

Chapter 2

Johann Sebastian Bach and Georg Friedrich Händel: The Economics of Late Baroque Market for Music



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Johann Sebastian Bach

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Georg Friedrich Händel

“Ich habe genug, ich habe den Heiland, das Hoffen der Frommen”

(“I have enough, I have the Saviour, the hope of Gentiles”)

J.S. Bach, Cantata Ich habe genug BWV 92

“Handel is become so arbitrary a prince, that the Town murmurs”

Letter received by the Earl of Essex in 1733

Introduction

Johann Sebastian Bach and Georg Friedrich Händel were two outstanding German composers born in 1685, who revolutionised the world of late Baroque music through a body of work of tremendous proportions. They admired one another but never met in person: although they twice had the opportunity to do so, on both occasions they were ultimately thwarted.¹ Curiously, by the time they died, both men had gone blind

¹ Their first opportunity to meet came in 1719, when Händel returned his birthplace of Halle. Bach, who greatly admired him as a musician, took a stagecoach from Köthen when he learned that Händel was in Halle, but by the time he arrived, Händel had already left. Ten years later, in 1729, the two

after being operated on by the same English doctor, John Taylor (Briceño-Iragorri 2012). However, their careers had taken very different directions: while one created music “for God”, the other composed for audiences.

Bach (1685–1750), who came from a long line of musicians, developed into a modest and “industrious craftsman”, operating within a local and traditional economy and always at the service of the aristocracy, the religious establishment and the municipal authorities. He never left Germany and travelled very little, as he had many children to support. A man of firm religious convictions, his work fell into relative obscurity after his death until it was “rediscovered” by Mendelssohn in the nineteenth century.

Händel (1685–1759), a bachelor without family ties, was independent, pragmatic and worldly. He represented a significant milestone in the development of the concept of the “free artist”, as he possessed a notable talent for entrepreneurship and even investment that enabled him to amass a significant fortune. He moved in wide yet select social circles, achieving considerable renown over the course of his life. Both the man and his music continued to be widely celebrated after his death. Händel was also cosmopolitan, multilingual and a great traveller: he began his career in Germany, continued his studies in Italy and eventually triumphed as a theatre impresario in England, which was then a dynamic market economy on the threshold of the Industrial Revolution.

In this study we will analyse the approaches taken by these two great Baroque musicians in their professional careers. They embraced two very different models, which had a decisive impact not only on their socio-economic status, but also on the genres they explored and their understanding of musical composition (section “[The Composers’ Professional Careers and Their Reflection in Financial and Musical Terms](#)”). These models also influenced the amount of social recognition they achieved, both in life and posthumously (section “[Public Recognition](#)”). First, however, we will briefly examine other contrasts (e.g. training, socio-economic context, lifestyle, travel, etc.) that will help us to better understand and place these two giants of music (section “[Works and Days](#)”).

Works and Days

Bach came from a long line of musicians that stretched back for six generations, from the late sixteenth century through to the nineteenth century.² His father, Johann Ambrosius, played a number of instruments and was employed as a musician by the municipal authorities of Eisenach. In line with his status as a craftsman, he had a

men had another chance to meet. Händel once again visited Halle, which was just four leagues from Leipzig, where Bach was living at the time. However, Bach had a fever, so he sent his eldest son, Wilhelm Friedemann, to invite Händel to Leipzig. Alas, Händel declined the invitation, saying that he was unable to travel to Leipzig (Andrés 2005, p. 263).

² For a detailed study on this subject, see Geiringer (1962) and Mai (2013).

medium level of income which he augmented by teaching students who boarded at his home. His approach to teaching was based on the continuous copying of scores and frequent instrument practice (Andrés 2005, p. 58). Consequently, Bach was fully immersed in a musical environment in which he was able to naturally acquire the rudiments of his training. He learnt to compose by copying and arranging the music of others. His family's long musical tradition would continue with Bach's own children: of the seven he had with his first wife, Maria Barbara (his second cousin), two of them—Wilhelm Friedemann and Carl Philipp Emanuel—would become renowned musicians; and of the 13 children he had with his second wife, the soprano and trumpeter's daughter Anna Magdalena, both Johann Christian and Johann Christoph Friedrich would become well-known.

Besides music, Bach also appeared to have an interest in humanistic and religious subjects. The library he left upon his death, and which was listed in the inventory of his goods, contained a little over 80 volumes, all of which were religious or spiritual in nature. However, it is unlikely that these were the only books he had: texts deemed to be of a “contrived” nature were probably not included in the inventory, or simply disappeared before the list was made (*ibid.*, pp. 19–20, 146–148).

In geographical terms, Bach's life was relatively limited in scope: essentially, he moved between the cities of Thuringia (Eisenach, Mühlhausen, Arnstadt, Weimar), Saxony-Anhalt (Köthen), Lower Saxony (Lüneburg) and Saxony (Leipzig). In Germany at that time, travelling was a slow, expensive and tiresome process, and to travel on foot was considered an acceptable option even for long journeys. For example, the young Bach decided to walk around 400 kms from Arnstadt to Lübeck, simply to hear the organist Buxtehude play and to learn from him (see Eidam 1999, chap. IV). The story of the great composer's life and career is well-known: born in Eisenach, he studied at the Latin School in Lüneburg, and after a brief period of employment in Weimar³ he worked as a church organist in Arnstadt (1703–1707) and Mühlhausen (1707–1708). Successively, he was then organist and concertmaster at the court of the Duke of Saxe-Weimar (1708–1714), and subsequently chapelmaster at the court of Prince Leopold of Anhalt-Köthen (1717–1723). Lastly, for 27 years and up until his death, he was the cantor at St Thomas School in Leipzig (1723–1750).

In the first half of the eighteenth century, Germany was divided into multiple political entities, ranging from large states (Saxony and Brandenburg-Prussia) to small independent cities and principalities. In economic terms, it was still recovering from the effects of the Thirty Years' War and a series of epidemics that had reduced the urban population by one-third (Ebert 1985, p. 37). In cultural terms, however, it was blooming. Generally, supporting the arts was considered important by both the aristocracy and the municipal authorities, and many noblemen were music aficionados to the extent that they themselves were also skilled performers or even composers.⁴

³ A lowly role in the orchestra of the Duke of Saxe-Weimar, with a salary of six florins (around 380 euros today) plus accommodation and food (González Mira 2021, p. 76).

⁴ For example, Johann Ernst (1696–1715), Prince of Saxe-Weimar; Frederick the Great (who reigned from 1740 to 1786); Anna Amalia (1723–1787), Princess of Prussia; and her niece Anna Amalia (1739–1807), Duchess of Saxe-Weimar. See Burkholder et al. (2019, pp. 551–552).

In fact, the German courts vied with one another to achieve the highest levels of artistic splendour and dedicated a significant amount of resources to cultural development. In particular, two of Bach's direct patrons, Prince Leopold of Köthen and Duke Wilhelm Ernst August of Saxe-Weimar, were among the most cultured men of their era and had a deep appreciation of music. Bach was also able to further his own education through the Duke's extensive library of Italian music. For his part, Friedrich Augustus III, the Elector of Saxony (which included the city of Leipzig, where Bach was the cantor), was also an avowed patron of the arts, as reflected by the cultural flowering of Dresden in particular (*ibid.*, pp. 42–44, 52).

