

Music Appreciation

MUSIC APPRECIATION

History, Culture, and Context

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Brandt, Anthony. *Sound Reasoning: A New Way to Listen*. OpenStax, Rice University, 2019. Located at: <https://cnx.org/contents/R21GFBYj@21.3:8gAhyfRY@23/Sound-Reasoning-A-New-Way-to-Listen> License: CC BY-3.0

Caffery, Joshua C. “Cajun Music,” *64 Parishes*, 2020. Located at: <https://64parishes.org/entry/cajun-music> License: Copyright, 2011, used with permission.

Clark, Alan, Thomas Heflin, Jeffrey Kluball, and Elizabeth Kramer. *Understanding Music: Past and Present*. University of North Georgia Press. Revised edition by Jonathan Kulp, 2015. Located at: <http://jonathankulp.org/um.html> License: CC BY-SA 4.0

Cohen, Douglas. *Music: Its Language, History, and Culture*, CUNY Brooklyn College, 2015. Located at: https://academicworks.cuny.edu/bc_oers/4/ License: CC BY-4.0

Morgan-Ellis, Esther, Ed. *Resonances: Engaging Music in its Cultural Context*. University of North Georgia Press. Located at: <https://ung.edu/university-press/books/resonances-engaging-music.php> License: CC BY-SA 4.0

Wikipedia Contributors. “Middle Eastern Music.” *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*, Wikimedia Foundations, 2022. Located at: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Middle_Eastern_music License: CC BY-SA 3.0 (text only)

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PREFACE

The Creation of This Book

This textbook was created as part of the Interactive OER for Dual Enrollment project, facilitated by [LOUIS: The Louisiana Library Network](#) and funded by a \$2 million [Open Textbooks Pilot Program grant from the Department of Education](#).

This project supports the extension of access to high-quality post-secondary opportunities to high school students across Louisiana and beyond by creating materials that can be adopted for dual enrollment environments. Dual enrollment is the opportunity for a student to be enrolled in high school and college at the same time.

The cohort-developed OER course materials are released under a license that permits their free use, reuse, modification and sharing with others. This includes a corresponding course available in [MoodleNet](#) and [Canvas Commons](#) that can be imported to other Learning Management System platforms. For access/questions, contact [Affordable Learning Louisiana](#).

If you are adopting this textbook, we would be glad to know of your use via this [brief survey](#).

Review Statement

This textbook and its accompanying course materials went through at least two review processes:

- Peer reviewers, coordinated by Jared Eusea, River Parish Community College, used an online course development standard rubric for assessing the quality and content of each course to ensure that the courses developed through Interactive OER for Dual Enrollment support online learners in that environment. The evaluation framework reflects a commitment to accessibility and usability for all learners.
 - Reviewers
 - Pamela Simek
 - Wendy Johnson
 - Maia Smith
- The Institute for the Study of Knowledge Management in Education (ISKME) collaborated with LOUIS to review course materials and ensure their appropriateness for dual enrollment audiences. Review criteria were drawn from factors that apply across dual enrollment courses and subject areas, such as determining appropriate reading levels, assessing the fit of topics and examples for high school

DE students; applying high-level principles for quality curriculum design, including designing for accessibility, appropriate student knowledge checks, and effective scaffolding of student tasks and prior knowledge requirements, addressing adaptability and open educational practices, and principles related to inclusion and representational social justice.

- Reviewers
 - Sara Shearman
 - Kristi Carr

INTRODUCTION

Music makes us human. Every culture on earth has music. In fact, every human society extending back into prehistoric times has had music. Most of us are surrounded by music. We use it to enhance our mood and to regulate our metabolism, to keep us awake and help us go to sleep, as background to accompany the work, study, exercise, and relaxation that fills our days.

But it is precisely when music steps *out* of this background and asks for our attention, engages our memory and our expectations, that it becomes a fundamentally *artistic* endeavor. Music is a sonic response to a question that's not really about sound at all but rather is historical and social. The study of music is the study of human thought, experience, and history.

This course is about the musical imagination. It's how to think about music, but it's also about music as a mode of thinking.

(Inspired by Michael Hays, Professor of Architectural Theory at Harvard University's Graduate School of Design: *Welcome to The Architectural Imagination* [edx.org]).

For another take on music, watch Louisiana's own Wynton Marsalis at Harvard. "Music and Meaning" is the first in a series of videos from Harvard, "[Music as Metaphor](#)," discussing topics like "sound as identity" and "American identity" in music.



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PART I

MUSIC FUNDAMENTALS

1.

HOW MUSIC MAKES SENSE

Learning Objectives

- Identify how music makes sense through consistency and repetition.
- Identify how music can be varied and fragmented in repetition but still recognizable.
- Identify different types of repetition to show consistency.
- Identify music examples using different types of repetition.
- Compare and contrast repetition of different sizes.
- Identify ways in which humans have used music for social and expressive purposes.

From *Sound Reasoning* by Anthony Brandt

Adapted and edited by Bonnie Le

In order to more fully appreciate music—any music, familiar or unfamiliar—let us begin by considering music from the “ground up,” free from the constraints of a particular era or style. What is music and how does it make sense to us?

Music is a time-art. It needs time to unfold. Whereas it is possible to have an instantaneous view of a painting, it is not possible to have an instantaneous hearing of a piece of music. We can all remember those electrifying moments when we round a museum corner and, suddenly, a favorite Rembrandt or Picasso bursts into view: We can take in the entire canvas in a single glance. Music does not offer such short cuts: There is no way to hear a favorite musical work other than to listen all the way through.

Music is ephemeral. A painting or sculpture exists in concrete physical form. When the lights are turned off in the museum, the painting is still there. But music is a performance art: Each moment is temporary, washed away by the next. A sound exists in its precise “now,” and then vanishes. Once the performance is over, the music is gone.

Music is unstoppable in time. Like music, fiction is a time-art. But the reader is in control of the pacing:

He or she may read the book in a single sitting or over the span of several months. In contrast, a musical performance is not meant to be interrupted; the pacing is out of the listener's control. Furthermore, the pages of a novel are all accessible at any time: The reader may review passages at will—meditating on the meaning of an ambiguous paragraph or looking back to confirm an important clue. The reader may even give into the temptation to skip ahead to the ending. No such luxury exists at a concert. You can't raise your hand and say, "Forgive me, Maestro, I didn't understand that last passage" and have the maestro reply, "Yes, you in the tenth row, no problem, I'll take it over again from **measure** nineteen!" Music rushes by, unimpeded by the listener's questions, distractions, or desire to linger.

Finally, music is abstract and non-verbal. The meaning of a word may be colored by context; but there is an enduring, stable meaning, which any of us can look up in the dictionary. If I use the word "egg" as a metaphor for birth or renewal, the metaphor only succeeds because you and I share a common definition. On the other hand, musical sounds do not have literal or fixed meanings. Musical sounds may evoke moods or images, may suggest yearnings, loss, or surprise: But these interpretations are far more subjective and open-ended. You can never say "Please get me a soda from the 7-11" in abstract musical sound. Music is not designed to be that literal. Although music is often referred to as a "language," its sounds are never anchored to any specific meaning.

Thus, music is an abstract and non-verbal art-form, unstoppable in time. Under those conditions, how is it possible for music to be intelligible? When you think about it, it's quite a challenge! Music places tremendous pressure on the listener: It asks him or her to follow an argument that is racing by, made up of impermanent sounds with no fixed meaning.

Something to Think About:

The study of music is the study of human thought, experience, and history.

What music have you heard that spoke to you or that you relate to a specific experience in your life?

The answer to this question is extraordinarily important, because it transcends all questions of era or style. We believe with all of our hearts that music speaks to us. But how? It is invisible and insubstantial; it is not referring to anything "real." Theater and ballet are also time-arts: But theater uses words, and ballet has the human body as a frame of reference. What does music have to direct our attention and guide us through its narrative?

The answer is that repetition is the key to musical intelligibility. Repetition creates the enduring presence at the heart of a work's fleeting, impermanent existence.

The Power of Consistency

Imagine that you are standing at a craps table in a casino. You don't know the rules and are trying to learn the game through observation alone. You would notice certain consistencies: One player at a time throws two dice, which must always fall on the craps table. Certain actions provoke certain reactions: If the shooter throws a two, the "house" always calls out "Snake eyes" and the shooter is replaced. Through careful observation, you could rapidly apprehend the rules. Not only that, you would soon become caught up in the game. You would never know what would happen next: Every roll would be unexpected; bets would be waged in surprising, shifting patterns. Yet everything that did happen would fall within comprehensible parameters.

Similarly, a music listener relies on consistency to understand what is happening. Many times, we do not consciously recognize these consistencies. A key part of appreciating music is to learn to become conscious of and articulate the most essential consistencies of a musical work.

What would happen if the consistencies were suddenly broken? Suppose you are standing at the craps table, elbow to elbow with the other gamblers, calmly stacking your chips. A shooter steps forward and throws only one die, then two, then three. When he throws twelve dice, everyone at the table throws their dice all at the same time. You would pull your chips off the table: Its consistencies broken, the game would have become incomprehensible.

Similarly, if you were to change the basic premises of a piece of music in the middle, how would the listener be able to make sense of what happened? In craps, you would withdraw your bets; in music, you might withdraw your attention.

Consistency does not imply predictability or monotony. In any game, the consistencies must be flexible enough to allow for an endless variety of play. Consider the following example from baseball. Perhaps the strangest no-hitter of all time occurred in the 1920s: The opposing pitcher, the worst hitter on the team, hit a line drive to the gap and legged out a double. But, in rounding first base, he missed the bag and was called out on an appeal play; that erased his hit, turning it into an out. He and his teammates never mustered another hit. This no-hitter was so rare, it has only happened once in the history of baseball. Yet no rules were broken: Instead, the consistencies of baseball were stretched to allow something exceptional.

Similarly, the consistencies in a piece of music still leave plenty of room for the unexpected and the unusual. Composers often strive to see how far they can stretch their consistencies without breaking them. As an illustration, consider a classical theme and variations. The composer begins by presenting a theme. He or she then repeats the theme over and over, preserving certain aspects of the theme while varying others. Although each variation is unique, they share an underlying identity. In general, the variations tend to get farther and farther removed from the original. The later variations may be so disguised that the connection to the original is barely recognizable. Yet, like the rare no-hitter, no "rules" are broken: The marvel of these late variations is that the composer has managed to stretch the consistencies so far without actually violating them.

For instance, listen to the first half of the theme from Beethoven's *Piano Sonata in C-minor, Opus 111*.

Audio ex. 1.1: Beethoven's *Piano Sonata in C-minor, Opus 111*



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From this austere first statement, listen to how far Beethoven stretches his theme in this variation.

Audio ex. 1.2: Beethoven's *Piano Sonata in C-minor, Opus 111*



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Though the theme is still recognizable, its consistencies have been stretched. It is in a higher **register**. The texture is more complex, with a very rapid **accompaniment**. The **melody** is more flowing, with new material filling in the theme's original resting points. While staying true to the theme's identity, this variation pulls the theme unexpectedly far from its original starkness. Baseball manager Bill Veeck once said: "I try not to break the rules, but merely to test their elasticity." The same may be said of music's greatest composers.

Each listener's reaction to the Beethoven variation will be personal, the words and metaphors to describe it subjective. But, as subjective as these emotional responses may be, it is the stretching of the material that has called them forth. The transformations are readily accessible to the ear and can be objectively described: The variation is not lower than the theme, it is higher; it is not more restful, it is more active and continuous. Appreciating music begins with recognizing how much we are already hearing and learning the ability to make conscious and articulate what we already perceive.

Repetition and pattern recognition underlie how we understand almost everything that happens to us. Physics might be described as an effort to discover the repetition and consistencies that underlie the universe. One of the powerful modern theories proposes that the basic element of the universe is a "string." The vibrations of these infinitesimally small strings produce all the known particles and forces. To string theory, the universe is a composition on an enormous scale, performed by strings. Continuity and coherence are created through the repetition of basic laws. Miraculously, out of a few fundamental elements and laws, enormous complexity, constant variety, and an unpredictable future are created.

We ourselves are pieces of music, our personal identities created through an intricate maze of repetition. Every time we eat and breathe, new molecules are absorbed by our bodies, replenishing our cells and changing our molecular structure. Yet, though countless millions of molecules are changing inside us every minute, we feel the continuity of our existence. This sense of self that we all feel so tangibly is really a dazzling performance: The new molecules maintain our identity by constantly repeating our basic structures.

Thus, repetition lies at the heart of how we understand music, ourselves, and our world. We have great faith in the richness and significance of repetition. In listening to music, we rely on repetition as the bearer of meaning.

Repetition of Different Sizes

Repetitions come in different sizes, from small gestures to entire sections.

The repeating element may be as brief as a single sound. For instance, Arnold Schoenberg's *Piano Piece, Opus 19, No. 2*, opens with an “atomic” sound that repeats over and over.

Listen to the entire one-minute work. You will notice that as everything changes around it, this repeating sound remains like a “beacon” of stability.

Audio ex. 1.3: Arnold Schoenberg's *Piano Piece, Opus 19, No. 2*



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More commonly, the repeating element is a short figure, often called a motive.

Here is the famous **motive** of Beethoven's *Symphony No. 5*.

Audio ex. 1.4: Beethoven's *Symphony No. 5*



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In the opening **phrase**, this short figure is repeated eleven times, with greater and greater intensity:

In the “Anvil Chorus” of Wagner's *Das Rheingold*, the short figure is a rhythmic pattern. In this brief excerpt, the rhythmic **motive** is repeated six times as the orchestra builds in intensity on top of it.

Audio ex. 1.5: Wagner's “Anvil Chorus” from *Das Rheingold*



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But repetition of longer units can occur. A phrase is a complete musical thought; it is often compared to a sentence. The opening phrase of Mozart's *Symphony in G-minor* has a lot of internal repetition. But it also creates a longer musical statement that is repeated, sinking slightly in **pitch** the second time.

Here is the phrase by itself:

Audio ex. 1.6: Mozart's *Symphony in G-minor*



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://louis.pressbooks.pub/musicappreciation/?p=43#audio-43-6>

Here is the phrase with its repetition:

Audio ex. 1.7: Mozart's *Symphony in G-minor*



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Frequency of Repetition

Notice that in approximately the same amount of time that Beethoven is able to repeat his **motive** eleven times, and Wagner six, Mozart is only able to repeat his longer **phrase** twice.

Audio ex. 1.8: Beethoven's *Symphony No. 5, I*



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Audio ex. 1.9: Wagner's "Anvil Chorus" from *Das Rheingold*



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Audio ex. 1.10: Mozart's *Symphony No. 40 in G-minor, I*



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Here is a similar example from Igor Stravinsky's ballet *Pétrouchka*. Similar to the Mozart, notice that the phrase is repeated in a slightly new form.

Audio ex. 1.11: Igor Stravinsky's ballet *Pétrouchka*



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Even longer units of repetition can occur. A group of **phrases** can be joined together to create a theme; this might be compared to a paragraph. In the following example from Beethoven's *Piano Sonata, Opus 53*, "Waldstein," the theme again contains a lot of internal repetition. But the theme itself is repeated in its entirety, with a more animated **accompaniment**.

Audio ex. 1.12: Beethoven's *Piano Sonata, Opus 53*, "Waldstein"



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In this excerpt from Bela Bartok's *Concerto for Orchestra*, the theme is repeated with a more elaborate instrumental accompaniment.

Audio ex. 1.13: Bela Bartok's *Concerto for Orchestra*



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Finally, even a complete section of music can be repeated—a **scale** that might be likened to a chapter. This is what happens in Luciano Berio’s brief folk song, *Ballo*.

Audio ex. 1.14: Luciano Berio’s *Ballo*



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Thus, repetition can occur in a variety of sizes, from “atomic” elements to longer time-spans.

Local and Large-scale Repetition

Repetition is often local and immediate. But repetition, especially of larger units, can occur after intervening music has taken place.

For instance, in Beethoven’s *Bagatelle, Opus 126, no. 4*, the following section occurs:

Audio ex. 1.15: Beethoven’s *Bagatelle, Opus 126, no. 4*



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://louis.pressbooks.pub/musicappreciation/?p=43#audio-43-15>

After intervening music, the entire section is repeated exactly and in its entirety. The excerpt picks up at the transition to the return:

Audio ex. 1.16: Beethoven’s *Bagatelle, Opus 126, no. 4*



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://louis.pressbooks.pub/musicappreciation/?p=43#audio-43-16>

When a repetition occurs after intervening music, we will call it a recurrence.

Thus far, we have seen that musical repetition can occur in different sizes and over different time-spans, from local to large-scale. We have also seen that smaller repetitions can be “nested” inside of larger ones: Notice, for instance, how the section from Beethoven’s Bagatelle has internal repetition of short patterns and longer **phrases** and also eventually recurs in its entirety.

Maximizing the Minimum

In popular music—as well as children’s songs—repetition is often literal and direct. This makes the music more readily accessible and immediately intelligible.

For instance, in this folk song sung by Pete Seeger, a short musical idea is repeated over and over exactly the same, sixteen times in a mere thirty seconds. On top of the quickly cycling music, Seeger presents a rapid-fire list of animal names.

Audio ex. 1.17: Pete Seeger’s “Alligator, Hedgehog”



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://louis.pressbooks.pub/musicappreciation/?p=43#audio-43-17>

What distinguishes classical music from most pop music is that, in classical music, the repetition is more frequently varied and transformed. This makes the repetition flexible, capable of assuming many forms and moods. When Elizabeth Barrett Browning writes “*How do I love thee—let me count the ways / I love thee to the depth and breadth and height my soul can reach...I love thee to the level of every day’s most quiet need.... I love thee freely, I love thee purely,*” she is using varied repetition to make her point. Similarly, one of the guiding principles of art-music is repetition without redundancy. The music will repeat its main ideas, but constantly in new ways.

In the popular *South Beach Diet*, dieters are at first restricted to a very limited regimen of foods: no bread, fruit, alcohol, or sugar. The challenge of the diet is to create a varied menu from such a circumscribed list of ingredients. Otherwise, the dieter will begin to stray. So, a lot of effort and inventiveness goes into designing recipes that make the daily staples lively and tasty.

In classical music, the goal is similarly to maximize the minimum. That is, the goal is to take a limited number of ingredients and create the greatest possible variety. A composer such as Beethoven or Bartok can take just a few basic elements and create the musical equivalent of a complete meal of soup, main course, salad, and dessert—all with distinctive flavors so that you sometimes can't even recognize the presence of the same ingredients in every recipe.

Let us study the concept of varied repetition in several works.

The basic pattern of Bach's *C-Major Invention* is the following:

Audio ex. 1.18: Bach's *C-Major Invention*



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This basic pattern is repeated over and over again throughout the piece, but in constantly new forms.

For instance, Bach plays the basic pattern in different **registers**:

Audio ex. 1.19: Bach's *C-Major Invention*



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Bach begins the basic pattern on different **pitches**:

Audio ex. 1.20: Bach's *C-Major Invention*



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Bach turns the pattern upside down:

Audio ex. 1.21: Bach's *C-Major Invention*

—



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Bach fragments the theme, dwelling on different segments of it.

In the next sample, he takes the first four notes and plays them at half-speed:

Audio ex. 1.22: Bach's *C-Major Invention*



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Here, he takes the last four notes, and extends them into an exciting rising figure:

Audio ex. 1.23: Bach's *C-Major Invention*



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He changes the **groupings** of the basic pattern, sometimes having several versions of the entire pattern in succession:

Audio ex. 1.24: Bach's *C-Major Invention*



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Finally, he changes how the pattern is echoed between the hands. Sometimes, the left hand leads:

Audio ex. 1.25: Bach's *C-Major Invention*



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Sometimes, the right hand leads. Notice, in this example, that Bach flips the basic pattern upside down and right side up in alternation.

Audio ex. 1.26: Bach's *C-Major Invention*



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Now, please listen to Bach's *Invention in C-Major* in its entirety.

Audio ex. 1.27: Bach's *C-Major Invention*



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://louis.pressbooks.pub/musicappreciation/?p=43#audio-43-27>

All of these flexible repetitions are beautifully coordinated so that the piece creates a clear opening, middle, climax, and ending. The fact that the basic pattern occurs in every **measure** creates consistency. The fact that it rarely occurs the same way twice contributes to the music's momentum and dynamism. The *C-Major Invention* is thus a case study in repetition without redundancy.

In Frederic Chopin's *Prelude in A-Major*, the basic pattern is a **rhythm**:

Audio ex. 1.28: Frederic Chopin's *Prelude in A-Major*



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://louis.pressbooks.pub/musicappreciation/?p=43#audio-43-28>

That rhythm occurs identically eight times. Here is the first time it is played.

Audio ex. 1.29: Frederic Chopin's *Prelude in A-Major*



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The stability of its rhythmic pattern gives the work consistency. At the same time, the music moves and progresses thanks to the variety of **melody** and **harmony**. Listen to how the pattern underlies the following examples:

Audio ex. 1.30: Frederic Chopin's *Prelude in A-Major*



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Audio ex. 1.31: Frederic Chopin's *Prelude in A-Major*



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://louis.pressbooks.pub/musicappreciation/?p=43#audio-43-31>

Now, listen to the Chopin *Prelude* in its entirety.

Audio ex. 1.32: Frederic Chopin's *Prelude in A-Major*



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Out of the eight times the rhythmic pattern is played, it only occurs the same way twice. As in the Bach, varied repetition helps to make the music both intelligible and dynamic.

The following pattern accompanies the voice in Stravinsky's "Akahito" from his *Three Haiku Settings*:

Audio ex. 1.33: Stravinsky's "Akahito" from *Three Haiku Settings*



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In the Chopin, the **rhythm** was repeated exactly, but the **pitches** changed. In the Stravinsky, both the rhythm and the pitches are repeated: thirteen times in all in this short piece!

So how is variety created? In this case, as the pattern is repeated over and over, an ever-changing layer is superimposed upon it. It is as if the basic pattern is “bombarded” in different ways, disguising its reappearance.

The first four times the pattern is played, it alone accompanies the voice.

Audio ex. 1.34: Stravinsky’s “Akahito” from *Three Haiku Settings*



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://louis.pressbooks.pub/musicappreciation/?p=43#audio-43-34>

But the fifth time, the new layer is added:

Audio ex. 1.35: Stravinsky’s “Akahito” from *Three Haiku Settings*



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://louis.pressbooks.pub/musicappreciation/?p=43#audio-43-35>

From then on, the added layer is constantly evolving. You will be able to recognize the presence of the underlying constant pattern, but its reappearance is camouflaged by the changing layer on top of it.

Now, listen to “Akahito” in its entirety:

Audio ex. 1.36: Stravinsky’s “Akahito” from *Three Haiku Settings*



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://louis.pressbooks.pub/musicappreciation/?p=43#audio-43-36>

In the Bach and Chopin examples, the basic pattern is treated dynamically: Almost every reappearance is new

in some way. In the Stravinsky example, the basic pattern itself is much more static. Yet the music never sounds the same because the music superimposed on top of it is always changing. Thus, the goal of “repetition without redundancy” is accomplished in a new way.

