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## By George! Handel's Music for Royal Occasions 7 February - 18 May 2014

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No composer has been more closely associated with the British monarchy than German-born George Frideric Handel (1685-1759). His anthem *Zadok the Priest* has been performed at every coronation since that of King George II on 11 October 1727, while his *Water Music* was performed in 2012 on the River Thames for the Diamond Jubilee of Queen Elizabeth II.

In the 300th anniversary year of the coronation of George I, the first Hanoverian king, this fascinating new exhibition explores Handel and his music for royal occasions, drawing on the Gerald Coke Handel Collection at the Foundling Museum, and significant loans from major institutions including the British Library, Lambeth Palace and the National Portrait Gallery.

Handel enjoyed the patronage of three British monarchs during his lifetime: Queen Anne, George I, and George II. Employed by George I in Hanover, Handel had the advantage of knowing the new king before he ascended the British throne in 1714. Although he was not appointed Master of the King's Musick, Handel was favoured by George I and his family, while the appointed Master was left to compose music for smaller, less significant occasions. Handel tutored the royal princesses and composed music for almost all important royal events. He went on to compose the coronation anthems for George II, as well as the *Music for the Royal Fireworks* and the famous *Water Music*.

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Exhibits include paintings of the Royal Family and the 1727 Order of Service for the Coronation of George II, annotated by the Archbishop of Canterbury. Musical instruments of the period will be displayed alongside autograph manuscripts including *Zadok the Priest*, the *Ode for the Birthday of Queen Anne*, and *Lessons for Princess Louisa*, which Handel composed to teach the Royal princesses to play the harpsichord. Rarely-seen documents from the archives of Westminster Abbey give an insight into the organisation of major Royal events.

The Librarian of the Gerald Coke Handel Collection, Katharine Hogg, said: “Handel combined his musical genius with an ability to place himself at the heart of the British establishment, while retaining his independence as an entrepreneur and philanthropist. His identity as part of the British musical tradition and his legacy of quintessentially British music reflects his ability to adapt his musical skills to meet the expectations of his patrons and audiences.”

Handel was a governor of the Foundling Hospital. He donated the organ to its Chapel, composed an anthem for the Hospital, and conducted annual fundraising concerts of *Messiah*. Today’s charity concerts and fundraising auctions can trace their roots back to the Foundling Hospital and the remarkable creative philanthropy of Handel.

The Foundling Museum’s Director, Caro Howell said: “By exploring Handel’s royal relationships here, in the context of a home for the most vulnerable children, we’re revealing two sides of a remarkable artist. The musician who personally tutored the royal princesses also oversaw the music at the Foundling Hospital’s chapel where illegitimate and abandoned children were christened. The composer who directed the music at lavish and unique royal events, including the Royal Fireworks, exploited the same appetite for scale by conducting fundraising concerts at the Hospital.”

*By George!* is accompanied by a series of public events, including a concert by the Academy of Ancient Music, performances of Handel’s music for nursery children, and eighteenth-century dancing and costume workshops.

**By George! opens a year of celebration at the Foundling Museum.**

The Foundling Museum celebrates its 10th anniversary in June 2014. This milestone year coincides with three significant anniversaries in the story we tell: the 275th anniversary of the establishment of the Foundling Hospital, the UK’s first children’s charity; the 250th anniversary of the death of William Hogarth, whose donation of paintings to the Hospital created England’s first public art gallery; and the 300th anniversary of the coronation of George I, the first Hanoverian king. We will be marking this year of celebration and commemoration with a series of major exhibitions, events and the re-opening our Introductory Gallery after a major refurbishment.

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Museum Director, Caro Howell said: “The Foundling will be ten years old in 2014. To mark this anniversary we will be staging an exciting programme of events that shine a light on some of the many fascinating histories we tell. From Handel concerts for babies to new commissions by contemporary artists, from Hogarthian Pub Crawls to Jacqueline Wilson in conversation, 2014’s ambitious programme will have something for everyone.”

#### NOTES TO EDITORS

The Foundling Museum

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Open: Tuesday – Saturday 10:00 – 17:00 and Sunday 11:00 – 17:00, closed Mondays

Admission: £7.50, concessions £5, National Trust members half price, children free

Tube and train: Russell Square, King’s Cross St Pancras and Euston

**The Foundling Museum** explores the history of the Foundling Hospital, the UK’s first children’s charity and first public art gallery. Through a dynamic programme of exhibitions and events we celebrate the ways in which artists of all disciplines have been inspired to improve children’s lives since 1740.

**The Foundling Hospital**, which continues today as the children’s charity Coram, was established in 1739 by the philanthropist Captain Thomas Coram, as ‘a hospital for the maintenance and education of exposed and deserted young children’. Instrumental in helping Coram realise his vision were the artist William Hogarth who encouraged all the leading artists of the day to donate work, and the composer George Frideric Handel who gave annual benefit concerts of *Messiah*. In doing so, they created London’s first public art gallery and set the template for the way that the arts could support philanthropy. The Foundling Museum celebrates their vision and continues their work, by enabling today’s artists, musicians and writers to work alongside vulnerable young people and to cast new light on the histories we tell.

#### **The Gerald Coke Handel Collection**

Handel was a governor of the Foundling Hospital, and the Gerald Coke Handel Collection is one of the major sources for Handel research the world over. The collection includes manuscripts and early printed music, books, paintings, prints and objets d’art, ephemera and memorabilia relating to Handel and his contemporaries. Significant items include Handel’s will, which includes the bequest to the Foundling Hospital of a score of *Messiah*, the *Messiah* score itself and two autograph letters from Handel to his librettist Charles Jennens.

Image: A perspective view of the building for the fireworks in the Green Park taken from the reservoir, Robert Sayer, ca. 1749 (c) Gerald Coke Handel Collection, the Foundling Museum

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