

Händel in Rome

On February 12th at the Patristic Institute of the Augustinianum, a new book was presented: *Georg Friedrich Händel, Francesco Maria Ruspoli e Roma*, which offers an Italian version of the formidable researches on the famous musician, conducted by the music historian Ursula Kirkendale (1932- 2013) in the Vatican Secret Archives. The studies had been published several times since 1967.

Ursula's husband, Warren Kirkendale, completed the revision of the texts, and Giorgio Monari, a professor at the Gregorian University, translated them.

Johann Herczog, musicologist and artistic director of the Pierluigi da Palestrina Foundation, introduced the collection of studies and documents. Warren Kirkendale, professor emeritus of music history at the University of Regensburg and honorary of the University of Pavia, spoke about the great enigmas of the history of music and art that had been resolved by his wife Ursula with the help of Quintilian and Hesiod: the Musical Offering of J. S. Bach and the Tempest of Giordano.

Ursula Kirkendale's studies demonstrate once again that humanistic culture, which finds its roots in classical literature, history, and art, can offer instruments of knowledge that otherwise remain not accessible.

Before the discoveries of Ursula Kirkendale "nothing was known in the history of music about Händel's sojourn in Rome or the fundamental role of Francesco Maria Ruspoli as a patron." All that we now know of the Roman period of Händel, 1706-1708, comes from the studies done by Mrs. Kirkendale in the Ruspoli-Marescotti archival collection that is kept in the Secret Archives, a work conducted over several years.

Affected by a stroke in 1971, which compromised her use of language, Mrs. Ursula nevertheless continued her research, while her husband completed her work through a careful and arduous reading of the sometimes almost illegible notes produced by his wife, which constitutes a rare example of absolute dedication to his life partner and to her valuable work, which finds its maximum expression in this publication.

The Santa Giacinta Marescotti Study Center and S. E. Don Sforza Ruspoli, prince of Cerveteri, supported the event. The Vatican Library, together with thirteen other institutions, offered their patronage as a sign of respect, esteem and gratitude towards the Kirkendale spouses.

A beautiful concert crowned the end of the presentation; artists Dalma Krajnyák, contralto, Deniel Perer on the harpsichord, and Giordano Antonelli on the cello performed some cantatas composed by Händel for the Arcade Francesco Maria Ruspoli (born Marescotti).

Prof. Kirkendale has been a friend of the Vatican Library since his youth, and thus has a deep and unconditional affection for it. In addition, he destined his precious personal library to the Apostolic Library, and has established a fund for the acquisition of books.

Our deepest gratitude goes to him and to Mrs. Ursula's memory.

