

# NEWSLETTER

of

## The American Handel Society

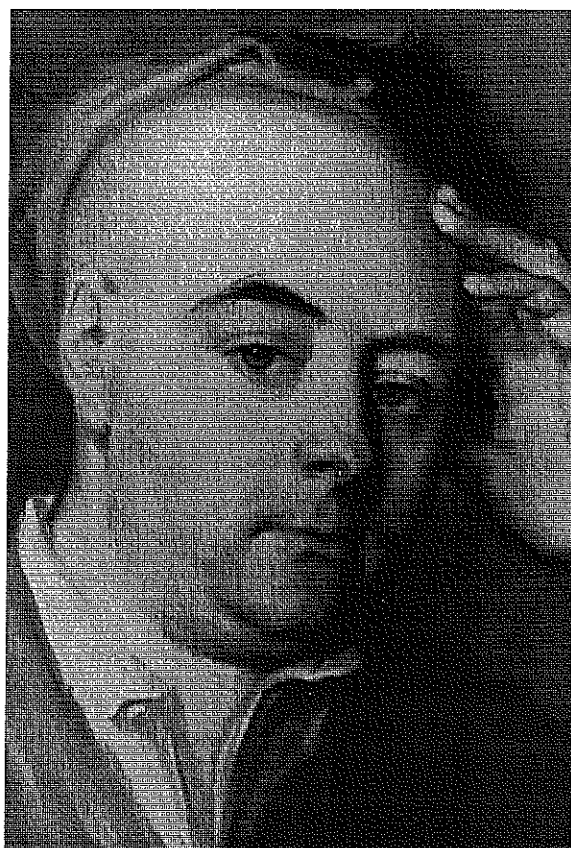
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### Mr Handel's Friends: Contemporary Accounts of the Composer from the Papers of James Harris

Although relatively little is known of Handel's London "oratorio audience" as a whole, it seems that it included a number of close-knit groups from substantial land-owning families, rather less exalted than the Dukes who had supported the Royal Academy of Music, but containing a fair number of "professional" people such as clergymen and lawyers. One such group comes to life in the correspondence of Mary Granville, subsequently Mrs. Pendarves and Mrs. Delany; another one, though hitherto less well-documented, consisted of the Harris family, whose connections extended by intermarriage to the Earls of Shaftesbury and Gainsborough, and Sir Wyndham Knatchbull. In both cases, the family circles were not only supporters of Handel's musical activities, but also personal acquaintances of the composer. Until recently, the story of the Harris circle's connection with Handel has been derived from extracts from 13 letters, supplemented by information from the composer's will: Thomas Harris, a lawyer in London, witnessed the first three codicils to Handel's will in 1756 and 1757, and received a bequest of 300 pounds in the final codicil in 1759. The recent deposit of his family archive by the present Earl of Malmsbury at the Hampshire Record Office, Winchester, England, has permitted access to a large collection of papers recording many

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*Portrait of Handel by Philippe Mercier. Courtesy of Viscount FitzHarris.*

### Abstracts of the 1996 American Handel Society Conference

The 1996 American Handel Society Conference was held in conjunction with the Maryland Handel Festival on November 1-2, 1996. Sunday's conference session was held in the R.Lee Hornbake Library at the University of Maryland.

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## 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.

*Alcina*, December 21, 23; January 5, 18, 21, 29; February 7; March 2. Theater Basel, Basel, Switzerland. 41 612951133.

*Ariodante*, January 11 (Grenoble, France), 13 (Clermont-Ferrand, France), 16 (Poissy, France), 18 (Concertgebouw, Amsterdam, Holland). A. S. Von Otter, L. Dawson, E. Podles, V. Cangemi, R. Croft; Marc Minkowski, conductor.

*Giulio Cesare*, January 25, 28, February 1, 4, 9. Munich Staatsoper. 49 89 221 316.

*Alcina*, February 7, 12, 15, 19, 22, March 4. Opernhaus Zurich. E. Mei, A. Murray, I. Rei, R. Sacca, Y. Naef, B. Skhovus, E. Magnuson. Zurich 41 268-6666.

