

## Music in 18th-Century Europe

Of all the fine arts, it was music that made the greatest strides in the 18th century. There was little good literature, poetry, painting or architecture.

It was in music that the 18th century achieved its highest imaginative expression. Most of the possible types of composition were embodied in innumerable musical scores. All forms (oratorio, quartet, symphony, concerto) and all instruments (organ and piano) were used and developed

Helped to pre-eminence by the fact that there were numerous and able patrons (this also led to keen rivalries.)

Musical criticism also began to be published.

### I. Introduction

A. the **16th century** had seen the rise of what we might call modern instrumental music, a trend away from church music

1. in that century distinct national forms of music also began to be discernable.
2. serious instrumental music developed, and composer appeared. (had always been instruments and instrumental music, but now written down.
  - a. 1511, first book describing how to play the various instruments published, written not in Latin but in vernacular (Sebastian Virdung's Musica getutscht und ausgezogen)
3. variety of instruments, including the clavichord (metal tangent hit string and stayed in contact) and harpsichord (quill plucking string)
  - a. instruments still associated with singing

### B. 17th century

1. Baroque period; the word is of Portuguese descent meaning "of irregular shape," dominance of Italian ideas
2. two basic constants
  - a. a distinction in various styles of composition (either music or text dominated) which later sub-divided into church, chamber, theater styles
  - b. began to write pieces for a particular idiom, like a violin
3. composer struggled to find musical expression for "Affections" like rage, excitement, heroism, (not the individual feelings of the artist) sometimes distorted, but developed a specific devices to convey that, or "figures"
4. many different types: fantasia, sonata, sinfonia, canzona, consort (ensemble), theme and variations

## II. The 18th century

### A. **Antonio Vivaldi**, 1678-1741, son of a leading Venetian violinist [THE TRANSITION FROM BAROQUE TO CLASSICAL]

#### 1. Background

- a. was educated for music (a virtuoso violinist) and the priesthood
- b. became a priest in 1703 (but because of ill health excused from active service a year later)
- c. had red hair so nicknamed "il prete rosso" (the red-haired priest)
- d. for 40 yrs was musical director of the Conservatory of the Pietà (for orphans) in Venice.
- e. did travel and died in Vienna.
- f. about 450 concertos are extant, and 23 sinfonias, 75 solo or trio sonatas, 49 operas etc. (constant public demand for new music, so worked fast)

#### 2. His music

- a. very original
- b. relatively recent revived interest, long known only for Bach's transcription of some of his violin concertos
- c. still attractive concertos, very fresh
- d. Vivaldi was an important transition from the Baroque to Classical periods

The basic structure of a concerto was Allegro (fast), Andante (slow), Allegro.

### 3. **LISTEN TO Primavera** (spring) was the first of four concertos in opus 8 (1725). It was one of the first descriptive symphonic works before Beethoven's "Pastoral" symphony no. 6.

- a. Note the use of the harpsichord, the lively feeling of growth and freshness
- b. violin

### B. **Johann Sebastian Bach**, 1685-1750, born in Eisenach, Thuringia

#### 1. Background

- a. Lutheran, from a large family, learned music in his family (parents died when he was ten)
  - 1) married 2x, 20 kids
  - 2) dug up his skeleton in 1894
- b. a German choirmaster, rather quiet, uneventful provincial life (never left Germany)
  - 1) little reputation in his life except as an organist.
- c. began as organist at Arnstadt
- d. 1723-50 to Leipzig as the Kantor of the Thomaskirche and Director Musices in Leipzig
  - 1) hot-tempered, stubborn, loved wine

- e. later lost his sight
- f. died 1750 in poverty
- g. chance that much preserved, his sons kept some of the work  
(two of his sons were outstanding musicians)
- 2. His music
  - a. \*\*\*\*\*said to have perfected the baroque\*\*\*\*\*
  - b. mastered the Fugue, an intricate version of the round in which each voice begins the theme in turn while other voices repeat it and elaborate upon it.
    - 1) a polyphonic musical composition in which one or two themes are repeated or imitated by successively entering voices and then contrapuntally developed in a continuous interweaving of the voice parts

Contrapuntal, relates to counterpoint, polyphony.

