

# Hogarth

DELPHI  CLASSICS

# *Masters of Art*

**William Hogarth**

(1697-1764)



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A stylized, handwritten signature of 'W. Hogarth' in black ink. The letters are fluid and connected, with a long, sweeping tail on the final 'h'.

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Version 1

*Masters of Art Series*

**William Hogarth**



*By Delphi Classics, 2021*

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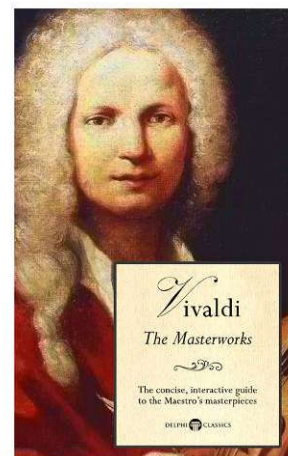
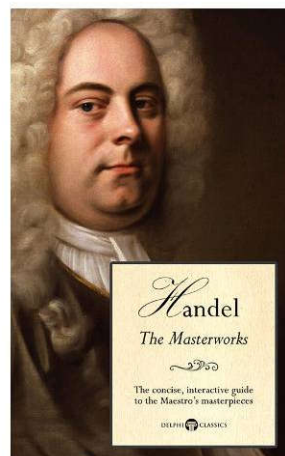
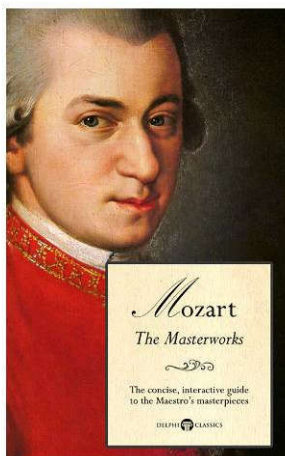
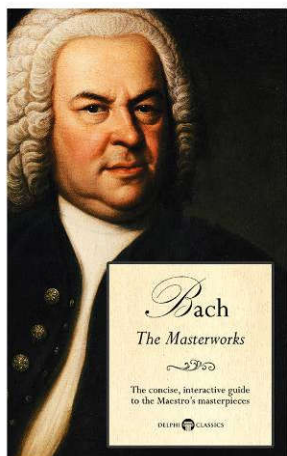
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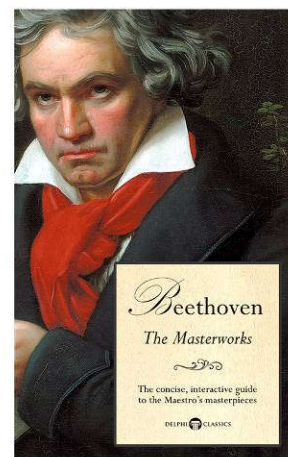
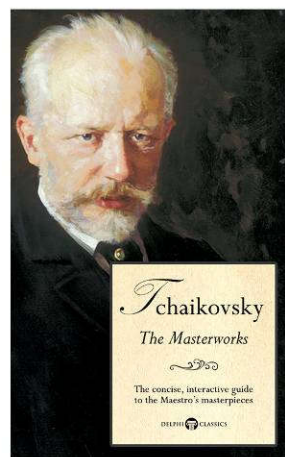
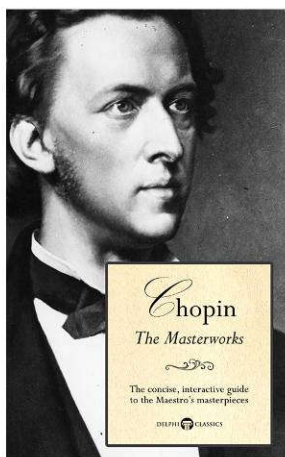
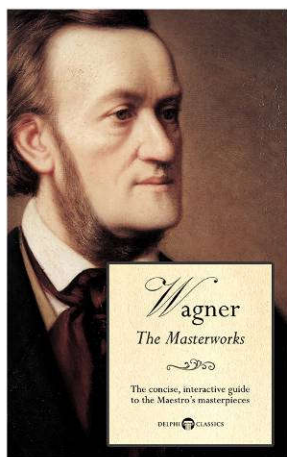
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## The Highlights



*Bartholomew Close, Smithfield, London — William Hogarth was born at 58 Bartholomew Close in 1697.*





*The site of the birthplace*





*St. Bartholomew Close, c. 1800*

## The Highlights



In this section, a sample of William Hogarth's most celebrated works is provided, with concise introductions, special 'detail' reproductions and additional biographical images.

