Abstracts

Amanda Babington (Manchester, UK): “Sketches for Messiah: pre-autograph activity”

Handel is well known for his lack of pre-compositional sketches. However, the few sketches that exist for Messiah are of interest not only for what they reveal of his pre-autograph compositional habits but also for how they fit into his compositional process as a whole. For the purposes of this paper, sketches are characterized by their existence on paper outside the autograph score, and reasons for this distinction will be made clear in the second half of the paper. The existing Messiah sketches, though few in number, are varied in appearance, suggesting that their function may have been equally varied. The nine sketches are now bound in two manuscripts, Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge Mss 260 and 263, the contents and dates of which differ greatly. Five sketches relate to the ‘Amen’ chorus, three to ‘Let all the angels’, and one is for ‘He was despised’. However, not all of the sketches were composed specifically for Messiah and the first half of this paper explores the relationship between the sketches’ origin and function, much of which is exposed through a detailed study of the two Fitzwilliam manuscripts. Some surprising results provide a link to Handel’s use of pre-existent material in Messiah and this leads to the second half of the paper, which explores the impact of these findings on our understanding of the composer’s pre-compositional process in Messiah.

Michael Burden (University of Oxford): “When Giulio Cesare was not ‘Handel’s’ Giulio Cesare: The opera on the London stage in 1787”

It is well known that the performances of Giulio Cesare that took place at the King’s Theatre in March 1787 were of a version of the opera that would have surprised the composer. Crammed with music from his other works, the libretto presents the story supported by a medley of Handel’s tunes. The libretto offers us the following rationale: ‘The original, however, offering a great number of incongruities, both in the language and the conduct, several material alterations have been thought absolutely necessary, to give the piece a dramatic consistency, and to suit it to the refinement of a modern audience’.

This passage has been quoted in modern scholarship, but authors move swiftly on to higher things, seemingly embarrassed at such use of Handel’s music. But it is easy today to pour scorn on such a staging, and to consider this version as a ‘revival’, but to do the former would be a mistake, and to do the latter would be ahistorical.

But a hint from Richard Mount-Edgecumbe suggests that all might not be as it appears:

In order to induce the king to visit the theatre called has own but which he seldom frequented, the Giulio Cesare of Handel was revived, or rather a medley from his Italian works, of little of the original was retained and many of his most favourite songs from other operas were introduced, Verdi prati, Dove sei, Rendiserenoi ciglio, and others. This ancient music was particularly suited to Rubinelli and familiar to Mara, both of whom sang it incomparably well.
Their Majesties did, indeed, command a performance of the opera, that given on 17 March 1787, and Mount-Edgcumbe’s mention of ‘ancient music’ draws our attention to the fact that the music used in the piece was not (noticeably) altered.

So what were the ‘incongruities’ that were removed by the ‘material alterations’? What was the ‘dramatic consistency’ required by the ‘refinement of a modern audience’? To answer these questions, this paper revisits the 1787 version of Handel’s Giulio Cesare, and places it in the context of both the London operas of the 1780s and on the contemporary artistic changes that were taking place at the King’s Theatre.

**Geoffrey Burgess** (Eastman School of Music): “Behind Handel’s Terpsichorean Muse: Prévost, Sallé and the Setting of Dance to Poetry”

Handel’s collaboration with the famous French dancer Marie Sallé in Rinaldo, Alcina, Ariodante and the 1734 revival of il pastor fido has attracted the interest of modern dance and music scholars. Sallé’s presence on the London stage was won through her impeccable technique, training in the French school — notably under Françoise Prévost — and her ability to match choreography to the dramatic situation. One of the dancer’s best-known demonstration pieces Les caractères de la danse, which she performed in both Paris and London from 1725, gives important clues into the choreographic style that lay behind the dance in Handel’s London productions. This telescoped dance suite representing the diverse characters of the standard dance forms of the day, was composed around 1715 by Jean-Féry Rebel for Prévost, who held exclusive rights to its performance up to the mid 1720s. A poetic parody of Rebel’s music published anonymously in the Mercure de France in 1721 has traditionally been interpreted as an indicator of a strong pantomimic component in Prévost’s and Sallé’s choreographies. Bringing fresh evidence on the identity of the poet and the parody’s intended audience and function, this paper argues that the poetic narrative pertains not so much to Prévost’s dance but to the dancer herself, and particularly scandalous rumors surrounding her private life. This extraordinary case study of the ‘transcription’ of dance characters into poetic form, not only sheds new light on the relationship between choreographic, musical and literary practices in Handel’s day, but addresses the crucial question of the place of pantomime in early 18th-century theatrical choreographies.

