravaging Lydia. These adventures are described in Apollodorus's *Library of Greek Mythology* (II.6) and Diodorus Siculus's *Library of History* (IV. 31). More significantly, according to certain Roman writers, Hercules was made to wear women's dress and spin during his servitude to Omphale (see the Fasti and Heroides of Ovid), and this is the story that Motteux has used.

In spite of profound differences between the two librettis, Broughton's *Hercules* in two scenes echoes certain of Motteux's lines. One of these scenes is that of Hercules's death, which Gilman singles out as particularly dependent upon Motteux. When Hercules suffers the effects of the poisoned robe he has put on, we read in Broughton (act 3, scene 2):

> Or, Neptune, kindly pour
> Ocean's collected Flood
> Into my Breast, and cool my boiling Blood!  

Broughton's rhyme might derive directly from Motteux's text:

> Help! Water! Rivers! Pour a Flood!
> A Deluge scarce will quench the Fire that drinks my Blood!

More interesting for our purposes, however, is the possibility that the scene between Hercules and Omphale in Motteux provided material for an important confrontation in Broughton's libretto, act 2, scene 5. Believing that Hercules has been unfaithful to her with Iole, Dejanira taunts her husband in an aria that accuses him of effeminity for falling in love:

Resign thy club and lion's spoils
And fly from war to female toils!
For thy glittering sword and shield
The spindle and the distaff yield:
Thund'ring Mars no more shall arm thee;
Glory's Call no more shall warm thee;
Venus and her whining Boy
Shall all thy wanton Hours employ.

Here both the dramatic situation and the image of spinning (aptly depicted in Handel's music) seem to echo Motteux's *Hercules*.

Omphale: Then learn to spin; 'tis all I ask.
Hercules: For Hercules a very pretty Task!
'Tis odd, 'tis odd, 'tis wondrous odd!
Malicious Love, resistless God!
But I have sworn, and then I burn,
And now my Club must Distaff turn.
I know by this I'm turning Fool,
And so we're all, while Women rule.

Moreover, Dejanira's recitative lines preceding her aria ("O glorious Pattern of heroic Deeds! The mighty Warrior, whom neither Juno's Hate, / Nor a long Series of incessant Labours, / Could ere Subdue, A Captive Maid has conquer'd. / O Shame to Manhood! O Disgrace of Arms!") seem to pick up upon Hercules's own lines in Motteux when he first sees Omphale ("Why sing my Triumph, when a single She, / A single Look has vanquish'd me?"). It is perhaps no accident, then, that the scene in which Dejanira and Hercules confront each other contains comic elements that seem to set it apart from the rather serious context of Handel's oratorio at large: these comic elements might reflect the scene's origins in Motteux's libretto.

Motteux was not the first to present Omphale as a cause of Dejanira's jealousy, however. In chapter nine of Ovid's *Heroides*, a work which turns out to be of great importance to both librettis, Dejanira addresses Hercules. She is thankful that Oechalia has been added to his list of honors, but complains that the victor has yielded to the vanquished. This opening line of chapter 9 of *The Heroides* is practically quoted by Broughton at the beginning of act 2, scene 5 of the libretto ("Yes, I congratulate your Titles swell'd / With proud Oechalia's Fall—But, O! I grieve / To see the Victor to the Vanquish'd yield."), which suggests that Broughton may have possessed direct knowledge of Ovid's work. In the *Heroides* Dejanira remarks that Venus, more than Juno, has been Hercules's bane (the B section of "Resign thy Club" refers to this: "Venus and her whining boy / Shall all thy wanton hours employ"). She proceeds to complain of two women, Omphale and Iole, and it is Omphale who receives the bulk of her attention:

But there is one love—a fresh offense of which I have heard—a love by which I am made stepdame to Lydian Lamus. The Meander...has seen hanging from the neck of Hercules—the neck which found the heavens but slight burden—bejewelled chains...You have no shrunk from binding your shaggy hair with a woman's turban! More meet for the locks of Hercules were the white poplar. And for you to disgrace yourself by wearing the Maeconian zone, like a wanton girl...They say that you have held the wool-basket among the girls of Ionia, and been frightened at your mistress' threats. Do you not shrink, Alcides, from laying to the polished wool-basket the hand that triumphed over a thousand toils; do you draw off with stalwart thumb the coarsely spun strands, and give back to the hand of a pretty mistress the just portion she weighed out...You are as much less than she [Omphale], O greatest of men, as it was greater to vanquish you than those you vanquished. To her passes the full measure of your exploits—yield up what you possess; your mistress is heir to your praise. O shame that the rough skin stripped from the flanks of the shaggy lion has covered a woman's delicate side! You are mistaken, and know it not—that spoil is not from the lion, but from you; you are victor over the beast, but she over you. A woman has borne the darts blackened with the venom of Lerna, a woman scarce strong enough to carry the spindle heavy

continued on back page
Special Offers from the American Handel Society

The American Handel Society is offering sets of back issues of the Newsletter for the price of $10 per year (three issues each), going back to the first year, 1986. All volumes are available, but some numbers are in short supply. We reserve the right to supply photocopies of individual numbers where necessary. In addition, the AHS has a limited number of copies of Handel and the Harris Circle at the price of $7. This attractive and important booklet, written by Rosemary Dunhill, provides a useful introduction to the rich Harris family archive, recently deposited at the Hampshire Record Office in Winchester and discussed by Donald Burrows in the December 1996 issue of the Newsletter. For further details, see the subscription notice inserted in this month's Newsletter.

The American Handel Society
School of Music, University of Maryland, College Park, Maryland 20742 Telephone (301) 652-2279

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