

FAME V  
Lesson 1  
September 2008

**George Frideric Handel (1685-1759)**

<b>Props</b>	<b>Costume</b>
3. Board with handles Timeline Picture of spinet 3 cartoons Picture of boat on Thames river Book on Handel	1. Black coat with tails 2. White blouse with ruffles or lace (2 are available ) <i>For men</i> who are giving the presentation please wear a white button up shirt with the black tail coat. Sorry, the shirts we have are women's and I'm not sure if they will fit.

Our composer today is George Handel. I have something here to help you remember his name. (Show board with handles). He was born in 1685 (That was over 300 years ago.) and he was born in Halle, Germany. That same year, in a town less than 100 miles away another FAME composer was born, Johann Sebastian Bach. Both became very famous musicians but they never met. (Show time line).

Handel is one of the most famous Baroque composers. He lived before Mozart and Beethoven. (*Show Mozart, Beethoven and Bach on timeline*)

George Handel's father was a barber-surgeon. Does anyone know what that means? At this time barbers not only cut hair but they performed minor operations, like pulling teeth, mended broken bones and they bled people, which was thought as a cure for many diseases back then. (*Show cartoon 1*) George's father wanted him to have a better job than he had; he wanted George to become a lawyer.

Now George's dad hated music. His dad did not want music in his home. He would close windows when church bells rang, and would pay street musicians to stop making music. George's dad thought music was a lot of foolishness and a waste of time.

Handel's father wanted him to forget about music and forbade George to study music, play music or go to a friend's house where instruments would be available to play. When George was 7 his aunt Anna, who loved music, smuggled a [spinet](#) into the home. Does anyone know what a spinet is? A small type of [harpsichord](#) or other keyboard like instrument, such as a [piano](#) or [organ](#).) **Show Picture of Spinet.** Aunt Anna wrapped its strings with cloth so it would sound very quiet and they took it to the attic. George would practice in the attic while his family slept at night. (*Show cartoon 2*)

When George was 10 his dad went on a business trip to see the Duke at Weissenfels (pronounced VIE-sen-fels). George wanted to go along, but his father said he'd be too busy to watch him. Did Handel listen to his father? No. Handel ran after his father's carriage. He followed for quite awhile before being discovered. (*Show 1 picture from book*) When his father finally realized that Handel was running behind him, he stopped and allowed George to go on the trip with him. This trip turned out to be very important for George.

George's father was too busy on this trip to keep his son from getting his hands on instruments. One morning George was playing the organ in the chapel after services. The Duke heard the music and asked who was playing. When he was told that it was George he called him and his father over. The Duke told George's father "Such talent can only come from God! It would be a sin against God not to let your son study music." The Duke then filled young Handel's pockets with gold and said "More will be coming, if you practice every day." (*Show cartoon 3*)

When George returned home he started his first music lesson. He studied the organ, violin, clavichord and composition (writing music). Do you know why he did not study the piano? It was not invented until 1830.

George went to university when he was 17 to be a lawyer but soon his father died and he had to work to support himself and his mother. He took a job with the Royal Court as a musician. This allowed him to travel all over Europe. When he was 21 he spent some time in Italy studying opera. Who knows what an opera is? (A play set to music all speaking parts are sung.) Operas were the top entertainment in Europe during Handel's time. They were as popular as movies are today. Handel became liked for his operas and wrote many of them. By the time he was 30 years old, he was the most famous composer alive.

He spent most of his adult life in England where his music was very popular. Handel lost his sight when he was 68 years old. Though he couldn't compose any more, he gave organ concerts and conducted performances of his oratorios. He died on April 6, 1759, and was buried in Westminster Abbey. During his life he composed 46 operas, 21 oratorios and hundreds of other pieces, including Water Music Suite, which is what we will hear today.

How many of you have seen a parade? Can you imagine a parade on the water, in boats? (*Show picture of boats on the river, also show picture from book.*) Handel wrote Water Music Suite for a grand royal concert on London's Thames River. While the king floated along on his royal barge, Handel conducted 50 musicians on a near by boat. Let's listen to "Air" from the Water Music Suite. While you are listening close your eyes and feel the music. What do you see when you listen to it? What kind of instruments do you hear? (*Play track 6*)

This piece of music is from a suite. A suite is a collection of music written by one composer, The Water Music Suite has 25 different pieces of music in it. Does anyone know of another famous suite that you've heard of? We usually hear it around Christmas time. (The Nutcracker Suite by Tchaikovsky)

I mentioned earlier that Handel wrote Oratorios. Does anyone know what an oratorio is? Oratorios are musical pieces written for instruments and voice. It is not like an opera in that it does not use costumes or stage scenery, all the drama is in the music. Handel was most famous for these. His most popular oratorio is the Messiah. We're going to play the very famous "Hallelujah Chorus" But to do this you all have to give me a hand. Now when they first performed this piece in 1743 King George II was so moved by emotion during this last part of the Messiah, that he stood up and it has ever since become a tradition to stand during this part of the music. So everyone please stand. (*Play track 13*)

