REFLECTIONS ON HANDEL, MESSIAH, AND ANTI-JUDAISM:
A YEAR LATER

On Easter Sunday, April 8 2007, just three weeks before the 2007 meeting of the American Handel Society at Princeton University, The New York Times published an article by Michael Marissen entitled “Unsettling History of That Joyous ‘Hallelujah.’” For Marissen, the Daniel Underhill Professor of Music at Swarthmore University, Handel is relatively new territory. However, his many publications on Bach include *Lutheranism, anti-Judaism, and Bach’s St. John Passion* (Oxford University Press), an influential book that has helped Bach devotees sort through the complex theological and musical implications of the anti-Judaic aspects of Bach’s interpretation of the Gospel According to St. John.

Unlike the St. John Passion, Handel’s Messiah does not ever mention or deal specifically with Jews and Judaism. For Marissen, however, this does not preclude the possibility of anti-Judaic intent or understanding on the part of the composer, librettist, or their eighteenth-century audiences. Reminding his readers of the popular Messiah sings and numerous performances of the work for Christmas and Easter, Marissen claims that the “Hallelujah” chorus was not designed to honor the birth or resurrection of Jesus, but rather to celebrate the destruction of Jerusalem and the Second Temple in AD. 70. The article sets out to demonstrate that Handel’s librettist Charles Jennens was the central architect in crafting a libretto that would have been understood in eighteenth-century England as a celebration of the destruction of the temple, since this represented divine retribution on Judaism for its failure to accept Jesus as God’s promised Messiah. Marissen went further, however, and did not shy away from implicating the composer in this endeavor. Handel, he wrote, “has his own contribution to the troubling theological message here,” such as saving the drums and trumpets for the “overt-the-top triumph” of the Hallelujah Chorus, or composing recurring motives that represent the Jews. *New York Times* readers were encouraged to think about this “unsettling history” whenever they confronted the popular tradition of standing up for the “Hallelujah Chorus.”

While many readers might have wondered why the *New York Times* saw fit to engage with this potentially volatile issue on one of the most important holidays of the Christian

continued on p. 4

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DR. SIEGFRIED FLESCH

The American Handel Society notes with sadness the death of Dr. Siegfried Flesch this past December. Born in Suhl, Germany on October 11, 1933, Dr. Flesch earned his doctorate in musicology in 1972. Throughout his professional career he made numerous contributions to the field of Handel studies as scholar, editor and board member of the Georg-Friedrich-Händel Gesellschaft and the Hallische-Händel Ausgabe. Siegfried’s dynamic presence at Handel festivals in Germany and elsewhere will be keenly missed. The AHS extends to the Flesch family its sincerest condolences.
HANDEL CALENDAR

The American Handel Society welcomes news or information about events of interest to Handelians. If possible, please include address, telephone number and URL where readers may obtain details. Announcements concerning Handel events from around the world are available by logging onto http://gchandlel.org/

Giulio Cesare in Egitto

Glimmerglass Opera Summer Festival

Giulio Cesare: TBA
Cleopatra: Mary Dunleavy, soprano
Sesto: Aurlheia Varak
Cornelia: TBA
Toio: Gerald Thompson
Conductor: David Stern
July/August 2008
Cooperstown, New York
http://www.glimmerglass.org

Radamisto

Santa Fe Opera

Radamisto: David Daniels, countertenor
Pelisson: Laura Claycomb, soprano
Zenobia: Christine Rice
Tigrane: Heidi Stober
Tralted: Luca Pisaroni, bass-baritone
(Note: The role of Fraarte has been cut.)
Music Director: Harry Bicket
Stage Director: David Alden
Scenes and Costumes: Gideon Davey
19, 23 July 2008
1, 7, 15 August 2008
http://www.santafeopera.org