In his work *Piano Phase*, Steve Reich takes Stravinsky’s procedure and goes one step further. Just like Stravinsky, he holds his basic pattern completely static. Just like Stravinsky, he superimposes an added layer. But, this time, the added layer is the basic pattern itself!

The musical material of Steve Reich’s *Piano Phase* for two pianos consists of the following pattern.

Audio ex. 1.37: Steve Reich’s *Piano Phase*



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://louis.pressbooks.pub/musicappreciation/?p=43#audio-43-37>

In *Piano Phase*, the first player remains absolutely fixed, repeating the basic pattern over and over again. The second player plays exactly the same pattern but gradually shifts its alignment so that it falls more and more out-of-phase with the first player. As the second player shifts alignment, new resultant patterns are created.

As an analogy, imagine that you had two identical panels, each made of strips of colored glass. At first, you line up the panels perfectly and shine a light through them. The sequence of colors in the panels would be projected on the wall: Let us say it is blue, yellow, red, yellow, blue. Then, you keep one panel fixed and slide the panel slightly over: In the new alignment, the red in the first panel is aligned with the blue of the second, the blue with the yellow, etc. When you shine a light through the panels, you get a new sequence of colors on the wall: purple, green, etc. Colors you’ve never seen before suddenly appear! As you can imagine, every time you shift one strip over, the resultant colors change. With startling efficiency, you can create constantly new patterns on the wall just by changing how the panels are aligned.

Here is how the music sounds when the two pianos begin in alignment.

Audio ex. 1.38: Steve Reich’s *Piano Phase*



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://louis.pressbooks.pub/musicappreciation/?p=43#audio-43-38>

A little while later, the second pianist shifts the basic pattern slightly out of alignment.

Audio ex. 1.39: Steve Reich’s *Piano Phase*



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://louis.pressbooks.pub/musicappreciation/?p=43#audio-43-39>

Later still, the second pianist shifts the pattern further and further out of alignment.

Audio ex. 1.40: Steve Reich's *Piano Phase*



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://louis.pressbooks.pub/musicappreciation/?p=43#audio-43-40>

The further out of alignment the two pianos get, the harder it is to recognize the underlying pattern. But ask yourself the following: Did the pianos change **speed**? Did the length of the pattern cycle change? Did the pianos play in a new **register** or at a different volume? When you think about it, you will be able to sense the steadfastness of the basic pattern.

Here is one more example of the pianos out of alignment.

Audio ex. 1.41: Steve Reich's *Piano Phase*



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://louis.pressbooks.pub/musicappreciation/?p=43#audio-43-41>

Now, listen to this extended excerpt from *Piano Phase*. When you listen to the excerpt, you will notice that when the second pianist shifts alignment, there is a brief “blurry” transition passage; then, the new alignment is established. The 3-minute excerpt will take you through the first three changes of alignment.

Audio ex. 1.42: Steve Reich's *Piano Phase*



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://louis.pressbooks.pub/musicappreciation/?p=43#audio-43-42>

Reich's method uses very minimal means to achieve the goal of varied repetition. He manages to create gradual

variety without changing the **register**, loudness, or **density** of the pattern. Furthermore, unlike the other examples, Reich is very patient in his presentation: He allows each stage of the process to persist, repeating over and over again, before shifting to the next. As a result, Reich's piece is more meditative and hypnotic than the other works; it has more in common with the stable repetition of pop music. However, Reich is still stretching his material by maximizing the minimum: Eventually, the work explores every possible superposition of the basic pattern with itself.

Composers are often divided up by era and style. Bach, Chopin, Stravinsky, and Reich would rarely be grouped together. However, beneath their unique personalities and styles, these composers are all striving to create musical intelligibility through varied repetition. In the examples above, each has found a different way to achieve this underlying goal.

Varied repetition is not only a guiding principle in Western art-music. In a jazz work, a pattern such as the famous “twelve-bar blues” will provide an underlying consistency on top of which the band will create ever-changing, spontaneous improvisations. In an Indian raga, an underlying rhythmic pattern, called a *tala*, creates the framework for elaborate improvisations. Music sustains itself, evolves, and spans the globe because of the richness of possibilities created by varied repetition.

Repetition and Recognition

Listening to explicit, literal repetition is like eating a simple carbohydrate: It is easily digested and quickly absorbed. That is why popular music has so much literal repetition: Its success depends on making an immediate impact. On the other hand, listening to transformed repetition is like eating a complex carbohydrate: It takes longer to digest. More of our attention is engaged: What changed? By how much? How fast did it happen? How long will it persist in the new form? Observations lead to interpretation: Why did it change? What are the consequences of what happened?

More and more, nutritionists are emphasizing that complex carbohydrates are healthier for our bodies. Similarly, transformed repetition may be healthier for our musical minds: It demands greater concentration, more astute observations, and more careful reasoning—in short, more active listening. Learning to recognize and evaluate transformed repetition is a crucial aspect of music appreciation.

Chapter Summary

Because music is an abstract, non-verbal time-art, repetition lies at the heart of how music makes sense. In pop music, the repetition tends to be more literal, while in classical music, it is often varied and transformed. As much as composers are often searching for new sounds and instrumental combinations, they are also inventing new means of building repetition.

Musical repetition offers powerful and suggestive models for how we understand the world and ourselves.

The composer Mario Davidovsky, one of America's great living composers, has said that he listens to music not with knowledge but rather for knowledge, for guidance in understanding and grappling with life. Through its imaginative and ever-changing use of repetition, music constantly presents us with new ways to recognize the unities and consistencies underlying our experience.

Test Your Understanding



An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:

<https://louis.pressbooks.pub/musicappreciation/?p=43#h5p-4>

Source:

Brandt, Anthony. "How Music Makes Sense," *Sound Reasoning*, OpenStax CNX. Sep 17, 2019. [CC BY 3.0](#). [Download for free.](#)

2.

HOW MUSIC IS CREATED

Learning Objectives

- Identify a wide variety of sounds, comparing and contrasting them using musical elements of pitch, volume, articulation, and timbre.
- Identify important performing forces (use of the voice and instruments) of Western music.
- Define basic elements of melody, harmony, rhythm, and texture and build a vocabulary for discussing them.
- Identify basic principles and types of musical form.
- Describe musical elements and form.
- Compare and contrast categories of art music, folk music, and pop music.
- Identify ways in which humans have used music for social and expressive purposes.

Music Fundamentals

Selections from *Understanding Music: Past and Present*
By N. Alan Clark, Thomas Heflin, and Elizabeth Kramer
Revised by Jonathan Kulp
Adapted and edited by Bonnie Le

What Is Music?

Music moves through time; it is not static. In order to appreciate music, we must remember what sounds happened and anticipate what sounds might come next. Most of us would agree that not all sounds are music! Examples of sounds not typically thought of as music include noises such as alarm sirens, dogs barking,

coughing, the rumble of heating and cooling systems, and the like. But, why? One might say that these noises lack many of the qualities that we typically associate with music.

We can define music as the intentional organization of sounds in time by and for human beings. Though not the only way to define music, this definition uses several concepts important to understandings of music around the world. “Sounds in time” is the most essential aspect of the definition. Music is distinguished from many of the other arts by its temporal quality; its sounds unfold over and through time, rather than being glimpsed in a moment, so to speak. They are also perceptions of the ear rather than the eye and thus difficult to ignore as one can do by closing his or her eyes to avoid seeing something. It is more difficult for us to close our ears. Sound moves through time in waves. A sound wave is generated when an object vibrates within some medium like air or water. When the wave is received by our ears, it triggers an effect known as sound, as can be seen in the following diagram:

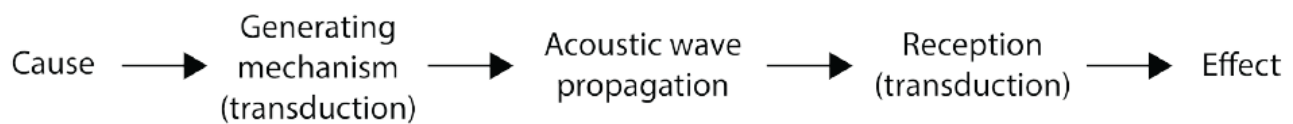


Figure 2.1: Movement of a sound wave | Attribution: Corey Parson | Source: Original Work | License: [CC BY-SA 4.0](#)

As humans, we also tend to be interested in music that has a plan—in other words, music that has intentional organization. Most of us would not associate coughing or sneezing or unintentionally resting our hand on a keyboard as the creation of music. Although we may never know exactly what any songwriter or composer meant by a song, most people think that the sounds of music must show at least a degree of intentional foresight.

A final aspect of the definition is its focus on humanity. Bird calls may sound like music to us; generally, the barking of dogs and hum of a heating unit do not. In each of these cases, though, the sounds are produced by animals or inanimate objects rather than by human beings; therefore, the focus of this text will only be on sounds produced by humans.

Acoustics

Acoustics is essentially “the science of sound.” It investigates how sound is produced and behaves, elements that are essential for the correct design of music rehearsal spaces and performance venues. Acoustics is also essential for the design and manufacture of musical instruments. The word itself derives from the Greek word *acoustikos*, which means “of hearing.” People who work in the field of acoustics generally fall into one of two groups: acousticians (those who study the theory and science of acoustics) and acoustical engineers (those who work in the area of acoustic technology). This technology ranges from the design of rooms, such as classrooms,

theaters, arenas, and stadiums; to devices such as microphones, speakers, and sound-generating synthesizers; to the design of musical instruments like strings, keyboards, woodwinds, brass, and percussion.

Sound and Sound Waves

As early as the sixth century BCE (500 years before the birth of Christ), [Pythagoras](#) reasoned that strings of different lengths could create harmonious (pleasant) sounds (or tones) when played together if their lengths were related by certain ratios. Concurrent sounds in ratios of two to three, three to four, four to five, etc. are said to be harmonious. Those not related by harmonious ratios are generally referred to as **noise**. About 200 years after Pythagoras, [Aristotle](#) (384–322 BCE) described how sound moves through the air—like the ripples that occur when we drop a pebble in a pool of water—in what we now call waves. Sound is basically the mechanical movement of an audible pressure wave through a solid, liquid, or gas. In physiology and psychology, sound is further defined as the recognition of the vibration caused by that movement. Sound waves are the rapid movements back and forth of a medium—the gas, water, or solid—that has been made to vibrate.

Properties of Sound: Pitch

Another element that we tend to look for in music is what we call “definite pitch.” A definite pitch is a tone that is composed of an organized sound wave. A note of definite pitch is one in which the listener can easily discern the pitch. For instance, notes produced by a trumpet or piano are of definite pitch. An indefinite pitch is one that consists of a less organized wave and tends to be perceived by the listener as noise. Examples are notes produced by percussion instruments such as a snare drum.

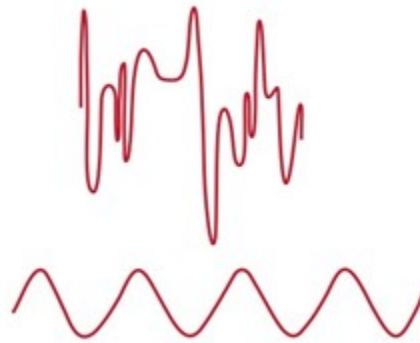


Figure 2.2: Two sound waves, indefinite pitch with uneven crests, troughs, and wavelengths, and the second a definite pitch with even crests, troughs, and wavelengths | Attribution: Corey Parson | Source: Original Work | License: [CC BY-SA 4.0](#)

Numerous types of music have a combination of definite pitches, such as those produced by keyboard and wind instruments, and indefinite pitches, such as those produced by percussion instruments. That said, most tunes are composed of definite pitches, and as we will see, melody is a key aspect of what most people hear as music.

In the Western world, musicians generally refer to definite pitches by the “musical alphabet.” The musical alphabet consists of the letters A–G, repeated over and over again (...ABCDEFGGABCDEFGABCDEFG...), as can be seen from this illustration of the notes on a keyboard. These notes correspond to a particular frequency of the sound wave. A pitch with a sound wave that vibrates 440 times each surface second, for example, is what most musicians would hear as an A above middle C. (Middle C simply refers to the note C that is located in the middle of the piano keyboard.) As you can see, each white key on the keyboard is assigned a particular note, each of which is named after the letters A through G. Halfway between these are black keys, which sound the sharp and flat notes used in Western music. This pattern is repeated up and down the entire keyboard.

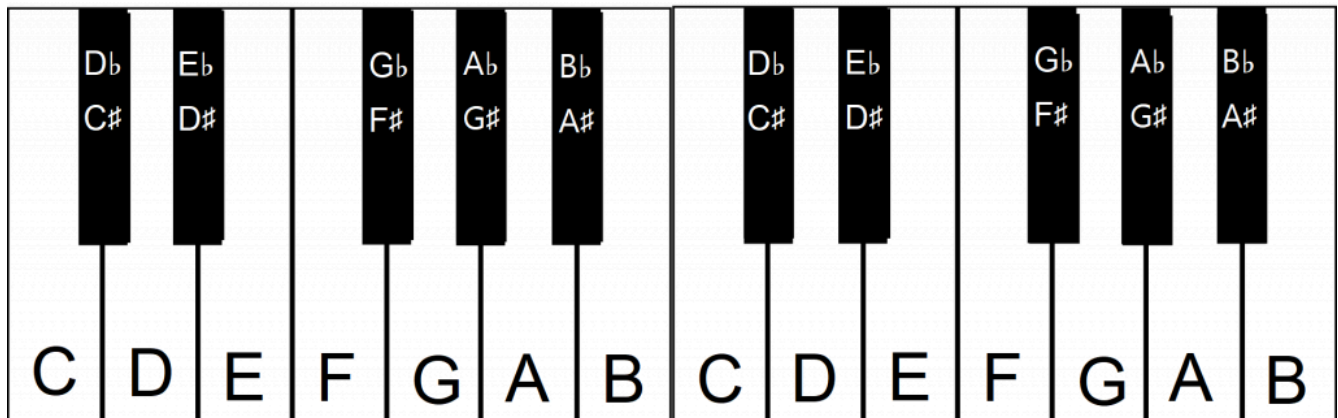


Figure 2.3: Segment of a piano keyboard labeled with the musical alphabet | License: Public Domain

The vibration with the lowest frequency is called the fundamental pitch. The additional definite pitches that are produced are called [overtones](#), because they are heard above or “over” the fundamental pitch (tone). Our musical alphabet consists of seven letters repeated over and over again in correspondence with these overtones.

To return to the musical alphabet: the first partial of the overtone series is the loudest and clearest overtone heard “over” the fundamental pitch. In fact, the sound wave of the first overtone partial is vibrating exactly twice as fast as its fundamental tone. Because of this, the two tones sound similar, even though the first overtone partial is clearly higher in pitch than the fundamental pitch. If you follow the overtone series from one partial to the next, eventually you will see that all the other pitches on the keyboard might be generated from the fundamental pitch and then displaced by **octaves** to arrive at pitches that move by step.

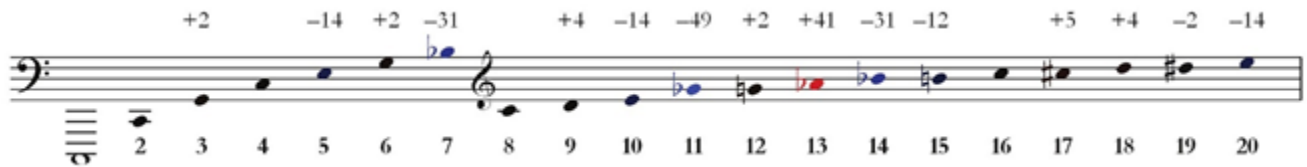


Figure 2.4: Harmonic series, partials for C | Attribution: [MusicMaker5376](#) | License: [CC BY-SA 3.0](#)

The distance between any two of these notes or pitches is called an interval. On the piano, the distance between two of the longer, white key pitches is that of a step. The longer, white key pitches that are not adjacent are called leaps. The interval between C and D is that of a second, the interval between C and E that of a third, the interval between C and F that of a fourth, the interval between C and G that of a fifth, the interval between C and A is that of a sixth, the interval between C and B is a seventh, and the special relationship between C and C is called an octave.

Other Properties of Sound: Dynamics, Articulation, and Timbre

The volume of a sound is its dynamic; it corresponds with the **amplitude** of the sound wave. The articulation of a sound refers to how it begins and ends—for example, abruptly, smoothly, gradually, etc. The timbre of a sound is what we mean when we talk about tone color or tone quality. Because sound is somewhat abstract, we tend to describe it with adjectives typically used for tactile objects, such as “gravelly” or “smooth,” or adjectives for visual descriptions, such as “bright” or “metallic.” It is particularly affected by the ambience of the performing space—that is, by how much echo occurs and where the sound comes from. Timbre is also shaped by the equalization (EQ), or balance, of the fundamental pitch and its overtones.

The video below is a great example of two singers whose voices have vastly different timbres. How would you describe Louis Armstrong’s voice? Perhaps you would call it “rough” or “gravelly.” How would you describe Ella Fitzgerald’s voice? Perhaps it could be called “smooth” or “silky.”

Video 2.1: Louis Armstrong and Ella Fitzgerald



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://louis.pressbooks.pub/musicappreciation/?p=5#oembed-1>

Music Notation

The development of music notation was absolutely critical to the rise of music that used more than just one melody. Everything that has developed in Western music after 1040 CE—from music of many independent

voices (polyphonic), to solo voices with keyboard or group **accompaniments**, to the popular music we enjoy today—grew from this development. The staff notation system developed by [Guido of Arezzo](#) and others who followed him allowed for the accurate preservation and distribution of music. Music notation also greatly contributed to the growth, development, and evolution of the many musical styles over the past one thousand years.

Because of his contributions to the development of music notation, Guido of Arezzo is arguably the most important figure in the development of written music in the Western world. He developed a system of lines and spaces that enabled musicians to notate the specific notes in a melody. The development of music notation made it possible for composers to notate their music accurately, allowing others to perform the music exactly the way each composer intended. This ability allowed polyphonic (many voiced) music to evolve rapidly after 1040 CE. The video linked below is an excellent resource that explains Guido’s contributions in more detail.

Video 2.2: Guido of Arezzo



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The popularity of staff notation after Guido paved the way for the development of a method to notate rhythm. The system of rhythmic notation we use today in Western music has evolved over many years and is explained in the following video.

Video 2.3: Watch Rhythm Notation – The basics of reading music



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Old and New Notation

Western musical notation has changed a lot from its inception until the present day. Below you can see two examples. The first one is medieval chant notation (though in a modern printed book). The second example is from an 18th-century piano work by Beethoven. You can see that both examples use staves, although the chant example only has four lines, while the modern example has five. **Chant** notation may be unfamiliar, but it should not be too difficult to see the general **contour** of the melody by following the pitch indications as they go up and down the staff. Besides pitch, the modern Beethoven score also indicates precise rhythmic values and includes performance indications such as **meter** (“C” or “common time” in this example), **tempo**

(“Grave” here), articulation, dynamics (*fp*, *sf*), phrasing, and fingerings (numbers above the notes). As we progress through music history we will see that composers indicate with ever-greater specificity the way they want their music to be played by the performers.

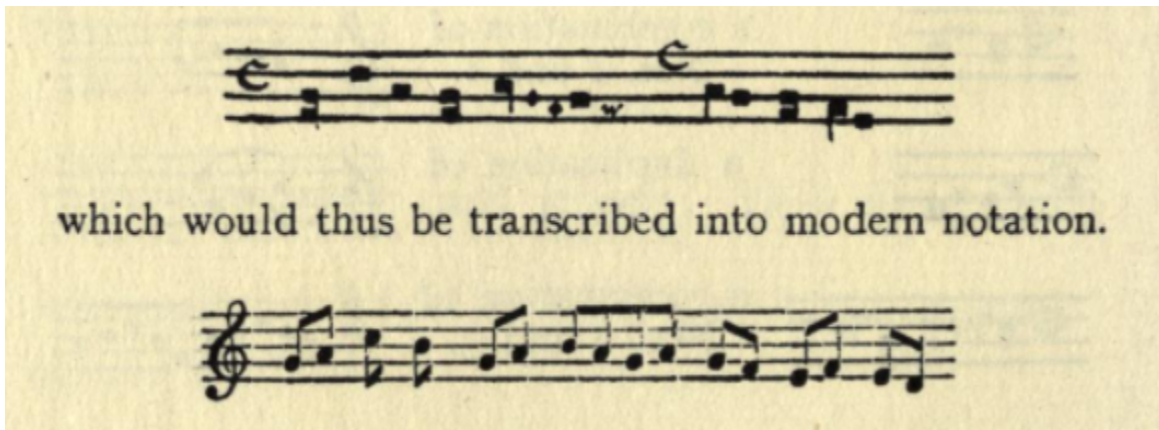


Figure 2.5: Medieval music notation transcribed into modern notation | Source: The Rudiments of Gregorian Music by Francis Burgess, [Internet Archive](#) | License: Public Domain

Further Reading:

[Rhythmic Notation](#) by Andrew Poushka (2003)

Visit [Musical Notation](#) on Wikipedia for a more thorough discussion of music notation and its history both in European music and in many musics of the world.

Performing Forces for Music

Music consists of the intentional organization of sounds by and for human beings. In the broadest classification, these sounds are produced by people in three ways:

1. through the human voice, the instrument with which most of us are born,
2. by using musical instruments, or
3. by using electronic and digital equipment to generate purely electronic sounds.

The Human Voice as a Performing Force

The human voice is the most intimate of all the music instruments in that it is the one that most of us are

innately equipped with. We breathe in, and, as we exhale, air rushes over the vocal cords, causing them to vibrate. Depending on the length of the vocal cords, they will tend to vibrate more slowly or more quickly, creating pitches of lower or higher frequencies.

Video 2.4: Watch “How Does Your Voicebox Work?”



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://louis.pressbooks.pub/musicappreciation/?p=5#oembed-4>

Voice Ranges

In Western music, voice ranges are typically split into six categories:

Soprano

The highest female voices; sing almost exclusively above middle C (middle C being the C approximately in the middle of the range of the piano)

Mezzo-Soprano

The middle female voices; the mezzo’s vocal range lies between the soprano and the alto voice types

Alto

The lowest female voices; sing in a register around and above middle C

Tenor

The highest male voices; sing in a register around and below middle C

Baritone

The middle male voices; the baritone’s vocal range lies between the tenor and the bass voice types

Bass

The lowest male voices; sing in a low **register**, below middle C

The most common arrangement for an unaccompanied vocal choir is the so-called SATB texture, which uses four of the six voice types above: soprano, alto, tenor, and bass. Further Reading: Voice Types (Wikipedia).

