

PRESS KIT 2023
Halle Handel Festival

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**for the presentation of the 2023 HANDEL FESTIVAL programme,
and announcement of the 2023 HANDEL PRIZE LAUREATE**

**Music in authentic venues
in the city of George Frideric Handel's birth,
Halle an der Saale**

**Tuesday, 29 November 2022, 11am
in the Chamber Music Hall of Handel House**

Participants:

Dr. Judith Marquardt, City of Halle Councillor for Culture and Sport

Dr. Jürgen Fox, Chairman of the Saalesparkasse Executive Board / Member of the Handel House Foundation Board of Trustees

Astrid Wessler, Press and Public Relations Manager Lotto-Toto GmbH Sachsen-Anhalt

Walter Sutcliffe, Artistic Director of Halle Opera

Louisa Proske, Deputy Artistic Director & In-house Stage Director of Halle Opera

Fabrice Bollon, General Music Director of Halle Opera & Chief Conductor of Staatskapelle Halle

Prof. Dr. Wolfgang Hirschmann, Professor of Historical Musicology at Martin-Luther-Universität Halle-Wittenberg & President of the Georg-Friedrich-Händel-Gesellschaft e.V.

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PRESS KIT 2023 Halle Handel Festival

2023 Handel Festival – Opera: *Dispute over Tweedle-dum and Tweedle-dee* from 26 May to 11 June 2023

From 26 May to 11 June 2023 in the city of George Frideric Handel's birth, the Handel Festival will be celebrating every facet of Baroque music with a sparkling array of events ranging from grand opera, solemn oratorios and prestigious gala concerts through to cross-genre formats. The title of the 2023 Handel Festival is *Opera: Dispute over Tweedle-dum and Tweedle-dee*. And this is reflected in the programme, which includes a total of six opera productions.

The festival will open with a new production of the opera *Serse* (HWV 40), which begins with Handel's famous first aria, *Ombra mai fu*. Numerous other operas, oratorios and concerts will make this 17-day festival a highpoint for early music fans. Enriching the festival programme are numerous events featuring other genres of music and new concert formats that call musical boundaries into question and take visitors on musical voyages of discovery. Following the anniversary year of 2022, which celebrated "100 Years of the Handel Festival in Halle", numerous well-known stars of the Baroque scene, including quite a few past Handel Prize laureates, will be tuning up for the start of a new century of the Handel Festival.

During the festival, this year's Handel Prize will be awarded to the mezzo-soprano Anna Bonitatibus, who has performed the great classics of concert and opera repertoire with unflagging passion for some 30 years. Born in southern Italy, the singer has been regarded as an outstanding interpreter of Baroque opera and of Handel's music in particular since her first recording of Vivaldi's opera *La Griselda* in 1992.

Advance ticket sales for all the festival events will start on 29 November 2022.

With 70 main events and numerous accompanying events in 17 venues in and around Halle, the tradition-steeped Handel Festival once again guarantees an excellent and varied programme in 2023.

For example, awaiting audiences are yet another new operatic production, *Alessandro Severo* (HWV A13), a pasticcio put together by Handel and, with the late version of *Rinaldo* (HWV 7b), an opera that was a huge success for Handel in London in 1711 and 1731 – both will be performed in the historic Goethe Theatre in Bad Lauchstädt. The opera *Orlando* (HWV 31), a reprise from the 2022 Handel Festival directed by Halle Opera's artistic director, the British-born Walter Sutcliffe, as well as the concert performance of the opera *Lotario* (HWV26) will take place at Halle Opera, while Handel's *Giulio Cesare in Egitto* (HWV 17) can be seen at Leipzig Opera.

Internationally renowned stars of Baroque music can also be heard in the 2023 gala concerts. Just a selection of them shows the prestigious range: from the soprano voices of Anna Prohaska, Julia Lezhneva and Veronica Cangemi to the mezzo-sopranos Anna Bonitatibus and Laila Salome Fischer; from the countertenors Raffaele Pe, Jakub Józef Orliński and Xavier Sabata to tenor Julian Prégardien and baritone Sergio Foresti – at the Handel Festival every register is

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represented by masters of their art. On the conductor's podium, audiences will have the chance to see internationally known experts of Baroque music, including Jana Semerádová, Alessandro di Marchi, Federico Maria Sardelli, Attilio Cremonesi, Rubén Dubrovsky and Handel Prize laureates Wolfgang Katschner and Andrea Marcon.

