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# Laurence Cummings

## Selected Reviews

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### **Saul**

#### **Glyndebourne Festival Opera (July 2018)**

"it has a brilliant precision, and a largely new cast brings fresh energy to it, galvanised from the pit by Laurence Cummings and the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment" – **Rupert Christiansen, The Telegraph \*\*\*\*\***

"there is also the bustling Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment to enjoy, conducted again by Laurence Cummings, so devoted to the composer of *Saul* that Handel might be his middle name" – **Geoff Brown, The Times \*\*\*\*\***

"the thrilling playing of the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment under the focused baton of conductor Laurence Cummings" – **George Hall, The Stage \*\*\*\*\***

"the chorus is predictably excellent and Laurence Cummings and the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment play the music with plenty of zest" – **Richard Fairman, Financial Times**

### **Arminio**

#### **Goettingen Handel Festival (April 2018)**

"Göttingen's artistic director, conductor Laurence Cummings, managed the musical ins and outs of this complicated operatic tale with his usually scrupulous balance and accomplishment." – **Tom Sutcliffe, Opera Now**

### **Handel's Last Prima Donna: Giulia Frasi**

#### **London Handel Festival (March 2018)**

"Laurence Cummings turns even the rawest musical material into gold" – **Berta Joncus, BBC Music Magazine**

### **Acis and Galatea**

#### **London Handel Festival (March 2018)**

"Laurence Cummings took an approach to the score that was delightfully free of historically informed point-making, and the London Handel Orchestra responded with playing that matched precision with spontaneity" – **Yehuda Shapiro, Opera Magazine**

### **Lotario**

#### **Goettingen Handel Festival Recording**

"[this] performance has a persuasive dramatic heart – due in large part to Laurence Cummings's expert direction of the excellent orchestra, which uses a satisfying variety of expressive rhetorical tools and aptly shaded textures" – **David Vickers, Gramophone**

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### **Saul**

#### **Theater an der Wien (February 2018)**

"Yet again the Arnold Schoenberg Chor and the Freiburger Barockorchester gave excellent performances, with *Laurence Cummings* drawing out the miraculous colours of this wonderful score with as much sensuality and intensity as possible." – **Gehard Persché, Opera Magazine**

"The Freiburger Barockorchester have been known to sometimes sound somewhat restrained, but conductor Laurence Cummings animates the orchestra to new differentiated levels" – **Peter Jarolin, Kurier**

"In the pit is the Freiburger Barockorchester under Laurence Cummings. The Handel Specialist enlivens the somewhat unusual score (with little bravura and few recapitulations). A glockenspiel, a surprisingly well-employed organ, plus natural horns, provide great atmosphere and dynamics. A truly dramatic plane arises from the many instrumental solos and accompagnati, which complements the staging wonderfully" – **Jörn Florian Fuchs, Badische Zeitung**

"Handel's rich, enriching, wonderful music is presented by the Freiburger Barockorchester under the direction of Laurence Cummings in a pleasurable and sensual way. In particular, the rich strings and the woodwind establish the juicy and powerful changing colours of sound" – **Stefan Ender, Der Standard**

"In the pit: Laurence Cummings and the Freiburger Barockorchester – an ideal team. Whether in the melodious overture, which counterpoints the upcoming calamity, the sweetness of the glockenspiel and harp, or in the swinging tutti passages, the Brit courageously reaches into Handel's treasure chest and always keeps in close contact with the stage. David McVicar will have to work hard on the 'Ariodante' at the State Opera, ditto William Christie on the podium, because his former assistant Cummings has set the bar enormously high" – **Michael Tschida, Kleine Zeitung**

"The Freiburger Barockorchester under Laurence Cummings provides a brilliant Handel sound. Magnificent colours, especially in the strings and the natural horns, organ sound, and the glockenspiel show the capabilities of this music. This is opera where everything is right" – **Susanne Zobl, News.at**

"Handel's score, one of his richest orchestral and most colourful, is in excellent hands at the Theater an der Wien with the Freiburger Barockorchester under the English Handel expert Laurence Cummings...how beautifully the Freiburger Barockorchester perform these echo effects, how melodious is the dialogue spun between the oboes and violins, how vividly do the bassoons draw out their dark curves, before the illuminating strings return, how the harp and organ shine – this not only excites the ear, but also connects powerfully with the dramatic agenda" – **Walter Weldringer, Die Presse**

"Laurence Cummings at the Freiburger Barockorchester explored the numerous tonal colours of the work and proved himself an equal partner in the interplay between stage and pit, repeatedly igniting each other in drama and intensity" – **Judith Belfkih, Wiener Zeitung**

"Musically, the evening was in the hands of the Freiburg Baroque Orchestra under Laurence Cummings, who impressively and passionately translated the extraordinarily colorful score with the utmost precision and absolute eloquence, thus laying the foundation for a fine ensemble of singers" – **Michael Wruss, öö Nachrichten**

