

2020 HANDEL SINGING COMPETITION NOTES FOR SINGERS

Thank you for your interest in the 2020 Handel Singing Competition, one of the world's leading competitions for baroque singers. In 2019 we had a record number of applications – 170 singers from 25 countries, as far afield as Australia and Argentina. Alumni of the Handel Singing Competition have gone on to major success in their careers.

Here are further details to help you with your application. Please note that the Semi-Final and Final are both open to the public as part of the London Handel Festival, and will be held at St. George's, Hanover Square in London, Handel's own church.

INTRODUCTION

The Handel Singing Competition is open to all singers aged between 23-34 on 1 February 2020, and is a showcase for historically informed performances of Handel's music.

After a pre-selection based on video or sound recordings submitted with the application, all the remaining rounds are in London.

Pre-Selection all candidates must supply a good quality sound recording or video of them performing a short recitative and aria by Handel. The recording must be with harpsichord or baroque ensemble/orchestra. It can be a concert performance or specially recorded for the application.

First Round (Craxton Studios) max 90 singers selected to be heard live or digitally by the panel. Two arias by Handel (either sacred or secular), one with its preceding recit. Must be performed in the original key and original language (Italian, English, German). Maximum time of 10 minutes. Video recordings can be used at this stage.

Semi Final (St George's, Hanover Square) max 12 singers invited to perform with a harpsichordist, two contrasting Handel arias up to 15 minutes.

Final (St George's, Hanover Square) max 6 singers invited to return and perform an all-Handel programme with London Handel Orchestra, conducted by Laurence Cummings. A contrasting programme up to 18 minutes (no specific number of arias required).

If you are successful at reaching the First Round, you will receive further details.

APPLICATION DEADLINE	Sunday 1 December 2019
RESULTS OF PRESELECTION ANNOUNCED	Friday 20 December 2019
FIRST ROUND	Thursday 6 - Saturday 8 February 2020
SEMI FINAL	Friday 6 March 2020
FINAL	Thursday 26 March 2020

ADJUDICATORS

Ian Partridge, Catherine Denley, Michael George (all rounds)
Clemens Birnbaum (Director, Halle Handel Festival) – Final
Other names to be announced

Past adjudicators in recent years have included Jane Glover, Rosemary Joshua, Lawrence Zazzo, John Mark Ainsley and Iestyn Davies.

PRIZES

First Prize - £5,000; Second Prize - £2,000; Audience Prize - £300;
Finalists Awards - £300.

All Finalists in the Handel Singing Competition are also guaranteed lunchtime recitals in the 2021 London Handel Festival, and many past finalists are also asked to perform solos in other prestigious concerts during the Festival and in other Handel Festivals abroad. For example, the 2019 London Handel Festival featured no fewer than 20 past Finalists and there are also recent Finalists performing at the Handel Festivals both in Goettingen and Halle. The winner of this year's competition has also been invited to perform the solos in *Messiah* with the Huddersfield Choral Society, under the direction of Jane Glover, and also a prestigious recital with the City Music Society.

APPLICATION & PRESELECTION

Please apply and pay via the London Handel Festival website. There is a two-stage process – firstly you must apply via the event and pay, secondly please fill in the application form as indicated. You must submit a sound or video recording of a Handel aria with your application – please see the application form for full details.

You will be informed of the results of the pre-selection by 20 December and all those who are not successful will be provide with some feedback at this stage.

REASONS TO APPLY

Both the Semi-Final and Final are open to the general public as part of the annual London Handel Festival and are well attended, including by many agents and promoters. Past finalists of the Competition include Iestyn Davies, Ruby Hughes, Lucy Crowe, Tim Mead, Sophie Junker, Anna Starushkevych and Grace Davidson.

“The London Handel Singing Competition was for me the perfect platform from which I was able to demonstrate what I thought I could do; I'm not a fan of competition in singing but this competition allows you to focus on the repertoire choices and stylistic decisions you make, first and foremost. For me it was absolutely the turning point. I secured an agent from my performance which opened a new chapter in my singing career at the time. It really was the taking part that counted; I didn't win!”

Iestyn Davies MBE, 2004 runner-up

“It came as a big surprise to win the first prize and audience prize all those years ago. Singing in the Handel competition was a super opportunity to focus on one glorious composer and his unique style, exploring his heavenly musical output. I learned so much about Baroque style and vocal technique and it gave me a solid foundation from which to build later repertoire.” *Ruby Hughes, 2009 winner*

“After a few years as a postgraduate student, winning the Handel Singing Competition was for me a great platform that opened many doors as a professional singer here in the UK. It also meant to me great recognition and projection here and abroad, where the HSC is very much appreciated as well.” *Josep-Ramon Olivé, 2015 winner*

“Competitions are a real asset to young singers, and act as a wonderful seal of approval as we continue to apply for the next project or audition. It is wonderful to have the recognition of such a well-known festival to recommend me further as a performer in the competitive world of singing” *Helen Charlston, 2018 winner*

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQ)

1. Is repertoire limited to opera or are sacred arias allowed?
You may perform both sacred or secular music in all rounds of the competition – the only restriction is no arias from the Messiah are allowed in the Final
2. Do I have to sing the full da capos in all my arias?
The competition is for historically informed performance, and therefore all da capos must be sung
3. Is there a preferred language choice for the arias?
You must always sing in the original language used by Handel but there is no restriction in language choice (Italian, German, English) apart from you MUST sing one aria in English in the semi-final
4. Is the first round open to the public?
No, you perform only to the three adjudicators
5. In what circumstances can I get a refund if I am not able to attend?
We only offer a refund in due to illness, which has to be supported by a doctor's note
6. Can I bring my own accompanist for any of the rounds?
No, everyone has to use one of our official accompanists
7. What sort of keyboard instrument is used for the accompaniment?
The competition is for historically informed performance so a double manual harpsichord at a-415 is used for the First Round and Semi-Final
8. Is there warm up space at Craxton Studios?
Unfortunately the venue is not able to provide space for warming up at the moment but we are working on finding a solution and will let the 90 successful singers know
9. Will I get to have a run through with my harpsichordist in the first round?
You get a 10 minute run through directly before you go on
10. Can I rehearse with my accompanist in advance?
Yes – you will be supplied with their contact info on the schedule
11. What format can I use to submit the recordings in the application?
Please include a link to your recordings in the application form
12. If I supplied a video with my application, can that be used for the first round?
If you supplied a suitable video recording in the application you only need to send a second one for the first round
13. What is the age limit for this competition?
You must be between 23 – 34 on 1 February 2020, sorry there are no exceptions
14. How can I book tickets for events in the London Handel Festival?
This is possible through the main website - <https://www.london-handel-festival.com/> but please note that booking is not open until mid-December for the general public
15. When will you let us know the results of the pre-selection?
You will be contacted by 20 December