



THE HANDEL INSTITUTE  
NEWSLETTER

That was the year that was! There was an amazing amount of Handel-related activity around the world last year, the 250th anniversary of the composer's death. Now that the dust has settled, we reflect both on the 'Purcell, Handel and Literature' conference and on some overseas meetings and performances that you may have missed. Thanks are due to our generous correspondents (whose reports appear in chronological order).

Following this retrospective, Terence Best re-examines the evidence on the singers in *La resurrezione*; Ilias Chrissochoidis sheds unexpected light on Senesino, and the undersigned discusses a new Handel borrowing from Vivaldi. There are brief announcements about the 'Handel Documents' project, the Handel website 'gfhandel.org' and the Stanley Sadie recording prize, and applications are invited for Handel Institute Awards.

Colin Timms

## HANDEL'S ANNIVERSARY YEAR 2009 REPORTS ON CONFERENCES AND PERFORMANCES

### VON NEAPEL NACH HAMBURG: DIE EUROPAISCHEN REISEN DER PARTENOPE

23-24 February

Vienna, Theater an der Wien

A new production of Handel's *Partenope* by Pierre Audi at the Theater an der Wien (22 February 2009) was garnished by this international symposium convened by Michele Callella (Vienna). Silke Leopold (Heidelberg) asked about the cultural meaning of the male disguise of Rosmira. She reconstructed an early modern view of gender defined by performativity rather than sexuality: Handel's music is not 'genderised' but reflects different behavioural potentials accessible to both women and men. David Vickers (Huddersfield) reported on the various versions of Handel's opera and their pros and cons, helping to understand his approach to plot and dramaturgy. Suzanne Aspden (Oxford) showed that Winton Dean's qualification of *Partenope* as a 'feminist' opera needs redimensioning, but that there are tendencies in Handel's work of the early 1730s that would satisfy a bourgeois admiration of powerful women.

The Neapolitan *Partenope* of 1699, set by Luigi Mancia, was interpreted by Paologiovanni Maione (Naples) and Francesco Cotticelli (Cagliari); Angela

Romagnoli (Pavia/Cremona) spoke on the setting by Antonio Caldara (Venice, 1708), whose libretto was the direct source for Handel's. Reinhard Strohm (Oxford) concentrated on settings in Italy and the Empire that usually carried the title *Rosmira* or *Rosmira fedele*, raising questions about the identity of the work and the identification of singers with their roles. Michael Zywiets (Bremen) commented on the Brunswick revivals of Handel's operas; he also revealed that the Handel documents surrounding the pasticcio *Hermann von Balcke*, performed in Elbing (Elbląg) in 1737, are forgeries by the Nazi-influenced musicologist Joseph Maria Müller-Blattau.

*Partenope* had a history beyond Handel and Stampiglia: Andrea Sommer-Mathis interpreted Pietro Metastasio's *festa teatrale* of the same title (1767), a work fascinatingly related to the reformist atmosphere of the Habsburg court. A historical survey of Handel opera performances of the last 40-50 years, and a critical interpretation of their component ideologies and aesthetic ideals, was offered by Arnold Jacobshagen (Cologne). The symposium concluded with a panel discussion conducted by Bernhard Trebuch (ORF, Vienna); panelists were Christophe Rousset (the conductor of the production), Herbert Lachmayer, Silke Leopold and Arnold Jacobshagen.

Reinhard Strohm



'Panstufato' was the Arcadian name of the copyist, Angelini. The second name, Matteo, is not recorded anywhere else in the documents; the next four are singers, listed elsewhere as soprano and alto castratos, tenor and bass. The identity of three of them can be inferred from other evidence, so that the cast of the four male singers in *La resurrezione* can be reconstructed as follows:

Angelo	Signor Filippo (soprano castrato)
Cleofe	Pasqualino Betti (alto castrato)
S. Giovanni	Vittorio Chiccheri (tenor)
Lucifero	Cristofano Cinotti (bass)

Filippo was in the service of the Polish queen Maria Casimira, who was then living in Rome; Betti sang in a number of operas before being engaged for the Cappella Pontificia in 1707; Chiccheri was for a time in the service of Cardinal Pamphilj.

