

# **SWIFT LEARNING BOOK-1**

**(Part II)**

**Children's old storybook on:  
HANDEL**

**SWIFT Topic: Communication & Expression II (Music)**

# Child's Own Book of Great Musicians: HANDEL

— By Thomas Tapper—

## The Story of a Little Boy Who Practiced in an Attic

In Germany where Handel was born his name was Georg Friedrich Händel (pronounced Gay-org Freed-riesh Hayn-del). But the great composer spent so much of his life in England that people now use the English form of his name.

Look at this queer old house where the great master was born. Handel was born in the same year as Johann Sebastian Bach, 1685. The father was a surgeon and barber, a queer combination. We know that he did not like music, and that he was unwilling for his son to study it.



Note: At the end of the book you will find some music vocabulary definitions.

Of the mother we know little. But we do know that she loved her little George Frederick, and helped him as far as she could.

The father was so determined that his son should not study music that he refused to let him go to school. He feared, no doubt, that the boy would soon learn to read notes.

But with the mother it was quite different. She observed the little boy's love of music.

In the Handel home there was a big roomy attic; the ceiling was low, and the windows had thick panes; the walls and floors were built of heavy timber, and silence reigned there.



"Here," said Mother Handel, "my little boy can play the harpsichord to his heart's content and no one will be the wiser."

You can imagine the surprise when the stern barber-surgeon stalked into the attic, followed by the family, holding high the lantern.

After that it may have been agreed that the boy should practice a little; not, however, that he might become a musician. "No, indeed," we may imagine Father Handel exclaiming, "my son shall be a famous lawyer."

One day when little George was seven years old his father set out by coach to visit another son, who was in the service of the Duke of Saxe-Weissenfels.

The little boy begged his father to let him go on the journey. "No," he replied, "you are too young to go so far."

However, when the coach set out George Frederick set out too on foot to follow, and he would not be sent home again.



He kept on trudging along as fast as his little feet would go. Every one hoped he would get tired and go back, but finally the father had to order the coach to stop and take him in.

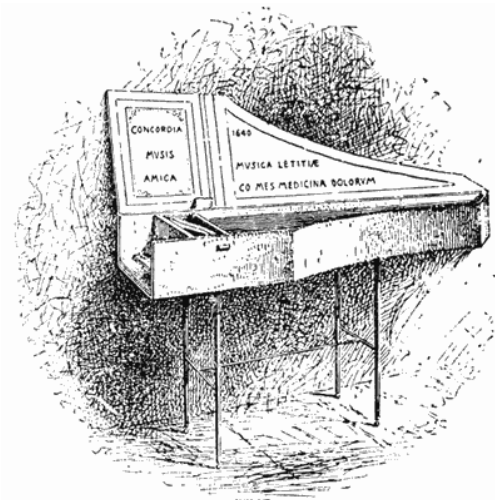
Thus did he show that determination which helped him all his life.

At the castle the boy soon made friends with the chapel musicians. They took him to the organ loft, where he played for them. All were delighted with his talent.

One day the Duke himself heard him play. He, too, was astonished that one so young should show so much skill. Calling the father into his presence, he pointed out how wrong it was to deny the boy the right to study music. "The world," he said, "should have the good of your son's great ability."

At the Cathedral in Handel's home city, Halle, there was a famous organist named Zachau. He became the boy's teacher.

They must have had a busy time together, for he had lessons from Zachau not only in organ playing, but in harmony, counterpoint, canon, and fugue; and in hautbois, violin, and harpsichord playing.



If you will look at this picture of the harpsichord on which Handel played, you will see that it is unlike the grand piano of our day. How does it differ?

And yet for this simple instrument Handel wrote beautiful music. Some day you may play his Little Fugues and some of the dances from the Suites.

Handel studied with Zachau for three years. The teacher said one day, “The boy knows more than I do.” So he was sent to Berlin, when he was eleven years old, to find other teachers.

Here he met two famous men, Buononcini and Ariosti. The former was harsh and unkind to him, but Ariosti treated him kindly and encouraged him. They all met again in later years in London.

When Handel was twelve years old his father died. From that time on he worked hard to perfect himself in his profession.

He became organist at Halle, but soon left there for Hamburg, which at that time was renowned for its music.



Here Handel began to work his way, making many friends, one of whom was the famous Johann Mattheson.

This is a fine old picture of Handel's friend, Johann Mattheson.

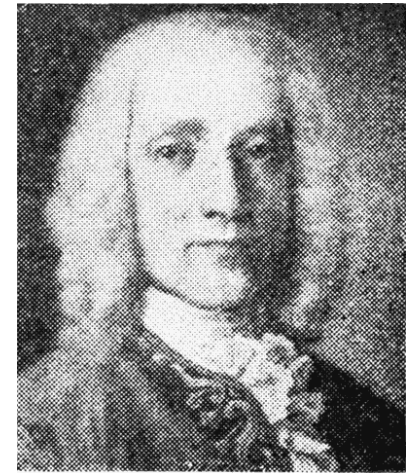
Though Handel went to Hamburg an unknown boy, he soon became famous. Here he wrote sacred music and his first operas. In his twenty-second year Handel went to Italy, where he stayed for three years. Here he met and became very friendly with Corelli and the two Scarlattis.



