

NEWSLETTER

of

The American Handel Society

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Göttingen: June 10–14, 1988

By chance both the President and Vice-President of the AHS were at Göttingen for the Handel Festival this year. There were few other Americans and British present; perhaps the falling dollar was a factor. At any rate, Handel was well represented in a number of different guises. The chief works were *Samson* and *Jephtha*: the former given by the North German Radio Orchestra and Chorus under the direction of Wolf-Dieter Hauschild; the latter for two successive nights by John Eliot Gardiner, the artistic director of the festival, with his Monteverdi Choir and English Baroque soloists. Curiously enough, Hauschild directed his modern instrumental group in eighteenth-century fashion while playing continuo at a raised harpsichord, while Gardiner led his original-instrument forces in the regular modern way while standing.

With a German audience, one of the great advantages for both oratorios was a complete printed word book with the English text on one side and the Gervinus German translation on the other. The works were sung in English, and the text could be read since the lights remained up. Would that this were done more often, since Hamilton's and Morell's English is not always completely intelligible, even to a native.

Samson was performed almost complete, for much of the Micah music, often omitted, was included. It took just under four hours with one twenty-minute intermission. The soloists were both German and English, the two English singers being Robert Tear and Sarah Walker, who sang *Samson* and *Micah* respectively. They are both very experienced artists who have long been known for their Handelian interpretation, and their performance showed a close emotional involvement in the music. The other soloists were in no way outshone, although their words sometimes got garbled. There was not even a smile from the German audience as the chorus sang "To man God's universal law/gave pow'r to keep the wife in awe."

To this listener, the star of the *Samson* performance—as was certainly true of *Jephtha*—was the professional chorus. Its robust, full-toned attacks in "Awake the trumpet's lofty sound," "Oh first created beam," and

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Halle: June 3–7, 1988

The 37th Handel Festival of the German Democratic Republic included 25 separate musical events spread over five days and a *Vorabend*. Six concerts included music by C. P. E. Bach in commemoration of the bicentennial of his death. To hear both his *Magnificat* (H. 772) and *Die Auferstehung und Himmelfahrt Jesu* (H. 777) was a rare pleasure. Unfortunately it was not possible to hear all the Bach works because of Halle's practice of scheduling two or more concerts at the same time.

Among the notable performances at the festival were those of countertenor Jochen Kowalski in *The Choice of Hercules* and a program of chamber cantatas. Kowalski produces a ravishing sound and knows how to act with his voice. The chorus for *The Choice of Hercules* was built around the *Stadtsingerchor* boy choir of Halle, which director Dorothea Köhler has built into a superb ensemble. Also noteworthy was soprano Nancy Argenta in a moving performance of Handel's *Qual ti riveggio* (HWV 150).

Annette Markert, Hendrikje Wangemann, and Andreas David gave outstanding performances in Handel's pasticcio *Oreste* given at the Goethe Theatre in Bad Lauchstädt near Halle. They were supported with skill, taste, and the requisite restraint by Christian Kluttig directing the Handel Festival Orchestra.

The Goethe Theatre is one of three theatres extant whose traditional set-changing machinery is still functional. There the instantaneous and fully visible scene changes assumed by the structure of *opera seria* are simple and natural to do, unlike in modern theatres. Unfortunately the producers ignored all the libretto's stage directions and the theatre's abilities to carry them out. Instead, the action was set in an abattoir that featured an altar from which ran a long grate-covered drain, obviously meant to carry off the blood of the sacrificial victims. In Act III, when the King of Taurus was done in—discreetly behind a curtain—little red balloons suddenly poked up from the drain. This was simply the grisly denouement of a production that featured bloody axes (an American near me murmured something about Lizzie Borden), swords, knives, and blood-stained floors.

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Four Handel Oratorios in Boston

This Lent Bostonians had an opportunity to enjoy performances of several Handel oratorios and to reflect on the best context for presenting such works. The contrast between the March 5 performance of *Theodora* at Emmanuel Church and that of *Hercules* at Jordan Hall on March 20 underscored both the suitability of these works for the concert hall and the difficulty of putting them across in a large stone church. In spite of its unflattering acoustics, the sacred aura of Emmanuel Church enhanced the performance of the Christian drama *Theodora* by the Chorus Pro Musica (Donald Palumbo, conductor) and the Emmanuel Chamber Orchestra (Craig Smith, conductor). Jordan Hall's livelier acoustics and greater sense of rapport between audience and performers facilitated the Boston Cecilia's efforts to project the full force of pagan tragedy in *Hercules*. The latter performance also made effective use of the stage: soloists moved around in the space alongside the conductor in a way that clarified the characters' interaction.

