

# Baroque Music: Georg Frederick Handel

Dr. Alan Haffa

Please SILENCE Cell Phones

# George Frederick Handel (1685- 1759)

- Cosmopolitan
  - Born in Germany; trained in Italy; performed in England
- Church Organist
- Harpsichordist in Hamburg Opera House
- 1710 Kappellmeister to George of Hanover; George I
- London in 1712



# Messiah

- <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=880893>
- Oratorio: similar to an opera, but with a sacred content; includes orchestra, choir, and soloists
- Written in three weeks for Easter season
- 1742: Choir from St. Patrick's Cathedral in Dublin (Dean of Cathedral, Jonathan Swift)
- Revenue to hospitals for mentally ill
- Subject: The Birth of Christ; Passion; Aftermath and Judgement Day and Thanksgiving

# Baroque Aesthetic and *Messiah*

- Light and Shade: How is this conveyed musically?
- Changing volume dramatizes text
- Chorus begins vigorously singing "hallelujah"
- Volume drops as they sing "For the Lord God omnipotent reigneth"
- Volume drops more for section "The Kingdom of this world," as if about to fade
- Top volume for final section: "And He shall reign for ever and ever" as multiple voices overlap, creating complex texture, introduction of trumpets and drums, up to triumphant climax

# Tradition of Standing

- 1743, London performance
- Uncertain, but legend has it that...
- King George II woke up during opening chords of Hallelujah Chorus and stood up
- All his subjects stood



# Overture

- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bnK8V3BZNeM>
- Similar to Lully's French Overture
- Starts slow and majestic
- Followed by a more lively, fugal second movement
  - takes a melody and juxtaposes it in different keys
- Returns to original key

# Recitative

- Little melodic interest
- Singing narrative
- Explains plot
- Text: “Handel uses chord change and chord selection as well as melodic elaboration to achieve dramatic emphasis of particular words or propulsion of the plot.”

# Recitative: "Comfort ye"

- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=656r8x8j6j0>

- *Tenor*

Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God.

Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned.

The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness; prepare ye the way of the Lord; make straight in the desert a highway for our God. (*Isaiah 40: 1-3*)

# Aria: Air

- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vCLUhVkCoPE>
- Revolutionary idea in Every Valley
- Soloist
- Da Capo form; “from the head” or from the beginning; Repetition
- “Ev'ry valley shall be exalted, and ev'ry moutain and hill made low; the crooked straight and the rough places plain”

# Structure

- Recitative: develop an idea rapidly
- Aria: elaborate an aspect of idea developed in recitative
- Chorus: Hammer home the message
- This plan is repeated four times before Handel varies the scheme by omitting, inverting or repeating one of the three basic elements
- Develops our expectations

# Hallelujah Chorus

- Concludes the Second Section; after the Passion of Christ
- Hallelujah: for the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth. (*Revelation 19: 6*) The kingdom of this world is become the kingdom of our Lord, and of His Christ; and He shall reign for ever and ever. (*Revelation 11: 15*) King of Kings, and Lord of Lords. (*Revelation 19: 16*) Hallelujah!
- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z5Xjz6ZuVk0>

# “Worthy is the Lamb” and “Amen”

- Concluding Choral Fugue
- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3x2fSxOeij4>
- Protracted “Amen”
- At 6:40 to end, Trumpets, full chorus, and drums give a strong, powerful sense of completion

# Baroque Effects of Messiah

- Emotionalism conveyed by:
  - intensity of voices
  - complexity of music
  - brass and percussion
  - Repetition
  - coloratura
- Light and Shade conveyed by range of volume
- Spirituality and religious fervor conveyed by theme