

CLASSICAL (1750-1820)

Characteristics and Context:

- * *Begins in 1750 with the death of Bach, master of the baroque*
- * *Rebellion against heavy ornamentation and strict rules of counterpoint*
- * *Industrial revolution & war*
- * *rise of a more educated urban population & great European cities*
- * *VIENNA, Austria was the center of the Classical world*
- * *concentration of musicians in a city led to more difficult orchestral work and larger orchestras, including full strings, brass, and woodwind*
- * *public concerts as opposed to patronage system allowed freedom of choice*
- * *increased travel and communication between major musical centers*
- * *named for neoclassical style in arts and architecture*
- * *return to the perceived purity of Greco-Roman art & philosophy through a modern filter, inspired by heroic ideal*
- * *cleaner and clearer style with more contrast & variety between sections through changes in key, tempo, rhythm, and dynamics*
- * *simplicity over ornamented rococo style*
- * *pleasing obbligato harmonies & structural clarity instead of polyphony: each voice plays a role in texture and harmony*
- * *straightforward lyrical melodies replaced strict counterpoint*
- * *spontaneous, emotional musical expression over emotional detachment*
- * *exploration of key relationships*
- * *graceful melodies with short, clear-cut phrasing & light accompaniment was a typical sound*

Vocabulary

Gallant (“courtly”) early French classical music style bridged baroque and classical through a graceful melody with chordal accompaniment

Empfindsamer Stil (“sensitive style”) German classical style of longer compositions and large orchestral forms (concerto, sonata, symphony)

Sonata form three part structure: exposition, development, and recapitulation

Cadenza Virtuoso solo passage in concertos added by Mozart to show off the skills of the instrumentalist

Oratorio volgare two-part form with Italian lyrics

Important Musical Forms of the Classical Era

* *Instrumental music became more important than vocal music.*

* *Haydn & Mozart standardize using pairs of flutes, oboes, clarinets, bassoons, horns, and trumpets with 1st and 2nd violins, violas, cellos, double basses, and timpani. Strings and winds were self-contained, independent sections.*

* *Development of the piano into the modern version w/dynamic contrast*

string quartet created by Haydn, four movements (fast – slow – minuet – fast) with 1st, 2nd, and 4th in sonata form. Small pieces for playing in private residences became popular, and moved into the concert hall in late classical period.

Sonata in the baroque, sonatas had a light, dance-music style. Classical sonatas included more complexity, varied accompaniments, harmonic vocabulary, and sense of drama. See Haydn's Sonata in C minor No. 36 as the introduction of classical Viennese style.

Concerto Mozart introduced the cadenza, virtuosic solo passage to display skills of the soloist

Symphony most important form of the classical period, evolved from 17th century Italian opera overtures. Individual movements were standardized into allegro first movement, slow movement, minuet or scherzo, allegro or rondo.

Mass more integrated structure merged *Gloria* and *credo*, adopted symphonic devices and more intensity in solo voices

Oratorio/Cantata Cantatas declined, oratorio became more popular

Opera Cut back on excess, reintroduced instrumental interludes and accompaniments between arias, more choral singing. Recitative, aria, duet, chorus, and instrumental sections combined to form whole scenes. Decline of *opera seria* and rise of *opera buffa* and *opera comique* with more realistic spoken dialogue and simpler songs. In England *ballad operas* that satirized London society became very popular.

Important Composers of the Classical Era

Haydn (1732-1809) Austrian-born, early classical composer and “father of the symphony,” also developed the string quartet, sonata, and sonata form. Known for perfection of form, clarity, earnestness, and depth of feeling with short, simple motifs developed into larger musical structures. Haydn wrote 107+ symphonies, 12 masses, 52 piano sonatas, and 84 string quartets.

London Symphonies (No 93-104): Most famous works (1791-92, 94-95) *The Surprise* (No. 94), most popular symphony of classical period, named because of a sudden loud chord in the middle of the tranquil beginning of the 2nd movement. Other London Symphonies include: *The Military* (No. 100), *The Clock* (No. 101), *The Drum Roll* (No. 103) and *The London* (No. 104).

During the *Farewell Symphony No. 45* players slip off stage one by one in order to convince the patron to let them return to the city.

W.A. Mozart (1756-1791) Austrian-born prodigy worked primarily in Vienna and is considered the peak of Viennese Classicism and master of the middle Classical. Early works imitated baroque counterpoint in pieces such as *The Magic Flute* and *Jupiter Symphony No. 41*. Mature period boasts of memorable melodies, formal elegance, rich harmony and texture.

Pioneered the piano concerto of which he wrote 21. Also wrote 20 operas, 21 piano concertos, 42 violin sonatas, 17 piano sonatas, 27 piano concertos, 26 string quartets, 10 instrumental quintets, 19 masses, and 41 symphonies.

Reformed opera so that every musical aspect contributed to the plot development and characterization, with orchestra moved to the forefront and music for each character that was unique.

Ludwig Van Beethoven (1770-1827) German-born piano virtuoso and innovative master of the late classical period who bridged into the romantic era. Piano featured prominently in many of his works. Attracted to ideals of the enlightenment, his music is complex and majestic, made evident by the “Ode to Joy” in 9th symphony. Master of key relationships and musical structure, he was the first to use interlocking melodic themes to unite movements in longer works.

Wrote 9 symphonies, 5 piano concertos, 32 piano sonatas, and 2 masses.

Early Period (1779-1802) Imitated Haydn & Mozart: 1st and 2nd symphonies, string concertos 1-6, piano concertos 1-3, and piano sonata

1-3 including *Moonlight Sonata*.

Middle Period (1803-1814) large scale works of heroism and struggle, examples: symphonies 3-8, 4th and 5th piano concertos, and *Fidelio*

Late Period (1815-1827) intense and personal compositions led to romantic era, last 5 string quartets and piano sonatas, 9th Symphony, *Missa Solemnis*

Gluck reformed opera to let music serve the drama without interruption of florid singing and excessive instrumental passages

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