

NEWSLETTER

of

The American Handel Society

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High-Tech Handel

We find ourselves at the close of the twentieth century amidst an information revolution, thanks in particular to the rapid growth of the internet and the world-wide web (or "web"), powerful new media for communication, commerce, research, and entertainment that are redefining the old paradigms of information dissemination. Gone are the days when publishers of books, newspapers, and magazines, and owners of media services such as radio and television controlled access to information. With the internet, anyone, with a little effort and money, can set up their own website and make information available to fellow "netizens." Access to seemingly unlimited information is effectively only a click of the mouse away, and there are no time-zone or business-hour constraints: the internet is theoretically "open" twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week.

However, as to be expected with any new technology, shortcomings are evident. In the absence of quality control, the value and accuracy of information accessible via the internet is highly variable. From a practical standpoint, the user often finds him/herself spending a great deal of time "surfing" the web in search of information of value. One needs to carefully formulate one's search strategy. For example, I recently searched the internet with a typical search engine using the word "Handel." The result was 80,000 matches; however, very few of these "hits" had any relationship whatsoever to the composer because in German the word "Handel" means, among other things, business or commerce. In trying to refine the search using Boolean operators (words such as "and," "or," and so forth), I had to deal with the various spellings of his name: George vs. Georg, Frideric vs. Friedrich, Handel vs. Händel vs. Haendel.

Information access via the internet is unpredictable for several other reasons of a technical nature. "Webservers" (powerful computers specifically designed for the rapid transfer of information across the world-wide web) may be temporarily out of operation. "Websites," along with their respective web addresses or URLs (universal resource locators) may



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

The Handel Festivals in Göttingen
(29 May to 2 June) and Halle (5 to 10 June)

A Tale of Two Serse's

The people of Halle (Saale) claim that it never rains on the Handel Festival, and though "never" is a bit of exaggeration, this traveler has always been impressed by the meteorological powers of the Hallensers. 1997 was no exception, and it must be said that Halle weather prevailed during Göttingen's Handel Festival

Handel Calendar

The American Handel Society welcomes news or information about events of interest to Handelians. If possible, please include the address and telephone number where readers may obtain details. Much of the information listed below has been taken from the web site "Hear Handel," to the organizers of which the Newsletter is much indebted.

Giulio Cesare. September 13, 15, 17, 20, 23, 25, 29; October 1; February 19, 21, 24, 26, 28, 1998. The Royal Opera, London, at the Barbican Theatre and, in 1998, the Shaftsbury Theatre. Giulio Cesare: Ann Murray; Curio: Roderick Earle/Graeme Broadbent; Cornelia: Catherine Wyn-Rogers; Sesto: David Daniels/David Taylor; Cleopatra: Amanda Roocroft/Elena Kelessidi; Tolomeo: Brian Asawa; Achilla: Gerald Finley/Neal Davies; Royal Opera House Orchestra and Chorus, Ivor Bolton, conductor; Lindsay Posner, producer.

L'Allegro, il Penseroso ed il Moderato. September 17. Montreux Festival, Montreux. C. Oelze, R. Mannion, N. Argenta, J. M. Ainsley, P. Robinson, Academy of Ancient Music, Christopher Hogwood, conductor.

Foundling Hospital Anthem. September 21. Sacred Heart Church, St Kilda, Melbourne. Graham Abbott, conductor. Also Ode for the Birthday of Queen Anne, Overture to Scipione, Wedding Anthem: Sing Unto God, Concerto Grosso in C minor op. 6 no. 8.

Serse. October 7. Théâtre des Champs-Élysées, Paris. Gabrieli Consort Orchestra, Paul McCreesh, conductor.

L'Allegro, il Penseroso ed il Moderato. October 24, 26. Symphony Hall, Boston. Handel and Haydn Society Orchestra, Christopher Hogwood, conductor.

Tamerlano. October 31. Deutsche Oper am Rhein Düsseldorf/Duisburg. David McVicar, producer.

Serse. November 1, 5, 8, 13, 16. New York City Opera. D. Daniels, L. Hunt, A. Burton, S. Waters, J. Lane, K. Ollmann, J. Opalach, New York City Opera Orchestra, George Manahan, conductor.

Solomon. November 27. Théâtre des Champs-Élysées, Paris. Andreas Scholl, Gabrieli Consort Orchestra, Paul McCreesh, conductor. Also November 28 at Lyon; December 3 at Amsterdam; December 5 at London.

