



Adrian Butterfield and the London Handel Orchestra, the vocal soloists Grace Davidson, Charles Daniels, Nicholas Mulroy, Benedict Hymas and Edward Grint, and the organist Alastair Ross – included the anthem *The Lord is my Light* (HWV255) and the *Te Deum* in B flat major (HWV281) as well as a selection of fugues written for organ by Krieger and Handel. In the interval the audience was treated to a talk by Dominic Gwynne, who had restored the organ.

The conference ended with Terence Best being made an Honorary Fellow of The Handel Institute in recognition of his great contribution to the *Hallsche Händel-Ausgabe* and the consequent strengthening of relations between anglophone and German scholars.

NATASSA VARKA  
[nev21@cam.ac.uk](mailto:nev21@cam.ac.uk)



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#### AMERICAN HANDEL FESTIVAL

JACOBS SCHOOL OF MUSIC, INDIANA UNIVERSITY BLOOMINGTON, 7–10 FEBRUARY 2019

This biennial meeting of the American Handel Society took place in Bloomington, Indiana. Despite the temperamental weather patterns (from rain and flash flooding to ice and snow accumulation), attendees enjoyed two and a half days of Handel scholarship, as well as admirable performances of works by Handel and his contemporaries. The Jacobs School of Music provided a welcome setting, not least because of the university's dedication to early music and historical performance practice. From the opening remarks by Ellen Rosand (Yale University) to the final notes of Musgrave Heighington's *Six Select Odes of Anacreon*, the conference showed that Handel scholarship is not only thriving, but is also revealing new, exciting paths into the composer's works as well as life in eighteenth-century Europe more generally. By both luck and design, all of the papers presented engaged in dialogue with each other across the conference. Six themes emerged out of the presentations during the course of the weekend: new analyses of eighteenth-century music, close studies of primary sources (both musical and documentary), papers with important implications for performance, new interpretations of operas and oratorios, new perspectives on Handel's life story, and finally presentations that expanded upon the context of Handel's music, from the eighteenth to the twentieth centuries.

The first day of the conference offered some new analytical approaches to eighteenth-century music, including Handel's. Paul Sherrill (University of Utah) delivered a co-written paper (with Nathaniel Mitchell of Princeton University and Matthew Boyle of the University of Alabama) called 'Recognition, Reversal, and Style Change in "Se cerca, se dice"', which argued that Pergolesi's 1735 setting of Metastasio's popular aria text gave rise to a long chain of related settings throughout the eighteenth century, including versions by Pasquale Anfossi and Giuseppe Millico. Stylistic characteristics such as no introductory ritornello, an idiosyncratic leaping-fifth cadence and an up-tempo conclusion link these different versions across the eighteenth century; the latter feature may even have influenced the development of the two-tempo rondò and double-aria forms. Later in the afternoon David Hurley (Pittsburg State University) elaborated on his latest analytical project, which traces the 'recomposed return', in his paper 'Handel's Transformative Compositional Practices: Variation and Drama in His Arias'. Analysing 'Ombre, piante' from *Rodelinda* and 'Lament not thus' from *Belshazzar*, Hurley demonstrated how Handel chose to re-compose the A' return in some of his da capo arias in order to heighten particularly dramatic situations in both the operas and the oratorios. Kenneth Nott (University of Hartford) re-examined the added air 'Happy Beauty' from the 1752



version of *Il trionfo del tempo*, which has been attributed to Handel's copyist and assistant John Christopher Smith, junior. Nott concluded that in fact the music for 'Happy Beauty' bears hallmarks of Handel's compositional style, including borrowed passages from Reinhard Keiser that were reworked because, as Nott put it convincingly, Handel had not yet 'exhausted the possibilities of the borrowed material'. Each of these papers showed that analytical insights continue to be found in Handel's music, and that these insights have particular bearing on performance and interpretation.

