

NEWSLETTER

of

The American Handel Society

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Theatre Research Resources for Opera Scholars

The *Newsletter* offers the following scholarship review to call attention to three older and five recent works used by theatre historians. Scholars researching London theatre and opera in the eighteenth century will find these resources rich in information.

Although they have been available for some years, three useful research tools are often neglected. *English Theatrical Literature 1559–1900: A Bibliography* by Robert W. Lowe, James Fullarton Arnott, and John William Robinson, provides massive source material for 1600–1800. Published in 1970 by the Society for Theatre Research, the bibliography is a guide to printed sources concerned with theatrical material, including opera, pantomime and music hall. Arnott and Robinson expanded Lowe's 1888 bibliography and list primary sources, covering the government regulation of the theatre, the morality of the theatre, general histories, opera, and periodicals. Looking in the opera section, for example, one would find an entry describing "An Epistle to Mr. Handel, upon his operas of *Flavius* and *Julius Caesar*" and locations of modern reprints. All in all, this bibliography lists many primary sources rarely if ever studied and is thus exceedingly valuable.

Charles H. Gray's *Theatrical Criticism in London to 1795* is another important book for eighteenth-century scholars. Published in 1931, this still useful study surveys "old periodicals [for] the contemporary opinions about . . . actors and the plays they played in." Selectively focusing on daily and weekly newspapers and monthly magazines, Gray traces the way theatrical criticism developed during the century. While some of his introductory judgments about the drama are dated, his history remains noteworthy, and the book identifies and describes many newspapers and magazines printed from 1702 to 1795. Organized chronologically, the book is a handy starting point for scholars working in a specific time period.

After referring to Gray, one can find many of the newspapers he describes in the Early English Newspapers microfilm collection from Research Publications.

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Giulio Cesare at the Met

In the first chapter of *Handel's Operas, 1704–1726* Winton Dean and Merrill Knapp argue that Handel was a composer equal in stature to Monteverdi, Mozart, and Verdi. One test of this view will be the willingness of major opera companies to perform Handel's operas as part of their regular repertory and not just as special offerings during an anniversary year. Given the difficulties of working in relatively unfamiliar musical and dramatic idioms, we cannot expect every company to mount new productions of works that will enjoy relatively few performances each season. On the other

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hand, a company such as the Metropolitan Opera, while unlikely to be the birthplace of benchmark Handel productions, does not wish to ignore his work completely.

One solution is to borrow a production and to hire musicians who have made the baroque their speciality to animate an existing design. For the Met to import the handsome English National Opera production of *Giulio Cesare*, designed by John Pascoe and Michael Sennett, and to hire John Copley and Trevor Pinnock to bring it to life, seems a reasonable compromise under the circumstances—always supposing the house is going to offer Handel at all. There is nothing wrong with presenting a baroque opera in a ready-made production already known to have been successful. Yet I came away from the matinee of October 22, 1988 feeling that I had experienced less in the theatre than I often do when listening to the Met's radio broadcasts. What went wrong?

The size of the house obviously militates against any feeling of intimacy, but I was not prepared for the extent to which the house swallowed *all* the voices. The sound was beautiful but attenuated: it seemed to come from far, far away. Marvelous details may have been produced onstage, but they did not carry to my seat, two-thirds of the way back on ground level. I felt as if I were watching a television from three rooms away with the sound turned low.

Another problem was the level of light in Gil Wechsler's Egypt, which seemed more characteristic of Norway in winter than of the Mediterranean. Atmospheric lighting is all very well, but I was constantly aware of having to peer at the stage, unable to see clearly in scene after scene.

The sensation of imposed distance was reinforced by an impression that almost the whole performance occurred at one unvarying volume and tempo. Both soloists and chorus were faint and remote (and very hard to understand). Nor did tempi convey a sense of variation: there seemed to be little distinction between one moment and the next, let alone a clear overall shape to the piece. I found this particularly disappointing, because I have often enjoyed Mr. Pinnock's orchestral work.

The infamous schedule pressures that prevail at the Met damage a production like this more than they do an old warhorse whose routine is familiar to everyone. Should a singer have to walk into the title role of *Giulio Cesare* as if it were *Tosca*? The Cesare I heard, Martine Dupuy, had sung Sesto in earlier performances before replacing Tatiana Troyanos. While Ms. Dupuy obviously had more acquaintance with the production than if she had just flown in to take over the lead, she had not entirely made the transition. Her confidence increased as the opera went on, and she made a convincingly enchanted lover, but she never seemed plausible as the conqueror of Egypt. Since most of the military action is over before the opera begins, Cesare's power is conveyed more by his commanding presence and others' response

to him than by direct action—a kind of acting and interplay woefully lacking in this production.

