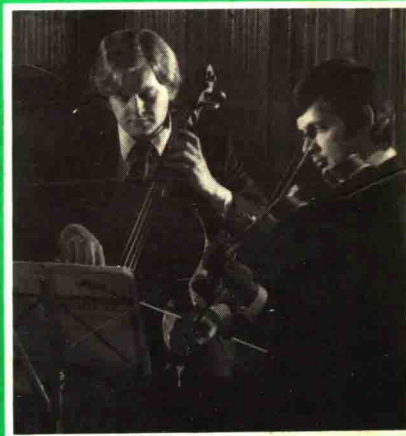
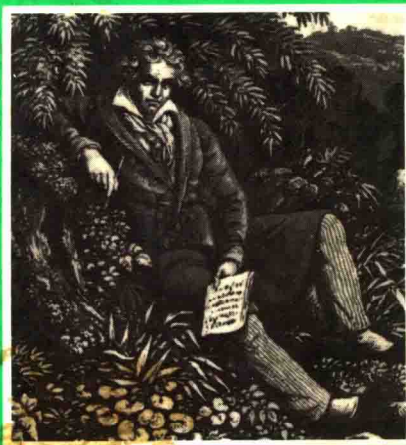


A Handbook of Composers and their music

Paul Farmer



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3800.300

Paul Farmer



Oxford University Press
Music Department, Ely House, 37 Dover Street, London W1X 4AH

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Teacher's note

The **Things to do** section at the end of each chapter has been specially written to cater for a variety of classroom needs, and contains activities suitable for pupils of different abilities and interests. In general these have been arranged as follows:

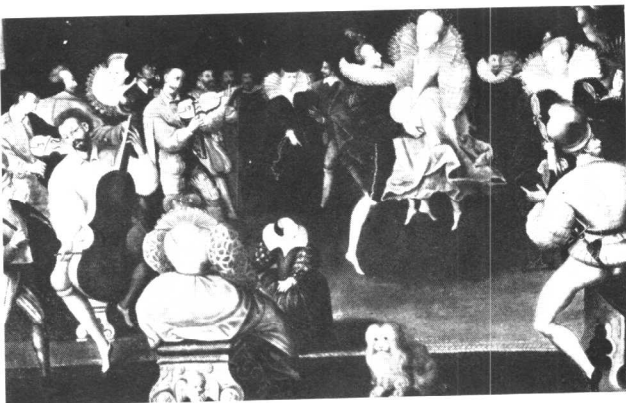
- 1 The first activity is always an essentially musical one, either involving the theory of music or practical work or both. Some of these activities are much more demanding than others, but the book as a whole contains enough of this kind of work to cover a wide range of abilities.
- 2 The second activity is usually one which does not involve much written work, (e.g. the making of charts, posters, etc.) and can be attempted regardless of 'academic' ability.
- 3 The final activity is useful as extension work for those pupils who are able and wish to research the subject further.

Elizabethan music

Queen Elizabeth I of England was born in 1533. She became Queen in 1558, and died in 1603; so we think of the **Elizabethan Age** as being the second half of the 16th century. At this time England was a leading musical country, and there were several English composers alive whose music is still played. The queen herself was also very interested in music.

Thomas Tallis (1505–1585) was organist of the **Chapel Royal** (this is the name for the Queen's own church musicians), and wrote a lot of church music. His **canon** (see *Things to do*, number 1a) is still regularly sung as a hymn tune. He also wrote a **motet** (an unaccompanied setting of religious words for voices) for eight choirs, each with five parts, called *Spem in Alium*. This piece has a total of forty separate voice parts!

One of Tallis's pupils was William Byrd (1543–1623). He was organist at Lincoln Cathedral and then at the Chapel Royal. He was a Catholic, at a time when many Catholics were persecuted in England, but somehow he was allowed to keep his religion. In fact he was



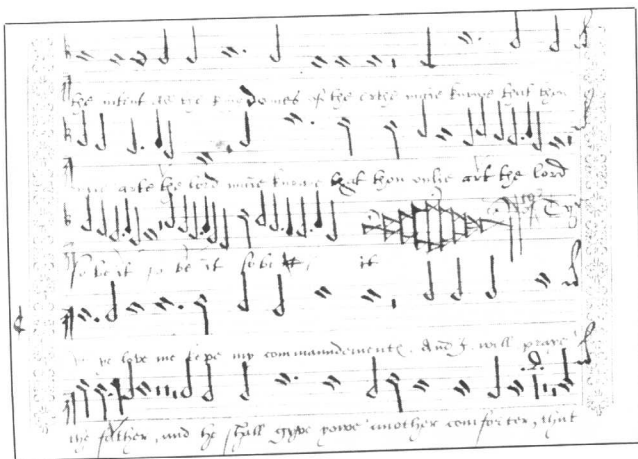
Queen Elizabeth I enjoyed music and dancing

so popular with Queen Elizabeth that she allowed him and Tallis to be the only people in the country who could print music.