Counterpoint, the combination of two or more independent melodies into a single harmonic texture in which each retains its linear character.

Polyphony, two or more independent but organically related voice parts sound against one another.

- c. harmonically-based instrumental polyphony
- d. important
  - 1) generally forgotten after his death as musical taste changed, though Haydn and Mozart had studied him
  - 2) absorbed and developed many styles and forms
  - 3) harmony and counterpoint, melody and polyphony are intense equilibrium as no other composer
- 3. Variety (very prolific)
  - a. did concertos, six dedicated to the Margrave of Brandenburg in 1721
  - b. four overtures, the very popular Air for the G string is an arrangement of the third one
  - c. lot of vocal and church music, and a mass in B minor, including St. Matthew Passion
  - e. hundreds of chorale preludes and vocal music
  - f. lot of instrumental ensembles works (hard to figure out what these titles mean), best known are the preludes and fugues called The Well-Tempered Clavier, 1722-40. (clavier, or keyboard)
- 4. the "gigantic" spectacular fugues; **LISTEN TO** Prelude in E Flat Major, "St. Anne's", 1739
  - a. Prelude and Fugue, technically difficult,
  - b. what more can we say about organs, sometimes almost haunting, other times strangely atonal,

- C. **Georg Friedreich Handel**, 1685-1759, born in Halle, died in London (born same year as Bach, but completely different)
1. very stormy international figure and very famous at the time
  2. Background
    - a. father allowed him to take lessons from church director
    - b. 1702, to University of Halle to study and appointed cathedral organist
    - c. went to Hamburg to fool with opera (his first opera composed and performed in 1706)
    - d. studied in Italy until 1710
    - e. then to Hannover then to London, from where he was supposed to return but didn't
    - f. luckily, the elector became King George I
    - g. legend that Water Music, written 1717?, published in 1740, restored his favor with the king
    - h. 1726, a British subject, "composer to the court"
    - i. buried in Westminster Abbey
  3. His music
    - a. pretty stable over the years, no real development, straight forward uncomplicated
    - b. at first wrote operas for the Royal Academy of Music
    - c. 1728, popular The Beggar's Opera
    - d. 1730s, opera out of style so Handel switched to oratorio in English, 26 of them including Messiah (musical drama for performance)
  4. His variety
    - a. the range of Handel, very elaborate works especially operas, much different from early simple musical works
    - b. six concertos, usually called oboe concertos
    - c. twelve Grand Concertos, see opus 6 (1739) in G Minor
    - d. not as important for his instrumental works?
    - e. a couple of overtures to Fireworks music 1749
    - f. operas while in England in 1720s
      - 1) in 1730s turned to oratorios, in English!, for the middle class
      - 2) used old testament themes, e.g, joshua.
      - 3) basically an opera on a divine subject that was presented in concert instead of on the stage and in English
      - 4) very grand, often an allegro chorus caps the work.
  5. **LISTEN TO** excerpts from Messiah, composed in August-September 1741 and first performed in Dublin in April 1742
    - 1) They are singing in English
    - 2) a three act play using scriptures from the bible, divided into Christmas and Easter.

- 3) Beginning in 1750 it was performed annually in 9 concerts for the benefit of the Foundling Hospital.

