

Hallelujah!

From the depths of despair, Handel composed an oratorical masterpiece



> Since its premiere in 1742, George Frideric Handel's *Messiah* has become known as the greatest oratorio ever written—a piece synonymous with the Christmas holiday season. It possesses a Hallelujah Chorus so powerful that upon hearing it, Austrian composer Joseph Haydn reportedly wept. Haydn said of Handel, “He is the master of us all.”

On composing the Hallelujah Chorus in 1741, Handel said, “Whether I was in my body or out of my body as I wrote it I know not. God knows.”

Messiah is a remarkable piece, one of the best-known and most frequently performed choral works in Western music. And it's even more amazing when one considers that this sacred oratorio was almost never composed.

The story goes something like this: Handel was in the middle of a successful composing career when he suffered a cerebral hemorrhage, which paralyzed his right side. For four years he could neither walk nor write. He eventually managed to write several operas but fell into debt. With no hope that he would regain his health, the composer, only 60, thought his life was over.

When a friend challenged him to write a sacred oratorio, Handel accepted. For 24 days, he worked day and night, without eating, to create *Messiah*. “I did think I did see all Heaven before me and the great God Himself,” Handel said of composing the piece.

Six decades before that momentous musical creation, in 1685, Handel was born in Halle, Germany. His father, Georg, was a barber-surgeon, and his mother, Dorothea, was a pastor's daughter. As a

musical composition and keyboard technique from Friedrich Wilhelm Zachow, the organist of Halle's Market Church of Our Dear Lady, who composed music for services at the church. From Zachow, the young musician learned much by copying and analyzing scores.

In accordance with his father's wishes, Handel began studying law at the University of Halle in 1702. However, his interest in music had only intensified, and that same year he also took a position as an organist at the cathedral of Halle. From then on his career as a professional creator and performer of music was sealed. His first two operas were produced in 1705, and two more were produced three years later.

As was the custom at the time, Handel frequently borrowed from music that had been composed by others for his own music. He was unapologetic about the practice. When asked why he borrowed material composed by Italian baroque composer Giovanni Battista Bononcini, Handel is said to have replied, “It's much too good for him; he did not know what to do with it.”

He traveled to Italy, where he

FOR 24 DAYS, HE WORKED DAY AND NIGHT, WITHOUT EATING, TO CREATE ‘MESSIAH.’ “I DID THINK I DID SEE ALL HEAVEN BEFORE ME AND THE GREAT GOD HIMSELF,” HANDEL SAID.

child, Handel's love of music was so strong—and in such opposition to his father's desire that he become a lawyer—that the boy was forbidden to play any musical instrument. One story has young Handel hiding a clavichord, a stringed keyboard instrument, in the attic and sneaking up to play when his family was asleep.

His formal training in music began as a teenager. Handel took lessons in

composed church, secular and theater music and met a number of Italian composers who influenced his work, and then settled permanently in England, where his patrons over the years included Queen Anne and the very wealthy third Earl of Burlington. In 1719, Handel became the music director of the Royal Academy of Music, which had been recently launched to establish Italian opera in London.

During the decades that followed, Handel composed more than 30 operas. These pieces, along with the biblical dramatic oratorios and secular music pieces that he created, were performed and well received by audiences and composers alike. Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart is said to have remarked of Handel, "Handel understands effect better than any of us—when he chooses, he strikes like a thunderbolt ... though he often saunters, in the manner of his time."

However, not everyone approved of his work. For example, though *Messiah* was well received at its premiere in Dublin, it became the subject of great controversy at its London debut a year later, in 1743, because some people believed it was profane to use Scripture to create works meant to entertain.

Handel weathered the storm of criticism about his work, but he was less successful at battling the physical illnesses that plagued him in later years. In addition to enduring a number of serious strokes, he suffered from serious cataracts. The operations he had to restore his vision resulted in blindness.

Handel died in 1759 at the age of 74 and was buried at Westminster Abbey. More than 3,000 people attended his funeral.

His work lives on, not only through its performances but in the inspiration it has provided generations of composers. "Handel is the greatest composer that ever lived," Ludwig van Beethoven once said. "I would uncover my head and kneel down on his tomb." ■

Introducing Dixon's

Two-Piece Hammer Union Nut

**New
for
2013**



Features:

- 4 hammer lug design; enables more surface area to hammer
- repair nut that is pinned and bolted for perfect alignment
- nut is installed without complete installation of male hammer union assembly
- nut forged to ASTM 105N standards; 2,000 PSI cold working pressure
- 4" Fig. 200/206 nut is interchangeable with reliable brands
- 8" Fig. 100/200/206 nut is interchangeable with reliable brands
- available in other series and sizes, consult Dixon

Note: Dixon recommends using Loctite® Threadlocker Red 271™ when bolting together two-piece hammer union nuts to ensure that bolts do not loosen when in service. Option two is to weld the seams of the split nut. Bolt torque recommendation is 60 foot pounds.

Call or click to learn more!

Dixon

800 High Street, Chestertown, MD 21620
ph 877.963.4966 • fx 800.283.4966

dixonvalve.com
customer service: 877.963.4966