## Masquerades and Operas (1724)



William Hogarth, the father of English painting, was born at Bartholomew Close in London to Richard Hogarth, an impoverished Latin school teacher and textbook writer, and Anne Gibbons. He grew up with two sisters, Mary and Ann, in the heart of the bustling city. In later years, Hogarth complained of the poor treatment of his gifted father at the hands of printers, booksellers and wealthy patrons. This developed in the young man a burgeoning distrust of learning and a self-assertive and independent character. He had little inclination to scholarship. Nonetheless, he had a lively perception of the world about him and stories survive of how he liked to mimic and draw every day characters, encouraged by his visits to a local painter's workshop. Although his father never actively discouraged his creative pursuits, the artist later complained that he did little more "than put me in a way of shifting for myself."

Hogarth turned to the security of a solid craftsman's training; at the age of fifteen he was apprenticed to a silversmith. Scanty information of this period survives and it is assumed that he moved to his master's house, where he learned to engrave gold and silver work with armorial designs. These years represent a disappointing hiatus in the artist's development, when he could have been occupied with more demanding work. He was frustrated during this period, leading him to exploit unorthodox methods of self-instruction to make up for lost time. And yet there are positive aspects of this developmental process — it moulded Hogarth into an original and flexible artist, whose unconventional approach inspired ideas that otherwise would never have occurred to him.

Still, it certainly was not all hard work and no fun. The young Hogarth had a lively and humorous character, taking delight in sociable and frivolous activities. A keen observer of human behaviour, he enjoyed trips to the theatres and extravagant shows, where he was a convivial companion. His later artworks reveal a thorough experience of the diverse and colourful distractions available in eighteenth century London. His meticulous depictions of coffeehouses, taverns, bawdy houses, fairs and theatres show a fertile appreciation of the lively metropolis. During this formative period, he developed lasting friendships among lively intellectual circles; he usually mixed with the middle classes, specifically with the critical and enlightened spheres — the heart of the cultural life of Hanoverian England.

At the age of twenty-three, when George I had been king for six years, Hogarth sought a more mature approach to his work. He set up his own studio, resolving to break away from the rigid limitations of his chosen trade. He attended a private drawing school in St. Martin's Lane, where he joined other students drawing from casts and live models. However, he was still no great student. He was averse to copying, likening the practice to 'emptying water from one vessel into another'. His instinctive rejection of formal training, blended with a characteristic waywardness, convinced him to adopt a new method of learning to draw — using the ingredients of actual life. Hogarth was a realist at heart and in his early work he was more concerned with expressive rather than formal values. He later explained how he liked to "retain in my mind's eye without drawing on the spot whatever I wanted to imitate." Favouring observation of everyday life, he trained his unusual visual memory to such

an extent that he no longer required the use of preliminary studies, committing his ideas directly to canvas or paper.

He still relied on his formidable knowledge of the European tradition in art, which he acquired through the plethora of reproductive engravings in the London market. While occupied with his novel learning process, he supplemented his living as a copper engraver, executing trade cards, tickets and book illustrations. Although he achieved success as an illustrator, it brought him no satisfaction; he wholly disliked being dependent on the same booksellers that had exploited his father. In short, his engraving work was but a means of maintaining funds for living expenses and the various leisure excursions that he enjoyed.

Hogarth was a keen admirer of Sir James Thornhill, an English painter of historical subjects, who worked in the Italian Baroque tradition. In 1724 Hogarth joined a drawing school that had newly opened in Thornhill's house. At that time Thornhill held the official post of sergeant painter to the king and he was the first knighted English-born artist. In his work Thornhill affirmed the vitality of native art and the social respectability of the artist — concepts held dear by Hogarth. Like Thornhill, he believed in art as a vital creative force in society and he despised the connoisseurs' prejudice for foreign artists and their exclusive regard for the Old Masters.

Hogarth's first major work, a small print entitled *Masquerades and Operas*, was published independently of the booksellers in 1724. The illustration savagely attacks the contemporary taste and expressed attitudes that had frustrated Hogarth throughout his life. It questions the standards of a powerful clique, which had been patronised by the 3<sup>rd</sup> Earl of Burlington, an influential architect. This bold attack on the connoisseurs was likely designed to appeal to his hero, Thornhill, who was then suffering from Burlington's Neoclassical revival. The fact that Hogarth was undaunted by the making of powerful enemies, right from the start of his career, reveals his stalwart, though imprudent nature. When the clique retaliated in 1730, nullifying all royal interest in Hogarth's work, he was incensed. This is a salient aspect of his character; though always quick to attack and satirise others, he was always discouraged and offended when his adversaries responded in equal measure.