Western classical music tends to use all four of these ranges, whereas melodic register and range in jazz, rock,

and pop tend to be somewhat more limited. As you listen to jazz, rock, and pop, pay attention to ranges and registers used as well as any trends. Are most female jazz vocalists altos or sopranos? Do most doo-wop groups sing in higher or lower registers? Different musical voices exhibit different musical timbres as well, as you heard earlier with Louis Armstrong and Ella Fitzgerald.

Musical Instruments as Performing Forces

Humans have been making music with bone, stone, wood, textiles, pottery, and metals for over 35,000 years. A musical instrument is any mechanism, other than the voice, that produces musical sounds. As we study jazz, rock, and pop, we will be listening to two types of musical instruments: purely acoustic instruments and electronic instruments. A purely acoustic instrument is an instrument whose sound is created and projected through natural acoustic characteristics of its media. Thus, when one hits wood or bone or stone or metal, one sends vibrations through it that might be amplified by use of a small chamber like a sound box or a gourd. When one plucks a string, one creates sound waves that might be amplified through a piece of wood or box of wood, such as one finds in an acoustic guitar or violin. As with the voice, the larger the instrument, the deeper the pitches it plays—consider, for example, the cello versus the violin. Instruments also differ in their ranges, some being able to produce a wide variety of notes, while others are much more restricted in the pitches that they can play. (For example, the piano has a range of over seven octaves, while the saxophone normally plays only two and a half.) The **timbre** of a sound coming from a musical instrument is affected by the materials used and the way in which the sound is produced. Based on these two characteristics, we categorize acoustic instruments into five groups: strings, wood-winds, brass, percussion, and keyboard.

Strings

Instruments whose sound is produced by setting strings in motion. These strings can be set in motion by plucking the strings with your finger (the Italian term is *pizzicato*) or a pick (a piece of plastic). They can also be set in motion by bowing. In bowing, the musician draws a bow across the string, creating friction and resulting in a sustained note. Most bows consist of horse hair held together on each end by a piece of wood. String examples: violins; violas; violoncellos; string bass (also known as double bass or stand-up bass); classical, acoustic, and bass guitars; harps.



Figure 2.6:
Horsehair bow |
Attribution:
Feitscherg |
Source: [Wikimedia Commons](#) |
License: [CC BY-SA 3.0](#)

Woodwinds

Instruments traditionally made of wood whose sound is generated by forcing air through a tube, thus creating a vibrating air column. This can be done in one of several ways. The air can travel directly through an opening in the instrument, as in a flute. The air can pass through an opening between a [reed](#) and a wooden or metal mouthpiece as in a saxophone or clarinet, or between two reeds (i.e., “double-reeds”) as in a bassoon or oboe. Although many woodwind instruments are in fact made of wood, there are exceptions. Instruments such as the saxophone and the modern flute are made of metal, while some clarinets are made of plastic. These instruments are still considered woodwinds because the flute was traditionally made of wood, and the saxophone and clarinet still use a wooden reed to produce the tone. Woodwind examples: flute, clarinet, saxophone, oboe, and bassoon.

Brass

Instruments traditionally made of brass or another metal (and thus often producing a “bright” or “brassy” tone) whose sound is generated by “buzzing” (vibrating the lips together) into a mouthpiece attached to a coiled tube. This “buzzing” sets the air within the tube vibrating. The pitches are normally amplified by a flared bell at the end of the tube. Brass examples: trumpet, bugle, cornet, trombone, (French) horn, tuba, and euphonium.

Percussion

Instruments that are typically hit or struck by the hand, with sticks, or with hammers, or that are shaken or rubbed. Some percussion instruments (such as the vibraphone) play definite pitches, but many play indefinite pitches. The standard drum set used in many jazz and rock ensembles, for example, consists of mostly indefinite-pitch instruments. Percussion examples: drum set, agogo bells (double bells), glockenspiel, xylophone, vibraphone, bass drum, snare or side drum, maracas, claves, cymbals, gong, triangle, and tambourine.

Keyboards

Instruments that produce sound by pressing or striking keys on a keyboard. The keys set air moving by the hammering of a string (in the case of the piano) or by the opening and closing of a pipe through which air is pushed (as in the case of the vibraphone, organ, and accordion). All of these instruments have the capacity of playing more than one musical line at the same time. Keyboard examples: piano, organ, vibraphone, and accordion. One of the earliest keyboards was the harpsichord. When the harpsichord’s keys are depressed, the strings inside the harpsichord were plucked by quill, leather, or plastic. The harpsichord was a popular keyboard instrument in the Baroque period but could not sustain its sound. The keyboard lost its popularity with the invention of the piano, which could sustain its notes and be played at different dynamic levels.

For more information and listening examples of different orchestral instruments, visit [Philharmonia: Instruments](#). Click on the individual instruments for an introduction and demonstration of the instrument.

Non-Acoustic Instruments: Electric Sounds and Instruments

Instruments can be electric in several ways. In some cases, an acoustic instrument, such as the guitar, violin, or piano, may be played near a microphone that feeds into an amplifier. In this case, the instrument is not electric. In other cases, amplifiers are embedded in or placed onto the body of an acoustic instrument. In still other cases, acoustic instruments are altered to facilitate the amplification of their music. Thus, solid-body violins, guitars, and basses may stand in for their hollow-bodied cousins.

Another category of electronic instruments is those that produce sound through purely electronic or digital means. Synthesizers and the modern electric keyboard, as well as beat boxes, are examples of electronic instruments that use wave generators or digital signals to produce tones. Synthesizers are electronic instruments (often in keyboard form) that create sounds using basic wave forms in different combinations. The first commercially available compact synthesizers marketed for musical performance were designed and built by Dr. Robert Moog in the mid-1960s. A staple of twenty-first-century music, synthesizers are widely used in popular music and movie music. Their sounds are everywhere in our society. Synthesizers are computers that combine tones of different frequencies. These combinations of frequencies result in complex sounds that do not exist in nature.

Listen to some of the recording below of Björk, which incorporates a live band with a variety of strange and interesting synthesized sounds.

Video 2.5: Björk—Voltaic Paris HD, 2009



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://louis.pressbooks.pub/musicappreciation/?p=5#oembed-5>

Solid-state electronics have enabled the synthesizer to shrink in size from its early days in the 1970s. Compare the number of electronic components in Keith Emerson’s “rig” in Figure 2.7 on the left with Chick Corea’s much smaller keyboard synthesizers on the right.



Figure 2.7a: Keith Emerson & Moog, Emerson & Lake Tour, May 15, 2010 | Photographer: Mari Kawaguchi | Source: [Wikimedia Commons](#) | License: [CC BY-SA 3.0](#)
 Figure 2.7b: Chick Corea, Zelt-Musik-Festiva | 2019 | Photographer: Ice Boy Tell | Source: [Wikimedia Commons](#) | License: [CC BY-SA 4.0](#)

Synthesizers can also be used to imitate the complex sounds of real instruments, making it possible for a composer to create music and have it played without having to hire a real orchestra. Many photographs of all different types of instruments may be found using Google images.

New Recording Technologies

Today, the ability to make high-quality recordings is within the reach of anyone with a laptop and a microphone. But only a few years ago, recordings were an expensive endeavor available only to those with the financial backing of a record label. Musicians of the twenty-first century have access not only to recording technologies but also to new and cutting-edge tools that are fundamentally changing how music is created, enjoyed, and disseminated. The synthesizer discussed above can be a recording technology, but there are others, such as Auto-Tune.

Auto-Tune and Looping

Auto-Tune is a technique originally invented to correct for intonation mistakes in vocal performances. However, the technique quickly evolved into a new form of expression, allowing singers to add expressive flourishes to their singing.

Video 2.6: How Auto-Tune Works



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Eventually, the technique was used to turn regular speech into music, making it possible to create music out of everyday sounds. Listen to the clip below of the musical group the Gregory Brothers, who regularly use Auto-Tune to create songs from viral Internet videos and news clips, posted to their YouTube channel, [Auto-Tune the News](#) playlist.

Looping is another technique that musicians now use to create music on the spot. The technique involves recording audio samples, which are then repeated or “looped” over and over again to a single beat. The performer then adds new loops over the old ones to create complex musical backdrops.

Video 2.7: Dub FX, “Love Someone”



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://louis.pressbooks.pub/musicappreciation/?p=5#oembed-7>

Melody

The melody of a song is often its most distinctive characteristic. The ancient Greeks believed that melody spoke directly to the emotions. Melody is the part of the song that we hum or whistle, the tune that might get stuck in our heads. A more scientific definition of melody might go as follows: melody is the coherent succession of definite pitches in time. Any given melody has range, register, motion, shape, and phrases. Often, the melody also has rhythmic organization.

The first of these characteristics, range, is one that we’ve already encountered as we talked about pitch. The range of a melody is the distance between its lowest and highest notes. We talk about melodies having narrow or wide ranges. Register is also a concept we discussed in relation to pitch. Melodies can be played at a variety of registers: low, medium, high.

The music can be played smoothly and connected (an Italian term called *legato* is used) or the notes can be short and detached (the Italian term *staccato* is used). As melodies progress, they move through their given succession of pitches. Each pitch is a certain distance from the previous one and the next. Melodies that are meant to be sung tend to move by small intervals, especially by intervals of seconds or steps. A tune that moves predominantly by step is a stepwise melody. Other melodies have many larger intervals that we might describe as “skips” or “leaps.” When these leaps are particularly wide and with rapid changes in direction (that

is, the melody ascends and then descends and then ascends and so forth), we say that the melody is disjunct. Conversely, a melody that moves mostly by step in a smoother manner—perhaps gradually ascending and then gradually descending—might be called conjunct.



Figure 2.8: Melodic Shapes, Adapted from [Melodic shapes](#) | Source: Original Work | Attribution: Corey Parson | License: [CC BY-SA 4.0](#)

Shape is a visual metaphor that we apply to melodies. Think of a tune that you know and like: it might be a pop tune, it might be from a musical, or it might be a song you recall from childhood. As we think back to a melody that we know, we can replay it in our mind and visualize the path that it traces.

Sing the childhood tune “Row, Row, Row Your Boat” to yourself. Now look at the musical notation for “Row, Row, Row Your Boat.”



Figure 2.9: “Row, Row, Row Your Boat.” Source: Traditional Melody | Public Domain

Even if you can’t read music, hopefully you can see how the note heads trace an arch-like shape. Most melodies have smaller sub-sections called phrases. These phrases function somewhat like phrases in a sentence. They are complete thoughts, although generally lacking a sense of conclusion. In the song “Row, Row, Row Your Boat,” the music corresponding with the words “Row, row, row your boat” might be heard as the first phrase and “gently down the stream” as the second phrase. “Merrily, merrily, merrily, merrily” comprises a third phrase, and “life is but a dream,” a fourth, and final, phrase.

Melodies are also composed of motives. A motive is the smallest musical unit, generally a single rhythm of two or three pitches. In “Row, Row, Row Your Boat,” the music set to “merrily” might be heard as a motive. Motives repeat, often in sequence. A sequence is a repetition of a motive or phrase at a different pitch level. Thus, in “Row, Row, Row Your Boat,” the first time you hear “merrily” is when it is at the top of the melody’s range. The next time, it is a bit lower in pitch, the next time a bit lower still, and the final time you hear the word, it is sung to the lowest pitch of the melody.

Video 2.8: Listen for sequences in “My Country, ’Tis of Thee” (2014)



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://louis.pressbooks.pub/musicappreciation/?p=5#oembed-8>

Dynamics in music are the levels of loudness and softness. Composers use a type of shorthand in the written music to help the musician determine what dynamics are used when performing the music. The dynamic markings used are typically Italian terms, as the Italians created some of the earliest music notation systems. Abbreviations are often used in the written music. There are many dynamic markings. Some of the commonly used dynamics are the following: *piano* (*p*) means to play soft, *forte* (*f*) means to play loud, *pianissimo* (*pp*) is very soft, and *fortissimo* (*ff*) is very loud. To gradually increase or decrease the loudness or softness in the music, *crescendo* is used to gradually get louder, and *decrescendo* to gradually get softer.

Harmony

Most simply put, harmony is the way a melody is accompanied. It refers to the vertical aspect of music and is concerned with the different music sounds that occur in the same moment. Western music culture has developed a complex system to govern the simultaneous sounding of pitches. Some of its most complex harmonies appear in jazz, while other forms of popular music tend to have fewer and simpler harmonies.

We call a group of three or more notes or pitches that are simultaneously played or sung together a chord. Like intervals, chords can be consonant or dissonant. Consonant intervals and chords tend to sound sweet and pleasing to our ears. They also convey a sense of stability in the music. Dissonant intervals and chords tend to sound harsher to our ears and often convey a sense of tension or instability. In general, dissonant intervals and chords tend to resolve to consonant intervals and chords. Seconds, sevenths, and tritones sound dissonant and resolve to consonance. Some of the most consonant intervals are unisons, octaves, thirds, sixths, fourths, and fifths. From the perspective of physics, consonant intervals and chords are simpler than dissonant intervals and chords. However, the fact that most individuals in the Western world hear consonance as sweet and dissonance as harsh probably has as much to do with our musical socialization as with the physical properties of sound.

Listen to two examples of consonance:

Audio ex. 2.1: Bach’s *Air on G String*



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://louis.pressbooks.pub/musicappreciation/?p=5#audio-5-1>

Audio ex. 2.2: Mozart's *Symphony no. 40*



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://louis.pressbooks.pub/musicappreciation/?p=5#audio-5-2>

Listen to two examples of dissonance:

Audio ex. 2.3: Penderecki's *Threnody to the Victims of Hiroshima*



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://louis.pressbooks.pub/musicappreciation/?p=5#audio-5-3>

Audio ex. 2.4: Penderecki's *The Dream of Jacob*



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://louis.pressbooks.pub/musicappreciation/?p=5#audio-5-4>

The triad is a chord that has three pitches. On top of its root pitch is stacked another pitch at the interval of a third higher than the root. On top of that second pitch, another pitch is added, another third above. If you add a fourth pitch that is a third above the previous pitch, you arrive at a seventh chord. (You may be wondering why we call chords with three notes “triads” and notes with four chords “seventh chords.” Why not “fourth chords?” The reason has to do with the fact that the extra note is the “seventh” note in the scale from which the chord is derived. We will get to scale shortly.) Seventh chords are dissonant chords. They are so common in jazz, however, that they do not always sound like they need to resolve to consonant chords as one might expect. One also finds chords with other additional tones in jazz: for example, ninth chords, eleventh chords, and thirteenth chords. These chords are related by stacking additional thirds on top of the chord. When chords

are played separately instead of at the same time, we call this a broken chord, or an Italian term is used called arpeggio.



Figure 2.10:
Seventh, Ninth,
and Eleventh
Chords in Musical
Notation |
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Parson | Source:
Original Work |
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4.0

Now listen to the chords:

Audio ex. 2.5: Seventh, Ninth, and Eleventh Chords



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://louis.pressbooks.pub/musicappreciation/?p=5#audio-5-5>

Key (sometimes called “tonality”) is closely related to both melody and harmony. The key of a song or composition refers to the pitches that it uses. A key is a collection of pitches, much like you might have with a collection of stamps, bottles, etc. The most important pitch of a key is its tonic—that is, the note from which the other pitches are derived. The first note of any scale built on the first step of a scale is its tonic. For example, a composition in C major has C as its tonic; a composition in A minor has A as its tonic; a blues in the key of G has G as its tonic. When sharps or flats are placed at the beginning of each line of the music staff that notate what pitches to raise and lower throughout the music, this is called the key signature. When the music shifts from one key to another, this is called modulation.

A key is governed by its scale. A scale is a series of pitches ordered by the interval between its notes. There are a variety of types of scales. Every major scale, whether it is D major or C major or G-sharp major, has pitches related by the same intervals in the same order. Likewise, the pitches of every minor scale comprise the same intervals in the same order. The same could be said for a variety of other scales that are found in jazz, rock, and popular music, including the blues scale and the pentatonic scale. Chromatic scales use every pitch level or half step interval and are used for coloring effect in music. Major and minor scales are most often found in Western music today. The difference of sound in the major scale as opposed to the minor scale is in the perception of the sound. Major sounds relatively bright and happy. “Happy Birthday” and “Joy to the World” (the Christmas Carol) are based on the major mode.

Two excerpts featuring the major mode:

Audio ex. 2.6: Beethoven's "Ode to Joy" from *Symphony No. 9*



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://louis.pressbooks.pub/musicappreciation/?p=5#audio-5-6>

Audio ex. 2.7: Bach's *Suite No. 1 in G*



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://louis.pressbooks.pub/musicappreciation/?p=5#audio-5-7>

Minor sounds are relatively more subdued, sad, or melancholy. The Christmas Carol "We Three Kings" is in the minor mode.

Two excerpts featuring the minor mode:

Audio ex. 2.8: Beethoven's *Symphony No. 5*



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://louis.pressbooks.pub/musicappreciation/?p=5#audio-5-8>

Audio ex. 2.9: Mahler's "Funeral March" from *Symphony No. 1 in D Major*



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://louis.pressbooks.pub/musicappreciation/?p=5#audio-5-9>

You might note that the simplest form of the blues scale is a type of pentatonic or five-note scale. This reflects the origins of the blues in folk music; much of the folk music around the world uses pentatonic scales. Flats (*b*- lower a pitch a half-step interval) and sharps (*#*- raise a pitch a half-step interval) are used to raise and lower pitches. You might also note that the blues scale on A has a note suspended below it, an E-flat (a pitch that is

a half-step higher than D and a half-step lower than E). Otherwise, it is devoid of its blue notes. Blue notes are pitches that are sometimes added to blues scales and blues pieces. The most important blues note in the key of A is E-flat. In a sense, blues notes are examples of accidentals. Accidentals are notes that are not normally found in a given key. For example, F-sharp and B-flat are accidentals in the key of C. Accidentals are sometimes called chromatic pitches: the word chromatic comes from the ancient Greek word meaning color, and accidentals and chromatic pitches add color and excitement to a composition. Chromatic scales use every pitch level or half-step interval.

Chords can be built on every pitch of a scale. One can build seventh chords on these same pitches by simply adding pitches. In the key of C major, the C major triad is considered the tonic triad (I), because it is built on the tonic of the key. When a chord is broken up and played one note at a time in sequence, we called this an arpeggio. We call a series of chords a chord progression. One of the most important chord progressions for jazz and rock is the blues progression. In the blues, the tonic chord (I) moves to the subdominant chord (IV) and then back to the tonic chord (I) before moving to the dominant chord (V) and finally back to the tonic (I). This often happens in the space of twelve bars or measures, and thus this progression is sometimes called the twelve-bar blues.

Chord progressions play a major role in structuring jazz, rock, and popular music, cueing the listener to beginnings, middles, and ends of phrases and the song as a whole. Chord progressions in particular and harmony in general may be the most challenging aspects of music for the beginner. Hearing chords and chord progressions requires that one recognize several music phenomena at the same time. Chords may change rapidly, and a listener has to be ready to move on to the next chord as the music progresses.

Rhythm

When you think of the word rhythm, the first thing that might pop into your head is a drum beat. But rhythm goes much deeper than that. Earlier, we defined music as intentional organization of sounds. Rhythm is the way the music is organized in respect to time. It works in tandem with melody and harmony to create a feeling of order. The most fundamental aspect of rhythm is the beat, which is the basic unit of time in music. It is the *consistent* pulse of the music, just like your heartbeat creates a steady, underlying pulse within your body. The beat is what you tap your feet to when you listen to music. Imagine the beat as a series of equidistant dots passing through time.



Figure 2.11: The Beat | Attribution: [Thomas Heflin](#) | Source: Original Work | License: [CC BY-SA 4.0](#)

It should be noted that the beat does not measure exact time like the second hand on a clock. It is instead a

fluid unit that changes depending on the music being played. The speed at which the beat is played is called the tempo. At quick tempos, the beats pass by quickly, as represented below, showing our beats pressed against each other in time.



Figure 2.12: Fast Tempo |
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Source: Original
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At slow tempos, the beats pass by slowly, showing our beats with plenty of space between them.



Figure 2.13: Slow Tempo |
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Composers often indicate tempo markings by writing musical terms such as “Allegro,” which indicates that the piece should be played at a quick, or brisk, tempo. In other cases, composers will write the tempo markings in beats per minute (bpm) when they want more precise tempos. Either way, the tempo is one of the major factors in establishing the character of a piece. Slow tempos are used in everything from sweeping love songs to the dirges associated with sadness or death. Take, for example, Chopin’s famous funeral march from his Piano Sonata, Op. 35, No. 2:

Video 2.9: Frédéric Chopin—Funeral March (Nagai)



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://louis.pressbooks.pub/musicappreciation/?p=5#oembed-9>

Fast tempos can help to evoke anything from bouncy happiness to frenzied madness. One memorable example of a fast tempo occurs in “Flight of the Bumblebee,” an orchestral interlude written by Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov for his opera *The Tale of Tsar Saltan*, which evokes the busy buzzing of a bee.

Video 2.10: “Flight of the Bumblebee”



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://louis.pressbooks.pub/musicappreciation/?p=5#oembed-10>

Basic tempo markings

By adding an *-issimo* ending, the word is amplified. By adding an *-ino* or *-etto* ending, the word is diminished. The beats per minute (bpm) values are rough approximations.

From slowest to fastest:

- *Larghissimo* – very, very slow (24 bpm [beats per minute] in a 4/4 time and under)
- *Grave* – very slow (25–45 bpm)
- *Largo* – broadly (40–60 bpm)
- *Lento* – slowly (45–60 bpm)
- *Larghetto* – rather broadly (60–66 bpm)
- *Adagio* – slow and stately (literally, “at ease”) (66–76 bpm)
- *Adagietto* – slower than *andante* (72–76 bpm)
- *Andante* – at a walking pace (76–108 bpm)
- *Andantino* – slightly faster than *Andante* (although in some cases it can be taken to mean slightly slower than *andante*) (80–108 bpm)
- *Andante moderato* – between *andante* and *moderato* (thus the name *andante moderato*) (92–112 bpm)
- *Moderato* – moderately (108–120 bpm)
- *Allegretto* – moderately fast (112–120 bpm)
- *Allegro moderato* – close to but not quite *allegro* (116–120 bpm)
- *Allegro* – fast, quickly, and bright (120–168 bpm) (*molto allegro* is slightly faster than *allegro* but always in its range)
- *Vivace* – lively and fast (168–176 bpm)
- *Presto* – very, very fast (168–200 bpm)
- *Prestissimo* – even faster than *Presto* (200 bpm and over)

Terms for tempo change:

- *Rallentando* – gradually slowing down
- *Ritardando* – gradually slowing down (but not as much as *rallentando*)
- *Ritenuto* – immediately slowing down
- *Stringendo* – gradually speeding up (slowly)

- Accelerando – gradually speeding up (quickly)

Meter

Beats are the underlying pulse behind music, while meter refers to the way in which those beats are grouped together in a piece. Each individual grouping is called a measure or a bar (referring to the vertical bar lines that divide measures in written music notation). Most music is written in either duple meter (groupings of two), triple meter (groupings of three), or quadruple meter (groupings of four). These meters are conveyed by stressing or “accenting” the first beat of each grouping. These are often referred to as strong beats, while the beats between them are referred to as weak beats.

