

Handel and the MESSIAH Story

The boy was left much on his own until a sudden change came to the Händel household. When his grandfather, Pastor Taust, died, Friedrich's Aunt Anna, who had been caring for him, now joined the Händel family. His warmhearted aunt had never been married and without children of her own, she soon gave all her love to her little nephew. And to her he confessed his love for music.

While Aunt Anna knew of the barber-surgeon's feelings, she took her nephew each Sunday to her father's former church, where the best organ music was performed, and as he listened raptly she watched him with delight. They shared a secret. Had his father known of their pleasure, he surely would have "beaten it out" of the boy, and Aunt Anna would have been thrown out of the house, bag and baggage. But she did not say a word. She seemed like an angel to Friedrich, an angel content to lead a double life to give him what he longed for.

Then one day when he came home from school, he saw something he could hardly believe. There was a clavichord in his room! Who else could have brought it but Aunt Anna? But when he ran to thank her, she admitted nothing. She only told him not to brag about the instrument and not to make any disturbance with it.

Friedrich did his best, but his father found out. He ordered the clavichord removed at once, though his son promised to play it only in his absence. Not until Fried-

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rich pointed out that he had to practice music for school did his father give in. The clavichord stayed, and Friedrich always believed it had been smuggled in by his saintly Aunt Anna.

He would have been lost without her and he could not have stood his loneliness. He had no friends among his schoolmates. He hardly ever roamed the crooked streets of Halle with the other boys. Most of his time was spent alone with his dreams and his music.

From his bedroom window he could see the gate of an old courtyard. The ancient palace inside it was deserted, with empty doorways and windows. Young Friedrich often sat in the palace yard and dreamed all by himself, with no one to disturb him. He dreamed of a day when he would leave the town of Halle and move to courts and palaces full of life, pomp, and music.

He knew that his father was a regular visitor to the ducal court at Weissenfels, only a few miles from Halle. "Can't you take me?" he begged many times.

"When you are old enough," the barber-surgeon said, "I will take you."

Father was aiming high for his only son. Friedrich was a good student, and since he did not want to be a surgeon, his father had decided that he must become a lawyer. In any case, he must preserve the honorable record of the Händels whose talents were above the lowly musicians' art. It might help Friedrich's career to