"Laurence Cummings drives the flexible instrumentalists through bouncy rhythms without curtailing their freedom of phrasing. They breathe beautifully in the pit, with smooth, infinitely-variable dynamics. A Handel for intelligently sharpened ears, but also for enjoyment. "Saul" with soul." – **Klassiker Welt**

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### ***The Rake's Progress***

#### **Opera glass Works, Wilton's Music Hall (November 2017)**

"Laurence Cummings at the harpsichord, costumed as an arresting combination of Handel and Hogarth ... led the players of the Southbank Sinfonia in a finely nuanced and detailed performance." - **Henrietta Bredin, Opera Magazine**

"The Southbank Sinfonia is small – only one player to each string part – but stylish. The conductor is the baroque-music specialist Laurence Cummings, directing from the harpsichord and dressed in jacked and squishy velvet cap to look alarmingly like Handel. He paces things snappily and, as the evening progresses, increasingly gets in on the action." – **Erica Jeal, The Guardian**

"this period-dress production scored in other ways. The interplay between art and life, artifice and truth, for instance. Laurence Cummings directs the spirited Southbank Sinfonia on stage, initially sporting a resplendent wig that would have made Handel jealous" – **Rebecca Franks, The Times**

"A costumed Laurence Cummings entered into the spirit with some baguette banter and a sure hand on the musical tiller (two on the harpsichord), although why the polished Southbank Sinfonia was not similarly decked in Hanoverian attire is a puzzle." – **Mark Valencia, Whatsonstage**

"Occupying the rear of the stage – and sometimes engaged in the action – are the Southbank Sinfonia and conductor-harpsichordist Laurence Cummings, a Handel expert splendidly costumed as George Frideric himself. The warm Wilton's acoustic takes some Stravinskian edge off the instrumental sound, but it shows off the singers – and their words – to ideal effect" – **Yehuda Shapiro, The Stage**

### ***Lucio Silla***

#### **Buxton International Festival (July 2017)**

"The English Concert, under Lawrence Cummings, played beautifully." – **Anthony Arblaster, Opera Now**

"A major asset is the stylish and sharply defined playing of The English Concert in the pit, while conductor Laurence Cummings superintends a performance with plenty of musical and dramatic clout" – **George Hall, The Stage**

"Terrific playing from the English Concert under Laurence Cummings's stylish direction" – **Richard Morrison, The Times**

"the English Concert were on superb form throughout under the experienced direction of Laurence Cummings – proving yet again that the principal prerequisite of a fine evening at the opera isn't the singers but an exceptional orchestra and conductor" – **David Mellor, Daily Mail**

### ***Brockes Passion***

#### **Goettingen Handel Festival 2017**

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"However, largely thanks to having the superb Baroque specialist Laurence Cummings as artistic director, Göttingen easily rivals the Handel festival at the composer's birthplace, Halle...Cummings conducted the Brockes-Passion immaculately" – **Tom Sutcliffe, Opera Now**

### **Lotario** **Goettingen Handel Festival 2017**

"Cummings conducted the music beautifully..." – **Tom Sutcliffe, Opera Now**

### **Joseph and his Brethren** **London Handel Festival 2017**

"The performance a memorable resurrection of a libelled piece by Cummings and his spirited acolytes...Cummings attacked with his usual vigour, though the piece has a great variety of affect and feeling. There were few sections that didn't come to life" – **Robert Thickers, Opera Now**

### **Faramondo** **Royal College of Music, London Handel Festival 2017**

"Laurence Cummings' stylish conducting leaves us in no doubt as to the quality of the score, which contains some of Handel's most striking music. It all makes for cool, clever and deeply unnerving entertainment." – **Tim Ashley, The Guardian**

"Handel expert Laurence Cummings presides over a stylish orchestral performance." – **George Hall, The Stage**

"Laurence Cummings's London Handel Orchestra sounds sprightly and stylish in a score with many awkward corners" – **Richard Morrison, The Times**

"Orchestral playing was excellent under the always lively Laurence Cummings" – **Richard Fairman, Financial Times**

"The playing of the London Handel Orchestra, conducted by Laurence Cummings, is very fine indeed and contributes greatly to the undeniable strength of the evening." – **Sam Smith, musicOMH**

### **Handel's Water Music** **Goettingen Festival Recording**

"Laurence Cummings makes the music dance and sing: touches like leaving the perky wind trios without continuo make the expressiveness of the strings as they enter all the more effective." – **Nicholas Kenyon, The Guardian**

### **The Paris Concert (March 2017)** **Scottish Chamber Orchestra**

"His Mozart Paris Symphony was a delight, full of gesture and rhetoric – seldom can its first movement's rushing scales have had so much sheer meaning – but superbly balanced in a buoyant slow movement" – **David Kettle, The Scotsman \*\*\*\*\***

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### ***Messiah***

#### **National Symphony Orchestra, Washington DC (December 2016)**

"On Thursday, he certainly showed himself to be a major Handelian in this fluid, fleet, fine-feeling reading. Rapid passagework in Baroque music can sound finicky, with a kind of sewing-machine needling; but time and again, Cummings encouraged playing and singing that were smooth, gentle, even tender" – **Anne Midgette, The Washington Post**