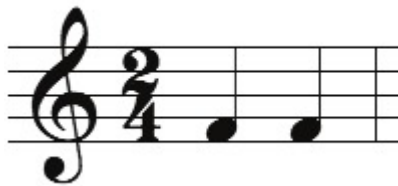


Figure 2.14: Duple meter in modern musical notation



Figure 2.15: Triple meter in modern musical notation



Figure 2.16: Quadruple meter in modern musical notation

To illustrate how vital rhythm is to a piece of music, let’s investigate the simple melody “Mary Had a Little Lamb.” Below, the melody and chords are conveyed through standard musical notation. The meter is indicated by the two numbers four over four. (This is known to music readers as the [time signature](#).) This particular time signature is also known as “common time” due to the fact that it is so widely used. The top number indicates the meter, or how many beats there are per measure. The bottom number indicates which type of note in modern musical notation will represent that beat (in this case, it is the quarter note). The vertical lines are there to indicate each individual measure. As you can see, the melody on the top staff and the chords on the bottom staff line up correctly in time due to the fact that they are grouped into measures together. In this way, rhythm is the element that binds music together in time.

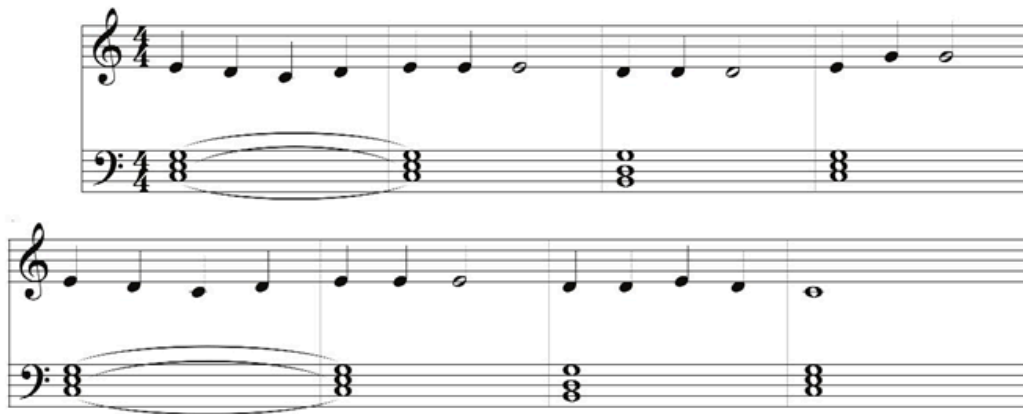
Mary Had a Little Lamb

Figure 2.17: “Mary Had a Little Lamb”
 | Attribution:
 Arranged by
[Thomas Heflin](#) |
 Source: Traditional
 Melody | License:
[CC BY-SA 4.0](#)

One way to add a sense of rhythmic variation to music is through the use of [syncopation](#). Syncopation refers to the act of shifting the normal accent, usually by stressing the normally unaccented weak beats or placing the accent between the beats themselves as illustrated in Figure 2.18 below.

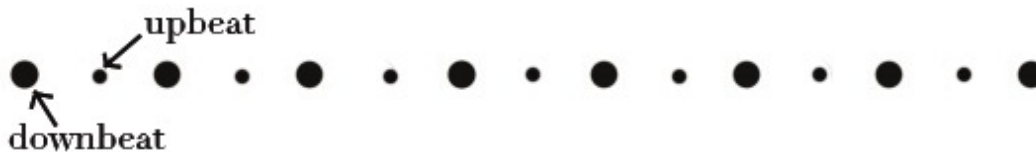


Figure 2.18:
 Syncopation |
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Syncopation is one of the defining features of ragtime and jazz and is one aspect of rhythmic bounce associated with those genres of music.



Figure 2.19: *The Entertainer* by
 Scott Joplin in
 musical notation |
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Audio ex. 2.10: *The Entertainer*, composer: Scott Joplin, performer: Adam Cuerden, Source: [Wikimedia Commons](#) | License: [CC BY-SA 3.0](#)



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In some cases, certain types of music may feature the use of a polyrhythm, which simply refers to two or more different rhythms being played at the same time. A common polyrhythm might pit a feeling of four against a feeling of three. Polyrhythms are often associated with the music of Africa. However, they can be found in American and European music of the twentieth century, such as jazz.

Listen to the example below of Duke Ellington playing his signature song, the Billy Strayhorn composition “Take the A Train.” You will notice that the beats in the piece are grouped as four beats per measure. Pay special attention to what happens at 1:04 in the video. The horns begin to imply groupings of three beats (or triple meter) on top of the existing four beat groupings (or quadruple meter). These concurrent groupings create a sense of rhythmic tension that leads the band into the next section of the piece at 1:11 in the video.

Video 2.11: “Take the A Train”



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://louis.pressbooks.pub/musicappreciation/?p=5#oembed-11>



Figure 2.20:
Polyrhythm |
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Texture

Texture refers to the ways in which musical lines of a musical piece interact. We use a variety of general adjectives to describe musical texture, words such as transparent, dense, thin, thick, heavy, and light. We also use three specific musical terms to describe texture:

- Monophony
- Homophony

- Polyphony

Of these three terms, homophony and polyphony are most important for jazz, rock, and popular music.

Monophonic Music

Monophonic music is music that has one melodic line. This one melodic line may be sung by one person or 100 people. The important thing is that they are all singing the same melody, either in unison or in octaves. Monophony is rare in jazz, rock, and popular music. An example would be a folk melody that is sung by one person or a group of people without any accompaniment from instruments. Gregorian chant is another excellent example of monophonic music.

Homophonic Music

Homophonic music is music that has one melodic line that is accompanied by chords. A lot of rock and popular music has a homophonic texture. Anytime the tune is the most important aspect of a song, it is likely to be in homophonic texture. Elvis Presley's "Hound Dog" (1956), the Carter Family's version of "Can the Circle be Unbroken" (1935), and Billy Joel's "Piano Man" (1973) are relatively good examples of homophony.

Polyphonic Music

Polyphony simultaneously features two or more relatively independent and important melodic lines. Dixieland jazz and bebop are often polyphonic, as is the music of jam bands such as the Allman Bros. "Anthropology" (ca. 1946), for example—a jazz tune recorded by Dizzy Gillespie, Charlie Parker, and others—reflects the busy polyphony typical in bebop. Some jazz played by larger ensembles, such as big bands, is also polyphonic at points, although in this case, there is generally a strong sense of a main melody. Much of the music that we will study in this text exists somewhere between homophony and polyphony. Some music will have a strong main melody, suggesting homophony, and yet have interesting countermelodies that one would expect in polyphony. Much rap is composed of many layers of sounds, but at times those layers are not very transparent, as one would expect in polyphony.

Something to Think About

Do you listen to rap music? Can you think of a popular rap song that uses polyphony? Can you hear multiple layers of melody? Does the polyphony add to or detract from the music?

Putting It All Together or Grasping the Whole Composition

From *Sound Reasoning* by Anthony Brandt

Musical form is the wider perspective of a piece of music. It describes the layout of a composition as divided into sections, akin to the layout of a city divided into neighborhoods. Musical works may be classified into two formal types: A and A/B. Compositions exist in a boundless variety of styles, instrumentation, length, and content—all the factors that make them singular and personal. Yet, underlying this individuality, any musical work can be interpreted as either an A or A/B-form. An A form emphasizes continuity and prolongation. It flows, unbroken, from beginning to end. In a unified neighborhood, wander down any street and it will look very similar to any other. Similarly, in an A-form, the music has a recognizable consistency.

The other basic type is the A/B-form or binary form. Whereas A-forms emphasize continuity, A/B-forms emphasize contrast and diversity. A/B-forms are clearly broken up into sections, which differ in aurally immediate ways. The sections are often punctuated by silences or resonant pauses, making them more clearly set off from one another. Here, you travel among neighborhoods that are noticeably different from one another: The first might be a residential neighborhood, with tree-lined streets and quiet cul-de-sacs. The next is an industrial neighborhood, with warehouses and smoke-stacks. The prime articulators of form are **rhythm** and **texture**. If the rhythm and texture remain constant, you will tend to perceive an A-form. If there is a marked change in rhythm or texture, you will tend to perceive a point of contrast—a boundary, from which you pass into a new neighborhood. This will indicate an A/B-form.

Labeling the Forms

It is conventional to give alphabetic labels to the sections of a composition: A, B, C, etc. If a section returns, its letter is repeated: for instance, “A-B” or binary form and “A-B-A” or ternary form are familiar layouts in classical music. As the unbroken form, A-forms come only in a single variety. They may be long or short, but they are always “A.” As the contrast form, A/B-forms come in a boundless array of possibilities. There may be recurring sections, unique ones, or any combination of both. For instance, a Rondo—a popular form in

Classical music—consists of an alternation of a recurring section and others that occur once each. It would be labeled A-B-A-C-A-D-A, etc. Many twentieth-century composers became fascinated with arch-forms: A-B-C-B-A. An on-going form, with no recurrence whatsoever, is also possible: A-B-C-D-E... Any sequence of recurring and unique sections may occur.

Understanding the layout of the city is crucial for exploring it: once you understand its topography, you know how to find its landmarks, where the places for recreation or business may lie. Similarly, determining the form of a piece will tell you a lot about it. If it is an A-form, your next focus will be on the work's main ideas and how they are extended across the entire composition. If it is an A/B-form, your next investigations will be into the specific layout of sections and the nature of the contrasts.

Source:

Brandt, Anthony. "How Music Makes Sense," *Sound Reasoning*, OpenStax CNX. Sep 17, 2019. [CC BY 3.0](#)

Examples of Binary (AB) Form and Ternary (ABA) Form Bonnie Le

Video 2.12: Watch *Forms 101: Binary Form* from The Listener's Guide on YouTube



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://louis.pressbooks.pub/musicappreciation/?p=5#oembed-12>

Video 2.13: Watch *Ternary Form Tutorial* from ILoveMusicTheory on YouTube



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://louis.pressbooks.pub/musicappreciation/?p=5#oembed-13>

You will notice that the two examples above both use the same melody to show binary and ternary forms.

Because the melody is arranged differently in each example, it still shows different examples of form. Form would follow how it is arranged in the written music.

Form in Music

From *Understanding Music: Past and Present*
By N. Alan Clark, Thomas Heflin, Elizabeth Kramer
Revised by Jonathan Kulp
Edited by Bonnie Le

When we talk about musical form, we are talking about the organization of musical elements—melody, harmony, rhythm, texture, timbre—in time. Because music is a temporal art, memory plays an important role in how we experience musical form. Memory allows us to hear repetition, contrast, and variation in music. And it is these elements that provide structure, coherence, and shape to musical compositions.

A composer or songwriter brings myriad experiences of music, accumulated over a lifetime, to the act of writing music. He or she has learned how to write music by listening to, playing, and studying music. He or she has picked up, consciously and/or unconsciously, a number of ways of structuring music. The composer may intentionally write music modeled after another group’s music: this happens all of the time in the world of popular music, where the aim is to produce music that will be disseminated to as many people as possible. In other situations, a composer might use musical forms of an admired predecessor as an act of homage or simply because that is “how it’s always been done.” We find this happening a great deal in the world of folk music, where a living tradition is of great importance. The music of the “classical” period (1775–1825) is rich with musical forms as heard in the works of masters such as Joseph Haydn and Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart. In fact, form plays a vital role in most Western art music all the way into the twenty-first century.

The Twelve-Bar Blues

Many compositions that on the surface sound very different use similar musical forms. A large number of jazz compositions, for example, follow either the twelve-bar blues or an AABA form. The twelve-bar blues features a chord progression of I–IV–I–V–IV–I. Generally, the lyrics follow an AAB pattern—that is, a line of text (A) is stated once, repeated (A), and then followed by a response statement (B). The melodic idea used for the statement (B) is generally slightly different from that used for the opening phrases (A). This entire verse is sung over the I–IV–I–V–IV–I progression. The next verse is sung over the same pattern, generally to the same melodic lines, although the singer may vary the notes in various places occasionally.

Video 2.14: Listen to “Hound Dog” sung by Elvis Presley (1956) and follow the chart below to hear the blues progression



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://louis.pressbooks.pub/musicappreciation/?p=5#oembed-14>

Lyrics (Chord changes indicated in brackets):

You ain't nothin' but a [I] hound dog, cryin' all the time

You ain't nothin' but a [IV] hound dog, cryin' all the [I] time

Well, you ain't [V] never caught a rabbit, and you [IV] ain't no friend of [I] mine.

When they said you was [I] high classed, well that was just a lie.

When they said you was [IV] high classed, well that was just a [I] lie.

You ain't [V] never caught a rabbit and you [IV] ain't no friend of [I] mine.

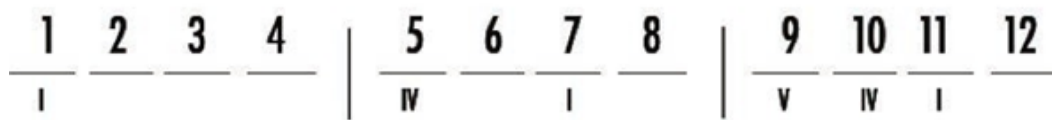


Figure 2.21: Typical Chord Progression for 12-Bar Blues | Attribution: Thomas Heflin | Source: Original Work | License: CC BY-SA 4.0

This blues format is one example of what we might call musical form. It should be mentioned that the term “blues” is used somewhat loosely and is sometimes used to describe a tune with a “bluesy” sound, even though it may not follow the twelve-bar blues form. The blues is vitally important to American music because it influenced not only later jazz but also rhythm and blues and rock and roll.

AABA Form

Another important form to jazz and popular music is AABA form. Sometimes this is also called thirty-two-bar form; in this case, the form has thirty-two measures or bars, much like a twelve-bar blues has twelve measures or bars. This form was used widely in songs written for Tin Pan Alley, Vaudeville, and musicals from the 1910s through the 1950s. Many so-called jazz standards spring from that repertoire. Interestingly, these popular songs generally had an opening verse and then a chorus. The chorus was a section of thirty-two-bar form and often the part that audiences remembered. Thus, the chorus was what jazz artists took as the basis of their improvisations.

Video 2.15: “(Somewhere) Over the Rainbow,” as sung by Judy Garland in 1939 (accompanied by Victor Young and His Orchestra), is a well-known tune that is in thirty-two-bar form.



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://louis.pressbooks.pub/musicappreciation/?p=5#oembed-15>

After an introduction of four bars, Garland enters with the opening line of the text, sung to melody A. “Somewhere over the rainbow way up high, there’s a land that I heard of once in a lullaby.” This opening line and melody lasts for eight bars. The next line of the text is sung to the same melody (still eight bars long) as the first line of text. “Somewhere over the rainbow skies are blue, and the dreams that you dare to dream really do come true.” The third part of the text is contrasting in character. Where the first two lines began with the word “somewhere,” the third line begins with “someday.” Where the first two lines spoke of a faraway place, the third line focuses on what will happen to the singer. “Someday I’ll wish upon a star, and wake up where the clouds are far, behind me. Where troubles melt like lemon drops, away above the chimney tops, that’s where you’ll find me.” It is sung to a contrasting melody B and is eight bars long. This B section is also sometimes called the “bridge” of a song. The opening melody returns for a final time, with words that begin by addressing that faraway place dreamed about in the first two A sections and that end in a more personal way, similar to the sentiments in the B section. “Somewhere over the rainbow, bluebirds fly. Birds fly over the rainbow. Why then, oh why can’t I?” This section is also eight bars long, adding up to a total of thirty-two bars for the AABA form.

Although we’ve heard the entire thirty-two-bar form, the song is not over. The arranger added a conclusion to the form that consists of one statement of the A section, played by the orchestra (note the prominent clarinet solo); another re-statement of the A section, this time with the words from the final statement of the A section the first time; and four bars from the B section or bridge: “If happy little bluebirds...Oh why can’t I.” This is a good example of one way in which musicians have taken a standard form and varied it slightly to provide interest. Now listen to the entire recording one more time, seeing if you can keep up with the form.

Verse and Chorus Forms

Most popular music features a mix of verses and choruses. A chorus is normally a set of lyrics that recur to the same music within a given song. A chorus is sometimes called a refrain. A verse is a set of lyrics that are generally, although not always, just heard once over the course of a song.

In a simple verse-chorus form, the same music is used for the chorus and for each verse. “Can the Circle Be Unbroken” (1935) is a good example of a simple verse-chorus form. Many childhood songs and holiday songs also use a simple verse-chorus song.

Video 2.16: Can the Circle Be Unbroken—The Carter Family



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In a simple verse form, there are no choruses. Instead, there is a series of verses, each sung to the same music. Hank Williams’s “I’m So Lonesome I Could Cry” (1949) below is one example of a simple verse form. After Williams sings two verses, each sixteen bars long, there is an instrumental verse, played by guitar. Williams sings a third verse followed by another instrumental verse, this time also played by guitar.

Video 2.17: Hank Williams Sr., “I’m So Lonesome I Could Cry”



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://louis.pressbooks.pub/musicappreciation/?p=5#oembed-17>

Composition and Improvisation

Music from every culture is made up of some combination of the musical elements. Those elements may be combined using one of two major processes: composition and improvisation.

Composition is the process whereby a musician notates musical ideas using a system of symbols or using some other form of recording. We call musicians who use this process “composers.” When composers preserve their musical ideas using notation or some form of recording, they intend for their music to be reproduced the same way every time.

Improvisation is a different process. It is the process whereby musicians create music spontaneously using the elements of music. Improvisation still requires the musician to follow a set of rules. Often the set of rules has to do with the scale to be used, the rhythm to be used, or other musical requirements using the musical elements.

Listen to the example of Louis Armstrong below. Armstrong is performing a style of early New Orleans jazz in which the entire group improvises to varying degrees over a set musical form and melody. The piece starts out with a statement of the original melody by the trumpet, with Armstrong varying the rhythm of the original written melody as well as adding melodic embellishments. At the same time, the trombone improvises supporting notes that outline the harmony of the song, and the clarinet improvises a completely new melody designed to complement the main melody of the trumpet. The rhythm section of piano, bass, and drums is improvising their **accompaniment** underneath the horn players but is doing so within the strict chord progression of the song. The overall effect is one in which you hear the individual expressions of each player but

can still clearly recognize the song over which they are improvising. This is followed by Armstrong interpreting the melody. Next, we hear individual solos improvised on the clarinet, the trombone, and the trumpet. The piece ends when Armstrong sings the melody one last time.

Video 2.18: Louis Armstrong, “When the Saints Go Marching In,” 1961



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://louis.pressbooks.pub/musicappreciation/?p=5#oembed-18>

Composition and Improvisation Combined

In much of the popular music we hear today, like jazz and rock, both improvisation and composition are combined.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, we learned a basic definition of music as well as definitions of the basic elements of music. We also explored some basic facts about **acoustics**, including the nature of sound. We learned how tones composed of organized sound waves sound to us like definite pitches, while disorganized sound waves are perceived as noise. We briefly touched on the harmonic series and how it influenced the nature of music, including properties of sound such as timbre.

Next, we explored how the development of musical notation made it possible to organize sounds into a wide variety of configurations. There are an infinite number of possible **performing forces**, but the most common would have to be the human voice followed by a wide variety of instruments, including strings, woodwinds, brass, percussion, keyboards, and electric instruments.

Next, we discussed the four main components of music: melody, harmony, rhythm, and texture. Melody is defined primarily by its shape and can be broken up into smaller components called motives. Harmony, which is the vertical aspect of music, can be described in its most basic terms as dissonant or consonant. Harmony is often built in thirds through the use of three-note chords called triads or four-note chords called seventh chords. Whole sequences of chords are known as chord progressions. Compositions are harmonically grounded through the use of key centers, tonic notes, and scales.

Rhythm is the way the music is organized in respect to time. The fundamental unit of time is the beat, which is further broken into groupings called measures. These groupings are determined by the meter of the piece, which is often either duple, triple, or quadruple. The speed at which these beats go by is known as the tempo. Other rhythmic devices such as syncopation and polyrhythm can add further variety to the music. On a larger

scale, music is put together in terms of its form. We discussed three common song forms: the blues, AABA, and the Verse and Chorus.

Texture refers to the ways in which musical lines of a musical piece interact. Common textures include monophonic texture (one melodic line), homophonic texture (accompanied by chords), and polyphonic texture (simultaneous melodies). We also saw that composition and improvisation are the two major processes used to combine the musical elements we discussed. They may be used independently, or they may be combined within a composition.

Test Your Understanding



An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:

<https://louis.pressbooks.pub/musicappreciation/?p=5#h5p-5>

3.

LISTENING TO MUSICIANS: MUSICAL ROLES, CONTEXTS, AND CATEGORIES

Learning Objectives

- Identify different musical contexts.
- Identify the role of the musical producer in the 20th century.
- Compare and contrast recorded music and live music.
- Identify how improvising is used in music performance.
- Identify examples of music improvisation.

Musical Roles

Contributed by Francis Scully

Consider the following musical contexts and imagine yourself listening to music in these spaces:

Video 3.1: Stevie Wonder performs the song “Overjoyed” live in concert



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://louis.pressbooks.pub/musicappreciation/?p=888#oembed-1>

Video 3.2: Listening to the song “Love on the Brain” by Rihanna while driving in your car



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://louis.pressbooks.pub/musicappreciation/?p=888#oembed-2>

Video 3.3: Attending a classical music recital and hearing a piano piece by Beethoven performed by the pianist Lang Lang



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://louis.pressbooks.pub/musicappreciation/?p=888#oembed-3>

Video 3.4: Listening to a choir sing “Amazing Grace” during a church service



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://louis.pressbooks.pub/musicappreciation/?p=888#oembed-4>

Obviously, we couldn’t hear any of this music without the contributions of talented and generous musicians who have worked hard. But each of these situations involves different musicians in a variety of roles. Two critical roles musicians play include performer and composer. A **composer** is the musician who writes the music, often literally writing notes on music paper. This is the person who receives inspiration, perhaps hears the sounds in their head, or sits down at the piano and improvises and creates the musical idea. By contrast, the **performer** is the musician who takes the musical ideas of the composer and brings them to life in sound. Of course, performers can inject their own imagination and creativity into the music when they play it.

