

Music & Theater Department Blog

Mystery Blog

By Dr. David Tripold

In 1703 he walked 300 miles to hear another musician play. Since the musician was about to retire from a prestigious position, he was also there to present himself as a job candidate. He didn't get the job. In 1717 he was imprisoned for a month for breach of contract when he tried to leave a job without permission. He spent the time composing and managed to complete 24 pieces for keyboard, one in every major and minor key. In 1747 he applied to get into his city's composer's club by submitting a piece of music he had recently composed. The club committee thought his music was old-fashioned, but accepted him as a gesture of kindness. He died from a brain hemorrhage as a result of having cataract surgery. By the way, the piece he composed for the club is now considered to be one of the greatest pieces of its type ever composed. Can you name the composer?



As a young man he was given permission to take a leave of absence to go to Italy to study music by the prince of his region. Shortly after his return he applied to go to Italy again. The prince was skeptical of this second application, but granted permission as long as he returned to resume his former duties. But the young man never returned and settled in London where he became a famous composer of Italian operas, the Founder of the Royal Academy of Music, and composer for the King of England. By the late 1720's a fickle English audience lost interest in Italian opera and became interested in something called oratorios, which were like operas but had no staging or costumes. So he began composing oratorios and, in fact, composed the most famous one of all time. By the way, that Prince never forgave him, especially when he became the King of England and was now this man's boss. Oh, yes, and how did this man die? He developed cataracts and underwent surgery with the same doctor who treated the man described in my first paragraph. Shortly after he developed a severe infection and died of a brain hemorrhage. Sick coincidence, yes? Can you name the composer?

And one more.

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He was born Robert Allen Zimmerman in Duluth Minnesota. His paternal grandparents had immigrated to the United States from the Ukraine during an anti-Semitic pogrom in Russia in 1905. He liked to listen to blues and country music on the radio and later to Rock and Roll. In high school he formed a band called the Golden Chords and sang covers of songs by Little Richard and Elvis Presley. While attending the University of Minnesota he began performing folk music at a local coffee house. It was here that he began introducing himself with a different name. When asked why he changed his name, he said "You call yourself what you want to call yourself. It's the Land of the Free." He dropped out of college and moved to New York to perform and visit Woody Guthrie. He signed a record contract and became a star! His career was interrupted by a terrible motorcycle accident. But he returned to the stage where his songs became synonymous with the Vietnam War protest. His career has spanned over fifty years, covering multiple musical genres from folk, blues, gospel, country, rock n' roll, and more. He has over 100 million records and continues to perform today. Can you name the artist/composer?

In many ways they are not unlike you and me. Work hard my friends. Don't limit yourself to any particular genre in music. Study it all. Practice like crazy. See every chance to perform as an opportunity and perhaps someday someone will be writing a mystery blog about you.

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