

## Music of the Baroque Period: Part 2

*Jeff Kluball and Elizabeth Kramer*

### Rise of the Orchestra and the Concerto

The Baroque period also saw the birth of the orchestra, which was initially used to accompany court spectacle and opera. In addition to providing accompaniment to the singers, the orchestra provided instrumental only selections during such events. These selections came to include the overture at the beginning, the interludes between scenes and during scenery changes, and accompaniments for dance sequences. Other predecessors of the orchestra included the string bands employed by absolute monarchs in France and England and the town collegium musicum of some German municipalities. By the end of the Baroque period, composers were writing compositions that might be played by orchestras in concerts, such as concertos and orchestral suites.

The makeup of the Baroque orchestra varied in number and quality much more than the orchestra has varied since the nineteenth century; in general, it was a smaller ensemble than the later orchestra. At its core was the violin family, with woodwind instruments such as the flute, recorder, and oboe, and brass instruments, such as the trumpet or horn, and the timpani for percussion filling out the texture. The Baroque orchestra was almost always accompanied by harpsichord, which together with the one or more of the cellos or a bassonist, provided a basso continuo.

The new instruments of the violin family provided the backbone for the Baroque orchestra (see Figures 4.6, 4.7, 4.8, and 4.9). The violin family—the violin, viola, cello (long form violoncello), and bass violin—were not the first bowed string instruments in Western classical music. The Middle Ages had its fiddle (see Figure 4.10), and the Renaissance had the viola da gamba (see Figure 4.11). Bowed strings attained a new prominence in the seventeenth century with the widespread and increased manufacturing of violins, violas, cellos, and basses. Some of these instruments, such as those made by Antonio Stradavari (1644-1737), are still sought after today as some of the finest specimens of instruments ever made. With the popularity of the violin family, instruments of the viola da gamba family fell to the sidelines. Composers started writing compositions specifically for the members of the violin family, often arranged with two groups of violins, one group of violas, and a group of cellos and double basses, who sometimes played the same bass line as played by the harpsichord.



**Figure 4.6** | (far left) Violin  
**Author** | User "Just Plain Bill"  
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**Figure 4.7** | (second from left) Viola  
**Author** | User "Just Plain Bill"  
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**Figure 4.8** | (second from right) Cello  
**Author** | Georg Feitscher  
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**Figure 4.9** | (far right) Double Bass  
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One of the first important forms of this instrumental music was the concerto. The word concerto comes from the Latin and Italian root *concertare*, which has connotations of both competition and cooperation. The musical concerto might be thought to reflect both meanings. A concerto is a composition for an instrumental soloist or soloists and orchestra; in a sense, it brings together these two forces in concert; in another sense, these two forces compete for the attention of the audience. Concertos are most often in three movements that follow a tempo pattern of fast – slow – fast. Most first movements of concertos are in what has come to be called **ritornello form**. As its name suggests, a ritornello is a returning or refrain, played by the full orchestral ensemble. In a concerto, the ritornello alternates with the solo sections that are played by the soloist or soloists.

One of the most important composers of the Baroque concerto was the Italian Antonio Vivaldi (1678- 1741). His father taught him to play at a young age and he probably began lessons in music composition as a young teen.



**Figure 4.10** | Vielle player  
**Author** | Unknown  
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**Figure 4.11** | Regola Rubertina Titelbild

**Author** | Silvestro Ganassi

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Vivaldi began studying for the priesthood at age fifteen and, once ordained at age twenty-five, received the nickname of “The Red Priest” because of his hair color. He worked in a variety of locations around Europe, including at a prominent Venetian orphanage called the *Opsedale della Pietà*. There he taught music to girls, some of whom were illegitimate daughters of prominent noblemen and church officials from Venice. This orphanage became famous for the quality of music performed by its inhabitants. Northern Europeans, who would travel to Italy during the winter months on what they called “The Italian Tour”—to avoid the cold and rainy weather of cities such as Paris, Berlin, and London—wrote home about the fine performances put on by these orphans in Sunday afternoon concerts.

These girls performed concertos such as Vivaldi’s well known *Four Seasons*. The *Four Seasons* refers to a set of four concertos, each of which is named after one of the seasons. As such, it is an example of program music, a type of music that would become more prominent in the Baroque period. **Program music** is instrumental music that represents something extra musical, such as the words of a poem or narrative or the sense of a painting or idea. A composer might ask orchestral instruments to imitate the sounds of natural phenomenon, such as a babbling brook or the cries of birds. Most program music carries a descriptive title that suggests what an audience member might listen for. In the case of the *Four Seasons*, Vivaldi connected each concerto to an Italian sonnet, that is, to a poem that was descriptive of the season to which the concerto referred. Thus in the case of Spring, the first concerto of the series, you can listen for the “festive song” of birds, “murmuring streams,” “breezes,” and “lightning and thunder.”

Each of the concertos in the *Four Seasons* has three movements, organized in a fast – slow – fast succession. We’ll listen to the first fast movement of Spring. Its “Allegro” subtitle is an Italian tempo marking that indicates music that is fast. As a first movement, it is in ritornello form. The movement opens with the ritornello, in which the orchestra presents the opening theme. This theme consists of motives, small groupings of notes and rhythms that are often repeated in sequence. This ritornello might be thought to reflect the opening line from the sonnet. After the ritornello, the soloist plays with the ac-



**Figure 4.12** | Portrait of Antonio Vivaldi

**Author** | Anonimo Bolognese

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companiment of only a few instruments, that is, the basso continuo. The soloist's music uses some of the same motives found in the ritornello but plays them in a more virtuosic way, showing off one might say.