Messiah

Johann Christian Bach-Akademie

30 November 2008, 7pm
Kloster Maria Laach, Germany
http://www.maria-laach.de
http://www.jcba.de

Halle Handel Festival

Rodrigo

Rodrigo: Maria Riccarda Wesseling
Eis: Maria Bayo
Florida: Deborah York
Giuliano: Robie van Rensburg
Fernanda: Max Emanuel Cencic
Evagon: Anne-Cathrine Gillet
Al Ayre Espanol Orquesta
Conductor: Eduardo Lopez Banzo
12 June 2008
Halle, Oper Halle
http://www.alayreespanol.com

Giulio Cesare (concert version)

Lawrence Zazzo, countertenor
Freiburger Barockorchester
Director: Rene Jacobs
14 June 2008
Cite de la Musique, Paris, France
http://www.cite-musique.fr
20 June 2008
Castellon, Spain

Israel in Egypt

Thomas Tallis Society

15 June 2008, 6.30pm
St. Alfege Church, Greenwich
http://www.thomas-tallis-society.org.uk

Rinaldo

Zurich Opera

Goffredo: Liliana Nikiteanu
Abinsera: Martina Janková
Rinaldo: Juliette Galtian
Argante: Andreas Hörl
Armida: Malin Hartelius
Music Director: William Christie
Stage Director: Klaus Guth
Scenes: Christian Schmidt
Lighting: Jürgen Hoffmann
15+ June 2008 (premiere)
Opernhaus Zürich, Switzerland
http://www.opernhaus.ch

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, contact the Newsletter Editor.
Coronation Anthems
Ode for Saint Cecilia’s Day

Sophie Daneman, soprano
Ed Lyon, tenor

Les Arts Florissants
Director: Paul Agnew

17 June 2008, 8pm
Cité de la Musique, Paris, France
http://www.cite-musique.fr

19 June 2008
Théâtre de Caen, France
http://www.theatre.caen.fr
http://www.arte-florissants.com

Coronation Anthems

The Sixteen
The Symphony of Harmony and Invention
Director: Harry Christopher

21 June 2008
Oxford, UK
http://www.the-sixteen.org.uk

Samson

Buxton Festival

11, 16, 19, 22 and 27 July 2008
Buxton, UK
http://www.buxtonfestival.co.uk

Theodora

Dartington Summer School
Conductor: Graeme Jenkins
2-9 August 2008 (course)
http://www.dartington.org/summer-school

Belshazzar

Daniel Jessyn Davies, countertenor
Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment
Sir Charles Mackerras

August / September 2008
London, UK (Venue to be confirmed)

Partenope

Armindo Jessyn Davies, countertenor
John Mark Ainsley
Patricia Bardon
Rosemary Joshua
Christine Rice
Christian Curnyn, conductor

October/November 2008
English National Opera, London, UK
http://www.eno.org

HANDEL-L

HANDEL-L is a discussion list open to everybody wishing to discuss the music, life and times of George Frideric Handel and his contemporaries. Subscribers are welcome to initiate or respond to a wide variety of topics. "Lurkers" are welcome to monitor proceedings anonymously.

All Handel enthusiasts, at any level of specialisation, are encouraged to provide reviews and feedback concerning recordings, opera productions, concerts, and literature. HANDEL-L combines this appreciation of Handel’s music with comments, short reports, and discussion from scholars, performers, and journalists who maintain a serious interest in the composer and his world: the discussion list is a valuable source for breaking the latest Handel news around the world.

To join HANDEL-L visit
http://groups.yahoo.com/group/handell/

MEMBERSHIP DUES AND DIRECTORY

Remember to keep your dues (and contact information) current for inclusion in the Membership Directory.

FROM THE PRESIDENT’S DESK
(WINTER 2007)

I just want to highlight three things that are dealt with in more detail elsewhere in the newsletter. First, the dates and location of AHS 2009 have been changed. It will now take place from 26 February to 1 March 2009 at Centre College in historic Danville, Kentucky. Nathan Link will be in charge of local arrangements, and the society is grateful to him and to his colleagues for being willing to host our conference on relatively short notice. Centre College, located in the heart of Kentucky’s Bluegrass Country, was the location of the very successful 1995 Society of Seventeenth-Century Music Conference. A Call for Papers is printed in this volume and information about travel and housing will be forthcoming. In the meantime, please hold those dates on your calendar.