*Giulio Cesare*, February 9 (Harrison Opera House, 804/623-1223), February 12, 14 (Carpenter Center, Richmond, 804/643-6004), February 21, 23 (George Mason University Center for the Arts, Fairfax, VA, 703/993-888). S. Kim, Friz, Sabella, Crowe, E. Russell; P. Mark/J. Shannon, Garrett-Croag, Conlin/C. Hoffman; Peter Mark, conductor.

*Serse*, February 20, 22, 23, 26, 28, March 1, 5. Von Stade/K. Barber, W. Hill, S. Waters, Clarey; Asawa/Ragin, Opalach, J. Atkins; Beckwith, S. Wadsworth, T. Lynch/Pakeldinaz, Seattle Opera, Seattle Opera House, Seattle, WA (206) 389-7676.

*Agrippina*, February 22, 25, 27. L. Lee, M. Uhe, M. Stork-Freiberger, G. Pushee, R. Girolami, R. Blaze, G. Jentjens; Paul Goodwin, conductor. Grosses Haus, Karlsruhe. 49 721390300.

**The 20th London Handel Festival**, March 16–April 23. Performances include

*Alessandro Severo*, March 18, 21, Denys Darlow and Michael Rosewell, conductors; Handel's *Music for Vespers* and Erba's *Magnificat* March 22, Jonathan Rees-Williams, conductor; *Il Trionfo del tempo e del disinganno*, April 3, Paul Nicholson, conductor; *Parnasso in Festa*, April 18, Denys Darlow, conductor; *Anthems for the Chapel Royal*, April 22, Jonathon Rees-Williams, conductor. For information, contact Ann Senior, 32 Wolverton Gardens, London W6 7DY. Tel. 0181 563 0618; fax 0181 741 5233.

*Acis and Galatea*, March 5 (Seville, Spain), 6 (Valencia, Spain). D. York, J. McDougall, A. Mackenzie-Wicks, D. Berg, W. Missin; King's Consort, Robert King, conductor.

*Alcina*, April 3, 5. Manhattan School of Music Opera Theater, Merker Hall, New York, New York (212) 749-2801, ext.428.

*Alexander Balus*, April 16. C. Denley, M. George, C. Daniels, L. Dawson, C. McFadden; King's Consort and Choir of New College, Oxford, Robert King, conductor. Queen Elizabeth Hall, London. tel. 44 1719604242.

*L'Allegro, il Penseroso ed il Moderato*, English National Opera. June 5, 6, 7, 9, 10. London Coliseum, London 44 171 632-8300.

**Händel-Festspiele, Halle. (Saale)** June 5–10, 1997. Featuring performances of *Serse*, *Ariodante*, *Atalanta*, *Clori*, *Tirsi e Fileno*, *Joshua*, *Acis and Galatea*, *Judas Maccabaeus*, *Saul*, *Solomon*, *Athalia*. Direktion der Händel-Festspiele in Händel-Hause Halle, Grosse Nikolaistraße 5, 06108 Halle (Saale), Germany.

### ***Israel in Egypt: an Oratorio as a Victim of Politics***

Annette Landgraf

Handel finished composing *Israel in Egypt* (HWV 54) on November 1, 1738. The work was given only four times between its premiere in April 1739 and the final performance on April 1, 1740. After its initial failure, Handel tried to adapt the work to suit the taste of the audience by shortening choruses and providing more arias. In spite of these changes, the oratorio never achieved success.

This paper explores why Handel's audiences responded so negatively to *Israel in Egypt*. In order to elucidate the issue, it is necessary to take into account contemporary aesthetics, intellectual and religious tendencies, and the political situation in Britain and Europe. The analysis of both the music and the libretto of the oratorio will help to disclose aesthetic references to social contexts. Important clues are provided by contemporary documents, including pamphlets from the 1730s.

### ***Handel's Early Performances of Judas Maccabaeus: Some New evidence and Interpretations***

Merlin Channon

Research has shown that eight versions of the original 1747 word-book were issued for the early performances of *Judas Maccabaeus* from 1 April 1747 until 1750, when a second edition was published. A detailed examination of these issues and other primary and secondary sources has enabled a revision of previous assumptions concerning Handel's revivals to be made. This paper also corrects some errors found in successive editions of *Judas Maccabaeus* from the eighteenth to the twentieth centuries.