6. Importance

- a. a choral composer in the grand style w/o peer
- b. more emphasis on melody and harmony than before
- c. middle class appeal

D. **Franz Joseph Haydn**, 1732-1809, born Rohrau, Austria, died in Vienna, a personal friend of Mozart

1. Background

- a. poor parents, an uncle taught him some music
- b. began as a choir boy in St. Stephen's Cathedral
- c. then odd jobs
- d. 1758, music director of the chapel of Count von Morzin in Bohemia
- e. 1761 began to be patronized by the Esterhazy family; he worked for 30 years in an ideal setup on the beautiful estate with his own orchestra and opera company (two operas and two concerts each week)
- f. later visited London before settling in Vienna in 1790s, where he wrote six masses and two oratorios

2. His music

- a. made the quartet and symphony the standards (the individual was merging with the group!!! (no longer as many concertos) from Concertare, to struggle or contend
- b. also largely responsible for the sonata form.

In a SONATA two contrasting themes are presented, interwoven, and then resolved (exposition, development and recapitulation).

- c. wrote tons of stuff, including: 106 symphonies, 68 string quartets, 60 piano sonatas, 15 operas, 4 oratorios and tons of other stuff
- d. The Creation performed in 1798, The Seasons performed in 1801.
- e. master of the classical symphony
  - 1) Symphony no. 82
  - 2) Symphony no. 44 in E Minor, "Mourning," has one of the most beautiful adagios

The classical symphony had four movements: ALLEGRO, ANDANTE MODERATO, MINUET AND TRIO, ALLEGRO. (Minuet, a slow graceful dance in 3/4 time)

Note that the 18th century orchestra was much smaller than today's. Haydn's orchestra in the 1770s had at most 25 players.

- f. Perhaps the father of the string quartet
  - 1) no. 17 and no. 20 (1771) and (1772), which were in perfect form
  - 2) no. 77, Note that this string quartet really evokes images of Vienna. **LISTEN TO** the minuet from String Quartet #77 in C Major

Instruments in the string quartet are the first and second violins, viola (bigger than violin) and cello.

- 3. His Importance
  - a. long and hard work
  - b. perfected the classical style

E. **Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart**, 1756-91, born in Salzburg (then within Bavaria, but independent; famous for its salt mines)

See the movie Amadeus for an interesting interpretation of Mozart's life.

- 1. Background
  - a. father a minor composer and director of the chapel
  - b. because of the boy's prodigious talent, the father devoted himself to educating and training him
  - c. from ages 6 to 15 spent on tour and show
  - d. by 1762 (age 6) a virtuoso on clavier
    - 1) first minuet at six
    - 2) symphony just before 9
    - 3) first opera at 12!
  - e. 1781 left salzburg for Vienna, at first prosperous, but then public deserted him and ill health
  - f. his personality did not allow him to work for one patron, so tried to freelance it
  - g. buried in a pauper's grave
- 2. His music
  - a. over 600 compositions
  - b. because of his contact with all kinds of music, very cosmopolitan quality; nor was his music really personal or autobiographical
  - c. easy for him to compose
- 3. again a variety of all types of music, especially for the piano
  - a. Fantasia and the Sonata in C Minor
  - b. finest four hand is Sonata in F major (K.497, 1786)

- c. 17 concertos for piano and orchestra, foremost, incomparable, perhaps k.459 in F
  - 1) k.466, in D minor (the most dramatic and most frequently played, 1784) **LISTEN TO** excerpt from Concerto for Piano in D Minor, no. 20
  - 2) the piano concerto was more prominent in Mozart's work than any other composer; they are incomparable: the piano is fully on par with the symphony.
- d. 1788, Symphony in C Major, "Jupiter," a masterpiece
- e. a bunch of operas: Le nozze de Figaro, Don Giovanni, Così fan tutti

**F. Ludwig van Beethoven**, 1770-1827, father was a singer in the Chapel at Bonn [TRANSITION FROM CLASSICAL TO ROMANTIC] (personal music)

1. Background

- a. his father tried to make him a Mozart (did play once for Mozart)
- b. November 1792, he travelled from Bonn to Vienna, as a pauper, Haydn had heard of him on a travel to Bonn
- c. took lessons from Haydn, also studied with some other composers
- d. soon acknowledged as foremost pianist and composer of his time
- e. never wrote music at someone else's command, drove hard bargains, and died with a comfortable estate
- f. did not cringe before princes or nobles

