A Curious Handel Performance at Keynsham

Lady Caroline Brydges (1730–1804), granddaughter of Handel’s patron James Brydges, First Duke of Chandos, was a lively young lady who wrote a number of entertaining letters to various relatives prior to her marriage in 1758. Very few contain references to music, although it is clear that she had received some training in it; in fact, she was reprimanded at one point for refusing to play the harpsichord for her cousin and later husband James Leigh of Adlestrop (1724–1774). Therefore it is a little surprising to find three musical references in a single letter, written to her older brother James, later Third Duke of Chandos, in 1751. James was undertaking his Grand Tour, and his sister had apparently promised to keep him informed of her activities in his absence.

The letter¹ is dated “Biddesden August ye 13th,” but the first part was written the evening before. It describes a recent stay at Keynsham Abbey, where her father, Henry, Second Duke of Chandos, had moved his family for a portion of the summer, probably in an attempt to keep one step ahead of his creditors. Keynsham Abbey, which had been in the extended Brydges family for generations, was located on the outskirts of the town of Keynsham not far from Bristol and Bath; only the entrance gate remains.

Lady Caroline writes:

I enclos’d a plan of Keynsham house with as good a description of the place as I am able to give which I am afraid you will find but a very lame one. The Lodge house I mentioned is a most beautiful situation & Mrs Bridges [a cousin] is building to it in order to spend some time there every Summer as she is very fond of the Park. We were twice at the long Room at Bristol. There was a great deal of company there. I danc’d two dances with Mr. Hoskyns but found it very hot & disagreeable. I was one morning at the pump room which is a poor shabby place & only one scurvy fiddle by way of musick. The

Master of ceremonys at Bristol is one Mercie formerly a Hautboy in my Grandfather’s band of musick. He scrap’d an acquaintance with me to my great astonishment & [I] was more amazed when I found all the acquaintance he had with me was by knowing my Grandfather before I was born.

“Mercie” was Lewis Mercy or Merci (fl. 1708–1751), a renowned recorder player who is not otherwise known to have played the oboe.² Lady Caroline seems unlikely to have mistaken a recorder for an oboe, but her reference to Mercy as “Master of ceremonies” and the fact that his last documented appearance as a performer occurred at a benefit concert for himself in 1735, may indicate that she did not hear him play and

continued on page 6
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 website “Hear Handel,” to the organizers of which the Newsletter is much indebted.

Agrippina. August 13, 14, 16, 20, 21, 22, 23, 29, 30. Wilhering Monastery, Linz. Karen Robertson, Barbara Payha, Markus Foster, Dean Ely, Robert Hillebrand, Lydia Vei linger, Manfred Mitterbauser, Orlando Mason. Opera Camera Linz, strings. William Mason, conductor. Henry Mason, producer. E-mail: w.mason@demut.or.at


Semele. August 16, 18, 20, 22. Tiroler Landestheater, Innsbruck, Austria. Jeffery Francis, John Bowen, Tomas Tomasson, Quentin Hayes, Graham Pushee, Patricia Bardon, Deborah York, Rosemary Joshua. Akademie für alte Musik, RIAS Kamerchor, René Jacobs, conductor. The first setting of the libretto, by John Eccles (1710), will be given in concert with the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment under John Toll on August 17.


Choice of Hercules. August 30. St. Mary’s Church, Stoke-by-Nayland, Essex. Baroque Orchestra and Psalmody, Peter Holman, conductor. (Plus music for Comus, English songs, and the Suite from the Water Music.) Tel: 44 (0)1473 827718


Belshazzar, September 18, 21, 22. Schloßächen im Regierungspräsidium, Cäcilienalle, Düsseldorf. Co-production with Karlsruhe Handel Festival, combining Handel’s music with modern video art. The audience will be part of the action.


continued on back page
1996 American Handel Society Recording Prize

The American Handel Society Recording Prize for a 1996 release goes to the recording of *Almira, Königin von Castilien* by Andrew Lawrence-King and Fiori musicali on the Classic Production Osnrück label (CPO 999 275-2). The recording features soloists Ann Monoyios (Almira), Patricia Rozario (Edilla), Linda Gerrard (Bellante), Jamie MacDougall (Fernando), Douglas Nasrawi (Osman), Christian Elsner (Tabarco), David Thomas (Gonsalvo), and Olaf Haye (Raymondo). A coproduction with Radio Bremen, the recording was made in connection with a 1994 staged performance of the work in Bremen-Halle, prepared and conducted by Thomas Albert, artistic director of Fiori musicali, who was unable to participate in the recording sessions because of illness.

