



Student CD
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Complete CD
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LISTENING GUIDE

George Frideric Handel (1685–1759)

From the *Water Music*

Date of composition: 1717

Orchestration: Two trumpets, two horns, oboes, bassoons, and strings.

Tempo: *Allegro*

Key: D major

Meter: $\frac{4}{4}$

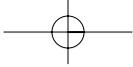
Duration: 1:49

Let's take a break from this discussion to listen to a wonderful piece of music. It is from Handel's *Water Music*. In the summer of 1717, an English newspaper reported the following about a trip taken by King George I along the river Thames in London:

On Wednesday evening, at about 8, the King went up the river in an open barge. Many other barges with persons of quality attended. A barge was employed for the orchestra, wherein were fifty instruments of all sorts, which played the whole way the finest music, composed expressly for this occasion by Mr. Handel, which His Majesty liked so much that he caused it to be played over three times.

Listen to some of the music the king heard. Listen first without thinking too much. Just concentrate on the sound and the energy. Now listen again, and think about this music in the context of what you have learned. It presents lots of melodies, which have motion and shape, are divided into phrases, and add up to a larger form. Listen also for pitch, intervals, consonance and dissonance, and dynamics. Let's listen to one section at a time.

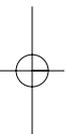
CD	TIME	LISTEN FOR
7 (7)	0:00	The piece starts with a single chord. Then we hear two trumpets ringing out. The accompaniment to the trumpets (played on oboes and stringed instruments) has descending runs, which add to the excitement. The melodic motion is of repeated notes that go ever higher and then are rounded off. The shape of the melody is upward with a slight fall at the end. The melody is divided into short phrases , the first three of which are very similar to each other, but at different pitches .
	0:09	The music is repeated, but there are significant differences the second time. Can you hear what they are? This time, (1) the instruments playing the melody are two horns instead of two trumpets, and (2) the accompanying runs are played an octave lower (actually one octave lower on the first repeat and two octaves lower on the second repeat). These differences are very effective, because they make the whole passage sound like an echo of the trumpet music.
	0:18	Very short two-note phrases (down-up), with trumpets and horns alternating. A change of dynamics here: the second alternation is played more quietly.
	0:22	Short repeated notes in small descending waves. Notice that the accompaniment is in the same rhythm. Again, the melody is echoed in the horns. You might notice that the accompaniment to the horns has a tinkling instrument playing along; this is a harpsichord.



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0:30	More military phrases here, like a fanfare. The accompaniment is in a different rhythm. The phrases are again echoed by the horns, and again the accompaniment is an octave lower, in the bass. Throughout the piece, the trumpets and the horns play in pairs. Different intervals are used between them, but the most common interval is a third.
0:45	Short phrases staying around the same pitch.
0:49	Now this is clever: The last part of the short phrases is repeated a couple of times to make a new phrase. But this is played by only one of the instruments (trumpet/horn). The other holds a high note, which then gets louder (crescendo) and rounds off the section.
0:58	Now Handel intensifies the music by introducing much shorter notes that go back and forth and reach a long, high note before rounding off.
1:13	Handel saves his most brilliant idea for the last section of the piece. All along, as we have seen, every phrase has been played first by the trumpets and then echoed by the horns. Now the composer <i>combines</i> the trumpets and horns to get the fullest possible sound. He also brings back the accompanying descending runs from the very beginning of the piece. The melody is played in longer notes that gradually descend. Since every phrase in the whole piece so far has been repeated, this time Handel also repeats the phrase, but just to get a little variety and final intensity, he divides each of the longer notes into two (<i>de-de de-de daa</i> instead of <i>da da daa</i>).
1:30	Four short chords end the whole piece.

This is wonderful music. No wonder the king wanted to hear it three times! Later in this chapter we'll analyze it again. Here, we have seen how the music can be analyzed in terms of melodic motion and shape, how it is divided very clearly into phrases, and how these phrases give the piece its form. We have also heard differences in pitch and noticed some intervals. We can hear that the music is almost entirely consonant throughout. We should also note that the dynamics are mostly *forte* (loud) with occasional crescendos to *fortissimo* (very loud). Remember, the sound had to carry across water!





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Key: D major

Meter: $\frac{4}{4}$

Duration: 1:49

Let's listen again to Handel's *Water Music* and think of it this time in terms of its rhythm. We will consider the beat, measures and meter, syncopation, and tempo.