**Donald Burrows** (The Open University, Milton Keynes, UK): “Milton from the Lego box: Handel’s performing versions of L’Allegro & Il Penseroso”

The text of James Harris’s arrangement of John Milton’s poems L’Allegro and Il Penseroso as a libretto intended for Handel, dated 5 January 1739/40, now found in the Malmesbury papers at Hampshire Record Office, was first published in 2002. It is complemented by letters between Harris and Charles Jennens that illuminate the process by which Harris’s text was re-shaped into the version that Handel composed in January-February 1740, and first performed on 27 February as L’Allegro, il Penseroso ed il Moderato.
The work saw several different performing versions in Handel’s subsequent revivals. As usual, many changes were stimulated by variations in the successive casts of solo singers. However, there were other factors as well: new movements drew on additional lines from Milton’s poems, and the sequence of movements in Part Two was radically re-shaped when Handel decided to drop Jennens’s original Part Three (Il Moderato).

The evidence for the performing versions of Handel’s revivals is incomplete in some details, but the general patterns can be reconstructed from his autographs, his performing score and the printed word-books. (A surviving copy of the word-book for the 1743 revival has only recently been located.) This paper will review the choices that Handel made in his successive performances, with particular reference to the selection and sequence of Milton’s texts.

**Evan Cortens** (Cornell University): “The Legacy of the Hamburg Opera in the Cantatas of Christoph Graupner”

George Frideric Handel's contemporary Christoph Graupner (1683–1760) has received comparatively little consideration in the musicological literature. Born in rural Saxony, Graupner studied at the Leipzig Thomaschule under Johann Kuhnau. In 1706 he moved to Hamburg to work at the Oper am Gänsemarkt where he made the acquaintance of Handel, who had worked there since 1703. While details of their relationship are lacking, Winton Dean and John Merrill Knapp suggest that Graupner may have directed Handel's *Daphne* (1708).

Yet both composers soon left Hamburg: Handel for Italy and Graupner for the landgraviate of Hessen-Darmstadt. Landgrave Ernst Ludwig, who heard Graupner when he visited Hamburg, hired him first as Vice-Kapellmeister in 1709, promoting him to Kapellmeister in 1711. While it was Graupner's operas that impressed the landgrave, he would write only a handful of them in Darmstadt, only one of which survives complete. On the other hand, he wrote over 1,400 sacred cantatas, evenly distributed over his fifty years as Kapellmeister.

In this paper, I will discuss selected Graupner cantatas in light of their relationship with the repertory of the Hamburg opera. Specifically, I will draw examples from two cantatas with texts by court poet G. C. Lehms, "Mein Herz schwimmt im Blut" and "Vergnügte Ruh, beliebte Seelenlust," familiar today because these same texts were set by J. S. Bach. I shall explore how the Italian style, so evident in Handel's only surviving Hamburg opera *Almira* (1704), can be found in these works. In Graupner's cantatas, a genre at the contested intersection of the theatrical and the theological, we see the fraught place of the cantata within the church.

**Joseph Darby** (Keene State College): “The Demographics of Subscription Concertos in Eighteenth-Century Britain: Handel and His Contemporaries”

Composers and publishers in eighteenth-century Britain used the subscription method of selling music to manage production costs, improve sales, and provide a reliable system of distribution. The subscription method was particularly useful in financing the high costs of publishing concertos -- which often appeared in weighty partbooks up to seven parts per concerto, and in
sets up to twelve concertos each. When a sufficient number of buyers allowed a proposed subscription to become published, a list of subscribers would be posted in the work’s first edition, often sewed into the partbook of a featured instrument.

