

THE BAROQUE PERIOD (1600-1750)

The transition from Renaissance to Baroque musical style began in the late sixteenth century. The poly-choral motets of the Venetian school, with two or more independent choirs juxtaposed to exploit the resulting contrast in color, provided the seedbed for the Baroque notion of conflict. Composers of the Venetian school also employed large performing forces, including choirs of instrumentalists, in their music. This led to the development of concertato style, in which the playing of a soloist or small group of players was contrasted with that of the full ensemble. This style of composition led to the development of the concerto. The concerto, of course, is an instrumental form, and during the Baroque era, instrumental music assumed far greater prominence than previously.

An examination of the madrigals of Monteverdi, written over a fifty year period, reveals many of the stylistic changes that signaled the transition from Renaissance to Baroque. Monteverdi's early madrigals (written 1587-1603) were composed in the style of the high Renaissance. Similar in character to the works of Marenzio in their use of chromaticism, they nevertheless begin a departure from the ideal of equality of voices and moved toward the Baroque notion of soprano-bass polarity. In contrast, his last four books of madrigals (written 1605-1638) include independent instrumental sections contrasted with choral interludes (concertato style) and increasing use of figured bass.

Text was of extreme importance to composers of both the Renaissance and Baroque eras. However, the manner in which it was approached differed markedly. The Renaissance ideal was of several independent vocal lines, each with its own inflections and accentuation. In the early to mid seventeenth century, the trend was away from this polyphonic ideal, toward soprano-bass

polarity, in which a single melody was sung and a figured bass line was played by an accompanying instrument or instruments. By the late Baroque era, in the first half of the eighteenth century, polyphony had returned to popularity. The polyphony of the late Baroque differed from that of the Renaissance: It was rooted in tonal harmony and characterized by an energetic, metrically conceived, driving rhythm.

The tradition of requiring full participation by the performer in decisions concerning tempo, articulation, ornamentation, and other matters continued from the Renaissance into the Baroque era. Keyboard players presented with a figured bass line were expected to "realize" it, filling in chords, adding ornaments, and otherwise embellishing their playing. Singers, particularly soloists, were expected to improvise ornamentation and elaboration for a melody found in the score.

Although all of the stylistic changes mentioned here occurred over a period of decades, the year 1600 is widely accepted as a convenient if somewhat arbitrary date to mark the end of the Renaissance and the beginning of the Baroque. It should also be noted that many if not all of these changes were interrelated. For example, the move away from polyphonic texture toward an accompanied melody was closely related to the shift from modality toward the major-minor key system and the use of figured bass. The increasing significance of new instrumental forms grew out of the employment of dependent instrumental parts, contrasted with choral sections. The total impact of all of these changes taken together propelled music forward into a new era.

Important Forms

In the Baroque period, some of the important choral forms, such as the mass and the motet, represented the continued development of Renaissance ideas. Others, such as the cantata and the oratorio, were newly created or assumed a new importance in terms of stylistic development. Some forms crossed the boundaries of sacred and secular. The cantatas of Bach, for example included both classifications. For the purposes of this discussion, opera is not considered. A brief definition of each of the important Baroque choral forms is presented here.

Anthem. The anthem tradition begun in Elizabethan England by Gibbons, Byrd, Tallis and others continued in the Baroque, reaching its highest state in the anthems of Purcell and Handel. The Baroque anthem was more elaborate than that of the Renaissance, utilizing recitatives, instrumental accompaniments with continuo, independent instrumental sections and interludes, and elaborate solo passages.

Cantata. Derived from the Italian word *cantare* meaning "to sing," the cantata developed in the seventeenth century as an extended piece of accompanied secular music with recitatives and arias. In Germany, the Lutheran chorale formed the basis for extended treatment in the "chorale cantata," a sacred work written for soloists, chorus, and orchestra, and brought to its highest development by J.S. Bach.

Madrigal. In the Baroque era, the madrigal continued to be popular and came to embody the "new style" in the form of the continuo madrigal developed by Monteverdi, using figured bass, and incorporating sections for solo, duet, or trio with continuo and contrasting sections for instruments with those for choir.

Magnificat. A musical setting of the canticle of the Virgin Mary found in the first chapter of the Gospel of Luke. Polyphonic settings were written as early as the fourteenth century. The Magnificat is a part of the Catholic service of Vespers and the Anglican service of Evensong. Monteverdi, Hassler, Purcell, and most importantly Bach, wrote significant settings of this text.

Mass. During the early Baroque, the mass tended to be a conservative musical form, similar in style to the Franco-Flemish mass of the sixteenth century. As the seventeenth century progressed, masses began to incorporate concertato style and to have instrumental accompaniments. These developments led to the five masses of J.S. Bach, whose **B Minor Mass** is one of the towering monuments of Western music. Unlike his other masses, the **B Minor Mass** is two hours in length and divides the ordinary into twenty-five separate movements characterized by a wide range of expressive and musical devices.

Motet. The motets of the Venetian school were written in concertato style, exploiting the colors of contrasting choral and instrumental forces. Schutz, Monteverdi, and Lully wrote motets that included a wide variety of forces, textures, and emotions. This led to the multi movement motet of the late Baroque, exemplified by the works of Bach and Buxtehude.

Oratorio. This refers to a setting of a sacred or heroic text for chorus, soloists, and orchestra. The details of the story are conveyed through recitative. Similar in character to opera, oratorios are not staged, nor are the singers costumed. The first important composer of oratorio was **Carissimi**. The Baroque oratorio reached its highest point in the works of **Handel**.