With regard to Bach's lifestyle, it must have been very similar to that of the long line of musicians from whom he was descended. Johann Nikolaus Forkel, who in 1802 published the first biography of the composer, drawing on the direct testimony of two of his descendants, Wilhelm Friedemann and Carl Philipp, described him as a man who was "entirely dedicated to the upkeep and education of his children"; an "artisan" who was fully absorbed by his craft, worked incessantly and, "like his ancestors, aspired only to live a modest life" (Forkel 1978, p. 110). In any case, we should reject the false, sugar-coated image of Bach as a "family man sitting peacefully in his home, enjoying placid musical soirées and absorbing himself in composition. On the contrary, he had to double his efforts and work tirelessly to maintain a house in which there was nothing [...] to spare" (Andrés 2005, p. 26). His was a life of struggle, characterised by adversities of all kinds, endless work and daily hardships. Among other issues, his students were numerous and varied widely in their abilities; his positions placed great demands on him; the authorities were penny-pinching; and he lacked sufficient musical resources to perform his works. The great misfortunes he suffered included the death of his first wife and eleven of his children,⁵ which must have caused tremendous pain to such a dedicated father despite the fact that child mortality rates were around 50% in Germany at the time (*ibid.*, p. 67). Furthermore, his son Johann Gottfried Bernhard, who died in 1739 at the age of just 24, was a constant source of stress for Bach, as he had to clean up the trail of debts and defaults that Johann left in his wake, such as his sudden abandonment of the organist's position at Sangerhausen, which Bach had worked hard to secure for him (*ibid.*, p. 70).

Unlike Bach, Händel did not come from a long line of musicians. His father was a barber-surgeon and wine merchant in Halle, and may have given Händel his first introduction to the world of business. Initially, he wanted his son to study law, rather than music, but Händel had such an obvious musical talent that he was eventually allowed to study under Friedrich Wilhelm Zachow, a music teacher and composer, who taught him the organ, harpsichord and counterpoint. Händel also studied the violin and oboe, and furthered his knowledge by copying scores by German and Italian composers.⁶ In 1701, during a trip to Berlin, he demonstrated his musical gifts in front of the Elector of Brandenburg (the grandfather of Frederick the Great

⁵ Only three of the seven children he had with his first wife, Maria Barbara, survived; and of the 13 he had with Anna Magdalena, only six survived to adulthood.

⁶ Burkholder et al. (2019, pp. 572–573). See also Burrows (1996, p. 12).

of Prussia), who offered him the post of court musician. Händel rejected the offer, however, as he wished to remain independent and was aware of the servitude the post entailed (Harris 2014, p. 41).

In 1702, while working as the organist at Halle Cathedral, he fulfilled his father's wishes and enrolled to study law at the university (as had his friend Georg Philipp Telemann in Leipzig, some 26 kms from Halle). However, the plan was extremely short-lived, as in 1703 he decided to move to Hamburg and become a violinist in the orchestra of the city's opera house (where he would go on to compose *Almira*, his first work in this new genre). A short while later, between 1706 and 1710, he travelled to Italy and visited various cities (including Florence, Naples, Venice and Rome), where he learnt the Italian style, made numerous contacts and experimented with composing in various genres (concertos, operas, motets, etc.). He gained a reputation as a keyboard virtuoso and took part in a famous musical duel with Domenico Scarlatti (also born in 1685), from which he emerged victorious on the organ, but not on the harpsichord. After returning from Italy he was appointed chapelmaster by the Elector of Hanover (the future King George I of Great Britain) and granted permission to visit the court of the Palatinate in Düsseldorf and to travel to London. In fact, he spent the period from 1710 to 1711 in the British capital, receiving his salary from Hanover, composing *Rinaldo* and undertaking diplomatic work for his patron.⁷ By 1712 he had settled permanently in London and severed his ties with the court of Hanover. This marked the start of an intense career as a musical director and opera impresario, while at the same time enjoying the support of various patrons and receiving a substantial pension from the Crown (as discussed in the following section).⁸

The Great Britain in which Händel found himself was a thriving country, ruled by a unified monarchy and just a few decades away from the dawn of the Industrial Revolution. London was at that time the most prosperous commercial and financial centre in Europe, and also its most populous city.⁹ The aristocracy had an appreciation for music, as many nobles had visited Italy during their youth as part of the Grand Tour. However, a new middle-class audience was also developing, which drew its wealth from trade, finance and manufacturing and had sufficient means to attend performances. In short, it was a city filled with opportunities for a creative, ambitious and entrepreneurial musician (Burkholder et al. 2019, p. 552; Glover 2018, pp. 13–24).

⁷ His ability to speak multiple languages and his musical gifts gave Händel access to private areas of court that were not open to other ministers (Harris 2014, p. 56).

⁸ Scherer (2004, pp. 4, 39, 85). For more detail see Harris (2014) and Hogwood (1988). On the professional status of musicians in the eighteenth century, see Rohr (2001, pp. 6–22).

⁹ In 1700, London had 550,000 inhabitants, Paris had 530,000, Vienna had just 105,000 and Berlin a mere 24,000. By 1750, London's population had swelled to 676,000 inhabitants, Paris had 560,000, Vienna 169,000 and Berlin just 113,000 (Scherer 2004, p. 128). See also Raynor (1986, pp. 351–383).

Händel was cosmopolitan, multilingual (he spoke German, French, Italian and English), impetuous and unmarried, without any family ties.¹⁰ He always enjoyed extensive freedom of movement and a wide circle of friends (including merchants, artists and intellectuals) and patrons (including kings, noblemen and businessmen).¹¹ In London, he also cultivated a large group of friends and rubbed shoulders with high society¹²; this meant that he had to maintain a lifestyle that matched this elevated status, with servants, elegant clothes, a house in a fashionable area, an art collection, etc.

The Composers' Professional Careers and Their Reflection in Financial and Musical Terms

As mentioned above, essentially Bach was always an employee serving the Church, the aristocracy or the municipal authorities; a “craftsman” who performed his role to the best of his ability, albeit subject to the whims of his patrons and the obligations imposed by his commissions. His first role was that of church organist in

¹⁰ Perhaps his income, foreign origins, profession and lack of land ownership prevented Händel from being able to marry into high society. Other writers have suggested that he may have been homosexual (Harris 2014, pp. 195, 207; Burkholder et al. 2019, pp. 572–573).

¹¹ His Italian patrons included the Prince of Tuscany, Ferdinando de' Medici; Marquess Francesco Ruspoli; cardinals Benedetto Pamphili, Carlo Colonna and Pietro Ottoboni and the Duchess of Laurenzana (Naples), Aurora Sanseverino. His English patrons included Richard Boyle (Lord Burlington), Richard Brydges (Duke of Chandos), Henry Furnese, Charles Sackville (Earl of Middlesex), Jonathan Tyers (the proprietor of Vauxhall Gardens) and John Rich (the director of the Covent Garden Theatre). Other notable British figures who hosted concerts included the coal-merchant Thomas Britton, the painter John Wollaston and the accountant and violinist Henry Needler. Händel also enjoyed the continued support and protection of royalty: his patrons included Queen Anne (the last monarch of the House of Stuart), King George I (the Elector of Hanover and first king of the House of Hanover) and King George II and his wife Queen Caroline (Harris 2014, pp. 9–11).