**Corelli**



**A. Scarlattis**



**D. Scarlattis**

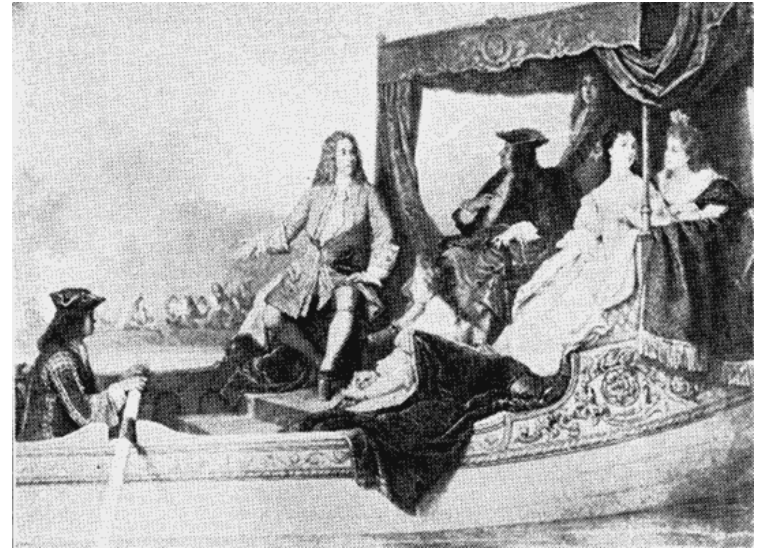
After his residence in Italy Handel went back to Germany, where he met the Elector of Hanover, who induced him to accept the post of Capellmeister. Handel agreed to do this on condition that he might first visit England. When Handel reached England he found himself already well known there.

The English people knew his operas, and liked them so much that Handel concluded to stay. But to his surprise and confusion it happened while he was in London that the very Elector of Hanover became George I, King of England.

Handel expected he would fare badly with the king for not having returned as Capellmeister to Germany.

But a friend arranged the matter so that Handel should compose some music for the king's coronation, hoping thereby to please his majesty.

He composed twenty-five pieces, called *Water Music*. A boat containing the players followed that in which the king sat.



When the music was performed the king asked who composed it. This led to Handel's being invited into the royal boat, where he again won the king's favour.



Handel greatly wished to give opera in London and devote his time to it as composer.

For many years the writing and staging of operas took all of Handel's time and thought, but he was not destined to make it a true success. Handel was a very fine performer at the keyboard.



Once again Handel visited his native land. On returning to England, which was to be his home for the future, he was asked by a wealthy gentleman, the Duke of Chandos, to become composer at the ducal residence.

Handel accepted this offer and composed much beautiful music. Handel was much beloved in England and was received at court.

He had tried hard to please the English public as an opera composer, and the disappointment of his failure caused him a severe illness from which he suffered greatly.

He lived to write some of the most lovely music the world possesses.

Perhaps the most famous of all his oratorios is the *Messiah*. When this was sung for the first time in London the king and all present rose at the words “For the Lord God Omnipotent Reigneth”.

Thus came the custom of rising at the singing of the *Hallelujah Chorus*.

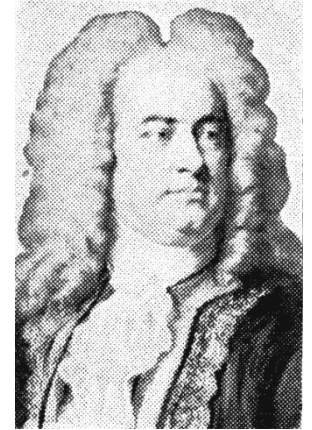
Handel loved England and became a naturalized British subject. He had a house in London, which in those days must have been considered a very fine one. He was very fond of gathering groups of musicians together.

Here he is in a familiar group.



As he greatly loved children, Handel once conducted the *Messiah* for the benefit of a hospital for little children, to which he gave large sums.

Toward the end of his life he became blind. Someone had to lead him to the organ loft, where, with his wonderful skill, he could still charm and delight.



The last appearance that Handel made in public was to conduct the *Messiah*. A few days later, on Good Friday, April 13, 1759, he passed away.

The English people loved and admired him so much that he was buried in Westminster Abbey.

## SOME MUSICAL DEFINITIONS:

**composer**—A person who creates and writes music.

**canon**—A piece of music where voices or instrument parts repeat the part of another, throughout the whole piece.

**counterpoint**—A combination of two or more melodies that are played together, and though different in some ways, they sound melodic and harmonious together.

**fugue**—A piece of music with a tune that is repeated regularly in different keys by different voices or instruments.

**grand piano**—A large piano that has horizontal strings in a harp-shaped frame, supported by three legs. (In a piano, when the keys of the keyboard are pressed, small hammers strike the strings to create the sound.)

**harmony**—A pleasant musical sound made by different notes being played or sung at the same time.

**harpsichord**—A musical instrument that is similar to a piano. When the keys of the keyboard are pressed, it has a device that plucks the strings to create the musical sounds, using points of feather or leather. It cannot play louder or softer. (The strings are not struck, as piano strings are, with a hammer-like device; and the piano can be played louder or softer.)

**hautbois**—A woodwind instrument, containing reeds (predecessor of the oboe).

**organ**—A large musical instrument with rows of pipes. The sound is produced by supplying air from bellows to blow through the pipes. It is played using a keyboard.

**oratorio**—A long musical piece, composed for a performance of voice and orchestra, often telling a dramatic story or words of religious content.

**read notes**—Understanding the sounds and music expressed by symbols, that have been written down.

**violin**—A wooden string instrument, with four strings, that is played with a bow of horse hair rubbing against the strings, and positioning the fingers on the fingerboard to create the various sounds.