Although the subscription method accounted for a fraction of total music sales in eighteenth-century Britain, the transactions recorded by subscription lists provide useful demographic information about buyers in the marketplace -- e.g., name, title, social class, gender, profession, and residence. This paper provides an analysis of roughly 5000 subscribers from thirty-two subscription concertos published in Britain between 1726 and 1797, with an emphasis on G.F. Handel’s Twelve Grand Concertos (publ. 1740). The data for this study were compiled via first-hand examination of subscription lists and newspaper advertisements at libraries and archives in London, Newcastle, New York, and Washington, D.C.

Luca Della Libera (Conservatorio di Musica di Frosinone / Università di Roma Tor Vergata): “Renaissance roots and Baroque affetti in the sacred music of Alessandro Scarlatti”

Alessandro Scarlatti’s sacred music, might, at first glance, be divisible into two basic groupings: those works in the concertato medium, and those in a more conservative vein, scored only for voices or voices and continuo. The purpose of this paper is to focus on this second category, and the very particular style of two scores that have not yet been studied but are now available in modern edition. The first work, a Salve Regina composed in Rome in February 1703. This piece, for four voices (SATB), without organ or basso continuo, according to RISM, is one of the few Salve Regina settings of that period with this scoring. It is composed, on the one hand, according to Renaissance models, and includes a cantus firmus drawn from the Gregorian antiphon. But, on the other hand, Scarlatti also uses the Baroque topos of lamento (the descending tetrachord bass) and a harmonic language with a strong “theatrical” expression, including chromatic passages for significant phrases of text, such as “In hac lacrimarum valle” and “Suspiramus gementes et flentes.”

The second work is the Missa defunctorum (1717), for SATB voices and basso continuo. This piece, which is far more contrapuntally involved, is very different from all the Italian Requiemsettings of that period. Scarlatti has drawn some solutions from the model of the “cyclic mass” --- hence the presence of the same musical material in different sections of his Missa. But the topos of lamento is also employed systematically, for such phrases as “Dona eis, Domine,” “Dona eis requiem,” “Dona eis pacem,” and “Lacrimosa.” Scarlatti uses a plethora of Baroque rhetorical figures of many kinds, repetition, wide intervallic leaps, and “descriptive” musical passages for texts such as “Et de profundo lacu” and “Ne cadant in obscurum.” Like the Salve Regina, the Missa defunctorum nevertheless has a very “modern” harmonic language, with passionate suspensions and daring seventh and ninth chords.

This paper will also explain the physical history of these manuscripts, because they have some connection to Handel and his entourage. The Salve Regina, now preserved in the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge, probably belonged to the library of Cardinal Ottoboni that was acquired by Handel’s agents in Rome. The Missa defunctorum, now preserved in the Biblioteca Donizetti in Bergamo, belonged to the English organist John Stanley.

The purpose of this paper will be to explore thematic relationships, rhythmic expansions and possible meanings in a purely instrumental work by Handel that may have been performed between the acts of one or more of his theatrical works. The paper will concern itself not only with Handel’s musical style, but also with notational practices that were available to him and their possible implications. Handel’s Grand Concerto in G Minor, Op. 6, no. 6 is somewhat unusual in that the composer presents the listener with a set of musical figures that link its movements, both affectively and thematically. The resulting relationships are particularly interesting to consider because the third movement happens to be a musette – unique within Op. 6 – that evokes pastoral imagery through its use of drones, phrase expansions and metrical reinterpretations. In the musette, for instance, we find a subtle interplay between musical figures and expansions of phrases into larger hypermetrical units that seem to evoke meaning even though there are no words. In discussing these above-mentioned features I will attempt to show that Handel uses them to enrich the concerto’s musical content, and how an aural recognition of them might enhance our experiences and performances of the work.