¹² His friends in London included a number of artists, such as Joseph Goupy (a painter, whose friendship with Händel suffered when he published a cruel caricature in 1740 depicting the composer as a pig), Louis-François Roubiliac (a sculptor, who created a statue of Händel for Vauxhall Gardens and his funerary monument in Westminster Abbey), Philippe Mercier (a painter, who produced a portrait of the composer), Rupert Barber (a miniaturist, who painted a miniature of Händel that has since been lost) and Thomas Hudson (who painted two well-known portraits of the composer). He also had contact with literary figures in Lord Burlington's circle, such as Alexander Pope and John Gay, and forged a number of important friendships with families who were socially well-positioned. Examples include the Mayne-Batt family, the Harris family (Thomas Harris was a renowned lawyer), the Donnellan-Percival family, the Palmer-Peacock-Verney family and the Delany-Granville family (Patrick Delany was a distinguished Protestant clergyman), as well as the wealthy Hunter family (James Hunter was an international merchant and worked for the British East India Company; his uncle, Sir Harcourt Master, was the director of the South Sea Company) (Harris 2014, pp. 12–16, 20, 27). Händel's partners in London included his amanuensis and manager John Christopher Smith (and his son), his publisher John Walsh (and his son) and the impresario Johann Jakob Heidegger (Harris 2014, pp. 9–11).

Arnstadt and Mühlhausen. Subsequently, he was appointed musical director to the courts of Weimar and Köthen, and finally became the cantor at St Thomas School in Leipzig (where he also composed music for four churches associated with the school). Although Bach occasionally engaged in other activities in addition to the many responsibilities imposed on him by his main role, not all of them brought him an income. He dedicated a number of compositions to important figures,¹³ published a few scores at his own expense (such as the *Clavier-Übung* and *Musical Offering*), gave private classes, inspected organs that had been recently installed in other cities and between 1729 and 1741 directed the Collegium Musicum, an unofficial orchestra in Leipzig.¹⁴

In the orchestras of the noble courts—such as Weimar and Köthen—there were various opportunities for musical employment, ranging from simple musician all the way up to chapelmaster. Salaries varied in line with the employee's responsibilities. Experienced composers like Bach could apply for the position of musical director, which offered substantial compensation by the standards of the period for a common craftsman. In Weimar, where he was a court organist and chamber musician for the Duke of Saxe-Weimar, Bach's finances improved significantly, as he was paid three times what he received in Arnstadt and 75% more than he received in Mühlhausen (González Mira 2021, p. 80). However, the biggest raise came in Köthen: with a salary of 400 thalers per year (equivalent to around 28,000 euros today, and accounting for 20% of the entire budget for musical activities, *ibid.*, p. 87), he was the second highest-paid of the court's 18 musicians; while his second wife, the soprano Anna Magdalena, was in third place with a salary of 200 thalers. Bach's income—equivalent to around 64 pounds per year at the time, and closer to 100 when taking payments in kind into account—was four times the salary of a manual worker in southern England. In view of the prevailing economic circumstances, and compared to other members of his profession, Bach was not doing badly. However, the highest-paid chapelmasters at that time were those of the Kingdom of Saxony: in 1720, the salary of the deputy chapelmaster Johann Heinichen (1683–1729) was nearly three times that of Bach in

¹³ In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, many composers wrote works for wealthy potential patrons, and delivered them accompanied by florid dedications. The polite practice at the time was to send the composer an honorarium in gratitude for the dedicated work, although this did not always happen. For example, Bach composed the *Brandenburg Concertos* for the Elector of Brandenburg, who left the scores untouched in a cupboard. In 1747, Bach travelled to Potsdam, improvised on a theme by Frederick the Great and later composed the *Musical Offering* without receiving anything in exchange, not even to cover his travel expenses. However, he was compensated by Count Hermann von Keyserlingk for the *Goldberg Variations*, in the form of a gold cup filled with 100 Louis d'or (around 114 pounds) (Scherer 2004, p. 55; Boyd 2000, pp. 197, 204–205).

¹⁴ Originally founded by Johann Kuhnau in 1688 and revived by Telemann in 1702. Admission was charged for concerts that were regularly held at Café Zimmermann in winter and in the café's garden in summer. The orchestra was comprised of musically talented university students, pupils from St Thomas School and a number of local aficionados. Almost all of the members were amateurs. Many of the non-religious works Bach composed during his time in Leipzig were for concerts by the Collegium (Scherer 2004, p. 44).

Köthen, while the chapelmaster Antonio Lotti (1667–1740) and his wife (a soprano) together received 2,500 pounds per year.¹⁵

However, employment in the noble courts had its drawbacks: ultimately, musicians were just another class of servant, with restrictions on their mobility outside the court and on the right to publish. Moreover, it was the patron who had absolute control over the musical agenda. Nor was it easy for musicians to move freely between positions: for example, in 1717, when Bach attempted to leave the service of the Duke of Saxe-Weimar and take up a post at the court in Köthen, he was imprisoned for four weeks and subsequently fired (Scherer 2004, pp. 54, 94, 134).

At St Thomas School in Leipzig, where Bach spent the larger part of his working life (27 years), he was the City Council's third choice among the candidates who applied for the position of cantor. His responsibilities in this role were no less demanding than in his previous positions: he had to commit to leading an exemplary life, and not to leave the city without permission from the mayor; he had to teach Latin and music to 55 students for four hours each day; he had to direct the main choir and supervise the other three (which were directed by his assistants, consisting of older students) and he had to compose, copy and rehearse music for religious functions, special events and ceremonies that took place in the city and at the university. "Together, the churches of Leipzig required 58 cantatas each year,¹⁶ in addition to music for the Passion on Good Friday, magnificats and vespers for three festivals, one cantata each year for the investiture of the City Council, and occasional music such as motets for funerals and cantatas for weddings" (Burkholder et al. 2019, p. 566).

Bach was given accommodation in one of the wings of the school, equipped with a studio for writing and composing and a professional library containing some 4,500 volumes. There was also an adjoining room where a number of students probably worked as copyists. The studio contained cupboards, shelves for books and scores, musical instruments, a desk, inkwells and so on. "It was a 'workshop', a private space for an artist of the late Baroque period, similar to those of other musicians who had a similar role and standing; a place where work of a solitary, considered and well-crafted nature could be carried out" (Andrés 2005, p. 21; Burkholder et al. 2019, p. 558).

Leipzig, a city of around 30,000 inhabitants, may have initially appealed to a musician like Bach. It was a prosperous, well-connected hub and had a lively commercial spirit, with three major fairs each year. The city was also home to numerous libraries, printing houses, publishers, engravers and booksellers. It was a place where orthodox Lutheranism coexisted alongside Pietism and freemasonry, home to exponents of rationalist philosophy in the vein of Leibniz and thinkers who would pave the way

¹⁵ Scherer (2004, pp. 88, 98, 206) and Ebert (1985, pp. 45, 52). In Arnstadt, Mühlhausen and Weimar, Bach's salary included payments "in kind" (particularly in the form of wood).

