

## **The Renaissance - 1450-1600**

## **The Golden Age of A Cappella Music**

### **Overview:**

Known as Rebirth. Was a cultural and artistic movement that began in Italy and spanned from the 15<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> Centuries. It was a time of Courtly (kings) and Papal (the pope) patronage for music.

### **Protestant Reformation:**

The reformation was a revolt against many of the long-standing practices of the Roman Catholic Church. Led by Martin Luther. Luther's main concern was that the worship services did not involve the congregation. He changed words in music from Latin to German. The Chorale or the first hymns for congregational singing came about during this time.

### **Where:** Europe -- -

Belgium/Flanders, (Franco-flemish)  
Italy (Venice) – St. Mark's Cathedral  
England  
Germany

### **The music:**

#### **Characteristics:**

Music is primarily linear  
Emphasis on Melody  
Melodically independent musical lines  
A cappella music flourished  
Not metered (no time signature or bar lines)  
Much of the music was dictated by the word stress.  
Generally did not write dynamics in the music.

### **Genres:**

Masses (sacred)  
Motets (sacred)  
Madrigal: (secular)  
Italian Madrigals vs. English Madrigals  
Italians were first. Then the English began composing in the Italian style – putting their own language to them – then they branched out and developed the English Madrigal style.

### **What did it sound like?**

It was primarily a cappella.  
In Venice – it was polychoral (music written for two or more choirs)  
Contrapuntal (**polyphonic**)– two or more moving musical lines.

**Palestrina:** Was called the "Prince of music". His style is imitative counterpoint. Often built upon themes of Gregorian Chant.

**Gabrieli:** (1557-1612) Expanded to include up to five choirs (one for each of the domes in St. Mark's Cathedral). Gabrieli's music marks the first use of the words *piano* and *forte* for antiphonal music.

## **The Baroque: 1600-1750**

**Overview:** It is a term borrowed from the fine arts to describe art that was considered (by Renaissance standards) to be “abnormal, bizarre, exaggerated, in bad taste or grotesque.” The art, architecture, sculpture and music of this period is considered decorative, dramatic, flamboyant and emotional.

**Where:** Europe -- -

Germany  
Italy (Venice)  
England

**The Music:** During this period, the composers began writing more for instruments than was previously done for voices. The center of music begins to move away from the church.

### **Characteristics:**

**Texture:** The move from Renaissance to the Baroque brought about an important change in the texture of music. In Renaissance music, the melody was supreme – in Baroque music, it centers attention on the harmony and the function of harmony.

From linear or horizontal texture (polyphony) – to **vertical (chordal texture)**

**Harmony:** Transition from Church modes to major/minor scales.

**Rhythm:** Baroque music is now metered. Has regular groupings of strong/weak beats. First use of time signatures and bar lines.

### **Genres**

**Opera** - Large, multi-movement work. It is a staged work. Secular in topic. Costumes, scenery and acting. The birth of Opera (Florence, Italy, c. 1600) changed the history of singing. Suddenly, the individual singer became important. The 17<sup>th</sup> century brought the development of many of our modern vocal techniques. Virtuoso singers appeared and began to dazzle audiences. **Monteverdi** was considered the father of opera.

**Aria** - usually for a solo singer. Sang about 1 topic.

**Recitative** - Moves the plot along. More like spoken dialogue

**Chorus** - Responds to the plot or other music.

**Oratorio** - Very similar to Opera in form, however has a sacred text, no costuming, scenery or acting. It is simply performed. Still has Aria, Recitative, and chorus.

**Cantata** – multi-movement vocal work (choral) with instrumental accompaniment.

**J.S. Bach:** (1685-1750) (Germany) - Johann Sebastian Bach is considered the foremost composer of western music. Was a Lutheran and wrote music for the Lutheran church. He was a virtuoso organist/keyboard player. He was employed by the church. Wrote almost entirely sacred works.

**Important works:** St. John Passion, St. Matthew Passion, B Minor Mass, Well Tempered Clavier, Brandenburg Concertos.

**George Fredric Handel:** (1685-1759) (England)

Handel was born in Germany but spent most of his career in England. He first wrote in the Italian Opera style, but this grew tiresome to his English audiences, so he began composing in English and began giving greater emphasis to the chorus in his operas and oratorios. He was very popular with British Royalty and was the greatest figure in English music during his lifetime.

**Important works:** \*\*The Messiah

## **The Classical Era 1750-1827**

### **Overview:**

The aesthetic of the time was to create noble, yet entertaining music; expressive, yet restrained, natural and free. For the first time in history, the Christian Church no longer dominated society. For this reason, less and less sacred music was being composed. Choirs had somewhat gone out of fashion.

