

# NEWSLETTER

## of the

# American Handel Society

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### FROM GÖTTINGEN TO NORTHAMPTON: HANDEL'S OPERAS COME TO AMERICA, 1927–1931

Stephen Nissenbaum

It may be surprising that the first American performance of any Handel opera took place at Smith College, in Northampton, Massachusetts. The year was 1927, and the opera was *Julius Caesar*. The event was a direct consequence of the “Händel Renaissance” that had begun seven years earlier in Göttingen, Germany—the brainchild of the art historian Oskar Hagen, who staged four Handel operas in Göttingen between 1920 and 1924: *Rodelinde*, *Otto*, *Julius Cäsar*, and *Xerxes*.<sup>1</sup> All four operas were sung in German, and Hagen published piano-vocal scores of each one.<sup>2</sup> Performances spread like wildfire through Germany—hundreds of them within just a few years. (That unprecedented response was partly due to the bleak atmosphere of postwar Germany. With the nation’s political and military power in ruins, many Germans turned instead to its enduring cultural preeminence.)

But those operas would not have come to America except for a setback in Oskar Hagen’s own career—he was denied tenure at Göttingen, and left Germany in 1925. That year, Hagen moved to America, accepting an offer from the University of Wisconsin to establish an Art History Department there.<sup>3</sup> Never again would he stage a Handel opera. Instead, it was another recent German immigrant who introduced Hagen’s version of *Julius Caesar* to America.

The composer and pianist Werner Josten came to America in 1920 and began teaching music at Smith College in 1923. Josten knew of Hagen’s work in Göttingen, and when he presented *Julius Caesar* at Smith in 1927, it was with Hagen’s personal support (including the use of his conducting score and parts, as well as an English translation of his own German libretto, made by a colleague in Wisconsin’s German Department).<sup>4</sup> Josten’s staging garnered enthusiastic reviews from magazines and newspapers around the country. That publicity made it

1 A good brief account of Hagen’s early years and the creation of the Göttingen Händel Festival is in Abbey E. Thompson, “Revival, Revision, Rebirth: Handel Opera in Germany, 1920–1930” (M.A. thesis, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, 2006), 6–9. For a political account, see David Imhoof, *Becoming a Nazi Town: Culture and Politics in Göttingen Between the World Wars* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2013), 73–90.

2 *Julius Caesar* (Leipzig: C. F. Peters, 1922); *Rodelinde* (Leipzig: C. F. Peters, 1923); *Xerxes* (Leipzig: C. F. Peters, 1924); *Otto und Theophano* (Hamburg-Bergedorf, 1927).

3 Thompson, “Revival,” 9–11.

4 For the English translation of Hagen’s German libretto, see Rachel Scott, “Home-Made from A to Z: New Documents for the Early History of Händel Opera in America,” *Fontes Artis Musicae* 67, no. 2 (2020): 144, 151–54. For Hagen’s support of Josten’s Handel productions at Smith, see pp. 154–60.

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### “LET’S IMITATE HER NOTES ABOVE”: RECOMPOSING AN AIR FROM ALEXANDER’S FEAST

Donald Burrows

Many years ago, and happily in tandem with a performance that I conducted, I prepared my first music edition of a major work by Handel: *Alexander’s Feast*, soon afterwards published in the Novello Handel Edition.<sup>1</sup> This of course required investigation of the musical sources to establish details of the work’s presentation by Handel in successive seasons, in order to reconstruct the performance history under the composer. *Alexander’s Feast* marked an important stage in the transition of Handel’s career from Italian opera to English oratorio-style works. It was his first venture with a substantial text by a recognized English literary figure. John Dryden’s Cecilian Ode from 1697, originally set by Jeremiah Clarke, was re-arranged for Handel by Newburgh Hamilton through “a plain Division of it into *Airs*, *Recitatives*, or *Chorus’s*.”<sup>2</sup> The Ode was in two Parts: for the first performances in 1736, Handel, recognizing that the London theater-goer might expect a more extensive evening, supplemented the Ode with two concertos and, before Part Two, the substantial Italian cantata *Cecilia, volgi un sguardo*. Hamilton also supplied the text for an “Additional Chorus” at the end: “Your voices tune” / “Let’s imitate her notes above,” derived from his own 1720 Cecilian Ode, *The Power of Music*.