Passion. The passion is a musical setting of the events at the end of Christ's life, from the Last Supper to the Crucifixion. The story is carried in recitatives sung by the Evangelist. Other

soloists perform recitatives and arias, and the role of the chorus varies from the singing of chorales, more complex contemplative choral sections, and **turba** sections in which the chorus assumes the identity of the crowd.

Te Deum. The opening words of this text, "Te deum laudamus," mean "We Praise Thee, God." It is sung at the Roman Catholic office of Matins, at Anglican Morning Prayer, and for other festive sacred and secular occasions. Purcell and Handel each wrote significant musical settings of the Te Deum.

Vespers. Evening worship in the Roman Catholic rite. Vespers includes a series of psalms, a hymn, and the Magnificat. Monteverdi's Vespers of 1610 utilized choir, instrumentalists, and was written in concertato style. It is the most important Baroque example of the form.

GREAT COMPOSERS OF THE PERIOD

Two composers predominated in the first half of the Baroque period. Their music embodies many of the elements of the transition from Renaissance to Baroque style. These two composers were **Claudio Monteverdi (1567-1643)** and **Heinrich Schutz (1585-1672)**.

Born in Cremona, Italy, **Monteverdi** composed eight books of madrigals, three masses, vespers, magnificats, and motets. He wrote at least twelve operas, three of which have been preserved. As mentioned earlier, Monteverdi's music illustrates the transition from the **prima prattica** to the **seconda prattica**, from Renaissance polyphony to Baroque homophony.

Schutz was the greatest German composer of the seventeenth century. Born in Saxony, he studied with Gabrieli in Venice. Schutz's music is diverse, reflecting his long life and the varied

conditions under which he worked. His first published compositions were Italian madrigals. He was Lutheran, and his sacred compositions were written for the Lutheran church. Schutz wrote several highly varied collections of motets as well as oratorios and passions.

Other important composers of the early Baroque include **Jean-Baptiste Lully** (1632-1687), **Jan Pieterszoon Sweelinck** (1591-1652), **Johann Hermann Schein** (1586-1630), and **Ciacomo Carissimi** (1605-1674). Carissimi's fifteen oratorios are of particular importance. They contain recitatives, arias, choral sections, and instrumental interludes, utilizing a variety of textures.

In the late Baroque period, the works of Bach and Handel predominated and constitute an important part of the choral repertoire performed today. Other major composers of this period include **Dietrich Buxtehude** (1637-1701), **Marc-Antoine Charpentier** (1634-1704), Henry Purcell (1659-1695), **Georg Philip Telemann** (1681-1767), and **Antonio Vivaldi** (1675-1741).

Johann Sebastian Bach Composer (1685–1750)

A magnificent baroque-era composer, Johann Sebastian Bach is revered through the ages for his work's musical complexities and stylistic innovations.

Synopsis

Born on March 31, 1685 (N.S.), in Eisenach, Thuringia, Germany, Johann Sebastian Bach had a prestigious musical lineage and took on various organist positions during the early 18th century, creating famous compositions like "Tocatta and Fugue in D minor." Some of his best-known compositions are the "Mass in B Minor," the "Brandenburg Concertos" and "The Well-Tempered Clavier." Bach died in Leipzig, Germany, on July 28, 1750. Today, he is considered one of the greatest Western composers of all time.

Childhood

Born in Eisenach, Thuringia, Germany, on March 31, 1685 (N.S.) / March 21, 1685 (O.S.), Johann Sebastian Bach came from a family of musicians, stretching back several generations. His father, Johann Ambrosius, worked as the town musician in Eisenach, and it is believed that he taught young Johann to play the violin.

At the age of seven, Bach went to school where he received religious instruction and studied Latin and other subjects. His Lutheran faith would influence his later musical works. By the time he turned 10, Bach found himself an orphan after the death of both of his parents. His older brother Johann Christoph, a church organist in Ohrdruf, took him in. Johann Christoph provided some further musical instruction for his younger brother and enrolled him in a local school. Bach stayed with his brother's family until he was 15.

Bach had a beautiful soprano singing voice, which helped him land a place at a school in Lüneburg. Sometime after his arrival, his voice changed and Bach switched to playing the violin and the harpsichord. Bach was greatly influenced by a local organist named George Böhm. In 1703, he landed his first job as a musician at the court of Duke Johann Ernst in Weimar. There he was a jack-of-all-trades, serving as a violinist and at times, filling in for the official organist.

Early Career

Bach had a growing reputation as a great performer, and it was his great technical skill that landed him the position of organist at the New Church in Arnstadt. He was responsible for providing music for religious services and special events as well as giving music instruction. An independent and sometimes arrogant young man, Bach did not get along well with his students and was scolded by church officials for not rehearsing them frequently enough. Bach did not help

his situation when he disappeared for several months in 1705. While he only officially received a few weeks' leave from the church, he traveled to Lübeck to hear famed organist Dietrich Buxtehude and extended his stay without informing anyone back in Arnstadt.

In 1707, Bach was glad to leave Arnstadt for an organist position at the Church of St. Blaise in Mühlhausen. This move, however, did not turn out as well as he had planned. Bach's musical style clashed with the church's pastor. Bach created complex arrangements and had a fondness for weaving together different melodic lines. His pastor believed that church music needed to be simple. One of Bach's most famous works from this time is the cantata "Gottes Zeit ist die allerbeste Zeit," also known as "Actus Tragicus."