As you listen, try to hear the alternation of the ritornellos and solo sections. Listen also for the motor rhythm, the constant subdivision of the steady beat, and the melodic themes that unfold through melodic sequences. Do you hear birds, a brook, and a thunderstorm? Do you think you would have associated these musical moments with springtime, if, instead of being called the Spring Concerto, the piece was simply called Concerto No. 1?

### LISTENING GUIDE

For audio, go to:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zWopEIymWK8&feature=youtu.be&list=PLoD3oA7BBDC0o1432>

Giuliano Carmignola (solo violin); Giorgio Fava (violin I); Gino Mangiocavallo (violin II); Enrico Parizzi (viola); Walter Vestidello (violoncello); Alberto Rasi (violone); Giancarlo Rado (archlute); Andrea Marcon (harpsichord); I Sonatori de la Gioiosa Marca / Giuliano Carmignola (conductor)

**Composer:** Antonio Vivaldi

**Composition:** The first movement of Spring from *The Four Seasons*

**Date:** 1720s

**Genre:** solo concerto and program music

**Form:** ritornello form

**Nature of Text:** the concerto is accompanied by an Italian sonnet about springtime. The first five lines are associated with the first movement:

Springtime is upon us.

The birds celebrate her return with festive song,  
and murmuring streams are softly caressed by the breezes.

Thunderstorms, those heralds of Spring, roar, casting their dark mantle over heaven,  
Then they die away to silence, and the birds take up their charming songs once more.

**Performing Forces:** solo violinist and string orchestra

**What we want you to remember about this composition:**

- It is the first movement of a solo concerto that uses ritornello form
- This is program music
- It uses terraced dynamics
- It uses a fast allegro tempo

<p><b>Other things to listen for:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The orchestral ritornellos alternate with the sections for solo violin</li> <li>• Virtuoso solo violin lines</li> <li>• Motor rhythm</li> <li>• Melodic themes composed of motives that spin out in sequences</li> </ul>		
<b>Timing</b>	<b>Performing Forces, Melody, and Texture</b>	<b>Text and Form</b>
0:00	Orchestra plays the Ritornello. Repetitive motives played by all the violins; cellos subdivide the beat, provided the motor rhythm; Dynamics terraced from loud to soft to loud to soft, every three measures; In E major	“Coming of spring”
0:36	Solo Section featuring the solo violin, joined by two other violins. Solo violin imitates the birds with repeated notes that are ornamented by trills and then repeated in shorter note values	“Birds celebrate” with “festive song.”
1:08	Ritornello starts with opening phrase. Opening phrase returns and then a softer new phrase with oscillating notes to depict the murmuring brook; Forte for the return of the opening phrase; then forte repeated low notes foreshadowing the appearance of lightening.	“Murmuring streams” “caressed by the breezes”;
1:49	Solo section. Solo violinist playing rapid notes in groups of three to represent lightning; answered by low repeated note in other strings representing thunder	“Thunderstorms...roar”
2:07	Orchestra plays the ritornello. Opening theme (just three measures)	

2:15	Solo section: Solo violin + 2 violins; cello sustains a drone pitch. More high-pitched, ornamented and repeated notes to represent	More chirping birds
2:33	Orchestra. Return of a motivic fragment from the opening phrase now more legato and repeated in a sequence.	
2:45	Solo violin + basso continuo. More fast, repeated and oscillating notes	Final reference to birds and streams
2:58	Orchestra: ritornello. Forte for the first melodic phrase of the ritornello; last phrase ends piano	

## MUSIC OF GEORGE FRIDERIC HANDEL (1685-1759)

George Frideric Handel was one of the superstars of the late Baroque period. He was born the same year as one of our other Baroque superstars, Johann Sebastian Bach, not more than 150 miles away in Halle, Germany. His father was an attorney and wanted his son to follow in his footsteps, but Handel decided that he wanted to be a musician instead. With the help of a local nobleman, he persuaded his father to agree. After learning the basics of composition, Handel journeyed to Italy to learn to write opera. Italy, after all, was the home of opera, and opera was the most popular musical entertainment of the day. After writing a few operas, he took a job in London, England, where Italian opera was very much the rage, eventually establishing his own opera company and producing scores of Italian operas, which were



**Figure 4.13** | Georg Friedrich Händel

**Author** | Philip Mercier

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initially very well received by the English public. After a decade or so, however, Italian opera in England imploded. Several opera companies there each competed for the public's business. The divas who sang the main roles and whom the public bought their tickets to see demanded high salaries. In 1728, a librettist named John Gay and a composer named Johann Pepusch premiered a new sort of opera in London called ballad opera. It was sung entirely in English and its music was based on folk tunes known by most inhabitants of the British Isles. For the English public, the majority of whom had been attending Italian opera without understanding the language in which it was sung, English language opera was a big hit. Both Handel's opera company

and his competitors fought for financial stability, and Handel had to find other ways to make a profit. He hit on the idea of writing English oratorio.

