

Baroque Concerto

- **Concerto grosso** is a small group of soloists pitted against a larger group of players called the **tutti**
- The tutti consists mainly of string instruments, with a harpsichord as part of the basso continuo
- A concerto grosso consists of several movements that contrast in tempo and character
- The first and last movements are often in **ritornello form**, which is based on alternation between tutti and solo sections
- In ritornello form, the tutti opens with a theme called the **ritornello** and this theme, always played by the tutti, returns in different keys throughout the movement

Examples:

- Brandenburg Concerto No. 5 in D Major by Johann Sebastian Bach

Baroque Opera

- **Opera** is a drama that is sung to orchestra accompaniment
- The **libretto**, or text, of the opera is usually written by the **librettist**, or dramatist, and set to music by the composer
- An **aria** is an outpouring of melody that expresses an emotional state
- An aria in A B A form is called a **da capo aria**
- In a **recitative**, words are sung quickly and clearly, often on repeated tones
- Recitative carries the action forward and presents routine information quickly
- Recitative was sung by a soloist with only a simple chordal accompaniment
- **Secco recitatives** are recitatives usually accompanied only by a basso continuo
- At emotional high points and moments of tension, however, they might be supported by the orchestra, which is called **accompanied recitative**
- An opera **chorus** generates atmosphere and makes comments on the action
- An opera has the same instruments as a full symphony orchestra, but usually it has a smaller string section
- Most operas open with a purely orchestral composition called an **overture** or a **prelude**
- The overture is a short musical statement that involves the audience in the overall dramatic mood

Ground Bass - A musical idea in the bass that is repeated over and over while the melodies above it change

Examples:

- Orfeo (1608) by Claudio Monteverdi, an Italian composer
- Dido and Aeneas (1689) by Henry Purcell, an English composer
- Operas in Italian Style by George Frideric Handel

Baroque Fugue

- The fugue can be written for a group of instruments or voices, or for a single instrument like an organ or harpsichord
- A fugue is a polyphonic composition based on one main theme, called a **subject**
- Throughout a fugue, different melodic lines, called voices, imitate the subject
- After its first presentation, the subject is imitated in turn by all the remaining voices
- The subject in one voice is constantly accompanied in another voice but a different melodic idea called a **countersubject**
- **Episodes** offer either new material or fragments of the subject or countersubject
- Episodes lend variety to the fugue and make reappearances of the subject sound fresh
- A **stretto** is when a subject is imitated before it is completed
- **Pedal point** is when a single tone, usually in the bass, is held while the other voices produce a series of changing harmonies against it
- Fugues usually convey a single mood and a sense of continuous flow
- Very often an independent fugue is introduced by a short piece called a **prelude**

Tierce de Picardie - Minor piece ending in major chord

Examples:

- Organ Fugue in G Minor (Little Fugue; about 1709) by Johann Sebastian Bach

Baroque Cantata

- Cantata originally meant a piece that was sung, as distinct from a sonata, which was played
- Cantata was usually written for chorus, vocal soloists, organ, and a small orchestra

Examples:

- Wachet auf, ruft uns die Stimme (Awake, a Voice Is Calling Us; 1731) by Johann Sebastian Bach

Baroque Oratorio

- An oratorio is a large-scale composition for chorus, vocal soloists, and orchestra
- Oratorio differs from opera in that it has no acting, scenery, or costumes
- An oratorio contains a succession of choruses, arias, duets, recitatives, and orchestral interludes
- Oratorios are longer than cantatas and have more of a story line

Examples:

- Comfort Ye, My People by George Frideric Handel

Baroque Sonata

- A **sonata** is a composition in several movements for one to eight instruments
- Composers often wrote **trio sonatas**, so-called because they had three melodic lines: two high lines and a basso continuo
- The sonata da chiesa (church sonata) had a dignified character and was suitable for sacred performances
- The sonata da camera (chamber sonata) was more dancelike and was intended for performance at court

Examples:

- Trio Sonata in A Minor, Op. 3, No. 10 (1689) by Arcangelo Corelli
- La Primavera, from The Four Seasons (1725) by Antonio Vivaldi

Baroque Suite

- Baroque composers often wrote **suites**, which are sets of dance-inspired movements
- A baroque suite is made up of movements that are all written in the same key but differ in tempo, meter, and character
- The movements of a suite are usually in two-part form with each section repeated (A A B B)
- The A section, which opens in the tonic key and modulates to the dominant, is balanced by the B section, which begins in the dominant and returns to the tonic key
- Both sections use the same thematic material, and so they contrast relatively little except in key
- One common opening is the **French overture**
- Usually written in two parts, the French overture first presents a slow section with dotted rhythms that is full of dignity and grandeur while the second section is quick and lighter in mood, often beginning like a fugue

Examples:

- Suite No. 3 in D Major (1729-1731) by Johann Sebastian Bach

Dance	Origin	Meter	Tempo	Character
Allemande	Germany	Quadruple	Moderate	Steady
Courante	France / Italy	Triple	Fast	Lively
Sarabande	Spain	Triple	Slow	Solemn
Gigue	England / Ireland	Compound	Fast	Lively

Characteristics of Baroque Music

Unity of Mood:

- One basic mood
- Begins joyfully and will remain joyful throughout
- Moods were called **affections**
- Specific rhythms or melodic patterns were associated with specific moods
- In vocal music, one mood is maintained at some length before it yields to another

Rhythm:

- Unity of mood is conveyed by continuity of rhythm
- Rhythmic patterns are repeated throughout a piece
- This rhythmic continuity provides a compelling drive and energy

Melody:

- Baroque melody creates a feeling of continuity
- An opening melody will be heard again and again
- Its character tends to remain constant
- There is a continuous expanding, unfolding, and unwinding of melody
- A musical idea is repeated at higher or lower pitches
- Elaborate and ornamental
- Gives an impression of dynamic expansion rather than of balance or symmetry

Dynamics:

- The level of volume tends to stay fairly constant for a stretch of time
- When the dynamics do shift, the shift is sudden
- The alternation between loud and soft is called **terraced dynamics**
- Organ and harpsichord were well suited for continuity of dynamics
- The **clavichord** could make gradual dynamic changes, but only within a narrow range

Texture:

- Predominantly polyphonic in texture
- Two or more melodic lines
- The soprano and bass lines are the most important
- Imitation between the various lines is very common
- Changes of mood in the words demand musical contrast in vocal music

Chords and the Basso Continuo:

- Chords became increasingly important during the baroque period
- The interest of chords gave new prominence to the bass part, which served as the foundation of the harmony
- It resulted in the most characteristic feature of baroque music, an accompaniment called the **basso continuo**
- Basso continuo is usually played by a keyboard instrument and a low melodic instrument

- The basso continuo help to emphasise the all-important bass part, besides providing a steady flow of chords

Words and Music:

- Baroque composers used music to depict the meaning of specific words
- Baroque composers often emphasised words by writing many rapid notes for a single syllable of text
- This technique also displayed a singer's virtuosity

Word Painting - Contour of melody is very close to the meaning of the words