Working for Royalty

After a year in Mühlhausen, Bach won the post of organist at the court of the Duke Wilhelm Ernst in Weimar. He wrote many church cantatas and some of his best compositions for the organ while working for the duke. During his time at Weimar, Bach wrote "Toccatina and Fugue in D Minor," one of his most popular pieces for the organ. He also composed the cantata "Herz und Mund und Tat," or Heart and Mouth and Deed. One section of this cantata, called "Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring" in English, is especially famous.

In 1717, Bach accepted a position with Prince Leopold of Anhalt-Cöthen. But Duke Wilhelm Ernst had no interest in letting Bach go and even imprisoned him for several weeks when he tried to leave. In early December, Bach was released and allowed to go to Cöthen. Prince Leopold had a passion for music. He played the violin and often bought musical scores while traveling abroad.

While at Cöthen, Bach devoted much of his time to instrumental music, composing concertos for orchestras, dance suites and sonatas for multiple instruments. He also wrote pieces for solo

instruments, including some of his finest violin works. His secular compositions still reflected his deep commitment to his faith with Bach often writing the initials I.N.J. for the Latin *In Nomine Jesu*, or "in the name of Jesus," on his sheet music.

In tribute to the Duke of Brandenburg, Bach created a series of orchestra concertos, which became known as the "Brandenburg Concertos," in 1721. These concertos are considered to be some of Bach's greatest works. That same year, Prince Leopold got married, and his new bride discouraged the prince's interest in music. Bach completed the first book of "The Well-Tempered Clavier" around this time. With students in mind, he put together this collection of keyboard pieces to help them learn certain techniques and methods. Bach had to turn his attentions to finding work when the prince dissolved his orchestra in 1723.

Later Works in Leipzig

After auditioning for a new position in Leipzig, Bach signed a contract to become the new organist and teacher at St. Thomas Church. He was required to teach at the Thomas School as a part of his position as well. With new music needed for services each week, Bach threw himself into writing cantatas. The "Christmas Oratorio," for example, is a series of six cantatas that reflect on the holiday.

Bach also created musical interpretations of the Bible using choruses, arias and recitatives. These works are referred to as his "Passions," the most famous of which is "Passion According to St. Matthew." This musical composition, written between 1727 and 1729, tells the story of chapters 26 and 27 of the Gospel of Matthew. The piece was performed as part of a Good Friday service.

One of his later religious masterworks is "Mass in B minor." He had developed sections of it, known as Kyrie and Gloria, in 1733, which were presented to the Elector of Saxony. Bach did

not finish the composition, a musical version of a traditional Latin mass, until 1749. The complete work was not performed during his lifetime.

Final Years

By 1740, Bach was struggling with his eyesight, but he continued to work despite his vision problems. He was even well enough to travel and perform, visiting Frederick the Great, the king of Prussia in 1747. He played for the king, making up a new composition on the spot. Back in Leipzig, Bach refined the piece and gave Frederick a set of fugues called "Musical Offering."

In 1749, Bach started a new composition called "The Art of Fugue," but he did not complete it. He tried to fix his failing sight by having surgery the following year, but the operation ended up leaving him completely blind. Later that year, Bach suffered a stroke. He died in Leipzig on July 28, 1750.

During his lifetime, Bach was better known as an organist than a composer. Few of his works were even published during his lifetime. Still Bach's musical compositions were admired by those who followed in his footsteps, including Amadeus Mozart and Ludwig van Beethoven. His reputation received a substantial boost in 1829 when German composer Felix Mendelssohn reintroduced Bach's "Passion According to St. Matthew."

Musically, Bach was a master at invoking and maintaining different emotions. He was an expert storyteller as well, often using melody to suggest actions or events. In his works, Bach drew from different music styles from across Europe, including French and Italian. He used counterpoint, the playing of multiple melodies simultaneously, and fugue, the repetition of a melody with slight variations, to create richly detailed compositions. He is considered to be the

best composer of the Baroque era, and one of the most important figures in classical music in general.

Personal Life

Little personal correspondence has survived to provide a full picture of Bach as a person. But the records do shed some light on his character. Bach was devoted to his family. In 1706, he married his cousin Maria Barbara Bach. The couple had seven children together, some of whom died as infants. Maria died in 1720 while Bach was traveling with Prince Leopold. The following year, Bach married a singer named Anna Magdalena Wülcken. They had thirteen children, more than half of them died as children.

Bach clearly shared his love of music with his children. From his first marriage, Wilhelm Friedemann Bach and Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach became composers and musicians. Johann Christoph Friedrich Bach and Johann Christian Bach, sons from his second marriage, also enjoyed musical success.

The music of **Johann Sebastian Bach** (1685-1750) represents the culmination of the two centuries of musical development that preceded it. Bach's choral, orchestral, and keyboard music display an amazing variety of expressive quality, technique, and organization. His choral output includes six motets, a magnificat, five masses, three hundred cantatas, and two complete passions.

While all of Bach's choral works constitute an important part of the repertoire, two works are choral monuments: the B **Minor Mass** and the **St. Matthew Passion**. In addition, the hundreds of Bach cantatas include a wide variety of difficulty levels, and some are performable by choirs

with limited experience and resources. The relatively modest resources required for the performance of many Bach cantatas is understandable, since he wrote the majority of them for performance by his church choir in Leipzig and was limited by the available finances and personnel. Although his singers were regularly under his instruction, the instrumentalists who constituted the orchestra were recruited on an ad hoc basis and in fact were probably sight reading the music in performance.