**Oratorio** is sacred opera that is not staged. Like operas, they are relatively long works, often spanning over two hours when performed in entirety. Like opera, oratorios are entirely sung to orchestral accompaniment. They feature recitatives, arias, and choruses, just like opera. Most oratorios also tell the story of an important character from the Christian Bible. But oratorios are not acted out. Historically-speaking, this is the reason that they exist. During the Baroque period at sacred times in the Christian church year such as Lent, stage entertainment was prohibited. The idea was that during Lent, individuals should be looking inward and preparing themselves for the death and resurrection of Christ, and attending plays and operas would distract from that. Nevertheless, individuals still wanted entertainment, hence, oratorios. These oratorios would be performed as concerts not in the church but because they were not acted out, they were perceived as not having a “detrimental” effect on the spiritual lives of those in the audience. The first oratorios were performed in Italy; then they spread elsewhere on the continent and to England.

Handel realized how powerful ballad opera, sung in English, had been for the general population and started writing oratorios but in the English language. He used the same music styles as he had in his operas, only including more choruses. In no time at all, his oratorios were being lauded as some of the most popular performances in London.

His most famous oratorio is entitled *Messiah* and was first performed in 1741. About the life of Christ, it was written for a benefit concert to be held in Dublin, Ireland. Atypically, his librettist, took the words for the oratorio straight from the King James Version of the Bible instead of putting the story into his own words. Once in Ireland, Handel assembled solo singers as well as a chorus of musical amateurs to sing the many choruses he wrote for the oratorio. There it was popular, if not controversial. One of the soloists was a woman who was a famous actress. Some critics remarked that it was inappropriate for a woman who normally performed on the stage to be singing words from sacred scripture. Others objected to sacred scripture being sung in a concert instead of in church. Perhaps influenced by these opinions, *Messiah* was performed only a few times during the 1740s. Since the end of the eighteenth century, however, it has been performed more than almost any other composition of classical music. While these issues may not seem controversial to us today, they remind us that people still disagree about how sacred texts should be used and about what sort of music should be used to set them.

We’ve included three numbers from Handel’s *Messiah* as part of our discussion of this focus composition. We’ll first listen to a recitative entitled “Comfort Ye” that is directly followed by an aria entitled “Every Valley.” These two numbers are the second and third numbers in the oratorio. Then we’ll listen to the Hallelujah Chorus, the most famous number from the composition that falls at the end of the second of the three parts of the oratorio.

<b>LISTENING GUIDE</b>		
For audio, go to: <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GDEi38TxBME&amp;feature=youtu.be">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GDEi38TxBME&amp;feature=youtu.be</a> Tenor Anthony Rolfe Johnson with The Monteverdi Choir and the English Baroque Soloists and John Eliot Gardiner, Conductor		
<b>Composer:</b> George Frideric Handel		
<b>Composition:</b> “Comfort Ye” and “Every Valley” from <i>Messiah</i>		
<b>Date:</b> 1741		
<b>Genre:</b> accompanied recitative and aria from an oratorio		
<b>Form:</b> accompanied recitative—through composed; aria—binary form AA’		
<b>Nature of Text:</b> English language libretto quoting the Bible		
<b>Performing Forces:</b> solo tenor and orchestra		
<b>What we want you to remember about this composition:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• As an oratorio, it uses the same styles and forms as operas but is not staged</li> <li>• The aria is very virtuoso with its melismas, and alternates between orchestral ritornellos and solo sections</li> </ul>		
<b>Other things to listen for:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The accompanied recitative uses more instruments than standard basso continuo-accompanied recitative, but the vocal line retains the flexibility of recitative</li> <li>• Motor rhythm in the aria</li> <li>• In a major key</li> <li>• In the aria, the second solo section is more ornamented than the first, as was often the custom.</li> </ul>		
<b>Accompanied Recitative: “Comfort Ye”</b>		
<b>Timing</b>	<b>Performing Forces, Melody, and Texture</b>	<b>Text and Form</b>
0:00		Reduced orchestra playing <i>piano</i> repeated notes
0:13	Mostly stepwise, conjunct sung melody; Homophonic texture	Vocalist & light orchestral accompaniment: “Comfort Ye my people”



0:27	Orchestra and vocalist alternate phrases until the recitative ends	Vocalist and light orchestral accompaniment: Comfort ye my people says your God; speak ye comforter of Jerusalem; and cry upon....that her iniquity is pardoned. A voice of him that cry-eth in the wilderness. Prepare ye the way for the Lord. Make straight in the desert a highway for our God
<b>Aria: “Every Valley”</b>		
<b>Timing</b>	<b>Performing Forces, Melody, and Texture</b>	<b>Text and Form</b>
2:22	Repeated motives; starts loud, ends with an echo	Orchestra plays ritornello
2:39	Soloist presents melodic phrase first heard in the ritornello and the orchestra echoes this phrase	Tenor and orchestra: Every valley shall be exalted
2:52	Long melisma on the word exalted...repeats  High note on mountain and low note on “low”	Tenor and orchestra: Shall be exalted  And every mountain and hill made low
3:17	Repeated oscillation between two notes to represent crookedness; then one note is sustained on the word straight.	Tenor and orchestra: The crooked straight
3:23	Repeated oscillation between two notes to represent roughness; then one note is sustained on the word plain.	Tenor and orchestra: And the rough places plain
3:38	Melismatic descending sequence on the word “Plain”	Continued
3:53	Goes back to the beginning, but with even more ornamentation from the melismas	Tenor and Orchestra: “Every valley shall be exalted” (Repetition of text and music)
5:10	Repeats the music of the ritornello one final time	Orchestra: ritornello

