Handeliana

Certainly one of the most intriguing aspects of Handel’s autograph manuscripts is the wealth of corrections, revisions, and alterations they contain. Anyone familiar with the autographs or the many manuscript studies devoted to them is aware of the valuable information they contain about Handel’s compositional process. Beyond their purely academic interest, however, is their significance as a record of certain aspects of Handel’s personality: his handwriting, his haste or relative leisure in composing a passage, even his reluctance to waste paper.

Among the various features of Handel’s actual writing process are the variety of techniques he used to alter what he had written. Most often, he simply crossed out what he wished to change, continuing on or cueing to another point in the manuscript, depending upon the point at which he made the change and its extent. In many instances, the different ways in which Handel altered his scores are our only means of determining the chronology of a series of changes within a piece.

If the alteration was small enough, however, and occurred to Handel immediately, he frequently smeared the not-yet-dry ink with his finger, thumb, or even the palm of his hand. Such a technique would seem to obliterate the writing that had been smeared, but the ink first set to paper usually managed to soak in enough to leave an impression of what he had written (these notes appear darker than the thinner, smeared ink). Furthermore, the spreading of the ink made it dry very fast, so it is no surprise that out of the hundreds of times Handel corrected his work in this manner, in at least one instance he managed to leave an impression of part of his thumb.

In the autograph manuscript of Scipione (British Library, Royal Music Library, RM 20.c.6), on the upper right hand corner of folio 64r, Handel shows us something of what his left thumbprint looked like when he made a minor alteration to the first violin part in the B section of the aria “Scoglio d’immota fronte” (see facsimile—especially the left side of the smear). The alteration itself is straightforward: Handel had begun to arpeggiate a B minor chord on the downbeat of the

Handel’s thumbprint in the autograph of “Scoglio d’immota fronte” from Scipione (GB-Lbl Ms RM 20.c.6, fol. 64). By permission of the British Library.

1989 AHS Membership Meeting

The first meeting of the members of The American Handel Society will take place November 9–12, 1989 in conjunction with the Maryland Handel Festival at the University of Maryland, College Park. Situated just outside of Washington D.C., the Festival has been sponsored by the University since 1981. The Festival will tender a reception for members of the AHS on Saturday evening after the concert, and offers members of the society tickets to individual concerts at a 15% reduction in price (the subscription price to the full series of concerts is already discounted). In addition, members of the AHS will receive the special festival rate at the Best Western motel (with its indoor swimming pool) adjacent to the College Park campus.

continued on page 3

continued on page 4

Together with Halle and Göttingen, Karlsruhe is steadily emerging as an important third addition to the constellation of German cities fostering Handel performance and research. This year’s gathering marked a fourth annual meeting of a wide spectrum of both performers and musicologists. The caliber of artist participation in the Händelfestspiele des Badischen Staatstheater Karlsruhe was high, with a roster of performers which included Bob van Asperen (harpsichord), Anner Bylsma (baroque cello), Jürgen Hübischer (lute) and Paul Esswood (counter tenor) among others. Featured works in 1988 were Rodrigo and Belshazzar; in 1989 they were Imeneo, Belshazzar and Saul. The Internationale Händel-Akademie Karlsruhe, as the musicological proceedings are termed, witnessed a continuation of symposia initiated in 1988 by Hans Joachim Marx and dedicated to exploring various facets of Aufführungspraxis as related to Handel’s oratorio and opera output. While last year’s sessions focused upon aspects of dramatic and scenic interpretation in Handel’s stage works, this year’s concentrated on matters bearing more directly upon musical interpretation.


The publication of all the papers listed above has been announced for 1990 and will appear as the third volume of the series Veröffentlichung der Internationen Händel-Akademie Karlsruhe under the title Bericht über die Symposien der Internationen Händel-Akademie Karlsruhe 1988 und 1989. As in the previous two volumes of this series, the editor is Hans Joachim Marx and the publisher is Laaber.