George Frideric Handel (1685–1759)

George Frideric Handel was born in Halle, Germany. Handel was a cosmopolitan man, traveling to Italy for three years in 1707 and living in London from 1711 until his death. His choral output included twenty-one oratorios, three Te Deums, fourteen anthems, and two passions. His oratorios were designed for concert presentation rather than for use in the church. They were musical narratives of the lives of heroic figures from the Bible and mythology. Handel's best known oratorio, **Messiah**, is atypical of the rest in that it presents a series of meditations on the life of Christ and its significance rather than a dramatic narrative of a sequence of events.

George Frideric Handel composed operas, oratorios and instrumentals. His 1741 work, 'Messiah,' is among the most famous oratorios in history.

Synopsis

Baroque composer George Frideric Handel was born in Halle, Germany, in 1685. In 1705 he made his debut as an opera composer with *Almira*. He produced several operas with the Royal Academy of Music in England before forming the New Royal Academy of Music in 1727. When

Italian operas fell out of fashion, he started composing oratorios, including his most famous, Messiah. Handel died in London, England, in 1759.

Early Life

Georg Frideric Handel was born on February 23, 1685, to Georg and Dorothea Handel of Halle, Saxony, Germany. From an early age, Handel longed to study music, but his father objected, doubting that music would be a realistic source of income. In fact, his father would not even permit him to own a musical instrument. His mother, however, was supportive, and she encouraged him to develop his musical talent. With her cooperation, Handel took to practicing on the sly.

When Handel was still a young boy, he had the opportunity to play the organ for the duke's court in Weissenfels. It was there that Handel met composer and organist Frideric Wilhelm Zachow. Zachow was impressed with Handel's potential and invited Handel to become his pupil. Under Zachow's tutelage, Handel mastered composing for the organ, the oboe and the violin alike by the time he was 10 years old. From the age of 11 to the time he was 16 or 17, Handel composed church cantatas and chamber music that, being written for a small audience, failed to garner much attention and have since been lost to time.

Despite his dedication to his music, at his father's insistence, Handel initially agreed to study law at the University of Halle. Not surprisingly, he did not remain enrolled for long. His passion for music would not be suppressed.

In 1703, when Handel was 18 years old, he decided to commit himself completely to music, accepting a violinist's position at the Hamburg Opera's Goose Market Theater. During this time, he supplemented his income by teaching private music lessons in his free time, passing on what he had learned from Zachow.

Opera

Though working as a violinist, it was Handel's skill on the organ and harpsichord that began to earn him attention and landed him more opportunities to perform in operas.

Handel also began to compose operas, making his debut in early 1705 with *Almira*. The opera was instantly successful and achieved a 20-performance run. After composing several more popular operas, in 1706 Handel decided to try his luck in Italy. While in there, Handel composed the operas *Rodrigo* and *Agrippina*, which were produced in 1707 and 1709 respectively. He also managed to write more than a few dramatic chamber works during this period.

Touring the major Italian cities over three opera seasons, Handel introduced himself to most of Italy's major musicians. Unexpectedly, while in Venice, he met multiple people who expressed an interest in London's music scene. Enticed to experiment with a freelance music career there, in 1710 Handel left Venice and set out for London. In London, Handel met with the manager of the King's Theatre, who commissioned Handel to write an opera. Within just two weeks, Handel composed *Rinaldo*. Released during the 1710–11 London opera season, *Rinaldo* was Handel's breakthrough. His most critically acclaimed work up to that date, it gained him the widespread recognition that he would maintain throughout the rest of his musical career.

After the debut of *Rinaldo*, Handel spent the next few years writing and performing for English royalty, including Queen Anne and King George I. Then, in 1719, Handel was invited to become

the Master of the Orchestra at the Royal Academy of Music, the first Italian opera company in London. Handel eagerly accepted. He produced several operas with the Royal Academy of Music that, while well liked, were not especially lucrative for the struggling academy.

In 1726 Handel decided to make London his home permanently, and became a British citizen. (He also Anglicized his name at this time, to George Frideric.) In 1727, when Handel's latest opera, *Alessandro*, was being performed, Italian opera in London took a hard hit as the result of a hostile rivalry between two female lead singers. Frustrated, Handel broke away from the Royal Academy and formed his own new company, calling it the New Royal Academy of Music. Under the New Royal Academy of Music, Handel produced two operas a year for the next decade, but Italian opera fell increasingly out of style in London. Handel composed two more Italian operas before finally deciding to abandon the failing genre.

Oratorios

In place of operas, oratorios became Handel's new format of choice. Oratorios, large-scale concert pieces, immediately caught on with audiences and proved quite lucrative. The fact that oratorios didn't require elaborate costumes and sets, as operas did, also meant that they cost far less to produce. Handel revised a number of Italian operas to fit this new format, translating them into English for the London audience. His oratorios became the latest craze in London and were soon made a regular feature of the opera season.

In 1735, during Lent alone, Handel produced more than 14 concerts made up primarily of oratorios. In 1741 Dublin's Lord Lieutenant commissioned Handel to write a new oratorio based on a biblical libretto assembled by art patron Charles Jennens and the *Messiah* was composed in

just 24 days. As a result, Handel's most famous oratorio, *Messiah*, made its debut at the New Music Hall in Dublin in April 1742.

Back in London, Handel organized a subscription season for 1743 that consisted exclusively of oratorios. The series opened with Handel's composition *Samson*, to great audience acclaim. *Samson* was eventually followed by a run of Handel's beloved *Messiah*.

