

GREGORY BATSLEER TO LEAD LONDON HANDEL FESTIVAL



The London Handel Festival today [18 October 2021] announces that Gregory Batsleer is to be its new Festival Director, with immediate effect. Gregory replaces Samir Savant, who stepped down at the end of July 2021 after five years in the role. As Festival Director, Gregory will be responsible for leading the programming, growth and development of the Festival, fulfilling its mission to bring Handel's music to the widest possible audiences.

Gregory has been working at the very highest levels of the classical music industry for over a decade and has built a strong reputation as both an innovative leader and an acclaimed conductor.

From 2012 to 2017, Gregory was Artistic Director of the National Portrait Gallery's Choir in Residence programme, the first ever in-house music programme of any gallery or museum in the world. He has curated and devised performances for the Southbank Centre, Wilderness Festival and Latitude and collaborated with leading cultural figures across art forms. In 2017, Gregory co-founded Future Stages, a charity dedicated to providing pathways into the performing arts for young people from disadvantaged backgrounds, and he is also co-founder and Artistic Director of Festival Voices, a versatile ensemble dedicated to cross-art collaboration. As a non-executive director, Gregory is on the boards of the Piece Hall in Halifax and Manchester Camerata.

As a performer, Gregory has conducted leading ensembles throughout the UK including his work as Chorus Director of the Scottish Chamber Orchestra and Principal Conductor of the Huddersfield Choral Society.

Gregory says:

"I am thrilled to have been appointed the new Festival Director of the London Handel Festival. Handel's music has an extraordinary ability to inspire and speak to 21st-century London. As we emerge from a cultural hibernation, I'm incredibly excited for what we can achieve. This will be a new and innovative chapter for the Festival in which we aim to be the go-to destination for the performance of Handel's music, and in turn contribute to London's reputation for boundary-pushing creativity."

Richard Hopkin, Chair of the London Handel Festival, said:

"On behalf of the Board, I am delighted we have chosen Greg to lead us forward to the next stage in the Festival's growth and development. From a very strong field of candidates, Greg impressed us most with his vision, passion and enthusiasm for the role. We are convinced that Greg is the right person to help us deliver Handel's universal appeal both to our existing and new 21st-century audiences."

Laurence Cummings, Artistic Director, said:

"I'm greatly looking forward to collaborating and working with Greg over the coming years. Greg brings new energy and vision to sharing Handel's music in new and imaginative ways, whilst maintaining our joint desire and commitment to put on the best possible performances of his amazingly diverse and wide-ranging works."

The London Handel Festival concludes this week with the [final of the International Handel Singing Competition](#) (20 October), to be followed in December by both its "traditional" and "reimagined" versions of *Messiah*.

www.london-handel-festival.com

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ATTACHED IMAGE: Gregory Batsleer

London Handel Festival

"...the London Handel Festival has superbly lived up to its name by presenting more and more of Handel's operas...the achievement of unlocking this treasure chest of sublime music and drama is truly remarkable." Richard Morrison, BBC Music, November 2021.

The London Handel Festival is an annual celebration of the life and work of composer George Frideric Handel. The Festival's core charitable and artistic objective is to explore the full repertoire of Handel, to nurture emerging talent, and bring the music of Handel to broader audiences. Founded in 1978, the London Handel Festival has played a crucial role in the revival of interest in Handel's music. Throughout the year, the Festival presents some 40 events held in venues across London celebrating Handel's extraordinary creative life in the city which he made home.

The London Handel Orchestra is directed by Laurence Cummings, one of the world's pre-eminent Handelian conductors, and led by Adrian Butterfield. The orchestra collaborates with leading soloists in numerous performances throughout the Festival, often reviving lesser-known works.

The Handel Singing Competition, inaugurated in 2002, is an integral part of the Festival. Past finalists are invited to sing on a regular basis at the Festival, and the competition has helped launch the career of many leading stars including Iestyn Davies, Lucy Crowe, Grace Davidson, Tim Mead, Christopher Ainslie, Rupert Charlesworth and Ruby Hughes.

Primarily based at St George's Church, Hanover Square, where Handel worshipped, the Festival has also worked with a range of established venues and artistic partners including the Linbury Theatre at the ROH, Wigmore Hall, St John's Smith Square and the Early Music Opera Company. The London Handel Festival also works with groups such as La Nuova Musica, the English Concert and Opera Settecento.

Gregory Batsleer, Festival Director

Gregory Batsleer has been working at the very highest levels of the classical music industry for over a decade. From 2012 to 2017, Gregory was Artistic Director of the National Portrait Gallery's Choir in Residence programme, the first ever in-house music programme of any gallery or museum in the world. As a creative consultant and programmer, Gregory has curated and devised performances for the Southbank Centre, the Wilderness Festival and Latitude. He has collaborated with leading cultural figures including Elbow, Simon Armitage, Hollie McNish, Damon Albarn and Simon Russell-Beale. In 2017, he co-founded Future Stages, a charity dedicated to providing pathways into the performing arts for young people from disadvantaged backgrounds. Gregory is also co-founder and Artistic Director of Festival Voices, a versatile ensemble dedicated to cross-art collaboration. As a non-executive director, Gregory is on the boards of the Piece Hall in Halifax and Manchester Camerata.

As a performer, Gregory has conducted leading ensembles throughout the UK including the Hallé, the Royal Northern Sinfonia, the Academy of Ancient Music, the Orchestra of Opera North, the Royal Scottish National Orchestra, the Scottish Chamber Orchestra and the National Youth Choir of Great Britain. He has worked as Chorus Director with the Scottish Chamber Orchestra and Principal Conductor of the Huddersfield Choral Society.

Gregory studied at the Royal College of Music and, in 2015, was awarded an Arts Foundation Fellowship for his approach to innovative programming at the National Portrait Gallery.

Laurence Cummings, Musical Director

Laurence Cummings is one of Britain's most exciting and versatile exponents of historical performance, both as a conductor and a harpsichord player. He was recently appointed Artistic Director of the Academy of Ancient Music from the 2021-22 season. He is also a regular guest at Casa da Musica in Porto where he is Music Director of the Orquestra Barroca Casa da Música.

Cummings makes regular appearances at English National Opera, Glyndebourne Festival Opera, Gothenburg Opera, Opernhaus Zurich, Opera de Lyon, Garsington Opera and English Touring Opera. He made his US debut conducting *Orfeo* with the Handel and Haydn Society in Boston.

His numerous recordings include the first recording of Handel's newly discovered *Gloria* with Emma Kirkby and the Royal Academy of Music and recital discs of solo harpsichord music.