

Characteristics of the Classical Style Period

(1750 – 1820)

- Textures are for more homophonic (melody and accompaniment or perhaps “monody”) than the Baroque – although counterpoint is still found
- Music has a regular harmonic rhythm
- Music is generally “lighter” and less “self-important”
- Music is not just for royalty now – first open concerts this period
- The piano takes on importance and the harpsichord all but disappears
- Instrumental music becomes far more important than vocal music
- Instruments include:
 - Violin, viola, cello, bass (Old style bows and gut strings)
 - Oboe, bassoon, flute (without mechanical keys)
 - The woodwind family adds clarinet
 - Customarily 1 or no more than 2 in the orchestra
 - Trumpet, horn (“Natural” or no valves)
 - Customarily 1 or no more than 2 in the orchestra
 - Trombone trios are still used in opera and oratorio to represent other worlds
 - Timpani (fixed pitch – non-tunable)
 - Other percussion instruments begin to appear – mostly as novelties
 - Organ and piano are prominent, although there is some harpsichord at the beginning
 - Voice

- Predominant musical forms include:
 - Chamber Music
 - The string quartet is “invented” in this period
 - Sonata
 - Know what the differences are between this type and the “Classical Period” version
 - Symphony
 - Four movements, usually:
 - Sonata-allegro form
 - A slow “ABA,” “sonata-allegro,” or occasionally “theme and variations,”
 - A Minuet or scherzo (Beethoven)
 - A fast “theme and variations,” “rondo,” or “sonata-allegro”
 - Concerto
 - A work for orchestra and instrumental soloist
 - Opera
 - Solo “Art Song”
 - For vocalist and piano
 - Other vocal forms (Oratorio, Mass, “Missa Brevis”)
- Increasing use of secular music forms
- Music is predominantly in Major or Minor keys

- Major Composers:
 - Joseph Haydn
 - String Quartets! And other trios and chamber works
 - Symphonies! (104)
 - Piano sonatas
 - Oratorio
 - Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart
 - Symphonies (41)!
 - Operas!
 - Piano sonatas
 - Violin sonatas and other chamber works
 - Ludwig von Beethoven
 - Symphonies! (9) And symphonic overtures
 - Piano Sonatas!
 - Chamber music

- More terms – know definitions and *what they sound like*:
 - Sonata-Allegro Form
 - Introduction (?)
 - Exposition
 - First Theme Group
 - Transition or Bridge
 - Second Theme Group
 - Closing Theme Group or Codetta
 - Development
 - Modulation
 - Intervallic development
 - Rhythmic displacement
 - Sequence
 - Key center
 - Fragmentation
 - Inversion
 - Diminution
 - Augmentation
 - Orchestration
 - Recapitulation
 - Similar to the exposition but centering on the tonic
 - Coda
 - Not always there, but if so either:
 - Reinforces the tonic, or
 - Continues development
 - Minuette Form
 - ABA where:
 - A = A-BA or A-B-A
 - B = C-DC or C-D-C
 - Alberti Bass
 - Cadenza
 - Rondo Form (ABACA)
 - Harmonic Rhythm