The prompt for the composition of *Alexander’s Feast* towards the end of 1735 may have been almost accidental: Handel had probably planned an opera season at Covent Garden, but he had insufficient leading singers until Conti and Negri were available the following April. *Alexander’s Feast*, however, seems to have gone down well with the audience to open Handel’s season in February 1736, and he repeated it in 1737 as part of the program of his next Covent Garden season. Next, with a series beginning on St. Cecilia’s Day in November 1739 at Lincoln’s Inn Fields Theatre, he solved the “Two-Part”

1 Novello Publishing Limited, 1982. My editorial responsibilities included the keyboard reduction for the vocal score and continuo realizations throughout, as well as score and parts.

2 Hamilton’s Preface to the wordbook for the 1736 performances.

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possible for Smith College to support the production of two more Handel operas: *Xerxes* in 1928 and *Rodelinda* in 1931. For each of these, too, Josten used materials provided by Hagen, including English translations of his libretti.

It might seem, then, that Josten was merely following in Hagen's footsteps. But the relationship between the Göttingen and Northampton productions is not that simple. Let me start with Oskar Hagen. The bold changes that Hagen made to his four Handel operas are well known: very freely translating the libretti into German and cutting, adding, and re-orchestrating the scores. Above all, Hagen was trying to take the operas out of their eighteenth-century context and remake them into something more contemporary. It's worth seeing in some detail just how and why he did that.

To take a single example: near the end of act I, Cleopatra sings a *da capo* aria, "Tu la mia stella sei," immediately after having seduced Caesar into falling in love with her—thereby cementing her plan to gain for herself the crown of Egypt. In the A section of the aria, as Handel set the Italian words, Cleopatra rejoices in her triumph and revels in the power she now wields, singing these words (translated into English): "You are my star, my lovely hope, and you bring me great joy by making my dreams come true." But then, in the ambiguously worded B section, Cleopatra wonders, for the first time, whether she might use Caesar to achieve not just her political goals but her romantic ones as well (though these words could also mean that she has employed love as a tool to manipulate Caesar): "The steadfast constancy of this heart, and how much power love can wield, will soon be seen." In the *da capo* that follows, of course, Cleopatra reverts to her initial thoughts, reveling in her triumph.

Hagen treated this aria differently. In his German version of the A section, he merely intensified Cleopatra's triumphant tone with the stage direction, "In wilde Freude" (in wild joy). But in the B section, he abandoned the subtle ambiguity of the Italian words. Instead, he made Cleopatra realize, quite suddenly, that she herself has fallen in love with Caesar—and no longer feels any ambition for power. She sings (in an English translation of Hagen's German words): "What unknown longing awakens in my soul? . . . I sought a crown / And found . . . a loving heart! Yes . . . Caesar's loving heart! How sweetly it moves my soul, this deep, pure longing for true, great love—for Caesar's noble heart!"

Hagen's new wording was reinforced by several changes he made to the music. For Handel, the B section offered only a modest contrast in tone to the A section. But for Hagen, as indicated in his stage directions, the tone of the B section is markedly different: "In sudden deep reflection, with a completely different tone." In the entire section, the tempo is slower and the dynamics softer.

Taken together, though, Hagen's changes created a new problem for him: namely, what to do with the *da capo*. After all, Cleopatra has renounced her political ambitions in the B section—so it would be simply impossible for her to return to gloating over her political triumph. Hagen solved this problem in two ways: first, by radically abbreviating the *da capo* (only 17 measures, down from 65); and, more importantly, by giving Cleopatra new words to sing: "Nun jauchz ich hell vor Glück!" (Now I'm shouting for joy!), with a flamboyant seven-measure melisma on "jauchz." Words of delight, to be sure—but those words now refer to Cleopatra's newfound love, not her political triumph. All in all, Hagen's changes transformed the Cleopatra of act I from an ambitious and manipulative woman of the eighteenth century to a sentimental woman of the nineteenth century.

Moreover, Hagen was trying not only to "modernize" Handel's operas but also to "Germanize" them. Most obviously, of course, he translated the libretti into German. For that matter, he did not even call them *operas*; instead, each was now a *Musikdrama*, a term that was unmistakably Wagnerian. In fact, Hagen was thinking a lot about German culture at this time—and not only about its music. He was, after all, an art historian by trade—a specialist in Italian Baroque painting. But in 1920, the same year he staged his first Handel opera, Hagen published three books about Baroque German art. One of them was titled *Deutsches Sehen* (translatable as "The German Way of Seeing"); there, Hagen argued that art is ineluctably shaped by an artist's national identity—by a "psychological attitude that is 'in his blood.'" "German music," Hagen wrote, "is unmistakably German . . . [so] German that when you listen to a Handel oratorio, a Mozart symphony or a Schubert song, you would never think that it could . . . have been written by an Italian." But many Germans were undergoing a crisis of faith after their defeat in the war, and Hagen described that crisis in apocalyptic language: "[A] despairing people," he wrote, "do not deserve to live. It is a duty, therefore, to dismiss the crazy notion that the sky has fallen down on our people and buried the German name forever. First, faith in the nation's own destiny must be restored."<sup>5</sup> And the way to do that was clear: regeneration through art. (Wagner had of course made that same point seventy years earlier.) Here, then, was the context in which Hagen launched the "Händel Renaissance."