Matthew Gardner (Ruprecht-Karls-Universität, Heidelberg): “An English Singer of Italian Opera: Handel and Anastasia Robinson”

Anastasia Robinson (1692–1755) holds a unique position as the only female English soprano (later contralto) to perform significant roles in Handel’s Italian operas. Following her education with William Croft and Pietro Giuseppe Sandoni her first appearance in a Handel opera was in the 1714–15 revivals of Rinaldo, and in the same season she performed the role of Oriana, which Handel composed for her, in Amadigi di Gaula. Following revivals of Amadigi and Rinaldo, various engagements in other non-Handel operas and pasticcios, and a brief stint at Drury Lane in 1719–20, she was engaged by the Royal Academy of Music on its foundation in 1719 and went on to sing in the first six of Handel’s operas for the Academy, including Radamisto (1720), Il Floridante (1721), Flavio (1723) and Giulio Cesare (1724), often performing a major role. Additionally she sang in works by the other Academy composers, Attilio Ottavio Ariosti and Giovanni Bononcini, and was promoted to prima donna in Bononcini’s Griselda in the 1721–2 season.

This paper explores the development of Robinson’s career from her first role in a Handel opera in the 1714/15 revival of Rinaldo to her last in Giulio Cesare (1724), making reference to her working relationship with Handel and her influence over his creative process, as well as placing her in the context of the star culture which surrounded the Royal Academy of Music.

Ellen T. Harris (MIT): “Taking the oaths: The directors of the Royal Academy of Music swear allegiance to King and Country”
In reading through the voluminous correspondence of John Percival, later 1st Earl Egmont, at the British Library, one of my greatest surprises was the discovery that the directors of the Royal Academy of Music were required to take the oaths of allegiance, supremacy and abjuration, to declare that there was no transubstantiation in the sacrament of the Last Supper, and to supply a certificate of conformity to the Church of England. Percival notes that he was elected a director of the Academy in February, 1720, and he writes on 24 April 1720: “I qualified my Self for Directorship of the Royall Accademy of Musick, by takeing the Oathes this day at Guildhall before the Ld Mayor &S’W” Thomson Recorder, & then delivred into Court my Certificate of having taken the Sacrament at S James Church Westminster.”

Various oaths of allegiance had been required for different sections of the population from the sixteenth century. In the early years of the reign of George I, office holders under the crown were required to take their oaths at one of the central courts of law: Chancery, King’s Bench, Common Pleas, or Exchequer. Others generally took the oaths at the county courts in Middlesex or Westminster during Quarter Sessions. Records of the former survive at The National Archives (TNA), the latter at the London Metropolitan Archives (LMA). Percival specifically mentions taking his oath in the City of London from the Mayor, and this set of records has now been transferred from the Corporation of London Archives to the LMA as well.

Initial examination of these records has confirmed Percival’s statement and led to further discoveries about the oath-taking of the other directors. Percival’s Certificate of Conformity is preserved at the LMA, dated 13 March 1720, and the record of his taking the oath in the City is recorded on 25 April with his signature. Some directors took their oaths in the county courts. For example, John Arbuthnot, Thomas Smith, and James Bruce went together to get their Certificates of Conformity on 10 January 1720 to St Martin in the Field, each certificate witnessed by the other two directors present. They signed the oaths together 14 January at the Middlesex Quarter Sessions. Those with high court positions, such as Stanhope and Kent, seem to appear only in the records of the Petty Bag Office in the court of Chancery at TNA.

In this paper, I plan to describe the oaths and the sources, examine the records for some of the directors, and consider, at least briefly, the perceived political nature of the opera librettos in light of the requirement that directors of the Academy take the oaths. I expect to include many visual images of the sources.

Joyce Irwin (Colgate University): “Saul, David, and the Power of Music”

The story in I Samuel 16 of David playing the lyre to alleviate King Saul’s melancholy has long been a standard piece of evidence for the healing power of music. Saul was tormented by an evil spirit from God, and his advisors recommended finding a person skilled in playing the lyre to help cure him. The shepherd David was brought into Saul’s service, and whenever David played the lyre for the king, Saul felt better, and the evil spirit departed from him.

