

Composer & Musical World — Teacher Answer Key

George Frideric Handel — Parts I–III

Student: Eric

Course: Cambridge International AS Level Music 9483

Exam: 2027

Composer: George Frideric Handel

Period: Baroque

Cambridge importance: Section A — Compositional Techniques and Performance Practice

PART I — COMPOSER IDENTITY

Full name

George Frideric Handel

German birth name: **Georg Friedrich Händel**

After settling in Britain, the Anglicised spelling **George Frideric Handel** became standard.

Born / Died

Born: 23 February 1685

Died: 14 April 1759

Age at death: 74

Place of birth: Halle, Duchy of Magdeburg, Brandenburg-Prussia; now Halle (Saale), Germany.

Place of death: London, Great Britain.

He was buried in **Westminster Abbey, London**. ([GF Handel](#))

Nationality / Cultural Identity

This deserves a more sophisticated answer than simply writing "German."

Teacher model answer:

Handel was German-born and received his early musical education in the German-speaking world. His career then became strongly international: he worked in Hamburg, spent formative years in Italy, served briefly at the Hanoverian court and eventually settled permanently in London. He became a naturalised British subject in 1727. His musical language therefore combines German contrapuntal traditions, Italian operatic and instrumental styles, and the musical culture of eighteenth-century Britain. ([GF Handel](#))

ERIC SHOULD REMEMBER:

German-born → Italy → Hanover → London → British citizen

That geographical journey is one of the easiest ways for him to remember how Handel developed.

Primary Musical Period

- ☐ Medieval
- ☐ Renaissance
- ☒ **Baroque**
- ☐ Classical
- ☐ Romantic
- ☐ Impressionist
- ☐ Expressionist
- ☐ Modernist
- ☐ Atonal
- ☐ Serialist
- ☐ Contemporary

Period: Late Baroque.

Handel was born in **1685**, the same year as **J. S. Bach** and **Domenico Scarlatti**.

That is a wonderful date for Eric to remember:

1685 = Handel + Bach + Scarlatti

Primary Genres / Styles

We should know that Handel was **not simply an oratorio composer**.

Major genres include:

Italian opera seria • English oratorio • anthem • cantata • concerto grosso • organ concerto • orchestral suite • chamber music • keyboard music • sacred music

His career moved through several of these genres according to where he lived, his patrons and changing London audiences. ([GF Handel](#))

Teacher emphasis

If we only write:

"Handel wrote Messiah."

that is far too narrow for AS Level.

We should eventually understand Handel as simultaneously a:

theatre composer + church/sacred composer + instrumental composer + performer + musical entrepreneur.

Primary Instruments

Organ

Handel was renowned as an organist and improviser.

Harpsichord

Important to his work as a keyboard performer, composer and musical director.

Violin

He also played violin, including during his early professional period in Hamburg. ([GF Handel](#))

Major Occupations

- ☒ **Composer**
- ☒ **Performer**
- ☒ **Musical director**
- ☒ **Organist / keyboard player**
- ☒ **Opera entrepreneur / impresario**

- ☐ Primarily teacher
- ☐ Primarily theorist

Teacher note

The word **entrepreneur** is important.

Handel wasn't simply sitting in a room waiting for commissions. He became deeply involved in London's commercial theatrical world, including directing the Royal Academy of Music, recruiting singers and producing Italian opera. ([GF Handel](#))

That will later help us understand **why Handel's musical style is so theatrical**.

PART II — FAMILY & EARLY INFLUENCES

The student sheet asks about parents, social background, first encounters with music, teachers, education and childhood influences.

Parents / Guardians

Father

Georg Händel (1622–1697)

He was a **barber-surgeon** and served important courtly clients.

He did **not initially want Handel to pursue music professionally**.

Mother

Dorothea Taust (1651–1730)

She came from a Lutheran clerical family and was more supportive of her son's musical development.

Teacher point

This creates an excellent biography question for Eric:

Was Handel born into a professional musical family?

Answer: No.

Unlike composers whose fathers were professional musicians, Handel did not inherit an established family music profession.

Economic / Social Background

Comfortable professional/bourgeois household rather than a hereditary professional-musician household.

His father's occupation connected the family with respectable civic and court circles.

Why this matters

We should understand that becoming a professional musician was a **career decision**, not simply the continuation of the family profession.

Where Did Handel Grow Up?

Halle, in the German-speaking Protestant world of central Europe.

This environment exposed him to **Lutheran church music and German musical traditions**.

How Was He Introduced to Music?

Accounts of Handel's childhood emphasize that he showed unusually strong musical ability from a young age despite his father's resistance to a musical career.