CD	TIME	LISTEN FOR
7 (7)	0:00	In this section, the beat is firmly established. It's the beat that you tap your foot to. You'll find yourself tapping to the first chord and to the three repeated notes of each trumpet phrase. These are all quarter notes . The tempo is quite fast (<i>Allegro</i>).
	0:09	Keep tapping your foot as the horns play.
	0:18	In this section each note is on the beat.
	0:22	Two notes to a beat here (<i>de-de, de-de . . .</i>). These are eighth notes .
	0:30	This is the military, bouncy, fanfare-like rhythm. The accompaniment, however, has even eighth notes.
	0:45	Short phrases staying around the same pitch, mostly eighth notes.
	0:49	The very short notes in these phrases are sixteenth notes .
	0:58	Most of the notes now are sixteenth notes (four to a beat: <i>diddlediddle</i>).
	1:13	Now let's start concentrating on measure and meter . You have probably noticed that there is a heavier accent every four beats of the music. If you tap your foot and count one on the heavier accent and <i>two, three, four</i> on the lighter ones, you'll see that there are four beats to every measure. This means that the meter is $\frac{4}{4}$: four beats (each a quarter note) to every measure.
	1:30	Four quarter-note chords end the whole piece. These chords have quarter-note rests between them, which make them particularly effective. Rests are used before this point, of course, when some of the instruments aren't playing, but here, when all the instruments are silent, we can really <i>hear</i> the rests.

We've figured out that the meter in this piece is $\frac{4}{4}$, that the beat is very steady, that the tempo is *Allegro*. The piece doesn't seem to have any **syncopation** (off-beat accents), so the rhythm is very straightforward. To make sure that this is all clear to you, listen to the music again and follow the outline above. Remember, I said at the beginning of the chapter that the two most important things about listening to music are concentrating carefully and listening several times.

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Let's listen once more to Handel's *Water Music*, and think about its harmony, cadences, and texture. The piece is in the **key** of D major. This is a good key for trumpets to play in, and it has a bright and extroverted sound. Since the music was composed for the outdoors, everything about it is cheerful and positive. There is no **modulation** to other keys; it remains in D major throughout. Because the piece is in D major throughout doesn't mean that every **chord** is a D-major chord. Rather, the chords are all formed on notes from the *scale* of D. The most common chord other than the D-major chord is the A-major chord, the **dominant** chord of the key of D major. It is used most prominently in **half cadences**, when the composer wants to close off a phrase, but not halt the music. You can hear half cadences on A major at 0:08–0:09, 0:15–0:17, 0:24–0:25, 0:28–0:29, 0:52–0:53, and 0:56–0:57. **Authentic cadences**, cadences that end on the **tonic** chord, the chord of the home key, D major, occur at 0:35–0:37, 0:44–0:45, 1:04–1:05, 1:12–1:13, 1:20–1:21, 1:28–1:29, 1:30–1:31, and 1:32–1:34.

The **texture** of the music is primarily **song texture**: melody with accompaniment. But there are some passages of homophony, when all the instruments are playing in the same rhythm, for example at 0:18–0:29. **Counterpoint** is used sparingly, but to telling effect. In the opening section, for example, 0:00–0:17, the rushing downward scales in the accompaniment can be clearly heard as

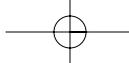


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CHAPTER 2

independent lines. When the top trumpet and the top horn hold long notes and then round off the phrase (at 0:49–0:53 and 0:53–0:57), this can also be called counterpoint because they are playing lines independent from the other instruments. And the downward scales return in the combined trumpets-and-horns section before the end (1:14–1:29).

CD	TIME	LISTEN FOR
7 (7)	0:00	Opening chord of D major. Rising four-measure phrase by trumpets accompanied by descending D-Major scales in sixteenth notes. Half cadence.
	0:09	Repeat (“echo”) of opening measures on horns. Accompanying descending scales in lower octaves.
	0:18	Half-measure phrases.
	0:22	Two-measure phrases, homophonic in eighth notes. Half cadences.
	0:30	Fanfare-like rhythm. Authentic cadences.
	0:45	Phrases of one measure. Mostly homophonic. Half cadences.
	0:49	Continuing closing gesture of previous phrases. Two-measure phrases. Solo instruments in counterpoint. Half cadences.
	0:58	Four-measure phrases using sixteenth notes. Authentic cadences.
	1:13	Trumpets <i>and</i> horns and whole orchestra combine for closing passages. Four-measure phrases in descending pattern match the opening. Descending scales return as accompaniment. “Echo” repetition breaks quarter notes into eighths. Authentic cadences.
	1:30	Four quarter-note chords separated by rests. Authentic cadences. End of movement.



