

**The
Baroque Period
of Western Music History
circa 1600 to 1750 AD**

The **Baroque** is a period, as well as a style, that used **exaggerated gestures** to produce **drama, tension, exuberance, and grandeur** in **architecture, literature, sculpture, painting, dance, and music.**

The style started around 1600 in Rome, Italy and spread to most of Europe.



Baroque Architecture



**The Palace of Versailles in France,
built from 1664 to 1710.**

Italian Baroque Church:

Basilica della
Collegiata,
built in Sicily in
1768.



The Baroque style of painting and art was prevalent in Europe from the **late 16th century** to the **early 18th century**. It is characterized by **dynamic movement** and **overt emotion**.



Baroque Painting:
**The Assumption
of Mary**
by
Peter Paul Rubens
(Flemish Baroque
Painter; 1577-1640)



**The Adoration
of the Magi (1624)**
by
**Peter Paul
Rubens**





Bean Feast

(1640-1645) by Flemish painter **Jacob Jordaens**

Common Musical Instruments of the Baroque Period

Keyboard Instruments:

Harpsichord, Clavichord, Spinet, Virginal
Pipe Organ

String Instruments:

Lute
Violin / Viola / Cello / Bass
Viol (a.k.a. Viola da Gamba)

Wind Instruments:

Recorder, Baroque Flute, Baroque Oboe,
Bassoon, Horn, Baroque Trumpet

Percussion Instruments:

Timpani

The Baroque Orchestra

- The concept of the orchestra was first established in the early Baroque period.

- Typical Baroque orchestra instrumentation:

6 First Violins / 4 to 6 Second Violins

4 Violas / 1 or 2 Cellos / 1 Bass / Harpsichord

plus one or more of the following instruments: **Recorder,
Baroque Oboe, Bassoon,
Horn or Baroque Trumpet.**

- The instrumentation of the orchestra did not become standardized until the Classical period.

Baroque Opera

One of the most important musical developments in the Baroque period was the establishment of a new performing art form called **Opera**.

“Opera” is an Italian word that means “work.”

Opera is a form of theatre that combines **literature, singing, instrumental music, acting, costumes, scenery** and **lighting** (among other arts forms) to produce a **unified dramatic effect**.

The subjects of Baroque opera were usually stories about **mythological characters** and **kings**. It was not until the 18th century that the stories of operas would be about the lives of ordinary people.

Characteristics of Baroque Music

1. **Mood (“Doctrine of Mood”)** – Generally speaking, music of the Baroque period has one particular mood or “affect.” A work or movement that is happy usually remains happy throughout the work or movement. Music that is sad usually stays sad throughout a section or an entire work.

Examples: (on the next two slides)

Happy: “Rejoice Greatly” from Handel’s *Messiah*

Sad: “Dido’s Lament” from the opera *Dido and Aeneas* by Henry Purcell (British Baroque composer)



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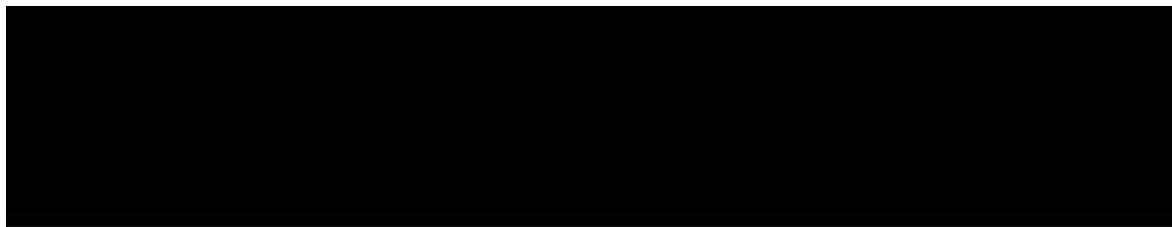
Characteristics of Baroque Music

2. Melody – Many Baroque melodies (though not all) are very long, complex and elaborate containing a seemingly endless string of notes. They are not easy to sing or play, often requiring enormous breath control and practice to perform.

Example: (on the next slide)

Bass Aria: “Endlich” from J.S. Bach’s ***Cantata 56***

(This aria also demonstrates the sound of continuo, described on the next slide.)



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Characteristics of Baroque Music

3. Basso Continuo – (also just called “**continuo**”) is a particular type of musical accompaniment that was used extensively in the Baroque period. The instruments of the Baroque continuo usually consisted of a **harpsichord** and **a cello**, but might include other instruments such as **organ** instead of harpsichord and **bassoon** instead of or in addition to the cello.

The first 28 seconds of the last musical example by J.S. Bach demonstrates the Basso Continuo accompanying a solo oboe. Please listen to the opening of this aria once again.



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Characteristics of Baroque Music

4. Dynamics – Many Baroque composers employed an effect called “terraced dynamics” in which musical passages alternated loud and soft, sometimes even repeating the same musical phrase.

Example: (on the next slide)

Chorus, “And the Glory of the Lord”
from Handel’s Messiah



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Characteristics of Baroque Music

5. Texture – A lot of music of the Baroque period (especially the late Baroque period) has a **predominantly polyphonic texture**, meaning that there are many voices or melodic lines happening at the same time. A special type of complex polyphonic musical texture called **Counterpoint** was widely used in the Baroque period and is one of the most distinctive musical elements of Baroque music.

Example: (on the next slide)

J.S. Bach: Choral Fugue from Cantata No. 80



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The Baroque period of music flourished for approximately **150 years** from about **1600 to 1750**, when musical tastes began to shift toward a generally simpler musical style that ushered in the next period of musical history, the **Classical period**.

The **death** of **Johann Sebastian Bach** in **1750** is generally used as the **end date** of the Baroque period of musical history.

