

PRESS KIT 2024 Handel Festival Halle

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**for the presentation of the 2024 HANDEL FESTIVAL programme
and announcement of the 2024 HANDEL PRIZE LAUREATE**

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

**Wednesday, 22 November 2023, 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 of Lotto-Toto GmbH Sachsen-Anhalt

Walter Sutcliffe, Artistic Director of Halle Opera

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

Bernd Ruf, Musical Director of "Bridges to Classics"

Dr Bernd Feuchtner, Artistic Director of the Handel Festival

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Handel Festival 2024 – “Oh là là! Handel? – French Inspirations” from 24 May to 9 June 2024

With a cornucopia of events ranging from grand opera to solemn oratorio and dazzling concerts right through to genre-crossing formats, the Halle Handel Festival is scheduled to take place from 24 May to 9 June 2024 in the city of George Frideric Handel’s birth. The festival title is “Oh là là! Handel? – French Inspirations”.

The festival opens with a new production of the opera *Amadigi di Gaula*. Louisa Proske sends the hero on a hallucinatory odyssey through Kaspar Glarner’s enigmatic world of imagery. To bring this magical milieu to life Halle Opera will, for the first time in many years in a Handel Festival production, be collaborating with Ballet Halle, under the direction of Michal Sedláček. This is only the third production at the Halle Handel Festival of this many-layered magic opera by the 30-year-old Handel. Numerous other operas, oratorios and concerts make this 17-day festival a highpoint for early music fans. Enriching the festival programme are numerous events featuring other musical genres and new concert formats that question musical boundaries and take visitors on musical voyages of discovery. A broad spectrum of Baroque musicians, from famous stars to young talents, await the Handel Festival visitors.

In 2024, the City of Halle Handel Prize, awarded by the Handel House Foundation, will go to the French conductor and harpsichordist Christophe Rousset.

Advance ticket sales for all the festival events will start on 22 November 2023.

With 77 main and secondary events in 18 different venues in and around Halle, the tradition-steeped Handel Festival is guaranteed once again to be a rallying point for international fans and stars of the early music scene in 2024.

For example, in addition to the new production of *Amadigi di Gaula* (HWV 11), other new productions also await audiences, including one of Handel’s opera *Terpsicore* (HWV 8b) in the historic Goethe Theatre in Bad Lauchstädt, and *Titus l’Empereur* at the Carl Maria von Weber Theatre in Bernburg. The opera *Serse* (HWV 40), a reprise from the 2023 Handel Festival directed by Louisa Proske, will be performed at Halle Opera. Other venues in the city of Handel’s birth include the Francke Foundations, where there will be a concert performance of Handel’s *Teseo* (HWV 9), and the Georg Friedrich Händel Hall, where there will be a concert performance of *Tolomeo, re d’Egitto* (HWV 25) and the organ concert *Organ Spectacular* with Cameron Carpenter.

Internationally renowned stars of Baroque music, such as Franco Fagioli, Sophie Juncker, Magdalena Kožená, Marie Lys, Raffaella Milanesi, Lawrence Zazzo and many others will also be guests at the 2024 festival, singing Handel’s music in every register. With Michael Schneider, Dani Espasa, Leo Duarte, Attilio Cremonesi, Giovanni Antonini, Philipp Ahmann and the Handel Prize laureates Wolfgang Katschner, Andrea Marcon and Christophe Rousset, conductors of worldwide fame will be taking the conductor’s podium.

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Visitors are guaranteed a genuine Baroque experience thanks to the historically informed performance practice of renowned period instrument ensembles accompanying both well-known and rising musicians in Halle. Thanks to an international network of contacts the Handel Festival is involved in numerous joint productions, including with Kammerorchester Basel and the ensemble Il Giardino Armonico, the Emanuele Soavi Incompany Köln and lauten compagney BERLIN, the London Handel Festival and our friends of the International Handel Festival in Göttingen. Besides the Handel Festival Orchestra and Staatskapelle Halle, further acclaimed ensembles from all over Europe will also be present at the 2024 Handel Festival. They include the British ensembles Solomon's Knot and Opera Settecento, Switzerland's La Cetra Barockorchester, La Sfera Armoniosa from the Netherlands, the Polish Wrocław Baroque Orchestra, the French ensemble Les Talens Lyriques and the German ensembles Concerto Köln, Ensemble Polyharmonique, La Stagione Frankfurt, the Leipzig Baroque Opera, lauten compagney BERLIN and many more.

