



## Teacher Resource Guide

# La Réjouissance

## George Frideric Handel (1685–1759)

arranged by Richard Meyer

STRING ORCHESTRA

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### Unit 1: Composer/Arranger

George Frideric Handel lived between 1685 and 1759. He was born in Halle, Saxony, and lived in Germany, Italy, and England, where he became a naturalized British subject in 1726. Most of Handel's music was written in either opera or oratorio form. His two best-known pieces are *The Water Music Suite* and *Music for the Royal Fireworks*, composed in 1749.

Arranger Richard Meyer is the conductor for the Pasadena Youth Symphony Orchestra and an arranger of band, orchestra, and string orchestra music. He received a Bachelor of Arts from California State University in Los Angeles and taught instrumental music for more than sixteen years. He has received prestigious composition awards from the National School Orchestra Association and the Texas Orchestra Directors Association.

### Unit 2: Composition

*La Réjouissance* (The Rejoicing) is a typical example of late baroque instrumental music. It is the fourth of six pieces from the *Music for the Royal Fireworks* suite. The suite was composed to celebrate the signing of the Peace of Aix-la-Chapelle (War of the Austrian Succession) in 1748. England's King George planned a grand fireworks celebration and asked Handel to compose martial music for the event. Thus, the original work had to be scored for winds and percussion, much to Handel's disgust.

Before the big celebration, Londoners were invited to Vauxhall Gardens to hear the debut of *Music for the Royal Fireworks*. An estimated 12,000 people were in attendance. Only the Overture was played at the fireworks celebration, and it was claimed to be a big success. The rest of the evening was not; rain ruined most of the fireworks, and the scaffolding specifically built for the big celebration caught fire. Immediately following this performance, Handel scored the work to include strings. This arrangement for string orchestra is marked "Allegro" and is two minutes and thirty seconds in length.

### **Unit 3: Historical Perspective**

*Music for the Royal Fireworks* was written toward the very end of the baroque period. Handel's contemporaries were Johann Sebastian Bach, Antonio Vivaldi, Henry Purcell, and Georg Telemann. Orchestral suites had become popular in Germany in the late 1600s until about 1740. They comprised dance movements with a French overture; the grouping eventually became known as a *suite*. Called *ouverture suites*, Bach wrote four; Telemann and other German composers wrote them as well.

### **Unit 4: Technical Considerations**

*La Réjouissance* is in the key of D major. It correlates with *Strictly Strings* Book 1, page 29, so it only uses a one-octave scale. The violas and cellos do not have to play any C-sharps or F-sharps on the lower strings. The rhythmic demands require some independence and use of eighth, quarter, half, dotted-half, and whole notes. The rhythmic independence required is a bit too challenging for students in the first year of study but is recommended for second- and third-year students. Even then, parts will need to be clapped out and bowed on open strings before adding the printed pitches. Students should practice the scale with staccato and hooked bowings.

### **Unit 5: Stylistic Considerations**

*La Réjouissance* introduces the baroque style to young students through the use of staccato, slurred staccato, and hooked bowings. The bow stays on the strings at all times. In the B section of the piece, the dynamics are particularly noticeable with the first motive *piano* and the sequence that follows eight measures later, *forte*. The tempo should remain steady throughout the selection.

### **Unit 6: Musical Elements**

The melody occurs only in the first violin part, though the second violin and viola get a measure of melody periodically. The cello part is contrapuntal, making this selection polyphonic. While the second violin, viola, and bass parts seem to be homophonic, the cello part is written in counterpoint. The form of this piece is binary with three themes in the selection. This arranger

has opted for the binary form, while some recordings repeat the A section.

## Unit 7: Form and Structure

Binary form: A–B

SECTION	MEASURES	EVENT AND SCORING
A	1–17	Melody stated in first violin with simple harmonization in second violin, viola, and bass parts; cellos start with descending arpeggios and at m. 9 continue with an independent part; Handel uses sequences and motives within the melody line
B1	17–24	Melody consists of a sequence and a motive with violin and viola playing in unison rhythmically; cello echoes with a slightly louder motive
B2	25–36	Melody consists of descending sequences in first violin with chordal accompaniment from second violin and viola; the cello line is completely independent beginning in m. 27
B1	37–44	Section repeats exactly
B2	44–56	Section repeats with final cadence

## Unit 8: Suggested Listening

J. S. Bach:

Overture (Suite) No. 1, BWV 1066

Overture No. 2, BWV 1067

Overture No. 3, BWV 1068

Overture No. 4, BWV 1069

George F. Handel, *Water Music Suite*

Henry Purcell, Suite from *The Fairy Queen*

## Unit 9: Additional References and Resources

Donington, Robert. *String Playing in Baroque Music*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1977.

Grout, Donald Jay, and Claude V. Palisca. *A History of Western Music*. 6th edition. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 2001.

Hogwood, Christopher. *Handel*. London: Thames & Hudson, 1996.

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Machlis, Joseph. *Music: Adventures in Listening*. New York: Grosset and Dunlap, 1968.

Sadie, Stanley. *Handel: Works for Orchestra*. CD recording. Polygram Classics, 1984.

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