

NEWSLETTER of the American Handel Society

Volume XXXVII, Number 1

Spring 2022

HANDEL HOUSE RESTORATION

Ellen T. Harris

Handel & Hendrix in London, encompassing Handel's house, Jimi Hendrix's flat (apartment), and exhibition and event space, closed its doors at the end of September 2021 for the final restoration of Handel's house. This will include the ground floor with Handel's front and back parlors, the basement kitchen with lightwell onto Brook Street, the restoration of the brick façade to the sidewalk (pavement in British terminology), and the use of the front door on Brook Street to enter the museum. It is projected that this renovation will be completed in time to reopen the museum in spring of 2023 as a celebration of the 300th anniversary of Handel's moving in. I like to refer to this restoration as "opening Handel's front door." Handel & Hendrix calls it "The Hallelujah Project," which gives some sense of the road that led to this moment over the course of the museum's twenty-year history.

When the Handel House Museum opened its doors in 2001, it had been able to acquire only the upper floors of Handel's house (25 Brook Street) and the attached house on its east side (23 Brook Street). The opening up of these adjoining houses on the second and third floors (American style) allowed Handel's rooms to be restored to their original form, using the highest level of historical restoration, while 23 Brook Street was used for rotating exhibits, a costume room, and, in the garret, the museum offices without impinging on the rooms in which Handel lived. The inventory of Handel's house, taken in the summer after Handel died, provided information about more



Handel's bedroom in Handel House. Photo courtesy of Handel House Trust.

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THE ENGLISH CONCERT PERFORMS *ALCINA*

Graydon Beeks

In early November 2021 LA Opera hosted the English Concert under the direction of Harry Bicket in two performances of *Alcina* as part of their return to America following cancellations caused by the COVID pandemic. These performances were what might be termed "lightly staged," with the singers in concert dress performing from memory, acting with complete engagement, and interacting with each other as they would on stage. The result was an outstanding musical and dramatic interpretation of Handel's opera, with a single *caveat* that will appear at the end of this review.



*Karina Gauvin as Alcina and Paula Murrihy as Ruggiero.
Photo credit: Lawrence K. Ho / LA Opera.*

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ephemeral objects, such as in Handel's bedroom (see image), the red window curtains and canopy (full tester) bed hung with thick woolen fabric (harateen) in crimson (which Handel House had woven specially in France). The fashionable, late-eighteenth-century bow extension at the back of Handel's house was used to create an accessible entrance to the museum (from what in Handel's day were the stable yards and now are a set of fashionable restaurants and shops). This space was used to encompass the ticket desk, public restroom, space for leaving coats and large bags, elevator, newly built emergency exit stairs, and, on the second floor, a museum shop, again, without needing to usurp the spaces in which Handel lived for these practical necessities.

By 2007 enough capital had been raised for the museum to take possession of Handel's entire house, including the ground floor commercial property, and The Handel House Trust acquired a 999-year lease for the entire house. Immediately a Master Plan was developed to restore fully both 25 Brook Street and the upper floors of 23 Brook Street. During the original planning for the museum in the 1990s, it was discovered that Jimi Hendrix had lived in the garret apartment of no. 23 from January to March of 1969, and that the English Heritage had chosen to commemorate Hendrix's years in London with this space. Consequently, in 1997 a blue plaque for Hendrix on no. 23 was added to the blue plaque for Handel on no. 25. This made the use of the garret in no. 23 for the offices of the museum awkward, although the planners went so far as to carpet that space in red shag, as it had been when Hendrix lived there. It was hardly an ideal arrangement for the office or for visitors who wished to see the flat. Therefore, the full restoration of the Hendrix apartment became an essential part of the Master Plan.

The first stage of the plan left the commercial property on the ground floor and basement of Handel's house *in situ* for the income it provided and focused on no. 23. The house was extended at the back on the second floor to the same point as the bow extension on no. 25. This new space allowed for the addition of an events room for lectures, receptions, concerts, and school visits, greatly expanding the programming for the museum. It also included newly built offices and extended elevator access to all floors. The full restoration of the Hendrix flat ensued with the assistance of Kathy Etchingham, Hendrix's partner, who had found and leased the apartment in 1968. The survival of color photographs and objects that had been in the flat was also indispensable. These newly built and restored spaces in what was the Handel House Museum opened in February 2016 under the new name of Handel & Hendrix in London.