Theologians of the 16th through 18th-centuries analyzed the various aspects of this story. Was Saul’s illness natural or spiritual? Was the healing power of music intrinsic to the music or dependent on divine presence? If the latter, was David’s personal spiritual strength crucial, or
did God simply use both David and the music to effect the healing result? Did it matter whether David sang psalms to Saul or simply played his instrument?

Whether or not Georg Friedrich Händel knew of the theological dissertation by Heinrich Pipping, *De Saul ocurato per musicam* (1688), or the medical treatise of Martin Pohle, *Dissertationem medicam de Curatione Morborum per Carmina et Cantus Musicos* (1706), he surely knew of Johann Kuhnau’s *Six Biblical Sonatas* (1700), where the story of Saul’s cure through the music of David is depicted in a keyboard setting. Händel’s oratorio *Saul*, however, with its text by Charles Jennens, does not fit the tradition. Although Saul’s daughter Michal sings that the “healing sounds dispel his cares,” and David sings a psalm-like air and plays a harp solo, these are followed by Jonathan’s recitative, “‘Tis all in vain, his fury still continues.” At the end of Saul’s ensuing angry aria, he throws his javelin at David. This is indeed true to the second biblical episode of David playing for Saul, but those who sought to elevate music’s power preferred the first episode.

When music is praised in Händel’s *Saul*, it happens through the recitative and air sung by the High Priest. In poetry reminiscent of John Dryden’s St. Cecilia’s Day ode, the High Priest speaks of the Eternal Word creating harmony out of the discord of original chaos. Raising the focus from the power of music on an individual disordered soul to the universal struggle between order and disorder, the air ends with the eschatological promise of a return to the pristine state of nature and harmony.

Händel’s presentation of this story did not meet with approval by John Brown, who in 1763 prepared an oratorio pointedly entitled *The Cure of Saul*. This was published along with his *Dissertation on the Rise, Union and Power, the Progressions, Separations and Corruptions, of Poetry and Music*, which is a critique of the oratorio tradition. My approach will be to contrast Brown’s treatment of the Saul/David story with that of Händel in a manner that will shed light on their differing approaches to these theoretical issues.

**Todd Jones** (University of Kentucky): “Handel in Early America and the Politics of Reception”

Handel’s music has always played an important part in American concert life. Scholars of American music have highlighted Handel’s importance ever since Oscar Sonneck’s 1907 *Concert Life in Early America* documented eighteenth-century American concerts. Handel’s elevation from operatic composer to musical icon of British nationalism coincided with the rise of the American middle class. As American newspapers followed news from Britain both before and after independence, Handel’s music and reputation, especially as related to the royal family, played an important role in their coverage. In the early American republic, many musicians considered Handel’s oratorios especially as models important enough to warrant naming musical societies after the long-dead composer. Several American cities held concerts imitating the commemorative celebrations held in London for Handel’s centennial and in the following years. The 1815 founding of the Boston Handel and Haydn Society, in fact, may mark the musical birth of the American genteel tradition.

Boston” (1998), focuses especially on the 1815 founding and early years of the Boston Handel and Haydn Society. Articles by Virginia Larkin Redway (1935) and Ralph T. Daniel (1959) follow Sonneck in focusing on reports of American concert life. “Zur Händel-Pflege in den USA” (1976), by Alfred Mann and Franklin B. Zimmerman, focuses on the 19th and 20th centuries. Unfortunately, none of these or related articles, either alone or in combination, can answer the question, “Who was Handel to Americans before 1815?”