The prize recognizes a superbly performed work that constitutes a significant contribution to Handel's recorded oeuvre. The committee, consisting of Graydon Beeks, chair, Martha Ronish, and Roger Freitas, faced an especially difficult task due to the unusually large number of excellent recordings issued in 1996 which fit these criteria (see "Recent Recordings" in the April 1997 issue of this Newsletter). *Almira* was chosen because of its high standard of singing and playing, the dramatic sweep of Lawrence-King's direction, and the crucial role the work plays in an understanding of Handel's development as an opera composer.

A committee is presently at work on the 1997 prize; readers who wish to nominate any recording not in the discography in the April 1998 Newsletter should write to Richard King at the address of the American Handel Society.

The J. Merrill Knapp Research Fellowship 1998

The Directors of the American Handel Society are pleased to announce that the recipient of the J. Merrill Knapp Research Fellowship in 1998 is Dr. Todd Gilman of Boston. Dr. Gilman received the Ph.D. in English literature from the University of Toronto in 1994. He is presently a lecturer in the Literature Section of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and in the Departments of English at Suffolk University and Fisher College. Dr. Gilman's project is a book entitled "Our English Amphiion: The Theater Career of Thomas Augustine Arne, 1732–78." He will use the fellowship to study Arne sources and materials at the Britten-Pears Library in Aldeburgh, England. The Fellowship Committee consisted of William D. Gudger, chair, Raymond Erickson, and Olga Termini. The winners of the Fellowship since it was established in 1989 are listed below:

- **1989** David Ross Hurley
- **1990** Richard G. King
- **1991** John Winemiller
- **1993** Michael Corn
- **1993** Channan Wilner
- **1994** Mark Risinger
- **1996** Barbara Durost
- **1998** Todd Gilman
1998 Maryland Handel Festival & Conference
November 6–8, 1998
University of Maryland, College Park
Paul Traver, Artistic Director
Richard G. King, Associate Director
Jesse Parker, General Manager

**Hallische Händel-Ausgabe Editorial Board Meeting**
Friday November 6, 9:00 AM
Room 2114, Inn and Conference Center, University of Maryland University College
(closed to the public)

**American Handel Society Board of Directors Meeting**
Friday November 6, 1:00 PM
Room 2114, Inn and Conference Center, University of Maryland University College
(closed to the public)

**Concert I**
Friday November 6, 7:30 PM
*Alexander Balus*
Sherri Karam, soprano
Lenaida Crawford, mezzo-soprano
Charles Reid, tenor
Phillip Collister, bass
Paul Traver, conductor
University of Maryland Chorus
Smithsonian Chamber Orchestra
Memorial Chapel, University of Maryland
Tickets: $25.00 / 21.00 / 16.00 / 10.00

**Conference Session I**
Saturday November 7, 9:00 AM
*Handelian Constructions Of Women*
Speakers:
Susanne Dunlap, "The Magic of Alcina: Transformations of the Sorceress from Caccini to Handel"
Wendy Heller, "The Pleasures of Self-Sacrifice: Handel's Admeto on the Journey from Venice"
David Hurley, "Hercules in Drag"
Kenneth Nott, "Injur'd Queen, L'indegna usurpatrice: The Portrayal of Athalia in 18th-Century Oratorio"
Ken McLeod, "Masculine Anxiety in Handel's Semee"
Room 1109, Inn and Conference Center, University of Maryland University College

**American Handel Society Membership Meeting**
Saturday November 7, 2:00 PM
Room 1109, Inn and Conference Center, University of Maryland University College

**American Handel Society Lecture**
Saturday November 7, 3:15 PM
Anthony Hicks, *Handel's Jephtha: A Sacrifice to Theology?*
Homer Ulrich Recital Hall, Tawes Fine Arts Building, University of Maryland

**Concert II**
Saturday November 7, 5:00 PM
*Chatham Baroque*
Homer Ulrich Recital Hall, Tawes Fine Arts Building, University of Maryland

**American Handel Society Dinner**
Saturday November 7, 7:30 PM
Location TBA

**Conference Session II**
Sunday November 8, 9:00 AM
*Handel in London Society*
Speakers:
Donald Burrows, "Handel's Women in the mid-1740s"
David Hunter, "Lady Margaret Cecil Brown: 'Otherwise Unknown to History'"
Richard G. King, "The Flower of Princesses': Anne of Hanover"
Thomas McGearry, "Handel as Art Collector"
Stanley C. Pelkey II, "Political Discourse and the Representation of Kingship in the Music of Handel"
Room 1109, Inn and Conference Center, University of Maryland University College