Even the performances that were more successful—Sarah Walker's as Cornelia and Jeffrey Gall's as Tolomeo—seemed based on a single idea, not designed to show variety. The trotting step with which Tolomeo made every exit, for example, never changed regardless of the content of the scene. The best acting came from Kathleen Battle as Cleopatra, but of course the action does allow her the opportunity to quarrel with her brother and seduce Cesare. By the time we saw her in chains (ludicrously inadequate—and inauthentic—as they were here), we knew she possessed a force Tolomeo had better try to restrain. Ms. Battle's voice scarcely reached me, but at least her performance conveyed variety and emotion.

How well did the Met serve Handel? About as well as it can, I fear. The production was visually stunning; elegantly if monotonously sung; and—frankly—pretty dull. We need to be able to see and hear, and we need stage and musical direction that conveys the force and feeling of a great opera. Even without a Senesino as Cesare and a Cuzzoni as Cleopatra, a major opera house ought to be able to stage Handel as something other than a museum piece.

Judith Milhous

David Edelberg (1939–1989)

David Edelberg, Vice-President and a member of the Board of Directors, died on March 14 after a brief illness. A graduate of McGill University with a degree in mechanical engineering, he was one of the principals of Airtek, Ltd., a firm specializing in air compressors and related equipment. David was both *Kenner* and *Liebhaver* in the traditional and truest sense of the words. He was one of the first to join our Society after its founding, and from the beginning he was most supportive with contributions and with unerringly sound advice. His interest in Handel centered on sound recordings. A member of the Association of Recorded Sound Collections and a highly professional discographer, he owned an immense collection of recordings of Handel's music. At his death he was working on a discography of Handel recordings on LP and later formats. In recent years he traveled far and wide to attend Handel performances and scholarly events. His loss will weigh heavily on all of us who knew him, worked with him, and enjoyed his friendship.

American Handel Society Research Fellowship

The Directors of The American Handel Society are pleased to announce that the first recipient of The American Handel Society Research Fellowship is David R. Hurley, a Ph.D. candidate in musicology at the University of Chicago where he has worked extensively with Ellen Harris. He will use the \$1,500 award to support research on his dissertation entitled *Handel's Compositional Process: A Study of Selected Oratorios*, which will examine revisions made by the composer before the first performances of *Semele*, *Hercules*, *Belshazzar*, *Solomon*, and *Susanna*. Mr. Hurley's work will focus mainly on the autograph scores, but will also take into consideration secondary sources, both manuscript and printed, including the manuscript word books in the Huntington Library. The AHS Fellowship Committee consisted of J. Merrill Knapp, chair, William Gudger and John Roberts.

New Editor

The new editor for the Newsletter is Graydon Beeks, who apologizes for the tardiness of this issue and begs the indulgence of the readers. Editorial correspondence should be directed to him at the following address:

Music Department
104 Thatcher Music Building
Pomona College
Claremont, CA 91711

New contributors and new contributions to the Newsletter are earnestly solicited. The editor especially encourages contributions in fields complementary to Handelian music studies, especially theatre, literature, and the visual arts.

Correspondence concerning membership and subscriptions should continue to be addressed to the Society at the Department of Music, University of Maryland, College Park, MD 20742.



Handel Calendar

The AHS welcomes news or leads about events of interest to Handelians. If possible, please include an address where readers may obtain details.

Saul. Canterbury Consort (period insts.), dir. D. Schuler. **May 6:** Canterbury Concerts at St. John's Episcopal Church, Stamford, CT 06901.

London Handel Orchestra. Bach & Handel Series incl. Concerti grossi Op. 6, nos. 4 and 11, Bach: harps. concertos (w/Maggie Cole) and Cantatas 199 and 202 (w/Gillian Fisher, soprano); dir. D. Darlow/R. Goodman. **May 16:** LHO, Francis House, Francis St., London SW1P 1DE.

Boston Early Music Festival. Incl. **May 29:** Steffani: *Enrico Leone*. Capella Agostino Steffani of Hanover, dir. L. Ravotkay. **May 28-June 4.** BEMF, P.O. Box 2632, Cambridge, MA 02238.