Second, you will notice that this volume of the newsletter carries the date Winter 2007. We are currently one issue behind in the production of the newsletter, but it is important for bibliographical reasons not to omit a scheduled issue. The current plan is to catch up by having a combined Spring/Summer 2008 issue, which will be published at the end of the summer. I am sure Ken Nott, our newsletter editor, joins me in asking for members of the society to submit articles, reviews and news items for the newsletter, and especially for this next double issue.

Finally, I would like to remind AHS members who wish to pay their dues to the G.F. Händel-Gesellschaft and/or the Friends of The London Handel Institute through the AHS to do so before June. This will mean that I can settle accounts with our sister societies while I am in Europe during the summer, thus avoiding the need to convert currencies and wire money. This procedure, initiated many years ago by Howard Serwer, yields a monetary saving for the AHS. Members should note that the dollar amounts have been raised again to account for the decrease in the value of the dollar in relation to the Euro and the pound.

I look forward to seeing many of you in the course of 2008 as we look forward to the great anniversary year of 2009.

Graydon Becks
calendar, the timing of the article was also significant for the upcoming meeting of the American Handel Society. Stimulated by Professor Marissen's presentation of this material in a more scholarly guise at the 2006 meeting of the American Musicological Society, the AHS had already invited Marissen to participate in a panel discussion on the topic. The respondents were to include Ruth Smith, author of Handel's Oratorios in Eighteenth-Century Thought. As one of the organizers of the conference, I had also volunteered to join the debate, not because of my particular expertise in Messiah, but because of my long-held interests in anti-Semitism in music that I have encountered as both a scholar and a singer. But Marissen's New York Times article—and the last minute decision of the Times to send music writer James Oestereich to cover our panel—presented us with a special challenge. What had begun as an academic debate to be conducted within the confines of scholarly conferences or academic journals had now become part of the public record, one with the potential to influence the reception of this masterwork for years to come. This became evident in the week following the publication of the New York Times essay, when the Times received a substantial number of letters from both Jewish and non-Jewish lovers of Handel and Messiah, expressing anxiety, loss, and genuine sense of guilt about one of their most beloved compositions. It seemed all the more important for those of us participating in the panel to speak not only to the scholarly community, but also to the wider readership of the New York Times. Many of us felt that it was the responsibility of the American Handel Society to contribute to this discussion, not merely to assume a defensive posture—that is, to protect our hero from charges of musical anti-Judaism—but rather to use our collective expertise to provide readers unaccustomed to scholarly rhetoric with a broader context in which to understand and evaluate Marissen's claims. Was it likely, for example, given our knowledge of Handel's compositional processes, that he would have used a specific motive to represent Jews, or saved up trumpets and drums to celebrate the fall of the Temple and the downfall of Judaism? Would the minor alterations made by Jennens in the translations of certain Biblical passages discussed by Marissen likely to have been motivated by a desire to enhance an underlying anti-Judaic sentiment expressed unambiguously by some contemporary commentators? In what other contexts—such as the Book of Common Prayer—might Handel's audiences have known these same texts?