¹⁶ "Of the five churches in Leipzig, cantatas were performed in only two of them (namely, St Nicholas and St Thomas), alternating on Sundays and public holidays. Consequently, Bach had to supply a new weekly cantata once per month" (Salazar 1985, p. 182). Throughout his life, Bach composed five complete cantata cycles, producing a total of 295 pieces. Of those cantatas, 265 were destined for the aforementioned churches, and 57 have been lost. During his early years in Leipzig, Bach composed nearly one major work per week. See Wolff (2000, pp. 237–252, 305–310).

for what would later become the Enlightenment. Leipzig was both a bridge between the West and the Slavic world, and a conduit channelling French influence towards Poland; moreover, its university could stand proudly alongside those in Tübingen, Jena and Heidelberg (Andrés 2005, pp. 30–33).

However, the position of cantor fell far short of Bach's expectations, after he left Köthen when his patron married a woman who had little interest in music. There were several reasons for his frustration: firstly, the notable lack of resources. Upon arriving at the school, the composer was confronted with "a wretched student body, incapable of forming a half-decent choir, and a severe lack of musicians. As incredible as it may seem, the municipal orchestra only had seven members" (ibid., p. 33). The orchestra had always been small since its creation, but there were also unfilled positions. This lack of personnel was only solved by the addition of a number of student volunteers from the university (whose experience with the Collegium Musicum had given them a musical affinity) and, over time, Bach's own students that had been trained at St Thomas School. However, the problem lay not only with the reduced number of musicians in the municipal orchestra, but also with their quality, as the composer himself stated in a letter to the City Council on 23 August 1730:

Discretion prevents me from giving a frank description of their musical knowledge and qualities, although it should be noted that many of them are retired and others do not perform their tasks as they undoubtedly should. (ibid., p. 34)

The same applied to the choir, for which Bach requested at least three or four voices per register (soprano, contralto, tenor and bass): in other words, a modestly sized group that would be sufficient to meet the new demands of this revitalised musical form (quoted in Andrés 2005, p. 55).

Secondly, music was not a priority at St Thomas School; it was just one of the various subjects that were taught there. "Bach wanted to turn St Thomas School into a focal point for music and equip it with the means to meet the city's requirements in style. But time and time again he came up against governors, teachers and other academic staff members who, instead of prioritising music, simply considered it a supplement to the students' education".¹⁷

Lastly (and most importantly), the position did not meet Bach's financial expectations. His salary had been set at 700 thalers per year (a little more than he and Anna Magdalena earned jointly in Köthen; approximately 112 pounds at the time and around 50,000 euros today, see Scherer 2004, p. 206; González Mira 2021, p. 90), approximately four times the salary of a clergyman and twelve times that of a schoolteacher (Frey and Pommerehne 1989, p. 141). However, he expected this figure to rise to 1,200 thalers with the so-called *Accidentia* (funerals, weddings, baptisms and other celebrations). However, the school's rules were modified and the cantor's responsibilities in relation to the *Accidentia*—and therefore his chance

¹⁷ Andrés (2005, p. 45). There were between 50 and 60 scholarships for children and young people who demonstrated an aptitude for study and music. These students were subject to strict discipline and endured harsh living conditions: they mostly slept three to a bed, got up at 5 a.m. in summer and 6 a.m. in winter, and had to get ready in just 15 min. Shouting, beatings and solitary confinement were frequent punishments (Andrés 2005, pp. 40–43).

to earn extra income—were reduced, while his responsibilities in other areas were increased. Additionally, Anna Magdalena had to give up her job, and therefore her income, after moving to Leipzig, as female singers could only perform in palace chapels and were otherwise banned from involvement in church music. Bach felt he had been let down and intended to resign (although he never did), as indicated in a revealing letter he wrote to Erdmann on 28 October 1730 (Williams 2007, p. 274):

Although at first I did not think it would be seemly to go from *Kapellmeister* (in Köthen) to *Cantor*, which is why I delayed my decision by three months, the post was described to me in such positive terms that eventually – and also considering the fact that my children seemed to be inclined towards university study – I decided to make the move, with God’s help; and after I moved to Leipzig, I passed the test and took up the position. And here I remain, by the grace of God. However, taking into account the fact that (1) I believe this post is nowhere near as exceptional as it was described to me; (2) many of the supplementary incomes for the position can no longer be obtained; (3) this is a very expensive location¹⁸; and (4) the authorities here are capricious and care little for music, and as I have to live in a permanent state of displeasure, envy and persecution, I shall be forced to seek my fortune elsewhere, with God’s help. If Your Excellency should find or learn of a suitable position there for an old and faithful servant, I respectfully beg that you recommend me for it most fervently. (quoted in Andrés 2005, p. 44)

In the same letter, and demonstrating his practical attitude, Bach underlined the fact that his income was dependent on deaths in Leipzig, as he was paid for the funerals he was authorised to attend:

My current position gives me approximately 700 thalers, and if there are a few more deaths than usual, my supplementary income increases proportionately. However, if people remain healthy, then my supplementary income falls, as happened last year, when my income from funerals fell by more than 100 thalers. In Thuringia I could live better on 400 thalers than I can on double that amount here, due to the high cost of living. (quoted in Andrés 2005, p. 78)

In a “free” city such as Leipzig, which had no resident nobility nor a court to host musical events, composers were, in principle, shielded against the whims of an aristocratic patron. However, the City Council, which was responsible for St Thomas School and the city’s churches, was essentially focused on minimising costs and relegated artistic matters to the background (Scherer 2004, p. 134). Bach had a difficult relationship with the City Council, whose conduct was far from generous upon his death on 28 July 1750. His widow, Anna Magdalena, asked the City Council to pay her six months of her husband’s salary, as had been the practice following the death of other cantors. Although the City Council granted her request, it deducted a certain

¹⁸ Bach’s complaints about the cost of living were justified. In Germany, inflation varied from place to place: in large cities such as Leipzig, prices generally rose relatively quickly in comparison to the courts of Weimar and Köthen. However, salaries generally remained at the same level, resulting in a loss of real purchasing power. For example, over the course of the eighteenth century the price of wheat, rye and lentils increased by 300–400%, while the price of meat rose by up to 500% (Ebert 1985, pp. 47, 52).

amount on the grounds that Bach had been a little slow in performing his functions after taking up the position (Andrés 2005, p. 23).

The inventory of the items that Bach left upon his death valued them at a total of 1,122 thalers, equivalent to around 180 pounds at the time (Scherer 2004, p. 206). In addition to 256 thalers in cash, his possessions included a share in a mining operation in Klein Vogtsberg, valued at 60 thalers¹⁹; various miscellaneous objects (candlesticks, cups, coffee pots, a teapot, sugar bowls, salt-cellars, cutlery, etc.); musical instruments (harpsichords, violins, violas, cellos, a viol, a lute, etc.); a number of tin, copper and brass utensils (irons, a coffee tray, kettles, etc.); clothes and accessories; religious books and some small items of furniture (Andrés 2005, pp. 63–66; Ebert 1985, p. 44). However, he also left a number of debts, totalling 130 thalers. Evidently, Bach did not die in poverty: although he did not own any property, he left a modest amount of money and goods. Nonetheless, when his widow, Anna Magdalena, died in 1760, she was described in the records as an *Almosenfrau*, a woman who lived on charity.²⁰

Unlike Bach, and as mentioned above, from a very young age Händel learnt how important it was to remain independent, for the benefit of his professional career.