### ***The Fonds Schoelcher: A Preliminary Report***

Richard G. King

The French writer and politician Victor Schoelcher (1804-1893) is well known to Handel scholars as author of an important biography of the composer (*The Life of Handel*, London, 1857). Schoelcher was also a cataloguer and avid collector of Handel's music. His catalogues, though never published, have served as a basis for subsequent efforts, and his collection of manuscripts, printed editions, and librettos must be counted as one of the major Handel collections.

Schoelcher's Handel library, donated to the Conservatoire de musique in 1872 and 1873, and now at the Bibliothèque nationale, has lain in relative obscurity. There is no substantial discussion of it in the literature and there is no published catalogue. The collection, however, merits much greater attention. A summary, manuscript listing of part of its contents can be found at the Bibliothèque nationale, and that list, combined with Schoelcher's own catalogue of parts of the collection and with a rough estimate of its as yet uninventoried portions, shows that the *Fonds Schoelcher* numbers more than three thousand items.

I am presently cataloguing the collection and offer in this paper a preliminary report on my findings. By way of introduction, the paper provides a biographical sketch of Schoelcher and a critical evaluation of his *Life of Handel*. The paper then explores the history of Schoelcher's collection, describing the provenance of some of the more important volumes and detailing the collection's treatment since 1872. The present state of the *Fonds Schoelcher* is then outlined: the collection consists of approximately 2,000 eighteenth- and nineteenth-century editions and arrangements of Handel's music; about 650 librettos; many works by Handel's contemporaries; ephemera such as newspaper clippings,

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references to eighteenth-century musical life in England, including about 150 new documents referring to Handel.

The principal relevant section of the archive consists of the correspondence of James Harris (1709–1780), the father of the first Earl of Malmesbury. As the oldest brother, it fell to James to maintain the family's property and interests in Salisbury, and he spent most of his time there until 1761, when he became Member of Parliament for Christchurch, Hampshire, involving attendance in London for part of each year. He took an active interest in music, directing the music club in Salisbury (one of the earliest and most flourishing provincial music societies in Britain), and was always pleased to receive news of musical events in London. Fortunately, both his brother Thomas and his cousin the Earl of Shaftesbury were keen supporters of Handel, and relayed with enthusiasm regular information about the composer and his professional activities. Other correspondents also responded to Harris's wish for news about Handel, in particular the clergyman John Upton, and John Robartes, who in 1741 inherited the title Earl of Radnor. It was from Robartes that Harris received the gift of a sumptuously-bound collection of manuscript scores of Handel's works (some of them now recognized as important sources for his operas and instrumental music) that had originally been assembled by Elizabeth Legh. Another interesting source of information about Handel comes from entries in the diaries kept by a third brother, George William Harris, which have also ended up in the Malmesbury archive.

Unfortunately there are no letters to James Harris from Handel himself, though the archive does have one page of his musical autograph, recording a keyboard piece (HWV 425) that he composed while on a visit to the Earl of Shaftesbury at Wimborne St. Giles, not far from Salisbury. There have been local legends about Handel visiting Harris in Salisbury: Harris's house (as Malmesbury House) still stands, in the Cathedral Close. A draft letter from Harris reveals that the composer did make at least one

visit, apparently in the summer of 1739, when he attended a concert in the "music room" adjoining Harris's house, and entertained his hosts by improvising music on the harpsichord and the organ. There was a further important connection between Handel and Harris soon afterwards, when Harris prepared an oratorio-style libretto from Milton's poems *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso*, interleaving passages from the two poems and laying them out as texts for setting as recitatives, arias and choruses, sometimes with a further specification of musical style, or the name of a singer from Handel's current theatre company in London. This libretto was further amended and expanded by Charles Jennens, becoming *L'Allegro, il Penseroso ed il Moderato*, which Handel composed in January–February 1740 and first performed at Lincoln's Inn Fields Theatre later that February.