All that was foreign to Werner Josten. He was not interested in "Germanizing" Handel—nor did he think of Handel primarily as a "German" composer. For that matter, he was not even interested in German music as "German" music. His background helps explain why. The son of a banker, Josten received his basic musical education in Munich, from a student of Engelbert Humperdinck. But then he left Germany to study composition in Geneva and Paris. It was in Paris that he got his first conducting job, and he remained there until the outbreak of World War I. The earliest of his compositions that I am aware of was printed in Paris in 1914; it was a setting of three songs to poems of Paul Verlaine. It was in Paris, too, that Josten met the American woman, Margaret Fatman, who would become his wife (both were living there from 1912 to 1914). They married in 1920, in New York, soon after arriving there from France.<sup>6</sup>

Josten's wife, too, was a professional musician, a singer who had also trained in Paris until the outbreak of the War. (In the early 1920s, she sang for two seasons at the Metropolitan Opera.) Both Josten and his wife had become professional musicians against the wishes of their parents. Both came from banking families with German roots. Hers was a very prominent American Jewish family: the Lehman Brothers banking dynasty. (She was the niece of a Senator from New York and the sister-in-law of Franklin Roosevelt's Secretary of the Treasury.<sup>7</sup>) Both of them were in every sense "cosmopolitan."

Thus, even though Werner Josten used Hagen's German versions of the Handel operas, it is clear that he did not do so for Hagen's reasons. So why, then, did he stage those Handel operas at all? I believe he did it because, for him,

5 Oskar Hagen, *Deutsches Sehen* (München: R. Piper, 1920), 1; *Deutsches Sehen; Gestaltungsfragen der deutschen Kunst*, 2nd ed. (München: R. Piper, 1923), 4, 6.

6 [Julius Seelye Bixler], *Werner Josten, 1885–1963: A Summary of His Compositions with Press Reviews* (New York: Marchbanks Press, 1964); John Tasker Howard, *Our Contemporary Composers: American Music in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1941), 176–78; See also Lester D. Brothers, "Josten, Werner (Erich)," *Grove Music Online*, January 20, 2001, <https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.14503>.

7 "Margaret Josten, a Niece of Lehman" (obituary), *The New York Times*, August 25, 1976.

Handel's operas represented neither "German music" nor "modern music"; rather, they represented "early music." The most important piece of evidence supporting this point is that Josten had presented his first American premiere of a Baroque opera back in 1926—a year before he staged *Julius Caesar*. And that opera was not by Handel—not even by a German; it was Monteverdi's *L'Incoronazione di Poppea*. (*Julius Caesar* was thus Josten's second American premiere.) And in 1928, a year after *Julius Caesar*, Josten staged a double bill: Handel's *Xerxes* paired with another Monteverdi work, *Il Combattimento di Tancredi e Clorinda*. 1929 brought a whole series of productions: first, a repeat of *Tancredi*, and then, on a different evening, another pairing: Monteverdi's *L'Orfeo* and Handel's 1710 cantata *Apollo e Dafne* (sung in Italian). Earlier that same year, *Tancredi* was performed at the Metropolitan Opera in New York, paired with Stravinsky's *Les Noces*. Finally, after taking a sabbatical in 1930, in 1931 Josten staged Handel's *Rodelinda* (which had been Oskar Hagen's first offering at Göttingen).<sup>8</sup>

But that raises a further question: What prompted Josten to open his series of Baroque premieres with *L'Incoronazione di Poppea*? The answer has to do with Josten's old Paris connections—and specifically with Vincent d'Indy. Back in 1905, d'Indy had led his Schola Cantorum in a concert version of *Poppea*—and he had published the score.<sup>9</sup> Then, in 1913, he staged the opera in Paris. Werner Josten was living in Paris at the time, and he would surely have encountered d'Indy's work there (he may even have studied with d'Indy). What makes the connection all but certain is that in 1926 d'Indy himself sent Josten the instrumental parts for *Poppea*—still in manuscript (just as Oskar Hagen would do a year later with *his* Handel materials).<sup>10</sup>