His talent eventually led to formal musical instruction.

Teacher caution

There are colourful stories about the young Handel secretly practising a **clavichord in an attic**.

You can tell Eric the story because it is famous, but I would label it:

Traditional biographical anecdote — not something to treat as an unquestionably documented fact.

This is useful for teaching the difference between **historical evidence and composer mythology**.

First Instruments

Primarily:

Keyboard / organ

He subsequently developed broader practical musical experience, including violin.

Important Teacher

Friedrich Wilhelm Zachow

1663–1712

This is the teacher we really need to remember.

Zachow was organist at the **Marktkirche in Halle**.

Under Zachow, Handel encountered:

counterpoint

harmony

keyboard technique

organ playing

composition

German sacred music

different national musical styles

Why Zachow matters

Zachow helped give Handel the technical foundation that later allowed him to absorb Italian and other European styles without losing his strong contrapuntal foundation.

Memory connection

ZACHOW → COUNTERPOINT → HANDEL

Formal Musical Education

Handel's early formal musical education centred on **Zachow** rather than a modern conservatory system.

His training was practical and broad: keyboard, composition, contrapuntal writing and exposure to repertoire.

Non-Musical Education

This is a fascinating part of Handel's story.

University of Halle

Handel enrolled at the **University of Halle in 1702** and studied law, following his father's wishes.

However, music quickly became his professional direction.

We should remember

LAW → MUSIC

This gives him a useful biographical hook.

Early Musical Influences

We can divide them into four layers.

1. German musical tradition

Counterpoint, organ music and Lutheran sacred traditions.

2. Zachow

Formal compositional and keyboard foundation.

3. Hamburg opera

Professional theatre and Italian-style opera.

4. Italy

Corelli, Alessandro Scarlatti, Domenico Scarlatti and the Italian vocal/instrumental tradition became major influences during Handel's Italian years. Handel's Italian travels brought him into contact with numerous leading musicians and patrons. ([GF Handel](#))

That creates another excellent memory sequence:

 **Germany = FOUNDATION**

 **Hamburg = THEATRE**

 **Italy = STYLE**

 **London = CAREER**

PART III — HANDEL'S LIFE IN THREE ACTS

Your worksheet divides each composer into **Early** → **Middle** → **Late**, not just asking what happened but **how the musical language changed**.

For Handel, this division works extremely well.

ACT I — EARLY LIFE

1685–1710

HALLE → HAMBURG → ITALY → HANOVER

Halle: 1685–1703

Handel grows up in Halle.

Studies with Zachow.

Develops as:

organist → keyboard player → contrapuntist → composer

Briefly studies law.

Hamburg: 1703–1706

This is a major turning point.

Handel moves to **Hamburg**, one of Germany's important centres of public opera.

He works in the opera orchestra, initially as a violinist.

Now he is surrounded by:

singers

actors

orchestra

opera composers

theatrical production

commercial audiences

His first opera:

***Almira* — HWV 1 Premiered: 8 January 1705**

It was performed at Hamburg's Theater am Gänsemarkt. ([GF Handel](#))

Why this matters

Handel moves from **student/church musician** → **professional theatrical composer**. (*watch a clip of this opera*)

Italy: 1706–1710

This may be the single most important developmental journey of his early career.

He travels through major Italian musical centres including:

Florence • Rome • Naples • Venice

He encounters major musicians including:

Arcangelo Corelli
Alessandro Scarlatti
Domenico Scarlatti
Bernardo Pasquini

and others. ([GF Handel](#))

He composes large numbers of Italian cantatas as well as sacred and theatrical music; the Handel chronology attributes roughly **100 chamber cantatas** to his Italian period. ([GF Handel](#))

Representative Early Work

***Dixit Dominus*, HWV 232**

1707

What should we hear?

vigorous counterpoint
virtuosic vocal writing
rhythmic energy
dramatic contrasts
Italian influence combined with contrapuntal command

Teacher question

What does Handel bring together in his early mature style?

Model answer

Handel combines the contrapuntal foundation of his German training with the dramatic, melodic and virtuosic characteristics he encountered in Italian music.

That's a much more useful AS-level answer than simply:

"Handel was Baroque."

ACT II — MIDDLE LIFE

approximately 1710–1738

HANOVER → LONDON

In 1710 Handel becomes **Kapellmeister to the Elector of Hanover**.

But London quickly becomes the centre of his career.

His opera:

Rinaldo

premieres in London in **1711**.

It becomes a major success and was Handel's first opera specifically composed for London.
([GF Handel](#))

London

Handel increasingly settles in Britain.

