

Press Release: for release 22 Feb through 30 March, 2019

Bennington Baroque Concert: "Handel at Home: Domestic Music in early 18th-century London"

Date: 31 March

Time: 3 PM

Venue: Carriage Barn, Park-McCullough House

Entrance by donation

On Sunday, Mar 31, 2019, Bennington Baroque will present music by George Frideric Handel, as it might have been heard during his lifetime. Using instruments of the period, we will play music composed for performance at home (a harpsichord suite and a trio sonata), but in addition we will recreate domestic versions of arias from the oratorio *Samson*, first presented at the Theatre Royal in Covent Garden on 18 February, 1743. Each year, during Lent, subscribers were promised several performances, introducing a new oratorio and reviving older ones. *Samson* was performed eight times in February and March; *Messiah*, also new to Londoners, was heard twice in late March, alongside a few revivals. *Messiah* resulted in an uproar in the press over the place of sacred music in the theatre, after which Handel brought *Samson* back for a final performance two weeks before Easter. This pattern, several performances of a new oratorio, increasingly mixed with selected revivals, continued until Handel's death in April, 1759.

Although each new oratorio was presented several times in its first season, the public must have craved further opportunities to experience Handel's music, especially at home. It is no surprise that the publisher John Walsh found a ready market for domestic arrangements of Handel's operas and oratorios, alongside his many prints of original compositions for keyboard or small chamber ensemble. Drawing on Walsh's published volumes, we present a selection of music heard in English drawing rooms, entitled, "Handel at Home: Domestic Music in early 18th-century London." Performers include Kerry Ryer-Parke (soprano), Mathieu Langlois (baroque flute), Emily Hale (baroque violin), André Laurent O'Neil (viola da gamba), and Sandra Mangsen (harpsichord).