"He brought an easy authority to the score, conducting from one of the two harpsichords in the orchestra, augmented nicely by portative organ in the larger pieces...Cummings emphasized the more operatic qualities of the work" – **Charles T. Downey, Washington Classical Review**

### ***Susanna***

#### **Goettingen Handel Festival Recording**

"Laurence Cummings's new version with Göttingen festival forces captures fully the uplifting, pastoral, ethereal vision...Beautiful" – **Nicholas Kenyon, The Guardian**

### **Purcell programme, Wigmore Hall Live**

"A Baroque supergroup (...) and the results are as glorious as you'd imagine" - **Alexandra Coghlan, Gramophone**

### ***Tamerlano***

#### **Buxton International Festival (July 2016)**

"The English Concert played beautifully under Laurence Cummings" – **Anthony Arblaster, Opera Now**

### ***Imeneo***

#### **Göttingen Handel Festival (May 2016)**

"...thanks to Cummings' perfect pacing and the infectiously catchy phrasing he draws from his excellent orchestra and cast." – **Shirley Apthorp, The Financial Times \*\*\*\*\***

"It's only appropriate, given the composer's long association with England, that two of these festivals – London and Göttingen – are now directed by an Englishman. Laurence Cummings has spent a career with this music, and his affection, understanding and excitement radiates out through the dancing energy of his instrumentalists and the emotional pitch of his singers." – **Alexandra Coghlan, The Spectator**

"Laurence Cummings conducted with real energy and characteristic taste... Göttingen's *Imeneo* was both a vocal, musical and theatrical triumph, and one that genuinely added to our sense of Handel's range and theatrical imagination – which is why this important festival exists." – **Tom Sutcliffe, Opera Now**

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"The FestspielOrchester Göttingen maintained its very high standard under the festival's artistic director Laurence Cummings, starting with a sonorous but gutsy rendition of the overture and continuing throughout with warmth and precision, always respecting the needs of the singers." – **Sandra Bowdler, *Opera Magazine***

### ***Ariodante***

#### **London Handel Festival (March 2016)**

"As always, the strength of the festival's opera offerings is found down in the orchestra pit, where Laurence Cummings and the London Handel Orchestra brought *Ariodante* to life with vitality and emotional depth." – **Richard Fairman, *The Financial Times***

### ***King Arthur***

#### **Opernhaus Zurich (February 2016)**

"The Overture had a completely different tint: led by Laurence Cummings, La Scintilla Orchestra played it with the warmth and softness that makes Purcell's music come alive." – **Susanne Kübler, *Tages Anzeiger***

### ***Con Eco d'Amore – Scarlatti with Elizabeth Watts***

#### **The English Concert (Harmonia Mundi)**

"The English Concert play with verve and warmth." – **Stephen Pettitt, *The Sunday Times***

"The playing of The English Concert [is] first-rate... Laurence Cummings always has a precise ear for texture and colour. – **Richard Wigmore, *Gramophone***

"Watts, Cummings and the English Concert make an ideal partnership in what is one of the most thrilling albums of its kind I've heard in recent years; I can't recommend this recording highly enough." – **Adrian Horsewood, *Early Music Today***

"This disc fizzes. Watts and director Laurence Cummings give us a dazzling sequence of numbers drawn from operas, serenatas and cantatas which leave one desperately wanting a second helping." – **Graham Rickson, *The Arts Desk***

### ***Saul***

#### **Glyndebourne on Tour (October 2015)**

"The theatricality of Handel's score knocks the wind from your lungs. The conductor Laurence Cummings has galvanised Glyndebourne's touring orchestra into a performance as playful and soulful and stylish as that on stage: acerbic in the opening allegro of the Overture, giddy with invention in the miniature concertos for chamber organ, the musical arguments dynamically phrased and punctuated throughout." – **Anna Picard, *The Times* \*\*\*\*\***

"Barrie Kosky's production for Glyndebourne, the highlight of this summer's festival, now returns with a fresh cast for the autumn tour, under the baton – a coup – of Laurence Cummings. As artistic director both of the London Handel festival and the Internationale Händel-Festspiele Göttingen, he now ranks as one of the composer's best advocates in the world. Self-effacing on the podium, faithful above all to the score, he matches Handel's energy and invention with unmistakable lyricism, generosity

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and dignity. It's not that others don't or can't; rather that Cummings makes it feel the only conceivable approach, drawing the music out, not driving it along. Nipping from podium to keyboard, he also plays the solo organ." – **Fiona Maddocks, *The Observer* \*\*\*\*\***

"Laurence Cummings, perhaps the country's most experienced Handelian, never lets Kosky's theatricality overwhelm the music however mad it gets." – **Mark Valencia, *WhatsOnStage.com***

"The musical direction by Laurence Cummings [is] even more eloquent than when the production was first seen in July..." – **Melanie Eskenazi, *Music OMH* \*\*\*\***