Another central theme in next year's programme is again the interaction between early music and musical genres beyond Baroque. In *Danse l'Europe*, the Pera Ensemble will combine European and Ottoman culture and shed light on the music's rich cultural interconnections. 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 comes together with 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 2024, the City of Halle Handel Prize, awarded by the Handel House Foundation, will go to the French conductor and harpsichordist **Christophe Rousset**. With this award, the Handel House Foundation Board of Trustees is honouring Christophe Rousset's decades-long, passionate interpretations of Handel's music on period instruments.

The 2024 International Academic Conference is entitled "An infinity of beautiful things. George Frideric Handel and French Music Culture". It will look at the prerequisites for, scope and significance of the influence of French music on Handel's work.

The annual exhibition *Charme • Esprit • Galanterie – Händel und Frankreich* ("*Charme • Esprit • Galanterie – Handel and France*") will shed compelling light on French influence and connections in relation to Handel through historical books, valuable prints, busts and musical instruments. Around 1700, France was a subject of fascination and cultural attraction in Europe, honoured, envied, but also viewed with fear. The French language and French culture and fashion set the standard and the royal court of Versailles was viewed as the centre from which French dance music emanated throughout Europe. This music also had a significant influence on Handel's works, although he never set foot on French soil. Handel spoke fluent French, was familiar with French art and literature and took inspiration from French music, including elements of it in his own compositions. The annual exhibition opens at 5pm on 23 February 2024 and can be visited until 7 January 2025.

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Artistic director Dr Bernd Feuchtner is looking forward to the festival: "Handel's education in Halle familiarised him with French culture and music. This comes across in his music, which is influenced by French dances and overtures. Even the libretti of his operas and oratorios are often based on French models. The 2024 Handel Festival will be devoted to this influence and present works by Handel which clearly demonstrate it. We are grateful for the support of the City of Halle, the State of Saxony-Anhalt and the German government, as well as private patrons and sponsors. By way of example I would like to mention in particular Lotto Sachsen-Anhalt, the Ostdeutsche Sparkasse Foundation and the Saalesparkasse bank."

The mayor, Egbert Geier, is looking keenly ahead to the festival: "The wit and creativity are almost tangible – even a little bit of frivolity is in evidence. With the choice of title alone, the festival organisers have once again succeeded in awakening a desire to hear Handel's music in all its facets. I am firmly convinced that next year we will again be honouring '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 / member of the Handel House Foundation Board of Trustees underscores this: "The Handel Festival's renown spreads well beyond the city of Halle an der Saale into all of Germany and throughout the world. It shows what a wealth of cultural treasure we have in our region. For us, it is an honour to be able to contribute to it, if only materially. Together with the Ostdeutsche Sparkasse Foundation, to which we extend our thanks here, the Saalesparkasse will be continuing this longstanding partnership next year too. We are already looking forward to the 2024 Handel Festival and the multitude of visitors from near and far."

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List of operas at the Handel Festival

- AMADIGI DI GAULA** Halle Opera (new production)
HWV 11 May 24 / 26, June 2 / 7
In Italian with German supertitles
- TERPSICORE** Goethe Theatre, Bad Lauchstädt (new production)
HWV 8b 25 / 26 / 27 May
A dance music project with music from Handel's *Terpsicore* and operas by J.-Ph. Rameau in Italian and French with German supertitles
- TESEO** Francke Foundations
HWV 9 28 May
Concert performance
In Italian with German supertitles
- SERSE** Halle Opera
HWV 40 31 May, 9 June
Reprise of the 2023 Handel Festival production
in Italian with German supertitles
- TITUS L'EMPEREUR** Carl Maria von Weber Theatre, Bernburg
(new production)
HWV A5 1 / 2 June
A reconstruction of the opera fragment by G. F. Handel
- HANDEL'S LIBRARY** Halle Opera
6 June
Pasticcio by Attilio Cremonesi with music by G. F. Handel and Jean-Philippe Rameau
- TOLOMEO, RE D'EGITTO** Georg Friedrich Händel Hall
HWV 25 7 June
Concert performance based on the Halle Handel Edition

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Operas at the Handel Festival