¹⁹ In actual fact, this was merely the formal valuation as entered in the mining register and did not reflect the true financial value that could be realised, as explained below. The Ursula Erbstollen silver mine in Klein Vogtsberg (Saxony), near Freiberg, was divided into 128 shares (*Kuxe*). The owners or subscribers of these shares undertook to make regularly quarterly payments to finance the mining operations, and if sufficiently large mineral deposits were eventually discovered, they would have the right to receive a dividend in proportion to their shareholding. However, in the case of the Ursula Erbstollen mine, this never happened. Between 1741 and 1744, Bach held a single share (one *Kux*) in the mine, which he seemingly did not even purchase; rather, it was given to him by one Johann Christoph Stiehl (who was responsible for recruiting mine subscribers in Leipzig), and the composer agreed to make the corresponding subscription payments on a regular basis in order to finance the search for mineral deposits. However, in 1744 Bach stopped making the payments, perhaps due to the lack of any returns up until that point, and his share in the mine expired. Nonetheless, in 1746 the composer became a subscriber once again (taking the place of another outgoing subscriber, and without having to buy their share), perhaps because it appeared as though the silver-mining operations had started to bear fruit the previous year, although this was not confirmed. In fact, up until his death in 1750, Bach did not receive a single dividend, although he continued to religiously make his payments as a subscriber, which reached a total of 30 thalers over the course of seven years. At the time, a miner's annual salary was approximately 60 thalers. See Spree (2013).

²⁰ Talle (2020, pp. 167–169), drawing on Eberhard Spree's *Die verwitwete Frau Capellmeisterin Bach* (Kamprad Verlag, 2019), examines the final years of Anna's life and compares them to those of other widows living in Leipzig at the time. He casts doubt on whether Anna actually lived in penury after Bach's death, and cites the following information: she received a third of the inheritance, and spent part of it on acquiring certain items that Bach's children inherited from him; she took over a portion of her widowed sister's debts; she continued her husband's investment in the silver mine; she may have kept certain items (e.g. clothes, books, furniture, musical instruments, etc.) that she used on a daily basis and which did not form part of the inheritance; she looked after five children—one of whom was disabled—in her home; she rented out rooms to visitors attending trade fairs in Leipzig; she made her husband's scores available for copying (in exchange for remuneration) during the 1750s; Carl Philipp Emanuel employed her as a sales agent in Leipzig for the first volume of his treatise on keyboard technique and lastly, it was normal at that time for widows to receive alms from the City Council and did not necessarily mean that they were destitute.

Consequently, instead of committing himself to the exclusive service of a particular court or church, he cultivated a wide circle of social relationships and patrons and diversified his activities and potential sources of income. We will now focus on his time in London (a period that began in 1712) in order to conduct a precise analysis of the sources of income that, despite occasional moments of difficulty, enabled him to rub shoulders with high society, live a comfortable life (with regard to his home, clothing, carriages, servants, etc.),²¹ collect art²² and make extremely generous donations to charity.²³

Firstly, Händel had a number of important private patrons of varying political alignments (Hanoverians/Jacobites) and religious affinities (Catholics/Protestants). These patrons provided him with various means of support, ranging from temporary accommodation to money and influential social contacts. Among his most noteworthy supporters were the Earl of Burlington and the Duke of Chandos (Harris 2014, pp. 9–11, 328). Undoubtedly, however, Händel's most important patron was the British monarchy. Queen Anne granted him a lifelong annual pension of 200 pounds (equivalent to around 25,000 pounds (28,121 euros) in 2020, and approximately double Bach's earnings in Leipzig), which King George I increased to 600 pounds (around 75,000 pounds (84,364 euros) in 2020) in 1724 in exchange for providing musical instruction to members of the royal household (ibid., p. 82; Burkholder et al. 2019, p. 573). The average annual salary for a craftsman at that time was around 26 pounds (Harris 2004, p. 532), which would have had to support both him and his family. This pension, which always provided the composer with a comfortable

²¹ Händel's expenses in London included the following: his house on Brook Street, where he lived for 36 years and which he rented out for short periods for around 40–60 pounds per year; his payment of parish taxes; the purchase of musical instruments, scores, manuscript paper, pens, ink, etc. (in the late 1740s he bought a large number of books and scores, thereby adding to his already extensive library of professional music); transportation costs (he rented horses and carriages whenever necessary, although he did not own any); food and clothing in line with his status as an important public figure; occasional expenditure on furniture and other domestic items and furnishings and servants (which accounted for around 100 pounds per year). Upon his death, Händel had four servants: two men, whom he named in his will, and two unidentified women. At the time, a butler would probably have earned around 40 pounds per year; a second manservant would have earned between eight and 40, depending on his responsibilities; a cook around 30; a maid around six and a washerwoman around five. See Harris (2004, pp. 534–536).

²² Händel attended art auctions and occasionally acquired artworks; over the years he amassed a substantial collection of paintings and engravings, with an overall value of around 1,000 pounds. The paintings he owned included a piece by Watteau titled *A Conversation*, and a piece attributed to Rembrandt titled *A Large Landscape and Figures*, which he purchased in 1750 for 39 pounds. He also owned works by painters who, in one way or another, had been linked to the world of opera in the 1710s and 1720s, such as Pellegrini, Marco and Sebastiano Ricci, Servandoni, Tillemans and Goupy. He also acquired numerous engravings (Harris 2004, pp. 534–536; 2014, pp. 288, 303–306).

²³ Händel's various charitable activities included his sustenance of the Society for the Support of Decayed Musicians, to which he also bequeathed 1,000 pounds in his will (Harris 2014, pp. 342–344). Additionally, in 1750, as part of an annual series of benefit concerts for the Foundling Hospital, he began to arrange regular performances of the oratorio *Messiah* for audiences of over 1,000 people (Scherer 2004, p. 46).

financial cushion, means that he cannot be considered a musician who was fully independent, or entirely dependent on the market.

Secondly, after working as a kind of freelance composer during his first few years in the British capital, Händel gained a salaried position as a music director, and later became a theatre impresario (Kimbell 2016, pp. 1–47). From 1719 to 1728 he was the director of the Royal Academy of Music, a company dedicated to Italian opera that was set up in London and was essentially funded by the annual subscriptions paid by its 63 patrons, most of whom were members of the aristocracy. His salary was 700 pounds per year (equivalent to around 87,500 pounds [98,425 euros] in 2020) and his responsibilities included composing operas (successful works he produced during this period include *Giulio Cesare*, *Tamerlano* and *Rodelinda*), supervising the Academy's programme and recruiting new talent (such as the castrato Senesino, the composer Giovanni Bononcini and the sopranos Francesca Cuzzoni and Faustina Bordoni). However, in 1729 the withdrawal of its subscribers meant that the company could no longer support itself, so Händel decided to provide financial backing for a new company (effectively a new Academy) in partnership with a Swiss impresario named Johann Jakob Heidegger.²⁴ Although the new company's opera productions had a mixed reception, it was granted a generous subsidy by the Royal Family, which for the 1732–1733 season (for example) accounted for as much as 20%²⁵ of its income. In 1733 a rival company, the so-called Opera of the Nobility, was set up in London. Also focusing on Italian opera, the new company poached talent from the Academy, attracted leading singers from the Continent (such as the castrato Farinelli) and had a major financial impact on Händel's company, which moved to the recently constructed Covent Garden in 1734 after Heidegger retired, leaving Händel as the main promoter. However, the Opera of the Nobility filed for bankruptcy in 1737, and Händel returned to the King's Theatre. Despite this victory, Italian opera as a genre seemed to be facing insurmountable difficulties in London. In fact, the period 1738–1745 was a rocky one for the composer, financially speaking. By dividing audiences and causing singers' wages to continuously spiral, the rivalry between the two opera companies placed both firms in a complicated situation characterised by ongoing losses (Milhous 1993, pp. 32–39). Moreover, the success of John Gay's *The Beggar's Opera* (1728), which featured popular themes that were sung in English and satirised Italian opera, marked the beginning of a gradual change in audiences' tastes (Scherer 2004, pp. 46, 55, 99, 110; Burkholder et al. 2019, pp. 575–578).