Also known as *The Bad Taste of the Town*, the print reveals the 'reigning follies' of London, mocking the contemporary fashion for foreign culture, including Palladian architecture and the current rage for pantomimes based on the Italian commedia dell'arte, masquerades (masked balls) and Italian opera. The artwork combines two printmaking techniques — etching and engraving — with etched lines made in the plate using acid and engraved lines, marked using a burin.

The building to the left is intended to represent King's Theatre, Haymarket, where a queue of masked figures is being led to a masquerade ball by a devil or satyr. This figure holds a bag containing £1,000, accompanied by a figure wearing a jester's cap and bells, with a garter round his right leg — a reference to the Prince of Wales, later George II, who was said to frequent masquerades. A banner hangs above the entrance depicting Charles Mordaunt, 3<sup>rd</sup> Earl of Peterborough and two other nobles kneeling before the Italian soprano opera singer Francesca Cuzzoni, asking her "pray accept £8,000" to perform in London. The Earl pours money on the floor and the singer draws it towards her with a rake, while two male singers stand behind. This banner — an imaginative picture within a picture convention — is based on a 1723 caricature of a performance of Handel's opera *Flavio*.

To the right, a crowd gathers outside Lincoln's Inn Fields Theatre to see John Rich's commedia dell'arte pantomime, *Harlequin Doctor Faustus*. The mitred soldiers guarding the buildings signal the patronage of George I, a monarch born in



Germany who spoke no English. A countryman with his staff looks on incredulously, scratching his head, as another man tries to interest him in the play. No doubt the feverish actions of the city dwellers are unintelligible to the man newly arrived from the peace of the country.

A sign advertises the conjuring act of Isaac Fawkes in the “Long room” of the theatre. John James Heidegger, Swiss impresario, manager of the King’s Theatre, Haymarket, and introducer of the masquerades to London, is portrayed leaning out of a window, identifiable by the letter “H...” on the window ledge beneath him. His wide spreading arms show his desire to capture the wealth and interest of the easily-led Londoners.

In the background, we can see the gate to Burlington House – the London house of Richard Boyle, 3<sup>rd</sup> Earl of Burlington in Piccadilly – which is now labelled as “Accademy of Art”, topped by a sculpture of Burlington’s favoured architect William Kent (KNT), who is humorously lifted above Michelangelo and Raphael. This indicates Hogarth’s preference for the old English Baroque style over the new Palladian style preferred by Burlington and Kent. Hogarth clearly bemoans the fashion for foreign entertainments and the neglect of their British equivalents. This is particularly stressed by the woman in the centre foreground, who pushes along a wheelbarrow filled with the works of the great English dramatists – William Congreve, John Dryden, Thomas Otway, Shakespeare and Joseph Addison – now being sold as “waste paper”.

As Hogarth published the print himself, aiming to avoid the monopoly of the Stationers’ Company, he could sell it for the low price of one shilling. The print was popular, though it would not be a commercial success, when half-price unauthorised copies appeared soon after its publication. Hogarth’s ensuing difficulties with the copyright infringement of his prints made him an advocate for copyright reform and ultimately led ten years later to the passing of the Engraving Copyright Act.



Could new dumb Faustus, to reform the Age,  
Conjure up Shakespear's or Ben Johnson's Ghost,  
They'd blush for shame, to see the English Stage  
Debauch'd by fool'ries, at so great a cost.

Price 1 Shilling. 1724

What would their Manes say? should they behold  
Monsters and Masquerades, where usefull Plays  
Adorn'd the fruitfull Theatre of old,  
And Rival Wits contended for the Bays.

*The first state of the print*



*Detail*





*Detail*





*Detail*



*Detail*





*Detail*



*Later state of the print, with numerous changes*





*Detail*



*Detail*





*Detail*



*Detail*





*Detail*



*Detail*





*Detail*





*Sir James Thornhill (1675-1734) was an English painter of historical subjects, working in the Italian Baroque tradition. He was responsible for several large-scale schemes of murals, including the "Painted Hall" at the Royal Hospital, Greenwich, the paintings on the inside of the dome of St Paul's Cathedral and prominent works at Chatsworth House and Wimpole Hall.*



*End of Sample*