

1685 to 1759

Musician & Composer

G.F. HANDEL



George Frideric Handel was born in Halle, Germany. His father was a barber-surgeon, who wanted him to become a lawyer; his mother, on the other hand, encouraged George's love of music.

Legend has it, young George was a secret clavichord player – practising in the attic at night because his father did not approve of his music. By chance, the Duke of Saxe-Weissenfels heard George playing the organ and convinced his father to support his musical education. So George was tutored by organist and composer Friedrich Wilhelm Zachow.

George tried to please his dad; he studied Law at the University of Halle, but dropped out. In 1704, he moved to Hamburg and worked as a violinist and harpsichordist at the Theater am Gänsemarkt ('Theatre at the Goose Market'). That's where he first started composing music.

In 1706, George moved to Venice, where he worked with notable composers and learned the Italian style of opera. He also met Charles Montagu, a British envoy, and Prince Ernst August of Hanover. He was invited to Hanover and also to London. In 1710, he visited Hanover.

In Hanover, George was introduced to the court of Georg Ludwig (the future King George I of England). He was offered the post of Kapellmeister, at a salary of 1,000 thaler (which we estimate to be about £500,000 in today's money)!

But George didn't accept the job; instead, in 1712, he accepted Charles Montagu's invitation and moved to London, where he found great success as a composer.

George was hard-working, demanding



Did You Know...?

After I moved to London, I changed my name!



Did You Know...?

In 1704, George had a dispute with Johann Mattheson, which led to a swordfight! Johann struck George on the chest, and a large button on his coat stopped the blade. Afterwards, George & Johann became lifelong friends.

and short-tempered; apparently, he once threatened to throw the soprano Francesca Cuzzoni out a window, because she refused to sing his song!

When he was 37 years old, he had a stroke that paralysed his arm. Later in life, he went blind after a botched cataract operation. In his final years, he attended church regularly at St George's, Hanover Square and reflected on his legacy. We wonder if he ever imagined just how grand it would be!

George Frideric Handel is best known for 'The Messiah' but, during his lifetime, 'Acis & Galatea' was his most popular opera. It was his first work in English, and it was performed more than 70 times before he died. Some people think it is his most perfect work; once you've heard it, you can decide if you agree with them!

To learn more about George Frideric Handel, visit <https://handelhendrix.org>

HANDEL'S GREATEST HITS

Water Music (1717)

George composed 'Water Music' to be played on the royal barge, as it traveled along the River Thames. Apparently, King George I liked it so much, he ordered the barge to do the journey again – so that he could hear it twice.

Zadok the Priest (1727)

George composed 'Zadok the Priest' for the coronation of King George II. You've probably heard this music on royal occasions, as well as in films and television adverts.

Messiah (1741)

The 'Messiah' is George Handel's most famous work, which he wrote in 24 days! The oratorio tells the story of Jesus and is often performed and played during the Christmas season. There's a story that King George II was so moved by 'The Hallelujah Chorus' that he stood up. And of course, everyone in the room did the same! Whether or not that's a fact, the audience still stands up when 'The Hallelujah Chorus' is performed.

Arrival Of The Queen Of Sheba (1748)

This sinfonia from the opera 'Solomon' brings to life the hectic preparations for the arrival of the queen. It was played at the Opening Ceremony of the 2012 London Olympics and the Coronation of King Charles III. You'll often hear it at weddings, too.

Music for the Royal Fireworks (1749)

George composed this music to celebrate the end of the War of the Austrian Succession. It includes trumpet fanfares and lots of drumming, to convey the power and importance of the occasion.