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Hello, hello! Welcome to episode 8 of Busy Kids Love Music, an educational podcast for music-loving kids. I'm Carly Seifert, the creator of Busy Kids Do Piano, and I'm so happy to have you here with me today.

During the holiday season, you might be hearing more of this famous piece, which comes from an oratorio composed by George Frideric Handel. This is Handel's most famous piece of work, and today we are going to learn a little bit more about Handel and his famous oratorio.

George Frideric Handel was born in Germany in 1685. Though he had an interest in music and began harpsichord lessons at a very early age, his father wanted him to become a lawyer. He obeyed his father's wishes and began to study law, but after his father died, he pursued his musical interests instead. His various musical jobs included the organist for a cathedral and a violinist and harpsichordist at an opera house. His most honored position was perhaps as music director – called Kapellmeister – to King George I of England. It was during his time in England that he composed some of his most famous works, including *Messiah*.

*Messiah* is an oratorio, which is a piece of music for orchestra, choir and soloists. It is like an opera, except that it isn't acted out with costumes on a stage. Oratorios were often performed in concert halls or even churches. The words to *Messiah* were written by someone named Charles Jennens, who used passages from the Bible to make a libretto. Now, a libretto is the words which are set to music for an opera or oratorio. So Jennens wrote the libretto, and Handel wrote the music for *Messiah*. He wrote this music – which included parts for choir, orchestra and soloist – in just 24 days while living in London.

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It tells the story of Jesus Christ and is divided into 3 parts. Part 1 tells of Christ's coming and birth. Part II is the death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus, and Part III focuses on the apostle Paul's teaching about heaven.

Because Part I of the oratorio tells of the coming and birth of Christ, and is associated with the Advent and Christmas season of the Christian church year, it is the most-often performed and especially during the Christmas season. The opening song of Part I, the overture, is one of only a few parts of the oratorio that is purely instrumental. Handel makes heavy use of the choir and soloists in his work.

Let's listen to bits of a few of the most popular choir selections from Part I of Handel's *Messiah*. "And the glory, the glory of the Lord" is the first time the choir is heard in the performance. Listen carefully for the beautiful stringed instruments that accompany the voices...

"For unto us a child is born" is another of the most popular choir numbers in *Messiah*. It is composed in the style of a fugue, which means that one theme is introduced, usually in a simple, straightforward way, but then gets more and more complicated as the music goes on, and as other themes are introduced. Let's listen to a bit of the song so that you can hear how the theme that is introduced by the sopranos and the beginning builds and becomes more complex...

Though the "Hallelujah Chorus" from *Messiah* is actually the final song of Part II of *Messiah*, you'll often hear it performed as the finale for Part 1 during a Christmas performance. It is said that when the King first heard the "Hallelujah Chorus", he rose to his feet. If you ever attend a performance of *Messiah*, you'll see that this tradition of standing for this number continues today!

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Trumpets, timpani, and choir voices repeating calls of “Hallelujah” give this piece a joyful, triumphant feeling, don’t you think?

Be sure to download this episode’s listening calendar, which includes links to performances of many other selections from *Messiah* both in the original arrangements as well as arrangements in gospel style or even for the electric guitar. You can get your hands on that listening calendar by visiting [busykidsdopiano.com/podcast/8](http://busykidsdopiano.com/podcast/8). For continued musical learning during the holiday season, be sure to check out my Nutcracker Camp for Kids, which I’ll link to in my show notes at [busykidsdopiano.com/podcast/8](http://busykidsdopiano.com/podcast/8)

If you enjoyed today’s episode, please be sure to rate and review our podcast on iTunes. Thank you so much for joining me today, and I look forward to seeing you again in 2 weeks on the Busy Kids Love Music Podcast!