2. His Music

- a. who knows where to begin with this giant
- b. inherited the style and forms of Mozart and Haydn, but gave them a powerful new force, stands astride the classical and romantic periods.
- c. 9 symphonies, 11 overtures, and much other (smaller output) **LISTEN TO** excerpts from symphonies 5 and 9
- d. had a very difficult time writing music, very critical of himself
  - 1) began 1798 by 1820 total deafness
  - 2) often composed outside while walking
- e. His first works, sonatas, date to 1796-97 (but we will still cover him here, since he came out of same tradition, but he was also the transition to the romantic age)
- f. direct outpouring of his personality, demonic energy, very personally
- g. first symphony 1799
- h. 3rd symphony, "eroica" (heroic), 1803, unprecedented length and strength

3. 5th symphony, circa 1805, "I will grapple with fate; it shall not overcome me.", succession from C minor to C major
4. 9th symphony
  - a. As early as 1792, he wanted to use Schiller's Ode to Joy.
    - 1) Note that Schiller's Ode to joy, 1785, was originally meant as an ode to freedom.
  - b. in 1812? he began work
  - c. In 1823 he decided to go ahead and chose stanzas that emphasized universal brotherhood of man through joy and joy in heaven.
  - d. first performed in Vienna in 1824, used chorus and solo voices in the finale!
    - 1) grand magnificence.
    - 2) used language, emotion, imagery, post-Napoleon. The perfect lead into the romantic movement.
  - e. By this time, his later works were so personal that few understood them.



## **HIS 102: Eighteenth-Century Music Listening List**

Selection 1: Antonio Lucio Vivaldi, 1678-1741, Venice, La Primavera (spring) from The Four Seasons, opus 8 (1725). Concert for violin, strings and continuo [in three parts]: Allegro, Largo e pianissimo sempre, Allegro. Netherlands Chamber Orchestra. An early use of imagery; melody triumphant over harmony; harpsichord, the typical Baroque instrument; springlike; relatively short concerto compared to Beethoven.

Selection 2: Johann Sebastian Bach, 1685-1750, Leipzig, Excerpts from Prelude and Fugue in E Flat Major, "St. Anne," s.552 (17??). Organ of St. Mary and Joseph's Cathedral. Two dominant strands.

Selection 3: Georg Friedreich Handel, 1685-1759, Halle, excerpts from Messiah (1741), including "Hallelujah." Messiah was first performed in Dublin, April 1742. New York Philharmonic Orchestra, Leonard Bernstein conducting. Adele Addison, soprano, et al, and the Westminster Choir. One of the greatest choral pieces ever written.

Selection 4: Franz Joseph Haydn, 1732-1809, Rohrau, String Quartet #77 in C Major, "Emperor Quartet," opus 76, no. 3: Allegro; Poco adagio, cantabile (that may be sung); Minuet, allegro; Finale, presto (quick). This is the "minuet." Haydn Quartet of Lower Austria. Dance music.

Selection 5: Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, 1756-1791, Salzburg, Concerto for Piano in D Minor, no. 20, kv 466: Allegro, Romance, Rondo (Allegro assai) (round). This is the "romance." Géza Anda and the Vienna Symphony Orchestra. A concerto in perfect form; much longer than a Vivaldi concerto.

Selection 6: Ludwig van Beethoven, 1770-1827, Bonn, Symphony no. 5 in C Minor, opus 67: Allegro con brio (with gusto), Andante con moto, Allegro, Allegro. This is the first movement. Herbert von Karajan and the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra.

Selection 7: Beethoven, Symphony no. 9 in D Minor, "Choral," written 1823. Otto Klemperer and the (London) Philharmonic Orchestra. This is the last movement based on Friedreich Schiller's "Ode to Joy."