In **1719**, he becomes musical director of the newly founded **Royal Academy of Music**, created to establish Italian opera in London. ([GF Handel](#))

Important operas include:

Radamisto
Giulio Cesare
Tamerlano
Rodelinda

Brook Street

In **1723**, Handel moves into **25 Brook Street, London**.

It remains his home for the rest of his life. ([GF Handel](#))

British Citizenship

1727

Handel becomes a **naturalised British subject**. ([GF Handel](#))

This is why describing him simply as "German" misses an important part of his identity.

Coronation Anthems

For the coronation of **George II**, Handel composes four anthems.

The most famous:

Zadok the Priest

This became one of his most enduring ceremonial works and has remained associated with subsequent British coronations. ([GF Handel](#))

Listening clue:

Notice the enormous dramatic strategy:

long orchestral preparation → sustained expectation → explosive choral entrance

That is Handel the **theatrical dramatist**, even in ceremonial sacred music.

Musical Language During the Middle Period

Now Handel is a mature international composer.

His musical language increasingly demonstrates:

Italian vocal lyricism

German contrapuntal craft

French overture/dance influence

English choral traditions
dramatic pacing
clear harmonic direction
sequences
strong cadences
ornamentation
virtuosic writing

Representative Middle Work

Giulio Cesare in Egitto

1724

Excellent choice because it represents Handel at the height of his London opera career.

We should eventually hear:

recitative → aria relationships
da capo aria
ornamentation
virtuosic vocal writing
characterisation through music

ACT III — LATE LIFE

approximately 1739–1759

This is where Handel's career changes significantly.

Italian opera in London becomes increasingly difficult commercially.

Instead of disappearing, Handel **adapts**.

English-language **oratorio** becomes increasingly central to his work.

Messiah

1741

Composed in 1741 and first performed in **Dublin in 1742**.

But Eric should **not reduce Handel to Messiah**.

Use *Messiah* as the doorway into the much larger world of Handelian oratorio.

Other important late works include:

Samson

Belshazzar

Judas Maccabaeus

Solomon

Theodora

Jephtha

Handel's later output encompasses biblical dramatic oratorios, secular dramatic works and patriotic concert works. ([GF Handel](#))

Personal Circumstances

Handel suffered increasing problems with his eyesight late in life.

Eventually he became effectively blind.

Yet performances of his music continued, and he remained an important figure in London's musical life.

He also developed a significant charitable association with London's **Foundling Hospital**, including benefit performances connected with *Messiah*. ([GF Handel](#))

Death

14 April 1759 — London

He was buried in:

Westminster Abbey — Poets' Corner

His public stature was enormous.

Remarkably, only a year after his death, John Mainwaring published a biography of Handel—an exceptionally early example of a full book devoted to the life and work of a composer. ([GE Handel](#))

Representative Late Work

Jephtha, HWV 70

1751

One of Handel's final great oratorios.

Why choose it?

It lets Eric encounter late Handel beyond *Messiah* and connects biography with musical expression because Handel's deteriorating eyesight affected him during its composition.

TEACHER MEMORY MAP — HANDEL'S LIFE

This is what I would actually have Eric memorize:

HALLE

Childhood → Zachow → organ → counterpoint → law

↓

HAMBURG

Opera orchestra → theatre → *Almira*

↓

ITALY

Corelli + Scarlatti → Italian vocal/instrumental style → *Dixit Dominus*

↓

HANOVER



LONDON

Rinaldo → Italian opera → Royal Academy → British citizen → *Giulio Cesare* → *Zadok*



LATER LONDON

English oratorio → *Messiah* → *Samson* → *Solomon* → *Theodora* → *Jephtha*



1759

Death → Westminster Abbey

The most important teacher answer

If you ask:

Why is Handel historically important?

a strong developing AS answer would be:

Handel was one of the major composers of the late Baroque. His international career allowed him to combine German contrapuntal training, Italian vocal and instrumental styles, French stylistic influences and English musical traditions. He became particularly important to London's operatic and concert life, first through Italian opera and later through the development of English oratorio. His music demonstrates dramatic expression, memorable melody, strong tonal organization, contrapuntal skill and an acute understanding of voices and instruments. His ability to adapt his musical language to different performers, audiences and cultural environments helped give his music an enduring international legacy.

“That's the level of understanding I want us aiming for—not merely memorising **1685–1759**.”

PART IV — THE WORLD AROUND THE COMPOSER

Handel lived from **1685–1759**, during the late Baroque and early Enlightenment.