The second and final stage of the restoration is now underway. When the museum reopens in spring 2023, the brick façade of the house will have been returned to the state it was in when Handel was in residence with two street-level windows, the lightwell into the basement surrounded by cast iron fencing, and the door on the right, leading into Handel's two ground floor parlors. The wall between the two parlors will be restored in such a way that it can be removed for events or formal dinners using the space of both rooms. Behind the second parlor the space created by the late-eighteenth-century bow extension will become the museum shop.

In the basement Handel's kitchen will be recreated using the inventory taken after his death, which is more complete for the kitchen than any other room in the house. The Handel House Trust believes this will be the only restored Georgian kitchen in London, and some simple cooking demonstrations are planned. My fingers are crossed that a substitute for the "fine cast-lead cistern" described in 1893 by W. H. Cummings (*The Musical Times*) as situated in the vault under the street (the purpose of which would have been to catch rainwater to be used in the house) can be procured (see image of the kitchen area opened up revealing the spaces under the street). Behind the Georgian kitchen will be a full, modern events kitchen for receptions upstairs and for special dinners in the house.



*Kitchen area in Handel House opened up during restoration.
Photo courtesy of Handel House Trust.*

On entering the house, the original staircase will lead visitors upstairs to the music rooms on the second floor and the bedroom on the third. These rooms will not be significantly altered, although there is a plan to recreate Handel's art collection based on the auction catalogue of its sale. There already is the prospect of a Canaletto painting that can represent item 63: "*The Doges' Palace* by Canaletto [*sic*]." In addition, the restoration will include fitting the house with Georgian-style lighting (replacing the bright, modern lights now in use).

I recently had the opportunity to see the restoration work in progress on the ground floor and the basement. It was exciting to see those spaces stripped back to their studs. With all the later additions taken out, it was possible to begin seeing these spaces as Handel knew them. And the new bricks for bringing the façade back down to the street level (distressed to match those currently on the house) were already stacked and ready to go. It will be grand in about a year to walk through Handel's front door into his front parlor and also to visit the rarity of a fully restored Georgian kitchen.

Americans who are interested in supporting the restoration and conservation of Handel's house can make tax-deductible contributions at the Handel House Foundation of America website, www.handelhouseamerica.org. Otherwise, contributions can be made to Handel & Hendrix in London at <http://handelhendrix.org/>.

Bicket had assembled a very strong cast led by Karina Gauvin in the title role. Her performance of Alcina's great aria "Ombre pallide" to end Act II was emotionally overwhelming, and her entire portrayal of the betrayed sorceress was dramatically compelling. As Morgana, her flighty younger sister, Lucy Crowe was musically stellar, bringing down the house with her virtuoso performance of the aria "Tornami a vagheggiar." It would be possible to criticize her combination of high-flying ornamentation and amusing hand gestures, but they seemed to me to be an integral part of a consistent characterization. Crowe's bright voice contrasted well with Gauvin's darker timbre.

Ruggiero, the object of Alcina's love, was played by the young Irish mezzo soprano Paula Murrihy, who displayed total command of her often very demanding music and effectively portrayed the seemingly vacillating character of the shipwrecked knight. As his betrothed, Bradamante, who comes to Alcina's enchanted island to rescue him, Elizabeth DeShong used her burnished mezzo soprano to capture her essential seriousness and the constancy of her love.



Elizabeth DeShong as Bradamante and Lucy Crowe as Morgana;
Harry Bicket (center) conducts *The English Concert* from the harpsichord.
Photo credit: Lawrence K. Ho / LA Opera.

Tenor Alek Shrader was a luxury casting as Oronte, the commander of Alcina's Guard. He found some unexpected humor in his interactions with Morgana but seemed less comfortable with Handel's coloratura than with that of 19th-century *bel canto* composers. Bass Wojtek Gierlach coped well with the small but crucial part of Melisso, the magician who accompanies Bradamante and plays a key role in the destruction of Alcina's power. The playing of the English Concert was technically and stylistically distinguished, and Becket's tempos seemed to me to be just right.

Alcina is an immensely long opera, even with almost all the dances omitted, as is appropriate in a concert performance. It was performed in three acts with breaks after Acts I and II, as Handel intended, which counterintuitively makes it seem shorter than breaking the flow in the middle of Act II as has become common in imitation of the practice initiated by Glyndebourne Opera. The running time was

announced as three hours and 30 minutes, and this was clearly too long for some in the audience. To achieve this timing, additional cuts had to be made. Productions often cut the role of Oronte to the bone, but this was obviously not an option given the presence of Shrader.

