

Montgomery Philharmonic 2017 - 18 Our 12th Season : Old Friends ... New Friends

Concert 2, Sunday, December 10, 2017 : Old Friends ... New Friends

Händel | Rutter | Leavitt | Powell

About George Frideric Händel –

It is interesting to note that Händel was born the same year as Johann Sebastian Bach and Domenico Scarlatti—two giants of the Baroque period.

Händel’s early years were spent in conflict with his father—a well-known barber-surgeon who served the courts of Saxe-Weissenfels and the Margrave of Brandenburg. On a trip with his father to Weissenfels to visit his half-brother, Händel played a surprise concert for Duke Johann Adolph. He surprised everyone, and the duke convinced Händel’s father that he should study organ.

At 17, in accordance with his father’s wishes, Händel began to study law at the University of Halle. During this time, in the background, he continued to polish his skills as a musician on the organ, harpsichord, and violin. While still in law school, he accepted a post at the former cathedral in Halle. Händel then went on to accept a position as violinist and harpsichordist of the Hamburg Oper am Gänsemarkt. At the opera he met other composers and began composing in earnest. He was just out of law school when he produced his first two operas—*Almira* and *Nero*.

In 1706, Händel traveled to Italy at the invitation of Ferdinando de’ Medici. While there, he composed operas in Florence and an oratorio in Rome. In 1710, he moved back to Germany, becoming the Kapellmeister to the court of Prince George in Hannover. Prince George would later become King George I of Great Britain and Ireland in 1714. In 1712, Händel moved to England, where his patrons were Queen Anne, Lord Burlington, and King George I. He wrote *Water Music* for King George as a reconciliation between himself and the King.

- **Born:** February 23, 1685, Halle, Germany
- **Died:** April 14, 1759, London, United Kingdom
- **Full name:** Georg Friedrich Händel
- **Buried:** Westminster Abby, London, United Kingdom
- **Parents:** Georg Händel, Dorothea Händel
- **Compositions:** 42 operas, 29 oratorios, more than 120 cantatas, trios, and duets, 16 organ concerti.

Messiah (1741) (Part 1) – Georg Frideric Händel (1685–1759)

Händel composed one of the most universally known pieces of music, the *Messiah*, using the text compiled by Charles Jennens from the King James Bible and the Book of Psalms included in the *Book of Common Prayer*. Händel had been living in England for almost 30 years and had established himself as a composer of Italian opera with the highly successful operas *Rinaldo*, *Julius Caesar*, *Orlando*, and *Agrippina*. The musical world was changing in the 1730s, so Händel followed suit by writing English oratorio. In 1736, he composed *Alexander’s Feast*, followed by *Saul* and *Israel in Egypt* in 1739. *Messiah* came along in 1741 at the request of the 3rd Duke of Devonshire.

Händel was invited to Dublin to give a series of concerts to benefit the hospitals of Dublin. The premiere was performed on April 13, 1742 at the New Music Hall on Fishamble Street with a choir of 26 boys and 5 men from the combined choirs of St. Patrick’s and Christ Church cathedrals.

Part 1 is often called the Christmas portion of the *Messiah*. The story of part 1 of the *Messiah* begins with the prophecy of the Messiah and his virgin birth. His birth is announced by words from Isaiah and followed by the proclamation to the shepherds. The piece then reflects on the Messiah’s deeds. Interestingly, there are no names of characters in the piece. It is thought that the reason for this is that Händel wanted to avoid charges of blasphemy. Instead he wrote music that tells the story through meditation and implication.

Part 1 corresponds to Advent, Christmas, and the life of Jesus, while part 2 coincides with Lent, Easter, the Ascension, and Pentecost. Finally, part 3 ends the church year and deals with the end of time.

Musically, Händel uses two purely instrumental movements—the overture (Sinfony) and the Pifa (pastorale introducing the shepherds in Bethlehem). The rest of the music uses soloists in recitatives and arias, with a few secco recitatives accompanied by only the continuo, and then choruses. The arias are usually in *da capo* form, but Händel does not use the strict sense of the form often formatting freely to convey the text. The choruses use all four voice parts—soprano, alto, tenor, and bass—with the occasional combination of the soloist, chorus, and orchestra.

Part 1 is divided into five scenes. After the Sinfony, scene 1 considers salvation in its three movements, while scene 2 uses three movements speaking about the apparition of God. Scene 3 has a short introduction and then addresses Isaiah’s prophecy about the virgin birth of the Messiah. Scene 4 is the only dramatic scene of the oratorio. It describes the annunciation to the shepherds and is taken from the Gospel of Luke (Luke 2:14). It sets the stage for the scene with the instrumental Pifa. Part 1 closes with scene 5, which describes the deeds of the Messiah and the response of man.

Text:

Instrumentation – 2 oboes, 2 bassoons, 2 trumpets, timpani, strings, basso continuo

Artifacts –

[Leonard Bernstein’s full score](#)

[A second score used by Leonard Bernstein](#)


1. Handel: Messiah - London Symphony Orchestra & Sir Colin Davis
2. Handel: Messiah - Academy of St. Martin in the Fields, Academy of St. Martin in the Fields Chorus, Anne Sofie von Otter, Jerry Hadley, Michael Chance, Robert Lloyd, Sir Neville Marriner & Sylvia McNair
3. Handel: Messiah - Chicago Symphony Chorus, Chicago Symphony Orchestra, Dame Kiri Te Kanawa & Sir Georg SoltiElgar: Enigma Variations & Holst: The Planets - London Symphony Orchestra & Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra
4. Handel: Messiah - English Baroque Soloists, John Eliot Gardiner & Monteverdi Choir

1. Handel: Messiah (250th Anniversary Performance)
2. Handel's Messiah
3. The Messiah: An Oratorio for Four-Part Chorus of Mixed Voices, Soprano, Alto, Tenor, and Bass Soli and Piano
4. Handel - Messiah / Vyvyan · Sinclair · Vickers · Tozzi · Royal PO · Beecham
5. Handel: The Man & His Music
6. Handel (Master Musicians Series)

YouTube.com Links –

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AZTZRtREkVk>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=71NCzuDNUcg>

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3w_EmCYrCIE