

The Handel Festival at Halle: May 25 to 28

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music it has the least use for choral, especially when the choralists are engaged in oratorio. To give a choral concert at a time when, roughly speaking, the only leisured folk are those who have no use for choral music, is simply to book a failure. Even the most attractive of orchestral concerts have to be given in the evening or on a Saturday afternoon. We had a good proof of the difficulty of getting an audience on any other afternoon, when during the war the experiment was tried of shifting the Proms. from the evening to the afternoon in order to dodge air-raid alarms. The experiment was a failure. No doubt hard things are being said at Leeds. But would the Choral Union draw a big audience in Yorkshire on a Thursday afternoon in June? Mr. Shaw is fond of music, but cold where sport is concerned. There are plenty of us who like music as much as he does, but who may be pardoned if, given the choice between Queen's Hall and Lord's or the Oval on a summer's afternoon, we do not hesitate much before joining the cricket crowd. In a few trifling details this is still a free country, and Mr. Shaw, the *Daily News*, and the other democrats to whom liberty is supposed to mean so much, must allow folk to choose their own ways of spending their spare time. Mr. Shaw has no more right to shriek at people who prefer sport to oratorio than the sporting costermonger has a right to abuse Mr. Shaw for spending a fine afternoon listening to music when he might be spotting likely ones at Epsom.

Apropos of *The Apostles*, we note that the work is constantly spoken of as 'neglected.' Of course such a term is relative, and a number of performances that would be small for (say) *The Messiah* may be large in the case of a modern work. *The Apostles* was inevitably shelved during the war, and was rarely heard for the first two seasons that followed. This is not surprising, seeing that, in addition to making heavy demands on choir and orchestra, it calls for six first-rate soloists. Critics who seem to be unable to mention this work without tacking on the 'neglected' will be interested in the following list of performances :

- March 24, 1920—Leeds Choral Union—Leeds.
- May 8, 1920—Choral Leeds Union—Newcastle-on-Tyne.
- March 17, 1921—Notts Sacred Harmonic—Nottingham.
- May 7, 1921—Alexandra Palace Choral Society—London.
- September 7, 1921—Hereford Festival—Hereford.
- March 29, 1922—Leeds Choral Union—Leeds.
- March 30, 1922—Hallé Concerts—Manchester.
- April 11, 1922—London Choral Society—Queen's Hall.
- May 11, 1922—Peterborough Choral Union—Peterborough.
- May 18, 1922—Bedford Musical Society—Bedford.
- June 8, 1922—Leeds Choral Union—London.
- June 9, 1922—Leeds Choral Union—Canterbury.
- September 5, 1922—Gloucester Festival—Gloucester.

The *crescendo* is significant, and coincides with the gradual revival of the big choral societies—two performances in 1920, three in 1921, and seven in the short period from March 29 to June 9.

Members and friends of the Livery Club of the Worshipful Company of Musicians were entertained at a reception given by Mr. Augustus Littleton, the President, at 160, Wardour Street, on June 20.

Sir Dan Godfrey's knighthood is a fitting recognition (made none too soon) of fine, all-round work. An immense amount of talk about our native music is delivered, on paper and otherwise, with comparatively little result. Sir Dan's propaganda is the only kind that counts for much in the long run. He cuts the cackle and gets on with the performance. Lucky Bournemouth!

The seventh of our series of articles on 'British Singers and Players,' reviews of new books and music, gramophone notes, and some letters to the editor, are unavoidably held over.

'Mr. —, the yell-known local tenor, won the bronze medal.'—*Scotch Paper*.

Yell-known, certainly; but no longer merely local. We have lately heard him in quite a lot of places.

More news from over the water :

After more than a quarter of a century's service as conductor of the London Choral Society, Sir Frederick Bridge has retired from his post.—*Musical America*. This will enable Mr. Arthur Fagge, the Society's founder and first conductor, to take up his old post again.

Here are three extracts from the daily press, showing that music is at last taking its place among the things that matter :

By keeping the mind of his patient, a highly nervous girl, lulled with music from a wireless telephone, a New York surgeon was yesterday able to operate for appendicitis without even a variation in her pulse. A spinal anæsthetic was used, causing the patient to become insensible to pain from the shoulders downwards. Wireless telephone receivers were strapped to her ears, and she lay listening to a Chopin recital on the pianoforte while the surgeon operated.

The complaint against a woman in the Bow County Court, to-day, was that she was so 'crazed' on her gramophone that she would even have it going in the bathroom when she was having a bath.

Every afternoon, in — Restaurant, 'the Singing Mannequin,' a well-known opera singer, masked, will entertain visitors with selections from her repertoire whilst displaying the newest fashions.