**Where:** Europe -- -

Austria – Musical capital of the world.

### **The music:** ALL ABOUT **FORM:**

The most important development of music in the Classical period was the evolution of clearly defined musical forms. Classical composers organized their music into precise, clear and well-balanced sections. The most popular formal organization developed from the contrast of two basic melodies (A and B). Usually **ABA**. Also **Theme & Variation (A A' A"....)** and **Rondo ABACADA....**

### **Characteristics:**

**Melody** – Strong emphasis was placed on melody. Classical melodies are usually singable and lyrical.

**Rhythm** – Simple and constant rhythm patterns. Tempos in Classical music are constant for an entire section of music. Silence in music (rests) became important.

**Harmony** – Key signatures were firmly established in the Classical period. The harmony is strongly tonal and generally simple. Harmony fit closely with form.

### **Genres:**

**Symphony:** Multi-movement work for full orchestra.

Consisted usually of 4 movements.

- I. Fast (sonata)
- II. Slow
- III. Minuet (dance)
- IV. Fast (rondo or sonata form)

**Chamber Works** - String quartets.

**Operas** were still being composed

**Piano Repertoire** greatly increased (the piano replaces the harpsichord)

### **Mozart: (1756-1791)**

Mozart was widely known as a child prodigy. At the age of five, Mozart began to write minuets for the harpsichord. At the age of six, Mozart's father took him on tour to play for royalty. He became famous all over Europe. Mozart died at the age of 35 without completing his Requiem.

**Important works:** Prolific composer writing in almost every form existing: many operas, symphonies, concertos, masses. The Magic Flute, Requiem.

### **Beethoven: (1770-1827)**

Beethoven is most known as the composer who bridged the gap between the Classical style and the Romantic style. He is generally regarded as one of the greatest composers in history. He was known as a virtuoso pianist during his lifetime. Beethoven had 3 periods of composition.

(**First-** wrote firmly in Classical style, **Second:** was a transition period, **Third:** began the romantic style). Born in Austria. His father tried to make him into a child prodigy like Mozart.

Beethoven began to lose his hear at the age of 26.

**Important works:** Missa Solemnis, Ninth Symphony (Ode to Joy),

## **The Romantic Era 1820-1900**

**Overview:** Romanticism as a movement began with literature in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. In contrast with the restraint and objectivity of Classicism, these artists turned to a more personal approach to art in which the individual's emotions were the focus. Other themes/topics for compositions included nature, individualism, the macabre and supernatural.

**Where:** Europe -- -

Germany  
Austria  
Italy

**The music:** Industrial revolution had a major impact on music. Instruments were better and now mass-produced so they were readily available. The size of ensembles grew significantly. Better instruments meant better-trained musicians. Larger concert halls – for larger audiences meant that ensembles had to grow as well. The idea of artists using indigenous folk music as themes in major works is known as **nationalism**.

**Characteristics:** Composers began experimenting and expanding on the possibilities of tonal music. Romantic composers used unprepared dissonances, sudden key changes, and an overall restlessness of tonality to further emphasize the emotional character of their music. Composers began expanding upon tonal conventions of the Classical era by using more chromaticism.

**Genres:**

**Opera** – Singspiel (German opera with dialogue); Lyric opera (combination of seria & buffa)

**Symphony** – still 4 movements typically, but much larger in scale

**Leid** (German for 'song') Solo art song

**Part-song** – short choral piece.

Music for chorus and orchestra intended for performance in a concert hall.

**Program Music** – tells a story, often based on literature (Concert Overture, Tone Poem, Symphonic poem, Incidental Music)

**Mendelssohn:** (1809-1847) Mendelssohn was a child prodigy (like Mozart). He gave his first performance at the age of 9. He was acclaimed during his time as a fine pianist and conductor. He is known as the father of modern conducting. His revival performance of the Bach St. Matthew Passion is credited with renewing public interest in Bach that still exists today.

**Works:** Elijah (Oratorio), Symphonies.

**Johannes Brahms:** (1833-1897) Johannes Brahms is considered the J.S. Bach of the Romantic period.

Brahms was acquainted with other important composers who included: Franz Liszt, Robert and Clara Schumann, and others. Although writing during the Romantic era - Brahms, however, maintained a Classical style of form and logic in his compositions. Brahms was the most significant composer of symphony during this time.

**Works:** Ein Deutsches (German) Requiem, Symphonies, Liebeslieder Waltzer.