As a result of all this, and without yet abandoning the world of opera, in the 1730s Händel began to develop a new genre that would enable him to adapt his approach and overcome any financial losses. The genre in question consisted of oratorios in English, performed by much cheaper local singers, with works based on Biblical themes that were well-known to the burgeoning urban middle classes and performed

²⁴ Harris (2014, pp. 97, 187; 2020, pp. 16–23), McGeary (2013, pp. 126–149) and Scherer (2004, p. 62).

²⁵ An analysis of the figures for the 1732–1733 season indicates that, of the total annual income for Händel's opera company, “23% came from subscribers, [...] 50% from ticket sales, which reflects the notable increase in direct attendance of specific operas; 7% from box hire; and an impressive 20% [...] from the Royal Family” (Hogwood 1988, p. 129).

in theatres, without any expenditure on sets or costumes. Tickets for each performance would be sold individually, without any exorbitant season tickets or subscriptions; choruses would be used in an innovative way that harked back to the long-standing English choral tradition; the works would incorporate an attractive mixture of musical elements of various origins (recitatives and arias *da capo* from Italian opera, overtures from classical French drama, German choral fugues, harmonies from English full anthems, etc.); and Händel would improvise on the organ during the intermissions. Without a doubt, this new genre produced notable achievements—such as *Esther* (1732), *Israel in Egypt* (1739), *Messiah* (1741), *Samson* (1743) and *Judas Maccabaeus* (1747)—that led to a gradual improvement in the composer's financial circumstances, to the extent that in 1741 he decided to make a definitive break with opera and dedicate himself fully to the oratorio genre that had brought him greater success (Burkholder et al. 2019, pp. 578–581; Scherer 2004, p. 110).

Thirdly, throughout his time in England Händel complemented his main activities in the fields of opera and oratorio with other ventures that brought him additional income. One such example is the publication of his music in the form of scores, although this did not earn him a great deal of money: composers only received a single payment from the publisher for each score, and a significant market for printed scores would not develop until the nineteenth century. Nor was there any effective legislation to protect copyright: although Royal Privileges could be granted, which bestowed exclusivity for a period of 14 years and—in theory—meant that illegal copies could be confiscated and the offenders fined (Händel was granted two such Privileges, in 1720 and 1739), in practice it was difficult and costly to enforce them.²⁶ Occasionally, Händel also gave music lessons and held private concerts.²⁷ Additionally, he composed music for private weddings, official ceremonies and acts of the Crown, to be performed in venues such as St Paul's Cathedral, Westminster Abbey and St James's Palace. During the 1740s he realised that patriotic materials sold well, especially in times of war, and so he started to compose works such as the *Dettingen Te Deum* (1743), designed to celebrate an English victory over the French (Scherer 2004, p. 111; Harris 2014, p. 147).

Lastly, we should also mention Händel's activities as an investor and his habitual use of banking services, at a time when this was highly unusual for a musician. According to Professor Ellen Harris, who has studied this intriguing aspect of the composer's life in detail, against the backdrop of the English Financial Revolution

²⁶ When rival companies staged modified versions of his opera *Ottone* or his oratorio *Esther*, Händel's only recourse was to create improved versions. Likewise, when he realised upon arriving in London that the works from his Italian period had been widely copied by John Walsh, he decided that the best course of action was to apply the old adage of "if you can't beat them, join them" and make Walsh his authorised publisher. In addition to operas, Walsh published chamber music and keyboard pieces that could be performed in homes and smaller spaces (Scherer 2004, pp. 57, 167, 171; Harris 2014, pp. 153, 277, 312–313).

²⁷ Those who hosted private concerts by Händel included the coal-merchant Thomas Britton, the painter John Wollaston and the accountant and violin aficionado Henry Needler. Händel also held musical soirées at his own house on Brook Street (Harris 2014, pp. 11, 153). His most active period as a music teacher was from 1720 to 1733 (Harris 2014, pp. 171, 178).

(which took place between 1688 and 1756) Händel was able to exert meticulous control over his finances and managed his funds rather prudently and conservatively (Harris 2004, p. 531).

By the middle of 1715, he had already invested 500 pounds in South Sea Company shares. Over the next five years the value of his shares increased considerably, and the sale of part of his shareholding (at least 300 pounds' worth) made Händel a substantial profit. When the notorious financial bubble finally burst in 1720, Händel still had around 150 or 200 pounds' worth of shares. Three years later in 1723, when the crisis was coming to an end, the shareholders' capital was divided equally between Company shares and Company bonds that were deposited with the Bank of England, which provided a fixed annual return. The account that was opened for the composer at the Bank, in the amount of 150 pounds' worth of Company bonds, indicates that at the time the capital was divided in 1723, he must have had around 300 pounds' worth of shares. In short, the evidence suggests that Händel navigated the movements of the market with relative skill and that the South Sea Company episode did not cause him to lose any money (*ibid.*, pp. 13–16).

The first bank accounts that Händel opened were short-lived. In 1720 he opened two accounts successively with the Royal African Company, in the amounts of 500 and 100 pounds respectively, but closed them a few weeks later. Equally as short-lived was his first account with the Bank of England, which he opened in 1721 after receiving government bonds with a return of 5% as payment of the pension of 200 pounds that had been granted to him by Queen Anne. On 11 October 1721 those bonds were deposited into an account in his name at the Bank of England; however, just two days later he sold them for cash and closed the account (*ibid.*, pp. 2–13).

Nonetheless, between 1723 and 1732 Händel kept the aforementioned South Sea Company bonds in an account with the Bank of England, which he effectively treated as a cash account, using it for a variety of transactions. For example, while he was the director of the Royal Academy of Music he deposited his annual salary of 700 pounds into said account. He received this salary in the form of one or more payments and continued to receive it during the early days of the “new” Academy, after Händel and his partner Heidegger took over the running of the opera company following the withdrawal of its private patrons in 1729. However, financial difficulties soon followed, and the composer ended up closing this account in June 1732 (*ibid.*, pp. 16–23).

Specifically, Händel sold the South Sea Company bonds he had acquired to date, earning 2,450 pounds from the sale. He kept 150 pounds and deposited the remaining 2,300 into a new cash account that he opened with the Bank of England in August 1732. For the next seven years he did not make any other deposits, although each year he withdrew an increasingly smaller amount of money until in March 1739 he withdraws the last 50 pounds that were left and closed the account.

