

NEWSLETTER

of

The American Handel Society

Volume IX, Number 2

August, 1994

Report from Halle

The forty-third Händel-Festspiele took place in Halle (Saale) on June 3–7, 1994, and the pattern established in the last few years now seems to be firmly in place. The festival is sponsored by the Federal German Government, by the state of Sachsen-Anhalt, by the city of Halle, by the Martin-Luther University of Halle Wittenburg, and by a small but significant group of local and national businesses. The events included the traditional opera and oratorio performances, chamber music, events for children, tours of the Händel-Haus, and social events. This year the musical and scholarly events took place in eleven different venues including on the river Saale itself, the scene of an agreeable boat ride.

The 1994 festival treated us to three of Handel's operas, two of them staged, and one unstaged. Howard Arman conducted the Halle opera house orchestra and a splendid cast of soloists in the opening night performance of *Flavio* that was musically very fine indeed. The quality of the performance was all the more appreciated inasmuch as the orchestra has only recently formed a so-called old-instrument group, but this ensemble played almost as though they had been using such instruments for a long time. The cast of seven soloists that included the redoubtable Axel Köhler (it has been ten years since he made his debut in Halle), outdid themselves. It was especially gratifying to hear Mária Petrašovská, whom we remember for her fine performance as Juno in *Semele* in 1990, singing better than ever.

The performances by the singers in fact bordered on the miraculous, considering the myriad distractions, upstaging, and pure nonsense to which they were subjected in the course of the show. Though the directors made good use of the Halle opera house's turntable for quick scene changes, the turntable was populated by large chessmen-like objects that commedia dell'arte-like figures moved purposefully about the stage. We understood these movements to represent the stages of a game. Clearly the directors understood the game-like nature of the intrigue, and in their crude, juvenile attempt to underscore the intrigue, they distracted the audience from the beauty of a fine classical drama. Kate Brown, the director, gave a talk the following morning about the staging of *Flavio*, but your reporter was unable to attend.

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A scene from Giustino, Göttinger Händel-Festspiele, 1994

Report from Göttingen

For many years one feature of the Göttingen Händel Festival has been the establishment of a special theme. In 1994 the motto "Handel and the Duke of Chandos" was chosen in order to recall the close relationship between James Brydges, the immensely rich art lover and Earl of Carnarvon who later became Duke of Chandos, and Handel, who composed some masterpieces for performance in Cannons, the Duke's residence. Accordingly Handel's major works for Cannons—*Acis and Galatea*, *Esther* (first version *Haman and Mordecai*) and two Chandos Anthems—were performed at this year's festival.

The centerpiece of the festival, however, was again an opera by Handel, namely *Giustino* (1736). Since Nicholas McGegan took over the artistic direction in 1991, the Göttingen Handel Festival, which started in 1920 and boasts the longest uninterrupted tradition of all Handel festivals worldwide, has resumed its main objective, which is to make Handel's Italian operas familiar to more people. The festival is characterized by productions of Handel's operas that follow the musical, acting, and stage conventions of baroque opera as closely as pos-

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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.

International Händel-Akademie, Karlsruhe, February 17–March 1, 1995. Baumeisterstraße 1, D-76137 Karlsruhe.

Göttinger Händel-Festspiele, June 2–6, 1995. Geschäftsstelle der Göttinger Händel-Gesellschaft, Hainholzweg 3-5, 37085 Göttingen, Germany, attn. Frau Eva-Maria Starke, 05 51 / 567 00.

Händel-Festspiele, Halle (Saale), June 9–13, 1995. Händel-Festspiele, Halle, Händel-Haus, Große Ulrichstraße 51, 06108 Halle (Saale), Germany, 2 46 06.

Xerxes, (in Italian with English supertitles; semi-staged concert version) July 22, 29, August 5. Catherine Robbin, Mika Shigematsu, Rosa Lamoreaux, Karen Clift, Linda Childs, Daniel Lichti, Burr Phillips; Carmel Bach Festival Chorale and Orchestra, Bruno Weil, conductor. Carmel Bach Festival 1994, P.O. Box 575, Carmel, CA 93921. 1-800-513-BACH.