Messiah. December 11, 12, 13, 14. Melbourne Concert Hall, Melbourne. Joanna Cole, Andrew Dalton, Michael Terry, Richard Alexander, Melbourne Symphony Orchestra and Melbourne Chorale, Richard Gill, conductor.

Messiah. December 13. Frits Philipszaal, Eindhoven. Mhairi Lawson, Daniel Taylor, Marcel Reijans, Stephan MacLeod, Koor en Barokorkest

van de Nederlandse Bachvereniging, Jos van Veldhoven, conductor. Also 12/14, Den Haag, Dr. Anton Philipszaal; 12/16, Paris, L'Eglise St. Roch; 12/17, Rotterdam, Laurenskerk; 12/19, Leeuwarden, De Harmonie; 12/20, Groningen, De Oosterpoort; 12/21, Enschede, Muziekcentrum; 12/22, Amsterdam, Westerkerk; and 12/23, Utrecht, MCV.

Belshazzar. February 4 1998. Queen Elizabeth Hall, London. Belshazzar: Jamie MacDougall; Nitocris: Lynne Dawson; Cyrus: Catherine Denley; Daniel: James Bowman; Gobrias: Neal Davies; The King's Consort.

Xerxes. February 6. English National Opera at the London Coliseum, London. Xerxes: Sarah Connolly; Romilda: Janis Kelly; Arsamenes: Artur Stefanowicz; Atalanta: Susan Gritton; Amastris: Jean Rigby; Ariodates: Mark Richardson; Noel Davies, conductor.

Tolomeo. February 13, 14. Stadsschouwburg, Bruges. Jonathan Peter Kenny, Marie-Nolle de Calata, Il Fondamento, Paul Dombrecht, conductor. Also Kortrijk, Stadsschouwburg, 18 February; Brussels, KVS, 20 February; Turnhout, De Warande Theatre, 4 March; Antwerp, Bourlatheatre, 7, 8 March; Hasselt, Cultural Centre, 10 March; Gent, Vooruit Theatre, 18 March; Amsterdam, Stadsschouwburg, 13 April; Dordrecht, Kunstmin Theatre, 17 April.

Giulio Cesare. February 28. Frankfurt-Hoechst, Germany. Concerto Köln, René Jacobs, conductor.

Ode for the Birthday of Queen Anne (with Thomas Arne's *Alfred*). March 12, 13, 14, 15. San Francisco, Palo Alto, and Berkeley CA. Jennifer Smith, David Daniels, Jamie MacDougall, Leroy Kromm, Philharmonia Chorale, Bruce Lamott, director, Philharmonia Baroque, Nicholas McGegan, conductor. (415) 391-5252.

Giulio Cesare. March 27, 29. Symphony Hall, Boston. Cleopatra: Sylvia McNair; Achilla: Daniel Lichti; Handel and Haydn Society Orchestra, Christopher Hogwood, conductor. Concert version.

The 1998 London Handel Festival (March 14 to April 25) is expected to include a fully staged production of *Lotario*, and performances of *Susanna*, *Il Trionfo del Tempo e della Verità*, *Dixit Dominus*, and *Alexander's Feast*.

the week previous. But more than just the weather linked these two events, for both featured productions of *Serse* that demonstrated the difference between the old-fashioned avante-garde productions of Baroque opera and modern ones that try to recapture, to the extent possible, what such works might have been like in their own time.

As the cognoscenti know, *Serse* differs markedly from most of Handel's other operas. It had its premiere in 1738, towards the end of his career as a composer of opera; only *Imeneo* and *Deidamia* would follow. Its text, based on a libretto written in 1654 and revised in 1690, makes the great Xerxes into a hapless fool and includes an alcoholic comic servant, a character type long since considered inappropriate for the serious and highly moral world of opera seria. As was customary in the seventeenth century, many of the aria texts are designed to be set to short airs rather than the great da-capo form customary in the works of Handel and his contemporaries. Such airs, taking noticeably less time than the conventional da-capo aria, tend to speed the pace of the action. Today, we can only guess why Handel turned to this kind of libretto at this time. Lowell Lindgren, in a lecture delivered at Göttingen, expressed the view that this send-up of regal pretensions may have been the composer's response to the popularity of ballad opera, in which almost no subject was sacrosanct. The nature of Handel's last two librettos, *Imeneo* and *Deidamia*, are consistent with this view, for neither are as serious as were most that he had set up to 1738.

