

PART VII SCIENCE AND SPLENDOR: THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

Chapter 22 Two Masters of Baroque Music: Handel and Bach

1. The seventeenth and eighteenth centuries included a number of luminaries in the musical realm from Italy, Germany, Spain, France, and England.
2. The two who rise above the others are Johann Sebastian Bach and George Frederick Handel.

I. George Frederick Handel (1685–1759): *Messiah*

1. Handel was born in Germany, worked in Italy, and eventually emigrated to London.
2. Handel was best known for his operas but his most enduring work is his oratorio *Messiah*.
3. No other work has captured the sincere affection of the English-speaking world more completely.
4. It is a holiday favorite at both Christmas and Easter.
5. *Messiah* is a monumental work, a superb pinnacle of artistic creation that speaks to modern ears with the same honesty of religious expression that it did when it was composed 250 years ago.

II. Johann Sebastian Bach (1685–1750): *Christmas Oratorio* and *Tocatta and Fugue in D Minor*

1. Bach spent his entire life within sixty miles of his birthplace.
2. A virtuoso organist, he saw few of his works published in his lifetime.
3. Great composers who followed him helped keep his music alive.
4. For the last 27 years of his life, he was a Lutheran musician in Leipzig.
5. In 1743 he composed a mammoth work in six parts, *The Christmas Oratorio*.
6. The oratorio is a collection of biblical texts and poetic meditations, underscored by 64 separate poet musical movements.