The 2024 Handel Festival opens with Handel's opera ***Amadigi di Gaula*** – a rarely performed masterpiece by the 30-year-old composer in which breathtakingly beautiful music takes us on an adventure-filled voyage through the labyrinth of a sorceress. Resident director Louisa Proske stages the opera, which is based on the chivalric romance *Amadís di Gaula* by Garcí Ordonez de Montalvo, as a hallucinatory odyssey through Kaspar Glarner's enigmatic realm of images. For the first time in many years, the ballet corps of Halle Opera will again be participating in a Handel stage performance. In a choreography by ballet director Michal Sedláček, six dancers will bring the intimate realms of this magic opera to life with spectacular costumes. Proske on *Amadigi*: "The music of the young Handel goes to the limit in the effort to portray on stage all the wild, wishful thinking and illusions that shake us and make us powerless when we desperately pursue great love." With Dani Espasa on the conductor's podium, Halle Opera presents a much sought-after newcomer to the European Baroque scene. Franziska Krötenheerdt and Yulia Sokolik, the stars of the Halle Opera ensemble and recently feted at the Handel Festival in *Serse* and *Orlando*, play two of the four main roles. The title role is played by the Polish countertenor Rafał Tomkiewicz, recently seen in Halle in *Lotario* und *La Resurrezione* under the direction of Attilio Cremonesi. Serafina Starke will be introduced to Halle audiences in the role of *Amadigi's* beloved, Oriana. The 23-year-old German soprano made highly acclaimed debuts at the Salzburg Festival and the Baden-Baden Easter Festival.

The dance theatre project ***Terpsicore – The Queen Dances!*** combines music from Handel's *Terpsicore* with music from operas by Jean-Philippe Rameau and focuses on contemporary dance. Written in 1734, the aim of the piece was to present the celebrated French dancer, Marie Sallé, to London audiences. The director and choreographer Emanuele Soavi seeks answers: *Terpsicore* celebrates dance and music, unites them in a glorious performance with modern relevance while leaving scope for the conflict of emotion and aesthetics, for irony, sarcasm and a socio-critical perspective. Together with the Cologne-based Emanuele Soavi Incompany, the internationally renowned lauten compagney BERLIN is the other outstanding partner in this joint stage production. Under the musical direction of Handel Prize laureate Wolfgang Katschner and with the participation of the soprano Hanna Herfurtner and mezzo-soprano Alice Lackner, this performance is one of the high points of the festival programme. This very special stage event is possible thanks to funding by the Ostdeutsche Sparkasse Foundation and Saalesparkasse bank and is part of an educational project.

One exception in Handel's operatic output is ***Teseo***, as it is the only one of his dramatic stage works to consist not of three, but of five acts, following the model of the French *tragédie lyrique*. The opera has been hugely popular ever since its premiere in 1713, which in addition to Handel's talent can be ascribed first and foremost to its elaborate staging. In the Freylinghausen Hall of the Francke Foundation, the Wrocław Baroque Orchestra will give a concert performance of

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the opera under the musical direction of Jarosław Thiel, with the young soprano Dennis Orellana (born in 2000) in the role of Teseo.

Opera star and Handel Prize laureate Anna Bonitatibus, who is at home on the world's greatest stages from Covent Garden to Milan's La Scala, will again be thrilling visitors to this year's Handel Festival in the title role of Louisa Proske's tumultuous and sparkling stage production of ***Serse***. The acclaimed opening opera of the 2023 Handel Festival under the musical direction of Attilio Cremonesi, it portrays the jet-setting oil billionaire Serse caught up between buying football clubs, opening a mega-pipeline and turbulent love affairs.

The ensemble Opera Settecento under the musical direction of Leo Duarte will be surprising the audience at the Carl Maria von Weber Theatre in Bernburg with their new production of ***Titus l'Empereur***. This opera was never completed by Handel himself: Handel and his resident librettist Giacomo Rossi modelled the plot closely on Jean Racine's drama *Bérénice* before halting the work for pragmatic reasons. The French original has therefore been used to complete the fragment. The newly created work begins with the fragment, which is followed by two further acts with eight to ten numbers in the style of an 18th-century pasticcio.

The Handel Festival Orchestra will be performing a pasticcio compiled by musical director Attilio Cremonesi in ***Handel's Library***. Handel knew the Abbé Prévost and had his book in his library: so how would Handel have composed *Manon Lescaut*? In combination with opera arias and instrumental pieces by Handel and his French contemporary, Jean-Philippe Rameau, the story about love at first sight is brought to life.

The last opera Handel composed in London, ***Tolomeo, re d'Egitto*** from the year 1728 is one of the most rarely performed. *Tolomeo* did not find favour with the audience at its premiere in 1728. Only when it was revived in 1730 was the opera a success, thanks to major changes to the score, greater musical forces and new arias for the soloists. It is this version of *Tolomeo* that will be presented at the 2024 Handel Festival. This first modern-day performance featuring the reconstructed original orchestral instrumentation, a joint production with Kammerorchester Basel and the ensemble Il Giardino Armonico, is based on an original idea by Clemens Birnbaum; it will be a concert performance based on the Halle Handel Edition under the musical direction of Giovanni Antonini.