With the deservedly famous "Ombra mai fu", *Serse's* serenade to his favorite tree, Handel and his librettist tried in one stroke to portray just how silly this supposedly powerful eastern potentate really was. If "Ombra mai fu" is a kind of rhetorical *proem* to the opera, then its performance (staging, singing, and playing) must elaborate on this rhetorical emblem. In Göttingen's production, directed by Drew Minter, Judith Malafrente as *Serse* was made to circle the tree (a reasonably generic palm tree down stage left) making adoring, even prayerful gestures that seemed a bit overdone. Someone near me grumbled (in German), "Oh just let her come down stage and sing it out; that's what we want to hear." Though I sympathize with artists who are compelled to open a rarely performed Handel opera with the one number that has survived as popular culture, this staging did not quite work.

Göttingen's almost-successful attempt at "Ombra mai fu" stands in noble contrast to the directorial ego trip foisted on the ever-patient citizens of Halle. There, Lynda Lee did belt the aria out, but on a distractingly goofy set whose noble tree was a giant cactus-like item placed upstage center, and in front of which was a modern restaurant table upon which rested a vessel containing some form of alcohol. This last served as a useful prop for *Serse's* complacency and the servant Elviro's rampant alcoholism. Downstage left I spied a

small heap of what looked like the remains of a building demolition. The stage designer managed to make me miss two whole numbers trying to figure out what it was. How foolish of me: it most certainly was some leftover bits from Xerxes' disastrous attempt to bridge the Hellespont. The Halle set was one of those quasi-unit sets so beloved by modern stage designers. Though not as freakish as the Mussolini-inspired madhouse of last year's *Tolomeo*, and even vaguely suggestive of some arid place in a mountainous part of modern Anatolia, it still fought against the settings intended by the librettist and the composer. There was nothing that resembled a "giardino" or a "cortile" in Act 1, a "piazza" or a "ponte" in Act 2, though the wreckage of the latter had been on stage right along.

Because the Deutsches Theater in Göttingen does not have the wings etc. used in theatres well into the nineteenth century, the producers mimicked traditional scenery by painting three pairs of large, arch-shaped cloth drops placed so that when one set was raised, it revealed a new scene painted on the other. The painting was so well done that even seated in the fourth row, it took my eye a moment to overcome the *trompe l'oeil* effect and almost a minute before I realized that I was looking at painted cloths rather than painted flats. The whole was so skillfully executed that the audience applauded loudly when the set revealed the back cloth painted to represent the "Ponte costruito sopra il mare" (II/8) and even more loudly the "Gran tempio" with its "simulacro del sole, ed ara accesa" (XXX/10). In Halle the audience exhibited indifference to the largely incomprehensible unit set except to snicker when Axel Köhler as Arsamene was obliged, ape-like, to climb about two meters up a wire fence to sing an air, mercifully short.

Serse is a stage director's garden of temptations, particularly in the person of Elviro, the comic servant, and when a marvelous actor like David Thomas is cast in the role, even a Drew Minter succumbs if only momentarily as was the case in *Atalanta's* "Si, si mio ben," when he permitted Thomas to mug distractingly. For the rest, however, Minter's directing was exemplary in its loving use of eighteenth-century acting conventions to support the drama and set off the artists' qualities to best effect. In Halle, alas, it was as if the stage director was trying only to show us how clever he is. The fundamental directorial rule of this production seems to have been, "The only way you will not be upstaged is if you are alone on the set"—and sometimes even that rule did not apply. At the beginning of the show, Romilda entered stage left while (!!) *Serse* was singing "Ombra mai fu" and made it clear that she thought him an idiot. Ulrich Studer, the fine bass who sang Elviro, must have been exhausted by the end of show, because he never stopped swigging, mugging, prowling (in the manner of Groucho Marx), and gesticulating the whole time he was on stage. In fact, so busy and effective was he that he managed to upstage the coro "La virtute sol".

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In the role of Serse in Göttingen, Judith Malafrente took a bit of time to warm up, but having done so sang and acted very well indeed. We have already mentioned David Thomas, who possesses a marvelous bass voice and a wonderful stage presence. Brian Asawa's brilliant countertenor sound made him the star of the show. His voice is seamless, uniform from bottom to top, powerful, and of immense beauty. Alas, Asawa has a noisy clique who made nuisances of themselves at the performance I heard, and I was told that they were unbearably disruptive in an earlier one. We trust he will dismiss them forthwith. The Hanover Band under Nicholas McGegan's direction played better than in 1996's *Riccardo Primo*, but to my mind, could have played even better had McGegan given them a clearer beat and cues.