Handel continued to compose a long string of oratorios throughout the remainder of his life and career. These included *Semele* (1744), *Joseph and His Brethren* (1744), *Hercules* (1745), *Belshazzar* (1745), *Occasional Oratorio* (1746), *Judas Maccabeus* (1747), *Joshua* (1748), *Alexander Balus* (1748), *Susanna* (1749), *Solomon* (1749), *Theodora* (1750), *The Choice of Hercules* (1751), *Jeptha* (1752) and *The Triumph of Time and Truth* (1757).

In addition to his oratorios, Handel's concerti grossi, anthems and orchestral pieces also garnered him fame and success. Among the most noted were *Water Music* (1717), *Coronation Anthems* (1727), *Trio Sonatas op. 2* (1722–33), *Trio Sonatas op. 5* (1739), *Concerto Grosso op. 6* (1739) and *Music for Royal Fireworks*, completed a decade before his death.

Health Issues

Over the course of his musical career, Handel, exhausted by stress, endured a number of potentially debilitating problems with his physical health. He is also believed to have suffered from anxiety and depression. Yet somehow, Handel, who was known to laugh in the face of adversity, remained virtually undeterred in his determination to keep making music.

In the spring of 1737, Handel suffered a stroke that impaired the movement of his right hand. His fans worried that he would never compose again. But after only six weeks of recuperation in

Aix-la-Chapelle, Handel was fully recovered. He went back to London and not only returned to composing, but made a comeback at playing the organ as well.

Six years later, Handel suffered a second springtime stroke. However, he stunned audiences once again with a speedy recovery, followed by a prolific stream of ambitious oratorios.

Handel's three-act oratorio Samson, which premiered in London in 1743, reflected how Handel related to the character's blindness through his own firsthand experience with the progressive degeneration of his sight:

Total eclipse! no sun, no moon. All dark amidst the blaze of noon. Oh glorious light! no cheering ray To glad my eyes with welcome day.

By 1750, Handel had entirely lost sight in his left eye. He forged on, however, composing the oratorio Jephtha, which also contained a reference to obscured vision. In 1752 Handel lost sight in his other eye and was rendered completely blind. As always before, Handel's passionate pursuit of music propelled him forward. He kept on performing and composing, relying on his sharp memory to compensate when necessary, and remained actively involved in productions of his work until his dying day.

Death and Legacy

On April 14, 1759, George Handel died in bed at his rented house at 25 Brook Street, in the Mayfair district of London. The Baroque composer and organist was 74 years old.

Handel was known for being a generous man, even in death. Having never married or fathered children, his will divided his assets among his servants and several charities, including the Foundling Hospital. He even donated the money to pay for his own funeral so that none of his

loved ones would bear the financial burden. Handel was buried in Westminster Abbey a week after he died. Following his death, biographical documents began to circulate, and George Handel soon took on legendary status posthumously.

During his lifetime, Handel composed nearly 30 oratorios and close to 50 operas. At least 30 of those operas were written for the Royal Academy of Music, London's very first Italian opera company. He was also a prolific writer of orchestral pieces and concerti grossi. He is said to have made significant contributions to all of the musical genres of his generation. His most renowned work is the oratorio *Messiah*, written in 1741 and first performed in Dublin in 1742.

In 1784, 25 years after Handel's death, three commemorative concerts were held in his honor at the Parthenon and Westminster Abbey. In 2001 Handel's home on Brook Street (from 1723 to 1759) became the site of the Handel House Museum, established in memory of his legendary life and works.

Baroque Style

The performance of Baroque choral music requires life and energy. It is music that is full of emotion. In Baroque music there tends to be unity of emotion within a given section of a composition. This stems from the Baroque idea that an individual is controlled by a single affect or emotion at any given time. But this does not mean the music should be emotionless. More overt emotion may be displayed in a Baroque choral piece than in music from the Renaissance. Contrast in emotion must be achieved as one section ends and another begins in a new tempo and with new dynamics.

Terraced dynamics, wherein dynamic changes occur between sections of music (as opposed to long crescendos and decrescendos within sections) is a typically Baroque musical characteristic. Similarly, the tempo of a Baroque composition should be steady within each section of a work. Sharp contrasts in tempo occur **between** sections.

The tone to be used in a Baroque mass is bigger and more dramatic than what would be appropriate for a sixteenth-century setting of the same text. A freer approach to vibrato along with a wider dynamic range helps distinguish the two styles.

The use of an orchestra to accompany Baroque choral music adds to the variety of color available and accentuates the need for choir members to sing with warmth and projection. As was the case in the Renaissance, it was quite common and accepted to double the vocal lines in a composition with instruments. In the Baroque period, in addition to the instrumental doubling, compositions also typically contained an independent orchestral accompaniment, often calling for strings, trumpets, oboes, and a keyboard instrument (harpsichord or organ) providing the continuo.

Some Baroque choral music tends to be "instrumental" in conception. Such music is characterized by driving dotted rhythms, and it must be infused with life, energy, and a sense of propulsion. Slower sections should be distinctly contrasting.

THE CLASSICAL PERIOD "Age of Enlightenment" (1750-1820)

This period is sometimes called the “Age of enlightenment” because, during this era, faith in the power of reason was so great that it began to undermine the authority of the social and religious establishment. The term Classical is confusing because it has so many different meanings. It may refer to Greek or Roman antiquity (ancient times) or it may be used for any supreme accomplishment of lasting appeal. Many people take classical music to mean anything that is not rock, jazz, folk or popular music.

