

Infirmary and the Charitable Musical Society – were careful to make approaches to the Deans and Chapters of both cathedrals.

The popularity of the subscription concerts put a severe strain on the amenities of Fishamble Street, and the organisers attempted to direct the circulation of coaches (down rather than up this difficult declivity), to make the passage of sedan chairs easier, and to provide better waiting-rooms for the footmen. These arrangements obviously proved satisfactory as the one-way system was taken over for the popular Saturday assemblies, also held at the New Musick Hall, and when a second subscription series was announced early in February the only chairs allowed to stand at the new exits into Copper Alley were ‘hazard Chairs’ – chairs plying for hire which would take the first comer rather than private chairs which would hold up the ‘emptying of the House’ while they waited for their owners to emerge.

The success of the concerts does not, however, seem to have affected theatre attendance, and an important event in January was Susannah Cibber’s first appearance as a singing actress. Her brother’s *Comus* had reached Dublin the previous year; she herself had played the Lady at its original Drury Lane opening in 1738. In Dublin she took the part of the nymph Euphrosyne, representing mirth. As casting this was far less appropriate than the solemn and assailed Lady, but at Drury Lane the Lady had not sung at all, and ‘Sweet Echo, sweetest nymph’, which belongs to her part, was performed off-stage by Susannah’s sister-in-law, while she mimed the action. Euphrosyne, of marginal dramatic importance, had by contrast three songs and a recitative, and the largo in her last song, ‘Ye Fauns and ye Dryads’, contains some of the most expressive music in the entire masque. The recitative, ‘Love, the greatest bliss below’, though short, also contains dramatic possibilities. Handel knew *Comus* and it had influenced his melodic style as well as his choice of text in *L’Allegro, il Penseroso ed il Moderato*; indeed, the character of Euphrosyne in Arne’s *Comus* had been imported from Milton’s original poem *L’Allegro*, by the adaptor John Dalton, to expand the seventeenth-century masque into a piece of operatic length. As we know from other testimony besides his own account to Jennens of his visit to *Alessandro in Persia*, Handel took an active interest in the doings of the opposition. In the circumstances of Dublin the Aungier Street Theatre did not even rate as that, and it seems far more probable that a sympathetic visit to Aungier Street, rather than any prearrangement, led to his discovery, in Mrs Cibber, of the second soprano soloist whom he needed for *Messiah*. That he