



You've heard his music on the radio. You've heard it in shopping centres and on T.V. advertisements. You may even have heard it performed by a rock band. Would it surprise you to learn that the brilliant musician in question was born over 300 years ago? His name is Johann Sebastian Bach and he is one of the greatest composers of classical music the world has ever known.



JS Bach was born in Germany in 1685 and came from a family full of famous musicians. His ideal early childhood was struck by tragedy when both his parents died within a year of each other before his tenth birthday. He went to live with his brother who taught him to play the organ and before long, his career began to flourish. Although we know Bach as a famous composer, he was best known in his day as a skilled violinist, organist and harpsichordist (a keyboard instrument which preceded the piano).



Bach lived during the **Baroque** era, a term which describes the fancy and complex style of music and art produced around the late 1600's and early 1700's. He wrote in all the popular musical forms of the day, depending on where he was working at the time. Whilst working as a church musician he wrote many of his famous **cantatas**, which are long musical works to be played and sung during church services. These works demonstrate his deep religious beliefs, which were a very important part of his life and music. When he was employed as a court musician, Bach wrote many beautiful instrumental works for his royal employers, including **sonatas, suites** and **concertos** for a wide variety of instruments. Bach's final job was working as Musical Director for the city of Leipzig. Here he was incredibly busy composing and directing music for four churches and two choirs as well as producing any music needed for special occasions. He was fortunate to have a wife who was skilled at copying music very quickly, as there were no photocopiers around back then!

Despite his genius as a musician, Bach was a devoted family man. He had twenty children to two different wives. Towards the end of his life, Bach slowly lost his sight and died at the age of 65 of complications resulting from eye surgery. He left behind him a rich musical legacy which we can still enjoy today.

Fast Facts

Name: Johann Sebastian Bach
Dates: 1685-1750
Country of birth: Germany
Historical Era: Baroque
Contemporary Composers: Handel, Vivaldi
Contemporary Artists: Rembrandt
Other People/Events: Isaac Newton, George Washington, Voltaire, invention of the steam boiler

Fun Fact

A recording of Bach's music is floating in outer space! In 1977, the spacecraft Voyager 1 and 2 were launched to probe areas of outer space never before explored. On board was a "Golden Record," a collection of the very best examples of human life and achievement, intended as a greeting to any form of life that may find it. Three recordings of Bach's music were chosen to be included in this "Who's Who" of human history.



“ In the attic of a modest home in Germany in the late 1600s, a small boy was secretly teaching himself to play the keyboard. His ambitious father’s plans for him to become a lawyer did not include music lessons, so his practice was all done behind his father’s back, or, as it were, above his head! His father eventually found out about it and provided music lessons, but was still insistent that his son pursue a proper career. It was not until after the death of his father that George Frideric Handel began formal music training and went onto become one of the finest composers of the **Baroque** era. ”

Handel’s early musical training began in Germany, but he found Germany boring and uninspiring, so he went to Italy to study his first love, **opera**. He lived in Italy for three years and learned from some of the greatest Italian composers about opera and how to make words sing.

Handel returned to Germany in order to work for the Elector of Hanover, on the condition that he be allowed to take some time off, right away, to go to London. The Elector agreed and after some time in London, he eventually went back to work....for one summer. He once again got itchy feet and his next trip to London lasted for the rest of his life.

Apart from **operas**, Handel wrote a wide variety of instrumental music including **concertos**, **suites**, **sonatas** and other types of **chamber music**. He also wrote a great deal of vocal music including cantatas and **Oratorios**. His oratorios were extremely popular in London, and one of them, **The Messiah**, became his best known work. The first performance of the messiah was in Dublin, but at the first London performance, the King was in attendance and was so impressed with the “Hallelujah Chorus“ from this work that he stood to his feet. Of course, when the King stands, everyone stands - and to this day, audiences have continued the tradition to stand during the “Hallelujah Chorus”.

Towards the end of his life, Handel went blind. One story says that it was because he had practiced his keyboard so much in the dark attic when he was a youngster. He was so well loved and respected in London, that when he died, over 3000 people attended his funeral and he was given the honor of being buried in Westminster Abbey.

Fast Facts

Name: George Frideric Handel
Dates: 1685-1759
Country of birth: Germany
Historical Era: Baroque
Contemporary Composers: Bach, Vivaldi
Contemporary Artists: Vermeer
Other People/Events: Isaac Newton, Voltaire, George Washington, invention of the piano

Fun Fact

Handel wrote one of his best known pieces of orchestral music for his employer King George 1 (previously known as the Elector of Germany). It was first performed whilst the King was floating down the Thames River on a barge, with the orchestra on another barge floating close by. The King liked the long series of movements so much, that he asked for it to be played three times that day. Needless to say, Handel and the orchestra were exhausted. This piece of music is aptly named *Water Music*.



Answer the following questions about Handel using the answers from the Word Bank below
Then, find all those answers in the word search puzzle.