The acoustics of the concert hall made for a better balance between voices and instruments. Craig Smith conducted a chorus of 65 singers and a well-coordinated orchestra of 20 players. The Boston Cecilia's Donald Teeters conducted a chorus of 56 and an orchestra of 29 that played on period instruments. While the *Theodora* performance used harpsichord continuo exclusively, the *Hercules* performance introduced variety by using organ continuo for the choruses.

Both Mr. Smith and Mr. Teeters maintained an unbroken continuity from one piece to the next. Both drew from their orchestras clear, crisp playing, with a fine sense of dynamic shading, but Mr. Teeters's wider range of tempi brought out the dramatic contrasts more forcefully than did Mr. Smith's almost uniformly brisk pace.

The performances shared two soloists: Jeffrey Gall sang Didymus in *Theodora* and Lichas in *Hercules*; William Hite sang Septimus in *Theodora* and Hyllus in *Hercules*. The other soloists in *Theodora* were Janice Felty as Theodora, Mary Westbrook-Geha as Irene, and James Maddalena as Valens. The other soloists in *Hercules* were David Arnold as Hercules, D'Anna Fortunato as Dejanira, Nancy Armstrong as Iole, and Mark St. Laurent as the priest of Jupiter.

While Mr. Gall's recitative delivery in both oratorios confirmed him as a consummate stylist, only in *Hercules* did he consistently sing the airs with the secure, intense tone for which he is famous. Nancy Armstrong and David Arnold matched him in emotional intensity, but no one matched the easy flow of his recitatives and the tasteful ornamentation of his airs. Both performances were remarkable for lovely vocal sounds, especially the mellifluous mezzo of Ms. Fortunato and the easy vocal production of Mr. Hite.

Both performances were uncut. Mr. Smith even included recitative that Chrysander left out of his edition. The Jordan Hall program included a libretto, but the auditorium was darkened, making it difficult to read. The Emmanuel Church program, less helpfully, in-

cluded only a synopsis, but there was plenty of light by which to read it.

Harris Sheridan Saunders, Jr.

When the Handel & Haydn Society was founded in 1815, it was primarily an organization for Bostonian choristers. And so it remained until last year, when Christopher Hogwood became its artistic director and an excellent "period orchestra" emerged as the new focal group. The score of *La Resurrezione* provides superb opportunities for display of instrumental skills, and it was brilliantly executed March 25 at Symphony Hall by the H&H orchestra of forty: 8+8+5+5+3 strings, 4 oboes, 2 trumpets, flute, bassoon, viola da gamba, theorbo, and harpsichord. Among the outstanding players were concertmaster Daniel Stepner, oboist Stephen Hammer, gambist Laura Jeppesen, theorbist Paul O'Dette and harpsichordist James David Christie.

The performers utilized the edition prepared by Anthony Hicks for the recording conducted by Hogwood in 1982. David Thomas, the *basso profundo* on the recording, repeated his magisterial rendition of Lucifer for the Boston audience. The other four soloists were from this side of the Atlantic: Jeanne Ommerlé was the Angel, Sharon Baker was Mary Magdalene, Catherine Robbin was Mary Cleophas, and Jeffrey Thomas was John the Evangelist. They all sang exquisitely, with sober yet expressive ornamentation of their da capos, and they emulated the Roman premiere of 1708 by joining for the "chorus" that ends each part of the work. Some members of the audience must have been disappointed by the non-appearance of the 173-season-old H&H chorus, and Handelians among them were disappointed to read that next season's schedule would include only one work by their favorite master: the 135th annual H&H presentation of *Messiah*. Indeed, at two of the six events scheduled for next season, even the "period orchestra" will be replaced, since the instrumental works chosen are by Rebel, Beethoven, Mendelssohn, Bizet, Strauss, Ravel, Sibelius, and Copland!

A second rendition of *La Resurrezione* was given on the afternoon of March 27. At the same time, *Samson* was performed across the river in Cambridge by the Masterworks Chorale, conducted by Allen Lannom. (Unfortunately I was not able to hear this performance, which received a very favorable review in *The Boston Globe*.) Praiseworthy renditions of four Handel oratorios thus provided Handelians in the Boston area with an exceedingly festive Lenten season of 1988.

