

Handel's Divas

London Handel Festival celebrates the women who inspired and sang Handel's music



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Festival highlights

- Leading mezzo-soprano **Alice Coote** in conversation with The Times' critic **Anna Picard** [28 March]
- New staging of **Handel's *Berenice*** at the **Royal Opera House's Linbury Theatre**, a co-production between the LHF and the ROH [27 March – 7 April]
- Annual **Handel Singing Competition** final held at St George's, Hanover Square [6 April]
- **Festival Voices** present Handel's *Dixit Dominus* reimagined for live performers and DJ, presented at Peckham's Bussey Building CLF Art Café [12 April]
- Venues include **St George's Hanover Square, Wigmore Hall, St Lawrence Little Stanmore, King's College Chapel, The Charterhouse, St John's Smith Square, The Handel and Hendrix Museum** and the **CLF Art Café** in Peckham
- Pre-performance **musical walks** with **Blue Badge Guide Janice Liverseidge**
- Ensembles such as the **London Handel Orchestra, Le Concert de L'Hostel Dieu, London Early Opera, Southbank Sinfonia, Early Opera Company, Opera Settercento** with a host of top soloists and conductors

The **2019 London Handel Festival** takes 'Handel's Divas' as its theme and will explore the lives of famous female singers – the divas of their day - who were associated with Handel and for whom he wrote many of his most famous roles.

The divas (a term not coined until the 19th century and at first entirely complimentary) played an important role in Handel's choice of subject and the development of his musical style. He sought particular female singers, first in Italy and later in Britain, to embody the female roles in his hugely successful operas and oratorios. The 2019 London Handel Festival will pay tribute to the women who inspired and gave life to his music (and occasionally caused opera riots amongst their rival supporters in London, filling the gossip pages of London newspapers at the time), by presenting a number of show-stopping performances of Handelian masterpieces and lesser-known works, oratorios, operas in addition to talks and walks.

Samir Savant, Festival Director of the London Handel Festival, said:

*"It is impossible to enjoy Handel's music without thinking of the great women who were his inspiration and whose careers he nurtured - his "divas". The 2019 London Handel Festival will explore the lives of these women, who were amazing role models in their day, attracting devoted fans and huge fame, but often with complicated personal stories behind their public acclaim. Our rich variety of performances will showcase many of the roles Handel wrote for his divas, and we are thrilled to be making our debut at the Royal Opera House as part of their Linbury Theatre season with *Berenice* which has not been performed there since Handel's day."*

A highlight of this year's festival is the new staging of ***Berenice***, a co-production between the London Handel Festival and the Royal Opera House. Sung in a new English translation by **Selma Dimitrijevic**, directed by **Adele Thomas** and conducted by

Laurence Cummings, Musical Director of the London Handel Festival. The production features **Claire Booth** in the title role alongside **Rachael Lloyd**, **James Laing**, **William Berger**, **Alessandro Fisher** and **Jette Parker Young Artists Jacquelyn Stucker** and **Patrick Terry**. *Berenice* is one of the two main shows inaugurating the new **Linbury Theatre** which reopened recently. *Berenice* hasn't been performed at the Royal Opera House since May 1737, when it premiered at what was then called Covent Garden Theatre in London.

Sarah Crabtree, Creative Producer for the Royal Opera House, said:

"The Royal Opera House has a rich history of staging Handel's music, with a number of the composer's operas and oratorios having premiered on this site at the first Covent Garden Theatre, including Berenice. It is fitting that the opening Season of the new Linbury Theatre includes a collaboration with the London Handel Festival, and I very much look forward to welcoming Laurence Cummings and the musicians of the London Handel Orchestra to the Royal Opera House."

Other major events of the Festival include the rarely-heard oratorio *Athalia* with **Anna Devin** taking the lead role, also conducted by **Laurence Cummings** and performed by the **London Handel Orchestra** [29 April]. London Handel Festival Associate Director **Adrian Butterfield** presents the serenata *Aci, Galatea & Polifemo* at Wigmore Hall [3 April] and continues his series of Chandos Anthems at St Lawrence in Little Stanmore, the church for which Handel wrote them [10 April].

Vocal ensemble **Festival Voices** make their London Handel Festival debut with Handel Remixed, an evening of music by Handel and his contemporaries featuring a brand-new version of *Dixit Dominus*, reimagined for live performers and DJ by electronic music producer **Nico Bentley** and the **Pencil Collective**. This will take place in Peckham's CLF Art café in the Bussey Building [12 April].