THE HANDEL FESTIVAL AT HALLE :

MAY 25 TO 28

BY E. VAN DER STRAETEN

Handel's birthplace, the town of Halle, in Saxony, celebrated the memory of its greatest son by a four days' Festival, organized by a committee of which Prof. Dr. Arnold Schering, the well-known music historian, Prof. A. Rahlwes, University music director, and Dr. B. Weissenborn, chief librarian, all of Halle University, were the principal moving spirits. The Festival was remarkable, firstly, in showing the master-mind in his various aspects; secondly, in bringing to light new facts concerning his person. It demonstrated, moreover, that gigantic proportions of chorus and orchestra, wonderful and impressive as their effect is in some of the monumental choruses, are not the best means of presenting Handel's work in the most artistic manner. This was clearly shown by the performances of the oratorios, *Semele* and *Susannah*, in which the choruses were rendered by the Robert Franz Vocal Academy

of a hundred and sixty-three singers, under their conductor, Prof. Rahlwes. The Halle Orchestra was increased to sixty-four instrumentalists by twenty-three members of the Leipzig Philharmonic

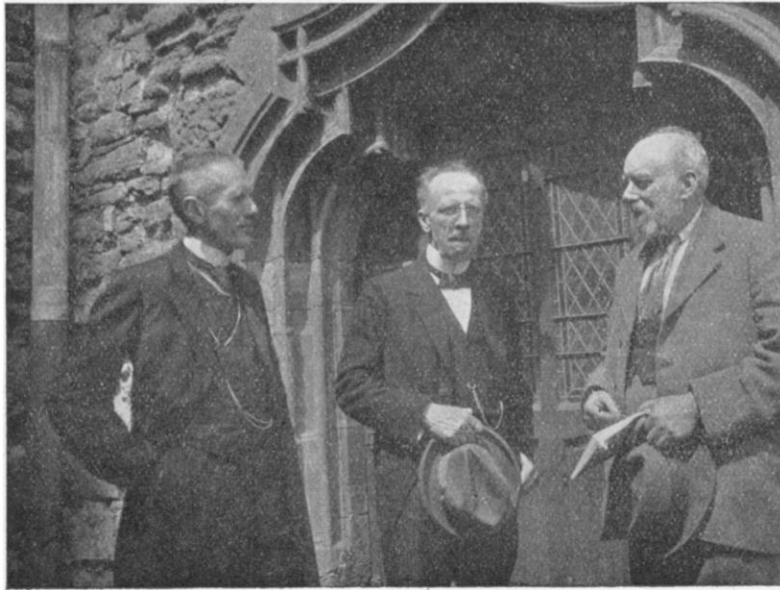


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[Newman Flower

DR. WEISSENBORN, DR. A. SCHERING, MR. E. VAN DER STRAETEN

and Gewandhaus Orchestras. With *Semele* the Festival began at the handsome theatre. In England this oratorio is known at present only by the two fine arias, *Where'er you walk* and

O sleep, why dost thou leave me? although of its kind it is as great a work as *The Messiah*, and Prof. Rahlwes obtained a magnificent performance. He is imaginative, full of temperament, and called to life the many great beauties which the work contains. The choir sang with great precision and spirit, and produced a fine volume of sound of good quality. The soloists, especially Madame L. Leonard (soprano), Madame A. Leydhecker (contralto), Mr. George A. Walter (tenor, the quality of whose voice was not quite equal to his very artistic style), and Prof. A. Fischer, who combines a magnificent bass voice with the temperament of a great artist, acquitted themselves of their task in an excellent manner, the fine reading of the duet between *Semele* and *Hera*, and the beautiful aria of

Morpheus, being worthy of special comment. The recitatives, &c., were accompanied on a concert grand (for want of a harpsichord) by Dr. Hans

Gaartz in a very delicate manner, and the orchestra distinguished itself particularly in the exquisite Morpheus music. All this may seem extravagant praise, but may be justified by the fact that a crowded house, including several hundred eminent musicians and writers on music, as well as musical amateurs from all parts of Germany, Austria, Switzerland, England, and Italy, were absolutely electrified, and roused to a pitch of enthusiasm that I have seldom witnessed. Prof. Rahlwes was responsible for the edition of the work, while Prof. Schering had prepared the version of *Susannah* which was given at the Cathedral, conducted by Prof. Rahlwes. Mesdames Rose Walter as *Susannah* and Frieda Schmidtes (the servant) proved themselves possessors of fine and well-trained soprano voices, Dr. H. J. Moser (baritone) was an excellent Joachim, and the same applies to Mr. Ernst Meyer (tenor) as Daniel. Messrs. G. A.

Walter, Prof. Fischer, and Dr. F. Viol, gave a fine rendering of the two Elders and the Judge. On Thursday evening there was a concert at the Marktkirche, where Handel first played the organ, the



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HANDEL'S BIRTHPLACE (THE HOUSE ON THE LEFT).