So who was Matteo? Kirkendale assumed that he was a singer, but Hans Joachim Marx has suggested to me that he is more likely to have been the violinist Matteo Fornari, Corelli's friend and long-time colleague; the two virtuosi had played together, especially in concertino roles, for many years, and appear in a number of payment accounts.<sup>4</sup> What is beyond doubt is that there was a woman in the cast. Pope Clement VI had issued an edict in 1704 forbidding the employment of women in public performances, and two contemporary documents record that a rebuke was sent to Ruspoli after the Sunday performance of *La resurrezione*. In the Valesio diary for 9 April 1708 we read: 'Lunedì 9 ha fatta S. B. [Sua Beatitudine] far una ammonizione per haver fatto cantare nell'oratorio della sera precedente una Cantarina' (on Monday 9th His Holiness sent a rebuke because a female singer had sung in the oratorio on the previous evening).<sup>5</sup> Then, in a letter of 17 April from the Bavarian ambassador, Graf Lambach, we find: 'Ultimamente [il Marchese Ruspoli] vi fece cantare una sua Canterina che tiene in casa; fù fatto chiamare dall'Em<sup>mo</sup> Paolucci: che li rappresentò venir' poco gusto inteso, che facesse cantare in sua casa e con palchi canterine ...' (recently [he] had a female singer sing whom he has in his house; he was summoned by [Cardinal] Paolucci, who informed him that it was objectionable that he should have female singers sing in his house and in a staged performance ...).<sup>6</sup>

It should be observed that neither document mentions how these events affected the second performance on the Monday, or what notice Ruspoli took of the 'ammonizione'. We know from the Ruspoli documents that the second performance certainly took place. Believing that Matteo was one of the singers (presumably in the role of the Angelo), Kirkendale concluded that one of the others, the castrato Vittorio, had not taken part in the Sunday performance and

was therefore available to sing the part of Maddalena on the Monday. Kirkendale's assumption that Durastanti was replaced by a castrato for the second performance has never been challenged and has become accepted wisdom in the Handel literature; but there is no evidence to support it.

If Matteo was indeed Fornari, there was no spare singer, and it may be that Ruspoli was sufficiently important to ignore the 'ammonizione'. He was a very powerful figure in Rome, and was being particularly useful in supplying military support to the papal forces in the War of the Spanish Succession, which was then raging. It stretches credulity to suppose that in the space of a few hours a replacement could be found for the biggest role in a work that had needed three rehearsals in preparation for the première. The papal rebuke could not have been delivered before the Monday morning, and it is quite possible that Ruspoli apologised but insisted there was not enough time to make a change before a performance that some of the papal staff were in any case due to attend.

The German scholar Juliane Riepe, who like Professor Marx has a good knowledge of the Roman background in which Handel worked at this time, has suggested, in her entry on *La resurrezione* in the *Cambridge Handel Encyclopedia* (2009), that the part of the Angelo was sung by Francesco Finaia. Otherwise she agrees with the cast listed above, although she is cautious enough to say that these singers 'might have been' the cast. She also provides the surname of Cinotti, who was, like Betti, a member of the Cappella Pontificia.

The HHA edition will go to press with the information set out above. Whether any new documentation about the singers in *La resurrezione* – especially who sang the part of Maddalena – will ever be forthcoming is anyone's guess.

Terence Best

## SENESINO'S BLACK BOY (1725)

For all their celebrity and constant exposure to public invective, London's opera stars in the 1720s and 1730s received limited factual coverage in the press. Typical reportage includes contractual engagements, arrival in and departure from England, and private performances for the royal family, noblemen and foreign dignitaries, all averaging a few lines. This makes even more impressive the long paragraph on Senesino's private life printed (on the singer's behalf, one reasonably assumes) in May 1725. I discovered the episode in a volume of 18th- and 19th-century music advertisements now held at the Gerald Coke Handel Collection. The newspaper cutting is from *The Daily Post*, no. 1759, for Saturday 15 May 1725, [p. 2]; it was reprinted with minor corrections in *The Daily Courant*, no. 7359, on Tuesday 18 May 1725, [2].

