"New" Handel Autographs

Various factors, human and technological, have held up the production of Donald Burrows's and my catalogue of the Handel autographs (reported in the AHS Newsletter, August 1986). The delay has turned out to be for the good, because several "lost" autographs have resurfaced in the meantime. Unfortunately, a couple of others have been "lost" or removed from public access—only temporarily, we hope. The descriptions below are from our catalogue and are the result of Professor Burrows's recent research.

Three of the "new" manuscripts were probably in a vault in London for some years before they and 177 other musical and literary autographs were donated to the British Library in 1986 by the heirs of Stefan Zweig. Anthony Hicks suspected back in 1981 that the final aria of the cantata "Ho fuggito amore anch'io," HWV 118, was in the Zweig collection, but my inquiries at that time went unanswered. Oliver Neighbour, then Keeper of the Music Department in the British Library, had seen parts of the Zweig collection, but he had not seen the three Handel autographs. Now, thanks to the generosity of the Zweig heirs, we have access not only to that cantata, but to the final chorus of Floridante, HWV 14, and to another page from the conducting score of Joseph and His Brethren, HWV 59, as well.

Zweig MS no. 36 (two leaves) contains the aria "È troppo bella." It completes the autograph of HWV 118, the first part of which is in Oxford at the Bodleian Library (MS Don.c.69). Its history is complicated and not completely known, but the manuscript seems to have belonged once to double-bass virtuoso Domenico Dragonetti (1763-1846), then later to W. H. Cummings (1831-1915) and several subsequent owners before it was purchased in 1938 by Zweig.

Zweig MS no. 37 (four leaves) is the final chorus of Floridante and continues directly from GB-Lbl RM 20.b.2. It was acquired by Zweig in 1937 from the First Edition Bookshop (Cecil Hopkinson). Its provenance before that is uncertain, though Hopkinson's catalogue description claims it had been in the possession of the Earl of Aylesford.

The third Zweig manuscript, no. 38, is a single folio containing recitative from the conducting score of

Händel Festspiele und Akademie, Karlsruhe 1987

In June 1987, Karlsruhe hosted a two-week Handel Festival, which included three operatic productions, five concerts, and Paul Barz's Mügliche Begrenzung (a comedy that depicts Handel, his amanuensis, and Bach at Leipzig in 1747). Concurrently, its International Handel Academy sponsored twelve week-long master classes and two day-long symposia. Every year during the past decade, the Badische Staatstheater in Karlsruhe has offered a new Handel production. Its festival was instituted in 1985, its academy in 1986; both components are flourishing. They made significant strides in 1987, when Karlsruhe established fraternal ties with Halle (which will result in cooperative endeavors) and its academy issued the first volume of its "Veröffentlichungen": a reprint of the valuable but rarely found study of 1940-41 by Joachim Eisenschmidt, Die szenische
Karlsruhe from page 1

The two symposia, whose papers will be published by the academy, were centered on the subject of Eisen- schmidt's study. The first was chaired by Hans Joachim Marx (Hamburg); it provided scholarly perspectives. Diedrich Diedrichsen (Hamburg) defined the production values that prevailed in London and in various German opera houses. Lowell Lindgren (Boston) exemplified the scenic requirements of Handel's London operas with many slides. Bernd Baselt (Halle) compared the Covent Garden Theatre of 1734 with the still-functioning Goethe Theater in Bad Lauchstädt, then discussed scenic and other aspects of Handel's Oreste (which will be produced in the Goethe Theater next year). Eva Campianu (Vienna) illustrated Baroque choreography by showing videotapes that exemplified her realizations of Feuillet notation as well as her productions of pastoral works by Handel. Stefan Kunze (Bern) discussed Handel's lack of interest in the non-illusionistic texts of Zeno and Metastasio and his overwhelming interest in illustrative/scenic music, which is especially prominent in his musical and pastoral operas.

The second day was chaired by Günter Köne mann (artistic director of the theater, festival, and academy); it featured the viewpoints of stage designers. The day began with a film of Jean-Louis Martinoty (Paris), in which he discussed illusions and illusions in his Karlsruhe production of Pasticcio— concocted of scenes from various works by Handel. Heinz Balthes (Karlsruhe) then described how the framework for Karlsruhe productions has been determined by the "discovery" of symbolic, ironic, or other relationships between characters. Balthes's presentation led to the liveliest of the lively discussions, as auditors commented on the presence or absence of irony in Handel, on the need to reflect the affect of each aria in the staging, on the excessive license given to stage directors, etc. Friedrich Meyer-Oertel (Wuppertal) then argued that the past must be made present in any production for audiences of today, as in his updatings of works such as King Arthur, Alcina, and Rodrigo. Walther Siegmund-Schultze (Halle) delineated the many changes in staging practice that he has witnessed and cited numerous examples of designers' folly. Joachim Herz (Dresden) reaffirmed the need to make Handel meaningful to audiences of today and exemplified his points with references to several productions or Serse. Imre Fabian (Zurich) reflected upon the role of the stage director and upon various Karlsruhe productions of Handel's works. At midday, the publication of Eisenschmidt's study was announced and presented to the press. In future, if such publications could be sent to the participants in the symposia a few months in advance, they could serve as fine focal points for the academic presentations and discussions.