The Harris papers add a little to the biographical details of the events of Handel's life, but their principal interest lies in two areas: they provide several lively first-hand accounts of the man himself, and they give some fascinating new details about his London performances. We have vivid reports of Handel's health crisis in 1737, and of the difficulties which he faced from time to time in his London theatre career from social and competitive pressures. In both areas, Handel seems to emerge with considerable self-confidence. His reaction to his severe attack of "rheumatic palsy" was that he was glad that he had finished composing his new opera scores in time, and even before he set off for the health-cures in Tunbridge Wells and Aix-la-Chapelle he had been on horseback twice. (This is apparently the first known reference to Handel's equestrian activities.) And, after a discouragingly empty "house" at the start of his 1744–5 season at the King's Theatre, he "laugh'd in his usual way, & seem'd quite jocular and easie." The letters give a vivid picture of the ebbs and flows of Handel's spirits and activities in his last years, when it seems that he was able to continue performing concertos in public from time to time, to maintain an active role

in the management of the oratorio performances (though perhaps not actual music direction), and to sustain at least a modest social life around London.

There are some fascinating descriptions of performances (and rehearsals) of Handel's music, with specific references to his vocal soloists and the varying quality of his orchestra. The Earl of Shaftesbury provides some particularly lively reports of attending Handel's operas in the later 1730s; there are also two vivid accounts of the 1744 *Deborah* revival from different correspondents, and Shaftesbury graphically describes the problems at the first night of *Hercules* in 1745, when Mrs. Cibber's last-minute indisposition meant that the bass Gustavus Waltz had to "read" a section of her role. Another sidelight on Handel's performances is provided by an intriguing series of letters in 1743-4 from John Christopher Smith the elder. It seems that Handel allowed Harris to borrow his own performing materials in order to perform some of his works, including *Messiah*, at Salisbury, and it emerged in the course of the exchange of letters that there were few, if any, independent "chorus" copies in the sets from Handel's 1743 performances. In addition to providing this direct contact with Handel's own principal music copyist, the Harris papers also have many interesting letters from other copyists referring to the creation of Harris's own music collection: these contain hints of the attitudes of British contemporary music collectors, as well as enlightening information about the way that copyists worked.

The papers from the Harris archive that interest us begin in the 1730s. Around 1760 there is a radical change in the nature of the musical references, produced by Handel's death and the change in James Harris's own career. But material on musical events in Salisbury and London continues up to the time of Harris's death in 1780: unfortunately his son did not inherit his interest in music. An engaging survey of the Handelian material in the Harris papers has been written by Rosemary Dunhill, the Hampshire County Archivist

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## The J. Merrill Knapp Research Fellowship

The Board of Directors of the American Handel Society invite applications for the 1997 J. Merrill Knapp Research Fellowship (formerly called The American Handel Society 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 and/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 1997 Fellowship must be postmarked no later than March 15, 1997 and should be sent to:

Professor William Weber  
Department of History  
California State University  
Long Beach, CA 90840

Applicants will be notified of the decision by May 15.

(*Handel and the Harris Circle*, No. 8 in the "Hampshire Papers" series published by Hampshire County Council). Rosemary Dunhill and I are preparing a book containing transcriptions (with commentary) of all the references to music and theatre from the Harris papers up to 1780, which will be published by Oxford University Press. The quantity of relevant original material is daunting, but we hope to make the material available as quickly as possible, and we have been happy to receive encouragement from the Earl of Malmesbury and his family. The liveliness of the original correspondents is ensuring that we shall not fall asleep over the job, and the book should make a "good read" for all Handelians.

*Donald Burrows*

programs, tickets, and posters; and, finally, some important eighteenth- and nineteenth-century manuscripts. Of these manuscripts, the most significant for Handel studies are the autographs of four of John Christopher Smith's oratorios, *Nabal, Gideon, Redemption, and Tobit*; one of the earliest copies of *Acis and Galatea* (dated 1720); and a late conducting score of *Israel in Egypt*. By way of conclusion, the paper offers some thoughts on Schoelcher's scholarship, examining in particular his work on Handel's compositional process and his efforts to date early printed editions of Handel's music. A more complete study of the *Fonds Schoelcher* appears in *Notes: Quarterly Journal of the Music Library Association* (March, 1997).

## The Handel Insitute Awards

Applications are invited for Handel Insitute Awards (up to £1,000) in support of research projects involving the life or works of Handel or his contemporaries. Deadline September 1, 1997.

Further details from:

Professor Colin Timms  
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## NEWSLETTER

of  
 The American Handel Society

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Those paying in dollars should make their checks payable to THE AMERICAN HANDEL SOCIETY and mail to THE AMERICAN HANDEL SOCIETY, Department 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.