CHARACTERISTICS OF CLASSICAL PERIOD MUSIC

- **Contrast of mood:** Changes in emotions, expressions etc.
- **Rhythm;** There was flexibility of rhythm which added variety to classical music. The Classical music has wealth of rhythmic patterns.
- In contrast to the polyphonic texture of Baroque music, classical music is basically **homophonic**. However, the texture is treated as flexibly as rhythm.
- The **melodies** of Classical period are among the most **tuneful** and easiest to **remember**. They also tend to sound **balanced** and **symmetrical** because they are frequently made up of two phrases of the same length.
- Classical music uses a lot of **terraced dynamics** (abrupt shifts from loud to soft) which was more of a Baroque characteristic.

COMPOSERS OF THE PERIOD

- Carl Phillip Emanuel Bach (1714-1788)
- Johann Christian Bach (1735-1782)
- Joseph Haydn (1732-1827)
- Ludwig Van Beethoven (1770-1827)

- Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791)

Wolfgang Mozart, Composer, Pianist (1756–1791)

A prolific artist, Austrian composer Wolfgang Mozart created a string of operas, concertos, symphonies and sonatas that profoundly shaped classical music.

Synopsis

Born on January 27, 1756, in Salzburg, Austria, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart was a musician capable of playing multiple instruments who started playing in public at the age of 6. Over the years, Mozart aligned himself with a variety of European venues and patrons, composing hundreds of works that included sonatas, symphonies, masses, chamber music, concertos and operas, marked by vivid emotion and sophisticated textures.

Early Life

Central Europe in the mid-18th century was going through a period of transition. The remnants of the Holy Roman Empire had divided into small semi-self-governing principalities. The result was competing rivalries between these municipalities for identity and recognition. Political leadership of small city-states like Salzburg, Vienna, and Prague was in the hands of the aristocracy and their wealth would commission artists and musicians to amuse, inspire, and entertain. The music of the Renaissance and Baroque periods was transitioning toward more full-bodied compositions with complex instrumentation. The small city-state of Salzburg would be the birthplace of one of the most talented and prodigious musical composers of all time.

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's was the sole-surviving son of Leopold and Maria Pertl Mozart. Leopold was a successful composer, violinist, and assistant concert master at the Salzburg court.

Wolfgang's mother, Anna Maria Pertl, was born to a middle class family of local community leaders. His only sister was Maria Anna (nicknamed "Nannerl"). With their father's encouragement and guidance, they both were introduced to music at an early age. Leopold started Nannerl on keyboard when she was seven, as three-year old Wolfgang looked on. Mimicking her playing, Wolfgang quickly began to show a strong understanding of chords, tonality, and tempo. Soon, he too was being tutored by his father.

Leopold was a devoted and task-oriented teacher to both his children. He made the lessons fun, but also insisted on a strong work ethic and perfection. Fortunately, both children excelled well in these areas. Recognizing their special talents, Leopold devoted much of his time to their education in music as well as other subjects. Wolfgang soon showed signs of excelling beyond his father's teachings with an early composition at age five and demonstrating outstanding ability on harpsichord and the violin. He would soon go on to play the piano, organ and viola.

In 1762, Wolfgang's father took Nannerl, now age eleven, and Wolfgang, age six to the court of Bavaria in Munich in what was to become the first of several European "tours." The siblings traveled to the courts of Paris, London, The Hague, and Zurich performing as child prodigies. Wolfgang met a number of accomplished musicians and became familiar with their works. Particularly important was his meeting with Johann Christian Bach (Johann Sebastian Bach's youngest son) in London who had a strong influence on Wolfgang. The trips were long and often arduous, traveling in primitive conditions and waiting for invitations and reimbursements from the nobility. Frequently, Wolfgang and other members of his family fell seriously ill and had to limit their performance schedule.

Budding Young Composer

In December, 1769, Wolfgang, then age 13, and his father departed from Salzburg for Italy, leaving his mother and sister at home. It seems that by this time Nannerl's professional music career was over. She was nearing marriageable age and according to the custom of the time, she was no longer permitted to show her artistic talent in public. The Italian outing was longer than the others (1769-1771) as Leopold wanted to display his son's abilities as a performer and composer to as many new audiences as possible. While in Rome, Wolfgang heard Gregorio Allegri's Miserere performed once in the Sistine Chapel. He wrote out the entire score from memory, returning only to correct a few minor errors. During this time Wolfgang also wrote a new opera, *Mitridate, re di Ponto* for the court of Milan. Other commissions followed and in subsequent trips to Italy, Wolfgang wrote two other operas, *Ascanio in Alba* (1771) and *Lucio Silla* (1772).

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart and his father returned from their last stay in Italy in March, 1773. His father's benefactor, Archbishop von Schrattenbach had died and was succeeded by Hieronymus von Colloredo. Upon their return, the new archbishop appointed young Mozart as assistant concertmaster with a small salary. During this time, young Mozart had the opportunity to work in several different musical genres composing symphonies, string quartets, sonatas and serenades and a few operas. He developed a passion for violin concertos producing what came to be the only five he wrote. In 1776, he turned his efforts toward piano concertos, culminating in the Piano Concerto Number 9 in E flat major in early 1777. Wolfgang had just turned 21.