Händels Italianità

A pair of featured works in keeping with the theme of the 1997 Göttingen Festival, "Handel's Italian-ness," was Alessandro Scarlatti's *Oratorio per la Passione de Nostro Signore Gesu Cristo* and Handel's *Oratorio per la Resurrezione di Nostro Signore Gesu Cristo*, generally known as *La Resurrezione*. I was unable to attend the Scarlatti, but Handel's piece, conducted by McGegan, provided some compensation for it. The singing was uniformly beautiful: David Thomas was a memorable Lucifero, and Dominique Labelle's performance of "Ferma l'ali" would have been unforgettable had the accompaniment not been quite so busy. Indeed, for my taste, much of the performance was over-conducted, which, combined with the difficult acoustics of the church in which the work was performed, left a slightly unsatisfactory impression overall.

A concert by "Fiori musicali" of Bremen made a much better impression even though it was given in the same church as *La Resurrezione*. Besides works by Handel, "Fiori musicali" presented compositions by Caldara, Antonio Maria Bononcini, Corelli, and Vivaldi. The works by Caldara and Bononcini were introductions to oratorios which provided further context for Handel's music, represented here by a suite of dances drawn from the opera *Rodrigo*. Thomas Albert is the principal violinist and leader of "Fiori musicali," and I was pleased to note that he led the performance from his desk with, of course, the cooperation of the harpsichordist. The performance was so elegant and refined that one wishes that all the stick-waving time beaters would put down their batons and join the band as leaders *primes inter pares*.

And in Halle . . .

Though I had been apprehensive about Halle's *Serse* (and, it turns out, with good cause), I was looking forward to a performance of *Ariodante*, a work composed to take advantage of the presence of Marie Sallé's dance company in London in the winter of 1734/35.

The idea of seeing a work like *Ariodante* staged, with dancing, with "Les Musiciens du Louvre," and the whole directed by Marc Minkowski was tantalizing. Alas, circumstances beyond Halle's control prevented a staged performance and eliminated the dancing. Instead we had a concert performance with the orchestra on stage and the singers performing down stage. The singers entered and exited as called for in the score, sang their recitatives to one another, and engaged in a modicum of acting. The "Musiciens" played the ballet music at the appropriate places and with great verve, and we all sat back and enjoyed it immensely. This production demonstrated to me that the drama is in the book and in the music, and that if a work is sung and played well, it preserves most of its power even when unstaged. The singing was very fine, and special note must be taken of Fiona Kimm, alto, who sang the role of Polinesso. If ever one needed proof that counter tenors are unnecessary in Handel opera, Kimm gave it. Having inveighed against stick waving and other extravagances in the conducting department, I would hope that M. Minkowsky, obviously a stupendous musician and organizer, would moderate podium gymnastics. That he prefers to conduct in the conventional way is justifiable in terms of his musical results, but his jumping up in the air at loud musical high points is terribly distracting and not a little funny.

Oratorios, oratorios, oratorios . . .

There was a surfeit of oratorios at this year's Halle festival: Handel was represented by *Joshua*, *Judas Maccabaeus*, *Solomon*, *Saul*, *Athalia*, and *Acis and Galatea* (if one accepts the German view that the latter is an oratorio), and for those who might be bored with Handel, Mendelssohn's *St. Paul* (or *Paulus*) was thrown in for good measure. As for *Acis*, Trevor Pinnock led the English Concert and its choir in what was in my view a loud, violent, disappointingly oratorio-like performance, although I must admit that I seem to have been a minority of one amidst the ecstatic reception given the production by the wildly enthusiastic Hallensers.

Christopher Hogwood's rendering of *Joshua* was, in keeping with the nature of the work, powerful, though the sheer size of the Marktkirche where it was performed diluted the effect and created balance problems. Hogwood, professional that he is, adjusted as he went along, and all was well. The chorus was the Choir of New College Oxford whose boys contributed to a performance that was clear, incisive, and dramatic. Nancy Argenta as Achsah was superb, and the other soloists were creditable. In contrast, the performance of *Solomon*, conducted by Dieter Gutknecht, was an attempt to be up-to-date but, alas, proved to be no more than an echo of traditional oratorio performances everywhere. The nod to the present was an orchestra using copies of baroque instruments and a chorus of about 40, and as Maestro Gutknecht wrote

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be transferred without notice from one internet access provider (IAP) to another. The "webmaster" (host of a web site) may lose interest, money, or both, and allow the site content to languish (become outdated) or simply vanish. For such reasons, the bewildered websurfer often experiences a series of error messages after selecting inactive hypertext links.