- 1 Where was Handel born? _____
- 2 Where did he go to study music because home was too boring? _____
- 3 Which country did Handel move to and come to call home? _____
- 4 What profession did his father want him to follow? _____
- 5 What kind of music was Handel's first love? _____
- 6 The _____ is Handel's most well known oratorio.
- 7 The King of England stood when heard the _____ Chorus?
- 8 Where was "The Messiah" first performed? _____
- 9 Handel lived during which era of music? _____
- 10 Originally, in Germany, Handel worked for the _____ of Hanover, who eventually became the _____ of England.

Word Bank

Germany	Elector	Italy	king
England	Baroque	lawyer	Dublin
Opera	Hallelujah	oratorio	Messiah

Word Search

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H E S T B M E S S I A H
H L Q L A W Y E R Z L P
A E A B R W T M E S S U
J C A R O T N D Y O X Z
U T R D Q G E R M A N Y
L O N T U Q N W E R T L
E R Y U E B G I I O P A
L M O N B D L V K C X T
L G P F D S A I A E Z I
A H E H J K N L N T E Q
H I R E V A D K L L H G
O R A T O R I O W B E F

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From the remaining letters, put a box around the letters that spell our composer's name.

GRAN PRINCIPALE DI TOSCANA
Da D. Antonio Vivaldi



Die Ospedale della Pietà di Venezia
OPERA TERZA

In the 1920s, an Italian boarding school was doing a spring clean when it discovered boxes full of old music manuscripts. The school, having no idea what the music was, thought that they might be able to sell the music to raise some funds. They sent the music to a University scholar for evaluation. The scholar in question went into fits of excitement when he realized that the scores were previously unknown compositions from the almost equally unknown baroque composer Antonio Vivaldi. This discovery began a renewed interest in the music of Vivaldi, who was a very well known composer during his lifetime, but had fallen into relative obscurity. Thus, Vivaldi's reputation as a worthy and equally important contemporary of Bach and Handel was reinstated.

Vivaldi was born in Venice, Italy. He was the son of a professional violin player who gave him an ideal start in his musical studies. At the age of 15, Vivaldi began studying to become a priest and thus, along with his bright red hair, he gained his life long nickname of Il Prete Rosso (The Red Priest). He did not actually end up performing the typical duties of a priest for very long because his struggle with a type of asthma left him short of breath and unable to recite Mass. Instead, he spent much of his life working in an orphanage teaching violin and directing the orchestra. Later in his life he traveled around Europe and earned a living writing and performing music.

Much of Vivaldi's music was written for the orphans he worked with and includes over 500 **concertos** for various instruments, **sonatas** and other , **operas** and **sacred vocal music**. Some of his best known music is a series of violin **concerti** called *The Four Seasons*. Each concerto corresponds to a different season of the year, the most famous one being *La Primavera* (Spring).

At the height of his career, Vivaldi was well known and popular with royalty and nobility. He wrote a wedding cantata for Louis XV of France and was even knighted by the Roman Emperor, Charles VI. However, a combination of bad luck and the fact that musical styles were changing, left him abandoned and penniless. He died from an illness at the age of 63 and was buried in a pauper's grave.

Fast Facts

Name: Antonio Vivaldi
Dates: 1678-1741
Country of birth: Italy
Historical Era: Baroque
Contemporary Composers: Bach, Handel
Contemporary Artists: Caravaggio
Other People/Events: Voltaire,
 Benjamin Franklin, Isaac Newton discovers
 Law of Gravity, Fahrenheit invented the
 thermometer

Fun Fact

In Vivaldi's day it was scandalous for females to be seen playing musical instruments. Vivaldi and his all-girl orchestra from the orphanage would therefore often have to play behind a white curtain....one that was thick enough to obscure such scandal from sight, but thin enough that the orchestra could be heard.



1 Word Search

O O B O E L O U T E B V
 A T S S O P O V O N F E
 L R U T E E I I R O E N
 C E O R R O D V E I R I
 V C A I L O L A A R D C
 A N M I O R E L T O H E
 E O N O R B O D M T A N
 D C O L I N C I H A A L
 V I S E L R A H C R U M
 E A U C E L L O V O I O
 I L P R E T E R O S S O
 L I P R I M A V E R A N

CONCERTO
 IL PRETO ROSSO
 SONATA
 OPERA
 ORATORIO
 PRIMAVERA
 VENICE
 VIOLIN
 VIVALDI
 CHARLES IV

2 Match these words from the word search to their definitions

Concerto	City where Vivaldi was born
Primavera	A piece with at least one soloist with orchestral accompaniment
Il Prete Rosso	A piece for one or a few instruments accompanied by keyboard
Venice	Spring
Opera	The Red Priest
Violin	A long vocal work with orchestral accompaniment that tells a story
Sonata	The instrument Vivaldi played

3 Write the unused letters from the word search in order to reveal some of the instruments that Vivaldi wrote for. Some of them are unusual instruments that you may not have heard of. Do an internet search to find out what they are.

- 1 _ _ _ _
- 2 _ _ _ _
- 3 _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _
- 4 _ _ _ _ _
- 5 _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _
- 6 _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _
- 7 _ _ _ _ _ _
- 8 _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _
- 9 _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _
- 10 _ _ _ _
- 11 _ _ _ _ _ _