Primary source studies, too, demonstrated how essential archival work is in revealing new aspects to Handel's works and adding new biographical details. Natassa Varka (University of Cambridge) shed light on Charles Jennens's personal manuscript copies of and partbooks for Handel's oratorios, focusing especially on *Belshazzar*. In these copies, Jennens made annotations, added and crossed out music, and corrected text underlay, providing what Varka argued was Jennens's 'own version' of some of the oratorios. (I especially appreciated Varka's revelation of some of Jennens's crotchety annotations, including the word 'blunderbuss!' written and crossed out again next to an error in the musical setting.) The paper by Mark Risinger (New York) was drawn from his 'herculean' (to use John Roberts's phrase) task of editing *Semele* for the Hallische Händel-Ausgabe. Risinger showed us the many layers present in *Semele*, largely owing to its 1762 revival; he also illuminated the relationships between *Semele* and the 1759 revival of *Susannah*, which borrowed a chorus from *Semele*. The 1762 revival also shows a return to the original production, with the reinstating of English-language airs that had been omitted and replaced by Italian arias for Italian singers. Two other papers looked to archival documents for new Handelian insights. Tenacious work in various Italian archives by Luca Della Libera (Conservatorio di Musica Licinio Refice, Frosinone) has borne new fruit: he presented on a newly discovered document from November 1707 that provides a specific date (30 October 1707) for the premiere of Handel's *Rodrigo* in Florence. And in the penultimate paper on Saturday afternoon, Ellen T. Harris (Massachusetts Institute of Technology) revisited her painstaking work in the archives of the Bank of England, providing us with updates on Handel's finances that both revised and elaborated upon previous conclusions made in articles such as 'Handel the Investor' (*Music & Letters* 85/4 (2004), 521–575). Harris revealed that Handel's stock accounts with the South Sea Company and the Royal African Company were probably not investment schemes, but rather an expedient way to pay the composer his pension as well as his salary as 'Master of the Orchester'.

A rewarding avenue of recent Handel research has focused on reception and performance practice. Three papers at the American Handel Society meeting addressed the issues involved in performing Handel's oratorios, from the eighteenth century to the twentieth. Donald Burrows (The Open University) tackled the subject of Handel's choral singers in the London oratorios. Although detail is scarce, Burrows's work on the *Handel Collected Documents* volumes has allowed him to amass as much information as possible concerning the physical placement of the choir, soloists, orchestra and even the organ during oratorio performances. Burrows used images as well as contemporary descriptions not only to recreate the arrangement of the oratorios, but also to estimate the number of choral singers originally used in these performances. Teresa M. Neff (Massachusetts Institute of Technology) picked up on the theme of performance practice in the nineteenth century. Her work in the Boston archives has shed new light on performance traditions of the Handel and Haydn Society, and her paper 'Singing the "Hallelujah" Chorus' reconstructed these traditions with illuminating results. Using the society's orchestral partbooks from the early nineteenth century, Neff produced an edition – as well as a recording – of the strange but fascinating changes that the Handel and Haydn Society made at that time based on their own philosophies and values. It was oddly satisfying to hear the melody of the 'Hallelujah' chorus in the tenor instead of the soprano! Luke Howard (Brigham Young University) also addressed performance-practice issues from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, in his paper 'Ebenezer Prout's 1902 Edition of *Messiah*: Symptom or Cure?'. Howard argued that Prout's approach must be re-evaluated in light of the fact that Prout was advocating greater historical awareness in performances of Handel's music at the time. Although Prout's edition of *Messiah* was designed to appeal to large choral societies and festivals – and is therefore seen as 'over-



romanticized' today – Howard revealed that Prout had sponsored performances of Handel's music with reduced forces, and that he studied Handel's manuscripts in detail.

A Handel conference is never complete without new readings of beloved works, and we were not disappointed in Bloomington. Two papers treated Handel's life and works through new interpretative lenses. Nathan Link (Centre College) opened the conference with his paper 'Portrayals of the Human Subject in Handel's *Giulio Cesare*'. At first Link gave evidence (namely, Sesto's 'Svegliatevi nel core') that the text of *Giulio Cesare* looked back to a seventeenth-century, Cartesian model of the passions. However, Cleopatra's role in the drama, which sees her transform from a calculating 'agitator' to a woman of deep feeling, represents a more Lockean view of a character's emotional progress, according to Link. Matthew Gardner (Universität Tübingen; 'Female Virtue in Early English Oratorios') offered new thoughts on Handel's 1730s oratorios (as well as those by Maurice Green and Willem de Fesch), specifically on the presence of heroic – and virtuous – female figures, including Judith, Esther and Deborah. Gardner argued persuasively that the appreciation for female virtue in these oratorios occurred during a time of powerful female monarchs, including Queen Caroline in the 1730s.