Historical Timeline

Area	What was happening during Handel's lifetime?
Politics / Government	European monarchies remained powerful. Handel lived during the reigns of British monarchs including Queen Anne, George I and George II. Britain was becoming a major European and colonial power.
Wars / Revolutions	War of the Spanish Succession, Jacobite uprisings, wars involving Britain, France, Austria and other European powers.
Society / Class	Aristocratic patronage remained important, but urban commercial society was expanding. London had a wealthy audience able to support opera, concerts and public entertainment.
Science	Isaac Newton's scientific ideas transformed understanding of physics and astronomy. Scientific inquiry and empirical thinking expanded.
Technology	Printing and engraving allowed music to circulate more widely. Instrument construction developed, and public theatres became increasingly sophisticated.
Philosophy	Enlightenment thinking increasingly emphasized reason, inquiry, individual thought and public debate.
Religion	Protestantism strongly shaped British public and sacred culture. Handel also grew up within the German Lutheran world.
Literature	Jonathan Swift, Alexander Pope, Daniel Defoe and John Dryden were important literary figures around Handel's world.

Education Universities, churches and private education remained important, while literacy and print culture expanded among the urban middle classes.

Teacher emphasis

Handel's career reflects a major change in the professional musician's world:

COURT + CHURCH PATRONAGE

became increasingly joined by:

THEATRE + TICKET-BUYING PUBLIC + COMMERCIAL CONCERT + PUBLISHING

Handel is especially useful for teaching the rise of the **professional musical entrepreneur**.

PART V — THE FIVE ARTS CONNECTION

MUSIC

Important composers alive at the same time

1. **Johann Sebastian Bach** — 1685–1750
2. **Georg Philipp Telemann** — 1681–1767
3. **Antonio Vivaldi** — 1678–1741
4. **Domenico Scarlatti** — 1685–1757
5. **Jean-Philippe Rameau** — 1683–1764

Other useful names:

Arcangelo Corelli
Alessandro Scarlatti
François Couperin

Relationships / influences

Handel encountered major Italian composers and musicians during his years in Italy, including **Corelli and the Scarlattis**.

His mature language combines:

German counterpoint
Italian vocal melody and virtuosity
French overture and dance traditions
English choral traditions

VISUAL ARTS

Important artists / movements

Useful contemporaries include:

Canaletto
William Hogarth
Antoine Watteau

Movement

Late Baroque → Rococo

Musical connection

A possible student answer:

Baroque visual art and Handel's music both frequently use grandeur, dramatic contrast, ornamentation, movement and strong rhetorical effects.

Teacher caution

This is an **analogy across art forms**, not evidence that Handel directly imitated a particular painter.

LITERARY ARTS

Important writers include:

Alexander Pope
Jonathan Swift
John Dryden
John Milton

Literature matters directly to Handel because he repeatedly set important literary and biblical texts.

Examples include:

L'Allegro, il Penseroso ed il Moderato

and

A Song for St Cecilia's Day

based on literary sources.



THEATRE / DRAMA

This section is extremely important for Handel.

He spent much of his career writing:

Italian opera

and later dramatic:

English oratorio

Important theatrical concepts

recitative

aria

da capo aria

chorus

dramatic pacing

characterisation

Teacher principle

Even when Handel writes sacred or instrumental music, his sense of **drama** often remains audible.



DANCE

Handel's instrumental and theatrical music contains many dance-derived forms.

Students should know:

minuet
gavotte
bourrée
gigue
sarabande
allemande

Dance rhythm contributes strongly to Baroque phrasing, metre and character.

PART VI — THE COMPOSER'S MUSICAL DNA

This worksheet asks students to describe the composer through melody, harmony, rhythm, texture, form, instrumentation, dynamics and timbre.

Melody

- ☒ Diatonic
- ☒ Lyrical
- ☒ Sequential
- ☒ Ornamented
- ☒ Motivic
- ☒ Sometimes highly virtuosic
- ☒ Strong vocal character

Teacher answer

Handel frequently writes **broad, memorable melodic ideas**.

His melodies may be:

- highly lyrical
 - sequential
 - ornamented
 - rhetorically dramatic
 - virtuosic in vocal and instrumental writing
-

Harmony & Tonality

- ☒ Major/minor tonality
- ☒ Functional harmony
- ☒ Circle-of-fifths progression
- ☒ Sequential harmony
- ☒ Suspensions
- ☒ Dominant-tonic cadences
- ☒ Related-key modulation

Typical harmony includes:

I – IV – V – I

with:

- dominant sevenths
- first and second inversions
- secondary tonicisations
- relative minor/major
- dominant and subdominant modulation
- suspensions
- pedal notes

Cambridge's 2027 guide identifies suspensions, circle-of-fifths sequences and related-key modulation as important features in the set concerto. ([Cambridge International](#))

Rhythm & Metre

- ☒ Regular metre
- ☒ Dotted rhythm
- ☒ Compound metre
- ☒ Syncopation
- ☒ Dance-derived patterns
- ☒ Repeated rhythmic motives
- ☒ Motoric passages

The set work includes:

- lilting compound metre
- syncopation
- off-beat emphasis

- rhythmic sequence

especially in the third movement. ([Cambridge International](#))

Texture

- ☒ Homophonic
- ☒ Polyphonic
- ☒ Contrapuntal
- ☒ Imitative
- ☒ Melody-and-accompaniment
- ☒ Solo ↔ tutti contrast

Teacher answer

Handel moves easily between:

strong chordal/homophonic writing

and

complex imitation and counterpoint.