<b>LISTENING GUIDE</b>		
For audio, go to: <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ptBZwDYKA14&amp;feature=youtu.be">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ptBZwDYKA14&amp;feature=youtu.be</a> Performed by English Baroque Soloists and Monteverdi Choir, Conducted by John Eliot Gardiner		
<b>Composer:</b> George Frideric Handel		
<b>Composition:</b> “Hallelujah” from <i>Messiah</i>		
<b>Date:</b> 1741		
<b>Genre:</b> chorus from an oratorio		
<b>Form:</b> sectional; sections delineated by texture changes		
<b>Nature of Text:</b> English language libretto quoting the Bible		
<b>Performing Forces:</b> solo tenor and orchestra		
<b>What we want you to remember about this composition:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It is for four-part chorus and orchestra</li> <li>• It uses a sectional form where sections are delineated by changes in texture</li> </ul>		
<b>Other things to listen for:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In a major key, using mostly major chords</li> <li>• Key motives repeat over and over, often in sequence</li> </ul>		
<b>Timing</b>	<b>Performing Forces, Melody, and Texture</b>	<b>Text and Form</b>
0:00	Orchestra: Introduces main musical motive in a major key with a homophonic texture where parts of the orchestra play the melody and other voices provide the accompaniment	
0:09	Chorus + orchestra: Here the choir and the orchestra provide the melody and accompaniment of the homophonic texture	Hallejulah
0:26	Chorus + orchestra: Dramatic shift to monophonic with the voices and orchestra performing the same melodic line at the same time.	For the Lord God omnipotent reigneth

0:34	Chorus + orchestra: Homophonic texture, as before.	Hallelujah
0:38	Chorus + orchestra: Monophonic texture, as before.	For the Lord God omnipotent reigneth
0:45	Chorus + orchestra: Homophonic texture, as before.	Hallelujah
0:49	Chorus + orchestra: Texture shifts to non-imitative polyphonic with the initial entrance of the sopranos, then the tenors, then the altos.	For the Lord God omnipotent reigneth
1:17	Chorus + orchestra: Homophonic texture, as before.	The Kingdom of this world is begun
1:36	Chorus + orchestra: Imitative polyphony starts in basses, then is passed to tenors, then to the altos, and then to the sopranos.	And he shall reign for ever and ever
1:57	Chorus + orchestra: Monophonic texture, as before.	King of Kings
2:01	Chorus + orchestra: Homophonic texture, as before.	Forever, and ever hallelujah hallelujah
2:05	Chorus + orchestra: Each entrance is sequenced higher; the women sing the monophonic repeated melody motive Monophony alternating with homophony	And Lord of Lords...Repeated alternation of the monophonic king of kings and lord of lords with homophonic for ever and ever
2:36	Chorus + orchestra: Homophonic texture	King of kings and lord of lords
2:40	Chorus + orchestra: Polyphonic texture (with some imitation)	And he shall reign for ever and ever
2:52	Chorus + orchestra: The alternation of monophonic and homophonic textures.	King of kings and lord of lords alternating with "for ever and ever"
3:01	Chorus + orchestra: Mostly homophonic	And he shall reign...Hallelujah

## Focus Composition:

### Movements from Handel's Water Music Suite

Although Handel is perhaps best known today for his operas and oratorios, he also wrote a lot instrumental music, from concertos like Vivaldi wrote to a kind of music called the suite. Suites were compositions having many contrasting movements. The idea was to provide diverse music in one composition that might be interesting for playing and listening. They could be written for solo instruments such as the harpsichord or for orchestral forces, in which case we call them orchestral suites. They often began with movements called overtures and modeled after the overtures played before operas. Then they typically consisted of **stylized dance** movements. By stylized dance, we mean a piece of music that sounds like a dance but that was not designed for dancing. In other words, a stylized dance uses the distinct characteristics of a dance and would be recognized as sounding like that dance but might be too long or too complicated to be danced to.

Dancing was very popular in the Baroque period, as it had been in the Middle Ages and Renaissance. We have several dancing textbooks from the Baroque period that mapped out the choreography for each dance. Some of the most popular dances included the saraband, gigue, minuet, and bourée. The saraband was a slow dance in triple meter, whereas the gigue (or jig) was a very fast dance with triple subdivisions of the beats. The minuet was also in triple time but danced at a much more stately tempo. The bourrée, on the other hand, was danced at a much faster tempo, and always in duple meter.

When King George I asked Handel to compose music for an evening's diversion, the suite was the genre to which Handel turned. This composition was for an event that started at 8pm on Wednesday the seventeenth of July, 1717. King George I and his noble guests would launch a barge ride up the Thames River to Chelsea. After disembarking and spending some time on shore, they re-boarded at 11pm and returned via the river to Whitehall Palace, from whence they came. A contemporary newspaper remarked that the king and his guests occupied one barge while another held about fifty musicians and reported that the king liked the music so much that he asked it to be repeated three times.

Many of the movements that were played for the occasion were written down and eventually published as three suites of music, each in a different key. You have



**Figure 4.14** | An illustration from Kellom Thomlinson's *Art of Dancing*, London, 1735

**Author** | Kellom Thomlinson

**Source** | Wikimedia Commons

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two stylized dance movements from one of these suites here, a bourée and a minuet. We do not know with any certainty in what order these movements were played or even exactly who played them on that evening in 1717, but when the music was published in the late eighteenth century, it was set for two trumpets, two horns, two oboes, first violins, second violins, violas, and a basso continuo, which included a bassoon, cello(s), and harpsichord.