While most of the papers at the conference explored Handel's life and works, a few papers considered how his music was received and promoted beyond the composer's direct involvement. My own paper, 'Handel as Miscellany' (Alison DeSimone, University of Missouri-Kansas City), showed that audiences could have encountered Handel's music through songbook miscellanies, many of which reprinted specific arias in new contexts. I also demonstrated that Handel's music itself became an exemplar for many eighteenth-century music critics, historians and aestheticians who prized 'variety' in music. Stephen Nissenbaum (University of Massachusetts at Amherst) offered a fascinating history of the Handel and Haydn Society by exploring the backgrounds of its founding members. Although none of the founders were from prominent Boston families, they advocated a musical society that would combine 'cosmopolitan musical taste and Christian piety' – as found, clearly, in works by Handel and Haydn.

Three other papers asked us to reconsider elements of Handel's biography. Thomas McGeary (University of Illinois) followed Handel's travels during the War of the Spanish Succession. He demonstrated the ways in which the composer's career intersected with (or purposely avoided) major battles and political alliances during the conflict. For the final paper on Saturday afternoon, Sandra Dolby (Indiana University) presented 'John Mainwaring – Fulfilling the Role of Folklorist in Writing the Memoirs of Handel', which asked the audience to reconsider how the composer's first biographer used anecdote and oral retellings of the composer's life to craft the composer's life story. On Sunday morning Ashley Greathouse (University of Cincinnati) followed these biographical retellings of Handel's life with her own version: a reconsideration of how Handel's image and fame were appropriated by those involved in managing London's pleasure gardens, especially at Vauxhall. Greathouse's virtuosic powerpoint presentation certainly helped us envision how Handel's statue became a focal point in Vauxhall, and how it may have visually represented connections with the royal family as well.

The American Handel Society conference is also a festival, meaning that those in attendance were treated to special performances of the composer's music. On Friday night we attended Indiana University's production of *Giulio Cesare*, directed by Robin Guarino. While the 'updated' setting (Cesare and his soldiers became members of Napoleon's army) was less than convincing, most of the performances by the IU students were extraordinary. I was especially impressed with Sesto (Emily Warren), whose clear mezzo projected nicely above the orchestra, and Cleopatra (Virginia Mims), who tackled baroque style and ornamentation with the aplomb of a veteran, despite the fact that she is only a university undergraduate. Devon Nelson (Indiana University) gave a thorough pre-concert talk before the performance that covered the plot, performers and historical connections in only twenty-five minutes – a true achievement. On Saturday night, members of the American Handel Society heard Handel's serenata *Parnasso in festa*; although I was unable to attend, I heard positive comments about the performance, which featured Jeffrey Thomas as music director as well as IU's talented early-music singers and instrumentalists.



The American Handel Festival celebrates two of its founders at each meeting of the Society. Howard Serwer is recognized by the eponymous Memorial Lecture, given this year by Ellen Rosand. Her talk, 'Handel's "Music"', borrowed the idea of diegetic music from film scholarship in order to re-examine famous scenes from Handel's operas and oratorios. She argued that many of these moments break the fourth wall of the theatre in some way. In some cases, the attention might shift from the story itself to Handel performing an organ concerto or a florid harpsichord solo; in others, the music heard on the stage is meant to be a performance itself, such as the seduction scene in *Giulio Cesare*. Her many examples pointed to the ways in which Handel experimented with dramatic form – something that continues to make Handel stand out as an opera and oratorio composer.

The Paul Traver Memorial Fund supported a lecture-recital of Musgrave Heighington's *Six Select Odes of Anacreon in Greek and [Six] of Horace in Latin* (c1736), with the lecture given by Donald Burrows and Robert Ketterer (University of Iowa). They were accompanied by students of the Indiana University Early Music Institute, who performed a number of selections from this publication. The interest in Heighington stems from the subscribers' list, in which Handel's name is included. Ketterer and Burrows explored Heighington's life and career in music, and also paid special attention to the reception history of odes by Anacreon and Horace in eighteenth-century England. Their lecture was punctuated by short performances of a number of the odes, which were beautifully sung. This fascinating lecture-recital summarized the conference itself: there will always be more scholarly work to do on Handel's own music as well as the context in which he lived and in which his music was received. Moreover, eighteenth-century music, whether by Handel or his contemporaries, still provides delightful and thought-provoking entertainment. Overall, the Bloomington conference was a huge success; many thanks to Ayana Smith and the Indiana University students who hosted us, fed us and helped us with our technological problems. We look forward to the next American Handel Festival in 2021!

ALISON DESIMONE  
[desimonea@umkc.edu](mailto:desimonea@umkc.edu)