Visitors are guaranteed a truly Baroque experience thanks to the historically informed performance practice of renowned period instrument ensembles who will be accompanying both well-known and rising musicians in Halle. The Handel Festival's international network of contacts has spawned numerous joint productions, such as that with the Innsbruck Festival of Early Music: *Il Messia* is the spectacular new production of a virtually unknown Italian version of Handel's famous oratorio. Further joint productions include ones with Collegium Marianum from Prague, the London Handel Festival, the Klangvokal Music Festival from Dortmund and our friends from the Göttingen International Handel Festival. Besides the Handel Festival Orchestra and Staatskapelle Halle, other renowned ensembles from all over Europe will be guests at the 2023 Handel Festival, including Modo Antiquo from Florence, the Brussels-based New Baroque Times, the {oh!} Orkiestra Historyczna from Katowice, Capella Cracoviensis from Cracow, and the German ensembles Concerto Köln and Lautten Compagny from Berlin.

Another central theme in next year's programme will again be the interaction between early music and musical genres beyond Baroque. This kind of bridge-building between genres is already evident in the very name of the popular symphonic rock concert, *Bridges to Classics*, in which Staatskapelle Halle meets a famous star guest from rock music. Other artistic border-crossings include an encounter between Baroque and jazz music and, part of the programme since 2018, the Poetry Slam.

In 2023 the City of Halle Handel Prize awarded by the Handel House Foundation will go to the Italian mezzo-soprano **Anna Bonitatibus**. With this award, the Handel House Foundation Board of Trustees will be honouring the boundless enthusiasm with which she has interpreted Handel's music for many years and her passionate commitment that has led to the performance of even less well-known works.

The 2023 International Academic Conference is entitled *The Politics of Opera – Handel's Opera Academies 1719–1737*. This will discuss the politico-cultural and social negotiating processes at every level of Handel's London operatic productions.

The annual exhibition *Fireworks and Halle-lujah – 100 Years of the Handel Festival in Halle*, which opened on 23 February 2022 under the patronage of the President of the Federal Republic of Germany, looks back at the eventful history of the Handel Festival in Halle, of which, even back in 1922, the Fireworks Music and the Hallelujah Chorus from *Messiah* were an obligatory part. The centenary exhibition continues in 2023, during which the miniature opera theatre featuring the opera *Orlando*, the two new productions in the Handel Junior film series and

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children's audio play can still be enjoyed. A new feature, however, starting on Handel's birthday on 23 February, will be a special display of educational content from the museum in the two top-floor rooms of Handel House.

Artistic Director Clemens Birnbaum is looking forward to the festival: "The 2023 festival programme is a seamless continuation of the magnificent anniversary festival. In it, we've set Handel's music theatre works at the forefront. We want to remind people that the composer had repeated difficulties in London and was forced to act to ensure that his Italian operas were well-received by the audiences. After the Covid pandemic and in view of the economic and energy crisis, opera houses, theatres and not least international festivals are also facing huge challenges. Despite this, the Handel Festival can look ahead with confidence thanks to the support of the City of Halle, the State of Saxony-Anhalt and the federal government, as well as that of private patrons and sponsors. By way of example I would like to mention in particular Lotto Sachsen-Anhalt, Ostdeutsche Sparkassenstiftung and Saalesparkasse."

The mayor, Egbert Geier, is looking keenly ahead to the festival: "*Opera: Dispute over Tweedle-dum and Tweedle-dee* – the title of the 2023 festival is fun, informal and bold and should attract more than just the usual opera lovers to the performances. It holds excitement, promises the unexpected and should inspire new visitors to approach Handel's music. I am firmly convinced that a year after the successful anniversary festival, we will once again be doing honour to 'our' Handel with one of the greatest music festivals in the country and thrilling visitors from all over the world."

Dr. Jürgen Fox, Chairman of the Saalesparkasse Executive Board, underscores this: "The Handel Festival marks the highpoint of the region's cultural year and each time round enthuses a highly interested audience. We are delighted to be able to pursue our longstanding partnership again this year and, together with Ostdeutsche Sparkassenstiftung, to go on actively contributing to the success of the Halle Handel Festival."