### ***Agrippina***

#### **Göttingen Handel Festival (May 2015)**

"Good though the singers are, they are almost eclipsed by the vivid, virtuosic Festival Orchestra. Laurence Cummings keeps rollickingly on track, with unflagging energy and musicality. Well worth the journey." – **Shirley Apthorp, *The Financial Times***

"Laurence Cummings, artistic director of the festival, had lot of fun with the interpretation of this material. Even in the famous overture to his FestspielOrchester did out: Both the tremolos and the unexpected pause in which Handel the dissolution of a final cadence is guilty and subsequently supply only a few bars later, took his ensemble with sensitivity and playfulness." – **Jonas Rohde, *Goettinger Tageblatt***

### ***Giove in Argo***

#### **London Handel Festival (March 2015)**

"Conducted by Laurence Cummings, it sounds terrific." – **Tim Ashley, *The Guardian* \*\*\*\*\***

"Under the driving direction of conductor Laurence Cummings and the spirited playing of the London Handel Orchestra, the evening flashed by." – **Stephen Pritchard, *The Observer* \*\*\*\*\***

"What it does have, however, are excellent musical values. In the pit Laurence Cummings presides over an orchestra that scampers stylishly through Handel's jaw-droppingly inventive arias." – **Richard Morrison, *The Times* \*\*\*\*\***

"We're carried along on the swift speeds and stylish delivery of Laurence Cummings and his band, supporting the excellent student chorus." – **Alexandra Coghlan, *The Spectator***

### ***Joshua – ACC 26403***

#### **Göttingen Handel Festival Recording (March 2015)**

"Cummings directs a compelling live performance." – **Stephen Pettitt, *The Sunday Times***

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### ***Semele***

#### **London Handel Festival (March 2015)**

"Cummings' London Handel Orchestra soon found their spark, while the London Handel Singers delighted from the start." – **Geoff Brown, *The Times* \*\*\*\*\***

### ***The Indian Queen***

#### **English National Opera (February 2015)**

"With outstanding soloists, with the ENO chorus in coruscating form, and with Laurence Cummings and his period instrumentalists generating transcendent beauty in the pit, this is an evening in musical heaven." – **Michael Church, *The Independent* \*\*\*\*\***

"The ENO Orchestra under Laurence Cummings delivered Purcell's score with the ideal balance of refinement and drama." – **Owen Mortimer, *Opera Now***

"[Laurence Cummings] indulges in daringly slow tempi and pregnant pauses to produce a backdrop for singing that melts the heart." – **Barry Millington, *The Evening Standard* \*\*\*\*\***

"Stylishly conducted by Laurence Cummings." – **Rupert Christiansen, *The Telegraph* \*\*\*\*\***

"The music itself is glorious... [with] Laurence Cummings' stylish conducting..." – **Tim Ashley, *The Guardian***

"Songs and anthems by Purcell have been added to make a full evening's drama, supremely well conducted by Laurence Cummings." – **Fiona Maddocks, *The Observer***

"Laurence Cummings led an orchestra spiked with a few Baroque instruments, its playing crisp and attentive to the leader." – **Russ McDonald, *Opera Magazine***

### ***Faramondo – ACC 26402***

#### **Göttingen Handel Festival Recording (November 2014)**

"Laurence Cummings, a very experienced and accomplished exponent of Handel's music, conducts... Cummings and his orchestra do full justice to the music." – **John T. Hughes, *International Record Review***

"Laurence Cummings and his expert Göttingen Festival Orchestra produce a fine account of this undervalued opera, with varied orchestral subtleties and a sure mastery of Handelian style in this fully staged production recorded live last June." – **David Vickers, *Gramophone Magazine***

### ***Siroe, Re di Persia – ACC 26401***

#### **Göttingen Handel Festival Recording (October 2014)**

"With Laurence Cummings at the helm, and the hand-picked FestspielOrchester Göttingen in stirring form, the performance is



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energetic and committed. Cummings has an ability to push the momentum through from recitative to aria and back again with naturalness and urgency, so that all seems of a piece." – **Lindsay Kemp, *Gramophone Magazine***

### ***The Coronation of Poppea* Opera North (October 2014)**

"Opera North's gripping new production.... The stage and musical directors, Tim Albery and Laurence Cummings, have devised a bare-essentials edition of Monteverdi's last opera (first seen in Venice in 1643), an apotheosis of lust and lust for power that seems bang up to date... great ensemble achievements." – **Hugh Canning, *Sunday Times***

"Laurence Cummings' musical direction was both alert and sensitive." – **Anthony Arblaster, *Opera Now***

### ***Faramondo* Göttingen Handel Festival (June 2014)**

"The Festspiel Orchester has reached a peak under the festival director Lawrence Cummings, and it blended smoothly while exuding great energy." – **Sandra Bowdler, *Opera Magazine***

"The FestspielOrchester Göttingen and conductor Laurence Cummings handled the fireworks of the score with aplomb while also creating numerous moments of crystalline beauty; any drama, however complex, would become completely comprehensible if afforded the dedication of such ardent advocates as in Göttingen." – **Adrian Horsewood, *Opera Now***