L'Allegro, il Penseroso ed il Moderato, September 10, 11, 15, 16, 17. Christine Brandes, Juliana Gondek, Paul Elliott, Nathaniel Watson, University of California Chamber Chorus, Philharmonia Baroque Orchestra, Nicholas McGegan, conductor. Philharmonia Baroque Orchestra, 57 Post Street, Suite 705, San Francisco, CA 94104. (415) 391-5252.

Music of Friends: Handel and Telemann, November 27. Carolina Baroque, Dale Higbee, Music Director, 412 S. Ellis St., Salisbury, NC 28144-4820. (704) 633-9311.

Concerto Grosso in B-Flat, Op. 3, no. 2; Concerto Grosso in D, Op. 3, no. 6; Organ Concerto in g, Op. 7, no. 5; Organ Concerto in B-Flat, Op. 7, no. 6, March 29, 31, April 1, 2, 1995. John Butt, organ, Philharmonia Baroque Orchestra, Nicholas McGegan, conductor. Philharmonia Baroque Orchestra, 57 Post Street, Suite 705, San Francisco, CA 94104. (415) 391-5252.

1994 American Handel Society Meeting and Conference

The American Handel Society will meet in conjunction with the Maryland Handel Festival on November 4–6, 1994. The featured performance of the festival will be Handel's *Belschazzar*. The programs for the conference sessions are as follows.

Saturday, November 5—Handel's Opera Librettos and Librettists, Etc.

John Sawyer, "Handel and Grimani's Libretto: A Study in Irony, Borrowings, and Characterization in *Agrippina*"

C. Steven LaRue, "Paolo Rolli, Nicola Haym, and Handel's Last Five Royal Academy Operas"

John T. Winemiller, "Zoroastro's Role in Orlando's Journey

1992 Recording Prize

The American Handel Society Recording Prize for a 1992 release goes to Robert King and the King's Consort's recording of *Judas Maccabaeus* on the Hyperion label. The recording features Jamie McDougall (*Judas Maccabaeus*), Emma Kirkby (*Israelitish Woman*), Catherine Denley (*Israelitish Man*), Michael George (*Simon*), James Bowman (*Priest, Messenger*), and Simon Birchall (*Eupolemus, Messenger*).

The prize recognizes a musically superlative performance of a work that constitutes a significant contribution to Handel's recorded oeuvre. *Judas Maccabaeus*, while not the strongest of Handel's English oratorios dramatically, contains some of the composer's most famous music. Popular in his own time, *Judas Maccabaeus* was revived many times, giving Handel the chance to add music originally written for other oratorios. Wisely, King has chosen to present all of the music usually associated with the oratorio, and as he points out in his excellent essay accompanying the recording, with a compact disc player one can simply program out any of the later accretions to get the original version.

King brings together a number of excellent performers, many of whom also have worked with him on earlier Handel projects (*Acis and Galatea* and *Joshua*), and his recordings of Purcell's vocal music. Kirkby, George, and Bowman are certainly among the leading interpreters of baroque music, especially the English repertoire. Particular mention must be made of the fine choir, the Choir of New College, Oxford (Edward Higginbottom, director), which is used in this recording. Combined with King's early music instrumentalists, the effect of the choir in the majestic choruses in this oratorio is stunning.

This year's committee consisted of William D. Gudger (chairman), Channan Willner, and John Roberts. A committee is presently at work on the 1993 prize; readers who wish to nominate any recording not in the discography on page 3 of the April, 1994 newsletter (vol. ix, no. 1) should write to William D. Gudger, Department of Music, College of Charleston, Charleston, SC 29424-0001.

through the 'Wood of Error': Theme and Plot in Libretto Adaption"

Steven Zohn, "Handel, Walsh, and Music as Intellectual Property: The Case of *Pyle vs. Falkener*"

Channan Willner, "Sequential Expansion and Handelian Phrase Rhythm"

Sunday, November 6—Oratorios and Sacred Music

Steven Miller, "*Pifferari* and *Pastori*: Handel and the Roman Pastoral Mass"

Kenneth Nott, "The Ambitious Minister and the Unsearchable Ways of God's Wisdom: Samuel Humphreys' Commentary on *Esther*"

Michael Corn, "The Problems and Politics of Attribution: The Libretto of Handel's *Solomon*"

Thomas Goleeke, "'These Labours Past': Handel Looks to the Future"