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Operas and Serenades at the Handel Festival

SERSE HWV 40 In Italian with German supertitles	Halle Opera (new production) 26 & 28 May, 3 & 11 June
ALESSANDRO SEVERO HWV A ¹³ Opera pasticcio In Italian with German supertitles	Goethe Theatre, Bad Lauchstädt (new production) 27, 28 & 29 May
ORLANDO HWV 31 (reprise of the 2022 Handel Festival production) In Italian with German supertitles	Halle Opera 1 & 7 June
RINALDO HWV 7b Performance based on the Halle Handel Edition In Italian with German supertitles	Goethe Theatre, Bad Lauchstädt 9, 10 & 11 June
LOTARIO HWV 26 Concert performance	Halle Opera 11 June
GIULIO CESARE IN EGITTO HWV 17 In Italian with German supertitles	Leipzig Opera 11 June
ACI, GALATEA E POLIFEMO HWV 72	Löwengebäude (auditorium of Martin-Luther-Universität Halle-Wittenberg) 11 June
APOLLO E DAFNE HWV 122	Leopoldina, Banquet Hall 3 June

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Oratorios and Choral Concerts at the Halle Handel Festival

IL MESSIA Halle Cathedral
HWV 56 27 May
Florentine version c. 1768 in Italian
The autograph score is part of the Handel House Foundation collection

MESSIAH Marktkirche Halle
HWV 56 2 June
English version

MUSICAL ENCOUNTERS: Ulrichskirche Concert Hall
FOUNDLING HOSPITAL ANTHEM 3 June
HWV 268 and *ZADOK THE PRIEST*
HWV 258 by G. F. Handel and
MASS IN D MAJOR by J. F. Fasch

MOTET CONCERT Marktkirche, Halle
CHANDOS ANTHEM AS PANTS THE 3 June
HART HWV 251b by G. F. Handel
and
cantata *BEFIEL DEM HERRN DEINE*
WEGE by G. H. Stölzel

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Operas at the 2023 Halle Handel Festival

The 2023 Handel Festival will open with one of the today's most popular operas by the Halle composer: **Serse**. And right at the beginning of this opera about the Persian king Xerxes we will hear *Ombra mai fu*, one of Handel's most famous arias. The musical direction is in the hands of the Baroque specialist and artistic director of the Handel Festival Orchestra, Attilio Cremonesi. Performing with familiar members of the Halle Opera ensemble, the soloists are countertenor Leandro Marziotte and, in the title role, the internationally renowned mezzo-soprano, Anna Bonitatibus. Following this premiere, she will receive the City of Halle Handel Prize, awarded by the Handel House Foundation. This new production is directed by Louisa Proske, who says of this opera in three acts: "This magnificent late work by Handel dating from 1738 sparkles with musical ideas and caustic humour. It takes a satirical look at the members of an upper class who, against a glamorous background, act like toddlers in a sandpit."

With **Alessandro Severo**, the series of Handel's largely unknown opera pasticcis that has achieved widespread acclaim will come to a close at the Halle festival. This fully staged performance is a joint production with an outstanding partner, the internationally renowned Collegium Marianum from Prague. The stage director is Monika Hliněnská. This opera pasticcio, for which Handel drew on existing pieces of music of his own composition, tells the story of the Roman emperor, Severus Alexander. Under the musical direction of flautist Jana Semerádová and with the participation of star singers such as Raffaele Pe and Hana Blažíková, the performance represents a highpoint in the festival programme. This very special theatrical event is possible thanks to funding by Ostdeutsche Sparkassenstiftung and Saalesparkasse.

With the reprise of **Orlando**, "the musically richest of all Handel operas" (Winton Dean) will again be delighting Handel Festival visitors this year. Arno Lückner of Opernwelt magazine judged this stage production to be "one of the most coherent, cleverest Handel productions of recent times, which should also appeal to young people". The stage director is Walter Sutcliffe and the musical director will, as in 2022, be the British Baroque specialist, Christian Curnyn. In the title role you can hear the internationally celebrated countertenor Xavier Sabata.

Besides his title role in *Orlando*, Xavier Sabata will also be delighting the audience at the Goethe Theatre in Bad Lauchstädt in **Rinaldo** – and in two ways: as stage director, marking his debut in this role, and as a soloist, playing the eponymous Christian knight. This production features the rarely performed second version of Handel's 1731 opera – one more reason not to miss it. Yet another reason is quality of the musical performance: under the baton of the Polish conductor Jan Tomasz Adamus, this will be provided by Capella Cracoviensis, one of the leading eastern European Baroque orchestras.

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The concert performance of Handel's opera **Lotario** promises to be an anniversary event of the highest calibre. Attilio Cremonesi will conduct the Halle Festival Orchestra which will be celebrating its 30th anniversary in 2023 and since its founding has perpetuated the Handel tradition in Halle with its historically informed performance practice. Alongside the 2023 Handel Prize laureate Anna Bonitatibus, further Baroque stars, such as Carlo Vistoli and Karina Gauvin, will make this special evening unforgettable.

