

WILLIAM BILLINGS 1746-1800



Boston Harbor

William Billings was born in Boston, Massachusetts and was self-taught as a composer. His job was that of a tanner (someone who makes leather from animal skins). He composed several fuguing tunes which are simple three and four part works that feature melodic imitation. Billings' first published book was *The New England Psalm-Singer*. The cover of that book was engraved by the famous American patriot Paul Revere. Although Billings wrote during the Classical period, his music is quite different than music written by Haydn and Mozart during that same time.

Chester is probably Billings' most well-known song. Its words reflect the growing tension between the North American Colonies and Great Britain. When the American Revolutionary War broke out, *Chester* became the "fight song" of the New England Regiments. William Schuman, a modern American composer, composed his contemporary setting of *Chester* in 1956.

■ 1746 Birth of William Billings

■ 1749 Handel composes *Music for the Royal Fireworks*

■ 1765 Potato becomes most popular European foodstuff

■ 1771 First edition of *Encyclopedia Britannica*

■ 1774 The Quebec Act gives French Canadians political and religious rights

■ 1776 American Congress writes Declaration of Independence

■ 1786 Mozart composes the opera *The Marriage of Figaro*

■ 1797 John Adams inaugurated President of U.S.,
Thomas Jefferson, Vice President

■ 1800 First electric battery invented by Alessandro Volta

QUESTIONS

1. A simple three and four part work that features melodic imitation is called a _____.
2. The cover of *The New England Psalm-Singer* was engraved by _____.
3. What was the "fight song" of the New England Regiments during the American Revolutionary War?
4. Who was inaugurated President of the U.S. during the last few years of Billings' life?

Optional Listening Response
Please complete for each composer

Using YouTube, Spotify, iTunes, or another music playing app or service, please listen to one piece from the composer and answer the following:

Composer name:

Title of composition:

Was this a fast or slow song?

What instrument or voice performed the melody?

What emotion would you give this piece?

Other thoughts you had about this piece of music:

If you could not do the listening for this assignment, it's ok. I hope you have the opportunity to hear the composers' works someday.



JACQUES OFFENBACH 1819–1880



Jacques Offenbach was a popular composer of Opera Comique (light, comic opera) in nineteenth century Paris, France. Written during the Romantic period, these comic operas generally had spoken dialogue between the songs, similar to what we have now in Broadway musicals. Comic operas of this type are sometimes called operettas. Offenbach was born in Cologne, studied at the Paris Conservatory, and played the cello. He then became a theater conductor, later getting his own operas produced.

Two of Offenbach's most popular operas, are *Helen the Beautiful* and *Orpheus in the Underworld* which contains the famous *Can-Can*.

■ **1819** Birth of Jacques Offenbach, Florida purchased by U.S. from Spain

■ **1822** Franz Liszt (at age 11) makes his debut as a pianist in Vienna, Austria

■ **1834** The bestselling book of the year is Victor Hugo's *Hunchback of Notre Dame*

■ **1844** Samuel Morse invents the telegraph, messages sent between Baltimore and Washington D.C.

■ **1849** Harriet Tubman escapes from slavery, works with the "Underground Railroad"

■ **1860** Étienne Lenoir develops first internal combustion engine

■ **1871** British Columbia becomes the sixth Canadian province

■ **1874** Brahms composes *Hungarian Dances*

■ **1880** Auguste Rodin completes famous sculpture *The Thinker*

QUESTIONS

1. True or False: The nineteenth century includes the years 1900–1999.
2. What often happens between the songs of a comic opera?
3. The famous music *Can-Can* is from which Offenbach opera?
4. Name a famous book published during Offenbach's lifetime.

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GIOACCHINO ROSSINI 1792-1868



Gioacchino Rossini was born in Pesaro, Italy and studied music in Bologna, where he learned to play the French Horn and sang in operas. By the age of 21, he had already composed 12 operas which were being performed in many of the major opera houses of Italy. Rossini composed a total of 39 operas, many of which are still performed regularly all over the world.

During this time in history, long before the invention of radio, movies or television, going to see an opera was a very popular form of entertainment. Rossini was clearly the most popular composer of opera during the Classical period in Italy. His most famous operas include *The Barber of Seville* (1816), *The Thieving Magpie* (1817), and *William Tell* (1829). At the age of 37 he retired from writing operas, and composed mostly religious choral music during the rest of his life. Rossini was also known as a gourmet, and developed a classic recipe ("tournedos Rossini") which is still used in some restaurants today.

■ 1792 Birth of Gioacchino Rossini, architect James Hogan begins work on the White House, Washington, D.C.

■ 1799 Beethoven composes *Symphony #1 in C Major*

■ 1815 Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm publish their collection of fairy tales

■ 1827 Alexander Dumas writes *The Three Musketeers*

■ 1840 Birth of three famous French artists; Monet, Renoir and Rodin

■ 1853 Henry Steinway and his three sons begin the N.Y. firm of piano manufacturers

■ 1861 Abraham Lincoln inaugurated as 16th President of U.S.