Händel-Festspiele der DDR. Incl. *Alcina*, *Alexander's Feast*, anthems, *Belshazzar*, *Sosarme* (cond. S. Simon), Utrecht Te Deum and Jubilate, Keiser: *Croesus*. **June 2-6, 1989.** G.-F.-Händel-Gesellschaft, Grosse Nicolaistr. 5, DDR-4020 Halle/Saale, E. Germany.

Serse. Pansegrau, Durmüller, Pflieger, Vier; cond. De Villiers. **June 3:** Städtliche Bühnen, Brunnenstr. 3, D-4800 Bielefeld, W. Germany.

Göttinger Händel-Festspiele: "Handel and Rome." Incl. *Saul*, cond. J. E. Gardiner; ballet; *Susanna*. **June 9-14.** Göttinger Händel-Gesellschaft e.V., Hainholzweg 3-5, D-3400 Göttingen, W. Germany.

London Handel Orchestra. Bach & Handel Series incl. Concerti grossi Op.6 Nos.7 and 9, Bach: harps. concerto (w/ M. Cole), Bach and Vivaldi cantatas (w/C. Denley); dir. D. Darlow/R. Goodman. **June 15:** LHO, Francis House, Francis St., London SW1P 1DE.

Internationale Händel-Akademie/Festspiele Karlsruhe. Incl. *Imeneo*, *Belshazzar*, *Saul*. Symposia "Performance Practice of Handel's Operas": H. Hucke, E. Harris, H. Krones, R. Wiesend, mod. H. J. Marx; "Problems of Performance Practice of Handel's Operas Today": A. Bylisma, P. Esswood, C. Farncombe, N. McGegan, C. Kluttig, E. Kohlhaas, mod. H. Becker. **June ?:** IHAK, D-7500 Karlsruhe, W. Germany.

Ludwigsburger Schlossfestspiele. Includes **June 17:** Flute sonata in b minor, and sonatas by Telemann, Bach and Vivaldi. J.-P. Rampal, flute, D. Roi, harps.; **September 17:** *Der Messias*. U. Sonntag, J. Rappé, M. Schäfer, C. Hauptmann; Süddeutscher Madrigalchor Stuttgart, Ludwigsburger Festspiele Orch., dir. W. Gönnerwein. Postfach 1022, 7140 Ludwigsburg, W. Germany.

Giustino. P. Spence, P. Racette, J. Williams, C. Keen, R. Mavrovitis, C. Estep, L. Villanueva, A. Panagoulas, V. Ledbetter; Philharmonia Baroque Orch.; cond. N. McGegan. **June 27, 29, 30:** San Francisco Opera Center, Herbst Theatre, S.F., CA (415) 864-3330.

Handel in Oxford. Incl. concerts and residential Handel Summer School, in assoc. with Dept. for External Studies, Univ. of Oxford. **July 1-12.**

Music at Oxford, 6a Cumnor Hill, Oxford OX2 9HA

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L'Allegro, Il Penseroso, ed il Moderato. faculty and soloists of the Oberlin Baroque Performance Institute; cond. N. McGegan. **July 9:** Oberlin BPI, Oberlin College, Oberlin, OH 44074 (216) 775-8569.

Susanna. L. Hunt, J. Feldman, D. Minter, J. Thomas, W. Parker, D. Thomas; Philharmonia Baroque Orchestra; cond. N. McGegan. **Sept. 13:** Herbst Theatre, San Francisco, CA; **Sept. 14:** 1st Meth. Church, Palo Alto, CA; **Sept. 16, 17:** Hertz Hall, U.C. Berkeley, CA [sold out]. PBO, P.O. Box 77344, S.F., CA 94107 (415) 543-8151.

Giuleo Cesare. J. Kowalski, V. Masterson, D. Visse, K. Cie-sinski, E. James, C. Robson; cond. N. McGegan. **Oct. 20, 22, 25, 28, 31, Nov. 4:** Houston Grand Opera, 510 Preston, Houston, TX 77002.

Maryland Handel Festival and Symposium. Nov. 9: AHS Lecture "The War of the Spanish Succession, Italy and Handel": B. Baselt; **Nov. 10:** A Grand Entertainment of Music; **Nov. 11:** Lieberman-Krueger-Kroll Trio; **Nov. 11:** Concert by Tafelmusik Baroque Orch.; **Nov. 12:** *Semele*. G. Fisher, M. Donnelly, D. Minter, J. Aler; cond. P. Traver; also symposia "Handel and his Texts" and "The Compositional Process". MHF, Dept. of Music, Univ. of MD, College Park, MD 20742.

