

## Baroque Era Composers

### 1. Antonio Vivaldi (1675-1741)



**ANTONIO VIVALDI (1678 – 1741)**

- Italian composer (born in Venice)
- Composed many operas, masses, and concertos
- Many compositions for string orchestras (over 500 concertos)
- Ordained a priest at age 25 – known as “The Red Priest” because of his red hair
- Was popular during his lifetime, but popularity dwindled after his death; his works were rediscovered in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.
- Most notable contribution to music history:
  - The Four Seasons –  
four separate concerti for string orchestra, each representing a different season

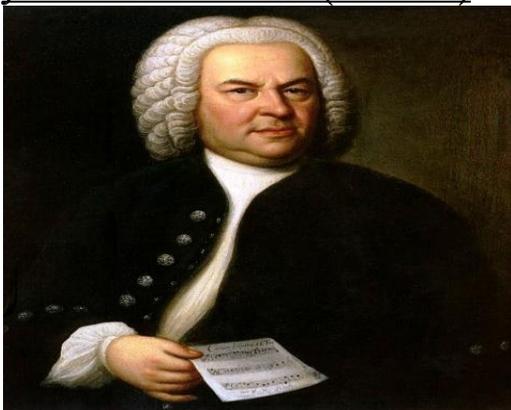
**SPRING** - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Yro42zd5XtM>

**SUMMER** - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OLP1pqNx0v4>

**AUTUMN** - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H7hGiZ579cs>

**WINTER** - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ve2rqERbeWo>

### 2. Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750)



- German composer (born in Eisenach)
- Born into a family of musicians
- Held many musical jobs during his lifetime; these outline his 3 compositional periods:

- Church organist in several cities – sacred works, organ works [Wachet Auf - Sleepers Awake](#)
- Musical director to the court of Prince Leopold – secular, orchestral works
- [Brandenburg Concerto #1](#)
- Choir director/organist at St. Thomas – sacred, vocal/choral works
- [Break Forth O Beauteous Light \(from Christmas Oratorio\)](#)
- Humble, religious, devoted family man
  - Married twice
    - Married 1<sup>st</sup> wife, Maria, in 1706
      - They had 7 children; 4 survived to adulthood
      - Maria died in 1720
    - Married 2<sup>nd</sup> wife, Anna Magdalena, in 1721
      - They had 13 children, 6 survived to adulthood
  - Even though J.S. Bach had 20 children between his two marriages, only 10 of his children survived into adulthood.
- Spent entire life within a small area of Germany
  - Was well known within a 200 mile radius in Germany but basically unknown outside this area
- Known for his phenomenal organ playing. Consulted on the construction/testing of new organs.
- Not famous during his lifetime – he did not pursue fame and fortune. Simply wanted to be a good provider for his family.
  - It took about 100 years for Bach to be recognized as a great musician.
  - Two of his sons became well known musicians even while Bach was still virtually unknown.
- MASTER of the PIPE ORGAN
  - His works form the foundation for our modern keyboard technique, still used today.
- MASTER of POLYPHONY
  - Perfected the Baroque style
- Goes blind about a year before his death
  - Some claim a result of botched eye surgery
  - Most likely stroke + pneumonia
- Composed almost every style popular during the Baroque era, but NO OPERA.
- Greatest musical contributions:
  - Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring (from a cantata) [Jesu Joy of Man's Desiring](#)
  - Toccata and Fugue in d minor (organ) [Toccata and Fugue in d minor](#)
  - Little Suite (keyboard/orchestral) [Minuet in G Major](#)
  - Brandenburg Concertos (orchestral/concerto grosso) [Brandenburg Concerto #4](#)

### 3. George Frederick Handel (1685-1759)



- Born in Germany (Halle)
- Showed remarkable talent at an early age
  - Played harpsichord, pipe organ, oboe, violin
- Father disapproved and forced him to study law
- Handel eventually abandoned his law studies in favor of moving to Italy to study opera.
- Eventually moved to England, but opera was unpopular.

- Handel adapts – writes oratorios instead!
- Handel’s oratorios end up earning him his greatest fame and wealth.
- Commissioned to compose for the King of England – King George (who was German and knew of Handel).
- Known as an arrogant individual; never married
- Traveled extensively
- Very well known during his lifetime
- Wrote some polyphonic works but much preferred the NEWER homophonic texture.
- Goes blind near the end of his life
  - Suffered from cataracts; had unsuccessful surgery which actually made his vision worse
- BURIED at WESTMINSTER ABBEY
  - English royalty, great English poets, politicians, etc. are buried there – this German man was “adopted” by the English and much beloved!
- Composed Orchestral Works – overtures, suites, chamber music, and choral works
- Greatest musical contributions:
  - The Messiah – an oratorio he composed in 3 weeks which contains the “Hallelujah Chorus”  
[Hallelujah Chorus](#)
  - Water Music Suite – for King George to enjoy as he rafted on the Thames [Hornpipe](#)

**Interesting note regarding Bach & Handel:**

Even though they were both born and raised in Germany during the same time period, they never met. Bach most likely knew who he was, since Handel was famous during his lifetime, but odds are that Handel would never have known of J.S. Bach.