■ 1868 Brahms composes *German Requiem, Opus 45*

QUESTIONS

1. Unscramble the letters to find where Rossini studied music in Italy - A L O G N O B
2. Add the number of operas Rossini composed by the age of 21, with his age at the time he stopped writing operas, and the sum will be _____.
3. Name two of Rossini's famous operas.
4. Name one French artist who was born during Rossini's lifetime.

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JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH 1685–1750



Johann Sebastian Bach was born in Eisenach, Germany into a family that had a tradition of producing great musicians. He became an orphan at age 10 and was raised by his older brother who was an organist. An accomplished violinist, Bach became more well-known as a church organist. In addition to being one of the greatest composers, Bach had 20 children, many of whom became musicians and composers themselves.

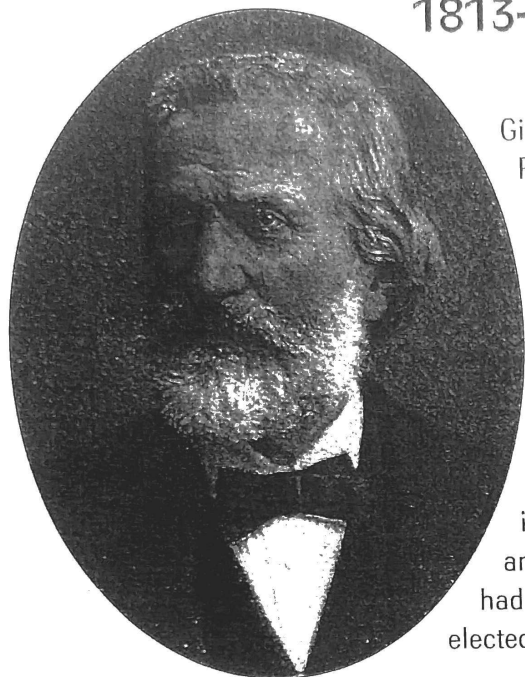
One of the most important Baroque composers, Bach wrote an enormous amount of music for organ, harpsichord, orchestra and chorus. Some of Bach's best known works include the *Brandenburg Concertos* for Orchestra (1721), *St. Matthew Passion* for chorus and orchestra (1729) and *The Well Tempered Clavier* (keyboard work including preludes and fugues in all twelve major and minor keys).

- 1685 Birth of Johann Sebastian Bach and George Frederick Handel
- 1704 "Boston News Letter" first newspaper in America
- 1709 Invention of the piano by Italian Bartolomeo Cristofori
- 1714 D. G. Fahrenheit constructs mercury thermometer with temperature scale
- 1718 Yale University (formerly Collegiate School of America) moves to New Haven, Connecticut
- 1731 Benjamin Franklin founds a subscription library in Philadelphia, PA
- 1734 First horse race in America at Charleston, South Carolina
- 1741 Handel writes *The Messiah*, an oratorio composed in 18 days
- 1750 The minuet becomes Europe's fashionable dance

QUESTIONS

1. J.S. Bach played the violin and the _____.
2. If you sang in an adult chorus you might sing a piece Bach wrote in 1729 called _____.
3. True or False: The keyboard work that includes preludes and fugues in all twelve major and minor keys is called *The Well Tempered Clavier*.
4. The piano was invented in the year _____.

GIUSEPPE VERDI 1813-1901



Giuseppe Verdi was one of the most famous composers of opera during the Romantic period. He was born in a small village in Northern Italy and was a talented organist, playing in churches at the age of 11. He wanted to study music at the Milan Conservatory but was refused admission, so he took private lessons instead. His third opera, *Nabucco*, established his fame as a composer. Verdi's operas are frequently performed in all the famous opera houses worldwide.

Verdi chose a number of interesting subjects for his operas. *Aida* (1872) takes place in Egypt and is sometimes performed with live animals, including elephants, on stage. *La Traviata* (1853) is set in Paris, France. *Othello* and *Falstaff* are based on William Shakespeare plays. Verdi's operas often had political themes, and Verdi himself was active in politics, eventually being elected senator.

- 1813 Birth of Giuseppe Verdi, James Madison begins second term as President of U.S.
- 1825 World's first passenger train system opens in England
- 1836 Davy Crockett, American frontiersman and politician killed at the Alamo (Texas)
- 1839 Abner Doubleday conducts the first baseball game. (Cooperstown, N.Y.)
- 1847 Gold discoveries in California lead to gold rush
- 1863 President Lincoln delivers "The Gettysburg Address"
- 1879 Thomas Edison invents the electric lightbulb
- 1884 Johannes Brahms composes *Symphony #3 in F Major*
- 1901 Marconi transmits radio messages from Cornwall, England to Newfoundland, Canada

QUESTIONS

1. True or False: Verdi was composing music during the Baroque period.
2. What kind of music did Verdi compose?
3. When Verdi was young, what instrument did he play?
4. Name a modern convenience that was invented when Verdi was over 60 years old.

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