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List of oratorios and choral concerts at the Handel Festival

ESTHER

HWV 50

First version, 1720

Halle Cathedral

25 May

ATHALIA

HWV 52

Ulrichskirche Concert Hall

26 May

JEPHTA

HWV 70

followed by the awarding of the 2024 Handel Prize to Christophe Rousset

Ulrichskirche Concert Hall

30 May

MESSIAH

HWV 56

Dublin version, 1742

Marktkirche Halle

31 May

LA RESURREZIONE

HWV 47

Merseburg Imperial Cathedral

2 June

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Oratorios and choral music at the Halle Handel Festival

The first oratorio of the 2024 Handel Festival is also the first English oratorio that Handel composed. The first version of ***Esther***, which was revised in 1720, was written in 1718. The libretto took its inspiration from the tragedy *Ester* by Jean Racine, which was premiered in 1689. It is precisely this version that, some 300 years later, the British ensemble Solomon's Knot will be performing in Halle Cathedral under the musical direction of Jonathan Sell.

The oratorio ***Athalia*** is another example of Handel's "French inspirations": the idea for the libretto of the oratorio, which was completed in 1733, was the French tragedy *Athalie*, also by Jean Racine, from 1691. In Ulrichskirche Concert Hall, the Leipzig Baroque Orchestra and MDR Radio Choir conducted by Philipp Ahmann will be joined by Marie Lys in the role of Athalia and Alex Potter in that of Joad.

In addition to Handel's first English oratorio *Esther*, there will also be a performance of his last oratorio, ***Jephta***. Composed in 1751, the work will be interpreted by the French ensemble Les Talens Lyriques under the musical direction of Christophe Rousset in Ulrichskirche Concert Hall. After the performance, Christophe Rousset will receive the 2024 City of Halle Handel Prize.

One tradition at the Handel Festival is the performance of the popular oratorio, ***Messiah***, in Halle's Marktkirche. Under the musical direction of Alexander Schneider, the oratorio will be performed by the vocal ensemble Polyharmonique and the Wrocław Baroque Orchestra in the Dublin version of 1742 in the church where George Frideric Handel was baptised.

For the first time as part of the Handel Festival, you will be able to hear an oratorio in Merseburg Imperial Cathedral. Handel's ***La Resurrezione*** was premiered in Rome in 1708. This early work by Handel, which he composed when he was 23, will be performed under the musical direction of Michael Schönheit of Merseburger Hofmusik in cooperation with the town of Merseburg.

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International singers in the concerts of the Handel Festival

One of the first concerts of the 2024 Handel Festival the internationally renowned soprano **Raffaella Milanese** will perform works by G. F. Handel, A. Scarlatti and A. Vivaldi. In *La tempesta d'amore* she will be accompanied by Emilio Percan (Baroque violin), Oriol Aymat Fuste (Baroque cello) and the G. A. P. Ensemble under the musical direction of Emilio Percan.

Stefanie True will focus on Handel's early period in Rome when, under the musical direction of Mike Fentross, she performs cantatas and a sonata by Handel together with the Dutch ensemble La Sfera Armoniosa.

The programme by the countertenor **Lawrence Zazzo** and harpsichordist **Guillermo Brachetta** also centres on Handel's early cantatas. In *Händel entflohen* (Handel Uncaged), he puts the spotlight on Handel's cantatas for solo alto. The highpoint is the concluding piece: *Amore uccellatore*, a Handel work never yet performed in this form. The countertenor, Lawrence Zazzo, discovered it in a later transcript, which was conserved in Cambridge.

Although his operas and oratorios were composed to Italian and English texts, some short French pieces are nevertheless to be found in Handel's work, such as the aria *Sans y penser*, which gives it name to the programme by the soprano **Margot Genet**. In addition, she and the ensemble Castor led by Petra Samhaber-Eckhardt will perform further works, including some by André Campra and by Elisabeth Jaquet de la Guerre, one of the first known female French composers.

In the gala concert *Alcina: Bewitched love – verzauberte Liebe* featuring the world-famous mezzo soprano **Magdalena Kožená**, the focus is on love arias from the rich trove of works by George Frideric Handel. In addition to these vocal gems, a positively Italian feel permeates with the performance of instrumental works by a number of Italian contemporaries of Handel: Arcangelo Corelli in an adaptation by Francesco Geminiani, as well as Alessandro Marcello and Francesco Maria Veracini. Under the musical direction of Handel Prize laureate **Andrea Marcon** and La Cetra Barockorchester Basel, a wonderful and magnificent evening awaits visitors.

Born in France, trained in Italy and rising to fame in London, the soprano Elisabeth Duparc was Handel's last diva. The Italians referred to her affectionately as *la Francesina*, the "French woman", and it was under this stage name that she also drew English audiences to Handel's oratorios. With her nightingale-like coloratura, the Belgian soprano **Sophie Juncker** could be the reincarnation of "la Francesina".