Lowell Lindgren

Correction

In the financial statement for 1987 printed in the last issue, the figure for interest/dividends received and consequent sums should be changed as follows:

Interest/dividends	340.47
Total receipts	5708.76
Net gain	4809.91
Balance on hand 12/31/87	10306.03

New Publications and Research

Publications

- Barnett, Dene. *The Art of Gesture: The Practices and Principles 18th Century Acting*. Heidelberg: Carl Winter Universitätsverlag, 1987.
- Burling, William J. "Four Casts for Early Eighteenth-Century London Operas," *Restoration and 18th Century Theatre Research*, 2nd ser., 2/1 (Summer 1987), 1-5.
- Houle, George. *Meter in Music, 1600-1800*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987.
- Highfill, Philip H., Jr.; Kalman A. Burnim; and Edward A. Langhans. *A Biographical Dictionary of Actors, Actresses, Musicians, . . . in London 1660-1800*, vols. 13-14. Carbondale: Southern Illinois Univ. Press, in press.
- Hume, Robert D. "The Sponsorship of Opera in London, 1704-1720," *Modern Philology* 85/4 (May 1988), 420-32.
- Kirkendale, Ursula. "Orgelspiel im Lateran und andere Erinnerungen an Händel—Ein unbeachteter Bericht in 'Voilage historique' von 1737," *Die Musikforschung* 41/1 (1988), 1-9.
- Miller, Leta F., and Albert Cohen. *Music in the Royal Society of London, 1660-1806*. Detroit: Information Coordinators, 1987 (Detroit Studies in Music Bibliography 56).
- Milhous, Judith, and Robert D. Hume. "The Haymarket Opera in 1711," *Early Music*, in press.
- Parker-Hale, Mary Ann. *George Frideric Handel*, in series *Composer Resource Manuals*, ed. Guy A. Marco. New York: Garland, [due Dec. 1988].
- Price, Curtis, Judith Milhous, and Robert D. Hume. *Opera in London to 1762*. London: Oxford Univ. Press, in prep.
- Sands, Mollie. *The Eighteenth-Century Pleasure Gardens of Marylebone*. London: Society for Theatre Research, 1987.
- Rogers, Patrick J. *Continuo Realization in Handel's Music*. Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, [due Dec. 1988].
- Dissertations**
- Edelmann, Bernd. "Händel-Einflüsse in Haydns vokalen Spätwerk." Ph.D. diss., Univ. of Munich, in prep.
- King, Richard G. [Edition and critical studies of Handel's *Alessandro*]. Ph.D. diss., Stanford Univ., in prep.
- Small, Barbara. "The life and works of J. C. Smith the Younger." Ph.D. diss., Oxford Univ., in prep.
- Stompor, Stephan. [Handel's operas]. Ph.D. diss., Univ. of Halle, in prep.
- Stratford, Michael D. "A Bibliographic Survey of the Recorder and Its Music in England, c.1675-c.1790." Ph.D. diss., Univ. of Hull, in prep.