That flexibility is central to his dramatic style.

Form / Structure

Common forms include:

ritornello

da capo aria

binary

French overture

fugal structures

concerto movements

dance forms

choral forms

Instrumentation / Orchestration

Handel writes effectively for:

voices

strings

oboes

bassoons

trumpets

horns

timpani

organ

continuo

His music often achieves dramatic impact through:

solo vs ensemble

instrumental colour

register

texture

rather than relying only on written dynamic markings.

Dynamics & Expression

Expression is shaped through:

- texture
- harmonic tension
- register
- orchestration
- repetition
- sequence

- suspensions
 - solo/tutti contrast
 - ornamentation
-

Timbre / Sound World

Model answer

Handel's sound world is grand, dramatic, clear and richly contrasted. Strong melodic ideas and functional harmony are combined with counterpoint, brilliant instrumental colour and powerful contrasts between soloists and larger ensembles.

PART VII — HOW DO I RECOGNIZE HANDEL?

Your worksheet specifically asks for five clues and a musical fingerprint.

Clue 1

Broad, memorable melodic writing

Clue 2

Strong functional harmony and sequences

Clue 3

Dramatic solo-versus-ensemble contrasts

Clue 4

Mixture of homophonic grandeur and contrapuntal writing

Clue 5

Italianate melody combined with German contrapuntal strength

Musical Fingerprint

I think this could be Handel because I hear a strong, memorable melody, clear tonal harmony and sequences, dramatic contrast between solo and ensemble, and a mixture of homophonic and contrapuntal textures.

Teacher warning

Students should not identify an unknown extract as Handel simply because it is Baroque.

A stronger answer is:

“This is likely late-Baroque because...”

followed by **specific musical evidence**.

PART VIII — TOP 10 WORKS

#	Composition	Date	Genre	Why Important
1	Organ Concerto in F major, HWV 295, “The Cuckoo and the Nightingale”	1739	Organ concerto	Cambridge set work
2	<i>Messiah</i> , HWV 56	1741	Oratorio	Handel's most famous oratorio
3	<i>Giulio Cesare</i> , HWV 17	1724	Opera	Major example of Handelian opera seria
4	<i>Rinaldo</i> , HWV 7	1711	Opera	First opera Handel composed for London

5	<i>Water Music</i>	171 7	Orchestral suites	Major ceremonial/outdoor orchestral work
6	<i>Music for the Royal Fireworks</i>	174 9	Orchestral suite	Ceremonial public music
7	<i>Zadok the Priest</i> , HWV 258	172 7	Coronation anthem	Major British ceremonial work
8	<i>Dixit Dominus</i> , HWV 232	170 7	Sacred choral work	Major early Italian-period work
9	<i>Israel in Egypt</i> , HWV 54	173 9	Oratorio	Large-scale choral writing
10	<i>Concerti Grossi</i> , Op. 6	173 9	Instrumental concertos	Major orchestral collection

The Cambridge set concerto was completed on **2 April 1739**, first performed on **4 April 1739** alongside *Israel in Egypt*, and published in 1740. ([GF Handel](#))

PART IX — MASTER COMPOSITION ANALYSIS

Cambridge Set Work

Organ Concerto in F major, HWV 295

“The Cuckoo and the Nightingale”

Genre: Organ concerto

Key: F major

Completed: 2 April 1739

First performed: 4 April 1739, King's Theatre, Haymarket, London

Performed with: *Israel in Egypt*

Published: 1740 ([GF Handel](#))

Why is it called “The Cuckoo and the Nightingale”?

The nickname comes from the **bird-call motives** in the second movement. ([GF Handel](#))

Important historical point

Handel himself was a celebrated organist and improviser.