The festival also presented Handel's first opera *Almira*, in a staged performance at the Goethe Theatre in Bad Lauchstadt. This work, Handel's only surviving opera from his Hamburg years (1703?-1706?) is typical of the time and place, with its mixture of German (for the recitatives and some of the arias) and Italian (for the rest of the arias and for the inclusion of a comic servant). Though the production did not make use of the theater's stage machinery (Bad Lauchstadt is one of the very few theaters extant that still boasts the kind of stage machinery needed for baroque opera), the quasi-abstract staging was effective and not at all distracting. The "BarokTanzTheaterBremen" [sic!] provided dance as called for in the score and gave the lie to the canard that dance in baroque opera is nothing more than "divertissement." The dances, beautifully done, enhanced the drama at the logically correct places. The non-use of the stage machinery meant that the curtain had to be lowered a few times during the course of the production. During one of the scene changes, Christian Elsner, in his role as Tobarco, the comic servant, appeared before the curtain and entertained the audience. Elsner and the other soloists and the Fiori Musicali baroque orchestra of Bremen gave an excellent account of the score.

The third opera of the festival was *Giustino*, presented in an unstaged performance conducted by Nicholas McGegan. The production was part of a pattern that has developed in the last few years in which McGegan presents an unstaged performance of a Handel opera in Halle, a staged version in Göttingen, and thereafter records the work for commercial release. As has been his practice in the last few years, McGegan encourages his singers to engage in a modicum of acting during the performance, and in the present case he had Michael Dean, as Polidante, present his plot-resolving speech at a distance, as is called for in the libretto. The absence of staging guarantees that full attention is given to the music and the performance, and in the present instance, both merited our undivided attention.

The Freiburger Barockorchester played superbly, and the soloists outdid themselves. McGegan, whose dramatic instincts would have the performance press on without interruption, had to yield again and again to great bursts of applause that greeted most of the arias. And though it is unfair in this case to single out any one artist from his superb ensemble, we must mention the performance of Dorothea Röschmann in the role of Arianna. We had enthused about her as Dorinda in *Orlando* at the 1993 festival; her singing and acting in *Giustino* in 1994 were better than ever.

On Saturday evening Paul Traver conducted the University of Maryland chorus, the Philharmonisches Staatsorchester Halle, and five young American soloists in a performance of *Alexander's Feast*, the *Dettingen Te Deum*, and the Concerto Grosso in C major (concerto in *Alexander's Feast*) in the great old Calvinist cathedral where Handel had his first professional engagement. The Philharmonisches Staatsorchester Halle is an ensemble that uses modern instruments, and Traver's performance of these works demonstrated that one need not

have so-called early instruments to give an effective and (as far as the state of our knowledge goes) stylistically appropriate performance. Indeed, one of our English colleagues opined that he had not ever heard the overture of *Alexander's Feast* performed better than on this occasion. The performance was warmly received, and among the soloists, Molly Donnelly, mezzo-soprano, and Robert Craig, tenor, impressed the most.

The oratorio presented at the 1994 Händel-Festspiele was *Solomon*; in addition there were choral and orchestral concerts featuring works by Vivaldi and Telemann, a gala concert featuring Axel Köhler on the occasion of his tenth year at the Halle opera house and of celebrating his being named recipient of this year's Handel prize. There were a series of chamber music programs. Of course there was the final concert held outdoors as usual, and even a boat ride on the river Saale.

Iter Facio

Recent Publications and Writings

The following list of publications covers the period from the last list published in the August 1993 issue of the newsletter to the present. Neither reviews of performances nor reports of festivals have been included. Readers with information about publications in progress for inclusion in future newsletters should write to David R. Hurler, 5514 S. Blackstone #216, Chicago, IL 60637.

Books

- Burrows, Donald, and Martha J. Ronish. *A Catalogue of Handel's Musical Autographs*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994.
- LaRue, C. Steven. *Handel and His Singers: The Creation of the Royal Academy Operas, 1720-1728*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, forthcoming in 1995.