Michael J. Spudic

Göttingen Festival: June 9–14, 1989

The Göttinger Händel-Festspiele presented Handel’s Saul as its featured work this year. One can have nothing but praise for the performance, directed by John Eliot Gardiner—two performances, in fact, necessitated by Philips’ plan to release it on CD. The version presented was that of Handel’s first run, something now fairly easy to do as a result of the memorandum prepared by Anthony Hicks for the Maryland Handel Festival production in 1986. I attended both performances and found it fascinating to see the adjustments made between the two. Gardiner seated his soloists behind the orchestra and in front of the chorus, having them rise and come to center stage to perform or to be addressed by other singers even though they might not sing a note at that time. On the first night, Saul, ably sung by Alastair Miles, remained seated on stage following his scene with the Witch of Endor, listening, head down, to the reports of his demise. In the second performance, he exited slowly and with great presence at the conclusion of the Endor scene, producing a fine dramatic effect. The remaining soloists were also of superb quality, and even more impressive was the fact that the members of the Monteverdi Choir who sang the secondary roles would themselves make an extremely fine group of principals for a performance of the oratorio.

The Festival also presented Susanna in a staged performance at Göttingen’s Deutsches Theatre, a house seating about 800. The decision to stage the work was based in part on the very large number of da capo arias in the oratorio and the fact that the chorus has little to do. Though Handel never staged any of his oratorios, one is always curious about the effect of staging a work such as this. Unfortunately, the stage director exhibited so little understanding of musical theater (let alone baroque theater), that no conclusions could be drawn about the suitability of the work for staging. The director seemed
Handeliana from page 1

measure (f#-d'-d'b'), but decided to make the diminished chord on the second beat (b-g#-d') a diminished seventh chord, for which he needed an e# (b-g#-d'-e#'). He therefore simply smeared out the notes he had written and filled in the new notes (the upbeat eighth note in the previous measure was also changed, from an f# to an a#'). Notice that the last b' of the smeared out group of notes became the first note of the new group, which is clearly visible in the facsimile.

Although the alteration in this case is of little intrinsic interest, the appearance of Handel's thumb print in the composing score of Scipione reminds us of our proximity to the composer when we examine his autograph manuscripts. The fact that he kept them in his possession until the end of his life is evidence of his own attachment to these scores, and in many ways the autographs are the most personal of Handel's surviving documents. Thus Handel's thumb print serves as a subtle reminder that when we examine his autograph manuscripts, we are as close as we can get to watching over the composer's shoulder as he worked.

C. Steven LaRue

Handel Calendar

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


Philharmonia Baroque Orchestra. Incl. Concerti grossi continued on page 4
1989 AHS from page 1

This meeting will be of particular interest to members of the society inasmuch as the editorial board of the Hallische-Händel-Ausgabe will be on hand, giving AHS members a chance to hear and meet colleagues from the German Democratic Republic, the Federal Republic of Germany, and England. The first conference session and second concert have been planned to explore Handel’s use of language and texts; in addition, the second concert will feature a performance of the first act of John Eccles’s setting of Congreve’s Semele, completed in 1707 but not performed, so far as we know, in the eighteenth century. Seating for all concerts is limited, and for that reason the Festival asks that AHS ticket orders (on the form enclosed) be in hand by September 25 at the latest. We also enclose a card for the Best Western Motel in College Park; it should be returned directly to the hotel no later than October 1.

Maryland Handel Festival Program
(subject to change—some locations to be announced)

Thursday, November 9, 1989
12:00 Noon—
Meeting of the Editorial Board of the Hallische-Händel-Ausgabe

5:00 p.m.—Tawes Recital Hall
Third Annual American Handel Society Lecture
Bernd Baselt, Martin Luther University of Halle/Wittenberg: “The War of the Spanish Succession, Italy, and Handel”

Friday, November 10, 1989
9:30 a.m.—Hornbake Library, third floor
Conference Session I: “Handel and His Texts”
Andrew Porter, Moderator
Hans Joachim Marx: “Handel and Barthold Heinrich Brockes”
Terence Best: “Handel and the Italian Language”
Donald Burrows: “Reading the Metre: Literary Aspects of the Handel Libretti of Jennens and Morell”
1:00 p.m.—
Meeting of the Board of Directors of The American Handel Society

4:00 p.m.—Tawes Recital Hall
Concert I: YOUNG ARTIST RECITAL
A program of baroque chamber music

8:00 p.m.—Memorial Chapel
Concert II: AN ENTERTAINMENT OF VOCAL AND INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC
Anne Johnson, Robert Petillo, University of Maryland Chorus, Tafelmusik Baroque Orchestra, Paul Traver, conducting. Includes Act I of John Eccles’s Semele and favorite Handel choruses.