It is perhaps unnecessary to rehash here the substance of the discussion, much of which was published in print and on the website of the New York Times. (Readers may wish to refer to the article online cited below). Oestereich reported a "relatively muted" and polite debate, in which "steely resolve was hidden behind a soft spoken and mostly polite manner." Indeed, there is much to be said about the theological and musical issues at stake, which will also be addressed in a forthcoming article by John Roberts and Ruth Smith. In retrospect, I wonder if the muted tone resulted from a sense of discomfort about a discussion that did not seem to be completely at home in the academy or in the public domain. Although Marissen condemned the anti-Jewish sentiment in his sources, the dizzying abundance of Biblical citations followed by the virulent anti-Jewish commentary in his presentation seemed almost more appropriate to a fiery pulpit than a scholarly conference. It was this part of the experience that I personally found to be unsettling. As a Jewish singer who has performed Messiah and Bach's St. John Passion numerous times—experiences I have treasured—I was reminded of how the language of music—with or without the collusion of the composer—so often tempers the harshness of the theology that it might express either implicitly or explicitly. If Bach, as Professor Marissen has written elsewhere, succeeded in mollifying the unambiguous anti-Judaic tone of the Gospel of St. John, should we not consider the possibility that Messiah—in which Jews and Judaism are never mentioned—might have been designed for a purpose other than expressing contempt for Jews? As scholars and as listeners, how might we best reconcile the undeniably pervasive anti-Judaic and anti-Semitic sentiments relevant to so many masterworks of western culture with the specific expressive goals of Jennens and Handel? Are those readers who might find themselves "unsettled" after reading Marissen's article truly able to grapple with the musical and theological complexities at stake?

It is perhaps telling that the panel on Messiah provided the American Handel Society with its best international exposure in the popular press. The New York Times ran Oestereich's article on April 24 with a photo of the three panelists, and later that week published responses Ruth Smith and myself onto their website Nytimes.com. In a reminder both of the power of Handel's music and the media's love for controversy, the article was also picked up by the by International Herald Tribune, and also appeared in a number of European newspapers. Thus, several days later, having resumed my sabbatical in Italy, while sipping a cappuccino in my neighborhood bar in Florence, I came upon a slightly abridged version of the article in La Repubblica. For Italian readers, the photograph of the panelists was replaced by a portrait of Handel. And by the time Christmas and Easter rolled around this year, I spotted no references to anti-Judaic intent in the reviews of the still numerous performances of Messiah reported in the New York Times. For some, the jury may still be out on the value of this approach to Handel and Messiah. But I would like to think that Handel might have already emerged as the victor.

— Wendy Heller
April 2008

James R. Oestereich, "Il Messia di Handel è antisemita?" La Repubblica, 26 April 2007
THE ORGAN FROM THE CHAPEL AT CANNONS

Organs which have a direct connection to Handel are always of interest Handelians. These include the instrument at Adlington Hall in Cheshire, home of the Legh family whom Handel is known to have visited on several occasions, and the organ of St. Lawrence, Little Stanmore ("Whitchurch"), the parish church of the Dukes of Chandos lying just outside the grounds of his estate of Cannons and the site of the first performances of the Cannons Anthems and, perhaps, also of the first version of Esther. These instruments are both in playing condition – the former having been restored by Noel Mander in 1959 and the latter by the firm of Goetze and Gwynn Ltd in 1994 – and can be heard on several recordings.1

Another organ, without quite such a confirmed Handel pedigree, has received much less attention. This is the organ from the Chapel attached to the main house at Cannons. It was a three-manual instrument of 18 stops made by Abraham Jordan. The chapel was dedicated in August 1720 and presumably the organ was in place and functioning at that time. The chapel was torn down in 1747 and there are apparently no extant drawings of the organ in situ. It was located at the East End of the chapel in a gallery above the altar and reachable by an outside staircase. The location is confirmed by John Loveday of Caversham who visited Cannons in 1738 and remarked that "the Organ is behind the Altar." In 1737, during a visit to Brussels, Loveday visited the church of the Carmelite nuns and made the following comments: "In the Church of the Great Carmelites the Organ is over the high Altar, making a part of it; as in the Royal Chapel at Windsor the Organ is behind the Altar and visible through an Oval over it; it is also behind the Altar in the Duke of Chandos's Chappel at Cannons." Notice that Loveday does not actually say that the organ at Cannons was situated exactly as those in Brussels and Windsor. It is much more likely to have been situated in a gallery with its own case, as it was in the Chapel Royal in St. James's Palace, although there the gallery was located on the North wall rather than behind the Altar.