This paper sketches a broad national outline of Handel’s reception before 1815 in the English-speaking American colonies and early republic. Using American and British newspapers’ reports both of American concerts and of Handel-related British activities, it attempts consider Handel’s performances and reputation within the holistic context of America’s developing national society. Agreeing largely with Handel’s nationalized status in Britain, newspapers presented what can only be called a “gentrified” Handel, one which all but ignored his operas and chamber music and focused almost exclusively on his oratorios and on his music for the British royal family. American performers, too (often English or German émigrés), presented a similarly gentrified Handel, performing from his oratorios and from hardly any of his other works. Many of these performers shared important aesthetic, theological, and even political commitments that contributed to their repertoire choices. Several were, for example, Anglican/Episcopalian organists who were far more urbane, far more tolerant of formal liturgy, and generally far less populist than the average American citizen of their day. Commitments similar to these played crucial roles in developing America’s nascent tradition of genteel music, a tradition still deeply influencing much of Americans’ relationship to art music in general—and their relationship to Handel’s music especially.


Two aspects of the performance of simple recitative in Handel’s operas and oratorios have received much scholarly attention: the proper performance of appoggiaturas, cadences, and “short” notes in the bass in opera; and the distinct roles of the harpsichord and organ in the performance of oratorios. In this paper, I explore two different and rarely addressed questions concerning the performance of Handel’s recitative: Did the violoncello occasionally realize the chords senza cembalo? And was the double bass, which has been banished from modern performances of Handel’s recitative, actually a regular part of his continuo ensemble when it accompanied recitative?

In the first act of Handel’s opera Alessandro, there is a scene in recitative in which Alexander the Great hurls his general Cleitus to the ground, angry that the latter has refused to worship him as a god (HG, vol. 72, p. 52). At the point when Alexander does this, Handel wrote a cadence in B-flat Major. Beneath that cadence, he spelled out the two chords in his autograph manuscript with letters, from the bottom up: f - c - a and f - d - b. The cadence comes at the end of a passage where the continuo line consists of a series of arpeggios doubled by the violins—the letters must mean something other than a continuation of those arpeggios (the composer would have written them out had he desired them). Handel presumably intended these letters to indicate a cadence played in triple stops by the violoncello, which would need to be
accompanied by a contrabasso (to provide the root of the final chord), but would surely be performed *senza cembalo*.

The use of a violoncello to realize the figured bass of recitative in opera, with or without the support of a double bass, is well documented in the last quarter of the eighteenth century and throughout the nineteenth, but no evidence has surfaced for it in Handel’s time. Nevertheless, it was common then to use a solo cello to realize the figured bass in Italian sonatas, an option given in the publications of Handel’s own chamber music by John Walsh. The title pages of Handel’s op. 1 and op. 5, for example, have “with a Thorough Bass for the Harpsichord or Violoncello” (emphasis added). Further, it was common to use the cello to realize recitative chords in later traditions of Handelian performance. In the first part of this paper, I will explore these sonata and oratorio traditions and how they connect with Handel’s own practices.

In the second part of the paper, I turn to the double bass. In the performance of Handel’s operas, it is conventional wisdom that simple recitative was accompanied by harpsichord (one, or two in alternation), and violoncello, possibly with the assistance of a theorbo. Although it is clear from a broad range of contemporary German, Italian, and English sources that the instruments widely used to accompany recitative in opera were the harpsichord, cello, and *double bass*, we have chosen to eliminate the bass, relying on two pieces of evidence. The first is the eyewitness testimony of Pierre-Jacques Fougeroux, who reported in 1728 that the Royal Academy used one cello, two harpsichords, and an archlute to accompany recitative. The second is contemporary orchestral pay rosters, which sometimes show cellists being paid at a higher rate than bassists—this has been interpreted as indicating that they played more (i.e., recitatives and rehearsals), and thus were paid more. Fougeroux has been shown to be unreliable. A fresh analysis of the pay rosters and an exploration of substantial written and iconographical evidence suggests that we, too, may have it wrong. The double bass may have been an essential part of the continuo group that accompanied Handel’s recitatives in both opera and oratorio.