Saturday, November 11, 1989
9:30 a.m.—Hornbake Library, third floor
Conference Session II: “Handel’s Compositional Process”
Andrew Porter, Moderator
David Ross Hurley: “The Summer of ‘43”
C. Steven LaRue: “Metric Reorganization as an Aspect of Handel’s Compositional Process”
George Buelow: “The Concept of Melodic Modules in Handel’s Compositional Procedures”

2:00 p.m.—
Business Meeting of The American Handel Society
3:00 p.m.—Tawes Recital Hall
Concert III: LIEBERMAN-KRUEGER-KROLL TRIO
Music by Handel, Couperin and C.P.E. Bach

5:30 p.m.—
Cocktails and Supper for AHS members (no-host).

8:00 p.m.—Memorial Chapel
Concert IV: TAFELMUSIK BAROQUE ORCHESTRA
Jean Lamon, music director
Works by J.S. Bach and Handel.
Post-Concert Reception for AHS members

Sunday, November 12, 1989
1:30 p.m.—Marie Mount Hall
Panel Discussion: “Handel’s Semele: Oratorio or Opera?”
Walter Siegmund-Schultze, Howard Mayer Brown, Shirley Strum Kenny, Calhoun Winton, Panelists

3:00 p.m.—Memorial Chapel
Concert V: THE STORY OF SHEMELE
Gillian Fisher, Anne Johnson, Molly Donnelly, Drew Minter, John Aler, William Sharp, University of Maryland Chorus, Tafelmusik Baroque Orchestra, Paul Traver, conducting.
The American Handel Society Research Fellowship

The American Handel Society Research Fellowship, an award of $1,500 is granted to an advanced graduate student involved in Handel research. The Society welcomes applications from students pursuing research into the life and works of Handel as well as from students examining broader fields of study related to Handel. In addition to the award, the recipient of the Fellowship will be given an opportunity to speak at a future meeting of The American Handel Society.

Applicants must be currently studying at a North American University and must submit a resume, a description of the project for which the Fellowship will be used (not to exceed 750 words), and a budget showing how and when the applicant plans to use the funds. In addition, applicants must have two letters of recommendation sent directly to the Society at the address below.

Applications for the 1990 Fellowship must be postmarked no later than March 15, 1990, and should be sent to AHS Fellowship Committee, c/o Howard Serwer, Department of Music, University of Maryland, College Park, MD 20742. The committee for the 1990 Fellowship will consist of John H. Roberts, The University of California at Berkeley (chairman), Philip H. Highfill, George Washington University, and Marita P. McClymonds, The University of Virginia. Applicants will be notified of the Committee’s decision by April 15.

1990 AHS Meeting and Conference

The American Handel Society will hold its 1990 Meeting and Conference on November 1 (Thursday) through 4 (Sunday) at the University of Maryland, College Park, in conjunction with the Maryland Handel Festival. The featured performance of the Festival will be Handel’s Joseph and the conference sessions will focus on the topics “Handel and his Performers” and “Handel and the Old Testament,” in addition to Joseph.

The Society welcomes proposals for papers pertaining to but not restricted by the topics to be emphasized in the conference sessions. Applicants should submit a paper proposal of not more than 500 words to AHS Program Committee, c/o Howard Serwer, Department of Music, University of Maryland, College Park, MD 20742. Proposals must be received before April 1, 1990, and applicants will be notified of the Committee’s decision by May 1. The program committee for the 1990 meeting will consist of Mary Ann Parker, University of Toronto (chairman), William Gudger, The College of Charleston, and J. Merrill Knapp, Princeton University.

DEPARTMENT OF MUSIC, UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND, COLLEGE PARK, MARYLAND 20742 TELEPHONE 301 454-5758

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APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP IN THE AMERICAN HANDEL SOCIETY

Name ___________________________ Date ___________________________

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Please attach your check payable to THE AMERICAN HANDEL SOCIETY for the amount of your dues and mail to THE AMERICAN HANDEL SOCIETY, Department of Music, University of Maryland, College Park, MD 20742.