



Music Appreciation



Baroque Oratorio



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» An oratorio is an extended composition for vocal soloists, chorus and orchestra; the narrative text is usually based on scripture or biblical stories but is non-liturgical. Although the oratorio is often about sacred subjects, it may also deal with semi-sacred subjects. This large-scale work is often compared to an opera, but unlike the opera, the oratorio often doesn't have acting, costumes and scenery. The chorus is an important element of an oratorio and the narrator's recitatives help move the story forward.



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- » Among the famous composers in Oratorio,
there are:
- » George Frideric Handel
- » Johann Sebastian Bach



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» Handel (1685–1759)

- » It has been mentioned that Handel's father didn't want him to become a musician at first; his father wanted him to become a lawyer instead. He studied law at Halle University. However, the young Handel managed to secretly play the clavichord in their attic. Later on, his father would allow him to study music under Friedrich Zachow. In 1702, he became organist at the Halle Cathedral.
- » In 1703, he moved to Hamburg where he served as violinist and then as harpsichordist
- » His most fruitful years of his career as a composer is when he was in London



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» In 1710 Handel left Venice and set out for London. In London, Handel met with the manager of the King's Theatre, who commissioned Handel to write an opera. Within just two weeks, Handel composed *Rinaldo*. Released during the 1710–11 London opera season, *Rinaldo* was Handel's breakthrough. His most critically acclaimed work up to that date, it gained him the widespread recognition that he would maintain throughout the rest of his musical career.



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- » In 1726 Handel decided to make London his home permanently, and became a British citizen. (He also Anglicized his name at this time, to George Frideric.)
- » He composed about 40 operas, 20 oratorios, songs and other vocal works. He also wrote orchestral music, chamber music and church music.



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- » Undoubtedly, his most famous work is the oratorio "Messiah," he also wrote other well-received works like "Samson," his operas "Almira," "Rinaldo," "Il pastor fido," "Teseo" and his English songs "Come and Listen (The Sailor's Complaint)," "Love's But the Frailty of the Mind" and "As on A Sunshine Summer's Day." His other works include "St. John Passion," "Rodrigo and Agrippina," "La Resurrezione," "Ode for the Queen's Birthday," "Utrecht Te Deum and Jubilate," "Jephtha," "Water Music" and "Music for the Royal Fireworks."
- » https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y4uJpY_vOEE
- » <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7YaGwI7GjIA>
- » <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=owcn6fgYwpw>



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» Bach

- » Born on March 31, 1685 (N.S.), in Eisenach, Thuringia, Germany, Johann Sebastian Bach had a prestigious musical lineage and took on various organist positions during the early 18th century, creating famous compositions like "Toccatina and Fugue in D minor." Some of his best-known compositions are the "Mass in B Minor," the "Brandenburg Concertos" and "The Well-Tempered Clavier." Bach died in Leipzig, Germany, on July 28, 1750. Today, he is considered one of the greatest Western composers of all time.





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- » After auditioning for a new position in Leipzig, Bach signed a contract to become the new organist and teacher at St. Thomas Church. He was required to teach at the Thomas School as a part of his position as well. With new music needed for services each week, Bach threw himself into writing cantatas. The "Christmas Oratorio," for example, is a series of six cantatas that reflect on the holiday.



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» Bach also created musical interpretations of the Bible using choruses, arias and recitatives. These works are referred to as his "Passions," the most famous of which is "Passion According to St. Matthew." This musical composition, written in 1727 or 1729, tells the story of chapters 26 and 27 of the Gospel of Matthew. The piece was performed as part of a Good Friday service.



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» Musically, Bach was a master at invoking and maintaining different emotions. He was an expert storyteller as well, often using melody to suggest actions or events. In his works, Bach drew from different music styles from across Europe, including French and Italian. He used counterpoint, the playing of multiple melodies simultaneously, and fugue, the repetition of a melody with slight variations, to create richly detailed compositions. He is considered to be the best composer of the Baroque era, and one of the most important figures in classical music in general.



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- » Little personal correspondence has survived to provide a full picture of Bach as a person. But the records do shed some light on his character. Bach was devoted to his family. In 1706, he married his cousin Maria Barbara Bach. The couple had seven children together, some of whom died as infants. Maria died in 1720 while Bach was traveling with Prince Leopold. The following year, Bach married a singer named Anna Magdalena Wülcken. They had thirteen children, more than half of them died as children.
- » Bach clearly shared his love of music with his children. From his first marriage, Wilhelm Friedemann Bach and Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach became composers and musicians. Johann Christoph Friedrich Bach and Johann Christian Bach, sons from his second marriage, also enjoyed musical success.





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» What is the difference between Bach's Oratorio Vs Cantata?



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» The difference between a large cantata and a small oratorio is hard to determine, but normally a cantata uses smaller, more various forces, attempts to fill a smaller dramatic canvas, and admits a much wider latitude in form.



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- » zbeckabee
- » Language -- Oratorio English or German while a cantata is a German biblical text
- » <http://www.barquemusic.org/cantatas.html>



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» Johann Sebastian Bach - Cantata BWV 147, Jesus, Joy Of Man's Desiring

» https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9wo2P_mfFAU

» <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rykzEv9z9i0>





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- » Arpeggionist
- » But the difference is whether or not the piece has a definite plot, or a guiding storyline beyond the texts chosen (e.g. "Jephtah", "Elijah" or "The Messiah"). Usually oratorios focus on biblical subjects, which is why Brahms' "Rinaldo" and Bach's "Birthday" and "Coffee" cantatas are not considered to be oratorios. But in fact Bach's Passions are oratorios. Another difference is that usually (but not always) an Oratorio is structured in several acts like an opera, while a cantata has a more free structure. A cantata originally is meant to be performed during a church service (a Protestant equivalent of the Catholic Mass settings in music), the oratorio is essentially a theatrically structured sermon in music.