

– PRESS RELEASE –
Göttingen, February 8, 2023

Göttingen International Handel Festival with “Hellas!” as its theme runs from May 18 - 29, 2023

With the theme “Hellas!”, the 2023 Göttingen International Handel Festival from **May 18 – 29** sets the spotlight on Greece.

Today, Wednesday, February 8, 2023, Artistic Director **George Petrou** and Managing Director **Jochen Schäfsmeier**, together with numerous patrons and partners of the Festival, unveiled the multifaceted Festival program. The two dramatic oratorios *Semele* and *Hercules*, which transport the audience to the mythical world of ancient Greece, form the central focus of the approximately 60 events in Göttingen and the region.

This year's *Semele* marks the first staging of an oratorio in the history of the Festival. George Petrou will direct and conduct the five performances at the Deutsches Theater (premiere May 19). Together with the FestspielOrchester Göttingen, the program features Marie Lys in the title role of *Semele*, Jeremy Ovenden in the role of Jupiter, and star mezzo-soprano Vivica Genaux. The Festival kicks off on May 18 with the oratorio *Hercules* in Göttingen's St. Johannis Church. Andreas Wolf in the title role as well as Vivica Genaux and Anna Dennis, together with the NDR Vokalensemble, will be accompanied by the FestspielOrchester conducted by George Petrou.

Beyond references to Greek mythology, George Petrou is also committed to showcasing Greece's musical abundance: “Even though Greece was never a Baroque hub, many composers to this day are inspired by the work of the great masters of the Baroque era.” The Festival program spans from the Renaissance to the present, combining Handel's work with compositions from Leondaritis to Theodorakis. The Athens Chamber Choir, Felix Klieser and the Göttinger Symphonieorchester, Nils Mönkemeyer and other ensembles daringly undertake the musical balancing act between the centuries. With the melodrama *Medea* by G. A. Benda and works for baroque orchestra by two Greek contemporaries, George Petrou and the FestspielOrchester demonstrate that Greek culture had an impact on the period of Viennese Classicism and remains relevant into the 21st century. The Gala Concert by OPUS Classic Prize winner Jeanine De Bique and Concerto Köln will bring the Festival to a close on May 29, 2023.

“Demonstrating how Handel's music is still exciting and relevant in the 21st century remains one of the major objectives of the Göttingen International Handel Festival”, emphasizes Managing Director Jochen Schäfsmeier. Especially in Göttingen, with its high number of university students, it is crucial to demonstrate that Handel's oeuvre holds more than just museological value. Programs such as **Agrippina: A Baroque-Jazz Guide** and **Valer Sabadus & Spark** performing songs of yearning from Handel through Schumann to

Rammstein underscore this timelessness. With “**Handel 4 Kids!**” the Festival targets the youngest audience members with a family version of *Semele*, a Children's Day, and numerous other events.

The *Hall of Fame* invites the Göttingen public and all those who are curious to a music-filled day at the industrial location of the Lokhalle. The light and music spectacle *Spotlight on!*, the **Festival Opera on the big screen** and the *Concert in the Dark* – a concert experience in which the senses are limited to hearing alone – can all be witnessed. Thanks to the support of Neustart Kultur and numerous other sponsors, *Spotlight on!* and *Opera on the big screen* can be enjoyed free of charge.

More than 400 artists are expected to perform in Göttingen and the region at this year's many events, including around 40 concerts and opera performances (including the public screening and the family version of the opera on May 28) as well as an academic symposium. The total budget for the Festival is approximately 1.2 million euros. “I'm filled with deep gratitude for the support of private donors and sponsors, as well as public funding.”, states Jochen Schäfsmeier.

Details on all events can be found at www.haendel-festspiele.de.

Public advance ticket sales begin on February 17, 2023.

Tickets are available for purchase at haendelfest.eventim-inhouse.de as well as on site exclusively at the Tourist Information Office Göttingen, Markt 8 and the Deutsches Theater Göttingen, Theaterplatz 11. In addition, tickets can be purchased nationwide at all public Eventim advance ticket outlets.

We will be happy to send you a digital press kit detailing the Göttingen International Handel Festival 2023 with extensive image material, a form for press ticket orders, and a PDF of the 2023 Festival magazine. To request a copy, please contact: presse@haendel-festspiele.de.