Which brings me, finally, to Josten's treatment of Hagen's three Handel operas. First, even though he was using Hagen's manuscript scores, Josten took some liberties with the music. In *Rodelinda*, for example, he removed several of Hagen's arias and replaced them with arias from Chrysander's edition. More importantly, in both *Rodelinda* and *Julius Caesar*, Josten interpolated a *Divertissement* that was not even written by Handel, but rather—once again—by a Frenchman, Jean-Philippe Rameau.<sup>11</sup> Finally, Josten was interested in Handel's operas as *early* music, not as *German* music. Here's one bit of evidence: in the *secco* recitatives in all three of his Handel operas, Josten employed a kind of prepared piano that (in the words of a reviewer) was "so doctored as to yield the peculiar *twing* of the harpsichord."<sup>12</sup> It's hard to imagine Oskar Hagen doing any such thing.

Indeed, I would speculate that for Josten, "early music" itself amounted to a version of what I'll call *exotic* music. Josten's best-known composition was a modernist orchestral piece titled *Jungle*. (Written in 1927—the same year as his production of *Julius Caesar*—it was premiered by Serge Koussevitzky, with the Boston Symphony.) *Jungle* was inspired by a fantasy painting by the Primitivist French artist Henri Rousseau, with the title *Exotic Landscape*.<sup>13</sup> According to Josten himself, "the music tries to portray the emotions and sensations which assail a white man entering the jungle, with its lures, terrors, primitive love and

ferocious death."<sup>14</sup> Scored for large orchestra, it also called for tam-tams, castanets, slap stick, African drums, and, at its climax, a lion's roar—created by drawing a rosined cord through a drumhead.

Clearly, Hagen and Josten were using Handel for different purposes. And neither of them cared—or had any reason to care—about fidelity to Handel's own intentions: the principle of *Werktreue*.<sup>15</sup> But that need not matter. Taken on their own terms (and viewed historically), their divergent projects reveal something about the differing impulses that generated an interest in early music in the early twentieth century.

14 [Bixler], *Werner Josten*, 21.

15 The relationship between Hagen's changes and Handel's original intentions has recently been discussed, from a different angle, in Lawrence Zazzo, "Handel, Hagen, and *Werktreue*: In Search of an Historically-Informed Approach to Musical Alterations in Handel Opera Revivals," *Händel-Jahrbuch* 69 (2023): 53–67. Zazzo shows in detail how Handel himself—for practical reasons—kept revising his own operas as they went through different productions. He proposes several "rules of thumb" to show how future revivals of Handel's operas can remain "historically informed" even while making changes to his music.

## CALL FOR PAPERS: INTERNATIONAL SCHOLARLY CONFERENCE AT THE HANDEL FESTIVAL IN HALLE (SAALE)

June 8–9, 2026

The Scholarly Conference held within the framework of the Handel Festival in Halle on June 8 and 9, 2026, invites researchers from around the world to present their current work on George Frideric Handel and his artistic and social milieu.

Particularly welcome are contributions addressing two areas of special significance for the Handel Year 2026. The first concerns the theme of masculinity constructions in Handel's operas and oratorios, as reflected in the festival motto "Men: Heroes–Rulers–Heartbreakers." In Handel's works, notions of masculinity are notably complex: "The stereotypical strong man offers little dramaturgical appeal—Handel and his librettists knew this well. Their male characters are complex, full of inner conflict, fragility, and tension" (Florian Amort).

The second focus arises from the 200th anniversary of the birth of Friedrich Chrysander (1826–1901), which offers an occasion to reconsider the importance and legacy of this most influential Handel scholar of the 19th century.

We invite proposals for 25-minute papers. Please submit your subject proposal and abstract by **January 31, 2026**. Travel and accommodation expenses for the conference days will be covered.

Organizers: Georg-Friedrich-Händel-Gesellschaft e.V., Internationale Vereinigung; Martin-Luther-Universität Halle-Wittenberg, Institut für Musik, Medien- und Sprechwissenschaften, Abteilung Musikwissenschaft; Stiftung Händel-Haus Halle.

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8 *Baroque Opera at Smith College, 1926–1931* (New York, 1966). For 1926 productions, see pp. 1–13; 1927: 15–38; 1928: 39–81; 1929: 83–141; and 1931: 143–67. This volume consists of photocopies of Josten's own scrapbook.

9 Claudio Monteverdi, *Le Couronnement de Poppée: Sélection . . . de la Schola Cantorum, le 24 février 1905*, ed. Vincent d'Indy (Paris: Bureau d'Édition de la Schola Cantorum, 1908).

10 "Smith Dedicates New Hall with Monteverdi Opera," *Musical America*, May 8, 1926, reprinted in *Baroque Opera at Smith College*, 12–13.