Let’s consider these roles in each of the above situations. In video 3.1, we hear Stevie Wonder as the performer, but he also wrote the music for this song, so in this situation the composer and the performer are the same person. In video 3.2, even though the musicians are not sitting there in the car with us, at one point, someone wrote the music down (the composer) and some musicians played this music (performers) into microphones so the music could be recorded. But in this case, the composer and performers are different people. Rihanna is the featured singer (the performer) and also the songwriter, having composed the song with a team of songwriters: Fred Ball and Joseph Angel, and citing herself as Robyn Fenty.

This separation of the roles of performer and composer continues in video 3.3: Lang Lang is the performer playing the notes on the piano, but he did not compose the music. In this case, Lang Lang is playing a piece

of music written down by the composer Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827). As you can see by the dates to the right of Beethoven's name, the composer is no longer alive, and he lived well before the invention of audio recording. Beethoven wrote his music down on music paper, but there's no way for us to really know what it might have sounded like if Beethoven performed it.

Video 3.4 adds an additional twist. The members of the church choir are obviously the performers and not the composers. But the story of the composition of this hymn is more complicated. While the words to "Amazing Grace" were written around 1772 by the English clergyman and poet John Newton, the composer of the musical part of the hymn (the melody to which the words are set) is unknown. The words were added at some point during the 1800s to a popular folk melody known as "New Britain."

New Musical Role in the 20th Century: Producer

With the advent of recording technology in the twentieth century, a new musical role emerged, that of the producer. The **producer** is the person responsible for overseeing the technical elements of the recording. The producer has to think about the "overall sound" of the recording—how the music is recorded (where the microphones are placed, how the instruments sound, special effects, etc.) and how the music is mixed (how loud or soft the different instruments/voices sound when you listen to the recording). Oftentimes, producers play a role in composing the music as well because they are a part of the creative process while the artists are in the studio recording the song. With all of the digital technology available nowadays, producing can get very complicated.

Musical Contexts

Recorded Music vs. Live Music

While listening to Rihanna in the car, we can't watch her and her band perform, but in the other three scenarios, performers are right in front of us and we can see them physically make the music. Aside from this obvious fact, what makes live performances different from recorded performances?

Recorded performances often represent a kind of "ideal" performance. Especially nowadays, every aspect of a recorded performance can be "perfected." Even brilliant musicians play with imperfections—a note sung slightly flat or sharp, a bass drum hit that is a little early or late, or a guitar chord that is held for just a little too long. Recording technology allows producers to "fix" these technical errors and make the recording sound exactly a certain way. Most of the time, the different musicians on a recording don't actually play their parts at the same time. A bass player and drummer might "lay down" their tracks, and then the guitarist comes in at a later time and maybe in a different room and plays over that recording. Then the vocalist records her track over all the other musicians. Then a producer mixes it all together. Sometimes, because the recording process is so intricate, an artist can't necessarily make a live performance of the same song sound like the recording.

By contrast, what can make live performance so thrilling is the unpredictability and all of the little “imperfections.” When you hear someone play a song live, it doesn’t sound like their recording, and by its very nature it never sounds exactly the same way twice. There is always something different that happens. Sometimes, of course, we can be disappointed in a live performance, but live performance also offers the possibility for amazing things to happen.

Improvisation: Composing/Performing Live

Some musical styles combine the process of composing and performing into one. Jazz music is a style that usually requires performers to improvise while performing. **Improvising** involves making up a musical part in the moment of performance. This is a style of composing and performing pioneered by African-American jazz musicians in the first part of the twentieth century. To be sure, not everything in a jazz performance is “made up on the spot.” Jazz ensembles typically perform what are known as standards. A **standard** is a popular song that has been performed and recorded by many different artists. This collection of standards is often referred to as “The Great American Songbook.” Jazz musicians take the skeleton of this standard—its melody and harmonies—and invent music on top of this skeleton. Even in the world of improvisation, there is usually some kind of **STRUCTURE** (a basic **FORM** that the piece follows), but the performers have more freedom to change things up as they play.

Louis Armstrong plays the Gershwins’ “I Got Rhythm”

We’ll listen to the great jazz trumpeter Louis Armstrong (1901-1971) in a recording he made of “I Got Rhythm” from 1938. The song “I Got Rhythm” was originally composed by American composer George Gershwin (1898-1937) with lyrics by his brother Ira Gershwin (1896-1983) in 1930 for a musical called “Girl Crazy.” The song “I Got Rhythm” became a popular hit and lots of jazz musicians used it as the basis of improvisational performances.

In this song, we’ll hear the band play the original tune (notice the tune itself has a mini ABA form, outlined below), after which each of the band members takes a turn improvising over the chords that supported the original tune.

Video 3.5: Follow along with the form chart below as you listen to Louis Armstrong play “I Got Rhythm.”



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://louis.pressbooks.pub/musicappreciation/?p=888#oembed-5>

Louis Armstrong, “I Got Rhythm” Form Chart

“the tune” 0:00-0:32a (0:00-0:15); b (0:16-0:22); a (0:23-0:32)

0:33-1:05 | Louis Armstrong solos over the chords on trumpet

1:06-1:40 | Saxophone solos over the chords (Bud Freeman)

1:41-2:11 | Trombone solos over the chords (Jack Teagarden)

2:12-2:45 | Piano solos over the chords (Fats Waller)

2:46-3:34 | Armstrong comes back in with trumpet (with some additional material in trombone also)

Something to Think About

After listening to live performances and recorded performances, which do you prefer? Would you rather attend a live performance or listen to a great recording of your favorite artist?

Musical Categories

From *Resonances: Engaging Music in Its Cultural Context*

Edited by Esther M. Morgan-Ellis

What kinds of music do you like to listen to? Country? Hip-hop? Classical? EDM? Top 40? Whether we are talking to a friend, using a streaming service, or browsing records in a store, we like to think about music in terms of categories. These categories can be very useful. They can help us pick a radio station we might enjoy or decide whether or not to buy tickets to hear an unfamiliar band. At the same time, these categories are both artificial and extremely limiting.

Let us begin by considering the classic tripartite division of music into the categories of “classical,” “popular,” and “folk.” This approach has been around for a long time, and it has persevered because, in many ways, it works. If I tell you that I like “classical” music, you immediately understand that I probably mean orchestral music, or opera, and that I probably listen to music that is fairly old. But there are problems with this categorization. To begin with, much of what is “classical” today was “popular” in the past. When Mozart wrote his symphonies, for example, his object was to satisfy popular demand and sell concert tickets, and his audiences behaved the same way that fans at a rock concert do today. And what if I actually prefer experimental orchestral music composed last year? It is common practice to refer to such repertoire as “classical,” but it’s about as far from Mozart as you can get.

“Classical” music is usually associated with certain performance conventions, including formal dress, music reading, and standard ensembles such as the orchestra and choir pictured here, but none of these are essential.



Figure 3.1: Classical Orchestra |
 Attribution: AfroRomanzo |
 Source: [Pexels](#) |
 License: [Free to Use](#)

How about “popular” music? This category is generally understood to contain commercial music that appeals to large numbers of people. But what about individual artists or songs that fail to achieve any popularity whatsoever? What about experimental rock bands that take the same attitude towards their work as serious “classical” composers? Mozart, a “classical” composer, might have more in common with a “popular” artist like Jimi Hendrix than Hendrix has in common with Pink Floyd. Mozart and Hendrix were both gifted instrumentalists who dazzled their audiences with virtuosic performances and wrote music to showcase their skills, while the band Pink Floyd is known more for their nuanced production, complex song structures, and unusual instrumentation. Again, however, this category is not without its value. While there is an enormous diversity of “popular” musics, they tend to be characterized by certain forms, instrumentations, styles, and performance venues. There might be much to separate Jimi Hendrix and Pink Floyd, but their music shares important elements of instrumentation and style, and it might be heard in the same types of settings.

“Folk” is also a slippery category. “Folk” music is typically described as music of unknown authorship that is passed down from generation to generation in a particular region. It tends to be fairly simple and in a distinctive style, and it is performed on instruments that are integral to the local musical culture. However, problems quickly arise as we try to label individual pieces or practices. In the United States, for example, the works of Stephen Foster have long been considered folk music. Songs like “My Old Kentucky Home” and “Camptown Races” have certainly entered folk culture, and many who sing or play them know nothing of their composer or origin. But can a commercial song, created and published by a professional composer, truly be considered “folk” music? Different problems arise as we address the musical practices of non-Western societies, many of which do not employ musical notation and reject notions of individual authorship. But does the absence of a named composer, official sheet music, and copyright notice mean that a work in the North Indian

classical tradition is “folk” music? The complexity, sophistication, and technical demands of music in this category would suggest not.

Woody Guthrie, pictured here in 1943, is an icon of American folk music. However, he mostly performed songs that he himself wrote and had a successful commercial career—characteristics that put him more in line with “popular” musicians.



Figure 3.2: Woody Guthrie | Attribution: Al Aumuller | Source: [Wikimedia Commons](#) | License: Public Domain

A further challenge arises when we try to identify the “folk” music of a region or nation. Let us take the United States. If I tell you that I listen to American folk music, you will probably imagine someone like Joan Baez playing guitar and singing songs from the Anglo folk tradition.

Indeed, music such as hers has come to be known as Folk music (with a capital F). If I ask Spotify to play Folk music for me, I'll hear Joan Baez and others like her. However, her music represents only one cultural strain within the United States. What about the polka music of midwestern communities? What about the corrido ballads of Spanish-speaking communities near the southern border? What about the dance music heard at Native American pow-wow gatherings? Are any of these traditions less “folk” or less “American” than the others?

For all the reasons explored above, this narrative is going to steer clear of “classical,” “popular,” and “folk” as categories and terms. They have been addressed here only because their use is so widespread. Instead, we will focus on what music across these categories shares in common: the purposes for which individual works were originally created and continue to be consumed. This book is organized around categories, but these categories have little to do with the style of the works contained therein. Instead, they have to do with the roles music plays in society. These categories lead us to first understand what music is for. Only then will we seek to address how the music works, who created it, and how it is rooted in its historical and cultural context.

These categories also have their shortcomings. Many musical examples included in a given category could just as easily be included in another. We will admit that at the outset. All the same, these categories seem more useful than “classical,” “popular,” and “folk,” and they tell us much more about what really matters: music as an integral aspect of the human experience.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, we listened to different musical contexts and the critical roles musicians play as performer and composer. In each of the video examples, we looked at the role of the composer and the role of the performer, how music can be produced from someone who is both composer and performer, and music that is written by a composer and then performed by someone else. We listened to music composed hundreds of years ago that is still being performed today and music that was composed in one era with words added to the composition in a different era.

With the advent of recording technology in the twentieth century, we explored the responsibilities of a producer overseeing the technical elements of the recording. The producer also looks at how the music is recorded (where the microphones are placed, how the instruments sound, special effects, etc.) and how the music is mixed.

We then compared recorded music with live music. We explored jazz music, where performers improvise while performing. Some jazz musicians take the skeleton of a standard jazz piece with its melody and harmonies and invent music on top of this skeleton. We showed how even in the world of improvisation, there is usually a basic form that the piece follows while still giving the performers freedom to change things up as they play.

We next reviewed how music is typically categorized into classical, popular, or folk categories and what was considered the definition of those categories. Classical music is associated with certain performance conventions, including formal dress, music reading, and standard ensembles such as the orchestra and choir.

Popular music contains commercial music that appeals to large numbers of people, and folk music is typically described as music of unknown authorship passed down from generation to generation in a particular region. We also looked at how some music can be difficult to place in one of these categories.

Our next chapter will look at how a music notation system was developed and will compare music that was written before 1600 CE with music of the Middle Ages and music of the Renaissance periods.

Test Your Understanding



An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:

<https://louis.pressbooks.pub/musicappreciation/?p=888#h5p-6>

PART II

HISTORY OF WESTERN MUSIC BEFORE 1600

4.

INTRODUCTION TO WESTERN MUSIC HISTORY

Learning Objective

- Identify various periods in the history of Western music.

Time, Calendars, History: Periods of Art and Music History

Stevens Edwards

History is the study of the past based on evidence, usually written documents. What happened? How do we know? Why did it happen? Historians sometimes attempt to impose order on the past by dividing it into periods or eras. Such attempts are inherently analytical and involve making judgments about the past. Some periods were named by the people experiencing them as “now.” People in the Renaissance really did believe that they were having a “re-birth” of interest in the ideals of Classical Antiquity, the ancient Greeks and Romans. They were also the ones who described the period between antiquity and themselves as the Middle Ages.

What historical era or period do you live in? The Post-9/11 Era? The Post-Pandemic Era? The Modern or Postmodern period? The 21st century? (What does one call these [first decades of the 21st century](#), anyway?) Or are you just living “now”?

Related to this question about when you are living is the matter of how you keep track. Over time and in different places, there have been numerous changes in the division of time into a calendar. In this course, we will use the distinctions CE (Common Era) and BCE (Before the Common Era). These are similar to what you may know as AD (*Anno Domine*, in the year of our Lord—not “after death”) and BC (Before Christ). The old AD and BC distinction is completely Western-centric and assumes that everyone is—or should be—Christian.

Pre-historic refers to the time before history, before written records. We know about pre-historic times based

on evidence that pre-dates a written record. In some cases, cultures living today have little or no contact with the outside world and preserve pre-historic traditions. These are now usually referred to as indigenous rather than pre-historic or primitive.

Classical Antiquity: 500 BCE–500 CE

The beginning of this era might be pushed back to around 800 BCE to include the earliest writings of the Hebrews and the beginnings of literate Greek culture (Homer’s “Iliad” and “Odyssey,” etc.) The end of the era is connected to the fall of the Roman Empire, which is conventionally dated to 476 CE. But Rome did not fall in a day...

Medieval (Middle Ages): 500–1400

The Middle Ages were sometimes also called the Dark Ages due to the collapse of the Roman Empire. The last two centuries of the Middle Ages saw a crescendo of political, economic, and artistic progress that moved logically into the Renaissance.

Renaissance: 1400–1600

The Renaissance reflected a re-birth of interest in the ideals of Classical Antiquity. In music, this was reflected in a new emphasis on all elements of text and in the actual experience of listening to music (as opposed to music being a symbolic representation of some philosophical natural order). As we will see below, there were huge changes in the sound of music and the relationship between music and text beginning in the 1430s.

Baroque: 1600–1750

The term “baroque” originally referred to something misshaped (an irregular pearl) and was not applied as the name of this period of history until the end of the 19th century. In fact, there were many significant developments in music around 1600: the beginnings of independent instrumental music, the invention of opera, and a change in thinking about and notating music (basso continuo, figured bass).

Classical: 1750–1810

The so-called classical period was named by 19th-century historians. It reflected a golden age in music (none of whose composers would have identified as “classical”) and was inspired by archeological rediscoveries in Greece of many monuments.

Romantic: 1810–1900

The “Long” 19th century extending from the French Revolution in 1789 until the First World War in 1914 includes the development of the modern concert, the virtuoso performer, and most of the trappings of the market-based musical economy

Modern or Contemporary: 1900–Present

As we move farther and farther into the 21st century, this label seems less and less useful. It is now more common to identify a Modern period from around the time of WWI (and the events leading up to it) until WWII (and the events just after). From the 1950s until 2017 can now be seen as the Global Era.

5.

MUSIC OF THE MIDDLE AGES

Learning Objectives

- Identify historical and cultural contexts of the Middle Ages.
- Identify musical styles of the Middle Ages.
- Identify important genres and uses of music of the Middle Ages.
- Identify selected compositions of the Middle Ages and critically evaluate their style.
- Compare and contrast music of the Middle Ages with today's contemporary music.

“Music of the Middle Ages” by Elizabeth Kramer

From *Understanding Music: Past and Present*

By Alan Clark, Thomas Heflin, Jeffery Kluball, and Elizabeth Kramer,

Edited and revised by Jonathan Kulp and Bonnie Le

Introduction and Historical Context

Timeline: Music of the Middle Ages



An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:

<https://louis.pressbooks.pub/musicappreciation/?p=179#h5p-1>

Timeline: Leading up to and through the Middle Ages

- 300-400 CE, 4th century:

- Founding of the monastic movement in Christianity
- Further refinement of musical notation, including notation for rhythm
- 300-900 CE, 4th–9th centuries: Development/codification of Christian chant
- ca. 400 CE: St. Augustine writes about church music
- ca. 450 CE: Fall of Rome
 - Marks the end of Classical Antiquity and the beginning of the Middle Ages
- ca. 800 CE: First experiments in Western music
- 1000-1100 CE, 11th century:
 - Rise of feudalism & the Three Estates
 - Growth of Marian culture
 - Guido de Arezzo refines music notation and development of solfège
- 1088 CE: Founding of the University of Bologna
- ca. 1095–1291 CE: The Crusades
- 1140s CE: Hildegard of Bingen (1098-1179) writes Gregorian chants
- ca. 1163–1240s CE: Building of Notre Dame in Paris and the rise of Gothic architecture
- 1200-1300 CE, 13th century: Development of polyphony
- ca. 1275 CE: King Alfonso the Wise collects early songs in an exquisitely illuminated manuscript
- 1346–1353: Height of the bubonic plague (Black Death)
- 1300–1377 CE: Guillaume de Machaut composes songs and church music

Introduction

What do you think of when you hear the term the Middle Ages (450–1450)? For some, the semi-historical figures of Robin Hood and Maid Marian come to mind. Others recall Western Christianity's Crusades to the Holy Land. Still others may have read about the arrival in European lands of the bubonic plague or Black Death, as it was called. For most twenty-first-century individuals, the Middle Ages seem far removed. Although life and music were quite different back then, we hope that you will find that there are cultural threads that extend from that distant time to now.

We normally start studies of Western music with the Middle Ages, but of course, music existed long before then. In fact, the term Middle Ages or medieval period got its name to describe the time in between (or “in the middle of”) the ancient age of classical Greece and Rome and the Renaissance of Western Europe, which roughly began in the fifteenth century. Knowledge of music before the Middle Ages is limited but what we do know largely revolves around the Greek mathematician Pythagoras, who died around 500 BCE.

Pythagoras might be thought of as a father of the modern study of acoustics due to his experimentation with bars of iron and strings of different lengths. Images of people singing and playing instruments, such as those found on the Greek vases, provide evidence that music was used for ancient theater, dance, and worship. The Greek word *musická* not only referred to music but also referred to poetry and the telling of history. Writings of

Plato and Aristotle referred to music as a form of ethos (an appeal to ethics). As the Roman Empire expanded across Western Europe, so too did Christianity. Considering that biblical texts from ancient Hebrews to those of early Christians provided numerous records of music used as a form of worship, the empire used music to help unify its people: the theory was that if people worshiped together in a similar way, then they might also stick together during political struggles.

Later, starting around 800, Western music is recorded in a notation that we can still decipher today. This brief overview of these five hundred years of the Roman Empire will help us better understand the music of the Middle Ages.

Historical Context for Music of the Middle Ages (800–1400)

During the Middle Ages, as during other periods of Western history, sacred and secular worlds were both separate and integrated. However, during this time, the Catholic Church was the most widespread and influential institution and leader in all things sacred. The Catholic Church's head, the Pope, maintained political and spiritual power and influence among the noble classes and their geographic territories; the life of a high church official was not completely different from that of a noble counterpart, and many younger sons and daughters of the aristocracy found vocations in the church. Towns large and small had churches, spaces open to all: commoners, clergy, and nobles. The Catholic Church also developed a system of monasteries, where monks studied and prayed, often in solitude, even while making cultural and scientific discoveries that would eventually shape human life more broadly. In civic and secular life, kings, dukes, and lords wielded power over their lands and the commoners living therein. Kings and dukes had courts, gatherings of fellow nobles, where they forged political alliances, threw lavish parties, and celebrated both love and war in song and dance.

Many of the important historical developments of the Middle Ages arose either in the church or in the court. One such important development stemming from the Catholic Church would be the development of architecture. During this period, architects built increasingly tall and imposing cathedrals for worship through the technological innovations of pointed arches, [flying buttresses](#), and large cut- glass windows. This new architectural style was referred to as “[gothic](#),” which vastly contrasts with the [Romanesque](#) style, with its rounded arches and smaller windows. Another important development stemming from the courts occurred in the arts. Poets and musicians, attached to the courts, wrote poetry, literature, and music less and less in Latin—still the common language of the church—and increasingly in their own vernacular languages (the predecessors of today's French, Italian, Spanish, German, and English). However, one major development of the Middle Ages spanned sacred and secular worlds: universities shot up in locales from Bologna, Italy, and Paris, France, to Oxford, England (the University of Bologna being the first). At university, a young man could pursue a degree in theology, law, or medicine. Music of a sort was studied as one of the seven liberal arts and sciences, specifically as the science of proportions.

Music in the Middle Ages: An Overview

Not surprisingly, given their importance during the Middle Ages, both the Catholic Church and the network of aristocratic courts left a significant mark on music of the time. Much of the music from that era that was written down in notation and still exists comes from Christian worship or court entertainment. Churches and courts employed scribes and artists to write down their music in beautifully illuminated manuscripts such as this one that features Guillaume Machaut's "Dame, a vous sans retoller," discussed later. Churchmen such as the monk Guido de Arezzo devised musical systems such as "solfège" still used today.



Figure 5.1: Page from a manuscript of Guillaume de Machaut's verse novel *Le remède de fortune* showing an outdoors dancing scene above music notations. Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, Ms. fr. 1586, fol. 51r | Attribution: Guillaume de Machaut | Source: [Wikimedia Commons](#) | License: Public Domain

As we study a few compositions from the Middle Ages, we will see the following musical developments at play: (1) the development of musical texture from monophony to polyphony and (2) the shift from music whose rhythm is hinted at by its words to music that has measured rhythms indicated by new developments in musical notation. Although we know that instrumental music existed in the Middle Ages, most of the music that has survived is vocal.

Music for Medieval Christian Worship

The earliest music of Catholic Christianity was the chant—that is, monophonic *a cappella* music, most often sung in worship in Latin. As you learned in the first chapter of this book, monophony refers to music with one melodic line that may be performed by one or many individuals at the same time. Largely due to the belief of some Catholics that instruments were too closely associated with secular music, instruments were rarely used in medieval worship; therefore, most chant was sung [a cappella](#), or without instruments. As musical notation for rhythm had not yet developed, the exact development of rhythm in chant is uncertain. However, based on church traditions (some of which still exist), we believe that the rhythms of medieval chants were guided by the natural rhythms provided by the words.

Medieval Catholic worship included services throughout the day. The most important of these services was the Mass, at which the Eucharist, also known as communion, was celebrated (this celebration includes the consumption of bread and wine representing the flesh and blood of Jesus Christ). Five chants of the mass (the Kyrie, Gloria, Credo, Sanctus, and Agnus Dei) were typically included in every mass, no matter what date in the church calendar. These five chants make up the [Mass Ordinary](#), and Catholics, as well as some Protestants, still use this liturgy in worship today.