The concerto therefore functioned partly as:

composition + performance showcase

Movement I

General character

Allegro / energetic concerto opening

The movement is based partly on material from Handel's earlier **Trio Sonata in F major, Op. 5 No. 6, HWV 401**. ([GF Handel](#))

Important features

- ritornello-like alternation
- organ solo episodes
- orchestral tutti
- sequences
- related-key modulation
- imitation
- functional harmony

Teacher emphasis

Students should understand:

TUTTI = structural anchor

SOLO ORGAN = expansion / virtuosity / development

Movement II

“The Cuckoo and the Nightingale”

This is the movement that gives the concerto its nickname.

Musical idea

The organ imitates stylised bird calls.

The bird material should not be treated as literal scientific transcription.

It is **musical representation**.

Listening focus

Ask students to identify:

- repeated-note cuckoo-like calls
- more elaborate nightingale-like figures
- dialogue between solo and ensemble
- repetition
- ornamentation
- imitation

Cross-arts connection

This is also a useful precursor to the later Cambridge Section B theme:

The Natural World

although this concerto belongs to Section A.

Organ Solo / Improvisation

Between the second and third movements Handel indicates:

“Organo ad libitum”

meaning the organist may improvise.

Cambridge notes that Handel himself was famous for highly virtuosic improvisation. ([Cambridge International](#))

Why this matters

Students need to understand that Baroque performance could include significant **performer creativity**.

The score was not always the complete musical event.

Movement III — Larghetto

Key

D minor — relative minor

Character

Slower, lyrical and pastoral.

Cambridge identifies a **siciliano influence**, heard through:

- compound metre
- dotted rhythm
- minor key
- lilting character

and notes the traditional pastoral associations of the siciliano. ([Cambridge International](#))

Texture

The movement frequently alternates:

tutti / continuo

with

solo organ

Other important features

syncopation

off-beat emphasis

contrary motion

ornamental decoration

tonic/dominant relationships

Ending

Cambridge identifies a **Phrygian cadence** linking toward the next movement:

IVb → V

in a minor-key context. ([Cambridge International](#))

That is an excellent advanced Baroque-harmony example.

Movement IV — Allegro

Like Movement I, this movement also reuses material from the earlier **Trio Sonata Op. 5 No. 6**. ([Cambridge International](#))

Structure

tutti → organ episode → tutti → organ episode

Important features

- fugal elements
- close imitation
- repetition with alteration
- modulation
- ascending and descending sequences
- suspensions
- circle-of-fifths progression

Cambridge specifically identifies a **circle of fifths** and increased harmonic rhythm as important features. ([Cambridge International](#))

Harmony / Pitch Organisation

Students should recognize:

F major tonic

D minor relative minor

C major dominant region

plus movement through related keys.

Important devices:

perfect cadences

imperfect cadences

Phrygian cadence

circle of fifths

suspensions

sequences

Melody

Characteristic techniques include:

- sequence
 - imitation
 - repetition
 - ornamentation
 - bird-call motives
 - thematic borrowing and transformation
-

Texture

Students should recognise:

organ solo ↔ orchestral tutti

homophony ↔ imitation

contrary motion

fugal entries

PART X — SCORE DETECTIVE

This worksheet asks students to choose three significant passages and explain both what happens and why it matters.

Passage 1 — Movement II: Bird Calls

What happens?

The organ presents stylised bird-call motifs.

Why important?

This gives the concerto its nickname and demonstrates:

musical representation + imitation + performer virtuosity

Passage 2 — Movement III: Siciliano

What happens?

D minor, lilting compound metre, dotted rhythm, alternating organ and tutti.

Why important?

Demonstrates:

contrast of mood

and important Baroque associations with the **pastoral siciliano**.

Passage 3 — Movement IV: Circle of Fifths

What happens?

Sequential harmonic movement travels through related keys, using suspensions and increased harmonic rhythm.

Why important?

Excellent example of:

Baroque harmonic propulsion

and one of the harmonic techniques Cambridge expects students to recognize. ([Cambridge International](#))

PART XI — PLAY IT

Your workbook asks students to demonstrate a composer's musical language physically.

At piano/keyboard or their preferred instrument, students can demonstrate:

1. Bird-call motif

Create a repeated two-note idea.

2. Sequence

Take a short motif and repeat it at different pitch levels.

3. Circle of fifths

For example:

Dm → Gm → C → F → B $\flat$ → E diminished/A → Dm

simplified as appropriate.

4. Suspension

Demonstrate:

4–3 suspension

5. Solo/Tutti Contrast

One student/hand plays a solo gesture, followed by a fuller chordal response.

6. Siciliano

Create a lyrical melody in compound metre using dotted rhythm.

PART XII — COMPOSE LIKE HANDEL

The worksheet asks students to choose three characteristics and compose **8–16 measures** inspired by them.