During my stay in Karlsruhe, I was privileged to attend four performances conducted by Charles Farn- come: an orchestral concert, a revival of Serse, and two renditions of the new production of Rodrigo. At the concert, four Baroque pieces (three by Handel and one by J. H. Roman) led to a Sturm und Drang symphony by J. M. Kraus that provided a ferocious finish. Baroque instruments were employed for the concert and for Rodrigo, but their incisiveness was sadly lacking in the four-year-old production of Serse, which also transposed two treble roles into male registers, added much extraneous stage business, and placed the modern instruments in a modern pit. Rodrigo avoided these inapt features and pleased everyone: the listener heard very fine playing and singing (e.g., by Derek Ragan as Rodrigo and Norma Sharp as Eulena), the reviewer saw a monumental set that underwent astonishing transformations, and the scholar learned about the libretto and score in excellent program notes by Anthony Hicks and Charles Farncombe. Serse was sung entirely in German translation, while in Rodrigo the recitatives were in German, the arias in Italian.

In retrospect, Karlsruhe provided a richly rewarding experience for the Handelian. Unfortunately, I arrived after the concert performance of Hercules and departed before the revival of Orlando.

Lowell Lindgren

Larsen Retires from IHS Post

At the meeting of the Directors of the International Handel Society held during the recent Halle festival, Jens Peter Larsen announced his resignation as one of the Society's four vice presidents. The Society expressed its gratitude for his many years of service to Handel scholarship. Elected as vice presidents were J. Merrill Knapp (Princeton, N J) and Bernd Baselt (Halle, DDR). Among the newly elected directors are Howard Serwer (University of Maryland, College Park) and Donald Burrows (Open University, Great Britain).

Addenda: Publications

Handel Calendar

The AHS welcomes news or leads about coming events of interest to Handelians. If possible, please include an address where readers may obtain details.


One further recent "discovery" is the Italian cantata "Mentre il tuto," HWV 130, now in a private collection in Basel. It consists of three folios of Italian paper from ca. 1708, and the music reads somewhat differently from the version printed by Chr. andsander. Its original provenance is uncertain, but it was owned by Major J. W. Fitcairn-Campbell until its sale by Sotheby's on February 18, 1963. A facsimile is in the British Library, Department of Manuscripts, MS Facs. Supplement X (47).

Three autographs are currently unavailable: the Italian cantata "Ero e Leandro," HWV 150, and the trio "Se tu non lasci Amore," HWV 201, in the possession of Dr. Georges Floersheim of Basel, and the Sarabande, HWV 425, in the collection of the Earl of Malmesbury. Dr. Floersheim may have sold the cantata since I saw it in 1982. We would appreciate any correspondence about these, or any of the manuscripts described above, that might be useful for our catalogue.

Martha Ronish
Halle Festival: June 11-16, 1987

The thirty-sixth Händel-Festspiele der DDR gave special attention to the works of Handel, Samuel Scheidt (born in 1587) and Christoph Willibald Gluck (died in 1787). As always, Handelians were forced to make hard choices: for instance, among simultaneous performances of Acis and Galatea, Polifemo, Rinaldo, Athalia, and the Sinfonie Opus XVIII (1610) by Viadana. Should one go to Athalia, a great work not often heard, or the even more rarely heard Viadana works, performed by Symposium musicum, an esteemed European ensemble unknown to most Americans? Of thirty-two musical events, only four had no competition, and one of them, a performance of Gluck’s Armide, barely so. The scholarly sessions, devoted this year to Scheidt and Gluck, related to the performances in unexpected and interesting ways.

On the second day of the conference, Peter Konwitschny, a well-known regisseur from Berlin, presented a talk titled „Erfahrungen mit Händel- und Gluck-Inzenierungen“ (Experiences in Staging Handel and Gluck) — two of his recent productions, Rinaldo and Floridante, were revived at the festival. Mr. Konwitschny stated flatterly that the task of the stage director is to help the audience understand the play, or in this case, the opera. Accordingly, he set forth his view of the historical and cultural significance of Rinaldo in an essay for the festival’s program book. His statement at the conference elicited grumbles, and objections were raised concerning his application of his creed, the production of Floridante at Bad Lauchstädt being a case in point.