11 See printed program for the 1927 production of *Julius Caesar* in *Baroque Opera at Smith College*, 18.

12 Francis Regal, "Handel's Julius Caesar Given at Northampton," *Springfield Republican*, May 15, 1927, reprinted in *Baroque Opera at Smith College*, 22.

13 Rousseau, *Exotic Landscape* (1908), <https://www.henrirousseau.net/exotic-landscape.jsp>. See also Brothers, "Josten, Werner."



problem by complementing *Alexander's Feast* with a one-act setting of another of Dryden's Cecilian Odes, "From harmony, from heav'nly Harmony." In the meantime a significant development had been the publication of the complete full score of Handel's *Alexander's Feast* by John Walsh: proposals were advertised in May 1737 and delivery in March 1738.<sup>3</sup> This, with the subsequent publication of *Acis and Galatea*, provided the only complete scores of Handel's major English theater works that were available during his lifetime: their relatively limited demands in terms of length, number of soloists and scoring, while somewhat problematic for Handel's theater program, had the result that these works were the first ones of their type to be taken up by other performers.<sup>4</sup>

Handel's next revival of *Alexander's Feast* was at Dublin in February 1742, in rather unusual circumstances. Beginning in December 1741, he had given a six-concert series of oratorio performances at the Fishamble Street music room with soloists (as described by Charles Jennens) "from the Dublin [Cathedral] choirs" to join the soprano Christina Avolio, whom he had brought with him from London. He planned a second six-concert subscription, but the Cathedral authorities apparently withdrew co-operation over the participation of their singers, and Handel had to recruit instead two new soloists from the Dublin theaters: the contralto Susanna Cibber and the tenor Calloghan McCarty. By re-allocating the former bass-voice music, Handel was able to open this second series with *Alexander's Feast* on February 17, 1742, giving two performances. In the following years the work did not feature in Handel's London theater programs for nearly a decade, eventually returning in 1751, 1753, and 1755, and complemented by a new single-act work, *The Choice of Hercules*.

When I prepared my edition of *Alexander's Feast*, I presented performers with two alternative schemes, based on Handel's performances from the 1730s and 1750s. Although not included there, I also followed up the history of Handel's Dublin performances from the sources. There is a good guide from the wordbook published in 1742, which shows that the Dryden/Hamilton work in two Parts was followed by a brief "Part III" based on Hamilton's text as follows:

AIR. *Your Voices tune, and raise them high; ...*  
 CHORUS. *Your Voices tune, and raise them high; ...*  
 DUET. *Let's imitate her Notes above; ...*  
 CHORUS. *Let's imitate her Notes above; ...*  
 FINIS.

Paper types in Handel's autograph of *Alexander's Feast* show that the duet, for Avolio and Cibber, was composed in Dublin, to lead into the pre-existing chorus; the chorus for "Your voices tune" also came from 1736 material, and the first bar of this in the performing score has a penciled note-pitch for the end of the preceding air, which shows that it had been sung by Cibber. The score for the air "Your voices tune" was, however, removed and discarded from the performing score; Handel's autograph is lost and the movement is not preserved in any secondary copies. However, the fortunate survival of an original performers' part-book (labeled "Harpsichord Pasqualino" on the cover), now in the library at the Royal College of Music, provides an orchestral bass-line for the movement.<sup>5</sup> For the revivals in the 1750s, the page with this music was covered over

with a blank sheet of paper, as the air was no longer included, but in the course of preparing my edition, I was able to make a transcription of the complete bass line, a section of which was printed in an article that I contributed to *The Musical Times*.<sup>6</sup> Someone had previously tried to have access to the music in the part-book, but I was pleased that I was able to transcribe the complete movement without further tears to the page. I left a copy of my pencil transcription with the College's librarian, Watkins Shaw.

As I did not have a source for the complete score of this air, I was not able to include the "Dublin version" of *Alexander's Feast* in my edition, and I thought no further about the matter.<sup>7</sup> Until, that is, some four decades later, when I was contacted in autumn 2024 by Peter Whelan, who was preparing for performances of *Alexander's Feast* and had discovered my transcription at the Royal College. The project now was to reconstruct the Dublin version, which would be performed in August 2025 at Kilkenny, Dublin, Snape, and in the London Promenade Concert series at the Royal Albert Hall. From the wordbook and from the information on the performing score (singers' names, pencil annotations to the music) such reconstruction was possible with redistribution to soprano, alto, and tenor soloists, apart from the matter of Cibber's air at the opening of Part Three, for which we had just the text and the bass part.