Whereas a very false and malicious Report hath for some time past been industriously spread, relating to Mr. Senesino, one of the Performers in the Opera, it is thought necessary to publish the following Authentick

<sup>4</sup> In 1684, for instance, Corelli received 40 scudi for a series of performances, and Fornari 25, a roughly similar proportion to the payments in the Ruspoli document. See Hans Joachim Marx, 'Die "Giustificazioni della Casa Pamphilj" als musikgeschichtliche Quelle', *Studi musicali*, 12 (1983), 121-87: 147.

<sup>5</sup> *Händel-Handbuch*, 4: *Dokumente zu Leben und Schaffen* (Kassel, 1985), 34.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 34-5.



Relation of that Affair: Mr. Senesino's Servant, a Black Boy, came into his Service about two Years ago being then about ten Years old, he was from the first unhealthy, but about the Month of November last past, he began to be worse than before, and was much afflicted with a violent Asthma and Dropsy, until on the 26th of February last past he was sent by the direction of Dr. Teissier, Physician of his Majesty's Household, and at the Expence of Mr. Senesino to Islington for the Air, where he was lodg'd at the House of Mr. George Allcock, Farrier, and was never after that seen by Mr. Senesino. On the 25th Day of March last past, he dy'd at Islington and was their [*sic*] bury'd. Having been guilty of some great Crimes some Days before his Death, and the said Allcock having corrected him for it, and even that without the Knowledge of the said Mr. Senesino, a Report was spread thereabouts, that the said Correction was the occasion of his Death, which Report was examin'd into by the Coroner's Inquest, and found to be malicious and groundless upon the Oath of Persons who lodg'd in the same House, and of Mr. Rideout a Surgeon of the Neighbourhood who visited him. It is suppos'd this hath given pretext to the late wicked vnd [*sic*] malicious Report, the falshood of which may be clearly prov'd by the said Inquest and Examinations taken then and there by Mr. George Rivers Coroner, or by the Report of the above-mention'd Dr. Teissier, and of Mr. St. Andre Surgeon, who both saw the Boy in his Illness.<sup>1</sup>

The growth of the transatlantic slave trade and London's dominant position in this market led to a strong influx of Africans and West Indians to England.<sup>2</sup> Among these, black boys were prized accoutrements in upper-class households. Their dark skin and facial features added a splash of exoticism to domestic life and brought attention to their owner in public places, while their youth and short stature minimized any physical threat to their masters. Ownership was affirmed through an engraved metal collar (e.g., 'GONE away from his Master a Negroe Boy ... had a Silver Collar about his Neck, on which was engraved Mrs. Gascoigne's Black Boy').<sup>3</sup> Serving usually as domestic servants, they

could also be used for rougher, though spectacular, activities, such as running races 'three times round St. James's-Park, for 100 l.'<sup>4</sup> Some managed to escape from their owners, prompting calls for their capture with generous rewards of up to several guineas. Even if they remained at large, they had little choice but to join London's buzzing crime scene and often targeted their former masters and properties. Victims of 'black' crime included lofty figures, such as the Earl of Burlington, whose 'Diamond Ring of 800 l.' was stolen in 1728 by a 'Negro Boy'.<sup>5</sup>

At the other extreme, black boys in the service of fashionable ladies could enjoy privileges unavailable to native youth, as several Hogarth images illustrate (e.g., *Taste in High Life; Marriage à-la-mode*, no. 4).<sup>6</sup> Partly pets and partly adopted orphans, they were fulfilling British colonial aspirations of civilizing savages while satiating the increasing demand for exotic products.<sup>7</sup> Their association with luxury naturally brought them in cultural alignment with Italian opera and especially castrati, whose childhood, too, was robbed of another kind of freedom.