Wolff Heintz, William Brade (Variations for violin and organ), a fine Magnificat by Samuel Scheidt, Sacred Concert for soli, chorus, strings, and organ, by A. Krieger, and an impressive *Sanctus* by Friedemann Bach for chorus, orchestra, and organ, all performed for the first time. Friday began with the opening of the Handel Loan Exhibition by Dr. Weissenborn, who recently discovered that the house in which Handel was born stood at the corner of the Nocalai and Kleine Ulrichstrasse, and is not the adjacent one fixed upon (though not without misgivings) by Chrysander. Both are shown on page 488 in a photograph by Mr. Newman Flower. The pseudo-Handel house was decked with garlands for the Festival. The exhibition contained, among autographs, personal souvenirs, &c., what is probably the last portrait of Handel, which was found early this year by Prof. Werner in the possession of descendants of Handel's sister. In the evening there was a symphony concert, when the Overture, Ballet music, and the exquisite Dream music of *Alcina*, with the second part of the Water Music, formed the orchestral numbers, while Madame Leydhecker sang an aria from *Tamerlane* and two arias from *Partenope*, and Prof. Fischer the beautiful solo cantata *Cuopie tal volta il cielo*. On Saturday morning Prof. Schering gave a very interesting lecture on 'The World of Handel,' in which he pointed out that Handel's genius could never have attained its proper development but for his coming to England.

Sunday morning began with a musical service at the Marktkirche, where were heard a Motet from the eighth anthem, an Organ Fugue in C minor, 'Glory to God,' and 'Hallelujah' from *The Messiah*, an Organ Prelude, *Es ist das Heil*, by Zachow, and one by J. S. Bach on the same Chorale. At mid-day began a chamber concert of works by Handel in the Aula of the University: Trio for two oboes and *Continuo* in E flat major, played by Messrs. H. Schmiedel and A. Karl, and Dr. H. Gaartz; *Lucrezia*, solo Cantata for soprano, sung by Madame Leonard; Harpsichord Suite, in F minor, Miss A. Linde; Chamber Duet, Madame Leonard and Dr. H. J. Moser; two German Arias, with oboe and violin obbligato respectively, Madame Leonard; and the *Harmonious Blacksmith* Variations, Miss Linde. The whole programme met with an enthusiastic reception by the audience. At the banquet which followed a professor of Freiburg University told about his discovery of a letter from George I. to the King of Prussia which throws an entirely new light upon the story of the Water Music and Handel's relation to the Court; but of this anon. The evening brought the opera *Orlando Furioso* at the theatre, which proved a great success. Dr. H. J. Moser, who had translated and edited the opera, explained in an essay added to the programme-book that the staging could not be done as he would have wished it owing to present conditions. Nevertheless the scenery and costumes were most artistic and very well executed. The costumes adhered to the baroque style of Handel's time. The absurdities of the book are pushed into the background by the genius of Handel, who treats the characters from a psychological standpoint, and therefrom received the inspiration of a great deal of most beautiful music. Space, however, will not permit a detailed account of this. An excellent performance was conducted by Mr. Oscar Braun.

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Messrs. Willi Sonnen, as Orlando, and Cornelius Barck, as Zoroaster, had exceptionally fine voices and shone in dramatic as well as cantabile passages, but their coloratura was less satisfactory. The Medoro of Mr. S. Matuczewski, Angelica of Madame Hilde Voss, and Dorindo of Madame Anna Eghardt were worthy of all praise. It is to be hoped that the intention of holding another Handel Festival at Halle in five years' time may crystallise and prove as great a success as that of 1922.

[Mr. van der Straeten's modesty prevents him from mentioning his own share in the Festival.



THE HANDEL PORTRAIT RECENTLY DISCOVERED
BY PROF. WERNER

From another source we hear of the success of his performance of a Gamba Sonata—the only one for which Handel wrote out a harpsichord part in full. Mr. van der Straeten used a very fine old English lra-viol (the smallest bass-viol), made about the time of Charles I. Following is an extract from the *Berliner Tageblatt* of May 31:

The greatest artistic treat offered was a chamber concert in the Aula of the University in which the most select concert pieces of the master were magnificently rendered. The artists, especially Lotte Leonard (Berlin), Anna Linde (Berlin), E. van der Straeten (London), Dr. Hans Gaartz (Halle) received ovations such as were never known before in the industrial town of Halle.—Ed., *M. T.*]

The Rondel Quartet—Miss Ethel Waddington, Miss Eleanor Tibbits, Mr. C. E. Dodge, and Mr. A. B. Bacon—gave an excellent programme at St. Helen's Gymnasium, Blackheath, on May 23. Half was Elizabethan (Lichfield, Wilbye, Morley, Edwards, Dowland), and half modern (Stanford, Ireland, Holst, Balfour Gardiner, Gerrard Williams, and Whittaker).