The only way forward, therefore, was to recompose the air from what was available. The general structure of the air is clear, with the entry of the second clause "Music to heaven and her we owe" in the relative minor at bar 28; the mood is set by Handel's "Larghetto e pomposo," and the bass part indicates the general style for the upper strings. Melodic relationships to other movements by Handel provided relatively few useful hints. A particularly curious feature is the wide-ranging and broken-up character of the bass part in bars 11–12, presumably representing the "echoes from the vaulted sky," which had a precursor in Ruggiero's "Qual portento" (*Alcina*). Peter Whelan, John Roberts, and I made independent drafts to complete the composition of the air, as contributions to ideas for the solo and orchestral parts: the final form was, of course, in Peter's hands, requiring completion in time for the performances. I was pleased with the result as I heard it at Dublin Castle on August 15, 2025, performed by Hugh Cutting and the Irish Baroque Orchestra. There, *Alexander's Feast* worked well with seven singers; the size and acoustic of the Castle's Hibernia Conference Hall were probably comparable to the former Fishamble Street music room a few hundred yards away. The rest of the world was able to judge the "Dublin *Alexander's Feast*," and our reconstruction of "Your voices tune," from the BBC broadcast of the Promenade Concert (with larger forces) at the Royal Albert Hall a fortnight later.

6 Donald Burrows, "Handel and *Alexander's Feast*," *The Musical Times* 123, no. 1670 (1982): 252–55. The music example on p. 254 incorrectly omits a repeated bar at 14–15.

7 My edition does, however, include the "Dubourg" version of "Softly sweet, in Lydian measures" (17b) which was composed in Dublin, because Handel also returned to it in the 1750s.

## HANDEL AUTOGRAPHS AT THE BRITISH LIBRARY

Some digitized manuscripts are now back up online. For the current list of items, see <https://www.bl.uk/collection/digitised-manuscripts-archives>.

3 The score was ready to be delivered to subscribers on March 7, the accompanying "print" of Handel on April 22: see the entries under those dates in Donald Burrows, Helen Coffey, John Greenacombe, and Anthony Hicks, eds., *George Frideric Handel: Collected Documents: Volume 3, 1734–1742* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019).

4 The full scoring of *Alexander's Feast* however required the inclusion of French horns.

5 Royal College of Music, London, MS 900.

## FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK

The AHS Board of Directors is pleased to announce that beginning in the New Year, Mark Risinger will be the society's new representative to the planning committee for Encounters with 18<sup>th</sup>-Century Music, the online forum the AHS cosponsors with the American Bach Society, the Society for Eighteenth-Century Music, the Mozart Society of America, and the Haydn Society of North America. He will be taking over from Wendy Heller who completes three years of outstanding service in that capacity. At its November meeting the Board also accepted the resignation of Alison DeSimone, who has decided to step down from the Board in order to concentrate on her duties as the newly elected President of the Society for Eighteenth-Century Music. She will continue to be an active member of AHS, and we look forward to even closer relations with our sister society.

AHS membership renewals for next year will be due in January 2026. All members with a membership profile should

### CALL FOR PROPOSALS: BIENNIAL MEETING OF THE AMERICAN BACH SOCIETY

October 1–4, 2026  
“Celebrating Bach”

The 2026 American Bach Society (ABS) meeting will take place at Baldwin Wallace University (BW) in Berea, Ohio. BW is home to the first collegiate Bach Festival in the United States, the Riemenschneider Bach Institute (RBI), and *BACH: The Journal of the Riemenschneider Bach Institute*. In recognition of BW's long history of promoting Bach, the meeting will be centered around the idea of “celebrating Bach.” The ABS invites individual paper proposals (30 minutes) that critically investigate the past, present, and future of the many ways in which we celebrate Bach. Papers on all aspects of Bach research are welcome; preference will be given to those related to the conference theme. Topics related to this theme could include but are not limited to:

- *Bach festivals, societies, museums, competitions, or websites*
- *Visual celebrations of Bach (monuments, postage stamps, films, etc.)*
- *Bach anniversaries*
- *Private and public collections of Bach's works*
- *Publications, recording projects, or documentaries highlighting Bach*
- *Compositions inspired by Bach*
- *Bach celebrated in popular culture*
- *Bach as part of cultural or political celebrations*
- *The future of Bach celebrations and studies in a changing world*

Please send your proposal as an abstract of up to 300 words emphasizing the results of research as a Word document [last name\_first name.docx] to **vicepresident@americanbachsociety.org** by **January 15, 2026**. Please include your name, institutional affiliation or city of residence, and email address, and indicate any audio, visual, or other needs for the presentation. Applicants will be notified of the program committee's decision by March 1, 2026. Note that all papers will be given in-person; therefore, the American Bach Society will offer subsidies for travel for papers accepted from scholars without institutional support.

receive reminders via email. The most convenient way to renew is online through the AHS website. Those who still wish to pay by check may continue to do so by using the Membership Form found in every issue of the Newsletter or downloadable from the website. Checks and completed forms should be sent to the AHS Treasurer, Marjorie Pomeroy Kelly. Overseas members may pay their AHS membership dues either online through the AHS website using a credit card or through their home society using local currency as in the past.