Between 1739 and 1743 he did not have any accounts with the Bank. The 1730s were marked by significant difficulties and varying fortunes for Händel's opera company, and uneven receptions for works such as *Ariodante* and *Alcina*, although he continued to stage new opera productions until 1741. That same year the composer travelled to Dublin, where he presented *Messiah* to great acclaim. When he returned

to London in 1742 he had already decided that he would no longer compose operas, as it seemed clear that the public's appetite for oratorios in English presented an excellent opportunity to create wealth (*ibid.*, pp. 23–24).

After the première of *Samson* in February 1743, Händel opened a new account for South Sea Company bonds with the Bank of England in May, and subsequently opened a new cash account in 1744. From then on, he deposited his earnings into the cash account, while building up a diverse portfolio of securities. During his highly successful English oratorio period, which lasted for approximately 16 years (1743–1758), he was able to save around 1,100 pounds per year. When he died in 1759 Händel was a rich man, with 17,500 pounds deposited with the Bank of England (equivalent to around 2.2 million pounds (2.5 million euros) in 2020) that had brought him an annual return of 3%.²⁸ The total value of his estate was estimated at 21,000 pounds, equivalent to around 2.6 million pounds (2.9 million euros) in 2020 (Scherer 2004, p. 105).

The very different professional paths taken by Bach and Händel had an impact not only on their respective incomes, but also on the types of genres they cultivated and their understanding of the practice of composition. Bach never had to adapt to the demands of the public, as he did not compose for the market; rather, his work had to meet the needs of the different positions he held as a musician at court or in the church. It is for this reason that he initially focused on the organ and harpsichord; created works for chamber ensembles and orchestras in Köthen and placed particular emphasis on cantatas and religious music in Leipzig. Moreover, given the importance of teaching among his various activities, he always paid careful attention to the educational aspect of his work as a composer. However, this does not mean that Bach was not open to innovation and the influence of the French, Italian and German approaches. In fact, he assimilated the innovations he encountered in the work of his contemporaries and reinterpreted them, experimenting in a range of different areas. With the exception of opera, his work encompassed virtually every style, form and genre of his time: he explored their possibilities in depth and developed them in often complex and unexpected directions, without any concessions to fashion or changes in taste (Salazar 1985, p. 187; Burkholder et al. 2019, pp. 555, 571, 1708–1714). Furthermore, Bach's identification with the texts of his religious works appears genuine: Lutheranism was his "spiritual home" and the texts established "a framework of religious convictions through which [...] he composed cantatas, motets, oratorios, passions and masses" (Trías 2007, p. 107).

Händel, for his part, shared Bach's tremendous capacity for work and for assimilating, rejuvenating and bringing together a variety of influences, with a "cosmopolitan and eclectic style that drew on German, Italian, French and English music" (Burkholder et al. 2019, p. 572). Unlike Bach, however, he openly sought

²⁸ Harris (2020, pp. 24–26). In addition to the financial information they contain, Händel's accounts with the Bank of England provide an unexpected insight into his personal well-being. An analysis of his signature between 1721 and 1758 reveals how his eyesight worsened and other health issues developed during the final ten years of his life.

to connect with audiences and adapted his creations in order to forge those connections more effectively, by trying out fresh approaches and always paying heed to the latest musical trends and demands (Davison 1986, p. 62; Basso 1986, pp. 137–139). According to Adolfo Salazar, this may explain why the “craftsman” Bach, aware of the requirements and stipulations of his position, produced works characterised by a great sense of “regularity” or “uniform density”; while the “impresario” Händel, faced with the capricious, shifting and peremptory demands of the opera market, produced works characterised by a greater “mixture of qualities and unevenness of workmanship”, as well as making greater use of existing material and reworking pieces by others when producing new compositions (Salazar 1983, pp. 279–280).²⁹ Moreover, in contrast to Bach’s essentially abstract pieces, Händel demonstrated a “great talent for drama” or theatricality and his music was placed “at the service of the characters” in his operas and oratorios: two genres that took centre stage in his production activities precisely because they were the ones that best enabled him to make a living from public performance. In particular, and as alluded to above, Händel’s unique approach to oratorio is an excellent example of his capacity for reinvention after the traditional opera “product”, based on themes from ancient Greece and Rome, started to lose its attraction for theatregoers. Indeed, Händel’s approach to oratorio consisted of adapting Italian opera to the tastes of the burgeoning London bourgeoisie, with plots based on well-known Biblical episodes and doing away with stage sets and costumes (Salazar 1983, pp. 281–283, 286–287). In this respect, the religious themes of his oratorios had a clear “utilitarian” purpose: to connect with middle-class Protestant audiences whose knowledge of the Bible was far superior to their awareness of stories from ancient history and mythology.

Public Recognition

Bach and Händel also differed greatly in terms of the public recognition they received, both in life and after death. Bach, who was essentially considered a “virtuoso organist” and “composer of sophisticated counterpoint works” (Burkholder et al. 2019, p. 555). while alive, never approached the levels of celebrity—even during his moments of greatest renown—enjoyed by Händel, Telemann and Christoph Graupner, or even other contemporary German composers who have since been largely forgotten, such as Carl Heinrich Graun and Johann Mattheson (Andrés, 2005, p. 28). As stated above, Bach did not compose for the public and never allowed himself to be led by fashion or changing tastes, even if he had ample musical resources to have done so (Forkel 1978, p. 114). Perhaps that is why many at the time considered his works to be too complex and advanced, or alternatively too old-fashioned. For

²⁹ Of the leading musicians of his era, Händel was by far the one who most frequently resorted to the common practice of reworking his own music and that of others (Burkholder et al. 2019, p. 581; Rose 2019, pp. 48–80).

example, while working as an organist in Arnstadt, his polyphonic music and innovative progressions were not to the liking of some of the parishioners and the church council received complaints about Bach's unusual variations in the chorales, whose strange tones confused those attending the ceremonies. By 1730, many considered his compositions to be over-elaborate and old-fashioned; perhaps that is why Telemann did not mention him in his essay on contemporary German composers (Scherer 2004, p. 109). Moreover, only a relatively small part of his music was published during his lifetime or distributed in manuscript form (Burkholder et al. 2019, p. 555). In 1750 Bach was given a modest burial in a grave that was subsequently forgotten until its later rediscovery. Musical tastes changed rapidly after his death and his compositions were overlooked in favour of works by composers such as Joachim Quantz and Franz Benda (Andrés 2005, p. 48).

Even though he did not achieve fame, Bach at least commanded the respect of professional musicians and his works were always known and appreciated by connoisseurs, who never forgot him (Talle 2017, p. 259). For example, many of his students went on to become cantors or organists, and copied and shared the scores written by their teacher; while Bach's sons Carl Philipp Emanuel and Johann Christian, who would explore new musical directions in the eighteenth century, were directly influenced by their father and raised awareness of his work within the musical profession. The influential Italian music expert Giovanni Battista Martini greatly admired Bach; his works for keyboard were highly praised by Muzio Clementi, Clementi's student Johann Baptist Cramer and John Field and some of the preludes from *The Well-Tempered Clavier* were distributed fairly widely in manuscript form. Haydn had a copy of *Mass in B Minor*; Mozart's father Leopold and friend Johann Christian encouraged him to explore Bach's music, and he discovered *The Art of Fugue* and a number of Bach's motets during a visit to Leipzig and the first edition of the magazine *Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung*, published in 1798, featured a portrait of Bach (Andrés 2005, p. 48; Burkholder et al. 2019, pp. 583–584).