It is unfortunate that Handel's medium, music, is presently the internet's weakest feature. Recorded sound exists as bytes of data. As the complexity and amount of recorded sound increases, so does the amount of data associated with it. In general, studio recordings consist of many megabytes (millions of bytes) of data. However, most people who surf the web use 14.4 or 28.8 kbps (kilobytes or thousands of bytes per second) modems via internet access providers. Therefore, for most people, the current technical infrastructure is inadequate to support fast, reliable transfer of studio-quality recordings.

Any time spent surfing the internet will suffice to show that few websites offer music for listening. Where they do, sites usually provide simple, synthesized music that is downloadable as MIDI (Musical Instrument Digital Interface) files. MIDI is a communications protocol that allows electronic musical instruments to communicate with each other in much the same way that computers connect via modems.

As host of the "George Frideric Handel Home Page," or HHP (<http://www.intr.net/bleissa/handel/home.html>), I have spent a great deal of time searching the internet for Handelian resources. I have assembled and organized many of these sources at a site called "Handel on the Web" (http://www.intr.net/bleissa/handel/gfh_web.html). There, the information is conceptually organized using the following classification: (1) websites dedicated to Handel; (2) biographies and chronologies; (3) catalogs of Handel's works; (4) Handelian research (detailed examinations of works and library collections); (5) concert and festival announcements; (6) commercial sites (e.g., advertisements for books, recordings, scores); (7) recording recommendations; and (8) MIDI files. As an appendix to this article (see reverse) I produce a list of selected sites from that larger "Handel on the Web" site. Happy Handelian surfing!

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Editor's note:

The American Handel Society now has its own website, which can be found at the following address:

<http://www.inform.umd.edu/ARHU/Depts/Music/people/rking/AHS.html>

The J. Merrill Knapp Research Fellowship

The Board of Directors of the American Handel Society invite applications for the 1998 J. Merrill Knapp Research Fellowship, an award of \$1,500 to be granted to an advanced graduate student or a scholar in an early stage of his or her career. This fellowship may be used on its own or to augment other grants or fellowships, but may be held no more than twice. The fellowship is intended to support work in the area of Handel or related studies. The winner of the award is given the opportunity to present a paper at the biennial meeting of the American Handel Society.

In awarding the fellowship, preference will be given to advanced graduate students; to persons who have not previously held this fellowship; to students at North American universities and residents of North America; and to proposals on specifically Handelian topics.

Applicants should submit a resume, a description of the project for which the fellowship will be used (not to exceed 750 words), a budget showing how and when the applicant plans to use the funds, and a description of other grants applied for or received for the same project. In addition, applicants should have two letters of recommendation sent directly to the Society at the address below.

Applications for the 1998 Fellowship must be post-marked no later than March 15, 1998 and should be sent to:

Professor William Gudger
Department of Music
The College of Charleston
Charleston, SC 29424-0001

Applicants will be notified of the decision by May 15, 1998.

HANDEL-L on LISTSERV@UMDD.UMD.EDU

HANDEL-L is a list sponsored by The American Handel Society at the University of Maryland, College Park. The list offers a forum for discussion of the life, times, and works of George Frideric Handel as well as related topics. HANDEL-L is open to all and welcomes comments, questions, and short reports from scholars, performers, and others interested in Handel.

To subscribe to HANDEL-L, send the following command to LISTSERV@UMDD.UMD.EDU:

SUBSCRIBE HANDEL-L <your first name>
<your middle name> <your last name>

Howard Serwer serves as owner and moderator of HANDEL-L. In that capacity he reviews all postings for relevance and suitability and communicates with submitters if necessary. Serwer's electronic address is hs7@umail.umd.edu.

A Bestiary of Selected Handelian Websites

(Caution: URLs are case sensitive!)