### ***Arianna in Creta* London Handel Festival (March 2014)**

"Graciously conducted by Laurence Cummings, it sounds good. The London Handel festival has done this work proud." – **Tim Ashley, *The Guardian* \*\*\*\***

"Vivaciously conducted by Laurence Cummings. The performance had the infectious advocacy of Cummings and his orchestra." – **Andrew Clark, *Financial Times***

"The chief musical pleasures were provided by Laurence Cumming's lively direction of his hand-picked London Handel Orchestra in the pit." – **Hugh Canning, *Opera Magazine***

### ***Orpheus and Eurydike* Goteborgs Opera (February 2014)**

"When it is played with such sensible sensuality, rhythmic accuracy and dramatic rigor of the Gothenburg Opera Orchestra under Laurence Cummings... Göteborg Opera's Orpheus and Eurydice is world class throughout." – **Lennart Bromander, *Aftonbladet Kultur***

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### **Lorraine Hunt Lieberson Memorial Concert at Lincoln Centre Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment (August 2013)**

"The concert glowed with the evident joy the musicians brought to Handel's music. Mr. Cummings conducted from the harpsichord with infectious energy and good humor, rhythmically bouncing in his seat and whipping up breezy crescendos with broad arm gestures. The impression that lingered strongest after the concert was of the freshness of Handel's music, which these musicians played with an exploratory passion as if it had been written yesterday." - **Corinna da Fonseca-Wollheim, *The New York Times***

### ***Siroe, Re di Persia* Göttingen Handel Festival (May 2013)**

"This is new artistic director Laurence Cummings' first opera in Göttingen, and it must count as a high point in the festival's history... Together, Cummings and Karaman have created an evening of Handel that looks and sounds as fresh as if it had been written yesterday.

On the podium, Cummings hits every tempo bang in the middle, so that phrases are light and airy, architecture is solid yet soaring, recitatives feel like free speech, and it is often hard not to stand up and dance. His orchestra is superb.

This is both musical discovery and pure joy; this is how Handel should be." – **Shirley Apthorp, *Financial Times* \*\*\*\*\***

### ***Imeneo, London Handel Festival* Royal College of Music (March 2013)**

"Laurence Cummings' period London Handel Orchestra gave immense pleasure from the Britten Theatre's tiny pit, with judicious tempos and forward propulsion where appropriate. All of which meant that *Imeneo*, in any case one of Handel's shorter operas, never outstayed its welcome." – **Hugh Canning, *Opera Magazine***

"From curtain up, Laurence Cummings and the London Handel Orchestra get the sparks to fly." – **Richard Fairman, *The Financial Times* \*\*\*\*\***

"It was a bold stroke for conductor Laurence Cummings to open the London Handel Festival with a production of this rarity by singers from the Royal College of Music. But these singers have excellent comic timing, and under Paul Curran's direction manage to do full justice both to their characters and to the demands of the score – vintage Handel and, as Cummings and his period-instrument ensemble deliver it, wonderfully rich and varied." – **Michael Church, *The Independent***

"The evening's best feature is the playing of the London Handel Orchestra under Laurence Cummings." – **George Hall, *The Guardian***

"Laurence Cummings and the London Handel Festival Orchestra were able to offer us a musical interpretation of the highest order; in fact the orchestra last night could have given Concerto Köln a run for their money, such was the energy, verve and commitment given to this attractive if neglected score." – **Miranda Jackson, *Opera Britannia***

"In the pit, Laurence Cummings and the London Handel Orchestra presented a firestorm of flashy volins and whirlwind oboes.

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Sometimes you long for Cummings to calm down when Handel engages with the heartbreak of his characters; but for sheer excitement it's unbeatable." – **Opera Now**

### **Magnificat in D, Christ Church Spitalfields (December 2012)**

"There was the English Concert's festival night at Christ Church Spitalfields, when Laurence Cummings directed superbly poised period accounts of Bach's Magnificat in D and his cantata 'Schwingt freudig euch empor', BWV36." – **Paul Driver, Sunday Times Review**

### **Messiah, Opera de Lyon (December 2012)**

"Conducted by a long-standing Handel expert like Laurence Cummings, the orchestra, through their adoption of phrases that mirror the specialized training of the music of the era, make the audience completely forget that they are playing on modern instruments." – **Laurent Bury, Forum Opera**

### **SALE, Zurich Opera House**

"...conductor Laurence Cummings (who sings "Comfort Ye" from the podium), is universally excellent. Cummings has style and lets the phrases breathe; his orchestra plays well. For chorus numbers, the singers are joined by the actors, who can all hold a musical line." - **Shirley Apthorp, Financial Times**

"...one of the most surprising and flawless performances comes from the conductor, when he turns around to us and sings the *Messiah* recitative "Comfort ye my people" in a very fine tenor. Laurence Cummings is an important musical figure in London, and has recently taken over the artistic direction of the Göttingen Handel Festival. His direction of the Zurich baroque band La Scintilla inspires SALE. Whether the music is pensive or stormy, the performance is of a high order. The famous "Lascia ch'io pianga" becomes a wonderfully heartfelt chorus and, thanks to Cummings, even the actors have impeccable intonation here." – **Badische Zeitung**