Theatre Research from page 1

The contextual information available for the theatre historian and the literary or music scholar in these newspapers is extensive and rich. Newspaper research is always tedious, yet the detective work can often uncover facts, explanations and anecdotes hitherto unknown.

In addition to these three older works, music scholars will find several recent resources helpful. The Bibliographical Society of the University of Virginia has tentatively agreed to publish William J. Burling's *A Catalogue of New Plays and Entertainments of the the London Stage, 1701-1737*. A chronological continuation of Harbage and Schoenbaum's *Annals of English Drama 975-1700*, Burling's catalogue lists the premieres of more than a thousand comedies, tragedies, operas, and afterpieces published from 1700 until 1737, when the Licensing Act slowed the production of new plays. Using the holdings of numerous American libraries and reading extant eighteenth-century newspapers, Burling assembles first-rate scholarship about the many plays and entertainments staged during this period. A typical entry provides the date of first performance, venue, title, author, genre, publisher or printer, location of a published copy (if available), comments concerning attribution and textual oddities. In addition, a comprehensive index lists plays by author, title, and sub-title. Thus, a scholar working on Handel can locate his works quickly, while one investigating trends in pantomime can identify all plays with "Harlequin" in the title. No publication date has yet been set, but Professor Burling has graciously offered to answer queries from members of the Society (Department of English, Auburn University, Auburn, AL 36849).

Two important journals now or will soon offer cumulative indexes. *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, the quarterly journal of the American Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies, recently released its first index, covering volumes 1-20. The editors divide the 145 pages into three convenient sections: a chronological index, which lists all the articles and revues issue by issue; and author index; and a subject index. *Theatre Notebook: A Journal of the History and Technique of the British Theatre*, will publish its second index sometime in 1989. Compiled by Olive Youngs, this index will cover volumes 26-40 (1972-1986). Although *Theatre Notebook* publishes articles on all periods, many articles on eighteenth-century topics appear, and it stands out as one of the best forums for serious theatre historians.

The Summer 1988 issue of *Restoration and 18th-Century Research* includes "An Index to the Theatrical Materials in the English Theatre Journals Published Between 1700 and 1750" compiled by David Ritchey. Ritchey covers twelve British journals which included theatrical materials. As he writes, his index is "not a complete guide to all materials in these journals [but only] to items related to the theatre and to dramatic literature." Cross-referenced by title, author, playwright, performer, and subject heading, the entries cover 32 pages and are a handy guide to overlooked sources.

Finally, Dene Barnett's *The Art of Gesture: The Practices and Principles of 18th-Century Acting*, published in 1987, has been hailed by early reviewers as an important, seminal work. Robert D. Hume, for example, in his review for *Studies in English Literature* describes it as a landmark achievement. The book expands upon Barnett's articles published in the first six volumes of *Theatre Research International*, and what he has to say about acting in serious drama and opera is illuminating.

Timothy J. Viator



Book Review

Knapp, J. Merrill, and Alfred Mann. *George Frideric Handel's Chamber Duets*. Los Angeles: William Andrews Clark Memorial Library, University of California, Los Angeles, 1987.

This brief volume by two distinguished members of the Society is an outgrowth of papers presented at a Clark Library Seminar on March 12, 1983. Knapp's contribution, entitled "Handel's Italian Duets," provides an excellent introduction to the genre, including discussions of Handel's debt to Steffani, the Hanoverian background of many of the early duets, and the relationship between certain of the later duets and choruses in *Messiah*. The interested reader should supplement this introduction with the recent articles by Donald Burrows and Colin Timms cited in the notes to Knapp's essay.

Mann's discussion of "Handel's English Duets" is concerned with the background and nature of the chamber

duet style and how Handel incorporated it into his English compositions, from the Utrecht-related works of 1713 through the Chandos Anthems of 1717-1718 and culminating in the Funeral Anthem for Queen Caroline of 1737 and *Messiah* of 1741. Mann's treatment of the music is insightful, but his discussion of the background of the Utrecht and Cannons works should be modified in light of the research of Burrows, Graydon Beeks, Howard Serwer and others, most of it available only since 1983. In his concluding section Mann pays fitting tribute to the late Jens Peter Larsen and his pioneering discussion of Handel's "duet choruses."

The volume, which also contains an introduction by Stephen M. Fry, Music Librarian at the University of California, Los Angeles, is beautifully printed and includes generous musical examples. It is available directly from the Clark Library, 2520 Cimarron Street, Los Angeles, CA 90018 for \$7.00.

Editor

The American Handel Society

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