The London Handel Festival welcomes for the first time **Le Concert de l'Hostel Dieu** from Lyon with a lesser-known programme of *Handel & Porpora* directed by **Franck-Emmanuel Comte** [8 April], and welcomes back **Opera Settecento** who will present the pasticcio opera *Venceslao* [26 April]. **London Early Opera** and **Early Opera Company** both present programmes focused on specific Handelian divas, including the famous "Rival Queens" Francesca Cuzzoni and Faustina Bordoni [11 April and 24 April].

On 28 March the Festival presents a pre-performance talk with one of the greatest Handel singers of our time, **Alice Coote**, who will be in discussion with The Times' critic **Anna Picard**. They will discuss Handel's women and Alice's experience portraying both male and female characters. Following this, the LHF will present a concert by Handel Singing Competition alumni **Soraya Mafi**, **Fflur Wyn**, **Katie Bray** and **Ewa Gubanska**.

Continuing the London Handel Festival's mission to explore Handel in context by presenting works by his contemporaries, and to nurture and encourage young and unknown talent, as Handel himself did, the London Handel Festival launches a new "festival within a festival", Baroque Feast, which will promote three emerging groups of young musicians – with tickets just £15. These include musicians from **Pro Corda** [13 April], the **Choir of King's College, London** [25 April] and **Southbank Sinfonia** [27 April].

The **Handel Singing Competition** – now in its 17th year – continues Handel's tradition of nurturing young talent [HSC Final 6 April]. Many of the young singers Handel encouraged went on to become his star soloists and were known as "Mr Handel's Scholars". In addition to this, the Festival presents a series of lunchtime recitals at St George's, Hanover Square, showcasing finalists from the 2018 Handel Singing Competition in addition to musicians from **Guildhall School of Music and Drama** and the **Royal College of Music's Historical Performance Faculty**.

www.london-handel-festival.com

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For more information and press tickets please contact Rebecca Johns at Premier
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Notes to Editors

About London Handel Festival

Founded by Denys Darlow in 1978 the London Handel Festival has contributed to a Handel revival in the UK. The Festival runs for around a month each year, with many events held at Handel's parish church – St. George's, Hanover Square. Laurence Cummings took over as Musical Director in 2002.

The London Handel Orchestra, which is made up of some of London's finest professional baroque players led by Adrian Butterfield, now has an excellent reputation for historically informed performance. The annual Handel Singing Competition was inaugurated in 2002 to give young singers the opportunity to concentrate on the wealth of Handel repertoire.

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. In 2012 he became Artistic Director of the Internationale Händel-Festspiele Göttingen. 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.

Samir Savant, Festival Director

Samir Savant has 20 years' experience as a senior manager in the arts, including at Shakespeare's Globe, English National Opera, Handel House and Royal College of Music. He started his role with the London Handel Festival in 2016 and has presented two highly successful festivals in 2017 and 2018, already attracting critical acclaim: "Under the direction of Samir Savant, London Handel Festival has expanded exponentially" (Sunday Times, April 2018). He is committed to developing new audiences and partnerships for Handel, as is demonstrated by the collaboration with the Royal Opera House in 2019.

He is an experienced mentor and public speaker and has chaired the Institute of Fundraising's Cultural Sector Network national conference on several occasions. He sings with Pegasus, the chamber choir he co-founded, and is a trustee of Shobana Jeyasingh Dance.

Full listings

Main Festival

Berenice – Royal Opera House Linbury Theatre
27, 29, 30 March and 1, 2, 4, 5, 7 April