**Pre-Concert Lecture**
Sunday November 8, 2:00 pm
Speaker: Ellen Rosand (Lecture Title TBA)
Maryland Room, Marie Mount Hall, University of Maryland

**Concert III**
Sunday November 8, 3:00 PM
*joshua*
Amanda Balestrieri, soprano
Lorie Gratis, mezzo-soprano
Charles Reid, tenor
Phillip Collister, bass
Paul Traver, conductor
University of Maryland Chorus
Smithsonian Chamber Orchestra
Memorial Chapel, University of Maryland
Tickets: $25.00 / 21.00 / 16.00 / 10.00

Concert II, the Lectures, and the Conference Sessions are free. Subscription tickets for Concerts I and III at reduced prices are also available. For more information or to purchase tickets call (301) 405-5588 or write to the Maryland Handel Festival Box Office, Room 2140, School of Music, University of Maryland, College Park, MD 20742.
ADVICE TO
Dr. Hunter:
On his Exposition of the ADVICE to Mr. Handel*

You may be right, my Friend, when you propose
A Name for One who Handel did oppose
When first he sang of Israel set free
From Egypt's Bondage, by the LORD's Decree.
'The Fiend' who stopped 'her' ears to Sounds divine,
May well be she who, gorged with Spite malign,
In very Person on the London scene
Made Mischief to defame his Art serene.
And yet I wonder if the 'Fiend' could be
That 'Envy' mentioned earlier in Line Three;
She there to Merit is set up as Foe,
And Merit's her 'Superior' just below.
The ancient Poets often Persons make
Of abstract Things, and for their Genders take
That which their Names in Latin do possess.
(Thus Envy from Invidia gains her Dress.)
'Let Envy then conceal her Head' recall,
A jolly Song, known to Handelians all;
Or Pope's fine Lines, writ in the self-same Year,
On Windsor Forest, charged with Hope most dear
For lasting Peace beneath a Stuart's sway,
And echoed (as a Tribute, I would say)
By Jennens, sometime Squire of Gopsall Hall,
Telling the Story of Belshazzar's Fall:
'O stretch they Reign, Fair Peace! from Shore to Shore
Till Conquest cease, and Slav'ry be no more...
Exiled by thee from Earth to deepest Hell,
In brazen Bonds shall barb'rous Discord dwell...
There hateful Envy her own Snakes shall feel
And Persecution mourn her broken Wheel...'
'Tis but a Thought; no Certainty I claim,
Though certain 'tis, my Verse is pretty lame.

Anthony Hicks

* Editor's Note
For Dr. Hunter's "Exposition," see the Newsletter of the American Handel Society 12/3 (December, 1997).

The Handel Institute Awards

Performance
Applications are invited for the Byrne Award (up to £1,000) to support performance of Handel's music and assist young professional musicians at the start of their careers. Deadline April 1.

Research
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.

Further details from:
Professor Colin Timms
Department of Music
University of Birmingham
Edgbaston
Birmingham B15 2TT
United Kingdom
Tel/fax: 0121-414 5781
Email: C.R.Timms@bham.ac.uk
A Curious Handel Performance from page 1

simply remembered incorrectly his explanation that he had been a wind player in the service of her grandfather. This is the last known reference to Mercy.

On the evening of the 15th, she continued in the same vein:

It rained every day while we were there which was no improvement to the country which is very bad. Notwithstanding the rain we went a fishing every day that we were not otherwise engaged which I preferred to the Rooms at Bristol & what is extraordinary I caught a number of fish & not one cold though good Madam scolded every time I went out in the rain but I escaped cold & was never better in my life for the novelty of the place tempted me out every day & I am become by it a very stout walker. My father talks of spending two or three months there next summer. I think it a very pleasant place in summer but it must be bad in winter as the country is too bad for riding but very pleasant for walking. I think it better for having no Neighbours for it is always in one's power to meet company by going to Bath or Bristol which is more agreeable than formal Visiting. They have a Vauxhall at Bristol. I did not go to it but I heard the music was very good but the gardens something worse than Marybon & the company in the same style.

Lady Caroline was not possessed of a robust constitution, and the success of this country expedition was somewhat of a surprise. It may have prompted a painting of her, in rather formal attire fishing by the side of a river, which was formerly in the collection of A Gilbey, Esq. I have been able to learn nothing further about the Bristol pleasure garden.

The final and most intriguing reference to music occurs in the midst of Lady Caroline's description of the family's arrival:

We were received at Keynsham with great rejoicings ringing of bells bonfires squibs serenades dancing staring gaping &c. The church is a very fine one for a country Parish & what surprised me excessively there are about 14 of the common people that sing in the Church all Handel's Anthems & with out any instruments sing as just as ever I heard any body in my life & some of them with very fine voices. The Minister of the Parish & his wife are young people very polite & well behav'd & were often with us.