In the June 19, 1725 Inventory of Cannons the organ was described as "A chamber organ, 3 rows of keys, 18 stops, made by Jordan" and was valued at £730.2 When the contents of the house were sold at auction in 1747, the organ was purchased by the congregation of the Holy Trinity Church, Gosport adjacent to Portsmouth. The Daily Advertiser of 16 October 1747 reported that:

"The Gentlemen of Gosport have lately purchas'd the fine Organ which was made by Mr. Jordan in the Year 1720, for his Grace the Duke of Chandos, and then set up in his Chapel at Cannons, have [sic] now agreed with Mr. Jordan for a thorough Repair, with Additions, and then to be erected in their Chapel at Gosport. And the Reverend the Dean and Chapter of Durham have agreed with Mr. Jordan for a great Repair of the great Organ in their Cathedral, the Work to be mostly new."3

Holy Trinity had been consecrated in 1696 and had waited 50 years to acquire a suitable instrument. More than 100 people subscribed to the organ appeal, donating sums from 2s. 6d. to £20 each. The purchase price of the organ was £117 12s., in addition to which Jordan was paid £16 8s. for "taking it down from ye chapell at Cannons, packing and bringing it to London" and £105 for repairs.

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Jordan was also paid £30 for "the addition of a swell." The Jordans, father and son, are generally credited with having installed the first swell division on an English organ for their organ at St. Benet's, Vedast Lane which was completed in 1712. It may be that the three-manual organ in the Cannons Chapel was originally built with Great, Choir and Echo division, and the new Swell division replaced or modified the Echo division. Dominic Gwynn has suggested that the organ may have been built with a Swell division, which was then rebuilt in 1747 to include a Swell Principal and Hautboy.4

Jordan was paid an additional £5 for re-packing the instrument for shipment to Gosport, and a Mr. Chase was paid £15 15s. for transporting it. The total cost, including "various other sums for a Faculty and alterations incidental to the erection," was £344 15s. 6d.4 The organ was installed in the west gallery and opened on 8 May 1748. James Peaceable of Southampton was elected the first organist. He was the son of the musician James Paisible, who had emigrated from France in about 1670, was appointed a Royal Musician as early as 1675, married an English woman in 1686, and died 1721 having served five sovereigns. The younger James

CALL FOR PAPERS - HANDELFEST 2009

The American Handel Society invites submission of abstracts for papers to be given at the American Handel Festival, to take place at Centre College in Danville, Kentucky, February 26 - March 1, 2009. We invite papers on any topic connected with Handel's life and music. We especially encourage papers dealing with Handel's connections to other composers celebrating significant anniversaries in 2009, including Purcell, Haydn, and Mendelssohn. Abstracts of no more than 500 words may be sent by October 15, 2008 to Wendy Heller, AHS Program Chair. Electronic submissions are preferred, and may be sent to wwheller@princeton.edu. Surface mail may be sent to Prof. Wendy Heller, Music Department, Princeton University, Woolworth Center 214, Princeton, NJ 08544.
Peacable, who was a resident of Southampton before moving to Gosport, probably died in 1759.

The organ was repaired at various times in the 18th and 19th centuries and received a major rebuild in the middle of Queen Victoria’s reign – perhaps by James Parker of Bath in about 1840. The earliest surviving list of specifications seems to be that preserved in the Sperling Notebooks, copied between 1850-1854. It may not differ greatly from the specifications of the organ as modified by Jordan in 1747.

Great Organ | Choir Organ | Swell Organ
---|---|---
1. Open Diapason* | 1. Stop’d Diapason* | 1. Open Diapason
2. Stop’d Diapason* | 2. Dulciana | 2. Stop’d Diapason
3. Principal* | 3. Principal | 3. Principal
5. Fifteenth* | 5. Fifteenth* | 5. Trumpet
7. Sesquialtera 3 ranks thro’
8. Mixture 2 ranks thro’
9. Trumpet
10. Pedal Pipes 1 7 octaves

Great & Choir Organs GG to D in alt. Swell to Fiddle G.