The bourée, as noted above, is fast and in duple time. The minuet is in a triple meter and taken at a more moderate tempo. They use repeated strains or sections of melodies based on repeated motives. As written in the score, as well as interpreted today in the referenced recording, different sections of the orchestra—the strings, woodwinds, and sometimes brass instruments—each get a time to shine, providing diverse timbres and thus musical interest. Both are good examples of binary form.



**Figure 4.15** | Westminster Bridge from the North on Lord Mayor's Day  
**Author** | Canaletto  
**Source** | Wikimedia Commons  
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**LISTENING GUIDE**

For audio, go to: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eQxQ8UTaYqU>  
~~<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=58f6NVVMSSYA>~~

The English Concert, on period instruments. Trevor Pinnock, conductor. [Bourée at 8:26]

**Composer:** George Frideric Handel

**Composition:** Bourée from *Water Music*

**Date:** 1717

**Genre:** stylized dance movement from a suite

**Form:** Binary form, AABB, performed here three times; B is twice as long as A

**Performing Forces:** Baroque orchestra: according to the musical score, 2 trumpets, 2 horns, 2 oboes, 1 bassoons, 1st violins, 2nd violins, violas, cello, and basso continuo (the cellos play the same music as the bassoon)

**What we want you to remember about this composition:**

- It's a stylized dance.
- It's in duple time and starts with a pick up (a note that appears before the first beat of the measure).
- It has a relatively fast tempo.

<p><b>Other things to listen for:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The A section is half the length of the B section; each section is repeated</li> <li>• The strings and woodwind instruments alternate taking the lead in this performance</li> <li>• The cello, bassoon, and harpsichord make up the basso continuo</li> </ul>		
<b>Timing</b>	<b>Performing Forces, Melody, and Texture</b>	<b>Text and Form</b>
45:23	Strings, basso continuo, trumpet Short phrase A of four measures, repeated	A, repeated
45:23	Same instruments play an answer phrase B of eight measures with descending motivic sequences	B
45:41	Repeated	B
45:50	Flute, oboe, bassoon, trumpets, strings Play the same A phrase as above	A
45:57	Same instruments play the B phrase	B
46:05	Repeated	B
46:13	Strings, trumpets, flute, oboe bassoon, and basso continuo play the A phrase.	A, repeated
46:22	Same instruments play the B phrase.	B
46:30	Repeated	B

<p><b>LISTENING GUIDE</b></p> <p>For audio, go to: <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fsQDKd88pOI">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fsQDKd88pOI</a>  <del><a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=59f62NYMSSXA">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=59f62NYMSSXA</a></del>  The English Concert, on period instruments. Trevor Pinnock, conductor.</p> <p><b>Composer:</b> George Frideric Handel</p> <p><b>Composition:</b> Minuet from <i>Water Music</i></p> <p><b>Date:</b> 1717</p> <p><b>Genre:</b> Stylized dance from a suite</p> <p><b>Form:</b> AA BB, to be performed three times according to the score</p>
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<p><b>Performing Forces:</b> Baroque orchestral: according to the musical score, 2 trumpets, 2 horns, 2 oboes, 1 bassoons, 1st violins, 2nd violins, violas, cello, and basso continuo (the cellos play the same music as the bassoon)</p>		
<p><b>What we want you to remember about this composition:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It is a stylized dance</li> <li>• It is in triple meter and at a moderate and stately tempo</li> </ul>		
<p><b>Other things to listen for:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It uses repeated sections or strains, A and B (A is half the length of B)</li> <li>• We don't know exactly which instruments would have played it but probably different families of instruments would have taken different sections to provide contrast</li> </ul>		
Timing	Performing Forces, Melody, and Texture	Text and Form
50:55	Strings, trumpets: triple meter in a major key; Melody starts with repeated notes and is very conjunct; some ornaments on the first beats of some measures	A
51:11	Repeated	A
51:21	Starts with repeated notes in just strings, oboes, and bassoon and ascends and then the trumpets and horns join: melody ascends and descends, mostly by step; trumpet becomes more prominent new phrases with a three-note motive that repeatedly ascends and then descends by step	B
51:44	As with B above	B
52:07	Flute, oboes, bassoons, horns, trumpets, basso continuo including cello play the opening strain	A
52:17	Repeated	A
52:29	First just double reeds, then adding horns	B
52:50	Repeated	B
53:13	Full orchestra	A
53:24	Repeated	A
53:36	First strings and then the full orchestra	B
53:57	First strings and then the full orchestra	B

## GLOSSARY

**Antiphonal** – A genre of sacred music featuring multiple choirs, or a choir that has been divided into different groups that can perform call and responses.

**Aria** – Homophonic compositions featuring a solo singer over orchestral accompaniment. Homophonic compositions featuring a solo singer over accompaniment. Arias are very melodic primarily utilized in operas, cantatas, and oratorios.

**Basso continuo** – continuous realization of harmony throughout a musical piece, usually by a harpsichord and/or cello. The Basso continuo provides a framework/template for harmonic accompaniments.