"...It is not surprising that the musicians, quite the contrary to the stage direction team, are rapturously applauded. Leading the way is the in-house Baroque ensemble *La Scintilla* under Laurence Cummings. Cummings, new head of the Handel Festival Göttingen, is an experienced baroque specialist who advocates speedy tempos, a bright sound and a thrilling approach". – **Reinhard J. Brembeck, Süddeutsche Zeitung**

"Cummings has one of his best nights on this occasion, so that overture, adagio, andante, sonatas, ensembles, duets, trios, arias from various opera and oratorios are performed with great intensity". – **Marinella Polli, Corriere del Ticino**

"There is much to admire. Not least La Scintilla Orchestra which displayed entrancing sensuality". – **Peter Hagmann, Neue Zürcher Zeitung**

"...One is kept awake by the music...and this is Laurence Cummings's achievement. Under the baton of the musically and # energetically vibrant British conductor, La Scintilla plays with wonderful colour, brilliance and intensity". – **Bruno Rauch, Bündner Tagblatt**

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### ***Judas Maccabaeus, BBC Proms***

"under Laurence Cummings's direction, the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment was not going to batter our ears. Rather, it caressed them with sounds of tenderness: the mellow tones of wooden flutes accompanying the duetting soprano and mezzo in "Oh lovely peace", the gently abrasive trumpets that hail "the conqu'ring hero". This was period instrument playing of subtlety, flexibility and grace" – **Nick Kimberley, *The Evening Standard***

Laurence Cummings conducted the Choir of the Enlightenment and the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment...Everything was done with exceptional finesse, from the finely detailed playing to the superbly moulded choral singing" – **Tim Ashley, *The Guardian* \*\*\*\***

### ***The Fairy Queen Glyndebourne Festival Opera***

"With the Baroque maestro Laurence Cummings now at the helm things have settled marvellously" – **Michael Church, *The Independent* [5 \*\*\*\*\*]**

"it is Cummings and the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment, performing Purcell's score with warmth, precision and a thrilling vitality, who ultimately steal the show." – **Laura Battle, *The Financial Times* \*\*\*\*\***

"The performance at this revival was outstanding. Laurence Cummings...drew consistently beautiful sounds from the OAE, especially from the string section, who were the glory of Purcell's astonishing score." – **Roger Parker, *Opera***

"Laurence Cummings, chief among the gutsiest and most invigorating of period specialists, sets aside rougher textures for the most tender account of Purcell's score, favouring sweetness and legato sway over brusquer articulation. Dance rhythms are tight and clean but heard as though from another world, transfigured like Shakespeare's own mortals in this enchanted wood." – **Alexandra Coghlan, *The Art's Desk***

"the musicians of the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment deliver the score with striking character under the baton of Laurence Cummings... It's an enchanting spectacle, not to be missed." – **George Hall, *The Stage***

"Laurence Cummings' energy seems to know no bounds; fresh from conducting Judas Maccabeus at the proms the previous night, here he coaxes an almost frenetic performance from the orchestra, attentive to every detail and accompanying the singers with his customary sensitive support." – **Alexandra Coghlan, *What's on Stage***

### ***L'Olimpiade, Garsington Opera***

"Laurence Cummings's musical direction (including a subtle paste-in, Vivaldi-style, of *Chariots of Fire*) of a new critical edition of the opera, played superbly on modern instruments, was inspired and inspiring throughout." – **Hilary Finch, *The Times***

"Laurence Cummings seeks out the essential character of every aria, allowing Vivaldi, on this occasion, to knock Mozart into second place." – **George Hall, *The Guardian* \*\*\*\*\***

"Its score mixes breathtakingly lyrical invention with all the exhilaration typical of the composer, and conductor Laurence

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Cummings balances these elements in a tightly paced performance." – **John Allison, *The Telegraph***

"L'Olimpiade is not all top-drawer Vivaldi but some of it is and Laurence Cummings's alert but sensitive direction ensured that the most was made of those numbers." – **Barry Millington, *The Evening Standard* \*\*\*\***

"the production was delightful and the performance excellent...The performance featured an accomplished young cast and the fine conducting of Laurence Cummings, an early-music specialist, who drew crisp, textured playing from the orchestra and led the continuo section from the harpsichord." – **Anthony Tommasini, *The New York Times***

"Thanks to judicious cuts and Cumming's pacy conducting *L'Olimpiade* seemed the worthiest of Garsington's Vivaldi resurrections." – **Hugh Canning, *Opera Magazine***

"Conductor Laurence Cummings serves up the full glory of the score in this new Garsington production. His incisive direction from the harpsichord draws crisp and buoyant playing from the pit musicians - a stylish period sound on modern instruments." – **Graham Rogers, *The Stage***