One of the most fascinating items from the Hall Handel Collection in the Department of Manuscripts at Princeton University’s Firestone Library is a manuscript bearing the name “Miss Baring”. The volume itself is a collection of keyboard solos, duets, and transcriptions of vocal and instrumental pieces, copied by multiple scribes. While the identity of a few of the pieces, such as the two embellished movements from Handel’s organ concertos Op. 4, has long been known, the identity of the rest of the pieces, and that of the presumed original owner, has remained unsolved. Our investigation allows us to finally identify several of these mystery pieces, thereby yielding new insights on the range of dates over which the manuscript was compiled. Furthermore, inscriptions on an eighteenth-century printed edition allow us to further reconstruct the musical library of Miss Baring and provide new clues as to her identity. Taken together, this information reveals the manuscript to be a mirror of the diverse and relatively progressive tastes of its original owner/owners.
The presentation also includes a performance of selected works from the manuscript by an ensemble of voice, recorder, and harpsichord. The performance will highlight the variety of repertoire included in the manuscript and serve as an evocation of the spirit of Miss Baring through the music she collected for private use and the pursuit of social harmony.


Mercer’s Hospital opened on Stephen Street, Dublin in 1734. It was the first Irish voluntary hospital to initiate a series of annual and bi-annual benefit concerts, the first of which took place on 8 April 1736 in St Andrew’s Round Church, Suffolk Street, Dublin. The benefit concerts consisted of a church service which included a charity sermon and the performance of sacred musical works. Sermons were preached by some of Ireland’s most eminent bishops and the works of Handel dominated the repertoire from the earliest years. The contents of the Mercer’s Hospital Music Collection, specifically the manuscript sources, are representative of the type of repertoire performed at the hospital’s benefit concerts, which continued until 1780 at least and attracted a wide range of Dublin-based performers, both singers and instrumentalists.

This paper will examine the Mercer’s Hospital manuscript sources for works by Handel, focusing on identified adaptations which include the substitution of parts and changes in scoring. Such adaptations are indicative of the constraints experienced in eighteenth-century Dublin performance practice, particularly in relation to the performance of service settings and orchestral anthems. Handel’s ‘Utrecht’ Te Deum-Jubilate HWV 278–9 was performed at the Mercer’s benefit concerts up to 1745 at least. The coronation anthems HWV 258–61 and two Chapel Royal anthems, namely HWV 250b and 256b, were also regularly performed. Handel’s Overture to Esther HWV 50 may have been performed as a prelude, as was customary at the benefit concerts in support of the English charity “The Festival of the Sons of the Clergy.” Vocal and instrumental manuscript parts for all eight works survive in the Mercer’s Hospital Music Collection currently housed at the Manuscripts and Archives Research Library at Trinity College, Dublin.

This paper will also discuss the provenance of the Mercer’s Handelian sources. Manuscript works extant in the collection were copied from early printed editions and from early manuscript copies thus revealing significant information about the origins of the Mercer’s Collection and about how Handel’s music was transmitted to Dublin during the eighteenth-century. Mercer’s Hospital was one of three charities to benefit from the première of Handel’s Messiah HWV 56. Even though no sources for Messiah are contained in the Mercer’s Collection, this paper will also discuss Handel’s contribution to Mercer’s Hospital, both directly through the Messiah première, and indirectly, through the regular performance of his works in the Mercer’s programme.
Stephen Nissenbaum (University of Massachusetts): “How Handel’s Messiah Became a Christmas Tradition”

How did Messiah come to be associated with Christmas rather than Easter? After all, just a small portion of the oratorio deals with the Nativity. Every performance of Messiah under Handel’s own direction took place in the spring, generally in the weeks before Easter. And the oratorio continued to be performed at Lent well into the nineteenth century. Yet, by the mid-1800s, Messiah performances in both Britain and America had morphed into the Christmas rituals they remain today.

The shift took place over the first half of the 19th century, and in two stages—the earlier one between 1815 and 1820, the later one during the mid-1830s. (To be sure, Messiah had been presented during the Christmas season in several places back in the 18th century. But, as I shall argue, these were anomalies, inasmuch as Handel’s oratorio itself held no seasonal associations before 1800.) In England, a tradition of annual Christmas performances seems to have begun as early as 1816 (presented by the Cecilian Society of London, an organization of amateurs), while in the U.S. the first complete performance of Messiah was famously given two years later in Boston, on Christmas Night, 1818, by another amateur group, the Handel and Haydn Society. (This event—I shall explore it in detail—was actually part of an organized campaign to bring Christmas itself back to New England, where it had long been suppressed by the Puritans.)

