

ETO HANDELfest

The stage works of Georg Frideric Handel represent the greatest flowering of opera in Britain, and one of the greatest moments in the history of opera. Handel's gift for melody, and his arresting sense of character and fate, make him a natural composer of opera. In 2009, the 250th anniversary of the composer's death, English Touring Opera celebrates with a touring festival of five of his great – and very different – operas, together with a series of stimulating discussions with experts and enthusiasts, recitals, masterclasses and workshops. It is a unique occasion to get a sense of Handel's genius, and to let this splendid, sensuous music speak to your heart and mind.

ETO has assembled a cast of virtuoso singers and period players for productions as diverse as the operas themselves. They will interpret these lively, popular operas written for the greatest voices of the day.



'ETO's HANDELfest is an incredibly ambitious and exciting celebration of Handel's opera, which has been such an important part of my career. I support the company's work, and look forward to the 5 operas and accompanying recitals, masterclasses and talks. I urge you to join me there, for a unique chance to immerse yourself in a week of Handel opera!'

DAME ANN MURRAY, Mezzo-Soprano

HANDELfest PATRONS

James Bowman CBE, Sarah Connolly, Andrew Higgins, Della Jones, Philip Langridge CBE, Sir Charles Mackerras, Anne Murray DBE

AUTUMN 2009

LONDON

Britten Theatre
Royal College of Music
Performances at 7.30pm



15 October FLAVIO
16 October TESEO
17 October TOLOMEO
21 October FLAVIO
23 October ALCINA
24 October ARIODANTE
Box Office: 020 7833 2555

MALVERN

Malvern Theatres
Performances at 7.30pm

27 October FLAVIO
28 October TESEO
29 October TOLOMEO
30 October ALCINA
31 October ARIODANTE
Box Office: 01684 892 277

EXETER

Exeter Northcott
Performances at 7.30pm

3 November FLAVIO
4 November TESEO
5 November TOLOMEO
6 November ARIODANTE
7 November ALCINA
Box Office: 01392 493 493

BATH

Theatre Royal
Performances at 7.30pm

9 November ALCINA
10 November TESEO
Box Office: 01225 448 844

SNAPE

Snape Maltings Concert Hall
Performances at 7.30pm

13 November ARIODANTE
14 November FLAVIO
Box Office: 01728 687 110

CAMBRIDGE

Arts Theatre
Performances at 7.30pm

17 November FLAVIO
18 November TESEO
19 November TOLOMEO
20 November ALCINA
21 November ARIODANTE
Box Office: 01223 503 333

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ENGLISH TOURING OPERA

AUTUMN 2009



www.englishtouringopera.org.uk

For more information please contact ETO on 020 7833 2555
or email handel@englishtouringopera.org.uk

TESEO



Teseo (1713) represents Handel's youthful brilliance, telling the story of Theseus, a shining hero who sets many hearts fluttering, his nervous father, his virtuous fiancée and her maid, and the powerful sorceress Medea. The hero's return to the war-torn city draws all of these into high-paced conflict, dominated by the jealous actions of heart-broken Medea. ETO's production sets the drama within church sanctuary and a surprising operating theatre – both with the qualities of 17th century Dutch painting.

If you like Vermeer and Van Dyck, Bonnie Prince Charlie, risk and honour, high odds, magnificent women, musketeers, trumpets and timpani, faint-hearted royalty, conflicts of the heart, sharp gouda cheese, vocal fireworks and high spirits – Teseo is for you.

Performed in Italian with projections of the 1713 English word book
Running time: 2hrs 35mins

FLAVIO



Flavio (1724) is a joyous comedy with a serious sub-plot. Caught between a promiscuous king and his jealous ministers are the finest pair of young lovers imaginable. In a rigid code of honour, a careless slap on the cheek leads to a garrotting and a knife fight. It's more fun than it sounds: a jubilant double wedding concludes the opera. ETO's new production in period costume on a brilliant blue set follows every mood swing in the score from the opening morning-after duet for sopranos to the light-filled, joyful final chorus.