English Adaptation **Selma Dimitrijevic**

Director **Adele Thomas**

Designer **Hannah Clark**

Lighting design **D.M. Wood**

Movement director **Emma Woods**

Conductor **Laurence Cummings**

Berenice **Claire Booth**

Selene **Rachael Lloyd**

Alessandro **Jacquelyn Stucker**

Demetrio **James Laing**

Arsace **Patrick Terry**

Fabio **Alessandro Fisher**

Aristobolo **William Berger**

London Handel Orchestra

28 March – Pre-performance talk – St George's, Hanover Square

Alice Coote and Anna Picard

28 March – Mr Handel's Scholars – St George's, Hanover Square

Sofaya Mafi *soprano* † Fflur Wyn *soprano* † Katie Bray

mezzo-soprano † Ewa Gubanska *mezzo-soprano*

Laurence Cummings *director*

London Handel Orchestra

31 March – Come and Sing: Messiah – St George's, Hanover Square

Laurence Cummings

3 April – Aci, Galatea e Polifemo – Wigmore Hall

Anna Dennis *Aci*

Anna Huntley *Galatea*

Edward Grint *Polifemo*

Adrian Butterfield *conductor*

London Handel Orchestra

8 April – Handel vs Porpora – St George's, Hanover Square

Le Concert de L'Hostel Dieu

Franck-Emmanuel Comte *harpsichord and director*

Giuseppina Bridelli *mezzo soprano*

10 April – Chandos Anthems – St Lawrence, Little Stanmore

Adrian Butterfield *conductor*

London Handel Orchestra

Soloists from the Royal College of Music

11 April – Costly Canaries – Mr Handel's Search for superstars – St George's, Hanover Square

Hannah Poulson *Margherita Durastanti*

Marie Elliot *Anastasia Robinson*

Anna Gorbachyova *Anna Maria Strada del Pò*

Bridget Cunningham *harpsichord and director*

Nicolette Moonen *leader*

Lars Tharp *narrator*

London Early Opera

12 April – Handel Remixed: Dixit Dominus – CLF Art Café, Bussey Building

Festival Voices

Gregory Batsleer *conductor*

Nico Bentley and the Pencil Collective *producer/DJ*

14 April – Music for Palm Sunday – The Charterhouse

Adrian Butterfield *director*

Rachel Brown *flute*

Soloists from the Royal College of Music

London Handel Players

16 April – Handel at home – Handel Revenged – Handel and Hendrix Museum

Masumi Yamamoto *harpsichord*

19 April – Bach St Matthew Passion – St George’s, Hanover Square

Nathan Vale *evangelist and tenor*
George Humphreys *christus and bass*
Erica Eloff *soprano*
Christopher Ainslie *countertenor*
Laurence Cummings *conductor*
Adrian Butterfield *leader*
London Handel Orchestra

23 April – Handel at home – the Goldberg Variations – Handel and Hendrix Museum

Robin Bigwood *harpsichord*

24 April – Handel and the Rival Queens – St John’s Smith Square

Mhairi Lawson *Faustina Bordoni*
Mary Bevan *Francesca Cuzzoni*
Christian Curnyn *director*
Early Opera Company

Baroque Feast

13 April – Stabat Mater – St George’s, Hanover Square

Musicians from Pro Corda
Adrian Butterfield *director*
Lisa Rijmer *soprano*
Jungkwon Jang *countertenor*

26 April – Venceslao – St George’s, Hanover Square

Nick Pritchard *venceslao*
Michal Czeriawski *casimiro*
Helen Charlson *lucinda*
Galina Averina *erenice*
Maria Ostroukhova *ernando*
Christopher Jacklin *gismondo and alessandro*
Leo Duarte *director*
Opera Settecento

29 April – Athalia – St John’s Smith Square

Anna Devin *athalia, queen of judah*
Grace Davidson *josabeth, wife of joad*
Rupert Entickhap *joad, high priest*
Anthony Gregory *mathan, priest of baal tenor*
Christian Immler *abner, captain of the jewish forces*
Treble from Westminster Abbey *Joas, King of Judah*
Laurence Cumming *conductor*
London Handel Orchestra
London Handel Singers

25 April – Music for a Queen – King’s College Chapel

Choir of King’s College, London
Joseph Fort *conductor*

27 April – Handel’s Rival Divas – St George’s, Hanover Square

Southbank Sinfonia
Adrian Butterfield *director*
Lauren Lodge-Campbell *soprano*
Helen Charlston *mezzo-soprano*

Lunchtime recitals – all at St George’s, Hanover Square, 1pm

27 March – Guildhall School of Music and Drama – Handel and Ferrandini

1 April – Helen Charlston (First Prize winner) with Baroque Ensemble Lux, Eva Caballero (flute), Nikolay Ginov (cello) and Asako Ogawa (harpsichord) – Handel

3 April – Royal College of Music’s Historical Performance Faculty – Handel, Purcell and Bach.

4 April – Lauren Lodge-Campbell (Second Prize and Audience Prize winner) with Sophie Stimson (violin), Jacob Garside (cello) and Satoko Doi-Luck (harpsichord) – Handel and Bach

10 April – Daniel Mullaney (Finalist) with Michael Papadopoulos (harpsichord and organ) – Handel

24 April – Emma Stannard (Finalist) with Heather Tomala (harpsichord) - Handel

Walks – all by Blue Badge Guide Janice Liverseidge

4 April – “Handel and Hogarth and 18th century contemporaries around Covent Garden”

St Martin-in-the-Fields – 5:30pm

8 April – “Handel’s Patrons and London’s nobility”

Green Park Underground – 6pm

14 April – “Music, meat, blood and guts!”

St Paul’s Underground, 2:30pm

25 April – “1000 years of churches, palaces, jousting and watery delights”

Wesminster Underground

Handel Singing Competition

5 March - Semi-Final – Grosvenor Chapel

6 April - Final – St George’s, Hanover Square