The deadline for paying for membership in the Händel Gesellschaft and either or both other German Handel societies through the AHS will continue to be May 15 rather than June 1. Unfortunately, because of new EU regulations and President Trump's increased tariffs on German products, our colleagues in Halle found it impossible to ship physical copies of this year's *Jahrbuch* at a reasonable cost to the Händel Gesellschaft coupled with the likelihood of an additional required payment on delivery by our members. They have, however, provided AHS members with an electronic copy of the 2025 volume. It is not known how long this situation will continue.

The payment deadline for membership in The Friends of the Handel Institute remains June 1st. Payment options are as described above. The Friends have decided to abolish fees for registered students. Their Council of Management has also decided that in the future, unless AHS members have specified that they wish to receive the paper version of the *Newsletter*, they will receive only the online version.

This year has been full of conferences, performances, publications and recordings featuring Handel and his music, beginning with the highly successful AHS conference in Boston last February. As 2025 draws to a close, we can all look forward to enjoying and supporting similar endeavors in 2026.

— Graydon Beeks

### CALL FOR APPLICATIONS: THE J. MERRILL KNAPP RESEARCH FELLOWSHIP 2026

The Board of Directors of The American Handel Society invites applications for the J. Merrill Knapp Research Fellowship to support scholarly projects related to Handel and his world. One or more fellowships may be awarded in a calendar year up to a total of \$2,000. Requests for funding may include, but are not limited to, purchase of microfilms, travel for research, and production expenses for publications. This fellowship may be used on its own or to augment other grants or fellowships.

In awarding the Knapp Fellowship, preference will be given to graduate students, scholars in the early stages of their careers, and independent scholars with no source of institutional support. The deadline for applications is **March 1, 2026**. There is no proposal form. Each applicant should submit an outline of the project, a budget showing how and when the funds will be used, and a description of other funding for the same project applied for and/or received. In addition, applicants should have two letters of recommendation sent directly to the Knapp Fellowship Committee. Please email the proposal and letters of recommendation to **Irer E. Chávez Bárcenas** at **ichavezb@bowdoin.edu** with the subject line “Knapp Research Fellowship.”

Knapp Fellowship Committee: Mark Risinger, Erica Levenson, and Ireri E. Chávez Bárcenas (Chair). <https://www.americanhandelsociety.org/awards>

## RECENT PUBLICATIONS

*Händel-Jahrbuch* 71 (2025) select titles in English:

Agresta, Rosalba. "Between Salon and Concert Room: The Promotion of Handel's Music by Édouard Rodrigues in 19th-century Paris," 147–69.

Burrows, Donald. "Handel and France: The View from London," 65–84.

Chirico, Teresa. "French Theater and Music in Rome Before and During Handel's Stay in Rome," 233–49.

Degott, Pierre. "(Re)discovering Handel in Nineteenth-Century France: An Assessment of the Roles Played by Choron, Berlioz and Viardot," 119–34.

Howard, Luke. "Nationalist Implications in 19th-Century French Performances of Handel's *Messiah*," 135–46.

Jones, Andrew V. "Elizabeth Legh: An Anecdote, a 'Cantata,' and a Hypothesis," 299–316.

Liu, Yiyun. "Dreams and the Appropriateness of Music: Exploring French Influences in Handel's Covent Garden Debut," 281–96.

Newton-Jackson, Paul. "French Influence in the Mixed Metric Practices of George Frideric Handel," 185–201.

Lockwood, Joe. "*Music, Books and Theatre in Eighteenth-Century Exton: A Context for Handel's 'Comus'*." By Colin Timms." *Music and Letters*, gcaf170, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ml/gcaf170>.

McGeary, Thomas. "From Dramatic Opera to Italian Opera?: With A Reconsideration of John Eccles's

*Semele*." *A Handbook for Studies In 18th-Century English Music* 27 (2025): 1–27.

Smith, Ruth. "Congreve's *The Judgment of Paris*: A New Source and a New Reading." *Music and Letters*, gcaf073, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ml/gcaf073>.