In the evening, one might attend a Vespers service, at which chants called hymns were sung. Hymns, like most of the rest of the Catholic liturgy, were sung in Latin. Hymns most often featured four-line strophes in which the lines were generally the same length and often rhymed. Each strophe or verse of a given hymn was sung to the same music, and for that reason, we say that hymns are in [strophic form](#). Hymns like most chants generally had a range of about an octave, which made them easy to sing.

Throughout the Middle Ages, Mary the mother of Jesus, referred to as the Virgin Mary, was a central figure in Catholic devotion and worship. Under Catholic belief, she is upheld as the perfect woman, having been chosen by God to miraculously give birth to the Christ while still a virgin. She was given the role of intercessor, a mediator for the Christian believer with a petition for God, and as such appeared in many medieval chants.

Focus Composition: *Ave Generosa* by Hildegard of Bingen (12th Century)

Many composers of the Middle Ages will forever remain anonymous. [Hildegard of Bingen](#) (1098–1179) from the German Rhineland is a notable exception. At the age of fourteen, Hildegard's family gave her to the Catholic Church, where she studied Latin and theology at the local monastery. Known for her religious visions, Hildegard eventually became an influential religious leader, artist, poet, scientist, and musician. She would go on to found three convents and become an abbess, the chief administrator of an abbey.



Figure 5.2:
Depiction of
Hildegard of
Bingen in the
Rupertsberger
Codex of her Liber
Scivias |
Attribution: Author
unknown | Source:
[Wikimedia
Commons](#) |
License: Public
Domain

Writing poetry and music for her fellow nuns to use in worship was one of many of Hildegard's activities, and the hymn "Ave Generosa" is just one of her many compositions. This hymn has multiple strophes in Latin that praise Mary and her role as the bearer of the Son of God. The manuscript contains one melodic line that is sung for each of the strophes, making it a strophic monophonic chant. Although some leaps occur, the melody is conjunct. The range of the melody line, although still approachable for the amateur singer, is a bit wider than other church chants of the Middle Ages. The melody contains two types of text singing: syllabic, which is one syllable per note, and melismas. A melisma is the singing of multiple pitches on one syllable of text. Overall, the rhythm of the chant follows the rhythm of the syllables of the text.

Examples of each:

Audio Ex. 5.1: Syllabic chant



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://louis.pressbooks.pub/musicappreciation/?p=179#audio-179-1>

Audio Ex. 5.2: Melismatic chant



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://louis.pressbooks.pub/musicappreciation/?p=179#audio-179-2>

Chant is by definition monophonic, but scholars suspect that medieval performers sometimes added musical lines to the texture, probably starting with drones (a pitch or group of pitches that were sustained while most

of the ensemble sang together the melodic line). Performances of chant music today often add embellishments, such as occasionally having a fiddle or small organ play the drone instead of being vocally incorporated. Performers of the Middle Ages possibly did likewise, even if prevailing practices called for entirely *a cappella* worship.

Listening Guide

Listen on YouTube to the UCLA Early Music Ensemble performing *Ave Generosa*; soloist Arreanna Rostosky; audio and video by Umberto Belfiore. Composer: Hildegard of Bingen, composition: *Ave Generosa*, 12th century.

Video 5.1




One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://louis.pressbooks.pub/musicappreciation/?p=179#oembed-1>

- Genre: Hymn (a type of chant)
- Form: Strophic; listen through 3:17 for the first four strophes.
- Nature of text: Multiple, four-line strophes in Latin, praising the Virgin Mary ([text and translation found at Norma Gentile](#))
- Performing forces: Small ensemble of vocalists
- What we want you to remember about this composition:
 - It is a chant.
 - It is *a cappella*.
 - Its rhythms follow the rhythms of the text.
 - It is monophonic (although this performance adds a drone).
- Other things to listen for:
 - Its melodic line is mostly conjunct.
 - Its melody contains many melismas.
 - It has a Latin text sung in a strophic form.

Audio Ex. 5.3: *Ave Generosa* by Hildegard of Bingen



 One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://louis.pressbooks.pub/musicappreciation/?p=179#audio-179-3>

The Emergence of Polyphonic Music for the Medieval Church

Initial embellishments such as the addition of a musical drone to a monophonic chant were probably improvised during the Middle Ages. With the advent of musical notation that could indicate polyphony, composers began writing polyphonic compositions for worship, initially intended for select parts of the liturgy to be sung by the most trained and accomplished of the priests or monks leading the Mass. Originally, these polyphonic compositions featured two musical lines at the same time; eventually, third and fourth lines were added. Polyphonic liturgical music, originally called organum, emerged in Paris around the late twelfth and thirteenth centuries. In this case, growing musical complexity seems to parallel growing architectural complexity.

Composers wrote polyphony so that the **cadences**, or ends of musical phrases and sections, resolved to simultaneously sounding perfect intervals. Perfect intervals are the intervals of fourths, fifths, and octaves. Such intervals are called perfect because they are the first intervals derived from the overtone series. As hollow and even disturbing as perfect intervals can sound to our modern ears, the Middle Ages used them in church partly because they believed that what was perfect was more appropriate for the worship of God than the imperfect.

In Paris, composers also developed an early type of rhythmic notation, which was important considering that individual singers would now be singing different musical lines that needed to stay in sync. By the end of the fourteenth century, this rhythmic notation began looking a little bit like the rhythmic notation recognizable today. Beginning a music composition, a symbol fell indicating something like our modern meter symbols. This symbol told the performer whether the composition was in two or in three and laid out the note value that provided the basic beat. Initially almost all metered church music used triple time, because the number three was associated with perfection and theological concepts such as the trinity.



Figure 5.3:
Depiction of
Guillaume de
Machaut, 14th
century |
Attribution:
Unknown | Source:
[Wikimedia](#)
[Commons](#) |
License: Public
Domain

Elsewhere in what is now France, [Guillaume de Machaut](#) (ca. 1300–1377) emerged as the most important poet and composer of his century and is credited with composing the earliest polyphonic setting of the Mass. He is the first composer about which we have much biographical information, due in part to the fact that Machaut himself, near the end of his life, collected his poetry into volumes of manuscripts, which include a miniature image of the composer. We know that he traveled widely as a cleric and secretary for John, the King of Bohemia. Around 1340, he moved to Reims (now in France), where he served as a church official at the cathedral. There he had more time to write poetry and music, which he seems to have continued doing for some time.

Focus Composition: *Agnus Dei* from the *Nostre Dame Mass* (ca. 1364 CE)

We think that Machaut wrote his *Messe de Nostre Dame* (*Mass of Our Lady*) around 1364. This composition is famous because it was one of the first compositions to set all five movements of the Mass ordinary as a complete whole: these movements are the pieces of the Catholic liturgy comprising every Mass, no matter what time of the year. Movement in music refers to a musical section that sounds complete but that is part of a larger musical composition. Musical connections between each movement of this Mass cycle—the Kyrie, Gloria, Credo, Sanctus, and Agnus Dei—suggest that Machaut intended them to be performed together rather than being traded in and out of a Mass based on the preferences of the priest leading the service. Agnus Dei was composed after Machaut’s brother’s death in 1372; this Mass was likely performed every week in a side chapel of the Reims Cathedral. Medieval Catholics commonly paid for Masses to be performed in honor of their deceased loved ones.

As you listen to the “Agnus Dei” movement from the *Messe de Nostre Dame*, try imagining that you are sitting in that side chapel of the cathedral at Reims, a cathedral that looks not unlike the Cathedral of Notre Dame in Paris. Its slow tempo might remind us that this was music that memorialized Machaut’s dead brother, and its triple meter allegorized perfection. Remember that although its perfect intervals may sound disturbing

to our ears, for those in the Middle Ages, they symbolized that which was most appropriate and musically innovative.

Listening Guide

Listen on YouTube to Oxford Camerata performing “Agnus Dei” from *La Messe de Notre Dame*, directed by Jeremy Summerly; composer, Guillaume de Machaut, date: ca. 1364 CE.

Video 5.2



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://louis.pressbooks.pub/musicappreciation/?p=179#oembed-2>

- Genre: Movement from the Ordinary of the Mass
- Form: A–B–A
- Nature of text: Latin words from the Mass Ordinary: Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata mundi, Miserere nobis (Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world, have mercy on us)
- Performing forces: Small ensemble of vocalists
- What we want you to remember about this composition:
 - It is part of the Latin mass.
 - It uses four-part polyphony.
 - It has a slow tempo.
- Other things to listen for:
 - Its melody lines have a lot of melismas.
 - It is in triple meter, symbolizing perfection.
 - It uses simultaneous intervals of fourths, fifths, and octaves, also symbolizing perfection.
 - Its overall form is A–B–A.

Audio Ex. 5.4: Agnus Dei from Messe De Notre Dame by Guillaume de Machaut



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://louis.pressbooks.pub/musicappreciation/?p=179#audio-179-4>

Medieval Secular Music

Bonnie Le

The popular music of the time was sung not in Latin but in the vernacular (everyday or common language) of that country. The most common secular vocal music performed then was sung by poet-musicians called minnesingers, trouveres, and troubadours. They were mainly singers from the upper classes who performed for private functions. The traveling street musicians who sang this type of music were called minstrels.

The music was usually about courtly love and included a refrain (distinctive melody with recurring words), with many of the songs being strophic (each verse of text sung to the same melody). A famous woman troubadour of the 12th century was Beatriz of Dia. She was a well-educated countess who had an arranged marriage. She took a lover, wrote poetry about her love, and then it was put to music as a troubadour song. Although she wrote many songs, this is the one song to have survived. It's called "A Chantar" ("It Is Mine to Sing").

Something to Think About

Listen to Beatriz of Dia's "A Chantar" and read the English translation in this YouTube video. Was this a happy song? What do you think she was feeling when she sang this song about her lover?

Video 5.3: Performed by Clemencic Consort; Singer, Pilar Figueras



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://louis.pressbooks.pub/musicappreciation/?p=179#oembed-3>

Music in Medieval Courts

From *Understanding Music: Past and Present*,

By N. Alan Clark, Thomas Heflin, and Elizabeth Kramer

Like the Catholic Church, medieval kings, dukes, lords, and other members of the nobility had resources to sponsor musicians to provide them with music for worship and entertainment. Individuals roughly comparable to today's singer-songwriters served courts throughout Europe. Like most singer-songwriters, love was a favored topic. These poet-composers also sang of devotion to the Virgin Mary and of the current events of the day.



Figure 5.4: Pipe and tabor players depicted in *Cantigas de Santa Maria* | Attribution: Unknown | Source: [Wikimedia Commons](#) | License: Public Domain

Many songs that merge these two focus points appear in a late thirteenth-century manuscript called the *Cantigas de Santa Maria* (Songs for the Virgin Mary), a collection sponsored by **King Alfonso the Wise**, who ruled the northwestern corner of the Iberian Peninsula. *Cantigas de Santa Maria* also includes many illustrations of individuals playing instruments. The musician on the left in Figure 5.4 is playing a rebec, and the one to the right a lute. Elsewhere in the manuscript, these drummers and fifers appear (see Figure 5.5). These depictions suggest to us that, outside of worship services, much vocal music was accompanied by instruments. We believe such songs as these were also sung by groups and used as dance music, especially as

early forms of rhythmic notation indicate simple and catchy patterns that were danceable. Other manuscripts also show individuals dancing to the songs of composers such as Machaut.



Figure 5.5: Rebec and Lute Players depicted in *Cantigas de Santa Maria* | Attribution: Unknown | Source: [Wikipedia Commons](#) | License: Public Domain

Focus Composition: Song of Mary, No. 181:

“The Virgin will aid those who most love her” is one of over four hundred songs praising the Virgin Mary in the *Cantigas de Santa Maria* described above. The song praises Mary for her help during the Crusades in defeating a Moroccan king in the city of Marrakesh. It uses a verse and refrain structure similar to those discussed in chapter 1. Its two-lined chorus (here called a refrain) is sung at the beginning of each of the eight four-lined strophes that serve as verses. The two-line melody for the refrain is repeated for the first two lines of the verse; a new melody then is used for the last two lines of the verse. In the recent recording done by Jordi Savall and his ensemble, a relatively large group of men and women sing the refrains, and soloists and smaller groups of singers perform the verses. The ensemble also includes a hand drum that articulates the repeating rhythmic motives, a medieval fiddle, and a lute, as well as medieval flutes and shawms near the end of the excerpt below. These parts are not notated in the manuscript, but it is likely that similar instruments would have been used to accompany this monophonic song in the middle ages.

Listening Guide

Watch *Cantigas De Santa Maria*, no. 181, “The Virgin will aid those who most love her” (Pero que seja a gente d’outra lei [e]descreuda) on YouTube, performed by Jordi Savall and Ensemble; anonymous composer; date: ca. 1275 Listen from 0:13 through 3:29.

Video 5.4: *Cantigas de Santa Maria*



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://louis.pressbooks.pub/musicappreciation/?p=179#oembed-4>

- Genre: Song
- Form: Refrain [A] & verses [ab] = A-ab
- Nature of text: Refrain and strophes in an earlier form of Portuguese, praising the Virgin Mary
- Performing forces: Small ensemble of vocalists, men and women singing together and separately
- What we want you to remember about this composition:
 - It is music for entertainment, even though it has a sacred subject.
 - It is monophonic.
 - Its narrow-ranged melody and repetitive rhythms make it easy for non-professionals to sing.
 - In this recording, the monophonic melody is sung by men and women and is played by a medieval fiddle and lute; a drum plays the beat; near the end of the excerpt, you can also hear flutes and shawms.
 - Its musical form is A-ab, meaning that the refrain is always sung to the same music.

Medieval poet composers also wrote a lot of music about more secular love, a topic that continues to be popular for songs to the present day. Medieval musicians and composers, as well as much of European nobility in the Middle Ages, were particularly invested in what we call courtly love. Courtly love is love for a beloved without any concern for whether or not the love will be returned. The speakers within these poems recounted the virtues of their beloved, acknowledging the impossibility of ever consummating their love and pledging to continue loving their beloved to the end of their days.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, we have studied music that dates back almost 1,500 years from today. In some ways, it differs greatly from our music today, though some continuous threads exist. Individuals in the Middle Ages used music for worship and entertainment, just as occurs today. They wrote sacred music for worship and also used sacred ideas in entertainment music. Music for entertainment included songs about love, religion, and current events, as well as music that might be danced to. Though the style and form of their music are quite different from ours in many ways, some aspects of musical style have not changed. Conjunct music with a relatively narrow range is still a typical choice in folk and pop music, owing to the fact that it is easy for even the amateur to sing. Songs in strophic form and songs with a refrain and contrasting verses also still appear in today's pop

music. As we continue on to study music of the Renaissance, keep in mind these categories of music that remain to the present day.

Test Your Understanding



An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:

<https://louis.pressbooks.pub/musicappreciation/?p=179#h5p-7>

6.

MUSIC OF THE RENAISSANCE

Learning Objectives

- Describe historical and cultural contexts of the Renaissance.
- Identify musical styles of the Renaissance.
- Identify important genres and uses of music of the Renaissance.
- Identify music selections of the Renaissance and evaluate for style and use.
- Compare and contrast the music of the Renaissance with contemporary music.

What Is the Renaissance?

From *Understanding Music: Past and Present*

By N. Alan Clark, Thomas Heflin, and Elizabeth Kramer

Revision by Jonathan Kulp and edited by Bonnie Le

The term [Renaissance](#) literally means “rebirth.” As a historical and artistic era in Western Europe, the Renaissance spanned from the late 1400s to the early 1600s. The Renaissance was a time of waning political power in the church, somewhat as a result of the [Protestant Reformation](#). Also during this period, the feudal system slowly gave way to developing nation-states with centralized power in the courts. This period was one of intense creativity and exploration. It included such luminaries as Leonardo da Vinci, Christopher Columbus, [Ferdinand Magellan](#), [Nicolaus Copernicus](#), and William Shakespeare. The previous medieval period was suppressive, firmly established, and pious. The Renaissance, however, provided the thinkers and scholars of the day with a revival of Classical (Greek and Roman) wisdom and learning after a time of papal restraint. This “rebirth” laid the foundation for much of today’s modern society, where humans and nature rather than religion become the standard for art, science, and philosophy.

The School of Athens (1511), below, demonstrates the strong admiration of, influence of, and interest in

previous Greek and Roman culture. The painting depicts the Greek philosophers Aristotle and Plato (center), with Plato depicted in the likeness of Leonardo da Vinci.



Figure 6.1: The School of Athens | Author: Raffaello Sanzio da Urbino | Source: [Wikimedia Commons](#) | License: Public Domain

Renaissance Timeline



An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:

<https://louis.pressbooks.pub/musicappreciation/?p=1059#h5p-12>

- 1440: [Gutenberg's printing press](#)
- 1453: Fall of Constantinople
- 1456: [Gutenberg Bible](#)
- ca. 1475: Josquin des Prez, *Ave Maria*
- ca. 1482: Botticelli, [La Primavera](#)
- 1492: Columbus reaches America
- 1501-1520: Ottaviano Petrucci, 1466-1539, first printer to use movable type to print polyphonic music, producing 16 publications

- ca. 1503: Leonardo da Vinci, [*Mona Lisa*](#)
- 1504: Michelangelo, [*David*](#)
- ca. 1505: Raphael, [*Madonna del Granduca*](#)
- ca. 1511: Raphael, *School of Athens*
- 1517: Martin Luther nails [*The Ninety-Five Theses*](#) on Wittenberg Church door
- ca. 1520: Madrigals were invented in Italy
- 1545–1563: [*Council of Trent*](#)
- 1558–1603: Elizabeth I, Queen of England
- 1563: Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina, *Pope Marcellus Mass*
- 1588: Spanish Armada defeated
- ca. 1570: Titian, [*Venus and the Lute Player*](#)
- 1597: Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*
- 1601: Thomas Weelkes, *As Vesta Was Descending*

Occurrences at the end of the Middle Ages accelerated a series of intellectual, social, artistic, and political changes and transformations that resulted in the Renaissance.

By the 1500s, Catholic liturgical music had become extremely complex and ornate. Composers such as Josquin des Prez and Palestrina were composing layered Masses that featured musical textures such as polyphony and imitative counterpoint (more on these techniques later). The Mass is a sacred choral composition historically composed as part of the worship liturgy.

The complexity of the music in the Catholic Mass garnered criticism from [*Martin Luther*](#), a Roman Catholic priest and the eventual father of the Protestant Reformation, who complained that the meaning of the words of the Mass, formal worship liturgy, was lost in the beautiful polyphony of the music. Also, Catholic Masses were always performed in Latin, a language seldom used outside the church. Early Protestant hymns stripped away contrapuntal textures, utilized regular beat patterns, and set biblical texts in German. Martin Luther himself penned a few hymns, many of which the great classic composer Johann Sebastian Bach would revisit about 125 years later.

Renaissance Humanism

The [*Humanist*](#) movement is one that expressed the spirit of the Renaissance era and took root in Italy after eastern European scholars fled from Constantinople to the region, bringing with them books, manuscripts, and the traditions of Greek scholarship. Humanism is a major paradigm shift from the ways of thought during the medieval era, where a life of penance in a feudal system was considered the accepted standard of life. As a part of this ideological change, there was a major intellectual shift from the dominance of scholars/clerics of the medieval period (who developed and controlled the scholastic institutions) to the secular men of letters. Men

of letters were scholars of the liberal arts who turned to the classics and philosophy to understand the meaning of life.

Humanism has several distinct attributes, as it focuses on human nature, its diverse spectrum, and all its accomplishments. Humanism syncretizes or unites all the truths found in different philosophical and theological schools. It emphasizes and focuses on the dignity of man and studies mankind's struggles over nature.

Medieval vs. Renaissance



Figure 6.2:
Rendition of David
Fighting Goliath
found on a
Medieval Cast
plate; 629–630 |
Artist: Unknown |
Source: [Met
Museum](#) | License:
OA: [Public Domain](#)



Figure 6.3:
Michelangelo's
rendition of David
preparing to fight
Goliath; 1501–1504
| Photographer:
Jörg Bittner Unna |
Source: [Wikimedia
Commons](#) |
License: [CC BY 3.0](#)

Rebirth of Ancient Civilizations

Predecessors to the Renaissance and the Humanist movement include Dante and Petrarch. In 1452, after the fall of Constantinople, there was considerable boost in the Humanist movement. Humanism was accelerated by the invention of the printing press, which permitted mass reproduction of the classical text—once only found in hand-written manuscripts—and the availability of literature improved immensely. Thus, literacy among the common people increased dramatically. The scholastic and intellectual stimulation of the public facilitated by Humanism initiated a power and knowledge shift from the land-owning upper class and the church to the individual. This shift facilitated and contributed to the beginning of the Reformation. As mentioned above, Martin Luther was a leading religious reformer who challenged the authority of the central Catholic Church and its role in governance, education, and religious practices. Like most other European groups of the era, the Humanists at the time were divided in their support of the Reformation and Counter-Reformation movements.

Symmetry and Perspective in Art



Figure 6.4:
Cimabue's
Madonna; 1280 |
Artist: Cimabue |
Artist: Cimabue |
Source: [Wikimedia Commons](#) |
License: Public
Domain



Figure 6.5: Giotto's
Madonna; 1310 |
Artist: Giotto |
Source: [Wikimedia
Commons](#) |
License: Public
Domain



Figure 6.6:
Raphael's
Madonna; 1504 |
Artist: Raphael |
Source: [Wikimedia Commons](#) |
License: Public
Domain

The shift away from the power and authority of the church between the Medieval period and the Renaissance period not only is evident in music but is also found in the visual arts. Artists and authors of the Renaissance became interested in classical mythology and literature. Artists created sculptures of the entire human body, demonstrating a direct lineage from ancient Greek culture to the Renaissance. In the Middle Ages, such depictions of the nude body were thought to be objects of shame or in need of cover. Artists of the Middle Ages were more focused on religious symbolism than the lifelike representation created in the Renaissance era. Medieval artists perceived the canvas as a flat medium/surface on which subjects are shown very two dimensionally. Painters of the Renaissance were more interested in portraying real-life imagery in three dimensions on their canvas. See the evolution of the Virgin Mary from the Medieval period to the Renaissance period in Figures 6.4, 6.5, and 6.6 above. You can see the shift from the religious symbolism to the realistic depiction of the human body features.

[Raphael](#) and [Leonardo da Vinci](#) focused on portraying realism, utilizing linear perspective and creating illusions of space in their works. A geometric system was effectively used to create space and the illusion of depth. This shift from the religious symbolism to the real portrayal of the human is representative of the decline of the church in the arts as well as music. Music outside of the church, secular music, increased in importance.