**Cantata** – A composite major church choir form from the Baroque period that involves soloist, choir, and orchestra. Cantatas have several movements and last for fifteen to thirty minutes. Cantatas are performed without staging but they utilize narration, arias, recitatives, choruses and smaller vocal ensembles.

**Chorale** – Originally the result from the German protestant church's reformation, the chorale is the hymn (tune) is a four part homophonic work that is sung by the church congregation. Chorales became the foundation for several cantatas and chorale preludes for organ.

**Concerto** – A musical composition for a soloist and orchestra.

**Concerto Grosso** – a musical composition for a small group of soloists and orchestra.

**Cori spezzati** – A divided choir that is utilized to perform in a polychoral style—able to perform “call and response”. Large churches were designed with multiple choir seating sections to perform such works.

**Fugue** – perfected by J.S. Bach during the baroque period, fugues are a form written in an imitative contrapuntal style in multiple parts. Fugues are based upon their original tune that is called the **subject**. The subject is then imitated and overlapped by the other parts by the called the answer, countersubject, stretto, and episode

**Homophony** – Music where the melody is supported by a chordal accompaniment the move in the same rhythm. Homophony is generally the opposite of polyphony where the voices imitative and weave with each other.

**Libretto** – The text or actual words of an opera, musical, cantata or oratorio, written or compiled by a librettist

**Melisma** – More than one note sung during one syllable of the text. The melismatic style was used extensively in gregorian chant.

**Motor rhythm** – The constant repeated subdivision of the beat. The motor rhythm provide unity and stability within the musical piece.

**Movement** – a subsection or independent section/piece of a larger work. (Ex. A symphony is divided into movements.)

**Opera** – A staged musical drama for voices and orchestra. Operas are fully blocked and performed in costume with sets. Operas utilize arias and recitatives without no narration.

**Oratorio** – a major work with religious or contemplative character for solo voices, chorus



and orchestra. Oratorios do not utilize blocking, costumes, or scenery.

**Polychoral (style)** – a compositional style where the chorus/choir is divided into two or more groups that can perform with or independently for each other (see antiphonal).

**Polyphony** – Two or more melodic voices or instruments combine weaving together.

**Program music** – instrumental Music written to portray an non-musical idea. A descriptive piece.

**Recitative** – An operatic number using speech-like melodies and rhythms, performing using a flexible tempo, to sparse accompaniment, most often provided by the basso continuo. Recitatives are often performed between arias and have texts that tend to be descriptive and narrating.

**Ritornello Form** – Repeated unifying sections founds in between the solo sections of a concerto grosso

**Sectional form** – A piece where distinct sections can be identified due to changes in texture and other musical compositional techniques.

**Solo** – A musical piece that features on musician either with or without accompaniment. In larger scored piece, the solo is the main part that should be brought out while performing.

**Sonata** – a musical composition in multiple movements for solo instrument, usually accompanied by the piano.

**Stylized dance** – piece of music that sounds like a dance but that was not designed for dancing. In other words, a stylized dance uses the distinct characteristics of a dance and would be recognized as sounding like that dance but might be too long or too complicated to be danced to.

**Subject** – The main melody or tune of a fugue.

**Suite** – A multi-movement instrumental musical composition of baroque music—usually in dance form.

**Terraced dynamics** – Used during the Baroque period, this is where the different sections have a piece of music have a set volume unique for that particular section. The next section may be written to be performed at another volume.

**Through-composed** – Songs or musical selections where new music is composed for each stanza or section with no repetition.

**Tutti** – Where the entire musical ensemble performs together as a whole as opposed to a soloist.

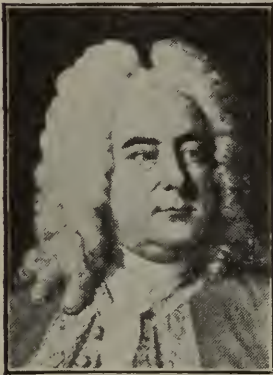
**Word painting** – the depiction of specific images from the text by vocal music. If the text refers to quickly running up a hill, the melody will ascend quickly to portray running up a hill musically.

monized chorales. The instrumentation has continual diversity of part writing, while obbligatos are skilfully used in the solo work. Altogether, the music, while strongly dramatic, expresses the deepest religious feeling, without sentimentality or catering to popularity.

### Section 2

#### GEORGE FREDERICK HANDEL, 1685-1759

**100. Early Life.** Unlike Bach, Handel had no musical ancestry. Born at Halle, his propensities early appeared in his surreptitious practice of the harpsichord. His musical studies were, however, opposed by his father, who destined him for the law; but his father was finally forced to yield his wishes in deference to his patron, the Duke of Weissenfels, who, hearing Handel play at the age of seven, insisted that he should receive a musical education. After close study of theory, harpsichord, organ, violin, and oboe under *Zachau*, at Halle, he visited Berlin. Here he delighted the Elector by his extemporizing, and here he met noted musicians, like *Ariosti* and *Buononcini*; but refusing the Elector's offer to retain him at Berlin, he resumed his studies at



HANDEL

Halle. His father's death in 1697 induced him to study law, meanwhile playing at the cathedral at a salary of fifty dollars a year; but growing restive here, he went to Hamburg in 1703, where he quickly rose from a subordinate position as violinist at the opera house to the leading rôle of harpsichordist. His experiences here stimulated him to write a passion and a number of operas which proved successful. In 1706 he journeyed to Italy. Here several of his operas won him laurels, and he was welcomed by many musicians, including Domenico Scarlatti.