Handel Calendar

- Partenope**. U.S. premiere, in English. D. Kotowski, D. Minter, S. Rickards, J. Lane, W. Sharp; cond. R. Westenberg, dir. S. Wadsworth. **Sept. 10, 15, 17, 23, 25**: Jody Art Museum, Omaha, NE. Opera Omaha, P.O. Box 807, Omaha NE 68101.
- Giulio Cesare**. K. Battle/B. Kilduff, T. Troyanos/M. Dupuy, H. Harris, S. Walker/B. Boozer, J. Gall, J. Robbins/T. Cook; cond. T. Pinnock, prod. J. Copley. **Sept. 27; Oct. 1, 4, 7, 10, 14, 19, 22**: Metropolitan Opera, Lincoln Ctr., New York, NY 10023.
- Maryland Handel Festival**. Incl. *Samson*; Handel's and M. Greene's *St. Cecilia Odes* (Maryland Chorus, Tafelmusik Baroque Orch.; M. Donnelly, G. Fisher, L. Hunt, S. Muller, R. Petillo, W. Sharp, C. R. Stephens, J. Wynne-Post; cond. P. Traver). AHS Lecture (E. Harris); *Samson* panel (D. Burrows, M. Stahura, mod. A. Porter). **Nov. 2-6**: Univ. of MD, Colledge Park (*Samson* also at Univ. of MD, Baltimore). MHF, Dept. of Music, Univ. of MD, Colledge Park, MD 20742.
- G. Bononcini: Camilla**. First modern perf. of original Eng. version of 1706. Student cast, cond. E. Polochick, prod. R. Brunyat. **Nov. 3, 5**: Opera Dept., Peabody Conservatory, 1 E Mt. Vernon Pl., Baltimore, MD 21202. In conj. with **Amer. Musicological Soc./Soc. for Music Theory National Meeting**.
- Ode for the Birthday of Queen Anne**. J. Ommerlé, M. Simpson, F. Hoffmeister, F. Urry; Baltimore Choral Arts Soc., cond. T. Hall. **Nov. 5**: Goucher College, Baltimore. BCAS, 1316 Park Ave., Baltimore, MD 21217.
- Alexander's Feast**. J. Nelson, J. Thomas; Philharmonia Baroque Orch., cond. N. McGegan. **Nov. 17**: First Methodist Church, Palo Alto, CA; **Nov. 18**: Herbst Theatre, San Francisco; **Nov. 19-20**: First Congregational Church, Berkeley. PBO, P.O. Box 77344, San Francisco, CA 94107.
- Messiah (1754)**. S. Baker, C. Watkinson, S. Olsen, D. Thomas; Handel & Haydn Society chorus & orch., cond. C. Hogwood. **Nov. 30**: Worcester, MA; **Dec. 1-4**: Symphony Hall, Boston, MA; **Dec. 20**: Bridgewater, MA; **Dec. 21**: Fisher Hall, Lincoln Ctr., New York, NY 10023. H&H, 295 Huntington Ave., Boston, MA 02115.
- Semele**. Y. Kenny, J. Howarth, K. Kuhlmann, C. Robson, A. Rolfe-Johnson, R. Leggate, P. Rose, G. Howell; cond. C. Mackerras. 5 perfs. **Dec. 22**: Royal Opera, Covent Garden, P.O. Box 6, London WC2E 7QA.
- Silla**. Cast incl. S. Peck, P. Terry. **Jan. 29, 1989**: Holy Trinity Church, New York. G. F. Handel Society, 244 W. 72nd St. # 4E, New York, NY 10023.
- Israel in Egypt**. Monteverdi Choir, English Baroque Soloists; cond. J. E. Gardiner. **Feb. 19, 1989**: Fisher Hall, Lincoln Ctr., New York, NY 10023.
- Händel-Festspiele der DDR**. Incl. *Alcina*, *Alexander's Feast*, anthems, *Belshazzar*, *Sosarme* (cond. S. Simon), Keiser: *Croesus*. **June 2-6, 1989**. G.-F.-Händel-Gesellschaft, Grosse Nicolaistr. 5, DDR-4020 Halle/Saale, East Germany.
- Göttinger Händel-Festspiele**. Incl. *Saul*, *Susanna*. Revised dates: **June 9-13, 1989**. Göttinger Händel-Gesellschaft e.V., Hainholzweg 3/5, D-3400 Göttingen, West Germany.

Have you missed one or more mailings from the AHS? If you have not received three Newsletters for each year of membership, please notify the Secretary.

"Hear, Jacob's God" were simply splendid. "Then round about the starry throne" seemed a little more routine, perhaps because we know it so well and expect more than the usual.

If one is a Gardiner admirer, giving the highest marks to his orchestra, chorus, and soloists, then it can almost be said that the *Jephtha* performances were breathtaking. Gardiner gave a rhythmic vitality and energy to the music which made it come spectacularly alive, even on two successive evenings. The German audience responded in kind with huzzahs, shouts, and rhythmic clapping, generally not heard in a critical university town. Again the chorus was a leading factor. Its makeup is particularly interesting: ten women (mostly sopranos) and eighteen men, at least four of whom are male altos. The multicolored timbre created is very distinctive, particularly with precise control of dynamics and phrasing. The young soloists also gave their music a lift. Mezzo Anne Sofie von Otter, as Storge, showed a lovely voice, as did soprano Lynne Dawson as Iphis. Michael Chance's countertenor blended skillfully with both in "These labours past" and the famous quartet. The orchestra, which played at low pitch, knew exactly what Gardiner wanted and performed accordingly. The result showed minute preparation at rehearsals—the secret of any superior performance.

C. P. E. Bach got his share at Göttingen on this, the two hundredth anniversary of his death. There were fine performances of his *Magnificat* and the oratorio *Die Israeliten in der Wüste* by the Stuttgart Kammerchor and Barockorchester under Frieder Bernius. I am told a favorite new CD in the Bundesrepublik is a coupling of Johann Sebastian Bach's *Magnificat* with that of his son.