The Protestant Reformation

In the Middle Ages, people were thought to be parts of a greater whole: members of a family, trade guild, nation, and church. At the beginning of the Renaissance, a shift in thought led people to think of themselves as individuals, sparked by Martin Luther's dissent against several areas and practices within the Catholic Church. On October 31, 1517, Luther challenged the Catholic Church by posting the [Ninety-Five Theses](#) on the doors of the Castle Church in Wittenberg, Germany. The post stated Luther's various beliefs and interpretations of biblical doctrine, which challenged the many practices of the Catholic Church in the early 1500s. Luther felt that educated/literate believers should be able to read the scriptures and become individual church entities themselves. With the invention of the Gutenberg Press, copies of the scriptures and hymns became available to the masses, which helped spread the Reformation. The empowerment of the common worshiper or middle class continued to fuel the loss of authority of the church and upper class.

Gutenberg Press

Few inventions have had the significance to modernization of the [Gutenberg Press](#). Up until the invention of the press, the earliest forms of books with edge bounding, similar to the type we have today, called codex books, were hand produced by monks. This process was quite slow, costly, and laborious, often taking months to produce smaller volumes and years to produce a copy of the Bible and hymn books of worship.

Gutenberg's invention of a much more efficient printing method made it possible to distribute a large amount of printed information at a much accelerated and labor-efficient pace. The printing press enabled the printing of hymn books for the middle class and further expanded the involvement of the middle class in their worship service—a key component in the reformation. Gutenberg's press served as a major engine for the distribution of knowledge and contributed to the Renaissance, scientific revolution, and Protestant Reformation.

Columbus's Voyage

Columbus's discovery of the New World in 1492 also contributed to the spirit and spread of the Humanist movement. The discovering of new land and the potential for colonization of new territory added to the sense of infallibility and ego of the human race. The human spirit of all social classes was invigorated. The invigoration of the middle class influenced the arts and the public's hunger for art and music for the vast middle-class population.

Music of the Renaissance

From Understanding Music: Past and Present

By N. Alan Clark, Thomas Heflin, and Elizabeth Kramer

Revision by Jonathan Kulp

Points to remember on music and society:

- [Petrucci](#) and the printing of music
- A growing merchant class singing/playing music at home

Renaissance composers used word painting to represent poetic images musically. The music represented the literal meaning of the words being sung. For example, an ascending melodic line would portray the text “ascension to heaven.” Or a series of rapid notes would represent running, or the notes would waver back and forth in pitch to represent waves.

Something to Think About

Word painting, or representing poetic images musically, is still done even today. Can you think of any music you may have heard that represents the sound of:

- Water falling, like rain?
- Sunshine or sunlight?
- The waves in an ocean?
- Birds singing?
- Singing up in pitch when singing about the sky or heaven?
- Singing low pitches very softly when singing about death or dying?

Art music in the Renaissance served three basic purposes:

- Worship in both the Catholic and burgeoning Protestant Churches
- Music for the entertainment and edification of the courts and courtly life
- Dance music

Playing musical instruments became a form of leisure and a significant, valued pastime for every educated person. Guests at social functions were expected to contribute to the evening’s festivities through instrumental

performance. Much of the secular music in the Renaissance was centered on courtly life. Vocal music ranged from chansons (or songs) about love and courtly intrigue to madrigals about nymphs, fairies, and, well, you name it. Both chansons and madrigals were often set for one or more voices with plucked-string accompaniment, such as by the lute, a gourd-shaped instrument with frets, a raised strip on the fingerboard, somewhat similar to the modern guitar.

A madrigal is a musical piece for several solo voices set to a short poem. They originated in Italy around 1520. Most madrigals were about love. Madrigals were published by the thousands and learned and performed by cultured aristocrats. Similar to the motet, a madrigal combines both homophonic and polyphonic textures. Unlike the motet, the madrigal is secular and utilizes unusual harmonies and word painting more often. Many of the refrains of these madrigals utilized the text “Fa La” to fill the gaps in the melody or to possibly cover risqué or illicit connotations. Sometimes madrigals are referred to as Renaissance Fa La songs.

A volume of translated Italian madrigals was published in London during the year of 1588, the year of the defeat of the Spanish Armada. This sudden public interest facilitated a surge of English madrigal writing as well as a spurt of other secular music writing and publication. This music boom lasted for thirty years and was as much a golden age of music as British literature was with Shakespeare and Queen Elizabeth I. The rebirth in both literature and music originated in Italy and migrated to England; the English madrigal became more humorous and lighter in England as compared to Italy.

Renaissance music was mostly polyphonic in texture. Comprehending a wide range of emotions, Renaissance music nevertheless portrayed all emotions in a balanced and moderate fashion. Extreme use of and contrasts in dynamics, rhythm, and tone color do not occur. The rhythms in Renaissance music tend to have a smooth, soft flow instead of a sharp, well-defined pulse of accents.

Composers enjoyed imitating sounds of nature and sound effects in their compositions. The Renaissance period became known as the golden age of *a cappella* choral music because choral music did not require an instrumental accompaniment.

Instrumental music in the Renaissance remained largely relegated to social purposes such as dancing, but a few notable virtuosos of the time, including the English lutenist and singer John Dowland, composed and performed music for Queen Elizabeth I, among others.

Dowland was a lutenist in 1598 in the court of Christian IV and later in 1612 in the court of King James I. He is known for composing one of the best songs of the Renaissance period, *Flow, My Teares*. This imitative piece demonstrates the melancholy humor of the time period.

Audio Ex. 6.1 John Dowland's *Flow My Tears*



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://louis.pressbooks.pub/musicappreciation/?p=1059#audio-1059-1>

Video 6.1: Listen to Dowland's *Flow, My Teares*, Valeria Mignaco, soprano; Alfonso Marin, lute



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://louis.pressbooks.pub/musicappreciation/?p=1059#oembed-1>

The instruments of the Renaissance era were quite diverse. Local availability of raw materials for the manufacture of the instrument often determined its assembly and accessibility to the public. A Renaissance consort is a group of Renaissance instrumentalists playing together. A whole consort is an ensemble performing with instruments from the same family. A broken consort is an ensemble composed of instruments from more than one family. For more information, visit the Iowa State Musica Antiqua ensemble's [A Guide to Medieval and Renaissance Instruments](#).

An example of instrumental music by Michael Praetorius, “Three Dances from Terpsichore”:

Audio Ex. 6.2 Three Dances from Terpsichore



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://louis.pressbooks.pub/musicappreciation/?p=1059#audio-1059-2>

Style Overview

| Medieval Music | Renaissance Music |
|--|---|
| Mainly monophony | Mainly polyphony (much is imitative polyphony/overlapped repetition—please see music score below) |
| Majority of the music's rhythm comes from the text | Majority of the music's rhythm is indicated by musical notation |
| Use of perfect intervals such as fourths, fifths, and octaves for cadences | Growing use of thirds and triads |
| Most music comes from the courts or church | Music–text relationships increasingly important with the use of word painting |
| Music instruction predominantly restricted to the church and patron's courts | Growing merchant class increasingly acquires musical skills |
| | Invention of music publishing |

Worship Music

During the Renaissance from 1442 to 1483, church choir membership increased dramatically in size. The incorporation of entire male ensembles and choirs singing in parts during the Renaissance is one major difference from the Middle Ages' polyphonic church music, which was usually sung by soloists. As the Renaissance progressed, the church remained an important supporter of music, although musical activity gradually shifted to secular support. Royalty and the wealthy of the courts seeking after and competing for the finest composers replaced what was originally church supported. The motet and the mass are the two main forms of sacred choral music of the Renaissance.

Motet

The motet, a sacred Latin-text polyphonic choral work, is not taken from the ordinary of the mass. A contemporary of Leonardo da Vinci and Christopher Columbus, Josquin des Prez was a master of Renaissance choral music. Originally from the region that is today's Belgium, Josquin spent much of his time serving in chapels throughout Italy and partly in Rome for the papal choir. Later, he worked for Louis XII of France and held several church music directorships in his native land. During his career, he published masses, motets, and secular vocal pieces and was highly respected by his contemporaries.

Josquin's "Ave Maria ... Virgo Serena" ("Hail, Mary ... Serene Virgin") ca. 1485 is an outstanding Renaissance choral work. A four-part (Soprano, Alto, Tenor, Bass) Latin prayer, the piece weaves one, two, three, and four voices at different times in polyphonic texture.

The image shows the opening lines of Josquin Des Prez's Ave Maria, a four-part setting. The score is written for four voices: Superius (Soprano), Altus (Alto), Tenor, and Bassus. The lyrics are 'A - ve Ma - ri - a, Gra - ti - a'. The Superius part begins with a five-measure rest, followed by the melody. The other parts enter at different times, creating a polyphonic texture. The Superius part has a five-measure rest at the beginning, followed by the melody. The Altus part enters with a four-measure rest, followed by the melody. The Tenor part enters with a four-measure rest, followed by the melody. The Bassus part enters with a four-measure rest, followed by the melody.

Figure 6.7:
Opening Lines of
Ave Maria |
Author: Josquin
Des Prez | Source:
Wikimedia
Commons |
License: Public
Domain

Video 6.2: Josquin Des Prez, Ave Maria



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://louis.pressbooks.pub/musicappreciation/?p=1059#oembed-2>

Audio Ex. 6.3: Ave Maria by Josquin des Prez.mp3 344 KB



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://louis.pressbooks.pub/musicappreciation/?p=1059#audio-1059-3>

Listening Guide

Listen to Josquin’s “Áve Maria” on YouTube, performed by Westminster Choir, Joe Miller, dir.

- Composer: Josquin des Prez
- Composition: Ava Maria . . . Virgo Serena
- Date: ca. 1485, possibly Josquin’s earliest dated work
- Genre: Motet
- Form: Through-composed in sections
- Translation: Available at [Unam Ecclesiam](#)
- Performing forces: Four-part choir
- What we want you to remember about this composition:
 - The piece is revolutionary in how it presented the imitative weaving of melodic lines in polyphony. Each voice imitates or echoes the high voice (soprano).
- Other things to listen for:
 - After the initial introduction to Mary, each verse serves as a tribute to the major events of Mary’s life—her conception, the nativity, annunciation, purification, and assumption. See above translation and listening guide.

Music of Catholicism

In the sixteenth century, Italian composers excelled with works comparable to the mastery of Josquin des Prez and his other contemporaries. One of the most important Italian Renaissance composers was Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina (ca. 1525–1594). Devoting his career to the music of the Catholic Church, Palestrina served as music director at St. Peter’s Cathedral and composed 450 sacred works and 104 masses. His influence in music history is best understood with a brief background of the Counter-Reformation.

Protestant reformists like Martin Luther and others sought to correct malpractices and abuses within the structure of the Catholic Church. The Reformation began with Martin Luther and spread to two more main branches: the [Calvinist](#) and [the Church of England](#). The Protestant reformists challenged many practices that benefited only the church itself and did not appear to serve the lay members (parishioners). A movement occurred within the church to counter the Protestant Reformation and preserve the original Catholic Church.

The preservation movement or “Counter-Reformation” against the Protestant reform led to the development of the [Jesuit order](#) (1540) and the later assembling of the [Council of Trent](#) (1545–1563), which considered issues of the church’s authority and organizational structure. The Council of Trent also demanded simplicity in music in order that the words might be heard clearly.

The Council of Trent discussed and studied the many issues facing the Catholic Church, including the church’s music. The papal leadership felt that the music had gotten so embellished and artistic that it had lost its purity and original meaning. It was neither easily sung nor were its words (still in Latin) understood. Many accused the types of music in the church of being theatrical and more entertaining rather than a way of worship (something that is still debated in many churches today). The Council of Trent felt melodies were secular, were too ornamental, and even took dance music as their origin. The advanced weaving of polyphonic lines could not be understood, thereby detracting from their original intent of worship with sacred text. The Council of Trent wanted a paradigm shift of religious sacred music back toward monophonic Gregorian chant. The Council of Trent finally decreed that church music should be composed to inspire religious contemplation and not just give empty pleasure to the ear of the worshiper.

Renaissance composer Palestrina heeded the recommendations from the Council of Trent and composed one of the period’s most famous works, “Missa Papae Marcelli” (Pope Marcellus Mass). Palestrina’s restraint and serenity reflect the recommendations of the Council of Trent. The text, though quite polyphonic, is easily understood. The movement of the voices does not distract from the sacred meaning of the text. Through history, Palestrina’s works have been the standard for their calmness and quality.

Listening Guide

Listen to the “Kyrie” from Palestrina’s Pope Marcellus Mass on YouTube, performed by The Sixteen, Harry Christophers.

Video 6.3



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://louis.pressbooks.pub/musicappreciation/?p=1059#oembed-3>

- Composer: Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina (1525–1594)
- Composition: “Missa Papae Marcelli” (Pope Marcellus Mass)—1. Kyrie
- Date: ca. 1562
- Genre: Choral, Kyrie of Mass
- Form: Through-composed (without repetition in the form of verses, stanzas, or strophes) in sections
- Nature of text:

- Greek text: Kyrie eleison, Christe eleison, Kyrie eleison
- English translation: Lord have mercy, Christ have mercy, Lord have mercy
- Performing forces: Unknown vocal ensemble
- What we want you to remember about this composition:
 - Listen to the polyphony and how the voices move predominantly stepwise after a leap upward. After the initial voice begins the piece, the other voices enter, imitating the initial melody, and then continue to weave the voices as more enter. Palestrina's mass would come to represent proper counterpoint/polyphony and become the standard for years to come. Even though the voices overlap in polyphony, the text is easily understood.

G.P. da Palestrina (1525-1594)

Soprano Ky - ri - e e - - - le - i - son Ky - ri - e e - - -

Alto Ky - ri - e e - le - i - son Ky - ri - e e - - -

Tenor 1 Ky - ri - e e - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - -

Tenor 2 Ky - ri - e e - - - - le - i -

Bass 1 Ky - ri - e e - - - - le - i - son

Bass 2 Ky - ri - e e - - - -

Figure 6.8: First bars of Palestrina's Missa Papae Marcellus' Kyrie | Author: Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina | Source: [Wikimedia Commons](#) | License: [GNU General Public License](#)

Music of the Protestant Reformation

As a result of the Reformation, congregations began singing strophic hymns in German with stepwise melodies during their worship services. This practice enabled full participation of worshipers. Full participation of the congregations' members further empowered the individual church participant, thus contributing to the Renaissance's Humanist movement. Early Protestant hymns stripped away contrapuntal textures, utilized regular beat patterns, and set biblical texts in German.

Instead of a worship service being led by a limited number of clerics at the front of the church, Luther wanted the congregation to actively and fully participate, including in the singing of the service. Since these hymns were in German, members of the parish could sing and understand them. Luther, himself a composer, composed many hymns and chorales to be sung by the congregation during worship, many of which Johann

Sebastian Bach would make the melodic themes of his Chorale Preludes 125 years after the original hymns were written. These hymns are strophic (repeated verses as in poetry) with repeated melodies for the different verses. Many of these chorales utilize syncopated rhythms to clarify the text and its flow (rhythms). Luther's hymn "A Mighty Fortress" is a good example of this practice. The chorales/hymns were usually in four parts and moved with homophonic texture (all parts changing notes in the same rhythm). The melodies of these four-part hymns/chorales used as the basis for many chorale preludes performed on organs prior to and after worship services are still used today. Here's an example of one such Chorale Prelude based on Luther's hymn:

Listening Guide

Listen to the Organ Chorale Prelude of "A Mighty Fortress Is Our God" performed by the Mormon Tabernacle Choir on YouTube

Video 6.4



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://louis.pressbooks.pub/musicappreciation/?p=1059#oembed-4>

- Composer: Martin Luther
- Composition: "A Mighty Fortress Is Our God" (also known as the "Battle Hymn of the Reformation")
- Date: 1529
- Genre: Four-part homophonic church anthem. This piece was written to be sung by the lay church membership instead of just by the church leaders as was practiced prior to the Reformation.
- Form: Four-part Chorale, Strophic
- Nature of text (topic, lyrics, translations): Originally in German so it could be sung by all church attendees
- Performing forces: Congregation (this recording is the Mormon Tabernacle Choir)
- Things to listen for: Stepwise melody, syncopated rhythms centered around text

Translation: Translated from original German to English by Frederic H. Hedge in 1853.

A mighty fortress is our God, a bulwark never failing;
 Our helper He, amid the flood of mortal ills prevailing;
 For still our ancient foe doth seek to work us woe;
 His craft and power are great, and, armed with cruel hate,
 On earth is not his equal.
 Did we in our own strength confide, our striving would be losing;
 Were not the right Man on our side, the Man of God's own choosing:

Dost ask who that may be? Christ Jesus, it is He;
 Lord Sabaoth, His Name, from age to age the same,
 And He must win the battle.
 And though this world, with devils filled, should threaten to undo us,
 We will not fear, for God hath willed His truth to triumph through us:
 The Prince of Darkness grim, we tremble not for him;
 His rage we can endure, for lo, his doom is sure,
 One little word shall fell him.
 That word above all earthly powers, no thanks to them, abideth;
 The Spirit and the gifts are ours through Him Who with us sideth:
 Let goods and kindred go, this mortal life also;
 The body they may kill: God's truth abideth still,
 His kingdom is forever.

Video 6.5: A PBS Luther documentary: Watch PBS documentary on [Martin Luther](#) on YouTube

The Anthem

Composer [William Byrd](#) (1543–1623) became very distinguished from many of his contemporary composers because of his utilization of many different compositional tools that he used in his music. His works represent several musical personalities instead of one single style. As his career progressed, Byrd became more interested and involved in Catholicism. The influence of Catholicism through the use of biblical text and religious styles increasingly permeated his music. The mandates established and requirements imposed by the Council of Trent placed a serious stumbling block in the path of the development of church music compositional techniques after the Reformation. Several denominations had to adapt to the mandates required by the Council of Trent. The music in the Catholic Church experienced relatively little change as the result of the reformation. This lack of change was the result of composers such as Byrd who remained loyal to the religion and their refusal to change their “traditional Catholic” style of composing.

In Byrd's Anglican [Anthem](#), “Sing Joyfully Unto God,” the opening phrase of the text is set with a single voice on each part. This technique is very similar to the Catholic Church settings of chant incipits. This full anthem by Byrd is much more polyphonic in nature than that of verse anthems. It also borrows heavily from both madrigal and motet styles, though modified for the liturgy. “Sing Joyfully Unto God” is one of the most thoroughly motet-like of the many Byrd anthems. Within the anthem there is a new point of imitation for each new phrase of text. Byrd extensively uses the text depictions to creatively illustrate the music's meaning. Below is an example of how Byrd's “Sing Joyfully Unto God” emphasizes the trumpet call of the text. All voices are singing together to depict the fullness of a trumpet fanfare, thickening the texture to illustrate the musical concept. This section begins with homophony, but polyphony is employed throughout the work. Byrd uses this technique primarily for a structural contrast device.

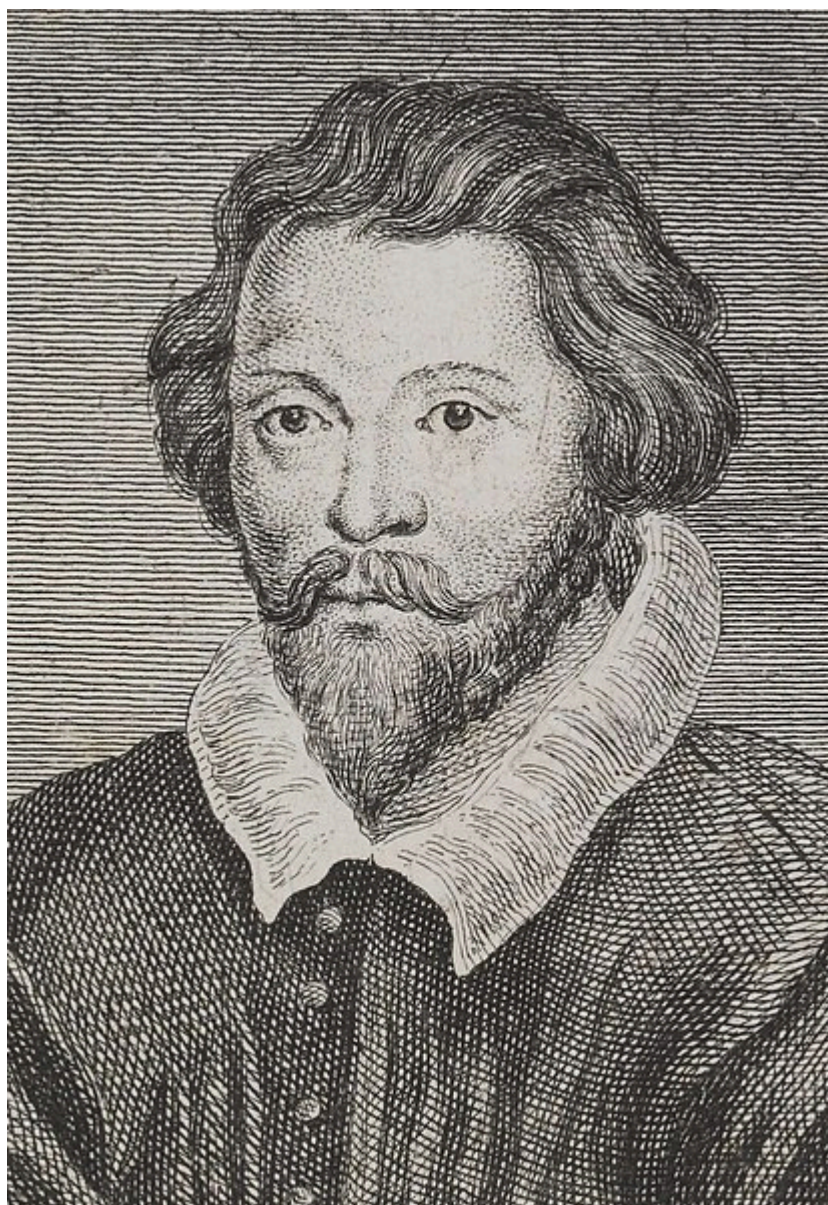


Figure 6.9: William Byrd | Author: Gerard van der Gucht | Source: [Wikimedia Commons](#) | License: Public Domain

The use of imitation as a structural tool is maintained primarily within full anthems. Byrd also uses a technique called pairing of voices, which was highly popular within the Renaissance period (Mitchel).

Listening Guide

Listen to *Sing Joyfully Unto God* performed by the University of Wisconsin, Eau Claire Concert Choir on YouTube

Video 6.6

—



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://louis.pressbooks.pub/musicappreciation/?p=1059#oembed-5>

- Composer: William Byrd
- Composition: *Sing Joyfully Unto God*
- Date: ca. 1580–1590
- Genre: Choral (Anthem)
- Form: Through-composed
- Nature of text: SSAATB
 - Sing joyfully to God our strength;
sing loud unto the God of Jacob!
Take the song, bring forth the timbrel,
the pleasant harp, and the viol.
Blow the trumpet in the New Moon,
even in the time appointed,
and at our feast day.
For this is a statute for Israel,
and a law of the God of Jacob.
- Performing forces: Six-part choir (SSAATB)
- What we want you to remember about this composition:
- This is very much a motet-like church anthem. It sounds very much like a mass, but the text does not come from any of the five sections of the mass. The work incorporated many of the polyphony techniques used in the mass. Listen to how the six voices interweave.
- Significant points: One of the most popular pieces from the time. The Psalm 81 text is set in English. Scored in SSAATB (two sopranos, two altos, one tenor, and one bass). Imitative polyphony, a capella in English, some word painting.