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Let's listen one last time to Handel's *Water Music*, and think about it in terms of form, instruments, historical period, and its composer's individual style.

In terms of form, the piece is quite simple. The form is provided by the simple device of the "echo." Every phrase of the melody is played twice, usually first by the trumpets and then by the horns. This tight organization provides so much structure for the short piece that Handel did not seem to feel the need for any more.

The choice of instruments adds to the bright and extroverted effect of the music. Trumpets and horns are designed for outdoor use. There is also a full complement of stringed instruments (two groups of violins, and violas, cellos, and double basses). A harpsichord plays along with the cellos and basses, as was traditional in the eighteenth century. And, although they are hard to hear, a pair of oboes plays along with the violins. If you listen very carefully, you might hear the extra edge they give to the violin timbre. Even harder to hear are a pair of bassoons that play along with the basses. Again, the difference is one of tone color or timbre more than anything else.

As already mentioned, the style of a piece of music can be thought about in two ways: historical and individual. The *Water Music* of Handel was composed in the first part of the eighteenth century and therefore belongs in the Baroque period (1600–1750). This was a period of clear-cut music, in which the mood of a piece stays constant from beginning to end, the harmonic structure is strong, and the bass line is firm and direct. All these things are true of our piece.

What makes the music typical of Handel, however, is a different and more subtle matter. Handel's music is always clear and accessible. Even when he writes counterpoint, it is easy to follow. But there is always something interesting and subtly unconventional about his music, even if it sounds extremely simple and straightforward.

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The special features to notice in this piece include:

1. The variable phrase lengths. In the first section the opening trumpet melody and the answering horn melody are exactly four measures long. But this is followed by two-note phrases (half a measure each!). Then the homophonic section has two-measure phrases. This variety of phrase length is typical of Handel and makes his music much more intriguing than it would otherwise be.

2. Very careful planning of ideas. For example, listen again to the very first chord. You might think this chord is unnecessary. (In fact, I thought so for a while.) The piece could just start with the trumpets. So why did Handel put in this first chord? Well, one can never really *know* the answer to a question like that, but a couple of ideas come to mind. First, it makes the trumpets sound more ringing when they enter right after it, since the chord uses neither the trumpets nor the horns. In fact, it's the only moment in the whole piece in which both the trumpets and the horns are silent. Second, that opening chord balances the four chords at the end of the piece and makes them sound more "correct."

As another example, think of the way Handel *combines* the trumpets and horns at the end, after having alternated them throughout. He must have planned this from the beginning. Think, too, of how the downward scales come back at the end, rounding off the piece perfectly with a subtle reference to the opening. Even more subtle is the fact that the *rhythm* of the trumpets' and horns' melody in this combined ending section is the same as the rhythm at the opening of the piece, but the instruments move down instead of up. (Down feels more right for an ending, up for a beginning.)

Handel may have thought of all these things consciously or unconsciously. It doesn't really matter. What matters is that they are there, that they are strokes of genius, and that you have already learned enough to be able to hear them!

Here is a final Listening Guide that summarizes these points about form, instruments, historical period, and the composer's individual style.

CD	TIME	LISTEN FOR
7 (7)	0:00	Opening chord on strings, oboes, and bassoons. Rising four-measure phrase on trumpets accompanied by descending scales on strings and oboes.
	0:09	Repeat ("echo") of opening measures on horns. Accompanying descending scales in lower octaves.
	0:18	Half-measure phrases.
	0:22	Two-measure phrases.
	0:30	Fanfare-like rhythm.
	0:45	One-measure phrases.
	0:49	Continuing closing gesture of previous phrases. Two-measure phrases.
	0:58	Four-measure phrases.
	1:13	Trumpets <i>and</i> horns and whole orchestra combine for closing passages. Four-measure phrases in descending pattern match the opening. Descending scales from opening return as accompaniment. "Echo" repetition breaks quarter notes into eighths.
	1:30	Four final chords also remind us of opening. End of movement.