The magnificence of the Hall of Mirrors in Versailles finds its musical equivalent in percussion and trumpets – that we know from Handel's *Music for the Royal Fireworks*. The **Baroque Trumpet Ensemble Berlin** under the baton of Johann Plietzsch turns the glorious period of Paris, Dresden and London Baroque into

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sound. Symphonies and concerti by Charpentier, Delalande and Fasch are complemented by the original 1749 wind version of Handel's *Fireworks Music*.

The Paris-based organist **Benjamin Alard** and Mainz-born recorder player **Michael Form** met while studying at the Schola Cantorum in Basel and since then have performed many concerts together. Their insights into the French sources of Handel's music guarantee a harmonious concert, entitled *Les Goûts réunis* and featuring compositions by Handel and Rameau, which also sheds light on the development of the "mixed style".

In 1987 he founded Anima Eterna Brugge – a symphonic project orchestra in which the musicians play the instruments with which the composers would have been familiar at their respective periods and which would have inspired them to write their works. But **Jos van Immerseel** was a pioneer of historically informed performance practice on keyboard instruments too. He will be giving a solo recital in the Chamber Music Room of Handel House.

Michael Schneider and his ensemble **La Stagione** have for many years now consistently ranked among the top musicians on the Baroque music scene. On the 350th anniversary of the birth of Reinhard Keiser, the Frankfurt-based musicians will be performing a programme of music from operas of the two Hamburg colleagues, Keiser and Handel – Handel carefully conserved Keiser's scores and frequently used them for inspiration. A chance to discover a superb composer whose importance is gradually gaining wider recognition.

Halle is a city of organs, but one of the most famous organists has never been here – yet: **Cameron Carpenter** has enchanted audiences all over the world and now you will have the chance to hear him for the first time at the Handel Festival. At the organ of Handel Hall, he will be demonstrating his virtuosity with both hands and feet – his spectacular playing has amazed many an audience. Besides Baroque music, he will also perform his own arrangement of *Pictures from an Exhibition*.

At this festival edition, French music has the final word: Entitled *Apothéose – La réunion des goûts*, the young ensemble **CAFÉ INTERNATIONAL** will play trio sonatas by Arcangelo Corelli and Jean-Baptiste Lully. To top it all, François Couperin, Handel's somewhat older contemporary, wrote an *Apothéose* for both. Couperin's *L'Apothéose de Corelli* and *L'Apothéose de Lully* open the programme. This too is an audible example of the French and Italian "mixed style".

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Cross-genre projects provide musical diversity

The Handel Festival is more than just a festival for early music. Again in 2024, it offers a diverse programme that includes other musical genres and novel concert formats. These additions not only enrich the festival, but also invite visitors to explore new musical horizons.

Michel Godard offers an improvisation-filled evening in **Baroque Lounge I** when, together with three other musicians, he references music from Handel's operas and oratorios as well as a composition by the French Baroque composer, Michel Lambert. His programme, entitled *Light the Earth*, will take place in collaboration with the Göttingen International Handel Festival.

In **Baroque Lounge II**, the ensemble Virévolte with soprano Aurore Bucher brings together folk, jazz and pop. *Handel goes Pop* combines elements from the music of John Dowland, Richard Wagner and Elvis Presley to France Gall, generating a mixture of traditional folk music, classical virtuosity, cool jazz sounds and melancholy pop songs.

In *Danse l'Europe*, the **Pera Ensemble** led by musical director Mehmet Yesilcay will combine Baroque works by G. F. Handel, G. Ph. Telemann, A. Campra, J.-B. Lully and F. Couperin with Ottoman music, creating a music and dance experience of both cultures. Joining the much-loved Pera Ensemble on stage are the sopranos Marie-Sophie Pollak and Yaprak Sayar, as well as dancer Mareike Greb, who brings the influence of the Orient during the Baroque period to life through graceful dance.

Featured in **Baroque Lounge III**, *Amour Fou* is a new pasticcio programme by the composer and bassoonist Burak Özdemir and his Baroque ensemble, Musica Sequenza. The work is written for three soloists: Özdemir's Baroque bassoon, the modern dance of choreographer Jiří Bartoň and the voice of tenor Anders Dahlin. The focus is on Handel's ecstatic opera arias which illustrate the passionate emotions of love – joy, pain, envy and grief – and are accompanied by period instruments.

With their programme *Handel, Creative Jazz meets Hip-Hop and World Music*, the group **Appaloosa** offers exciting interpretations and new arrangements of Handel's music, to be held in St. George's Church in collaboration with Women in Jazz. The five young musicians led by composer and saxophonist Sandrine Ramamonjisoa have links to the Nuremberg Music University. In their compositions, they take a critical look at the subject of digital and industrial progress in relation to the environment and its transience. The band won the 2022 NEXT GENERATION WOMEN IN JAZZ competition and in 2023 the City of Halle Jazz Prize.