Not to be omitted from mention were performances in the St. Albani church by Edward Tarr and his wife, Irmtraud Krüger, on baroque trumpet and organ. Tarr, an American with international reputation on his instrument, has a knack of presenting Handel concertogrosso and organ-concerto transcriptions brilliantly with suitable ornamentation and style that does not offend taste. His wife brings the same approach to the organ. There was also a welcome rapprochement of the two Germanys in that the festival address was given by Professor Bernd Baselt of Halle. His lecture with musical examples clearly and succinctly illustrated "The Biblical Theme in Handel's Works and His Reform of the Oratorio." Altogether, an interesting and creative festival.

J. Merrill Knapp

Plans for future Göttingen festivals have been revised. Next year's event will take place June 9–13 or 14 and will feature Saul, Susanna, and ballet. Plans for June 1–5, 1990, include Dixit Dominus and operas by Mozart (Idomeneo) and Handel.—Ed.

Worse, the director made the singers behave like fidgety school children. They darted about the stage singing Handel's arias or attempted them in all manner of athletic poses. By late in Act II the stage was strewn with bits of clothing and props like a teenager's bedroom. The effect of such theatrical busy-ness was to make Handel's music psychologically inaudible.

After the performance, when the booing had died away, we were saddened that the beautiful little Goethe Theatre had been used for a production that could have been mounted anywhere. The director who works there has a heaven-sent opportunity to restore Handel's music dramas to their original glory—and acquire no little glory for himself. One hopes that before long we will be treated to a production at Bad Lauchstädt of an opera by Handel.

The topic of this year's scholarly conference was "Concerning Performance Possibilities in Handel's Oratorios." The session was planned as a more or less informal exchange of views among scholars and performers. The speakers addressed questions of staging, translation, the placement of soloists, and the choice among versions of a given work. What distinguished this year's session from previous such meetings was a willingness by scholars and performers to take each other's positions seriously. One hopes that further development of such mutual respect will soon engage the attention of stage directors. Publication of a summary of the discussion is planned for the 1989 *Händel-Jahrbuch*.

Howard Serwer

George Frideric Handel Society

A new performing organization devoted to Handel has been formed in New York. The George Frideric Handel Society aims to attract a wide audience to Handel's secular vocal music through a program of historically informed (though not necessarily "period") performances emphasizing high levels of musicality and fidelity to Handel's texts. The society plans to establish a complete repertory company and issue new performing editions of the works it presents. The latter would feature "clean" musical texts that include all authoritative performance options; copious notes would explain all aspects of the works, their context, and their interpretation.

The society's first season includes a fall chamber series, a production of *Silla* on January 29 (see Calendar), and perhaps later a staged oratorio. Proceeds from regular and fund-raising performances will support the society's activities. Singer Peter Terry is president and artistic director; the board of advisors is headed by H. C. Robbins Landon. The George Frideric Handel Society is based at 244 West 72nd Street, Apt. 4E, New York, NY, 10023.

The American Handel Society

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In the last few years, scholars have come to recognize that traditional musicological studies alone cannot provide a clear picture of Handel and his world. The American Handel Society seeks the participation of all scholars—theatre historians, social historians, literary historians and all others whose subject matter is Handel's England. And of course, The American Handel Society welcomes the support and participation of all persons interested in Handel and his world. Activities of The American Handel Society will include

- publication of the *Newsletter of The American Handel Society*,
- sponsorship of meetings of the Society,
- cumulation of a computerized bibliographic data base of writings about Handel and his music and about related subjects,
- maintenance of a register of performing materials for Handel's major works,
- cumulation of a Handel discography,
- establishment of an electronic bulletin board/conferencing network to facilitate communication among members and subscribers.

The Founding Members and the Board of Directors of The American Handel Society invite you to become a member. Wide support from scholars and those interested in Handel will help the Society make a strong start in achieving its goals. In 1988 members will receive

- the *Newsletter of the American Handel Society*,
- a 10% discount on scores and books (not restricted to Handel) through Dale Music Company of Silver Spring, Maryland, one of America's leading dealers. In addition, Dale has agreed to make available to our members four recent titles from Cambridge University Press at a 20% discount. Other special offers are also available. See the order form on the last page of this newsletter.
- the AHS Membership Directory, showing members' Handel-related activities such as research, performance, and collecting.

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