**101. Handel in England.** Returning to Germany in 1710, he became chapelmaster to the Elector of Hanover, afterwards George I of England. He soon, however, obtained leave of absence and visited England, where he eventually passed most of his life, becoming naturalized. Italian opera had been introduced into England in 1707, and the English public were thus prepared to welcome him, fresh from his Italian triumphs, with acclaim; so that his new operas were sumptuously mounted, and enthusiastically received. He was loaded with honors, and in a short time became a musical autocrat, whose word was law with the *savants*, *littérateurs*, and nobility of London. His *Te Deum* and *Jubilate* for the celebration of the Peace of Utrecht brought him a pension of \$1,000 from Queen Anne; and George I, crowned in 1714, who was at first displeased with him for his long absence from Hanover, was so effectually won over by his "Water Music" that he added another \$1,000 to his pension. Becoming chapelmaster to the wealthy Duke of Chandos, at Cannons, he wrote while there his first oratorio, "Esther," harpsichord suites, anthems, and the serenade "Acis and Galatea," for orchestra.

But a series of troubles now pursued him. In 1720 he was made director of the new Royal Academy, where he produced his opera "Radimisto," and a joint work "Muzio Scevola," of which he wrote one act, while two other prominent musicians wrote the others. But his successes incurred for him the jealousy of these rival composers, and his irascible disposition involved him in numerous broils with the autocratic singers of the day. The Academy, for which he wrote fourteen operas, collapsed in 1728, and he afterward attempted other operatic ventures on his own account; but the cabals of rivals, chief among whom was *Buononcini*, and the waning interest in Italian opera, resulted in two financial failures, during which his naturally rugged health gave way.

**102. Later Life. Oratorios.** Convinced at last that the Italian opera had had its day, he turned his attention to the oratorio, a form in which he had already gained success, and in which his best work was eventually accomplished. His first oratorios had been written for the concerts which took

THEME FROM THE "MESSIAH."

Amen Chorus.

*Allegro moderato.*

The musical score is presented in three systems, each with a vocal line (treble clef) and a piano accompaniment line (bass clef). The key signature has two sharps (F# and C#) and the time signature is common time (C). The lyrics are written below the vocal line.

System 1:  
Vocal: A - - - - - men, A - - - - - men, A -  
Piano: Accompanying accompaniment with eighth and sixteenth notes.

System 2:  
Vocal: A - - - - - men, A - - - - -  
Piano: Accompanying accompaniment with eighth and sixteenth notes.

System 3:  
Vocal: - - - - - men, A - - - - - men, A -  
Piano: Accompanying accompaniment with eighth and sixteenth notes. The lyrics "men, A - men, A - men," are written below the vocal line. The piano part includes the lyrics "A - men, A - men, A -" and ends with "&c. A -".

the place of the opera during the Lenten season. In 1739 his "Saul" and "Israel in Egypt" were produced, of which the latter, now reckoned one of his chief works, proved too ponderous for the public, on account of its heavy choruses. In 1742, invited to Dublin, he produced various oratorios, among them giving the first performance of the "Messiah." This was first performed in England the next year, and was afterwards followed by the "Occasional Oratorio," "Judas," "Joshua," and others. While writing "Jephtha," in 1751, blindness overtook him, yet he persisted in his work, pro-

ducing the "Triumph of Time and Truth" at Covent Garden. His death occurred soon after a performance of the "Messiah," which he conducted. He was buried in Westminster Abbey.

**103. Personality.** Handel imbibed many of the English characteristics during his long residence in England; and these appear in his works in the form of strong rhythms and bright melodies, which yet have the underlying Teutonic coherency and solidity. To this reflection of inherent English traits is due his dominant position in English music, which caused him to be slavishly imitated by hosts of following English composers. As a man, he was of strict integrity, sincerity, and loyalty; of so independent a spirit, moreover, that his contempt for rank and his anger at opposition brought him into countless broils with his associates. In his works are reflected this freedom from convention, and this direct and forceful expression. His benevolence and kindness of heart are shown in the fact that he gave the "Messiah" yearly for charity, never realizing a penny from this king of his works. Of great bodily strength and simple tastes, Handel's industry was unflagging, and his writing extraordinarily rapid. Of this his composition of the entire "Messiah" in twenty-four days is an instance. As organist he was considered Bach's equal, and he extemporized readily, even after he became blind. He was never married.

**104. Vocal Works.** Of his forty-two operas, parts stand out as possessing especial merit; but as a whole their Italian triviality of style has denied them a permanent place. Yet by them Handel came to know his public intimately, and thus when he entered the domain of oratorio he brought to it those elements of effect which told with the audience, and which added a dramatic and epic interest hitherto wanting in this form of music. His first oratorios were given with scenery and costumes; and, as with a play, Handel made the

interest cumulative, piling up climax upon climax, dominating Italian melodic beauty by expression and contrapuntal writing. His chorus takes the first place, assuming the rôles

IMITATIVE PASSAGE FROM "ISRAEL IN EGYPT."

Alto solo.

Their land brought forth frogs,      Their land brought forth

Accompaniment.

L.H.      L.H.

frogs ;      yea

&c.

of the narrator and personages involved in the action. His use of embellishments and realistic effects, such as the imitation of hailstones or the hopping of frogs, has been criticised. Some of these devices, however, are extremely clever, and show his command over his orchestra. His free use of material copied from other composers has been the subject of much controversy.