Bach's work began to be rediscovered more generally during the nineteenth century, and he gradually went from being a composer renowned by experts to a figure who commanded respect among mainstream audiences. In 1802 the organist J. N. Forkel published the first biography of the composer, and German musicians slowly began to extol his virtues on nationalist grounds. In 1829 Felix Mendelssohn directed Bach's *St Matthew Passion* to great acclaim in Berlin, and in 1859 the Bach Society was founded by Robert Schumann and others. By the second half of the nineteenth century Bach was widely renowned, and since then his reputation has only continued to grow. His work influenced a wide variety of major twentieth-century composers, including Schönberg, Ives, Bartók, Stravinsky, Shostakovich, Villa-Lobos and Webern. Today, he is ranked among the undeniable greats in the history of music (ibid., pp. 583–584).

Händel, in contrast, enjoyed widespread renown while alive and his reputation has sustained through to the present day. Portraits of the composer were painted by a number of major contemporary artists, such as Joseph Goupy, Philippe Mercier (who was principal painter to the Prince of Wales until he was replaced by Goupy), Thomas Hudson (who painted him twice) and the miniaturist Rupert Barber (whose portrait

of Händel has since been lost). For his part, in 1738 the sculptor Louis-François Roubiliac produced a statue of the composer in white marble for Vauxhall Gardens (today, the statue is housed in the Victoria and Albert Museum). After becoming a British citizen in 1727, Händel went on to gain increased renown between 1738 and 1745, becoming a veritable national institution. His image was widely circulated in the form of engravings, miniatures and small busts or statuettes, and his music was continuously printed and distributed, sometimes in opulent editions. For example, in 1738 146 deluxe copies of *Alexander's Feast* were produced for 125 subscribers, while in 1740 122 copies of his Twelve Grand Concerts, Opus 6 were produced for 100 subscribers. These subscribers included friends and associates such as Bernard Granville, James Harris, Charles Jennens, Lord Shaftesbury and James Hunter (Harris 2014, pp. 279, 287, 309).

From the late 1730s onwards, perhaps as a result of stress, Händel began to show signs of illness, such as episodes of paralysis and mental health problems. The composer, preoccupied with questions of posterity and his posthumous reputation, requested permission to be buried in Westminster Abbey and set aside 600 pounds for the construction of a monument. (The monument would be sculpted by the aforementioned Roubiliac and eventually installed in the Abbey in 1762.) Händel's funeral was held with full state honours at Westminster Abbey in 1759, and was attended by around 3,000 people. Immediately after his death, the composer's widespread fame continued to grow. Just one year later, in 1760, an extensive biography and catalogue of his works was published by John Mainwaring (*Memoirs of the Life of the Late George Frederic Handel: To Which Is Added a Catalogue of His Works and Observations Upon Them*); and in 1799 a work somewhat lighter in tone, *Anecdotes of George Frederick Handel and John Christopher Smith*, was published by William Cox (ibid., pp. 21, 279, 415). Additionally, Händel's music soon became identified with the British monarchy (in 1784 King George III organised a grand festival in his name), many amateur choral societies placed his oratorios at the heart of their repertoires and his works continued to be performed regularly. In fact,

Händel became the first classical composer; the first to gain a permanent place in the repertoire of performance. (Burkholder et al. 2019, p. 584)

Venerated by the public, he left his mark on classical and romantic music and was always admired by great composers such as Beethoven. In contrast, figures such as Vivaldi (for example) would not be reassessed until the early years of the twentieth century (Andrés 2005, p. 55). Today, Händel remains one of the giants of the Baroque era, and his music has not lost one iota of its appeal.

Conclusion

In this study we have analysed the very different career paths taken by two Baroque composers who rank among the greats in the history of music. Bach was an honest and humble “craftsman” who came from a long line of musicians and, like his predecessors, placed his skills at the service of a court or the municipal and religious authorities. Consumed by his countless responsibilities and the education and maintenance of his many offspring, Bach’s life was one of hardship and constant struggle against all manner of adversities (including the deaths of eleven of his children and his first wife, the many capricious demands placed on him by his positions (including the teaching of numerous students, of widely varying abilities), the lack of sufficient musical resources, and the frequent parsimony of the authorities). His geographical scope was limited, within a stable socio-economic environment that remained unaffected by major changes and a society characterised by a deeply rooted Protestant religiosity. Bach never had to adapt to the demands of the public, as he did not compose for the market; rather, his work had to meet the needs of the different positions he held as a musician at court or in the church. Upon his death he left a very modest estate that barely allowed his widow to survive, and his work—which for the most part had not been published—was largely forgotten outside of professional musical circles.

Händel, for his part, always jealously guarded his independence and played a key role in the development of the concept of the “free artist”. With no prior musical connections and no family ties, he travelled extensively throughout Germany and Italy, where he learned his craft as a musician and took a particular interest in the new genre of Italian opera. Later on he settled permanently in London, the dynamic capital of a country that would soon become the epicentre of the Industrial Revolution and offered great opportunities for a capable and ambitious composer who could cater to the changing musical demands of a growing middle-class audience with its roots in the world of trade and finance. Händel always maintained a large network of contacts and managed to forge important relationships within high society; however, among his many supporters, the British monarchy was undoubtedly his foremost patron. Building on the solid financial base that this patronage afforded him, he became a theatre impresario and for many years mounted his own operas. However, when he realised that the genre was showing signs of decline, he was able to adapt his approach and promote a new kind of performance: oratorios in English. At the same time, he was an investor and habitual user of banking services, exercising careful control over his finances and managing his funds rather prudently. He also obtained additional income through complementary activities, such as publishing printed music, giving private concerts, composing works for private and official ceremonies and giving music lessons. He became a rich man and enjoyed widespread social recognition, which continued and even increased after his death.

Interestingly, one of Bach’s children, the highly talented Johann Christian, followed Händel’s example in many aspects of his own musical career. After the death of his father, the 15-year-old Johann Christian went to live in Berlin, where his

brother Carl Philipp was in the service of the Prussian king. It was also a city with a vibrant musical life and where opera was very much in vogue. At the age of 21 he fell in love with an Italian singer and—like Händel—moved to Italy, where he studied under Padre Martini. He converted to Catholicism in order to work as an organist at Milan Cathedral, but decided to abandon the security of this position after receiving a couple of commissions to compose operas. Like Händel, in 1763 he moved to London, where he was offered the position of composer for the King’s Theatre, and where he would later become Queen Charlotte’s music master. Also like Händel (who, after arriving in England, signed his works as “Handel”), he changed his name to John Bach, became a music impresario and captivated “London audiences with his brilliant and imaginative music filled with invention and fantasy” (González Mira 2021, p. 110). After achieving success with his opera *Temistocle*, he had to adapt to the fickle tastes of English audiences, as did Händel. However, unlike Händel, he led a disorderly life and died an impoverished alcoholic at the age of just 46, despite having earned more money than any other member of the Bach family (*ibid.*).

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