

NEWSLETTER of the American Handel Society

Volume XXXVIII, Number 3

Winter 2023

LONDON HANDEL INSTITUTE CONFERENCE REPORT, NOVEMBER 2023

Ellen T. Harris

According to its website, the London Handel Institute brought forward to 2023 its normal triennial conference “in order to celebrate the refurbishment and the reopening in spring 2023 of the Handel House Museum at 25 Brook Street (Handel Hendrix House) and also the tercentenary of the composer moving into the property in 1723.” The Institute’s thirteenth conference turned out to be a lucky one in that the papers were of high quality and interest, and the fine reception hosted by Handel Hendrix House on Saturday night (November 18) gave a special patina to the event. The possibility of continuing the conferences on a biennial cycle was mentioned. Stay tuned. What follows is what I took away from the conference and may not be accurate, of course: it’s what one listener heard.

The conference opened Friday, November 17 at the Foundling Museum with a welcoming glass of champagne and a fine concert by the all-women Ensemble Molière celebrating the French dancer and choreographer Marie Sallé (1707–56). Comprised of violin, flute, bassoon, gamba, and harpsichord, the ensemble is well situated to play chamber pieces of different configurations but also larger orchestral works in modern transcriptions following baroque practice. One could imagine oneself at the private residence of one of Handel’s patrons listening to Handel as well as contemporary music recently brought over from Paris. In addition to suites from Handel’s *Terpsichore*, I especially enjoyed “Les Fleurs Suites” from Rameau’s *Les Indes Galantes*.

The paper sessions, coffee breaks, and lunches took place in Bridewell Hall, conveniently located by the Blackfriars tube and rail stations. Donald Burrows (Chair, Handel Institute) opened the conference noting a confluence of anniversaries, both personal and Handelian, before introducing the first conference session, “Musical culture in early eighteenth-century Britain.” In the first paper, “The other Chandos anthems: J. C. Pepusch and music for Cannons c. 1716–23,” Robert Rawson gently chided us all for not taking the music of Pepusch more seriously. He showed that the distinctive instrumentation in the anthems of Haym, Pepusch, and Handel for the Duke of Chandos does not endorse the idea that the Cannon’s Concert progressively expanded over these years but that it was successively adjusted to the requirements of the individual composers. Rawson argued further (with convincing examples) that Pepusch’s anthems, particularly “Rejoice in the Lord” (1719), might have provided a stylistic model for Handel’s later oratorio choruses. Olive Baldwin and Thelma Wilson followed with “Handel between the acts,” showing that Handel’s newest music was regularly heard in

continued on p. 2

HANDEL AND HAYDN SOCIETY’S PERFORMANCE OF *ISRAEL IN EGYPT*

Minji Kim



*H+H’s new artistic director Jonathan Cohen conducts from the harpsichord.
Photography by Robert Torres.*

The Handel and Haydn Society (H+H) welcomed its 15th artistic director Jonathan Cohen and opened the 2023–24 season on a celebratory note with two performances of Handel’s oratorio *Israel in Egypt*. I attended the second concert on Sunday, October 8, 2023, and the midday show drew a large crowd that filled about three-quarters of Boston’s Symphony Hall. Under Cohen’s clean and precise direction (conducting from the harpsichord), the H+H orchestra and chorus gave a compelling display of Handel’s work.

The performance uniquely showcased the high caliber of H+H choral singers as they drew thirteen out of thirty-three members to sing solo airs and duets. While they ranged in ability to project through the large (and long)

continued on p. 4

IN THIS ISSUE

London Handel Institute Conference Report – Ellen T. Harris
Handel and Haydn Society’s Performance of *Israel in Egypt* – Minji Kim
From the President’s Desk – Graydon Beeks
Call For Applications
10th Annual Handel Aria Competition Winners
Recent Publications & Upcoming Events