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REPORT FROM THE FOURTEENTH HANDEL INSTITUTE CONFERENCE, LONDON (2025)

Luke Howard

The Fourteenth Handel Institute Conference, held in London from November 21 to 23, 2025, continued this organization's long tradition of intellectually invigorating and musically rewarding conference events, buoyed by the conviviality of exchange between like-minded scholar/musicians who have devoted their attentions to the life and works of Handel.

The conference kicked off with a Friday-evening reception in the Court Room at the Foundling Museum, hosted by the Museum's director Emma Ridgway and assisted by the Handel Institute's invaluable colleagues Katharine Hogg and Colin Coleman of the Gerald Coke Handel Collection. This was followed by a breathtaking concert in the museum's Picture Gallery upstairs, given by Adrian Butterfield and the London Handel Players, featuring music by Handel and some of his Italian and German "friends and colleagues" (as the program put it), including Geminiani, Telemann, Quantz, and Haym. Between the quartet, trio and solo sonatas, and other permutations of the ensemble, the performers took a moment or two to speak about the history and quirks of their particular instruments, and how Handel and his contemporaries wrote idiomatically for them. Deeply insightful and comprehensive program notes by David Vickers were small (but much appreciated) compensation for the fact that he was unable to attend the conference in person this year.

Conference sessions began the following morning at Bridewell Hall, an elegant and accommodating Grade II-listed assembly space tucked into a side alley just off Fleet Street. After a welcome and some opening remarks from Donald Burrows, Chair of the Handel Institute, the first session—titled "Cannons and Caravans"—consisted of papers by Graydon Beeks (Pomona College, California, and President of the American Handel Society) and Donald Burrows himself. Beeks discussed materials from Handel's Op. 2 Trio Sonatas that are closely related to works known to have been composed at Cannons from 1717–18, and which therefore might help narrow the possible composition dates for the sonatas. Burrows reviewed musicians from the 1740s and '50s who, in addition to performing with Handel in London, maintained stable professional relationships and activities in other cities including Dublin and Edinburgh, furthering the spread of Handel's music during this period.

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CAMBRIDGE HANDEL OPERA COMPANY, *IMENEO*, FESTIVAL THEATRE, CAMBRIDGE, UK, MARCH 23–28, 2026

Katie Hawks (Cambridge, UK)



Left to right: Bethany Horak-Hallett (Tirinto), Timothy Nelson (Imeneo), and Ellie Neate (Rosmene) in the CHOC production of Handel's Imeneo. Photograph by Craig Fuller.

A low-budget production in a venue not set up as a theater may sound inauspicious, but CHOC's *Imeneo* at the Festival Theatre was an acme of how such things should be done. The Festival Theatre is a hidden gem: most of the locals in the audience did not know about it. I myself have been wanting to see a baroque opera in there for quarter of a century, and I hope that this is not a one-off. The theater dates from 1814, built by the same man as the Theatre Royal in Bury St. Edmunds. It now belongs to the Cambridge Buddhist Centre and is used for prayers rather than performances, so in addition to importing sets and costumes, all the lighting had to be imported as well. Luckily, Cambridge is one of those places that happens to have a top-notch amateur stage tech club (another hidden gem). The decor is workaday, the facilities adequate but low-key. It is small—gone are the

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