During the reign of Queen Elizabeth a new type of music called the **madrigal** developed in England. This was written for several voices singing different parts. It was rather like a motet, except that it was not written for the church. In a way, it was one of the very earliest forms of popular song.

Thomas Morley (1557–1603) has been called 'the father of the English madrigal'. He was an organist of St Paul's Cathedral in London, and a 'Gentleman of the Chapel Royal' (this means he sung in the Chapel Royal). He must have also been popular with Queen Elizabeth, as he took over the monopoly of music printing from Tallis and Byrd. In 1597 he wrote a book called the *Plaine and Easie Introduction to Practicall Musicke*.

Another madrigal writer was Orlando Gibbons (1585–1625). He was also an organist of the Chapel Royal, and later of Westminster Abbey. He published only one volume of madrigals. One of them, *The Silver Swan*, is still



A manuscript of a piece of church music by Thomas Tallis



*William Shakespeare,
whose plays contain
many songs and
references to music*

well known. Gibbons was one of the last of the madrigal composers, and after his death very few of these pieces were written.

William Shakespeare, the English playwright, lived at almost exactly the same time that Elizabeth I was on the throne. Like the queen, he was very interested in music. Not only are there many songs and references to music in his plays, but often his stage directions ask for music to be played. Most people went to the theatre in those days, and Shakespeare's plays gave many people the chance to enjoy music.

The composers in Queen Elizabeth's day wrote a lot of their music in what we call **variation** form. They wrote one short tune (an **air**), and then wrote it again in several different ways (the **variations**). They might make the variations higher or lower, or give them a different rhythm. Another popular form of composition was to put together two dance tunes to make one longer piece. Usually one of the tunes would be slow (such as a **pavan**), and the other would be quicker (such as the **galliard**).

Music was obviously an important part of Elizabethan life. People sang folk songs, or rounds and catches (these were like small canons—*Three Blind Mice* is an example); there were also madrigals, often sung by people connected with the aristocracy and the court; and there was a great deal of church music. There were also plenty of instruments to play this music on: the **virginals** (a small



Making music in Elizabethan times. One lady sings, while the other two accompany her on the flute and lute

harpsichord), small organs, **viols** (which looked like violins, but had frets like guitars), recorders (in different sizes), lutes, trumpets and drums.

After the Elizabethan composers and Henry Purcell (see page 7), England produced very few composers until the 19th century.

Questions

- 1 When was the **Elizabethan Age**?
- 2 Who was Thomas Tallis?
- 3 Which of Thomas Tallis's compositions has 40 voice parts?
- 4 Name and describe one of Tallis's pupils.
- 5 What is a **madrigal**?
- 6 Name two madrigal composers.
- 7 How do you think we know that Shakespeare was interested in music?
- 8 Explain in your own words what **Air and Variations** means.
- 9 Name and describe some of the instruments used in Elizabethan times.
- 10 How 'musical' a country was England in the 16th century? Explain your answer.

Things to do

- 1a Here is the beginning of Tallis's canon, the well known hymn tune sung to the words 'Glory to Thee my God this Night'. In a true canon all the parts sing the same tune, one after the other, but in this extract the alto part has harmony notes. Can you fill in the missing tenor part? Copy the whole extract into your book first.

Soprano

Alto

Tenor

Bass

- 1b Use any instruments to play Tallis's canon. You will need two or more players:

- 2 Make a chart about Elizabethan composers. First list the composers mentioned in this chapter down the left hand side of your page, and make four vertical columns to the right of your list. In these columns you can put: the dates each composer lived; where they worked; the names of any of their compositions; any other important information.
- 3 Use a music reference book such as *The Oxford Junior Companion to Music* to find out all you can about the **Chapel Royal**.

Answer as many as you can of the following questions about it:

- What exactly is the Chapel Royal? (It really has two meanings.)
- How old is it?
- How were boys recruited to it during Richard III's reign?
- Why was the Chapel Royal not used for a time?
- Where does the Chapel Royal work now?