In a joint production between Théâtre des Champs-Élysées, Opéra Orchestre national de Montpellier Occitanie, Théâtre du Capitole Toulouse and Leipzig Opera, audiences will be able to enjoy Handel's most-performed opera **Giulio Cesare in Egitto** in Leipzig. The opera will be performed by the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra under the musical direction of Rubén Dubrovsky, who has been a guest at the Handel Festival in Halle on several occasions. The stage director is Damiano Michieletto.

Handel's serenata **Aci, Galatea e Polifemo** could also be called a chamber opera. Thanks to its musical quality, this work about the blissful love affair between the shepherd Acis and the nymph Galatea which is destroyed by the cyclops Polyphemus is regarded as one of Handel's great masterpieces. The arias demand huge virtuosity of the three vocal soloists. With the young soprano Federico Fiorio, who recently performed to great acclaim in Drottningholm in Sweden, in the role of the shepherd Acis, as well as Margherita Maria Sala and Luigi De Donato, audiences can expect a stellar performance. All the more so as the musical direction is in the hands of the Handel connoisseur, Federico Maria Sardelli.

The cantata **Apollo e Dafne**, too, has the feel of a mini-opera. In it, Handel combines his experience of operatic composition that he began in Hamburg and consolidated in Italy. The cantata tells the gripping story of the divine "stalker", Apollo, and Daphne, whom the former covets but who prefers to be transformed into a tree than bend to his will. With Sophie Junker and Tomáš Král two virtuoso singers especially capable of bringing out all the drama of the music and plot are returning to Halle. They will be supported by the {oh!} Orkiestra Historyczna from Katowice and their concertmaster Martyna Pastuszka, who has achieved widespread acclaim for her interpretations of Baroque operas. You can hear the cantata with other settings of the subject in the concert **Metamorphosis**.

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Oratorios and Choral Music at the 2023 Halle Handel Festival

For experts and admirers of the early music scene a great surprise is in store with ***Il Messia***: the Florentine arrangement dating from around 1768 of Handel's probably best-known work will be performed for the 2023 Handel Festival in collaboration with the Innsbruck Early Music Festival under the baton of Alessandro de Marchi. He will be accompanied by soloists of international renown. The first modern-day performance of this *Il Messia* in Innsbruck in August 2022 was an acclaimed highpoint of Baroque music festival there. The original manuscript of this Italian version has been in the possession of the Handel House Foundation for a number of years.

One tradition at the Handel Festival is the performance of the popular oratorio, ***Messiah***. In 2023, Handel Prize laureate Wolfgang Katschner will be performing it together with young soloists, some of whom have already made sensational appearances at previous Handel Festivals, and with the renowned Lautten Compagny Berlin and Capella Angelica. After years of renovation work, the oratorio can, as in the past, once again be heard in the church where Handel was baptised. Following another established tradition, the performance of *Messiah* is presented by Lotto Sachsen-Anhalt.

Two choral concerts also feature on the festival programme. In a concert entitled ***Musical Encounter***, Handel's *Foundling Hospital Anthem* and the splendid coronation anthem *Zadok the Priest* can be heard alongside a mass by the Zerst composer, Johann Friedrich Fasch. They will be sung by the Johann Friedrich Reichardt University Choir, conducted by the Fasch Prize laureate, Jens Lorenz. A musical ***Motet concert*** can be heard in the church where Handel was baptised, sung by Stadtsingechor zu Halle under the direction of Clemens Flämig. Among other works, they will sing Handel's Chandos anthem, *As Pants the Hart*.

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International Master Class: Gala Concerts

Further highlights of the Handel Festival that lend particular prestige to the two festival weeks include the concerts featuring stars of the international Baroque music scene.

The first gala concert of the 2023 Handel Festival will be honoured by the presence of the internationally renowned, star Baroque singers, **Anna Prohaska** and **Bejun Mehta**. Under the musical direction of Handel Prize laureate Wolfgang Katschner and accompanied by Lautten Compagney Berlin, the concert will feature magnificent arias, duets and instrumental pieces that explore the theme of human relationships.

On her "grand tour", virtuoso singer **Julia Lezhneva** will be stopping off at the Handel Festival and together with the prize-winning period instrument ensemble Concerto Köln performing works by G. F. Handel, A. Vivaldi and C. H. Graun. To judge by Lezhneva's past appearances at the Handel Festival in 2014, 2015 and 2018, with her powerful voice of "angelic beauty" – to quote the New York Times – and the brilliant virtuosity of Concerto Köln we are promised an unforgettable evening.

