

Hendrix and Handel: Baroque and roll

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Hendrix lived in the top floor flat of 23 Brook Street from 1968 to 1969, and described it as “the only home I ever had”. Ironically, the adjoining No. 25, was occupied by the great baroque composer George Frideric Handel two centuries before. This historic connection between rock and the baroque marks out the terrace houses as a unique destination for music lovers.

The Handel House Trust’s three-year project to convert Hendrix’s former accommodation into a museum will be followed by a second redevelopment to improve visitor facilities to the existing Handel House Museum.

Currently, the Hendrix flat is the museum’s administrative office and can only be visited by the public during the annual Open House weekend when a limited number of tickets are snapped up as soon as they become available.

The project will re-instate Hendrix’s flat, create new exhibition space and provide lift access for visitors. A Learning Studio will also be created on the first floor of the Grade II listed building and replacement office space for museum staff built as a mansard addition at 4th floor level. The grant also covers the cost of an expanded volunteer and education programme covering such topics as London in the 1960s, the contemporary music scene and Hendrix’s legacy as one of the greatest guitarists of all time who continues to inspire and influence musicians and songwriters.

The project will also emphasise synergies between Hendrix and Handel who lived in Brook Street for 36 years until his death in 1759. It was where he composed many of his most loved works, including Messiah and Music for the Royal Fireworks.

Wesley Kerr, Chair of the Heritage Lottery Fund London Committee, said: “The Handel House Museum is one of the most precious and evocative places in London. To visit the beautifully restored home where one of history’s greatest composers lived and invented some of the finest music ever written is already pure joy. We are delighted that this award will enhance the spaces for volunteers and staff. It will also make available to visitors the neighbouring flat where Jimi Hendrix - another extraordinary musical émigré from a more recent era - found inspiration and happiness - transcending musical boundaries in the heyday of rock and roll. The two spaces together will be greater than the sum of their parts, and I’m sure that the excellent Handel House team will use the new rooms and themes and circulation routes creatively.”

Sarah Bardwell, Director of Handel House Trust, said: “We are extremely grateful for the grant from the HLF and this amazing opportunity that their enlightened support has provided for Handel House. We believe this project will give us the ability to reach a much wider audience and bring the Handel’s and Hendrix’s stories to a much larger community.”

Notes to editors

- Nos. 25 and 23 Brook Street are Grade I and Grade II listed buildings respectively. They were built in 1721 and Handel was the first resident of No. 25 from 1723 until his death in 1759
- Jimi Hendrix first arrived in London, an unknown American musician, in 1966. During the last four years of his life in London he forged a reputation as a guitarist and changed the direction of rock music. No. 23 Brook Street is his only officially recognised home and bears a blue plaque to that effect. According to his girlfriend at the time, Kathy Etchingham, his flat at No. 23 was the place where he felt most at home

Further information

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