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Since the 2018 Handel Festival, the **Poetry Slam** has invited wordsmiths to take the stage, thereby putting the emphasis also on the spoken word. Once again, the presenter is the experienced Halle-based slammer Katja Hofmann, who has more than a decade of experience in slam at the national and international level. Under the motto 'Vive la France!' the 2024 slam evening offers another versatile performance of play on words, humour and profundity both surprising and inspirational.

The popular open-air event, **Bridges to Classics**, is one of the highlights of the Handel Festival. On 8 June, classical music, rock and pop will merge amid the impressive scenery of the Galgenberg Gorge. Once again, electric guitars, violins and choirs will be some of the sounds featured in this symphonic rock concert at sundown. And again in 2024, you will have the chance to hear Bernd Ruf, who has been conducting this bridge-building concert for 20 years, on the saxophone. Who the star guest of the concert will be will remain a secret until spring.

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Open-air events, church concerts and more in the city centre

In 2024 in Halle an der Saale, Handel's music can again be heard in authentic venues when the whole city becomes a stage – often with free admission.

The 2024 Handel Festival kicks off with the **opening ceremony** at 4pm on Friday 24 May at the Handel monument on Marktplatz in Halle. There will then be a **carillon concert** played by the bells of the Red Tower, followed by the 20th Organ Night with five different organ recitals. Prof Dr Stephan Keym will open the Saturday programme with his **festival lecture** on "Handel as a key figure of the European transfer of music". Starting at 12 noon, the Halle student theatre group Händels Harlekine and Pro Musica will present Baroque musical life and transform Marktplatz into a stage.

Music lovers who want to enjoy outdoor early summer concerts have the opportunity of taking a fascinating guided tour through the Botanical Garden, then listening to the sound of the Halle University Choir and Pfeiferstuhl Music wind quartet in a **promenade concert**. Some gentle refreshment concludes this special experience for the senses. **WaterMusic** takes the form of a musical boat trip down the picturesque Saale Valley, when the Weimar Alpine horn ensemble and soloists of Sächsische Bläserphilharmonie wind orchestra will perform musical arrangements of Handel's works on board the MS Händel 2. This event is reminiscent of similar performances some 300 years ago on the Thames, when the English king, George I, had the *Water Music* performed. But Halle's version of this musical experience on the water goes further and offers a mixture of popular music and swing during the boat trip.

Foodies can enjoy a culinary experience with the **walking dinner**, while music enthusiasts can get their just desserts at one of the **lunchtime concerts**. These admission-free concerts are organised in collaboration with the London Handel Festival and one of them will be served up by the prize-winner of the 2023 Handel Singing Competition in London, Florian Störtz.

The 2024 Handel Festival will conclude with two open-air events set in the idyllic natural landscape of the Galgenberg Gorge: the famous **Bridges to Classics** concert and the **closing concert** on the last evening of the festival. The traditional finale sends the Halle Handel Festival visitors on their way with, among other pieces, Handel's *Music for the Royal Fireworks* and a spectacular fireworks display.

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Laureate of the 2024 Handel Prize

In 2024, the City of Halle Handel Prize, awarded by the Handel House Foundation, will go to the French conductor and harpsichordist Christophe Rousset. With this award, the Handel House Foundation Board of Trustees is honouring Christophe Rousset's decades-long, passionate interpretations of Handel's music on period instruments.

The French conductor and harpsichordist Christophe Rousset was born in Avignon on 12 April 1961 and studied harpsichord at the Schola Cantorum in Paris and the Royal Conservatory in Den Haag. At the age of 22, he won the first prize in the 7th Musica Antiqua competition for harpsichord in Bruges.

In 1991, Rousset founded the ensemble Les Talens Lyriques, a Baroque orchestra with which he regularly gives concerts in Europe and North America. With Les Talens Lyriques Rousset has recorded a series of operas by George Frideric Handel, including *Scipione*, *Ricardo Primo*, *re d'Inghilterra* and *Serse*. These recordings won great critical acclaim and made Rousset one of the world's leading interpreters of Handel operas. His interpretations are characterised by vibrant energy and sensual expression. He is a master of conveying the emotional power of the music and invites listeners to immerse themselves in the world of opera.

Rousset is also a much sought-after guest conductor of other orchestras, including that of the Gran Teatre del Liceu in Barcelona, La Scala in Milan and the Royal Opera House in London, the English Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment and the Hong Kong Philharmonic Orchestra.