In the concert entitled *Giulio Cesare – A Baroque Hero*, countertenor **Raffaele Pe** will be following in the footsteps of the Roman emperor Julius Caesar with works by G. Giacomelli, A. Pollarolo, N. Piccinni, F. Bianchi and G. F. Handel. The period instrument ensemble La Lira d'Orfeo, conducted by Gian Andrea Guerra, will be making their first appearance at the Halle Handel Festival.

Works by the rival opera composers G. F. Handel and G. Bononcini are the subject of the concert by countertenor **Jakub Józef Orliński**, and fittingly so, as the dispute between the composers inspired the theme of the 2023 Handel Festival. Together with the early music orchestra Capella Cracoviensis under the musical direction of Jan Tomasz Adamus, Orliński will bring the musical battle of 1720s London to the 2023 Handel Festival in Halle.

In the 1720s Handel wrote some notable opera roles for the Italian tenor Francesco Borosini, thereby bringing the tenor register out of the shadow and to the front of the stage. Some 300 years later, **Julian Prégardien** will be devoting his concert to these virtuoso Borosini arias at the 2023 Handel Festival. He will be accompanied by La Cetra Barockorchester from Basel. Conducting them will be **Andrea Marcon**, the 2021 Handel Prize laureate, who will receive his award belatedly at the end of the concert.

While numerous musicians will be appearing for the first time at the Handel Festival in Halle, the gala concert featuring **Veronica Cangemi** marks more of a farewell appearance – the soprano intends to end her singing career and devote herself to teaching young musicians. She made her debut at the 1997 Handel

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Festival as Dalinda in *Ariodante*. In 2023, she will be bidding farewell to the city of Handel's birth with works by G. F. Handel and A. Vivaldi. Under the musical direction of Handel Prize laureate **Andrea Marcon** and La Cetra Barockorchester Basel, visitors can expect a superb and prestigious evening's performance.

Another gala concert will see the return to Halle of the well-known and frequently acclaimed countertenor **Filippo Mineccia**. He will be embarking on an exciting musical foray through different settings of *Orlando*. Other international singers will be celebrating their debut at the festival as outstanding soloists – one example is the baritone **Sergio Foresti** in his concert, *Cieco Amor*. The Handel Festival frequently offers a platform for young talented singers who are just starting their career. One of these is the tenor **Marco Angioloni**, whose concert Handel versus Bononcini is a musical reflection of the festival theme. He will be accompanied by the ensemble Il Groviglio, who are also making their debut in Halle.

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Beyond Musical Boundaries: Cross-genre Projects

It is a well-known fact that the Handel Festival is about far more than just early music. Once again in 2023, other musical genres and new concert formats will be enriching the programme, questioning musical boundaries and sending festival visitors on musical voyages of discovery.

One indubitable highpoint of the 2023 Handel Festival will come on Saturday 10 June, when the popular open-air concert, **Bridges to Classics** will again be breaking down the boundaries between classical, rock and pop music. Against the impressive scenery of the Galgenberg Gorge, electric guitar, violin and a choir are some of the sounds to be heard in this sunset symphonic rock concert – not forgetting the saxophone of musical director Bernd Ruf, who has conducted this bridge-building effort for the past 20 years. Which star guest will be lending their voice to the 2023 Bridges to Classics remains a secret until the spring – suspense!

Exciting interpretations and new arrangements of Handel's music are what the **Makiko Hirabayashi Weavers** promise with their programme entitled *Chain of Life – Echoes of Handel?*, held in St George's Church in cooperation with Women in Jazz. Together with Fredrik Lundin on the saxophone and Bjørn Heebøll on percussion the exceptional Japanese pianist Makiko Hirabayashi, who has lived in Denmark since the 1990s, will be weaving elements of jazz and classical music together to form a wholly unique sound and showing Handel's music from a new perspective.

Since the 2018 Handel Festival, the **Poetry Slam** puts the emphasis on the spoken word and invites wordsmiths to take the stage. The presenter this year again is Halle-based slammer Katja Hofmann, who has more than ten years' experience in national and international slams. On this year's theme of "Battle of Words", the slam promises to be a thrilling evening of surprises and inspiration between words and wit, combined with a pinch of profundity.

Mezzo-soprano **Laila Salome Fischer** and jazz trumpeter **Pascal Klewer** will show what results when early music meets jazz in **Baroque Lounge I**. Historically informed performance practice comes together with an innovative programme in *Agrippina – A Baroque-Jazz Guide*, also featuring the ensemble Il Giratempo. In it, "Time-Turner", as the ensemble's name translates into English, will cover 300 years of music history. This concert about the Roman empress, Agrippina, is held in cooperation with the Göttingen International Handel Festival.