### ***Esther*, Goettingen International Handel Festival 2012**

"Cummings showed not the smallest doubt in the material, and together with the Göttingen Festival Orchestra – not the biggest names but truly the superstars of the festival – coaxed a reading that smote and seduced by turns, supporting the lighter voice of Daniel Taylor's tender Mordecai, anchoring Sophie Junker's Israelite woman, and growing to match and rival Sampson...and Davies for virtuosity. With pacy tempos and choral episodes that grew in assurance and character as the evening progressed...*Esther* was a stylish promise of things to come under Cummings's direction." – **Alexandra Coghlan, *The ArtsDesk.com***

### **St Matthew Passion, St George's, Hanover Square**

"With Laurence Cummings directing from the harpsichord/organ, and some fine principals heading the chorus of the period-instrument London Handel Orchestra, this towering masterpiece was in ideal hands. Though the forces were small, it was clear that Bach's scoring for two orchestras and choruses would work powerfully, and the opening phrase 'Come ye daughters, share my mourning' seemed to surge up out of the earth...Thanks to Cummings's furious momentum, the symmetrical contours of this great edifice came splendidly clear, and its alternations of chaos, rage, and celestial calm were presented to greater effect than is ever possible in a concert performance." – **Michael Church, *the Independent* \*\*\*\***

### ***Riccardo Primo*, London Handel Festival 2012**

"The overture – starring oboes, bassoons, and sundry flutes – sets a cracking pace which the London Handel Orchestra under the direction of Laurence Cummings ably replicates." – **Michael Church, *The Independent***

"As ever, the orchestral performance under Laurence Cummings was scintillating, propelled by a peppery bassoon, archlute, cello, bass and two harpsichords. It is this vivacity, and the rarity of the repertoire, that accounts for the loyalty of the festival's audience." – **Anna Picard, *The Independent on Sunday***

"It helped that musical standards were expert and rigorous. The orchestral writing, vividly executed by the LHF orchestra, is full of invention, with trilling, bird-like recorders, "royal" horns, trumpets and drums, tempestuous string passages and delicate

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# Laurence Cummings

## Selected Reviews

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word painting. The conductor Laurence Cummings kept a fine balance between unforced phrasing and breathless vigour. Now one of the composer's most sought-after champions, he has been LHF director since 1999 and next month takes up the same directorial role at the illustrious Göttingen Handel festival in Germany. His bobbing enthusiasm can turn Handel opera agnostics, myself among them, into wild-eyed converts ready to sign the pledge." – **Fiona Maddocks, *The Guardian***

"Cummings has raised the standard of the London Handel Orchestra's playing over his ten years in charge, and he relished the thrilling storm music which succeeds the magnificent overture and paced the music with sufficient verve and forward thrust to disguise the opera's creaky dramatic structure. *Riccardo Primo* may not be one of Handel's triumphs, but these performances justified its revival." – **Hugh Canning, *Opera Magazine***

"audiences return, lured by the energy of the festival's Musical Director Laurence Cummings...Cummings' orchestra are all guttural punch and swaggering dance, and the trumpets, oboes, recorders and flute add welcome dimension and colour to the action – kept mercifully efficient by Cummings' tempos." - **Alexandra Coghlan, *The Art's Desk***

### Messiah, Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment

"Much of this performance seemed right and appropriate. Laurence Cummings conducted an OAE trimmed down to a size Handel would have recognised from the first London performances of *Messiah*, with doubled oboes and bassoons adding the only extra colour to the original scoring for strings and trumpets. The Choir of the Enlightenment fielded only 22 people, yet they sung with admirable focus and feeling, and patient attention to Handel's masterful word-painting." - **Neil Fisher, *The Times***

### La Verità in Cimento, Garsington Opera

"...conductor Laurence Cummings sets about every number with almost breathless enthusiasm." - **Richard Fairman, *Financial Times***

"All praise, however, to Laurence Cummings, the enthused conductor of an animated orchestra..." - **Rupert Christiansen, *Daily Telegraph***

"Laurence Cummings's conducting is witty and compassionate..." - **Tim Ashley, *The Guardian***

"...lovingly played here by leading period-instrument soloists under Laurence Cummings..." - **Amanda Holloway, *Opera Magazine***

"Conductor Laurence Cummings makes his enthusiasm for the music clear, as he weaves, bobs and zooms to show the beat of Vivaldi's elaborate score." - **Paul Levy, *Wall Street Journal***

"Conductor Laurence Cummings encourages precise and elegant playing from the orchestra." - **Christopher Gray, *Oxford Times***

"Laurence Cummings conducts a spry account of the score" - **George Hall, *The Stage***

### Rodelinda, London Handel Festival

"Laurence Cummings, the festival's musical director, gets inside the music, drawing highly expressive playing from his period instrument London Handel Orchestra and, partly because he rarely lingers, sweeping the singers along with him." - **Richard**

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# Laurence Cummings

## Selected Reviews

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### Fairman, *Financial Times*

"Cummings favours brisk, muscular playing, which the experienced London Handel Orchestra provided unstintingly..." - **Fiona Maddocks, *The Observer***

"Laurence Cummings conducts this rewarding cast and London Handel Orchestra at exhilarating tempi, lickety-split. A joy from start to finish." - **Laurie Lewis, *The Independent***