Websites Dedicated to Handel

- <http://www.voicenet.com/~hohmann/handel/index.html> (by Alexander Hohmann)
- <http://www.intr.net/bleissa/handel/home.html> (HHP)

Biographies

- <http://w3.rz-berlin.mpg.de/cmp/handel.html> (from The Grove Concise Dictionary of Music)
- <http://www.culturefinder.com/burkat/bios/handel.htm> (from Burkat Program Notes)
- <http://www.intr.net/bleissa/handel/frosch.html> (by William A. Frosch, M.D.)
- <http://www.ee.cityu.edu.hk/~94909101/handel.htm> (by Chan Kwok Leung)

Chronologies

- <http://www.intr.net/bleissa/handel/chron1.html> (HHP; from 1685 to 1738)
- <http://www.intr.net/bleissa/handel/chron2.html> (HHP; from 1739 to 1759)

Collected Pictures of Handel

- <http://www.voicenet.com/~hohmann/handel/pictures.html> (by Alexander Hohmann)

Catalogs of Handel's Works

- <http://bruichladdich.dcs.st-and.ac.uk/HandelWWW/HandelCat.html> (a thematic catalogue of tunes indexed by shape, by Tony Davie)
- <http://www.intr.net/bleissa/handel/genre.html> (HHP)

Collections

- <http://www.lib.umd.edu/UMCP/MUSIC/coopersmith.html> (the Jacob Coopersmith Collection of Handelian at the University of Maryland)

Detailed Examination of Individual Works

- Ariodante: <http://bruichladdich.dcs.st-and.ac.uk/HandelWWW/HWV33Ariodante/ActI.html> (by Tony Davie)
- Messiah: <http://uts.cc.utexas.edu/~patf/bach/messiah.html> (by Patrick Findlay)
- Messiah: <http://www.sunhawk.com/hawk/handelI.html> (interactive CD-ROM)
- Susanna: <http://bruichladdich.dcs.st-and.ac.uk/HandelWWW/HWV66Susanna/ActI.html> (by Tony Davie)

Concert Schedules and Festivals

- <http://www.mycenae.demon.co.uk/HrHandel/HHWelcome.html> (HEAR HANDEL)

Recording Labels

- Harmonia mundi France: http://harmoniamundi.com/compf_h.html#HANDELGF
- Hyperion Records: <http://www.hyperion-records.co.uk/catalogue/handel.html>
- Naxos: <http://www.hnh.com/composer/handelgf.htm>
- Philips Digital Classics: <http://www.philclas.polygram.nl/class/cg-j/handel.htm>

Recording Recommendations

- <http://www.classical.net/music/comp.lst/handel.html> (by Dave Lampson)
- <http://www.lainet.com/cdscout/handelfo.htm> (by Classic CD Scout)

Midi Files

- <http://www.prs.net/handel.html> (Classical MIDI Archives)
- <http://midiworld.com/handel.htm> (Midiworld's Händel Page)

in a note to the program, "Our preparation and performance attempted nothing less than to connect with that evolving style of Handel performance in the years before reunification that is so closely tied to the names of Christian Kluttig and Manfred Otte." Having heard any number of Kluttig performances before reunification, I should say that if anything, Gutknecht's *Solomon* reflected "early Kluttig:" it shared the slow tempi, oversung recitatives with delayed cadences, and lack of contrast in dynamics (mostly *mf*) and tempo (*moderato*) typical of "pre-unification" renderings. On the other hand, when Manfred Otte, concertmaster of the orchestra and simply the best musician in Halle, led his own ensemble of modern instruments (in those days the GDR government was disinclined to let musicians waste hard currency on reproductions of old instruments), it was so right musically and historically that one did not miss the old instruments. Otte directed from the concertmaster's stand, and it was his performance as much as any other which has led to my opposition to "stick wavers" for music down through early Beethoven.

