



Source 1: Music of the Baroque Period

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1 The harpsichord and viol might just seem like some silly words, but they are actually two important instruments in the Baroque period. The most famous Baroque composer of all time, Johann Sebastian Bach, used them often to compose his music. Baroque music includes music written between the year 1600 to 1750. It is important to remember that the word baroque is both a time period and a style of music. Music written during this period had certain characteristics that eventually became known as baroque music.



2 Baroque music can be described as classical, orchestral music. It uses instruments from the strings, woodwinds, brass, and percussion. Instead of a piano, which did not exist yet, the musicians would play the harpsichord. The harpsichord is similar to a piano but cannot play loud and soft. It can only play one **dynamic**¹ of music. It is known for its *pling, pling, plinging*, sound.

3 During this period, opera was a big hit. Baroque music often played a part in these operas and catered to the needs of the show and the singer. This is one reason why Baroque music is known for its trills. Trills are those quick wiggles back and forth between two notes. These trills add decoration to the music and are easily mimicked by the human voice.

4 Most compositions during this time include many different lines of music, all being performed at the same time. While the rhythms might be simple, there were often many different notes being played at the same time to create interesting harmonies. Many times these thick harmonies would be played beneath a single solo melody. The figured bass was also very common. This was a low bass line that the harpsichord would play and would be the starting point for all the additional harmonies.

5 Great composers of this time were Handel, Vivaldi, and Pachelbel. Many elementary music teachers use these great composers for their classes because they are simple enough to pick out a melody line but are fast-moving and fun for teaching. Baroque music from these great composers, like Canon in D also known as Pachelbel's Canon, is still played at weddings today!

¹ dynamic: volume

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Source 2: Music From the Classical Period

6 To an uninformed listener, almost all music that came before jazz that was played by an orchestra could sound like classical music. This is confusing because at one point, classical music meant music from the classical period, just like baroque music was from the baroque period. For most music scholars, this is still what they mean when they say classical music. For them, classical music means music specifically from the classical period or music written between the years 1750 to 1820. It is important to know the difference between classical music and the classical period of classical music.



7 Classical music tends to be light and airy and holds a steady tune. During other musical periods, many tunes are used and weaved together. In classical music, however, the tune is introduced during the first section of the piece and comes back time and time again. It is also much less complex than other orchestra compositions. It is generally **homophonic**² with a softer accompaniment supporting the melody.

8 These tunes tend to go back and forth quickly between dynamics. One minute you will have to lean in to hear, the next the entire orchestra will be crashing loudly. The back and forth in volume helps the listener feel the mood of the music. In earlier musical periods, the harpsichord was a popular choice. In the classical period of music, it was replaced by the fortepiano. Forte meaning loud and piano meaning soft. Today we call this instrument a piano. They began using the piano in much of their music so they would have the ability to go for soft to loud more quickly.

9 Many of the pieces written during the classical period of music had similar names. You will see, for example, a lot of symphonies, sonatas, and concertos. These are not just names; each of these are names of popular styles of music written during the Classical period of music. During this time period, composers used the style of music as part of the song title.

10 Some popular composers of this time period were Joseph Haydn, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, and Ludwig van Beethoven. Throughout the classical period of music, the songs became more complex, used more piano, and added more improvisation. Beethoven's death marked the end of the true classical period of music. He died in 1827 which began what is known as the Romantic period.

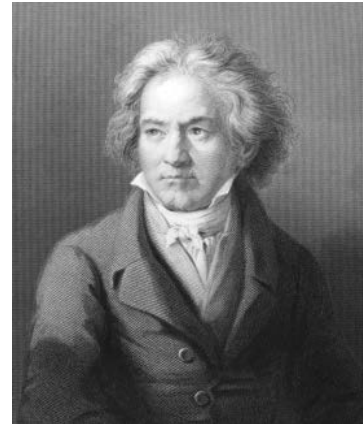
² homophonic: a music texture where the main part stands out and is supported by harmonies

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Source 3: The Romantic Period

11 Romantic music is not all about love; it does not all sound romantic either. Music from the Romantic period is all about feelings, and expressing those feelings through music. People have always expressed themselves through song, but during the Romantic period, the emotions were exaggerated. The composers of this period wrote for themselves and not for other audiences.



12 This musical period comes right after the Classical period and includes music written around the years 1820 to 1910. Ludwig van Beethoven started the Romantic period with his death in 1820. While he was alive, he faced many challenges. One challenge was when Beethoven lost his hearing. He kept composing, but his music became angrier over time. He expressed his feelings of anger and sadness in song. These were the first Romantic pieces ever written. Other great composers of the Romantic period were Richard Wagner, master of opera, and Franz Liszt, the great pianist.

13 Romantic music is hard to spot because it includes all of the characteristics of music from the classical period. Some of these characteristics include things like songs starting light and carefree, being simple in nature, and having a memorable tune.

14 There are a few more things you can look for to spot a Romantic piece. The music of the Romantic period does have a lot of exciting dynamics but does not bounce back and forth. Instead, music from this period tends to start softly and grow stronger and louder throughout the piece. Along with volume, the mood also changes. When the composer wants to show anger, the music crashes and clangs. It grows louder and louder. When the composer feels less tension, he shows that in his music by lowering the volume and adding softer rhythms and harmonies.

15 The orchestras are much bigger during this period and are starting to look like much like the symphony orchestras of today. The music becomes longer because the popular styles of music, like symphonies, sonatas, and concertos, became more complex. Other musical works were created such as symphonic poems, and the popularity of opera continued to grow. These pieces were not just 5 to 7 minutes long. Some of the popular music from this could be up to 90 minutes long and separated into sections called movements.

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