If you like Romeo and Juliet, swordfights that turn nasty, Blackadder, heart-breaking laments, first love, Paula Sides (ETO's Pamina last season), good manners, vinho verde, candlelight, Yves Klein and wildly happy endings – Flavio is unmissable.

Performed in English.
Running time: 2hrs 40mins

TOLOMEO



Tolomeo (1728) has a wonderful, almost hallucinatory quality, though its story of faithful love in the face of crushing odds is truly harrowing. Recounting the fates of two ship-wrecked sons of Cleopatra (a savage mother if ever there was one), we witness their reactions to fierce tests of character and will. This strange, beautiful opera looks at the poor, the lost and the exploited people of the earth whose dignity and faith is truly inspiring. *Tolomeo* is a confirmation of all that is good in man, in the face of all that can be corrupted.

If you like walking on the pier, Sons and Lovers, flowers that grow in the cracks of pavements, Brief Encounter, arte povera, gangsters, wine from Languedoc, Lilya 4-ever, pomegranate, survivors – you will feel the depth of Tolomeo.

Performed in Italian with surtitles.
Running time: 2hrs 15mins

ALCINA



Alcina (1735) is a very great opera, and an encyclopaedia of love. At its heart is an enchantress whose rejected passion for a married (but forgetful) man drives her to lonely, futile revenge. She is one of Handel's most splendid creations – seductive, tender, and terrifying. She longs for the gaze of men, yet will move on in the blink of an eyelid. Ravished by her is the wayward hero, who lives for passion – until he is reclaimed by his puritan wife and teacher. ETO's *Alcina* is set at the island court of a Stuart beauty, with vibrant period costumes and a poetic setting.

If you like fantasy, Canova sculpture, Tarkovsky films, Donne's poetry, escape, islands, nostalgia, Kama Sutra, chandeliers, camembert, attics, lavender, the Winter Queen, ripe peaches, dangerous beauty – you will want to live in the world of Alcina.

Performed in English.
Running Time: 2hrs 50mins

ARIODANTE



Ariodante (1735), set on the wintry Scottish coast, shows us what happens when love is forgotten, and sensuality is hidden. Falsely accused, a young woman is cast out by her father, and abandoned by her innocent lover. Her traducer is a clergyman who makes a pact with the devil in order to gain her love. The brightest hopes and innocence meet the wildest seas and bleakest thoughts, and go on a visceral journey back to light. ETO's gripping production is set amongst a dissenting Scottish sect in the early nineteenth century, and recalls Brontë novels and Nordic paintings.

If you like Northern lights, Strindberg plays, a wild sea, Ingmar Bergman, two way mirrors, the idea of order, Lars van Trier, saunas and snow, Hammershøi paintings, peaty whiskey, finding lost things, wrestling with God – you need to experience Ariodante.

Performed in English.
Running time: 2hrs 50 mins

EXTRA EVENTS

While these 5 operas dominate the stage in the evening, ETO plans a broad range of over 45 Handel related events during the days of the festival. They include themed recitals (like 'The Florid Style' and 'Great arias we have had to cut'), instrumental music of Handel, lectures and panel discussions by eminent Handel scholars and enthusiasts, masterclasses with artists including Ann Murray and James Bowman, and creative education workshops. Wherever you decide to take part in the ETO HANDELfest, there is a busy, interesting programme for you – and a week of lively theatre and glorious music. Check the ETO website for festival details at each venue.

ETO also performs regularly in schools and colleges. In this exceptional season we celebrate Handel the man and composer with a series of workshop recitals for secondary schools and colleges. Also, taking Handel's heroes as a theme we complete our trilogy of operas commissioned for children aged 7 to 12: *In the Belly of the Horse* is performed by 5 multi-skilled artists who play Greek heroes telling stories from within the belly of the Trojan horse.