If *Solomon* was not memorable, *Saul* was, but for many wrong reasons and a few right ones. Semi-staged by Wolfgang Barth in the Ulrich Church Concert Hall and conducted by Peter Neumann, the singing of the soloists and the Kölner Kammerchor (30 voices) and the playing of the Collegium Cartusianum was all that one could ask. As is always the case in staging Handel oratorio, the physical presence of a chorus creates a problem if the drama contains episodes that take place in private, as, for example, in the scene in which Michal rebuffs Saul's emissary. Barth's solution was to play the work in the manner of Greek drama with the chorus omnipresent, in the present case seated upstage in something like choir stalls. That would have been acceptable given the premise, but they filed in during the slow movement of the overture (again, ok), and then proceeded to don choir robes and make up their faces. The principles too, came on, and although they did not make themselves up, they did put on costumes thoughtfully left on mannequins for them. Back stage scenes on stage: a new way to upstage Handel's music. Gregory Reinhart's entrance as Saul in the midst of this foolishness was in the manner of a psychotic homeless person, and his character went downhill from there; we received no hint of the power and majesty that once was Saul's and which makes his decline so awful. Instead, he suffered endless indignities from upstaging: David menaced him with a harp/slingshot, while others treated him as a resident of Bedlam, usually to insure that the javelins he hurled did no harm to those on- or offstage. Surely the inherent impossibility of hurling spears safely in the theatre suggests that *Saul*, perhaps the most dramatic of all of Handel's oratorios, is not to be staged.

Barth elected to exploit the homosexual implications of the David-Jonathan relationship as a way to explain Saul's hatred of David. David and Jonathan were made to behave provocatively causing Saul to look daggers at them while Michal and Merab rolled their eyes, much in the manner of modern soap opera. Worse, Barth gave Saul a credible reason to hate David, weakening the case for Saul's insanity.

This year's scholarly conference at Halle concerned itself with Handel's oratorios and their effect on nineteenth-century composition; the papers were all at the very high level that we have come to expect of this annual event. Next year's conference will focus on Metastasio settings by Handel and his contemporaries. A final note: in 1998 Trevor Pinnock will succeed Howard Arman as musical director of the Halle Festival.

Iter Facio

Editor's note:

When Mr. Iter Facio's promised review of the Göttingen and Halle Festivals failed to appear, I tried to reach him at his usual haunts: the palazzo Ruspoli, the MacDonalds in the Haymarket, and a cafe on the Goosemarket in Hamburg. As I was about to give up, I received an envelope addressed in Facio's hand, bearing no return address and postmarked Berlin-Schönefeld. Inside was a typescript much longer than that published here and an unsigned note in German that I render verbatim:

"Most Honored Sir: yesterday, while strolling on the Koch Strasse, I saw three large men in black denim, with pony tails and other marks of the avante-garde theatre, wrestling a small, elderly man into a huge Tatra limousine of a kind favored many years ago by the Nomenklatura. As he was forced into the car, the old man dropped an envelope into the street. Just before they shut the doors, he screamed: 'Zu Hilfe! Zu Hilfe! sonst bin ich verloren!'"

Recent Publications

A substantial Handel bibliography for the years 1993–1995, compiled by Hans Joachim Marx, is given in *Göttinger Händel-Beiträge VI* (Göttingen, 1996), pp. 299–307. The following list includes items from 1993–1995 not found in that bibliography, as well as items that have appeared since the last Bibliography, published in the August 1995 issue of the *Newsletter*. Festival reports and reviews are not included here.

Books and Dissertations

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NEWSLETTER
of
The American Handel Society

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The Editor welcomes comments
and suggestions for future issues.

**The American Handel Society:
Election of Officers**

The Board of Directors of the American Handel Society, as a result of deliberations at their meeting of 3-4 May 1997, presents the following slate of nominees to the membership of the society for consideration:

President: David Ross Hurley, Pittsburg State University

Vice-President: Ellen Rosand, Yale University

Secretary/Treasurer: Howard Serwer, University of Maryland (emeritus)

Additional nominations are hereby solicited from the members of the Society. Nominations should be accompanied by a brief biography of the nominee and a written confirmation that the person nominated would be willing to serve if elected, and they should be sent to the Secretary/Treasurer by November 30, 1997.

Ballots will be included in the December 1997 issue of the Newsletter. The officers elected will serve two-year terms of office beginning in 1998, as provided for in the By-Laws of the Society.

The American Handel Society

School of Music, University of Maryland, College Park, Maryland 20742 Telephone (301) 652-2279

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Those paying in dollars should make their checks payable to THE AMERICAN HANDEL SOCIETY and mail to THE AMERICAN HANDEL SOCIETY, School of Music, University of Maryland, College Park, MD 20742. Those paying in sterling should make their checks payable to Howard Serwer and mail to the society at the above address. Those wishing to pay in DM should remit to Dr. Siegfried Fleisch, Treasurer, Georg-Friedrich-Händel-Gesellschaft, Gr. Nikole Str. 5, O-4020, Halle/Saale, Federal Republic of Germany, and indicate that the payment is for the account for the AHS.