Suggested three characteristics

1. **Sequence**
2. **Functional harmony**
3. **Solo/tutti contrast**

Student brief

Compose an 8–16-bar Baroque concerto-style passage for keyboard and ensemble, or simulate the two groups at the piano.

Must include:

- clear key
- identifiable motif
- one sequence
- one cadence
- one suspension or imitation
- contrast between solo and ensemble material

Alternative Natural-World challenge

Create two contrasting musical motives representing two animals or natural sounds, inspired by Handel's bird-call technique without copying his material.

PART XIII — INFLUENCE MAP

Who influenced Handel?

Friedrich Wilhelm Zachow

Early German training and counterpoint

Arcangelo Corelli

Italian instrumental tradition

Alessandro Scarlatti

Italian vocal and operatic tradition

Italian opera

Major influence on melody and drama

French style

Overtures, dances and courtly traditions

German Lutheran tradition

Counterpoint and sacred background

HANDEL → LATER MUSIC

Possible map:

Zachow / Corelli / Scarlatti / European Baroque

↓

HANDEL



English choral tradition → later oratorio → ceremonial choral music → concert culture

His influence extends far beyond eighteenth-century England.

Teachers

Friedrich Wilhelm Zachow — most important early teacher.

Students

Handel is less important historically as the head of a formal school of composition than as a:

composer + performer + director + public musical figure.

Collaborators / Professional Network

Important categories include:

- Italian singers
 - London theatre managers
 - instrumentalists
 - librettists
 - royal/court patrons
 - church and charitable institutions
-

Patrons / Institutions

Important associations:

Hanoverian court

Royal Academy of Music

London theatres

British monarchy

Foundling Hospital

PART XIV — THEN vs NOW

What did Handel inherit?

- major/minor tonality
- basso continuo
- counterpoint
- Italian opera
- French overture
- concerto tradition
- Lutheran/German sacred writing

What did he change?

He fused international traditions into a highly personal public style.

He also helped establish:

English oratorio

as a major concert genre.

What did he leave?

A lasting tradition of:

oratorio

choral grandeur

ceremonial music

organ concerto

dramatic vocal writing

Can we hear his influence today?

Yes, particularly in:

- choral societies
 - oratorio traditions
 - ceremonial music
 - concert-hall sacred music
 - historically informed Baroque performance
-

PART XV — COMPOSER COMPARISON

Handel vs Telemann

This is the most useful immediate comparison because both are Cambridge Section A composers.

Element	Handel	Telemann
Period	Baroque	Baroque
Nationality/background	German-born; international; British career	German
Melody	Broad, dramatic, vocal, memorable	Elegant, flexible, dance-like
Harmony	Strongly tonal, sequential	Strongly tonal, sequential

Rhythm	Dramatic, concerto and dance influence	Strong dance influence
Texture	Homophony + counterpoint	Homophony + counterpoint
Instrumentation	Vocal/orchestral brilliance; organ important	Colourful wind/string combinations
Italian influence	Extremely strong	Strong
French influence	Important	Extremely prominent in suite writing
Cambridge work	Organ concerto	Orchestral suite
Performance focus	Improvisation, solo organ, concerto dialogue	articulation, dance, ornamentation, orchestral colour
Recognition	dramatic melody + solo/tutti + sequences	dance + colourful instrumentation + stylistic variety

Most Important Similarity

Both composers synthesize several European Baroque styles and use functional harmony, sequence, ornamentation and contrasting textures.

Most Important Difference

Handel's Cambridge work centres on the virtuoso relationship between solo organ and orchestra, while Telemann's focuses on the orchestral suite, dance character and contrasting instrumental colours.

PART XVI — 60-SECOND IDENTIFICATION CHALLENGE

Possible Composer

George Frideric Handel

Period

Baroque

Possible Genre

Concerto / instrumental Baroque music

Evidence

Melody: clear, sequential, ornamented

Harmony: functional tonal harmony, related-key modulation

Rhythm: regular pulse, possible compound or dotted patterns

Texture: solo/tutti contrast and imitation

Instrumentation: organ with orchestra in the Cambridge set work

Form: concerto/ritornello principles

Model Conclusion

I believe this music is late Baroque and could be Handel because it uses clear functional harmony, sequences and strong cadences together with contrasting solo and tutti textures. The writing combines memorable melodic gestures with imitation and contrapuntal detail, and the prominent virtuoso organ is especially characteristic of Handel's organ-concerto style.