But those initial London Christmas performances did not achieve any great popularity. Similarly, in America, after 1818 the Handel and Haydn Society did not present another Christmas Messiah for fully fifteen more years, until 1833. It was only then that a genuine and lasting association was forged between the holiday and the oratorio. In England as well, it was during the 1830s that Christmas performances of Messiah became (and remained) truly popular events. Starting in 1836, these annual Christmas performances were given by a newly formed group of amateurs, the Sacred Harmonic Society of London. And it was this group that first deployed the massive choral and instrumental forces which came virtually to define “Victorian” Handel performance practice. Soon Boston’s Handel and Haydn Society too were using large-scale forces for their own annual Christmas Messiahs.

A final point: both the Handel and Haydn Society of Boston and the Sacred Harmonic Society of London were comprised chiefly of religious dissenters—Unitarians in the American case, Methodists in the British one. Those dissenters managed to appropriate Messiah from the established Church, which had essentially controlled it through the 18th century and beyond. In the process, they managed to sever the oratorio’s solid association with Easter and to construct its new and enduring connection with Christmas.

Kenneth Nott (University of Hartford): “Psalms and Psalm Genres in Handel’s Old Testament Oratorios”

It is well known that Handel’s Old Testament oratorios frequently depart from their source stories. This is understandable enough when one considers that what usually begins as a prose narrative has to be transformed into a series of aria, recitative and chorus texts intended to be
sung in a three-act performance lasting roughly three hours. Oftentimes the briefest of verbal clues in the source text forms the basis for extensive oratorio scenes, and even the creation of characters and events not present in the original story is commonplace.

The process of oratorio adaptation is complex and multifaceted. In this paper I would like to explore the role played by psalms and psalm genres in Handel’s so-called Israelite oratorios. Of course, Handel and his librettists had precedents for this approach in Milton’s three masterpieces of biblical adaptation, Paradise Lost, Paradise Regained and Samson Agonistes, where, in the words of one Milton scholar, the poet became “as far as possible a new psalmist himself,” writing “biblical lyric into Bible-based narrative.” (Mary Ann Radzinowicz, Milton’s Epics and the Book of Psalms, p. 50) I would suggest that something similar happens in the Old Testament oratorios of Handel.

To keep the scope of this topic within reasonable limits, I will examine scenes from Handel’s Samson, Joshua and Susanna to determine the extent to which specific psalms or elements of psalm genres, such as hymn and lament, have been employed as a means of both structure and interpretation. Broadly speaking, three effects of the use of psalms and psalm genres in the oratorios can be identified: (1) they serve as a practical way of creating musico/dramatic episodes which do not exist or are only hinted at in the source stories; (2) they help slant the stories in the direction of national or communal deliverances, even when the source story is more neutral in that regard; (3) they contribute to a quasi-liturgical or ceremonial atmosphere, which would have made the oratorios more accessible to audiences well versed in public services, such as coronations, state funerals, etc. which were “staged” as sacred events interspersed with psalmic commentary.

Ruth Smith (Cambridge University): “New perspectives on Charles Jennens”

Preparing the Charles Jennens exhibition at the Handel House Museum, London (21 November 2012 – 14 April 2013), afforded fresh insights into Jennens’ achievements and character, which are presented in this paper. The innovative nature of Jennens’ inextinguishable creative energy is exemplified in his pioneering Shakespeare editions, which established new standards used even now by modern editors, and in his commission of a work by Roubiliac which is unique in the sculptor’s output (and for which a new source is suggested in this paper). Jennens’ fidelity to his religious-political principles is shown in the (newly identified) source of his seal ring. Jennens’ addiction to and active pursuit of music, Handel’s in particular, is manifested – and the Aylesford partbooks explained – by his designs for the architecture and furnishing of his country house. The paper connects these evidences of Jennens’ interests to his librettos for Handel.