Purcell (1659–1695)

Henry Purcell's father was a professional singer when Charles II returned to the English throne in 1660. Since church music was now sung once more (Oliver Cromwell had previously banned it) Henry's father was able to make a living as a church musician. So when he joined the choir of the Chapel Royal, it is not surprising that his son Henry also joined the choir as early as he could.

Henry did not just sing on Sundays, but spent all the week in the choir school, and learned all the usual school subjects. He also learned a lot of music, and was taught to play the lute, the violin and keyboard instruments (see page 23). There were also lessons in musical composition, and those pupils who were able could write **anthems** (accompanied settings of religious words for voices) which were sometimes performed by the choir.

Once Purcell's voice broke he could no longer sing. However, he stayed at the Chapel Royal where he did all sorts of jobs, from writing pieces of music which were needed very quickly, to looking after the King's instruments and tuning the organ. He possibly taught some of the younger boys as well.

A few years later Purcell suddenly became famous. In 1677 the composer Matthew Locke died, and Purcell was asked by the King to take over from Locke as composer for the King's string orchestra. This was a very important job for an 18-year-old. Two years later Purcell became organist at Westminster Abbey; this was not because the previous organist had died, but simply because the older man thought Purcell was better than he was, and wanted the young man to take over! These two jobs made Purcell the most important musician in the country.

Not surprisingly, Purcell's music soon began to be published. His two jobs meant that he had to write a lot of music. This tended to be rather serious for the Abbey, but lighter for the Chapel Royal or the Court, since the King seemed to enjoy lively music.

Purcell wrote many short pieces for all sorts of rather unimportant occasions, as well as other pieces for coronations and royal funerals. Like several other composers who followed him, Purcell died early, at the age of 37.



The English composer Henry Purcell

Purcell's music

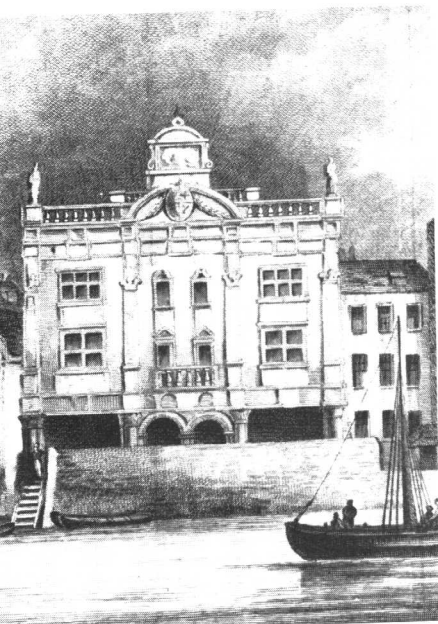
Many of Purcell's pieces are written in what is called **binary form**, which means that they contain two different sections. Like many Elizabethan composers, Purcell also *combined* two short pieces, to make one longer piece. But he did rather more than just this, and often put *several* pieces together, to make up a **suite**. This was a collection of dances.

Purcell also wrote what could be described as a **bass with variations**. This is a piece where the same bass part is played over and over again, with a different tune above it each time. Probably one of the best known of all these **ground basses** (which is what we now call them) is *When I am Laid in Earth*, from his opera *Dido and Aeneas*. This tune is played at the Cenotaph each year on Remembrance Sunday.

Dido and Aeneas is one of Purcell's most popular pieces of music, and is still performed regularly. It was written for a girls' school in Chelsea, London, when Purcell was about 30. He wrote a lot of music for the theatre, including *King Arthur*, *The Fairy Queen* and *The Indian Queen* (these are very similar to operas) as well as music to accompany some of Shakespeare's plays (**incidental music**).

Purcell seems to have been a very adaptable composer. Not only did he write very serious music for the church, such as funeral anthems (for example, for Queen Mary, the wife of Charles II, when she died in 1694), but lots of short pieces to celebrate special occasions. The same Queen had birthday **odes** written for her on every birthday from her coronation to her death, and even the return of the King from some journey would be a good enough excuse to write a welcoming piece of music. Purcell's music, like that of many composers of that time, was very often 'tailor-made'.

Not only has much of Purcell's music lasted until the present day, but it was also a source of inspiration for the composer Benjamin Britten (see page 86).