No surprise, then, that Senesino had a black boy in his service (it is hard to tell whether he was also his legal owner). The question is why he employed one of evidently ill health. For a celebrity expected to be at the top of his form twice a week for half a year, the presence of a sickly boy might have been psychologically stressful and medically imprudent. Did the vulnerable creature touch a paternal nerve in him? This is an intriguing possibility, given the explicit references to his lost manhood in the satirical *Epistle from Senesino, to Anastasia Robinson* (1724).<sup>8</sup> Whatever the case may be, it says a lot that, while the singer had ignored the scurrilous attacks of early 1724,<sup>9</sup> he responded to this one with legal precision, protesting his innocence and defending his honour. An easy target for contemporary satirists and a Judas in Handelian historiography, Senesino here appears a concerned employer and a humane being. Even if this factual aria was clearly not of his own making (recall his mangled English in the production of *Esther* seven years later), his moral performance deserves a fair hearing.

Ilias Chrissochoidis

<sup>1</sup> 'Old Advertisements (Musical)': London, Foundling Museum, Gerald Coke Handel Collection, accession no. 605, p. 2. My deepest thanks to Katherine Hogg and Colin Coleman for their wonderful hospitality.

<sup>2</sup> Their exact population is hard to determine but was clearly in the thousands, with the majority close to the three slave trade ports of London, Bristol, and Liverpool. According to *The Gentleman's Magazine*, 34 (1764), 493, 'the number in this metropolis only, is supposed to be near 20,000'. For textual and visual records of their presence, see David Dabydeen, *Hogarth's Blacks: Images of Blacks in Eighteenth Century English Art* (Manchester, 1987), 17-40, and Catherine Molineux, 'Hogarth's Fashionable Slaves: Moral Corruption in Eighteenth-Century London', *English Literary History*, 72 (2005), 495-520: 497-98.

<sup>3</sup> *The Daily Post*, no. 2617, Saturday 10 February 1728, [2].

<sup>4</sup> *The Original Weekly Journal*, Saturday 27 February 1720, 1676.

<sup>5</sup> *The Country Journal: Or, The Craftsman*, no. 81, Saturday 20 January 1728, [2].

<sup>6</sup> See, however, Catherine Molineux's reading of these images as satirical inversions of black slavery in Britain: 'Hogarth's Fashionable Slaves', 513-15. Senesino's account shows that indulgence and cruelty could

easily alternate. One cannot imagine what 'great Crimes' a dangerously ill twelve-year-old could have committed back then. It is possible that Allcock, facing legal investigation, exaggerated the boy's actions to justify his harsh punishment.

<sup>7</sup> See the famous epitaph of Scipio Africanus, one of the Earl of Suffolk's black boys who died in 1720 ('I who was Born a PAGAN and a SLAVE / Now Sweetly Sleep a CHRISTIAN in my Grave / What tho' my hue was dark my SAVIOR'S sight / Shall Change this darkness into radiant light / Such grace to me my Lord on earth has given / To recommend me to my Lord in heaven / Whose glorious second coming here I wait / With saints and Angels Him to celebrate'), reprinted in Peter Fryer, *Staying Power: The History of Black People in Britain* (London, 1984), 62; the tombstone can be seen at [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Scipio\\_Africanus\\_grave.jpg](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Scipio_Africanus_grave.jpg).

<sup>8</sup> See Thomas McGeary, 'Verse Epistles on Italian Opera Singers, 1724-1736', *Royal Musical Association Research Chronicle*, 33 (2002), 29-88: 32-33, 54-55.

<sup>9</sup> A letter published under his name ('SENZINO') in *The Weekly Journal or Saturday's-Post*, no. 220, Saturday 12 January 1723, 1293 is clearly fraudulent: see <http://ichriss.ccarh.org/HRD/1723.htm>.