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Hey there and welcome to episode 63 of Busy Kids Love Music, a podcast for music loving families. I'm Carly Seifert, the creator of Busy Kids Do Piano, and I'm so happy you're joining me today.

It's been awhile on the podcast since we've done a composer series, where we spend three episodes really digging into the life and works of a famous composer. Today we're going to start our first composer series of 2022 and learn about the life of Baroque composer George Frideric Handel.

Now we've discussed Handel's most famous work – the Messiah – in a previous podcast, which I will link to in the show notes, but today we're going to learn more about the composer himself.

Handel was born in Germany in 1685. His father was a barber – and a surgeon. At an early age, Handel demonstrated musical talent and began to study the harpsichord and organ. Already by the young age of 9, he was composing.

Handel's father died when Handel was just 11, and he had always wanted Handel to be a lawyer. Handel enrolled at a university and studied law for a year to fulfill his father's wishes...but he was very unhappy, and decided to pursue his dreams of becoming a musician instead.

Handel took a job as an organist for a local cathedral, but eventually moved to Hamburg where he took a job as a violinist and harpsichordist in the orchestra of the opera-house. It was here that he began composing opera.

Because he wanted to learn more about composing opera, he spent several years traveling to Italy, which was the home of opera during this time. It was in Italy that he connected with many of the greatest Italian musicians of the day, and composed many of his own works – including two operas, solo compositions for vocalists, and Latin church music. His opera *Agrippina* put him on the map

when it opened with great success in Venice in 1710.

Handel's mastery of composing in the Italian opera style made him famous throughout Europe, and he was appointed Kapellmeister – or music director – the elector of Hanover, who was to eventually become King George I of England.

The elector gave Handel leave to travel to England and premiere his operas there. He impressed Queen Anne, who gave him an annual allowance. Upon Queen Anne's death, the elector George Louis became King George of England, doubling Handel's salary as he now became the director of music for the king!

In 1727, Handel became a British subject, or citizen, which enabled him to be appointed a composer of the Chapel Royal, allowing him to continue to compose many works. He continued to compose many operas until 1741, when opera began to lose much of its popularity in England. The English didn't like being entertained in an unintelligible language sung by artists of whose morals they disapproved. Oratorio became increasingly popular. We've talked about oratorios on the podcast in several episodes – but they are just large musical works for solo voices, a choir and the orchestra, that typically dramatize a story from the Bible. It was during this time that Handel composed his greatest oratorio, Messiah. This was a smart business move – Handel would have lost his audience in England who would have turned away in moral outrage from the Italian opera, but were quite open to listening to a moral tale from the Bible. Towards the end of his life, Handel began to experience trouble with his vision, and died in 1759 at the age of 74. He is buried in Poets' Corner of Westminster Abbey.

As I mentioned before, Handel composed during the Baroque period of music. Handel and Johann Sebastian Bach are typically considered to be the greatest composers of the Baroque era. Much of Handel's music was written for vocalists – both for choruses and for soloists. His compositions include 42 operas, 25 oratorios, more than 120 cantatas, trios and duets, and numerous arias, odes, sonatas and organ concertos.

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Many great composers who came after him – such as Beethoven and Mozart – held him in high esteem and wished to achieve the things he did in his career.

In our next two episodes, we'll be digging deeper into some of Handel's most well-known works, but if you'd like to get a bit of a broad overview of some of Handel's famous compositions, check out the curated playlist I've put together for you on YouTube. You'll find the link to the playlist at busykidsdopiano.com/podcast/63, along with this episode's show notes and a link to a previous episode that we did about Handel's Messiah. Again, you can find that at busykidsdopiano.com/podcast/63

Thanks so much for joining me today to learn a little bit about the life of George Frideric Handel. I look forward to learning more about his music with you in our next episode of Busy Kids Love Music, which airs in two weeks. Bye for now!