In **Baroque-Lounge II** the international chamber music ensemble Thomas Dobler's New Baroque led by Swiss jazz vibraphonist **Thomas Dobler** performs works by G. F. Handel in *Haendel Reloaded*. Here, familiar Baroque pieces are combined with element of jazz, world music and pop. Unique compositions, arrangements and improvisations are the result.

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The City as a Stage: Open-air Concerts, Church Concerts and More

Once again in 2023, Handel's music will sound in authentic venues of Halle when the whole city becomes a stage – and often with free admission.

The 2023 Handel Festival will open on Friday 26 May with the **ceremony at the Handel monument** on Halle's Marktplatz. Following this, you will be able to hear a carillon concert played by the bells of the Red Tower, before five different organs sound for the **19th Organ Night**. The Saturday programme will open with the **festival lecture** by Prof. Dr. Arnold Jacobshagen on "The dispute over opera – from Handel to the present day". From 1pm, Marktplatz will be transformed into a stage as theatre group Incanto perform their play, **Baroque and Rococo in Halle**.

After an exciting guided tour of the Botanical Garden, music lovers who enjoy concerts under an open, early summer sky can listen to the Halle University Choir and the Pfeiferstuhl Music wind quintet during their **promenade concert** – an unusual experience for all the senses that ends with snacks and refreshments. In **WaterMusic**, a musical boat trip down the romantic Saale Valley, Ventum Ensemble Leipzig and soloists from the Sächsische Bläserphilharmonie perform arrangements of Handel's music and other pieces on the MS Händel 2. The English king, George I, indulged in similar activities some three hundred years ago on the Thames. But Halle's WaterMusic pursues different musical paths, part popular pieces and part swing.

If you like your food served with music, you'll find the **Walking Dinner** to your taste – or (a purely musical starter) one of the **Lunchtime Concerts** organised in cooperation with the London Handel Festival and featuring, among others, Handel Singing Competition London winners Eszter Balogh and Hilary Cronin. A chance, perhaps, to hear the great vocal stars of tomorrow for free.

The **International Academic Conference** of the 2023 Handel Festival, entitled *The Politics of Opera – Handel's Opera Academies 1719–1737*, takes a look at the politico-cultural and social negotiating processes at every level of the opera productions of that time. Last but not least, the aim is also to critically update historical findings in the context of the situation of opera houses today.

Ending the 2023 Handel Festival will be the famed **Bridges to Classics** concert and, on the final evening, the **closing concert**; two open-air events set against the romantic, natural backcloth of the Galgenberg Gorge. As the final chord sounds, the Handel Festival in Halle an der Saale traditionally bids a fortissimo farewell to visitors with Handel's *Fireworks Music* and a superb closing fireworks display.

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2023 Handel Prize laureate

In 2023 the City of Halle Handel Prize, which is awarded by the Handel House Foundation, will go to the Italian mezzo-soprano **Anna Bonitatibus**. With this award, the Handel House Foundation Board of Trustees will be honouring the boundless enthusiasm with which she has interpreted Handel's music for many years and her passionate commitment that has led to performances of even less well-known works. Since her first recording of Vivaldi's opera *La Griselda* in 1992, Anna Bonitatibus has been regarded as an outstanding interpreter of Baroque opera and of Handel's music in particular.

The anti-diva, as Bonitatibus likes to style herself, was born in Potenza in the Basilicata region of southern Italy. Since her debut in *Don Giovanni* at La Scala in Milan in 1999, Anna Bonitatibus has lent her voice to countless works of the early Baroque, the bel canto period and more than 70 operas, working with internationally acclaimed conductors and stage directors. She has already performed ten operas by G. F. Handel alone: *Agrippina*, *Alcina*, *Deidamia*, *Giulio Cesare*, *Orlando*, *Tamerlano*, *Tolomeo*, *Ottone*, *Il trionfo del Tempo e del Disinganno* and, recently, during her European tour of the 2021-22 season, as Tigrane in *Radamisto*.

Her *Hosenrollen* – literally "trouser roles", male characters played by a woman – made Bonitatibus an internationally celebrated interpreter of Mozart's music. She has performed major works by Handel, Mozart and Rossini at Europe's greatest opera and concert venues. From her first steps at Milan's Teatro alla Scala to the Bavarian State Opera House in Munich, Théâtre des Champs-Élysées in Paris, Teatro Real de Madrid, La Monnaie in Brussels, the Vienna State Opera, the Royal Opera House in London and the festivals in Salzburg, Florence, Munich, Bologna and Grange – Bonitatibus is a star of the Baroque.