## UPCOMING EVENTS

### Encounters with Eighteenth-Century Music "Genealogy of Eighteenth-Century Cadences"

Friday, March 20, 2026

4:00–5:30 pm EDT

<https://encounters.secm.org>

\*Registration is free but required

### International Scholarly Conference at Handel Festival Halle 2026

June 8–9, 2026

<https://www.haendel.de/en/scholarly-handel-conference>

### Handel Festival Halle 2026

"Men: Heroes–Rulers–Heartbreakers"

June 5–14, 2026

<https://haendelhaus.de/hfs/startseite>

## MESSAGE FROM THE EDITOR

Renew your membership for 2026 today! To renew online, go to <https://www.americanhandelsociety.org/join>, or renew by mail using the membership form on page 7 of this *Newsletter*. Go Green and opt to receive the *Newsletter* via email.

## American Handel Society

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# AMERICAN HANDEL SOCIETY — MEMBERSHIP FORM

Please mail the completed form and appropriate membership dues as instructed below:

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
 Address \_\_\_\_\_  
 City \_\_\_\_\_ State/Country \_\_\_\_\_ Postal code \_\_\_\_\_  
 E-mail address \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

I agree to have the following listed in the Directory of AHS Members (check as appropriate): ☐ Address ☐ Phone ☐ Email

Donors and members of Rinaldo, Cleopatra, Theodora, and Messiah Circles — I consent to publishing my name on the AHS newsletter and website:  
☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Anonymous

I would like my copy of the Newsletter delivered: ☐ electronically ☐ by mail

<b>Class of Membership</b> — Circle applicable cell(s) (for current calendar year, unless otherwise specified)	\$	£	€
Regular	40	30	35
Joint (one set of publications)	50	38	44
Student or Retired	20	15	18
Rinaldo Circle	75	55	66
Cleopatra Circle	125	95	110
Theodora Circle	250	190	220
Messiah Circle (Lifetime membership)	500	400	450
Subscriber (Institutions Only)	48	36	42
Donation – Travel Grant, Serwer Lecture, Knapp Fellowship, Traver Concert, ongoing activities (please specify intent)			
Friends of the Handel Institute, London*			
Regular	30	20	-
Student	15	10	-
Membership in the Georg-Friedrich-Händel-Gesellschaft*			
Regular	45	-	40
Student*	20	-	15
Dual Membership – Georg-Friedrich-Händel-Gesellschaft / Göttinger-Händel-Gesellschaft*†			
Regular	75	-	65
Regular (with <i>Göttinger Händel Beiträge</i> )	115	-	95
Student	27	-	21
Student (with <i>Göttinger Händel Beiträge</i> )	56	-	46
Dual Membership – Georg-Friedrich-Händel-Gesellschaft / Händel-Gesellschaft Karlsruhe*			
Regular	63	-	55
Student*	23	-	17.5
Triple Membership – Georg-Friedrich-Händel-Gesellschaft / Göttinger-Händel-Gesellschaft / Händel-Gesellschaft Karlsruhe			
Regular	93	-	80
Regular (with <i>Göttinger Händel Beiträge</i> )	125	-	105
Student	30	-	24
Student (with <i>Göttinger Händel Beiträge</i> )	60	-	48.5
TOTAL REMITTANCE			

\* This organization does not have a reduced rate for retirees.

† This organization has additional categories of Regular Membership that require a higher membership fee but provide additional benefits (see its website). Arrangements for these other categories may be made directly with Mrs. Pomeroy Kelly (see below).

Those paying in dollars should make their checks payable to AMERICAN HANDEL SOCIETY and mail them to Marjorie Pomeroy Kelly, Treasurer, AMERICAN HANDEL SOCIETY, 49 Christopher Hollow Road, Sandwich, MA 02563. Those wishing to pay in Euros should remit to Stephan Blaut, Treasurer, Georg-Friedrich-Händel-Gesellschaft, Gr. Nikolaistrasse 5, 06108 Halle (Saale), Federal Republic of Germany, and indicate that the payment is for the account of the AHS. Friends of the Handel Institute, London may also pay their AHS dues in sterling by making their checks payable to THE HANDEL INSTITUTE and mailing them to Ms. Sylvia Levi, Hon. Treasurer, The Handel Institute, 254A Kew Road, Richmond TW9 3EG, United Kingdom, with the appropriate annotation. Please do not send checks in Euros or sterling directly to the AHS as we are no longer able to process them.

Online payment options are available at <https://www.americanhandelsociety.org/join/>

**Payments in dollars for GFH or HI memberships must be received before May 15.**

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## American Handel Society

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