Despite his success with the compositions, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart was growing discontent with his position as assistant concert master and the confining environment of Salzburg. He was ambitious and believed he could do more somewhere else. Archbishop von Colloredo was becoming impatient with the young genius's complaining and immature attitude. In August 1777,

Mozart set out on a trip to find more prosperous employment. The archbishop wouldn't give Leopold permission to travel, so Anna Maria accompanied Wolfgang on his quest to the cities of Mannheim, Paris and Munich. There were several employment positions that initially proved promising, but all eventually fell through. He began to run out of funds and had to pawn several valuable personal items to pay traveling and living expenses. The lowest point of the trip was when his mother fell ill and died on July 3, 1778. After hearing the news of his wife's death, Leopold negotiated a better post for his son as court organist in Salzburg and Wolfgang returned soon after.

Making it in Vienna

Back in Salzburg in 1779, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart produced a series of church works, including the Coronation Mass. He also composed another opera for Munich, *Ideomeneo* in 1781. In March of that year, Mozart was summoned to Vienna by Archbishop von Colloredo, who was attending the accession of Joseph II to the Austrian throne. The Archbishop's cool reception toward Mozart offended him. He was treated as a mere servant, quartered with the help, and forbidden from performing before the Emperor for a fee equal to half his yearly salary in Salzburg. A quarrel ensued and Mozart offered to resign his post. The Archbishop refused at first, but then relented with an abrupt dismissal and physical removal from the Archbishop's presence. Mozart decided to settle in Vienna as a freelance performer and composer and for a time lived with friends at the home of Fridolin Weber.

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart quickly found work in Vienna, taking on pupils, writing music for publication, and playing in several concerts. He also began writing an opera *Die Entführung aus dem Serail* (The Abduction from the Seraglio). In the summer of 1781, it was rumored that

Mozart was contemplating marriage to Fridolin Weber's daughter, Constanze. Knowing his father would disapprove of the marriage and the interruption in his career, young Mozart quickly wrote his father denying any idea of marriage. But by December, he was asking for his father's blessings. While it's known that Leopold disapproved, what is not known is the discussion between father and son as Leopold's letters were said to be destroyed by Constanze. However, later correspondence from Wolfgang indicated that he and his father disagreed considerably on this matter. He was in love with Constanze and the marriage was being strongly encouraged by her mother, so in some sense, he felt committed. The couple was finally married on August 4, 1782. In the meantime, Leopold did finally consent to the marriage. Constanze and Wolfgang had six children, though only two survived infancy, Karl Thomas and Franz Xaver.

As 1782 turned to 1783, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart became enthralled with the work of Johannes Sebastian Bach and George Frederic Handel and this, in turn, resulted in several compositions in the Baroque style and influenced much of his later compositions, such as passages in *Die Zauberflöte* (The Magic Flute) and the finale of Symphony Number 41. During this time, Mozart met Joseph Haydn and the two composers became admiring friends. When Haydn visited Vienna, they sometimes performed impromptu concerts with string quartets. Between 1782 and 1785 Mozart wrote six quartets dedicated to Haydn.

European Fame

The opera *Die Entführung* enjoyed immediate and continuing success and bolstered Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's name and talent throughout Europe. With the substantial returns from

concerts and publishing, he and Constanze enjoyed a lavish lifestyle. They lived in one of the more exclusive apartment buildings of Vienna, sent their son, Karl Thomas, to an expensive boarding school, kept servants, and maintained a busy social life. In 1783, Mozart and Constanze traveled Salzburg, to visit his father and sister. The visit was somewhat cool, as Leopold was still a reluctant father-in-law and Nannerl was a dutiful daughter. But the stay promoted Mozart to begin writing a mass in C Minor, of which only the first two sections, "Kyrie" and "Gloria," were completed. In 1784, Mozart became a Freemason, a fraternal order focused on charitable work, moral uprightness, and the development of fraternal friendship. Mozart was well regarded in the Freemason community, attending meetings and being involved in various functions. Freemasonry also became a strong influence in Mozart's music.

From 1782 to 1785, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart divided his time between self-produced concerts as soloist, presenting three to four new piano concertos in each season. Theater space for rent in Vienna was sometimes hard to come by, so Mozart booked himself in unconventional venues such as large rooms in apartment buildings and ballrooms of expensive restaurants. The year 1784, proved the most prolific in Mozart's performance life. During one five-week period, he appeared in 22 concerts, including five he produced and performed as the soloist. In a typical concert, he would play a selection of existing and improvisational pieces and his various piano concertos. Other times he would conduct performances of his symphonies. The concerts were very well attended as Mozart enjoyed a unique connection with his audiences who were, in the words of Mozart biographer Maynard Solomon, "given the opportunity of witnessing the transformation and perfection of a major musical genre." During this time, Mozart also began to keep a catalog of his own music, perhaps indicating an awareness of his place in musical history.

By the mid-1780s, Wolfgang and Constanze Mozart's extravagant lifestyle was beginning to take its toll. Despite his success as a pianist and composer, Mozart was falling into serious financial difficulties. Mozart associated himself with aristocratic Europeans and felt he should live like one. He figured that the best way to attain a more stable and lucrative income would be through court appointment. However, this wouldn't be easy with the court's musical preference bent toward Italian composers and the influence of Kapellmeister Antonio Salieri. Mozart's relationship with Salieri has been the subject of speculation and legend. Letters written between Mozart and his father, Leopold, indicate that the two felt a rivalry for and mistrust of the Italian musicians in general and Salieri in particular. Decades after Mozart's death, rumors spread that Salieri had poisoned him. This rumor was made famous in 20th century playwright Peter Shaffer's *Amadeus* and in the 1984 film of the same name by director Milos Forman. But in truth there is no basis for this speculation. Though both composers were often in contention for the same job and public attention, there is little evidence that their relationship was anything beyond a typical professional rivalry. Both admired each other's work and at one point even collaborated on a cantata for voice and piano called *Per la recuperare salute di Ophelia*.

