

Call for papers

Redemption and the Modern Age - Handel's *Messiah* in the 19th to 21st century

The International Scholarly Conference “Redemption and Modern Age – Handel's *Messiah* in the 19th to 21st Century” will be held from 31 May to 2 June 2021 during the Handel Festival 2021 in Halle (Saale), which has the theme “Heroes and Redeemers”. The Conference will focus on the performance history, the history of the arrangements and the history of the impact of *Messiah* which stands for the worldwide reputation of the composer more than any other work. Conceptualised by the librettist Charles Jennens as a response to contemporary deistic doubts about the Messianic mission of the Christian Redeemer, *Messiah* attained the status of an overall spiritual, transconfessional work in the course of its performance history, which has continued unbroken from 1741 to the present day. In its significance for the reception of Handel, *Messiah* is only exceeded by the Hallelujah Chorus from that work which – to name just two examples – could be used at the opening of the Olympic Games on 1 August 1936 in Berlin as well as in an open-air performance by the choir and orchestra of the “Resistenza musicale permanente” on the occasion of the resignation of Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi on 12 November 2011.

The Conference aims to find out what has happened with the original Christian message of Redemption in the oratorio by using it in secular contexts, but also with the adaptations and transformations (some of which are problematic) that have led to the present global significance of *Messiah* and Handel's most famous chorus.

The Festival keynote lecture by Andreas Waczkat (University of Göttingen) on 29 May 2021 will give an introduction to the topic. The Conference welcomes scholarly contributions addressing performance history and the history of the adaptations of the work beginning in the late 18th century. It will also explore the religious, political, cultural and social historical problems of interpretation associated with the global dissemination of the work in the 20th and 21st centuries.

The organizers invite interested scholars to contribute to the Conference with a 25-minute presentation and ask for an application with a proposal of a topic and an abstract by 30 September 2020. Travel and accommodation costs will be covered for the Conference days.

Organizers: Georg-Friedrich-Händel-Gesellschaft e. V., Internationale Vereinigung; Martin-Luther-Universität Halle-Wittenberg, Institut für Musik, Medien- und Sprechwissenschaften, Abteilung Musikwissenschaft; Stiftung Händel-Haus Halle.

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