Other vocal works were anthems, two passions, ninety-four cantatas, and songs.

**105. Instrumental Works.** Handel's orchestration was somewhat crude, though he employed an unusually large number of instruments for his day, and his fondness for wind instruments caused him to be considered noisy. To

fill in the harmonies, the organ or harpsichord was relied upon, for which figured basses (par. 72) were written; and to supply the parts suggested, succeeding writers, notably Mozart and Franz, composed additional accompaniments.

Handel's organ concertos are popular in style, while his *concerti grossi* and serenades for orchestra are of unequal merit. For the violin he wrote sonatas which are still played. Of his two sets of harpsichord suites, the first is by far the best. Both of them embrace vigorous movements, though the prevalence of a single key through each suite inclines toward monotony. The strict part-writing and the emotional significance of Bach's works in this style are lacking.

**106. Bach and Handel.** The two masters furnish interesting points of contrast, and perhaps for that reason exerted a wider influence, since they filled different spheres. Bach lived the quietest of family lives, while Handel was continually in the public eye; so that the works of the one are introspective and reflective, while those of the other are brilliant and popular. Bach, too, wrote from the organ bench, producing rugged counterpoint and characteristic expression; while Handel wrote for the singer, giving beauty of melodic form, and opportunities for vocal display. Even in recitative Bach maintained his elaborate and difficult interweavings, while Handel's recitative is Italian in its emptiness. Both were equally backward in instrumentation, relying on the organ for sonority.

Handel thus appeals to a much larger public than Bach, while Bach demands more mentality for his comprehension. Although so closely related in their work, the two masters never met.

### *Section 3*

CHRISTOPHER WILLIBALD VON GLUCK, 1714-1787

**107. Early Life.** Though somewhat later in his work than the two preceding composers, Gluck demands a place with them, since he, too, attacked the frivolous tendencies of the

## George Fredrick Handel

George Frederick Handel (1685 – 1759) was one of the greatest composers of the Baroque period. He was remarkably versatile and wrote concertos, keyboard music, chamber music, oratorio (music based on Holy Scripture) and opera (stories based on ancient Greek or Roman history and mythology). Below are the titles of ten works by Handel. Which ones are operas and which ones are oratorios?



1. Alexander's Feast
2. Messiah
3. Julius Caesar
4. Xerxes
5. Israel in Egypt
6. Judas Maccabaeus
7. Nero
8. Hercules
9. Joshua
10. Solomon



**Composer: Handel**

**Opera: *Xerxes***

**Aria: “Ombra mai fu”**

“Ombra mai fu,” also known as “Largo from *Xerxes*,” is the opening aria from the 1738 opera *Serse* (Serse=Xerxes) by Handel. The opera was a financial failure, but a century later the aria was rediscovered and became one of Handel’s best-known pieces. Originally it was composed to be sung by a countertenor (a very high male voice) playing the role of Xerxes I of Persia admiring the shade of a plane tree. It is now most often sung by a female mezzo-soprano.

The title translates from the Italian as “Never was a shade.”

Italian	English
Frondi tenere e belle del mio platano amato per voi risplenda il fato. Tuoni, lampi, e procelle non v'oltraggino mai la cara pace, né giunga a profanarvi austro rapace.	Tender and beautiful fronds of my beloved plane tree, let Fate smile upon you. May thunder, lightning, and storms never disturb your dear peace, nor may you by blowing winds be profaned.
Ombra mai fu di vegetabile, cara ed amabile, soave più.	Never was a shade of any plant dearer and more lovely, or more sweet.

Fun Canadian Fact:

On Christmas Eve 1906, Reginald Fessenden, a Canadian inventor and radio pioneer, broadcast the first AM radio program, which started with a phonograph record of “Ombra mai fu” followed by his playing “O Holy Night” on the violin and singing the final verse. The aria therefore was the first piece of music to be broadcast on radio.

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## Purcell

**Composer: Purcell**

**Opera: *Dido & Aeneas***

**Aria: Dido's Lament**

Dido's Lament is the aria "When I am laid in earth" from the opera *Dido and Aeneas* by Henry Purcell (libretto by Nahum Tate).

It is played annually in London by the massed bands of the armed forces at the Cenotaph in London England on Remembrance Sunday, the Sunday nearest to November 11 (Armistice Day).

Dido's Lament opens with a descending chromatic fourth line, the ground bass, which is repeated eleven times throughout the aria, thus structuring the piece in the form of a ciaccona.



The text, and the Purcell opera, allude to the *Aeneid*, the Roman legend of the Trojan warrior Aeneas, travelling to Italy from the betrayed and fallen Troy in order to settle there and secure his son Ascanius's lineage. Their ship is blown off course from Sicily, and they land on the shore of North Africa, in Carthage, a town newly settled by refugees from Tyre. Aeneas falls in love with their queen, Dido, but dutifully departs for Italy leaving her distraught at his betrayal.

Text

Recitative:

Thy hand, Belinda, darkness shades me,

On thy bosom let me rest,

More I would, but Death invades me;

Death is now a welcome guest.

Aria:

When I am laid, am laid in earth, May my wrongs create

No trouble, no trouble in thy breast;  
Remember me, remember me, but ah! forget my fate.  
Remember me, but ah! forget my fate.

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