*The Duke's Theatre, Dorset Gardens, overlooking the River Thames. Many of Purcell's works for the theatre, including *The Fairy Queen*, were first staged here*

Questions

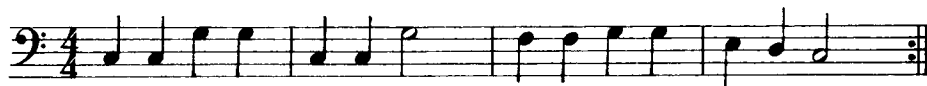
- 1 What was Purcell's father's job?
- 2 What event in history took place the year after Purcell was born?
- 3 Why was this event (Q.2) important for Purcell's father?
- 4 Where did Purcell receive his first musical training?
- 5 Why did Purcell stop singing in the choir of the Chapel Royal?
- 6 What did Purcell do, once he stopped singing?

- 7 What two events suddenly made Purcell famous?
- 8 Explain why Purcell's music was sometimes serious and sometimes light.
- 9 Describe **binary form**.
- 10 Give some examples of Purcell's 'tailor-made' music.

Things to do

- 1 Next time you are asked by your teacher to make up some music of your own in class, try playing a **ground bass** with another instrument. Whoever has the lower instrument, such as a bass or alto xylophone, should play this line of music over and over again:

Ground bass



Bach (1685-1750)



The German composer Johann Sebastian Bach

Johann Sebastian Bach was one of several composers who all had the same surname. They were in fact related to each other, but it is J. S. Bach who is usually considered the greatest of all the Bachs. He wrote such well known pieces as *Air on a G String*, the 48 *Preludes and Fugues* and *Tocatta and Fugue in D Minor*.

Bach was born at Eisenach, Germany, in 1685. This was the same year that another composer, George Frideric Handel was born (see page 13), though Handel lived nine years longer. Another difference between these two composers is that Handel travelled a great deal in his lifetime, and spent much of it outside Germany. Bach hardly travelled at all, and didn't even know much about his own country.

By the time Bach was ten years old his father and mother had both died, and he had to go to live with his elder brother who was an organist in a town not far away. Bach was sent to the local school, where he learnt all the usual subjects, while his brother taught him music. He also sung in the local church choir.

When Bach was fifteen he went to another school in a place called Luneberg, where he paid for his lessons by singing in the choir and later playing the violin in rehearsals. During the next few years he had a number of musical jobs in different towns, including Arnstadt, as an organist or director of music. All these different experiences of composing, arranging and performing music must have taught him a great deal about his subject. Like many composers of his time he was not *just* a composer, but also an all-round *musician*.

When he was 38, Bach moved to the city of Leipzig, where he became choirmaster at St Thomas's School. As well as training the singers, he had to compose a **cantata** (a religious piece of music for a choir) every Sunday for the singers to perform in one of the services of the city churches. He remained at Leipzig until he died in 1750, having reached quite an old age compared with many other composers.

Bach's first wife died, and so he re-married. Out of his 20 children only 11 lived to become adults. Three of the boys are still known for their own compositions, and one of them (J. C. Bach) taught Mozart for a short while (see page 19).



St. Thomas's Church, Leipzig, where Bach was choirmaster

Bach's music

Although Bach composed the equivalent of five cantatas for every Sunday in the year, only about 200 of them remain. Bach's

importance as a composer is shown by the fact that these pieces which were originally written for church services are still performed today in concerts. Perhaps his best known pieces of church choral music are the St Matthew and St John **Passions** (these are the words of the gospels set to music), and the *Mass in B Minor* (the requiem service set to music).

As well as writing a great deal of choral music, Bach wrote a lot of music for the keyboard instruments of the time: **organ**, **harpsichord** and **clavichord**. Although the Preludes and Fugues for the organ are still played as they were originally intended on this instrument, the pieces for the other two instruments are now played on the piano—an instrument which had not been invented in Bach's time (see *Keyboard Instruments*, page 23).

A **Prelude** and **Fugue** were often written together. The Prelude was a kind of introduction, and was usually quite short. The Fugue was longer and, like a canon, all the parts came in one after the other. In each of the two books of Preludes and Fugues mentioned above, there were 24 of these pieces, making one piece for each of the major and minor keys. These pieces, which are very well known, are often just called 'the 48'.