To what extent the details of her description of the "great rejoicings" are exaggerated for dramatic purposes is unclear. Her father was, however, Duke of Chandos, and this may well have been his first visit to Keynsham Abbey.

Lady Caroline's comments on St. John the Baptist, Keynsham are of particular interest to Handelians. Local tradition holds that Handel visited the church on more than one occasion, and among the church plate are several pieces inscribed as gifts from the composer in the early 1750s. It would seem natural that the parishioners might have taken a particular interest in the famous composer. But what manner of performance does Lady Caroline describe? The phrase "without any instruments" would seem to imply unaccompanied singing, but which of Handel's anthems could be performed in that manner? Perhaps she meant accompanied only by the organ, presumably playing a transcription of the orchestral parts. If so, this is surely a very early example of that mode of performance in a parish church.

And finally, which of Handel's anthems could she have heard performed? Only the Coronation Anthems and the Funeral Anthem had been published by 1751. All other works circulated only in manuscript copies, such as those I described in an earlier issue of this Newsletter. Could Lady Caroline have heard movements extracted from oratorios and performed as anthems in a manner similar to that employed by William Boyce some years later? Or is it possible that she heard portions of the Anthems for Cannons which Handel had composed for her grandfather more than forty years earlier?

Graydon Beeks

1 Huntington Library Stowe MS STB Box 11 (2), quoted by permission.

HANDEL-L on LISTSERV@UMDD.UMD.EDU

HANDEL-L is a list sponsored by The American Handel Society at the University of Maryland, College Park. The list offers a forum for discussion of the life, times, and works of George Frideric Handel as well as related topics. HANDEL-L is open to all and welcomes comments, questions, and short reports from scholars, performers, and others interested in Handel.

To subscribe to HANDEL-L, send the following command to LISTSERV@UMDD.UMD.EDU:

SUBSCRIBE HANDEL-L <your first name> [<your middle name>] <your last name>

Howard Serwer serves as owner and moderator of HANDEL-L. In that capacity he reviews all postings for relevance and suitability and communicates with submitters if necessary. Serwer's electronic address is hs7@umail.umd.edu.
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.

NEWSLETTER of The American Handel Society

Richard G. King, editor
School of Music
University of Maryland
College Park, MD 20742
U.S.A.
Tel: (301) 405-5523
Fax: (301) 314-9504

The Editor welcomes comments and suggestions for future issues.

The American Handel Society

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

OFFICERS AND DIRECTORS

David Hurley, President, Pittsburg State University, Kansas
Howard Serwer, Secretary/Treasurer, University of Maryland, College Park

Graydon Becks, Pomona College
William D. Gudger, The College of Charleston
Ellen T. Harris, Massachusetts Institute of Technology
Nicholas McGegan, Honorary Director, Berkeley, CA
Alfred Mann, Honorary Director, Eastman School of Music

Ellen Rosand, Vice President, Yale University
Richard G. King, Newsletter Editor, University of Maryland, College Park

John H. Roberts, University of California, Berkeley
Olga Termimi, California State University, Los Angeles
Paul Traver, Honorary Director, University of Maryland, College Park
William Weber, California State University, Long Beach

*Founding Member

APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP IN THE AMERICAN HANDEL SOCIETY

Name ___________________________ Date ___________________________

Address ___________________________ State __________ Zip __________

Class of Membership (for current calendar year; otherwise, specify future starting year on lines below)

$ £ DM $ £ DM

REGULAR .............................. 20 13 35 .............................. SPONSOR ......................... 60 38 100

JOINT .................................. 25 16 45 .............................. PATRON ......................... 125 80 200

(one set of publications) .............................. LIFE ......................... 400 250 700

DONOR ................................. 35 22 60 .............................. SUBSCRIBER (institutions only) ........ 30 20 50

STUDENT/RETIRED .................. 10 7 18


Friends of the Handel Institute: £10/£16; students £5/£8.

Those paying in dollars should make their checks payable to THE AMERICAN HANDEL SOCIETY and mail to THE AMERICAN HANDEL SOCIETY, School of Music, University of Maryland, College Park, MD 20742. Those paying in sterling should make their checks payable to Howard Serwer and mail to the society at the above address. Those wishing to pay in DM should remit to Dr. Siegfried Flesch, Treasurer, Georg-Friedrich-Händel-Gesellschaft, Gr. Nikole Str. 5, O-4020, Halle/Saale, Federal Republic of Germany, and indicate that the payment is for the account for the AHS.