The solution adopted here was to eliminate the character of Oberto, the boy who arrives on Alcina's island seeking his father, a sailor who has been shipwrecked there and turned into an animal—in this case a lion—by Alcina, a procedure she has employed with other shipwrecked sailors. The decision to omit Oberto has the benefit of eliminating three arias and allowing a touring company to travel with one fewer singer. But, it also has the disadvantage of altering the audience's perception of the title character.

As the opera proceeds, Alcina realizes that she is losing her hold over Ruggiero and reacts accordingly. The audience naturally sympathizes with her, especially after her heart-rending aria "Mi restano le lagrime," and the subsequent destruction of her power makes the conclusion of the opera ambivalent, especially when the animals have been turned back into men but the island paradise is revealed to be a desert. The presence of Oberto creates another level of ambiguity.

When Oberto appears for the third time seeking his father, Alcina deflects his question by asking him to kill a lion that, she claims, has just threatened her. Oberto recognizes the lion as his father and he rounds on Alcina with the fiery aria "Barbara!" At this moment the audience realizes that Alcina has not changed her ways and should not be viewed as an entirely sympathetic character. Without Oberto, the audience's sympathy for Alcina is likely to remain unchecked.

I am not sure there is a solution to the Oberto problem in these circumstances. In an oratorio Handel would probably have had the same soprano sing the roles of Morgana and Oberto, but in an opera—especially one that is even lightly staged—this is not a viable solution. The difficulty could have been explained in the program notes had there been any. The person giving the pre-concert lecture rightly stressed the importance of Oberto's Act III aria but gave no indication that the aria and, indeed, the entire character had been cut. Perhaps it is only in a festival setting that one could expect to see a reasonably complete *Alcina*. Meanwhile, I was grateful to have heard an incomplete performance of such musical and dramatic stature.

MESSAGE FROM THE EDITOR



I am pleased to announce that articles published in the *Newsletter of the American Handel Society* will now be covered by *Répertoire International de Littérature Musicale* (RILM), <https://www.rilm.org/>, offering the dissemination of our contents worldwide.

Renew your membership for 2022 today!

CALL FOR APPLICATIONS: INTERNATIONAL HANDEL RESEARCH PRIZE 2023

In 2023 the George Frideric Handel Society will award its International Handel Research Prize for the sixth time to a young scholar who has completed a research project on the life or work of George Frideric Handel and has presented the results in a formal research document. Research teams also may apply.

The International Handel Research Prize is sponsored by the Foundation of the Saalesparkasse. It is valued at €2000 and entails the presentation of a paper to be read by the prize winner at the scholarly conference to be held during the annual Handel Festival in Halle an der Saale (May 30–31, 2023).

Applications may be submitted by graduates of musicology or related disciplines who have completed their Master's or Doctoral studies (or equivalent research) between 2020 and 2022. Historical-critical editions may also be submitted for the prize. Studies in English or German are accepted.

Applications for the International Handel Research Prize should be sent by **November 30, 2022** (postmarked) to the:

Georg-Friedrich-Händel-Gesellschaft e.V.
Geschäftsstelle Grosse Nikolaistrasse 5
06108 Halle (Saale)
Germany

The application must include the scholarly work undertaken (in printed and in electronic form) and be accompanied by a brief curriculum vitae and an account of the applicant's career. Reports can be enclosed.

The prize winner will be selected by a panel from the Foundation of the Saalesparkasse and the George Frideric Handel Society. The prize will be presented in Halle in June 2023, during the scholarly conference of the Halle Handel Festival.

FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK

The Board of Directors is pleased to announce that the next American Handel Society Conference will take place February 23–26, 2023 and will again be hosted by the Jacobs School of Music at Indiana University Bloomington. Details are still being formulated, but the Call for Papers can be found elsewhere in this issue of the *Newsletter*. The Board also determined at its April 16, 2022 meeting to award the 2022 J. Merrill Knapp Research Fellowship to Blake Johnson, a doctoral student at the University of Missouri-Kansas City, to support research for his DMA thesis on “The Influence of Foreign Oboists on English Musical Life, 1700–1750.” Finally, the Board accepted the request of Ellen Rosand to step down from regular membership and is pleased to announce that she will continue serving the society as an Honorary Member of the Board.

It is time for me to remind the members of the society to pay their membership dues for the year 2022. For those of you doing this online, it will mean creating a membership profile and password on our newly designed website (<https://www.americanhandelsociety.org>) by clicking “Join” on the homepage and following the instructions. Those of you who would prefer to pay offline should send your payment to the Secretary/Treasurer, Marjorie Pomeroy Kelly, at the address given on the Membership Form printed elsewhere in the *Newsletter*. The Webmaster will then create a simple membership profile and send you a temporary password that can be used to login on the website, complete the membership profile, and create a permanent password. Please make sure to include your email address with your payment.