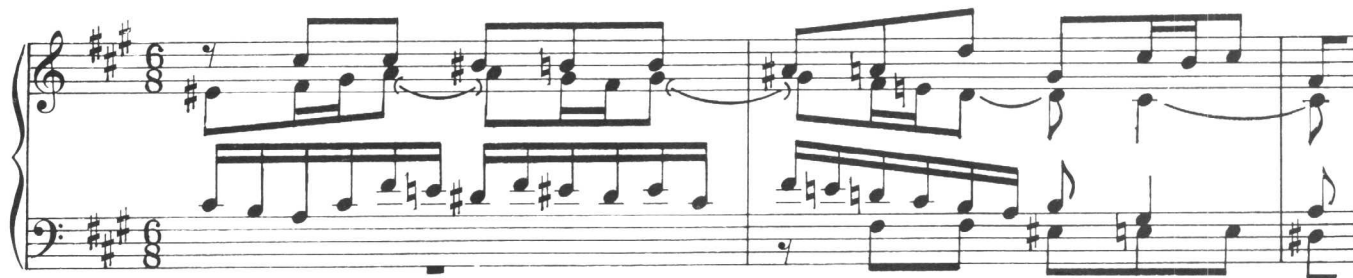
Much of Bach's music is written in what is called **counterpoint**. This means that instead of the pieces being made up of blocks of notes (chords), there are many tunes (called **parts**) that are played at once. Many people would say that counterpoint is harder to compose than some chordal music, because there are so many tunes to think of which all have to fit together. Counterpoint can often be hard to play, too!



The manuscript of one of Bach's preludes from his famous collection of 48 Preludes and Fugues for keyboard

The opening of one of Bach's fugues, written in counterpoint. Compare it with the chordal music on page 36

J. S. Bach: Toccata in F sharp minor BWV 910



Questions

- 1 Which other well known composer was born in the same year as Bach?
- 2 How much longer than Bach did this other composer (Q.1) live?

- 3 What events changed Bach's life by the time he was ten?
- 4 Who first taught Bach music?
- 5 How did Bach pay for his lessons at the school in Lüneburg?
- 6 What kind of jobs did Bach have during the next few years?
- 7 What was Bach's last job?
- 8 Describe Bach's duties in his last job.
- 9 Name and describe some of Bach's choral works.
- 10 Explain what is special about Bach's 48 Preludes and Fugues.

Things to do

- 1a Here is part of a fugue, in which all the parts play the same tune as they come in. One of the parts is missing, except for its first two notes. Copy out the whole extract in your book, and try to fill in the rest of the missing part. Remember that it uses the Bass clef:

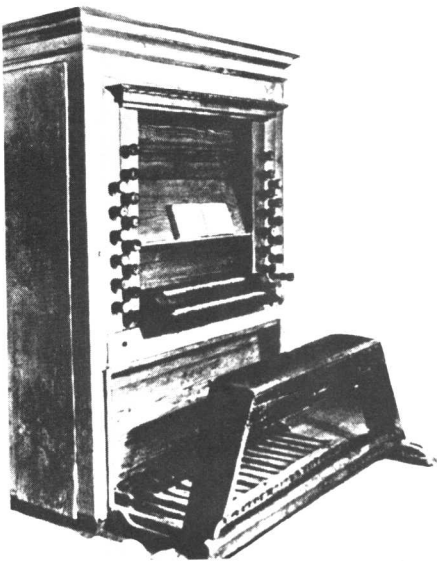


- 1b Next time you make up some music in class, see if you can use the idea of a fugue. Whatever your music is like, try to get each instrument to imitate what the other has just played.
- 2 Make a chart of Bach's main compositions, using the information on the previous page. It could start like this:

Name of Piece	Description
295 cantatas	Pieces for church choirs
etc . . .	etc . . .

Make your chart as interesting as you can, if possible by adding your own handwritten copies of parts of Bach's music which your teacher may have.

- 3 Two differences between Bach and Handel are mentioned in this chapter. Read the next chapter about Handel, and then write a short passage which shows all the ways in which the two composers were different. Try to write about their music as well as their lives.



The organ Bach played at Arnstadt

Handel (1685–1759)

One thing that we can be fairly sure about is that George Frideric Handel was very keen on music when he was a small boy. There is a well known story about his being caught one night, practising the clavichord (a quiet keyboard instrument) in the attic of his house.

Handel had to be secretive about his practising because his father, who was a **barber-surgeon** (he shaved people and pulled teeth out) did not want him to get too interested in music. He wanted Handel to become a lawyer instead of a musician.