Toward the end of 1785, Mozart met the librettist Lorenzo Da Ponte, a Venetian composer and poet and together they collaborated on the opera *The Marriage of Figaro*. It received a successful premier in Vienna in 1786 and was even more warmly received in Prague later that year. This triumph led to a second collaboration with Da Ponte on the opera *Don Giovanni* which premiered in 1787 to high acclaim in Prague. Noted for their musical complexity, the two operas are among Mozart's most important works and are mainstays in operatic repertoire today. Both compositions feature the wicked nobleman, though Figaro is presented more in comedy and

portrays strong social tension. Perhaps the central achievement of both operas lies in their ensembles with their close link between music and dramatic meaning.

Later Years

In December, 1787, Emperor Joseph II appointed Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart as his "chamber composer," a post that had opened up with the death of Gluck. The gesture was as much an honor bestowed on Mozart as it was incentive to keep the esteemed composer from leaving Vienna for greener pastures. It was a part-time appointment with low pay, but it required Mozart only to compose dances for the annual balls. The modest income was a welcome windfall for Mozart, who was struggling with debt, and provided him the freedom to explore more of his personal musical ambitions.

Toward the end of the 1780s, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's fortunes began to grow worse. He was performing less and his income shrank. Austria was at war and both the affluence of the nation and the ability of the aristocracy to support the arts had declined. By mid-1788, Mozart moved his family from central Vienna to the suburb of Alsergrund, for what would seem to be a way of reducing living costs. But in reality, his family expenses remained high and the new dwelling only provided more room. Mozart began to borrow money from friends, though he was almost always able to promptly repay when a commission or concert came his way. During this time he wrote his last three symphonies and the last of the three Da Ponte operas, *Così fan tutte*, which premiered in 1790. During this time, Mozart ventured long distances from Vienna to Leipzig, Berlin, and Frankfurt, and other German cities hoping to revive his once great success and the family's financial situation, but did neither. The two-year period of 1788-1789 was a low point for Mozart, experiencing in his own words "black thoughts" and deep depression.

Historians believe he may have had some form of bipolar disorder, which might explain the periods of hysteria coupled with spells of hectic creativity.

Between 1790 and 1791, now in his mid-thirties, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart went through a period of great music productivity and personal healing. Some of his most admired works -- the opera *The Magic Flute*, the final piano concerto in B-flat, the *Clarinet Concerto* in A major, and the unfinished *Requiem* to name a few -- were written during this time. Mozart was able to revive much of his public notoriety with repeated performances of his works. His financial situation began to improve as wealthy patrons in Hungary and Amsterdam pledged annuities in return for occasional compositions. From this turn of fortune, he was able to pay off many of his debts.

However, during this time both Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's mental and physical health was deteriorating. In September, 1791, he was in Prague for the premier of the opera *La Clemenza di Tito*, which he was commissioned to produce for the coronation of Leopold II as King of Bohemia. Mozart recovered briefly to conduct the Prague premier of *The Magic Flute*, but fell deeper into illness in November and was confined to bed. Constanze and her sister Sophie came to his side to help nurse him back to health, but Mozart was mentally preoccupied with finishing *Requiem*, and their efforts were in vain.

Death and Legacy

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart died on December 5, 1791 at age 35. The cause of death is uncertain, due to the limits of postmortem diagnosis. Officially, the record lists the cause as severe miliary fever, referring to a skin rash that looks like millet seeds. Since then, many hypotheses have circulated regarding Mozart's death. Some have attributed it to rheumatic fever,

a disease he suffered from repeatedly throughout his life. It was reported that his funeral drew few mourners and he was buried in a common grave. It should be some scholars like Zubin Mehta and Anita Kamien in their book

“In 1791, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart- one of the greatest composers of the classical period- was buried in a sack in an unmarked communal grave”. Music an appreciation on page 153

Both actions were the Viennese custom at the time due to the rule of King Joseph the Second, for only aristocrats (upper class) and nobility enjoyed public mourning and were allowed to be buried in marked graves. However, his memorial services and concerts in Vienna and Prague were well attended. After his death, Constanze sold many of his unpublished manuscripts to undoubtedly pay off the family's large debts. She was able to obtain a pension from the emperor and organized several profitable memorial concerts in Mozart's honor. From these efforts, Constanze was able to gain some financial security for herself and allowing her to send her children to private schools.

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's death came at a young age, even for the time period. Yet his meteoric rise to fame and accomplishment at a very early age is reminiscent of more contemporary musical artists whose star had burned out way too soon. At the time of his death, Mozart was considered one of the greatest composers of all time. His music presented a bold expression, often times complex and dissonant, and required high technical mastery from the musicians who performed it. His works remained secure and popular throughout the 19th century, as biographies about him were written and his music enjoyed constant performances and renditions by other musicians. His work influenced many composers that followed -- most

notably Beethoven. Along with his friend Joseph Haydn, Mozart conceived and perfected the grand forms of symphony, opera, string ensemble, and concerto that marked the classical period. In particular, his operas display an uncanny psychological insight, unique to music at the time, and continue to exert a particular fascination for musicians and music lovers today.