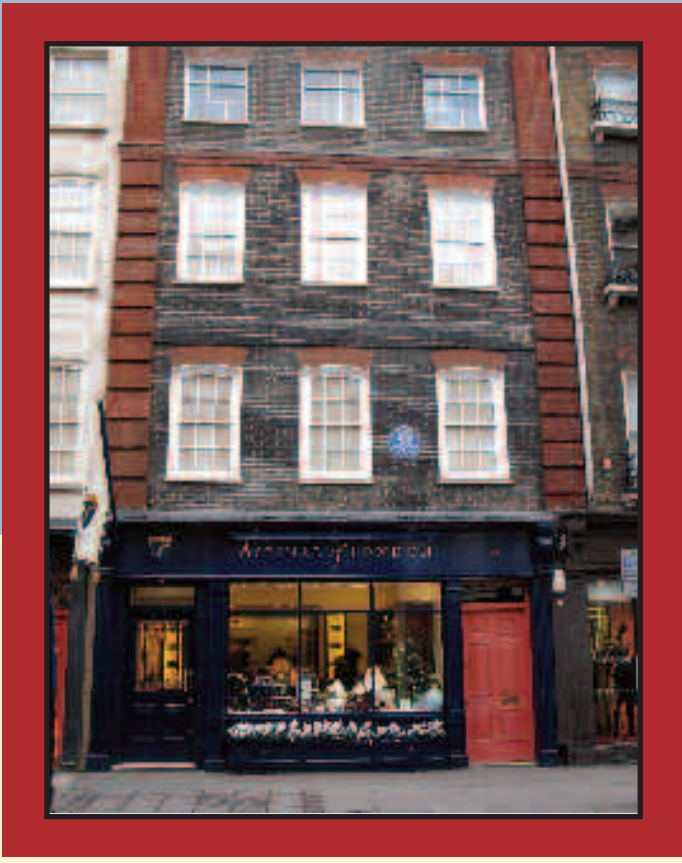


Tafelmusik Salutes: Handel House Museum



Handel's House Today



Handel House Museum occupies the building at 25 Brook Street in London where George Frideric Handel made his home from 1723 until his death in 1759.

The museum works closely with other galleries, museums and private collectors to help tell the story of Handel to the general public. The interiors are a scholarly restoration of the rooms as Handel would have known them.



Photo by Stuart Leach © The Handel House Trust Ltd

The museum organizes a lively series of concerts, lectures, storytelling events and interactive activities for children, and hosts all levels of school groups.

Handel House has worked closely with the RNIB to develop special programming specifically designed for blind or partially sighted visitors in remembrance of Handel's own blindness.

The Handel House Composer-in-Residence Scheme uses the talents of composers to engage with Handel's music and his house in new and innovative ways, creating new works inspired by different aspects of Handel's music.

One of the recent projects was:

Graininess and Sheen by Kerry Andrew, using improvisations on the three keyboards in Handel's house, recordings of creaking floorboards and other sounds made by the house, and interviews with museum volunteers.

Listen to a podcast of this wonderful work by Kerry Andrew and find out more information about visiting the museum on the Handel House website



Photos by Andy Lepki with kind permission of the Handel House Museum

The House in Handel's Time

From *The London Daily Post and General Advertiser*, Monday, January 9, 1743

Mr. HANDEL proposes to perform, by SUBSCRIPTION, twelve times during next Lent, and engages to play two New Performances (and some of his former Oratorios if time will permit.)

Each subscriber is to pay Four Guineas at the Time he subscribes which entitles him to one Box Ticket for each Performance ...

Those Gentlemen and Ladies who have already favoured Mr. Handel in the Subscription are desired to send for their Tickets, at his House in Brook-street, where Attendance will be given every Day (Sunday excepted) from Nine o'Clock in the Morning until Three in the Afternoon.

Handel was the first tenant of the townhouse in Mayfair, a new London subdivision with wide streets and large public squares. He paid 60 pounds per annum in rent; as a foreign national, he was forbidden from owning property.

The Westminster Poor Rate Book (record of property taxation for the benefit of the poor) shows that the Brook Street house was newly built but as yet unoccupied on July 3, 1723.

The Westminster Commissioner of Sewers Rate Book shows that Handel had moved in by August 8.

The kitchens were in the basement. Kitchen equipment listed in *Handel's Estate Inventory* from August 27, 1759 shows that Handel was able to entertain many guests.

The Estate Inventory also describes Handel's red canopied bed in the front room on the third floor:



There was a fine collection of 80 paintings and 64 engravings in the house. It is not possible to know what the exact paintings were, but they were described in detail in the catalogue of Handel's estate auction at the London firm of Abraham Langford. Earlier catalogues from 1749 and 1750 identify six paintings bought by Handel, including a large landscape by Rembrandt for which he paid 29p 18s.

Did you know...

Jimi Hendrix lived next door! For a brief period in the late 1960s Jimi Hendrix lived in a flat at 23 Brook Street. The offices of Handel House Museum now occupy this space, which has been restored

Composing

Handel composed some of his most famous works in the house. This little room with its strong morning light is thought to have been his study:



Some of the works composed here were:

- 30 operas, including *Rodelinda*, *Ariodante* and *Alcina*
- 25 oratorios, including *Israel in Egypt*, *Messiah*, *Semele* and *Hercules*
- Coronation Anthems
- Concerti grossi Opus 6
- *Music for the Royal Fireworks*

Rehearsing

From 1734, Handel shared Covent Garden with acting companies and had limited rehearsal time in the theatre. He held preliminary rehearsals with singers and instrumentalists in his music room at home.

The Estate Inventory lists green silk curtains for all the principal rooms of the house except for this one. The reason may have been acoustical – curtains and rugs soak up sound and make voices and instruments seem less resonant.



Marco Ricci depicts a London opera rehearsal in the early part of the 18th century. The woman in brown is the singer Catherine Tofts, who later married Consul Joseph Smith, and lived with him in the Venice palazzo of *House of Dreams*.



Yale Center for British Art, Paul Mellon Collection

with the decor of Jimmy Hendrix's time. Learning that Handel used to live next door, Hendrix went to One Stop Record Shop in South Molton Street and bought LPs of *Messiah* and *Water Music*.