One day Handel's father took his son to stay with the boy's brother, who was servant to a duke about 40 miles from where Handel lived. The duke heard Handel playing, and was so impressed that he managed to persuade his father to pay for him to have proper music lessons. When Handel returned home to the town of Halle, he began his lessons with a man called Zachau. He was organist of the local cathedral, and taught George how to play the harpsichord, organ and violin, as well as how to compose.

When Handel was seventeen he went to study law at the local university, just as his father had wished. But he soon gave this up and went to Hamburg, a more exciting musical centre, where he got a job at the opera house. He spent the next few years in Italy, a very important country as far as music was concerned. He travelled around there and learned a lot about the Italian musical styles, especially opera.

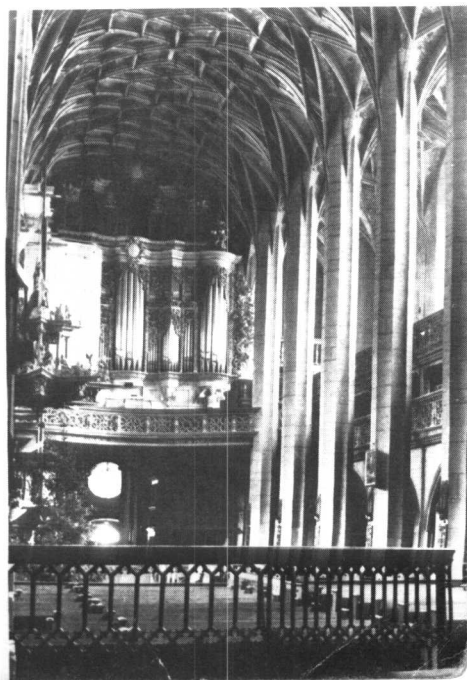
When Handel returned to Germany, aged 25, he was appointed director of music to the Elector of Hanover. Soon after this he asked to go to London, and while there he wrote an opera, *Rinaldo*. The opera was performed in London and was most successful. After returning to Hanover for a while he went back to London again, only this time he stayed so long that the Elector got angry. So when Queen Anne died, and the Elector became George I of England, Handel got rather an unpleasant surprise. It was not until the *Water Music* was performed (see below) that the King forgave Handel, according to one story.

Handel stayed in London for the rest of his life, and spent most of his time working in the theatre. He wrote forty operas, but in spite of his success these eventually led him into debt, since operas were both expensive to stage and an unfashionable form of entertainment. It was because of his financial problems that he started to write oratorios (see next page).

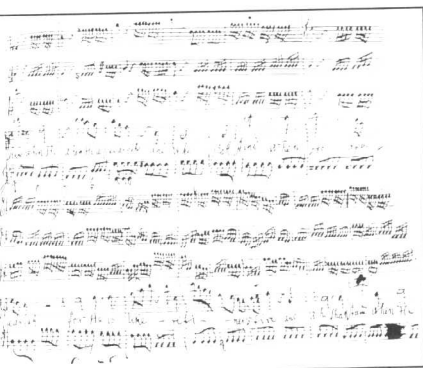


The German composer George Frideric Handel

The inside of the church at Halle where Handel received his first music lessons



Handel's music



Part of Handel's manuscript for the oratorio *Messiah*

Handel's best known piece of music is *Messiah*, a large choral work for choir, orchestra and solo singers, which uses words from the Bible. It is thought that it only took Handel twenty-four days to write it. Another story is that when George II first heard the piece in London, he and all the audience were so impressed by the 'Hallelujah Chorus' that they stood up. Ever since then it has become a tradition to stand during this part of *Messiah*.

Messiah is an **oratorio**, a religious choral work which has no acting, and which can be performed in a church or theatre. Handel wrote several of these, mostly after his opera career had come to an end. It is strange to think that he might never have bothered writing *Messiah* if he had remained successful in the theatre for longer.

The *Water Music* is another well known composition by Handel. This was thought to have been written and played for George I, (the King who had previously quarrelled with Handel), on a state barge trip down the Thames. The story says that the King was so pleased with the music that it helped to mend their quarrel.

Since the composer J. S. Bach (see page 10) and Handel were born in the same year and the same country, it is natural to compare their music. Handel seems to have liked writing melodies for the human voice, perhaps because he had good professional singers available to perform his music. Bach, on the other hand, often gave his singers melodies which sound as if they might have been meant for instruments rather than voices. His music is often more complicated than Handel's, and seems rather like a musical jig-saw, with lots of different parts which all fit together.