PART XVII — FINAL COMPOSER SUMMARY

Explain Handel in Exactly Five Sentences

1. George Frideric Handel was a German-born late-Baroque composer whose international career took him through Germany, Italy and Britain.
 2. His music combines German contrapuntal technique, Italian melody and virtuosity, French stylistic influences and English choral traditions.
 3. He became one of London's most important composers of opera, oratorio, instrumental and ceremonial music.
 4. His musical language is characterised by memorable melody, functional harmony, sequences, dramatic contrasts, counterpoint and effective orchestration.
 5. His operas, oratorios, concertos and ceremonial works helped make him one of the most influential composers of the eighteenth century.
-

Five Words That Define Handel

Dramatic | Melodic | Grand | International | Theatrical

Three Works Students Must Recognize

1. *Organ Concerto in F major, HWV 295*

Cambridge examination priority

2. *Messiah*

Major oratorio

3. *Giulio Cesare*

Major opera

For Cambridge preparation, however, the **set concerto must receive the deepest analytical attention.**

One Innovation / Contribution to Remember

Handel helped establish the English oratorio as a major public concert genre and developed the organ concerto as a vehicle for his own virtuoso performance and improvisation.

One Historical Connection to Remember

Handel's career shows how eighteenth-century music was moving beyond exclusive court patronage toward commercial theatres, public concerts and ticket-paying urban audiences.

One Five-Arts Connection

Handel's music is closely connected to theatre and literature because his operas and oratorios transform dramatic characters, stories and texts into musical rhetoric.

One Musical Feature to Demonstrate at the Piano or on their Choice Instrument.

Circle-of-fifths sequence

Students should be able to:

1. play a simple circle-of-fifths progression
 2. identify how the bass moves
 3. improvise a small melodic sequence above it
 4. explain why sequences create forward momentum
-

Final Question

Why Does Handel Matter to Music History?

Teacher Model Answer

Handel matters because he brought together several of the most important musical traditions of Baroque Europe. His German training gave him a strong contrapuntal foundation, while his years in Italy developed his command of melody, vocal writing and theatrical drama. In London he transformed these influences into an international style suited to opera, oratorio, instrumental music and major public occasions. His ability to write memorable melodies while controlling harmony, counterpoint, orchestration and large-scale dramatic structure helped his music remain central to the repertoire. His organ concertos are particularly important because they also reveal the eighteenth-century performer as improviser, virtuoso and composer rather than merely an interpreter of a fixed score.

CAMBRIDGE 9483 — HANDEL TEACHER QUICK KEY

Composer: George Frideric Handel

Dates: 1685–1759

Period: Baroque

Set work: *Organ Concerto in F major, HWV 295*

Nickname: *The Cuckoo and the Nightingale*

Completed: 2 April 1739

First performance: 4 April 1739

Key: F major

Genre: Organ concerto

Primary relationship: solo organ ↔ orchestra

Essential techniques: sequence, imitation, functional harmony, suspensions, circle of fifths, related-key modulation

Essential performance-practice issue: improvisation / **Organo ad libitum**

Natural-world element: stylised cuckoo and nightingale calls

Movement III: D minor siciliano influence

Movement IV: imitation, sequences, suspensions, circle-of-fifths movement ([GF Handel](#))

The one sentence students should remember

Handel combines dramatic melody, clear tonal harmony, contrapuntal craft and virtuoso solo writing within an international late-Baroque style.

PART XVIII — STUDY FOCUS CONNECTIONS

Study	Focus	Where can I hear this in this composer?
01	Motif & Development	Repeated bird-call motives in <i>Organ Concerto in F major, BWV 295</i> , along with sequence, imitation and motivic repetition.
02	Harmony & Structure	Clear functional harmony, circle-of-fifths progressions, suspensions, perfect/imperfect cadences and movement between tonic, dominant and related keys.
03	Contrasting Texture	Solo organ against tutti orchestra; homophonic passages contrasted with imitation and contrapuntal writing.
04	Pitch Cells / Chromatic Organisation	Handel is primarily tonal rather than pitch-cell based. Students can study short motifs and sequences as organised pitch material and compare this later with Ravel and Takemitsu.
05	Instrumentation	Solo organ contrasted with strings and continuo; orchestration highlights the difference between solo virtuosity and ensemble statements.
06	Form & Development	Ritornello-like organisation, solo episodes, recurring tutti material, sequences and contrapuntal development across movements.

Strongest Study Focus for This Composer:

Harmony & Structure

Composition Technique I Can Borrow:

Circle-of-fifths sequence combined with imitation and a clear cadence.

Musical Example:

Movement IV of *Organ Concerto in F major, BWV 295* — sequences, suspensions, imitation and circle-of-fifths movement.

How I Could Use It in My Own Composition:

I could create a short tonal motif, repeat it at different pitch levels, move through a circle-of-fifths sequence and use imitation between two instruments before resolving with a strong cadence.