



# George Frederic Handel

Composer of the Week





Born in Halle, Germany, in 1685  
– the same year as BACH



Died in London, England, in  
1759

He was a talented child but Handel's lawyer father did not approve of music. In fact, when he was a boy, Handel had to sneak up to the attic to play a **clavichord** (a small early version of the piano) that had been hidden up there.

He was organist at the Cathedral in Halle but soon moved to Hamburg to play violin in the opera orchestra.

He spent 4 years travelling in Italy where he met the greatest Italian musicians of the day and began composing operas.

**Operas** are long dramatic works, performed on stage with soloists and chorus.

Handel wrote over 40 operas and many were first performed in London at the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden.



This **aria** (song) from Handel's Opera **Semele** is sung by the American Soprano, Kathleen Battle. It is very beautiful.



In 1710 Handel was appointed Kapellmeister to George, the Elector of Hanover. This meant he was in charge of all the music at Court and Church in Hanover. Later that same year he travelled to England. His music was greeted so enthusiastically that Handel decided to leave Hanover and stay in London, he was employed by Queen Anne and paid £200 per year.

In 1714, George, the Elector of Hanover became King George I of England. This could have been tricky for Handel but he wrote many pieces of music to re-gain the King's approval.

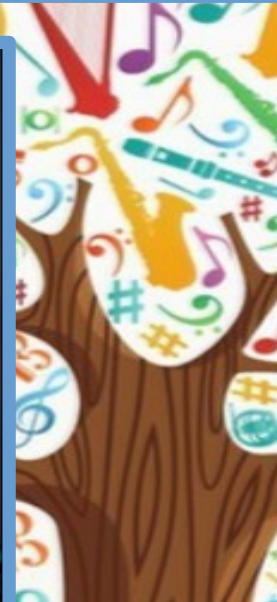


One of these pieces is the '**Water Music**'. King George and his guests sailed on a barge up the river Thames from Whitehall to Chelsea. This was followed by a barge containing 50 musicians playing Handel's **Water Music**.



Handel lived right in the centre of London, in Mayfair at 25 Brook Street.

You can visit his house today, it looks just like it did when Handel lived there.



In 1968 Jimi Hendrix moved into the house and lived there for a year

When George II was crowned in Westminster Abbey in 1727 Handel wrote **Coronation Anthems** for the ceremony and '**Zadok the Priest**' has been sung at the coronation of every king and queen since then.

Do you recognise it?

It is used today as the introduction music for the Champions League Football Matches



By 1730 Italian Opera became less popular and Handel devised a new form – the **Oratorio**.

These are concert performances (no acting or costumes) for Chorus, Orchestra, and soloists based on biblical stories and often using text directly from the Bible.

His most famous oratorio '**The Messiah**' is based on Jesus' birth, life, and death.



**The Messiah** took only 24 days to compose.

It was first performed in Dublin in 1742.

It is said, that when it was first performed in London, the following year, King George II was so impressed with the Halleluiah Chorus, that he shot up to his feet.

Because the King stood, everyone else had to stand up too and it is a tradition, to this day, that when the **Halleluiah Chorus** is sung, the audience stand.

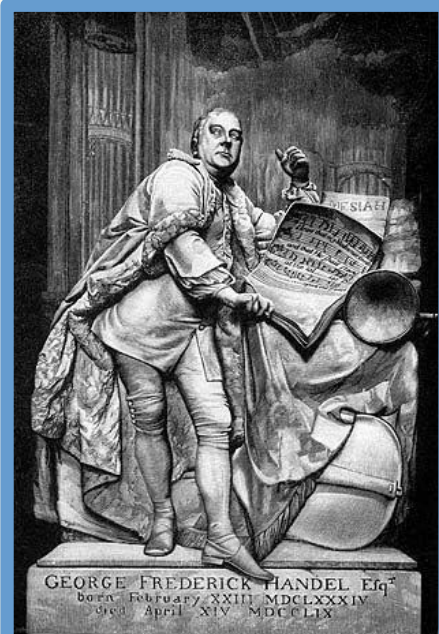


At the end of the score Handel wrote the letters  
SDG - *Soli Deo Gloria* - To God alone the glory.

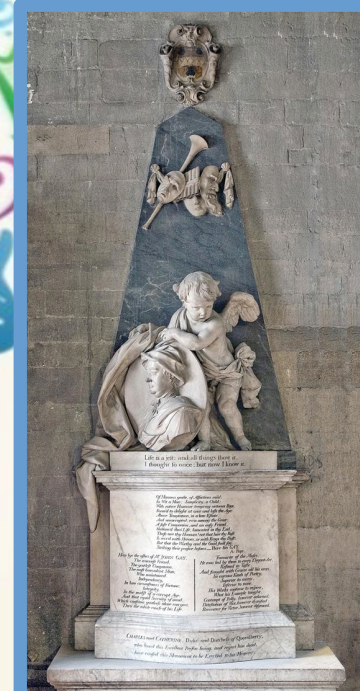
Handel became very rich because his compositions were so popular. He gave much money to charity. He gave his portion of the proceeds of the Messiah's first performance to a debtor's prison and hospital in Dublin.

Every Christmas he would put on a performance in London to provide money for The Foundling Hospital.

He was buried at Westminster Abbey and over 3000 people attended his funeral. You can see his grave if you visit the abbey today.



THE MONUMENT IN WESTMINSTER ABBEY  
By L. F. Kneller.





Learn all there is to learn, and  
then choose your own path.

~ George Frideric Handel

AZ QUOTES