Finally, I would like to call attention to the virtual forum *Encounters with Eighteenth-century Music*, which the AHS co-sponsors with the American Bach Society, the Haydn Society of North America, the Mozart Society of America, and the Society for Eighteenth-Century Music. The series has just completed its very successful first year, which consisted of five programs including conversations on “Performing the Baroque for Modern Audiences” with Nicholas McGegan and Ellen T. Harris, “Moravian Soundscapes: Hearing New Histories of Early America” with Sarah Eyerly, and “Embodying Entanglement: The Case of Beethoven and his French Piano” with Tom Beghin. The series will continue in the fall, and the program committee will be chaired by our own Robert Ketterer. The schedule will be forthcoming.

— Graydon Beeks

CALL FOR PAPERS: AMERICAN HANDEL SOCIETY CONFERENCE 2023

The biennial conference of the American Handel Society will be held in Bloomington, Indiana, hosted by the **Jacobs School of Music at Indiana University Bloomington**, on **February 23–26, 2023**. Commencing on Handel's 338th birthday, the conference will include academic panels, the Howard Serwer Memorial Lecture, and performances by IU's Historical Performance Institute.

The Society invites submission of abstracts for papers on any topic connected with Handel's life, his music, his close contemporaries, or the contexts in which his music was composed and/or performed. Given the setting, the Program Committee would especially appreciate topics on issues of performance and performance practice. Abstracts of no more than 500 words may be sent by **October 3, 2022** to the program chair, **Roger Freitas**, at rfreitas@esm.rochester.edu.

NEW WEBSITE

The **NEW American Handel Society Website** is up and running. In addition to a completely redesigned look, exciting new features include the **online membership management** system, where members can keep track of their membership status and payments with a secure login, and a newly compiled list of **online resources for scholarly research** on Handel-related topics that will be useful for anyone interested in this subject. We encourage all members to **create a profile** to enjoy full access. Please visit us at <https://www.americanhandelsociety.org/>.



HANDEL PRIZE WINNER 2022

The Handel House Foundation awards the 2022 Handel Prize of the City of Halle (Saale) to the President of the George Frideric Handel Society, **Dr. Wolfgang Hirschmann**. Congratulations!

J. MERRILL KNAPP RESEARCH FELLOWSHIP WINNER

The J. Merrill Knapp Research Fellowship—named for one of the founders of the American Handel Society—supports scholarly projects related to Handel and his world.

The winner of the Knapp Fellowship for 2022 is **Blake Johnson**, who is currently completing a DMA in Oboe Performance and a Master's in Musicology at the University of Missouri-Kansas City Conservatory where he is completing a thesis entitled "The Influence of Foreign Oboists on English Musical Life, 1700–1750." The Knapp Fellowship will support Johnson's research at the British Library and the National Archives, focusing on the performance style of foreign oboists in



eighteenth-century London with particular attention to those performers for whom Handel wrote obligato oboe parts in his operas, including Jean Baptiste Loeillet (1680–1730), Johann Ernst Galliard (1687–1747), Jean Christian Kytch (?–1738), and Giuseppe Sammartini (1695–1750). Johnson's goal is not only to show some of the characteristics of Handel's writing for the oboe in general, but also to find evidence that Handel crafted his oboe parts with the skills of specific performers in mind. Scholars have long been attentive to Handel's relationships with singers; Johnson's project opens up new conversations about his artistic collaborations with instrumentalists.

The Board congratulates Mr. Johnson for his award. As chair of the Knapp Fellowship Committee, I would like to thank my colleagues on the committee, Ileri Chávez-Bárceñas and Mark Risinger for their contributions to this process.

— **Wendy Heller**, Chair
Knapp Fellowship Committee

RECENT PUBLICATIONS

- Aspden, Suzanne. Review of *Kitty Clive, or the Fair Songster* by Berta Joncus. *Music and Letters* (2022), <https://doi.org/10.1093/ml/gcab091>.
- Burrows, Donald. "Oboe parts for *Messiah* and Handel's performances." *The Musical Times* (Spring, 2022): 77–88.
- Gardner, Matthew. "Sängerinnen und Sänger – Vermittlung und Vermarktung." *Göttinger Händel-Beiträge* 23 (2022): 31–46, <https://doi.org/10.13109/9783666278372.31>.
- Semi, Maria. "Writing about Polyphony, Talking about Civilization: Charles Burney's Musical 'Corns and Acorns.'" *Music and Letters* (2021), <https://doi.org/10.1093/ml/gcab079>.
- Strohm, Reinhard. Review of *Sounding the Past: Music as History and Memory*, edited by Kügler Karl. *Music and Letters* (2022), <https://doi.org/10.1093/ml/gcac001>.
- Tufano, Lucio. "An Unknown Tribute by Farinelli to King Philip V of Spain." *Eighteenth Century Music* 18, no. 2 (2021): 253–69.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Göttingen Handel Competition