With her CD recording of Vivaldi's *La Griselda* in 1992, Anna Bonitatibus laid the first stone in a whole series of award-winning recordings. In 2015, she received the International Opera Award in the CD (Operatic Recital) category for her album *Semiramide – La Signora regale*. With her CD *En Travesti*, with the Munich Radio Orchestra, she dealt with the subject of *Hosenrollen*.

In addition to her artistic activities, Anna Bonitatibus also researches and promotes Italian *lirica da camera*. Working together with experienced musicians and academics from European universities of renown, raising the international reputation of this musical legacy is a subject close to her heart.

With the new production of *Serse* at the 2023 Handel Festival, Anna Bonitatibus is adding one further Handel opera to her repertoire and will open the festival with its famous first aria, *Ombra mai fu*.

More information and photos are available at: <http://www.annabonitatibus.com/>

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Thoughts on the Festival Theme

By Clemens Birnbaum

Now, following the Covid pandemic, society is facing further huge challenges in the shape of the energy and economic crisis, which will certainly also have repercussions on cultural life. It is nothing new in the long history of the Handel Festival for exceptional external events to have a direct impact on the festival programme. Some scheduled festivals were unable to take place for this reason.

Traditional opera has also experienced historical crises. Less than 50 years ago, for example, the renowned composer and conductor Pierre Boulez, in an interview in *Der Spiegel*, urged people to: "Blow the opera houses up!". This was a funeral oration for modern opera first and foremost, but which also questioned the entire opera system per se.

George Frideric Handel repeatedly faced great challenges when trying to establish Italian opera in England. His first London opera, *Rinaldo*, written in 1711, attracted extraordinary interest from the English public and press. But the first criticisms of opera soon made themselves heard; for example, that this genre was a laughable in-between thing, written in a language no one understood and which, moreover, was far too expensive. Over the next 30 years, Handel repeatedly tried to convince the English of the opposite. From the mid-1720s an additional problem arose: opera lovers were divided – to the malicious delight of opera haters – into two camps, who argued fiercely about whose operas were the better ones, Handel's or those of Giovanni Bononcini. A musical locking of horns resulted and open rivalry between the two composers. Witness to this is the ironic epigram by the poet John Byrom, which provided the inspiration for the title of the 2023 Handel Festival.

Some say, compar'd to Bononcini
That Mynheer Handel's but a Ninny
Others aver, that he to Handel
Is scarcely fit to hold a candle
Strange all this Difference should be
Twixt Tweedle-dum and Tweedle-dee!

John Byrom -
Epigram on the Feuds Between Handel and Bononcini

While the Royal Academy, the first London opera company for which Handel worked from 1719, favoured operas in the grand, heroic style in their choice of pieces – as can be seen with *Giulio Cesare* in 1723-24 and later with *Lotario* in 1729 – a very experimental tendency is noticeable in the seasonal programmes of Handel's subsequent opera companies. Because the composer had to react if he wanted to win back the interest of the London audiences for Italian opera after the dissolution of the Royal Academy in 1728 due to financial failure. Consequently, besides non-heroic material and operas which, as with *Orlando*

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(1732-33), were “on the threshold of comic opera” (Silke Leopold), oratorios in English, among other genres, additionally found their way onto theatres’ seasonal programmes. Various opera pasticcis, such as *Alessandro Severo* (1738) were also performed. But all these measures were not enough to prevent Handel’s last Italian operas in London enjoying only moderate success with audiences. This applies even to the today very popular opera, *Serse*, which, after its premiere on 15 April 1738, ran for only five performances. By the early 1740’s, Handel’s efforts to firmly establish Italian opera in London society despite all resistance had therefore failed. In the following years the composer wrote no further operas, but concentrated on English-language oratorio.

You will be able to hear most of the operas named above at the 2023 Handel Festival and can therefore look forward to an exciting foray through Handel’s 30 years of opera in London with all its highs and lows, performed by very famous interpreters of Baroque music and important supporting partners. Today, Handel’s operas are firmly anchored in theatre repertoire. The resistance the composer was forced to contend with is hard to understand.

By looking back to Handel’s time, the thematic focus is also intended to stimulate a debate in the present about how opera can continue to be an attractive artistic form of expression. On the one hand, this debate is already in progress with one section of the audience, in particular those opera-goers who reject modern director’s theatre because it is not “faithful to the original”. But it also has a cultural and political dimension when one considers the question of which social target groups opera should address and in what way the public sector should contribute to financing it.