The theatre in Bad Lauchstädt, built in the early 19th century, seats about 200 on benches well calculated to keep an audience awake. Its original stage machinery includes three pairs of wings, shutters, and five trap doors. It is one of the few theatres anywhere in which one can produce a baroque opera without having to resort to makeshift substitutes for the machinery that was a normal component of the genre’s dramatic structure. Floridante makes typical use of the machinery; it calls for no spectacular effects but uses the movable scenery simply to change venue once or twice in each act.

The performance was conducted very stylishly by Christian Kluttig. Principals and orchestra alike performed on a high order. Mr. Konwitschny, however, seemed to think that the opera needed help lest the audience fail to understand it or, worse, get bored. His solution was to add all manner of theatrical “doo-dads”: a mechanical fox running across the stage in the first scene, a twenty-foot long ribbon played with (symbolically, I suppose) by the secondary love-interest pair, and marionettes made of the principals manipulated by the singers during the final coro, to name only three. Worse, Mr. Konwitschny failed to use the machinery as it was intended: to keep the show moving. For this viewer the production was at once distracting and patronizing, as though Mr. Konwitschny and his marionettes were saying, “The play is worthless and the audience is most important; look at what I can do with such an unromantic business!”

The other connection between the conference and the performances arose even more unexpectedly from the first paper, Instrumentalmusik vor Händel, by Dr. Ernst Hermann Meyer, president of the International Handel Society. Its musical examples, by Vierdanck, Weckmann, Polhe, and other 17th-century musicians, were played by members of the Hallenser Philharmonie in ensembles of from three to seven players. Maestro Kluttig conducted each example. As the paper proceeded, I found myself increasingly uncomfortable watching a conductor wave his arms at a small group of professional musicians playing relatively simple baroque pieces.

This led me to think about the performances I had attended so far.

At the opening concert of the Festival Maestro Kluttig conducted an exquisite performance of Acis and Galatea, which, though billed as the 1718 version, included changes from the late 1740s. The orchestra used modern instruments, but the playing was thoroughly informed by a knowledge of eighteenth-century performance practice. With a chorus of eight plus four very fine soloists, and presented in the visually and acoustically beautiful Aula of the Martin Luther University, it was a memorable event, climaxed by one of the most moving renderings of the mourning chorus I have ever heard. That the orchestral playing was extraordinarily fine came as no surprise when I noticed that the concertmaster was Manfred Otte, founder-director of the Collegium instrumentale Halle.

The next day I heard Hercules in Halle’s large municipal theatre. Olaf Koch, a distinguished East German conductor, led some thirty players, a Polish chorus of about sixty-five, and a group of soloists in a mostly traditional performance. However, most of the recitative cadences were performed without extension, the treble male roles were sung at pitch, and the soloists stood behind the orchestra, just in front of the choruses. These somewhat non-traditional measures improved the performance’s pace and drama. The soloists, alas, sang their recitatives straight at the audience rather than to each other, and they never once joined with the choruses. The sight of a group of soloists sitting and staring into space during a jubilant final chorus has served to spoil more oratorio performances than I can count.

By way of contrast, in a performance of the Funeral Anthem for Queen Caroline and Utreni To Deum by the Sine Nomine Singers and the Chamber Orchestra of the Dessau State Theatre under the direction of Harry Saltzman, members of the chorus sang the solos. Admittedly the solos were not as demanding as those in Hercules. Nevertheless, the more homogeneous effect was better than the usual separation of soloists from chorus. The funeral anthem received a moving performance, leading me to wish that its contrafact would be used more often as the first part of Israel in Egypt.

My experiences with the chamber groups, Acis, Hercules, and the Funeral Anthem all came together during a performance of La Resurrezione at the Aula of the University. The five singers stood behind the orchestra, and Manfred Otte directed all but the recitatives from his place as concertmaster. At times he rose to direct; at others he stood to begin a number and then sat down, controlling the performance with an occasional wave or nod. Otte’s pacing provided almost no opportunities for applause, despite some marvelous singing, especially by Juliane Claus as Angelo. The lack of applause and the absolute concentration of the players allowed recitative and aria to follow one another with compelling urgency. Once or twice in each part, at logical places, Otte stopped for perhaps thirty seconds to suggest a change of scene. The Collegium instrumentale Halle, numbering ten violins, three violas, three cellos, a double bass, and a viola da gamba, produced some of the most expressive playing I have ever witnessed from modern instruments. The violin solos fell to Otte in his role of music director (not conductor). I found myself imagining how it must have been on Good Friday in 1708 when Corelli directed the first performance of this work. Then I noticed Olaf Koch sitting in the front row. I watched for any sign of approval or disapproval, but he gave none. Was he wondering if stick-waving in baroque music is unnecessary? Not only unnecessary, perhaps, but even counter-productive.
The American Handel Society

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