Freeman agrees with these specifications, but also includes a five-rank Mounted Cornet on the Great. If the Tierce and the Mixture were later additions, Freeman’s specifications for the Great would agree with Jordan’s 16-stop organ of 1714 at St. Benet Fink, London as reported by Leffler at the beginning of the 19th century. The Dulciana was almost certainly a later addition to the Choir, as were the pedal pipes.

The organ was moved to its present location at the East End of the north aisle in 1867. The pipes from the original façade speak down the aisle from behind a side altar, but the console has been moved around to the south side of the case within the divided chancel. In 1897 Hill & Son incorporated the existing organ into a rebuilt organ, making only a few alterations to the pipework. Little has been changed since that date. Fortunately a good deal of the original Jordan pipework remains, marked (*) above. The upper pipework in the 8’ Clarionet Flute on the current Great is also by Jordan and presumably came from one of the other divisions. The surviving original pipework is sufficient to give a pretty good idea of the sound from Jordan’s original robust Great and Choir divisions.

The design and installation of the organ was probably supervised by Johann Christoph Pepusch, who had some connection with Cannons from at least December 1717 and served as Master of the Music from spring 1719 until sometime in 1726. Handel very likely had some input as well. Whether he had much opportunity to play the finished organ is open to question, since he had clearly left Cannons by February 1719 at the latest, after which time he concentrated his energy largely on the new Royal Academy of Music and the production of operas. John Roberts has uncovered evidence that the first performance of the completed Cannons version of Esther must have taken place after Handel’s visit to Dresden in late summer 1719. An 18th-century tradition connected that performance with August 1720 and specifically with the dedication of the Chapel at Cannons. If that date is correct and the performance took place at Cannons, it is difficult to believe that Handel would not have taken advantage of his visit to play upon the new organ in the Chapel.

The parish of Holy Trinity, Gosport is interested in undertaking a restoration of their organ and is hopeful of soliciting individual and corporate donations and applying for grants. The recent announcement that the organ built by Abraham Jordan for St. George’s, Botolph Lane, in the City of London in 1713 and moved to St. George’s Southall in 1904 will be restored thanks to a grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund must be encouraging news. Members of The American Handel Society who are interested in this project should visit the church’s website www.holytrinitygosport.co.uk.

— Graydon Reeds

1. The organ at Adlington Hall is played by Jennifer Bates on her multi-volume series From Stanley to Wesley issued by Unicorn-Kanchana; the organ at St. Lawrence ("Whitchurch") may be heard on Paul Nicholson’s recording of on Handel Organ Concertos, op.4 on Hyperion.
3. Huntington Library, San Marino, California, MS ST 83: f151r.
5. W.H. Cummings, Handel (London, 1904), p.60, drawing on the Vestry Book of Holy Trinity Church. Cummings, however, also cites A true and perfect note of all singular the Goods, Books, Ornaments, and Utensils belonging to the Inhabitants and Chapel of Gosport, in the County of Southampton, and Diocese ofWinion which gives the cost and charges as £342 16s. 7d.
6. Transcribed by James Boeringer in Organum Britannico, ii (Bucknell University Press, 1983); p.239-240.
10. Choir & Organ

NEWSLETTER of
The American Handel Society

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* - This organization does not have a reduced rate for retirees.

Those paying in dollars or sterling should make their checks payable to THE AMERICAN HANDEL SOCIETY and mail them to Marjorie Pomeroy, Secretary/Treasurer, THE AMERICAN HANDEL SOCIETY, 49 Christopher Hollow Road, Schwich, MA 02663. Those wishing to pay in Euros should remit to Prof. Dr. Manfred Räther, Treasurer, Georg-Friedrich-Händel-Gesellschaft, Gr. Nikolaistraße 5, 06108 Halle (Saale), Federal Republic of Germany, and indicate that the payment is for the account of the AHS. Friends of the London Handel Institute may also pay their AHS dues in sterling by making their checks payable to The Handel Institute and mailing them to Malcolm London, Hon. Treasurer, The Handel Institute, 108 Falcon Point, Hopton Street, London, SE1 9JB, with the appropriate annotation.

Payments in dollars for GFH or HI memberships must be received before 1 June.