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Visitor Information and Information on Ticket Sales

The 2023 Handel Festival visitors' office in Handel House is open daily from 24 May to 11 June, from 10am to 6pm. Here, visitors can get information about events, the programmes of individual events and unsold tickets. Visitors can also purchase the festival magazine. This provides an overall insight into the festival, with interesting features on the performers, background information about performances and much more besides.

The box offices open one hour before the start of performances at the respective venues.

Tickets for the 2023 Handel Festival are available:

- Via the hotline +49 (0)345 / 5652706 (Monday to Friday: 7am-6pm, Saturday: 7am to 12 noon)
- At: www.haendelfestspiele-halle.de
- From all CTS-Eventim advance ticket booking agencies all over Germany
In Saxony-Anhalt also from TiM Ticket in *Mitteldeutsche Zeitung* service centres.

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Press release

2023 Handel Festival – LOTTO renews support for this Baroque music festival

€70,000 for “Opera: Dispute over Tweedle-dum and Tweedle-dee”

Magdeburg, 29 November 2022 – When stars of the international Baroque music scene meet for the traditional Handel Festival from 26 May to 11 June 2023, a multitude of events will once again be celebrating the city’s great son.

Following the centenary edition of 2022, the Handel House Foundation chose a theme of overarching interest for the festival theme: Baroque opera. Entitled *Opera: Dispute over Tweedle-dum and Tweedle-dee*, it focuses on Handel’s opera and theatrical work, at the same time building bridges of artistic interest to other music genres.

George Frideric Handel’s home city has commemorated and conserved his legacy for more than a century. LOTTO Sachsen-Anhalt has sponsored the Handel Festival since 1998 and has provided funding of more than 1.1 million euros of lottery earnings* to date, 70,000 euros of which are going to the 2023 Baroque music festival.

“With the choice of the festival’s leading theme for 2023, the guardians of George Frideric Handel’s musical legacy are opening up a new chapter in the history of music. As new life is breathed into the old Baroque opera, music lovers from home and abroad who come to the great composer’s birth city can enjoy some very special musical moments,” says Lotto’s managing director, Stefan Ebert. “LOTTO Sachsen-Anhalt has for many years been a dependable sponsor of the Handel Festival, the fame of which reaches far beyond the state of Saxony-Anhalt.”

Further information:

*Lottery funding resources come from lottery revenues. For every euro spent on a LOTTO Sachsen-Anhalt product, around 20 cents go towards projects of public interest. Depending on the project, any not-for-profit body can apply for lottery funding resources ► since July 2022 solely online on www.lottosachsenanhalt.de in the section *Lotto fördert* (“Lotto funds”).

Since 1991, LOTTO Sachsen-Anhalt has provided funding of over 37.9 million euros to City of Halle projects – its most recent contributions in the culture category include those for the Monstronale Festival in mid-October, the improvised drama festival in late November and the annual Women in Jazz festival held in Halle every spring.

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Press release

Stadtwerke Halle supports the 2023 Handel Festival

The 2023 Handel Festival will take place in Halle from 26 May to 11 June and is entitled *Opera: Dispute over Tweedle-dum and Tweedle-dee*. “As longstanding sponsors, we are extremely attached to the Handel Festival because it has been thrilling music-lovers from all over the world since 1922. Famous artists and first-rate orchestras bring pleasure to concert-goers and music critics alike – reason enough for us to support this top-class event. We want to do our bit towards building a rich cultural landscape in Halle an der Saale, because that is good for us too,” says Matthias Lux, Managing Director of Stadtwerke Halle.

Stadtwerke Halle not only assumes economic responsibilities, it is also passionately committed to culture, sport, science and education – as well as numerous other activities that make everyday life in this city on the River Saale pleasanter and contribute to the well-being of the people who live here. Stadtwerke Halle operates in four fields of business:

- **Energy**
Energy supply, provision of energy-efficiency services
- **Water and Waste Management**
Water supply, sewage treatment, waste disposal, secondary raw materials
- **Mobility**
Local public transport, mobility, logistics
- **Services**
Municipal infrastructure services, internal services

Stadtwerke Halle GmbH

Stadtwerke Halle is a powerful corporate group providing the full range of basic utilities for the city of Halle and services to industry: its operations range from energy and water supply to local public transport, recycling, sewage treatment, waste disposal, street-cleaning, ice and snow-clearing services, logistics, landfill and infrastructure services and data processing, right through to the provision of swimming facilities and street-lighting – all from a single source. With 2,945 employees and interns and an annual turnover of €781m in 2021, Stadtwerke Halle is the largest industrial employer in Halle an der Saale and the largest municipal utility in Saxony-Anhalt. More at: www.stadtwerke-halle.de

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