Articles

- Best, Terence, ed. *Handel Collections and Their History*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993. Contents: Brian Trowell, "Foreword"; Gerald Coke, "Collecting Handel"; Hans Dieter Clausen, "The Hamburg Collection"; Winton Dean, "The Malmesbury Collection"; John H. Roberts, "The Aylesford Collection"; Anthony Hicks, "The Shaftesbury Collection"; Donald Burrows, "The Barrett Lennard Collection"; Graydon Beeks, "The Chandos Collection"; Percy Young, "The Shaw-Hellier Collection"; J. Merrill Knapp, "The Hall Collection"; Hans Joachim Marx, "The Santini Collection"; Keiichiro Watanabe, "The Music-Paper Used by Handel and His Copyists in Italy 1706-1710"; Paul Everett, "Italian Source-Studies and Handel"; Bernd Baselt, "Early German Handel Editions during the Classical Period."

- Händel-Jahrbuch* 39 (1993). Contents: Terence Best, "Keyboard Arrangements of Handel's Opera Arias, 1717-1724"; Donald Burrows, "The Christ Church Water Music Chamber Suite: Is It an Authentic Handelian Arrangement?"; Graydon Beeks, "William Boyce's Adaptions of

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sible, thereby reviving this art form for those who enjoy genuine baroque opera unspoiled by so-called updating.

With *Giustino*, never performed before at Göttingen, the festival was as successful as it had been with *Agrippina* (1991), *Ottone* (1992), and *Radamisto* (1993). The production was directed by Drew Minter. It was given three performances, conducted with electrifying vitality and drive by Nicholas McGegan. McGegan inspired the Freiburger Barockorchester to give top performances. Special praise is also due to Katharina Arfken for playing perfectly the extensive oboe parts.

The cast proved to be at home in baroque singing. On the whole they were also capable of acting in proper period style. In the title role, Michael Chance excelled in his strong falsetto and convincingly portrayed the aspiring country lad Giustino. Also outstanding was the performance of the young brilliant soprano Dorothea Röschmann, who played Arianna, the emperor Anastasio's wife, and gave her part charm and aristocratic flair. The emperor Anastasio was impersonated by Dawn Kotoski. Her singing in a clear soprano voice and her intelligent acting was very well suited to represent the emperor's naiveté. Drew Minter was Anastasio's general Amanzio, who aspires to the emperor's throne. He made plausible the cunning and plotting villain by means of his soft alto voice, his smooth gestures, and his mimic art. The part of the tyrant Vitaliano was convincingly played by the tenor Marc Padmore. Remarkable performances in minor parts were given by Jennifer Lane (alto) and Michael Dean (bass). Drew Minter's staging, Scott Blake's decor, and Bonnie Krueger's glittering and splendid costumes were inspired by baroque conventions and contributed immensely to making the performances an entertaining and exquisite delight.

The shifting of scenes was quite frequent. Some of the settings were already familiar from last year's production (in keeping with Handel's London performances!). Most, however, were newly painted, representing architecture and landscape. Particularly effective and much applauded by the audience were typical baroque scenes, like roaring ocean waves and Fortuna descending from heaven, and, of course, the appearance of a bear in the first act, which gives Giustino the opportunity to rescue heroically the emperor's sister Leocasta from great danger. However, the ocean monster (was it a dragon?) in the second act was misrepresented. It was not funny, but ridiculous. J. F. Lampe's ballad opera *The Dragon of Wantley* (1737) as a parody on *Giustino* is now easier to understand. Notwithstanding this remark, Drew Minter's staging was on the whole quite close to the conventions of the period.

The Göttingen production has proved to me that the libretto of *Giustino* is much better than most critics would have it. This impression is certainly due to the baroque production: the rise of a young peasant to the Byzantine throne became rather plausible. The behavior of the characters Giustino encounters becomes clear: they react to his aspiring to fame and glory. These characters are thus much more individualized than the so-called stereotyped baroque opera figures. Handel's

music for *Giustino* is all new. He may have been convinced that the libretto deserved it.

All performances of *Giustino* were sold out and enthusiastically applauded by the audience. No doubt the Göttingen conception of opposing baroque productions to the common "Reggietheater" productions has proved its validity. With *Haman and Mordecai* and the choral concert, the festival was less successful, owing to the Halle chorus (Kammerchor Cantamus and Männerchor Bouquet Vocalis), trained by Dorothea Koehler. Their performances in *Haman and Mordecai*, and especially in the choral concert with two Chandos Anthems, did not reach the level of the festival. However, Nicholas McGegan succeeded in making the drama of Esther and Haman, the persecutor of Jews, very moving thanks to good singers—among them Juliana Gondeck (soprano) and Michael Dean (bass)—and the excellent Freiburger Barockorchester (solo harpist: Andrew Lawrence-King).