Handel composed his *Water Music* for a musical party on the Thames, rather like the one in this painting

Questions

- 1 How do we know that Handel was interested in music when he was a small boy?
- 2 What did Handel's father want Handel to become?
- 3 What persuaded Handel's father to arrange music lessons for the boy?
- 4 What subject did Handel study at University?
- 5 Where did Handel travel and study during his early 20s?
- 6 Why did the Elector of Hanover get angry with Handel?
- 7 What piece of music is supposed to have ended George I's quarrel with Handel?
- 8 What sort of music did Handel first write in London? What made him change?

- 9 What story is told about the first performance of *Messiah*?
- 10 Describe the differences between the music of Bach and Handel.

Things to do

- 1a The opening bars of the *Hallelujah Chorus* are printed below. The word Hallelujah (pronounced *hallylooya*) is separated in the music, like this: Hal - le - lu - jah. If you are able to listen to a recording of these opening bars, see if you can fill in the words, just as they fit the music. You could copy the music into your book first:

Allegro (brightly)

Soprano

Alto

Tenor

Bass

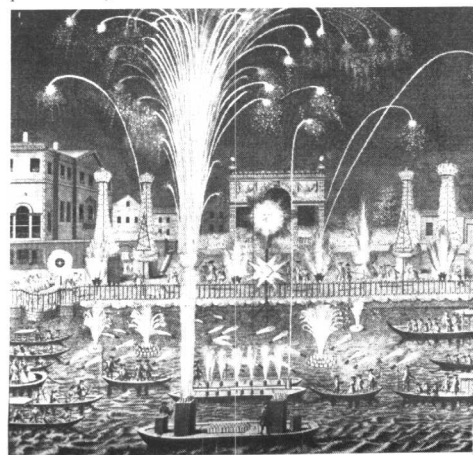
- 1b Make up some music of your own, using the same *rhythm* as the first bars of the *Hallelujah Chorus*. You could simply start with a drum or tambourine playing the rhythm over and over again:



Next, try adding pairs of minims to this, played on other instruments. Finally, see if you can add a tune, using crotchets.

- 2 The first London performance of *Messiah* was in the Theatre Royal, Covent Garden. Tickets were 10s/6d, 5s or 3s/6d, and the theatre opened at 4pm. Design your own advertisement for this concert, as it might have looked at the time. How much do you think the tickets would cost today?
- 3 EITHER imagine how both Handel and George I felt when they came face to face in London, and write an imaginary account of what happened in the form of a short sketch or newspaper report; or start your own project on **Royal Music**, beginning with Handel's *Royal Fireworks Music*.

Handel's Fireworks Music was written for a special fireworks display in Green Park, London, 1749, to mark the signing of an important peace treaty





The Austrian composer Franz Joseph Haydn

Haydn (1732–1809)

Franz Joseph Haydn was born in a small town in Austria, near the border with Hungary, and lived with his family in a small thatched house. Haydn's father, who was a wheelwright, was not able to afford music lessons for Joseph or his brother Johann, who also became a composer. However, Joseph had a good treble voice which the choirmaster of a Viennese cathedral noticed on a visit to the town. As a result, Joseph, and later Johann, attended the cathedral choir school where they received a very good musical education.

As soon as a boy's voice broke he was no longer any use to the choir, and was usually sent away to earn his living in any way he could. This happened to Haydn just before he was 17. He was left on his own in Vienna, and might have very quickly become too poor to continue his interest in music. But somehow he managed to hire an attic, buy an old clavichord (see page 23) and make a little money from giving music lessons. In many towns or cities he probably wouldn't have been able to survive in this way; but Vienna was a very musical place, and there were quite a few people interested enough in music to become his pupils.

Haydn also wrote some music for the Viennese street bands, and one day he was noticed by someone who asked him to write an opera. By the time Haydn was 23 he was fortunate in having been employed as music director to two local noblemen at their country houses. There he would write pieces of music for their resident musicians to play. While he was employed by the second of these men he married a barber's daughter. She unfortunately turned out to be a most unsuitable wife (she is supposed to have used his music for curling her hair!) and so he made sure he saw her as little as possible.

In 1761, when Haydn was 29, he was appointed to a very important job as deputy music director to one of the richest noblemen in Austria, Prince Paul Esterházy. Five years later Haydn succeeded

Vienna in Haydn's time

