

Handel



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George Frideric Handel was a defining figure of the late Baroque era, shaping its music for the theatre in much the same way J.S. Bach dominated the writing of music for use in church. Perhaps, best known for bringing the oratorio form to an English-speaking audience with masterworks, such as *Messiah*, Handel also had a distinguished career, as a composer of Italian operas, and furthermore found time to influence the development of orchestral music by writing, such works as the "Water Music" and "Music for the Royal Fireworks". Donald Burrows's new biography relates Handel's life and his music, devoting particular attention to two crucial junctures in Handel's development: his transition from a church-trained musician in Germany to a successful opera composer in London, and the gradual transformation of his theatre career from opera to oratorio, some thirty years later. In the oratorio form, as Burrows demonstrates, Handel was able to combine the techniques of large-scale construction and of aria writing that he had developed in his operas with an experience of choral music that went back to his earliest training as a church organist. The result was music that succeeds to this day in capturing the imagination of a vast audience. The last half-century has seen Handel take a major place in modern musical scholarship. This book takes into account not only recent knowledge of historical sources and significant studies of Handel's major works, but also research on Handel's 'borrowing'

practices, his habit of using the existing musical ideas of other composers, as well as his own. Yet, Handel remains unsurpassed as one of the greatest compositional architects in the history of Western music, with a sure instinct for both balance and originality in the final result. In this insightful study, Donald Burrows brings to life not only the glory of Handel's artistry, but also his sometimes elusive personality and the flavour of the times and places in which he lived.

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