May 16–17, 2022

<https://www.haendel-festspiele.de/en/programme/2022/goettingen-haendel-competition-2023/>

Göttingen International Handel Festival

May 12–22, 2022

<https://www.haendel-festspiele.de/en/index.html>

Halle Handel Festival 100th Anniversary

May 27–June 12, 2022

<https://haendelhaus.de/en/hfs/homepage>

International Academic Conference

"Orlando and the History of Handel's Operas in the 20th and 21st Centuries"

May 30–June 1, 2022

Händel-Haus, Kammermusiksaal

<https://haendelhaus.de/en/event/orlando-and-history-handel-s-operas-20th-and-21st-centuries>

The 9th Annual Handel Aria Competition

August 19, 2022, 7:30 p.m.

Grace Episcopal Church, Madison, Wisconsin

<https://handelariacompetition.org/>

American Handel Society Conference 2023

February 23–26, 2023

Indiana University Bloomington

<https://www.americanhandelsociety.org/events/>

American Handel Society

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Ayana Smith, Indiana University

AMERICAN HANDEL SOCIETY MEMBERSHIP FORM

Please mail the completed form and appropriate membership dues as instructed below:

Name _____ Date _____

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City _____ State/Country _____ Postal code _____

E-mail address _____ Phone _____

I agree to have the following listed in a printed Directory of AHS Members (check as appropriate): ☐ Address ☐ Phone ☐ Email

I would like my copy of the Newsletter delivered: ☐ electronically ☐ by mail

| Class of Membership — Circle applicable cell(s) (for current calendar year, unless otherwise specified) | \$ | £ | € |
|--|-----|-----|------|
| Regular | 40 | 30 | 35 |
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| Student or Retired | 20 | 15 | 18 |
| Rinaldo Circle | 75 | 55 | 66 |
| Cleopatra Circle | 125 | 95 | 110 |
| Theodora Circle | 250 | 190 | 220 |
| Messiah Circle (Lifetime membership) | 500 | 400 | 450 |
| Subscriber (Institutions Only) | 48 | 36 | 42 |
| Donation – Travel Grant, Serwer Lecture, Knapp Fellowship, Traver Concert, ongoing activities (please specify intent) | | | |
| Friends of the Handel Institute, London* | | | |
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| Student (with <i>Göttinger Händel Beiträge</i>) | 56 | - | 46 |
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| Regular | 63 | - | 55 |
| Student* | 23 | - | 17.5 |
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| Regular | 93 | - | 80 |
| Regular (with <i>Göttinger Händel Beiträge</i>) | 125 | - | 105 |
| Student | 30 | - | 24 |
| Student (with <i>Göttinger Händel Beiträge</i>) | 60 | - | 48.5 |
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* This organization does not have a reduced rate for retirees.

† This organization has additional categories of Regular Membership that require a higher membership fee but provide additional benefits (see its website). Arrangements for these other categories may be made directly with Mrs. Pomeroy Kelly (see below).

Those paying in dollars should make their checks payable to AMERICAN HANDEL SOCIETY and mail them to Marjorie Pomeroy Kelly, Secretary/Treasurer, AMERICAN HANDEL SOCIETY, 49 Christopher Hollow Road, Sandwich, MA 02563. Those wishing to pay in Euros should remit to Stephan Blaut, Treasurer, Georg-Friedrich-Händel-Gesellschaft, Gr. Nikolaistrasse 5, 06108 Halle (Saale), Federal Republic of Germany, and indicate that the payment is for the account of the AHS. Friends of the Handel Institute, London may also pay their AHS dues in sterling by making their checks payable to THE HANDEL INSTITUTE and mailing them to Ms. Sylvia Levi, Hon. Treasurer, The Handel Institute, 254A Kew Road, Richmond TW9 3EG, United Kingdom, with the appropriate annotation. Please do not send checks in Euros or sterling directly to the AHS as we are no longer able to process them.

Online payment options are available at <https://www.americanhandelsociety.org/join/>

Payments in dollars for GFH or HI memberships must be received before June 1.

American Handel Society

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ISSN 0888-8701
xxxvii/1