"...with Laurence Cummings briskly directing the gutsy London Handel Orchestra..." - **Geoff Brown, *The Times***

"In the pit, Laurence Cummings conducts an outstanding assemblage of baroque players." - **George Hall, *The Guardian***

"Emotional sincerity...was something we had in excess: the swaggering attack of the London Handel Orchestra's Overture under the direction of Laurence Cummings; the plaintive obbligato flute solo in "Ombre, piante"; the impassioned grief of Eleonor

Dennis's Rodelinda... It's a production that deserves another outing..." - **Alexandra Coghlan, *The Arts Desk***

"The festival's music director Laurence Cummings conducted the orchestra of baroque players with verve. What a pity there were only four performances." - **Clare Colvin, *The Express***

### Gothenburg Opera - Alcina

"...An uncommonly expressive but dark, Alcina and musically nothing short of sensational...the orchestra – under Laurence Cummings' direction – plays with wonderful sensualism and excellent articulation." - **Lennart Bromander, *Aftonbladet***

"In Gothenburg Opera's pit conductor Laurence Cummings leads the ensemble and orchestra; dynamic, precise and vibrant." –

### Gunilla Brodrej, *Expressen*

"We are given lots of greys, blacks and whites. A colour scheme that articulates the elevated archaic traits of the drama and creates friction against the sensualism pouring out of the orchestra, brilliantly led by baroque specialist Laurence Cummings." – **Martin Nyström, *Dagens Nyheter***

"Conductor Laurence Cummings unfolds the arias calmly, systematic and implacably. Both orchestra and soloists are well served..." - **Bo Löfvendahl, *Svenska Dagbladet***

"Yes, this is – as you may understand – a performance outside of the ordinary. The orchestra, under British baroque specialist Laurence Cummings plays with a dreamlike lightness and precision, as if the musicians have been positively bewitched." - **Magnus Haglund, *Göteborgs-posten***

### English National Opera - Radamisto

"English National Opera has assembled a magnificent cast, galvanised by the crisply phrased, speedy conducting of Laurence Cummings and stylish orchestral playing." - **Rupert Christiansen, *Daily Telegraph***

"So it looks great – how does it sound? Better. Laurence Cummings directs with his customary verve and he's made very free with

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# Laurence Cummings

## Selected Reviews

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embellishments that have his sopranos pipping the high Bs and Cs like there was no tomorrow." - **Edward Seckerson, *Independent***

"[there is] no lack of effort or stylishness on the part of cast and orchestra conducted by Laurence Cummings" - **Andrew Clark, *Financial Times***

"Laurence Cummings whips the orchestra into a frenzy of dancing semiquavers and sexily-sung French trills...the singing and playing are marvellous" - **Anna Picard, *Independent on Sunday***

"aided by Laurence Cummings's sympathetic accompaniments" - **Barry Millington, *Evening Standard***

"Laurence Cummings conducts with alacrity" - **George Hall, *The Stage***

### Glyndebourne - Giulio Cesare

"The fundamentally neo-Classical décor is matched by an appropriate sound, the scrupulous efforts of Laurence Cummings and the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment." - **Opera Magazine**

### Royal College of Music – Alcina

"top-rank playing from Laurence Cummings's laser-sharp band" - **Opera Now**

### Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra

"Deftly juggling duties as director and harpsichordist was Britain's Laurence Cummings, in his Minnesota debut. Born in 1968, Cummings has emerged as one of his generation's leading baroque-era specialists, at home in both opera house and concert hall. There is nothing routine in Cummings' approach to his repertoire. Before the orchestra Friday, he was vigor incarnate, a man possessed by the music's rhythmic impulse and its play of moods. Bounding from his bench like a jack-in-the-box, one hand on the keyboard as the other sliced the air, he had the SPCO sounding as stylish as any period band, modern sonorities notwithstanding; the strings, in particular, combined clarity and warmth to a rare degree." - **Larry Fuchsberg, *Star Tribune***

"Cummings is a major player on the baroque music scene, especially in his native England, where he heads the London Handel Festival. Friday night marked his Minnesota debut, as he led the St. Paul Chamber Orchestra in an exceptionally well-performed collection of concertos (plus a J.S. Bach *Orchestral Suite*) at Wayzata Community Church. If you need a reminder of what a great baroque band we have in the SPCO, these are the concerts to catch, for you're unlikely to hear a better performance of that era's music in the Twin Cities this year." - **Rob Hubbard, *Pioneer Press***

### Tolomeo, London Handel Festival

"Laurence Cummings drew stylish, spirited playing from his London Handel Orchestra and paced [...] the work adroitly." - **Rodney Milnes, *Opera Magazine***



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# Laurence Cummings

## Selected Reviews

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### Angelika Kirchschrager, Handel Arias recording

"Virtuos, durchsichtig, klingschön und im besten Sinne begleitend musiziert der Kammerorchester Basel; Laurence Cummings am Pult sorgt für exzellente Balance und durchweg flotte, dabei nie hastige Tempi." - **W. Borches, *Das Opernglas***