At the 2024 Handel Festival, Christophe Rousset and the ensemble Les Talens Lyriques will perform the oratorio *Jephtha* (HWV 70) in Ulrichskirche Concert Hall on 30 May. Following this, he will receive the 2024 Handel Prize.

More information and photos are available at:

<https://www.lestalenslyriques.com/en/christophe-rousset/>

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Thoughts on the Festival Theme

By Clemens Birnbaum

While at first glance the influences of Germany, Italy and England on Handel's work seem the most decisive, this does not mean that French music and culture had no shaping influence on his oeuvre.

An initial glance shows that Handel followed French models in his instrumental music above all. For example, if you look at the overtures to his operas, nearly all follow not the Italian, but the French type in their succession of a slow, ceremonious introduction, a faster, fugal movement and a dance movement, in which Handel frequently used the minuet. In this respect, it is worth mentioning the following anecdote, reported by Handel's biographer, John Mainwaring: A difference of opinion flared up between Corelli and Handel about the execution of the double-dotted notes in the slow, framing movements of the (original) French overture to Handel's oratorio *Il trionfo del Tempo e del Disinganno*. Handel is said to have impatiently snatched the violin out of Corelli's hands to demonstrate how he wished these dotted notes to be played. Corelli, a sweet-tempered man, responded: "*Ma, caro Sassone, questa Musica è nel Stylo Francese, di ch'io non m'intendo*" ("But, my dear Saxon, that music is in the French style, of which I understand nothing"). As a favour to Corelli, Handel composed a new overture in the Italian style.

Handel's suites for harpsichord or his orchestral suites such as the *Royal Fireworks Music* and the *Water Music*, in which he compiled various French dances, also follow the French model. One reason for this could be that, as was typical for musicians of the northern and central regions of Germany, Handel studied not only the Italian forms of aria in his musical education but was also familiarised with French dance music.

Although Handel's operas are typically Italian even in their formal structure and formal language, this does not mean that you do not find some French elements in them. Even Silke Leopold notes that: "Their openness to musical ideas from French opera are one of the particularities of Handel's *dramma per musica*." (Silke Leopold: *Händel. Die Opern*, Kassel 2009, p. 199). For example, she demonstrates that the closing scenes in some of Handel's operas are modelled on Lully's and concludes that "Handel's aim was not to adopt the specifically French traits as well as the specifically Italian in an uncritical way, but always to create something new that grew out of a synthesis of both" (ibid, p. 200).

Besides instrumental music, we can see that French texts were another important influence on Handel, especially the plays of Jean Racine. The texts of some of Handel's oratorios, such as *Esther* and *Athalia*, are based on French models, and in his early London operas *Teseo* and *Amadigi di Gaula* Handel was inspired by the actual libretti of French *tragédie lyrique*. In *Teseo*, he even adopted the five-act form of the *tragédie lyrique* – the sole such example in Handel's operatic works. The music itself largely follows Italian aria forms, however. Sadly, one of

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Handel's opera projects remained a fragment: he planned to write an opera with the French title of *Titus l'Empereur* based on Racine's play, *Bérénice*. Why he chose a French title in spite of the Italian libretto and why he stopped writing after Act 1, scene 3 we do not know.

The texts that Handel set to music in his operas and oratorios are in Italian and English. One exception is the German *Brockes Passion*. Handel's cantatas, too, are almost all composed to Italian texts. But there is one notable exception: the cantata, or chanson, *Sans y Penser*, HWW 155, is a setting of a French text.

In London Handel was in contact with French artists. Although we do not know the details, he certainly knew the French sculptor Louis-François Roubiliac, who lived in London from 1731. He sculpted the first Handel monument for Vauxhall Gardens, Handel's tomb in Westminster Cathedral and a number of Handel busts. One figure particularly worth mentioning in the realm of music is the dancer Marie Sallé, who danced in a number of Handel's operas, such as *Alcina*, to ballet music composed especially for her and for whom Handel wrote the dance prologue *Terpsichore* for the reprise of his opera *Il pastor fido* in 1734. But in this context we must also mention the French soprano, Elisabeth Duparc: "*la Francesina*" (the little French woman) as she was known was Handel's preferred prima donna in the 1730s.