The concert performance of *Acis and Galatea* (1718) was artistically more consistent. Michael Schneider conducted the baroque ensemble La Stagione, Frankfurt, with a fine sense of formal balance. His decision to cast the choral parts with solo singers contributed to making the high quality of this masterpiece even clearer. Barbara Schlick deserves special praise for her soulful and expressive singing as Galatea. Michael Schopper conveyed a convincing portrait of the rumbling Polyphemus. The performances of Harry van Berne as Acis and Christian Eilsner as Damon were also very satisfactory.

The concert with "Kammermusik am Hof des Duke of Chandos," given by the ensemble Le Nuove Musiche, Hanover, under Lajos Rovatkay, offered a program of particular interest. The cantatas of John Ernest Gaillard and Johann Christoph Pepusch illustrated that the circle of artists at Chandos aimed at connecting English poetry with music in the Italian style.

The "Nachtkonzert" at the Marienkirche (St. Mary's Church) was labeled "Il Trionfo del Amore." The program included arias and duets by Handel from cantatas and operas and vocal music of Purcell, Eccles, Humfrey, and others. Nicholas McGegan, harpsichord, accompanied Juliana Gondek and Ralph Popken. The concert was much acclaimed.

The introductory talk by Nicholas McGegan, with which the festival opens every year, has become a much appreciated specialty of the Göttingen festival. His very informative, humorous, and entertaining way of introducing the audience to the festival's topic attracts more and more people.

In 1995 the Göttingen Handel Festival will celebrate its seventy-fifth anniversary. The two principal works planned are a new production of *Ariodante*—not *Ricardo I*, as announced in the program—and *Messiah*, both conducted by Nicholas McGegan.

Otto Gossmann

Handel's Works for use in the English Chapel Royal"; Magda Marx-Weber, "Johann Adam Hiller als Bearbeiter Händelscher Werke"; Klaus Hortschansky, "Händel in Göttingen. Die von Johann Nikolaus Fleischmann 1785 herausgegebene Auswahlgabe des Alexanderfestes"; Edwin Werner, "Empfindungen am Grabe Jesu.' Händels Funeral Anthem in Deutschland"; Siegfried Flesch, "Die Händel-Ausgabe von J. O. H. Schaum"; Rudolf Pečman, "Georg Friedrich Händel in der Zeit der Tschechischen Wiedergeburt"; Undine Wagner, "Händel-Bearbeitungen in böhmischen und mährischen Handschriften aus der ersten Hälfte des 19. Jahrhunderts"; Walther Siegmund-Schultze, "Händel und Brahms"; Howard Serwer, "Brahms and the Three Editions of Handel's Chamber Duets and Trios"; Dieter Gutknecht, "Robert Franz als Bearbeiter Händelscher Werke"; Jürgen Böhme, "Händels *L'Allegro, il Penseroso ed il Moderato* in der Bearbeitung von Robert Franz"; Karin Zauft, "Händel-Bearbeitungen und Händel-Aufführungen im Halle des 19. Jahrhunderts"; Helen Wanske, "Georg Friedrich Händels Klaviersuiten in historischen und

modernen Drucken. Ein Vergleich an ausgewählten Beispielen"; Gerhard Poppe, "Eine bisher unbekannt Quelle zum Oboen-konzert HWV 287"; Daniel Brandenburg, "Zur Problematik der Autorschaft einiger Cantate a voce sola des frühen 18. Jahrhunderts"; Torsten Fuchs, Johann Augustin Kobelius, "Ein Konkurrent des jungen Johann Sebastian Bach im Umfeld Georg Friedrich Händels"; Franz Hermann Franken, "Legenden um Mozarts Krankheiten und sein Tod."

Shapiro, Alexander H. "Drama of an Infinitely Superior Nature': Handel's Early English Oratorios and the Religious Sublime." *Music and Letters* 74 (1993): 215-45.

Dissertations

Willner, Channan. "The Articulation of Form and Rhythm in Handel's Instrumental Music" (forthcoming Ph.D. dissertation, City University of New York).

Winemiller, John T. "Aspects of Neoclassicism in Handel's Compositional Aesthetic" (forthcoming Ph.D. dissertation, University of Chicago).

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