In London, Handel's music was heard by a number of French people. The dedication prefacing the libretto of Handel's opera *Lucio Cornelio Silla* to Louis-Marie, Duc D'Aumont de Rochebaron, indicates that the then French ambassador to England had some kind of now unknown connection to Handel's opera. Perhaps he attended the premiere, which might have taken place in Burlington House in London in 1713. The attendance of the Frenchman Jacques Fougereux of an opera during his travels in England in the late 1720s is a proven fact. In his *Voyage d'Angleterre d'Hollande et de Flandre fait en l'année 1728*, he describes his impression of his visit to the opera and provides important detailed information about the size and composition of the orchestra with which Handel's operas were performed in London in the late 1720s:

The orchestra consisted of twenty-four violins led by the Castrucci brothers, two harpsichords (one of which was played by the German Handel, a great player and a great composer), one archlute, three cellos, two double basses, three bassons and sometimes flutes and oboes. This orchestra makes a very loud noise. As there is no middle part in the harmony, the twenty-four violins usually divide only into firsts and seconds, which sounds extremely brilliant and is beautifully played. The two harpsichords [and] the archlute fill in the middle of the harmony. They use only a cello, the two harpsichords and the archlute to

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accompany the recitatives. [...] One of these overtures also included hunting-horns, and so did the chorus at the end (the chorus consists of only four voices), and this was marvellous.

From: Pierre Jacques Fougeroux, *Voyage d'Angleterre d'Hollande et de Flandre fait en l'année 1728* (quoted in the preface to the edition of the opera *Ezio* by George Frideric Handel, Hallische Händel-Ausgabe, Series II, Vol. 26, p. XVIII)

The size and composition of the orchestra will be reproduced at the 2024 Handel Festival with the concert performance of Handel's *Tolomeo*.

During his lifetime, Handel's operas were almost never performed in France. One noteworthy exception is the guest appearance in Paris of the Italian singers of the Royal Academy of Music: in the summer of 1724 concert performances of Handel's *Ottone* and *Giulio Cesare* are said to have taken place as part of a series of private concerts in the house of the financier and arts patron Pierre Crozat in Paris. These may have been the first performances of Handel operas in France.

Today, Handel's music is an important and popular repertoire for performances in French opera houses and Baroque music festivals. Almost all well-known French Baroque music orchestras play Handel to the very highest standard – including Les Talens Lyriques led by Christophe Rousset. At important opera festivals, such as that of Aix-en-Provence, as well as in the renowned opera houses in Paris, Handel's operas are now part of a frequently performed, standard repertoire. This reception and recognition of Handel as one of the most important European composers began back in the 19th century: the *entrée du grand public* of the Opéra Garnier in Paris, built between 1860 and 1875, is ornamented by four statues of important European composers. For this, Jean-Jules-Bernard Salmson created a large-size statue of Handel which, according to the wishes of the architect Charles Garnier, is intended to represent English music.

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"Charme • Esprit • Galanterie – Händel und Frankreich"

2024 annual exhibition of the Handel House Foundation

At the period around 1700, France was a subject of fascination and cultural attraction in Europe, honoured, envied, but also feared. The French language, and French culture and fashion set the standard and the royal court of Versailles was viewed as the centre from which French dance music emanated throughout Europe. This music also had a significant influence on Handel's works, although he never set foot on French soil. Handel spoke fluent French, was familiar with French art and literature and took inspiration from French music, including elements of it in his own compositions.

But while France was a reference for culture, it was also passionately hated. Louis XIV embroiled his country, which strove for world power, in numerous conflicts and wars which affected not only France but also its European neighbours long after the death of the famous "Sun King".

The annual exhibition *Charme • Esprit • Galanterie – Händel und Frankreich* ("Charme • Esprit • Galanterie – Handel and France") will shed compelling light on French influence and connections in relation to Handel through historical books, sheet music, valuable prints, busts, musical instruments and numerous examples of compositions. It will open at 5pm on 23 February 2024 (the date of Handel's birth) and can be visited until 7 January 2025.

Curated by: Karl Altenburg and Christiane Barth with the collaboration of Dr Juliane Riepe (Handel House Foundation)

Designed by: INSIDE Grafik

You will find more detailed information on all events in the festival annual programme.

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Visitor information and information on ticket sales

As of now, the 2024 Handel Festival offers you a “print at home” option when you buy tickets through Eventim. This means that you can print out the tickets yourself or have them digitally scanned at the entrance to the event.

Also new are the three weekend passes, available in all price categories, which grant visitors admission to the festival at a very advantageous price and also guarantee access to the main events.

During the 2024 Handel Festival, the visitors’ office in the inner courtyard of Handel House will be open from 22 May to 9 June from 10am to 6pm as usual. Here, visitors can buy tickets and get information, as well as the programme booklets for individual events. The current festival magazine can also be bought here. This provides an overview of the festival, with interesting articles about the artists, background information about the performances and much more besides.

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

Tickets for the 2024 Handel Festival are available:

- By phone +49 (0)345 / 565 2706 (Monday to Friday: 7am to 6pm, Saturday: 7am to 12 noon)
- On the Internet 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 and from StadtCenter ROLLTREPPE.

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