Secular Music—Entertainment Music of the Renaissance

Royalty sought the finest of the composers to employ for entertainment. A single court, or royal family, might employ as many as ten to sixty musicians, singers, and instrumentalists. In Italy, talented women vocalists began to serve as soloists in the courts. Secular pieces for the entertainment of nobility and sacred pieces for the chapel were composed by the court music directors. Musicians were often transported from one castle to another to entertain the court's patron, traveling in their patron's entourage.

The Renaissance town musicians performed for civic functions, weddings, socials, and religious ceremonies/services. Due to the market—that is, the supply and demand of the expanding Renaissance society—musicians experience higher status and pay unlike ever before. Flanders, the Low Countries of the Netherlands, Belgium, and northern France became a source of musicians who filled many important music positions in Italy. As in the previous era, vocal music maintained its important status over instrumental music.

Germany, England, and Spain also experienced an energetic musical expansion. Secular vocal music became increasingly popular during the Renaissance. In Europe, music was set to poems from several languages, including English, French, Dutch, German, and Spanish. The invention of the printing press led to the publication of thousands of collections of songs that were never before available. One instrument or small groups of instruments were used to accompany solo voices or groups of solo voices.

Thomas Weelkes

Thomas Weelkes, a church organist and composer, became one of the finest English madrigal composers. Thomas Weelkes’s “As Vesta Was Descending” serves as a good example of word painting with the melodic line following the meaning of the text in performance.

Video 6.7

Listening Guide

Watch and listen to “As Vesta Was Descending,” performed by the British vocal ensemble VOCES8, ending at 4:00. The second piece in this video, “Dessus le marché d’Arras,” by a French composer, also uses word painting to represent chatter in a marketplace.



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://louis.pressbooks.pub/musicappreciation/?p=1059#oembed-6>

- Composer: Thomas Weelkes
- Composition: “As Vesta Was from Latmos Hill Descending”
- Date: 1601
- Genre: Madrigal
- Form: Through-composed
- Performing forces: Choral ensemble
- One thing to remember about this composition: This composition has many examples of “word painting,” where the text and melodic line work together. For example, when the text refers to ascending a hill, the melody ascends (music notation 1, below), and when it refers to descending a hill, so does the

melody, illustrated in notation 2.



Figure 6.10:
Examples of “word
painting” in
Weelkes’s “As
Vesta Was from
Latmos Hill
Descending.” |
Author: Diana
Thompson |
Source: [ChoralWiki](#)
| License: [CPDL](#)

Audio Ex. 6.4: “As Vesta was from Latmos Hill Descending”—Weelkes.mp3 942 KB



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://louis.pressbooks.pub/musicappreciation/?p=1059#audio-1059-4>

Here is another example of an English madrigal that also has many examples of word painting by John Farmer, “Fair Phyllis.”

Audio Ex. 6.5: “Fair Phyllis” by John Farmer



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://louis.pressbooks.pub/musicappreciation/?p=1059#audio-1059-5>

Renaissance Dance Music

With the rebirth of the Renaissance came a resurgence of the popularity of dance. This resurgence led to instrumental dance music becoming the most widespread genre for instrumental music. Detailed instruction books for dance also included step orders and sequences that followed the musical accompaniment.

The first dances started, similar to today’s square dances, soon evolved into more elaborate and unique forms of expression. Examples of three types of Renaissance dances include the [pavane](#), [galliard](#), and [jig](#).

The pavane is a more solemn, stately dance in a duple meter (in twos). Its participants dance and move

around with prearranged stopping and starting places with the music. Pavanes are more formal and used in such settings.

The galliard is usually paired with a pavane. The galliard is in triple meter (in threes) and provides an alternative to the rhythms of the pavane. The jig is a folk dance or its tune in an animated meter. It was originally developed in the 1500s in England. The instrumental jig was a popular dance number. Jigs were regularly performed in Elizabethan theaters after the main play. William Kemp—actor, song and dance performer, and comedian—is immortalized for having created comic roles in Shakespeare. He accompanied his jig performances with pipe and tabor and snare drum. Kemp’s jig started a unique phrasing/cadence system that carried well past the Renaissance period.

Listening Guide

Watch Kemp’s Jig on YouTube performed by Valery Sauvage, YouTube user Luthval

Video 6.8



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://louis.pressbooks.pub/musicappreciation/?p=1059#oembed-7>

- Composer: Unknown but was performed by William Kempe in the late 1500s. The piece became known as Kemp’s Jig.
- Composition: “Kemp’s Jig”
- Date: late 1500s
- Genre: Jig (dance piece instrumental)
- Form: abb (repeated in this recording). Most dances of the period had a rhythmic and harmony pause or repose (cadence) every four or eight measures to mark a musical or dancing phrase.
- Performing forces: Lute solo instrumental piece
- What we want you to remember about this composition:
 - A jig is a light folk dance. It is a dance piece of music that can stand alone when played as an instrumental player. This new shift in instrumental music from strictly accompaniment to stand-alone music performances begins a major advance for instrumental music.
 - Will Kemp was a dancer and actor. He won a bet that he could dance from London to Norwich (80 miles). “Kemp’s Jig” was written to celebrate the event.
- One thing to remember about this composition:
 - This piece of dance music is evolving from just a predictable dance accompaniment to a central piece of instrumental music. Such alterations of dance music for the sake of the music itself are

referred to as the stylization of dance music that has carried on through the centuries.

Visit [Renaissance Music Timeline](#) for more.

Chapter Summary

The Renaissance period was truly a time of great discovery in science, music, society, and the visual arts. The reemergence of and renewed interest in Greek and Roman history/culture are still current in today's modern society. Performing music outside of the church in courts and the public really began to thrive in the Renaissance and continues today in the music industry. Many of the master works, both sacred and secular, from the Renaissance are still appreciated and continue to be the standard for today's music industry. Songs of love, similar to Renaissance chansons, are still composed and performed today. The beauty of Renaissance music, as well as the other arts, is reintroduced and appreciated in modern-day theater performances and visually in museums. The results of the Protestant Reformation are still felt today, and the struggles between contemporary and traditional church worship continue very much as they did during the Renaissance. As we continue our reading and study of music through the Baroque period, try to recall the changes and trends of the Medieval and Renaissance eras and how they thread their way through history to today. Music and the arts do not just occur; they evolve and also remain the same.

Test Your Understanding



An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:

<https://louis.pressbooks.pub/musicappreciation/?p=1059#h5p-8>

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Mitchel, Shelley. *William Byrd: Covert Catholic Values with Anglican Anthems Comparison of Style to Catholic Gradualia*. Indiana State University, 2008. <https://scholars.indstate.edu/handle/10484/1072> (may want to include a link from the in-text citation.)

Original Textbook Source:

Clark, N. Alan; Heflin, Thomas; Kluball, Jeffrey; and Kramer, Elizabeth, [“Understanding Music: Past and Present”](#) (2015). [Galileo: Fine Arts Open Textbooks](#).

Revised and Corrected Edition

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PART III

HISTORY OF WESTERN MUSIC AFTER 1600

7.

MUSIC OF THE BAROQUE PERIOD

Learning Objectives

- Discuss the historical and cultural contexts of the Baroque period.
- Identify musical performing forces (voices, instruments, and ensembles), styles, composers, and genres of the Baroque.
- Describe ways in which music and other influences interact in music of the Baroque period.
- Identify selected music of the Baroque, making critical judgments about its style and use.

From *Understanding Music: Past and Present*

By Jeff Kluball and Elizabeth Kramer

Edited by Steven Edwards and Bonnie Le

Introduction and Historical Context

This brief introduction to the Baroque period is intended to provide a short summary of the music and context of the Baroque era, which lasted from about 1600 to 1750.

The term “Baroque” has an interesting and disputed past. Baroque ultimately is thought to have derived from the Italian word *barocco*, referring to a contorted idea, obscure thought, or anything different, out of the ordinary, or strange. Another possible origin is from the Portuguese term *barrocco*, in Spanish *barrueco*. Jewelers still use this term today to describe irregular or imperfectly shaped pearls: a baroque pearl. The Baroque period is a time of extremes resulting from events stemming back to the Renaissance. The conflict between the Reformation and Counter-Reformation and the influence of Greek/Roman culture as opposed to medieval roots are present throughout the Baroque era.

In art circles, the term baroque came to be used to describe the bizarre, irregular, or grotesque or anything

that departed from the regular or expected. This definition was adhered to until 1888, when Heinrich Wölfflin coined the word as a stylistic title or designation. The baroque title was then used to describe the style of the era. The term “rococo” is sometimes used to describe art from the end of the Baroque period, from the mid to late eighteenth century. The rococo took the extremes of baroque architecture and design to new heights with ornate design work and gold gilding. Historical events and advances in science influenced music and the other arts tremendously. It is not possible to isolate the trends of music during this period without briefly looking into what was happening at the time in society.

Baroque Timeline



An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:

<https://louis.pressbooks.pub/musicappreciation/?p=1073#h5p-13>

- 1597: Giovanni Gabrieli writes his *Sacrae Symphoniae*
- 1607: Monteverdi performs *Orfeo* in Mantua, Italy
- 1618-1648: Thirty Years War
- 1623: Galileo Galilei publishes *The Assayer*
- 1642-1651: English Civil War
- 1643-1715: Reign of Louis XIV in France
- 1649: Descartes publishes *Passions of the Soul*
- 1678: Vivaldi born in Venice, Italy
- 1685: Handel and Bach born in Germany
- 1687: Isaac Newton publishes his *Principia*
- 1740-1786: Reign of Frederick the Great of Prussia
- 1741: Handel's *Messiah* performed in Dublin, Ireland
- 1750: J. S. Bach dies

Music in the Baroque Period

Music Comparison Overview

| Renaissance Music | Baroque Music |
|--|--|
| Much music with rhythms indicated by musical notation | Meter more important than before |
| Mostly polyphony (much is imitative polyphony) | Use of polyphony continues |
| Growing use of thirds and triads | Rise of homophony; rise of instrumental music, including the violin family |
| Music–text relationships increasingly important with word painting | New genres such as opera, oratorio, concerto, cantata, and fugue |
| Invention of music publishing | Emergence of program music |
| Growing merchant class increasingly acquires musical skills | First notation of dynamics and use of terraced dynamics |
| | Continued presence of music at church and court |
| | Continued increase of music among merchant classes |

Science

Sir Isaac Newton and his studies made a great impact on Enlightenment ideology. In addition to creating calculus, a discipline of mathematics still practiced today, he studied and published works on universal gravity and the three laws of motion. His studies supported heliocentrism, the model of the solar system's planets and their orbits with the sun. Heliocentrism invalidated several religious and traditional beliefs.

Johannes Kepler (b. 1571-1630), a German astronomer, similarly re-evaluated the Copernican theory that the planets move in a circular motion in their orbits around the sun. In utilizing Brahe's records, Kepler concluded that the planets move in ellipses in their orbits around the sun. He was the first to propose elliptical orbits in the solar system.

William Harvey conducted extensive anatomical research concerning the circulatory system. He studied the veins and arteries of the human arm and also concluded that the blood vessel system is an overall circle returning back to the heart while passing through the lungs.

Philosophy

René Descartes (1595-1650) was a famous philosopher, mathematician, and scientist from France. His opinions on the relationship of the body and mind as well as certainty and knowledge have been very

influential. He laid the foundation for an analysis and classification of human emotions at a time when more and more writers were noting the powers of music to evoke emotional responses in their listeners.

John Locke (1632-1704) is regarded as the founder of the Enlightenment movement in philosophy. Locke is believed to have originated the school of thought known as British Empiricism, which laid the philosophical foundation for the modern idea of limited liberal government. Locke believed each person has “natural rights,” that government has obligations to its citizens, that government has very limited rights over its citizens, and that in certain circumstances, it can be overthrown by its citizens.

Art

Gian Lorenzo Bernini (1598-1680) was a famous Italian sculptor of the Baroque era. He is credited with establishing the Baroque sculpture style. He was also a well-known architect and worked most of his career in Rome. Although he enjoyed the patronage of the cardinals and popes, he challenged artistic traditions.

His art reflects a certain sense of drama, action, and sometimes playfulness. Compare, for instance, his sculpture of David (1623-1624) with the David sculpture (1501-1504) of Renaissance artist Michelangelo.

Where Michelangelo's David appears calmly lost in contemplation, Bernini's David is in the act of flinging his slingshot, jaw set and muscles tensed. We see similar psychological intensity and drama in music of the Baroque period.



Figure 7.1:
Michelangelo's
rendition of David
preparing to fight
Goliath; 1501–1504
| Photographer:
[Jörg Bittner Unna](#) |
Source: [Wikimedia
Commons](#) |
License: [CC BY 3.0](#)



Figure 7.2: Bernini's David | Collection: Galleria Borghese | Source: [Wikimedia Commons](#) | License: [CC BY-SA 4.0](#)

Elaborate formal Baroque gardens indicating man's control over nature were used to demonstrate the owner's power and prestige. France was a major contributor to the development of these highly ornamental gardens. These gardens became associated with autocratic government. The designs of these elaborate gardens were from "Cartesian" geometry (science and mathematics) while drawing the landscape into the composition. Look at the Leonard Knyff engraving of the Hampton Court Baroque garden.

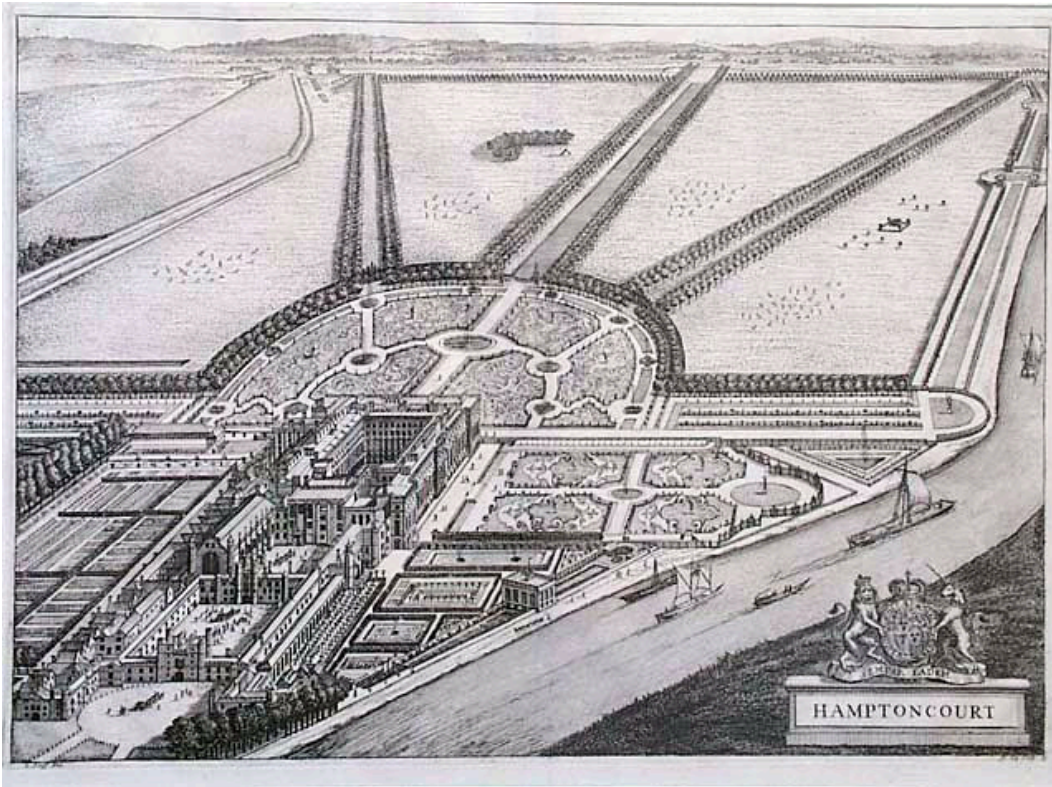


Figure 7.3:
Hampton Court
Gardens (1708) |
Artist: Leonard
Knyff | Source:
[Wikimedia
Commons](#) |
License: Public
Domain

Literature

Literature during the Baroque period often took a dramatic turn. William Shakespeare (1564-1616), playwright and poet, wrote the play *Hamlet* and many other great classics still enjoyed by millions of readers and audiences today. Music composers have long used Shakespeare's writing for text in their compositions; for example, his *Hamlet* was used as the basis for an opera. Shakespeare's writings depict an enormous range of human life, including jealousy, love, hate, drama, humor, peace, intrigue, and war, as well as all social classes—matter that provides great cultural entertainment.

Jean Racine (1639-1699) wrote tragedies in the neoclassic (anti-Baroque) and Jansenism literary movements. Many works of the classical era utilized rather twisted, complicated plots with simple psychology. Racine's neoclassic writing did just the opposite, incorporating simple and easy-to-understand plots with challenging uses of psychology. Racine is often grouped with Corneille, known for developing the classic tragedy form. Racine's dramas portray his characters as human with internal trials and conflicting emotions. His notable works include *Andromaque*, *Phèdre*, and *Athalie*.

Miguel de Cervantes (1547-1616) was a Spanish playwright, poet, and novelist. *Don Quixote* is his most famous work and is often considered the first modern novel from Europe. It was published in 1605 and portrays the traditions of Sevilla, Spain. Legend has it that the early portions of *Don Quixote* were written while the author was in jail for stealing.

Other Baroque-era authors include John Milton (1608-1674), author of the epic *Paradise Lost*; John Dryden (1631-1700), dramatist and poet who wrote several semi-operatic works incorporating music by

contemporary composer Henry Purcell; Jonathan Swift (1667-1745), an Anglo-Irish essayist and proto-novelist, poet, and cleric who authored *Gulliver's Travels*; and Henry Fielding (b. 1707-1754) a proto-novelist and dramatist who authored *Tom Jones*.

We will find a similar emphasis on drama as we study Baroque music, especially in the emergence of genres such as opera and oratorio.

Politics

In politics, three changes that started in the Renaissance became defining forces in the Baroque period. First, nation-states (like France and England) developed into major world powers ruled by absolutist monarchs. These absolute monarchs were kings and queens whose authority, it was believed, was divinely bestowed upon them. They amassed great power and wealth, which they often displayed through their patronage of music and the other arts. With the rise of this system of absolutism, the state increasingly challenged the power base of the church. In the case of Germany, these nation-states were smaller and often unstable. Second, Protestantism spread throughout northern Europe. Places such as England, where Georg Frideric Handel spent most of his adult life, and central Germany, where Johann Sebastian Bach spent all of his life, were Protestant strongholds. J. S. Bach wrote a great deal of music for the Lutheran Church. Third, the middle class continued to grow in social and economic power with the emergence of printing and textile industries and open trade routes with the New World (largely propelled by the thriving slave trade of the time).

Exploration and Colonialism

The 1600s saw the first era of the colonization of America. France and England were the most active in the colonization of America. The quest for power in Europe, wealth/economics and religious reasons energized the colonial progression. Hudson explored the later-named Hudson River (1609); Pilgrims landed at Plymouth (1620); Manhattan was bought from Native Americans (1626); Boston was founded (1630); and Harvard University was founded (1636).

General Trends of Baroque Music

The characteristics highlighted in the chart above give Baroque music its unique sound and appear in the music of Monteverdi, Pachelbel, Bach, and others.

To elaborate:

1. Instrumental solo music was composed with a major emphasis on violin and keyboard compositions.
2. Definite and regular rhythms in the form of meter and “motor rhythm” (the constant subdivision of the beat) appear in most music. Bar lines become more prominent.

3. The use of polyphony continues with more elaborate techniques of imitative polyphony used in the music of Handel and Bach.
4. Homophonic (melody plus accompaniment) textures emerge, including the use of basso continuo (a continuous bass line over which chords were built used to accompany a melodic line).
5. Homophonic textures lead to increased use of major and minor keys and chord progressions (see chapter 1).
6. The accompaniment of melodic lines in homophonic textures is provided by the continuo section: a sort of improvised “rhythm section” that features lutes, viola da gambas, cellos, and harpsichords. Continuo sections provide the basso continuo (continuous bass line) and are used in Baroque opera, concerti, and chamber music.
7. Instrumental music featuring the violin family—such as suites, sonatas, and concertos emerge and grow prominent.
8. These compositions are longer, often with multiple movements that use defined forms having multiple sections, such as ritornello form and binary form.

Genres of the Baroque Period

Much great music was composed during the Baroque period, and many of the most famous composers of the day were extremely prolific. To approach this music, we’ll break the historical era into the early period (the first seventy-five years or so) and the late period (from roughly 1675 to 1750). Both periods contain vocal music and instrumental music.

The main genres of the early Baroque vocal music are madrigal, motet, and opera. The main genres of early Baroque instrumental music include the **canzona** (also known as the sonata) and suite. The main genres of late Baroque instrumental music are the concerto, fugue, and suite. The main genres of late Baroque vocal music are **Italian opera seria**, **oratorio**, and the church **cantata** (which was rooted in the Lutheran chorale, already discussed in the chapter on the Renaissance, “Music of the Protestant Reformation”). Many of these genres will be discussed later in the chapter.

Solo music of the Baroque era was composed for all the different types of instruments but with a major emphasis on violin and keyboard. The common term for a solo instrumental work is a sonata. Please note that the non-keyboard solo instrument is usually accompanied by a keyboard, such as the organ, harpsichord, or clavichord.

Small ensembles are basically named in regard to the number of performers in each (trio = three performers, etc.). The most common and popular small ensemble during the Baroque period was the trio sonata. These trios feature two melody instruments (usually violins) accompanied by basso continuo (considered the third single member of the trio).

The large ensembles genre can be divided into two subcategories, orchestral and vocal. The concerto was the leading form of large ensemble orchestral music. Concerto featured two voices, that of the orchestra and that

of either a solo instrument or a small ensemble. Throughout the piece, the two voices would play together and independently, through conversation, imitation, and in contrast with one another. A concerto that pairs the orchestra with a small ensemble is called a **concerto grosso**, and a concert that pairs the orchestra with a solo instrument is called a **solo concerto**.

The two large vocal/choral genres for the Baroque period were **sacred works** and **opera**. Two forms of the sacred choral works include the **oratorio** and the **mass**. The oratorio is an opera without scenery or acting.

The **Mass** served as the core of the Catholic religious service and commemorates the Last Supper. **Opera** synthesizes theatrical performance and music. Opera cast members act and interact with each other. Types of vocal selections utilized in an opera include recitative and aria. Smaller ensembles (duets, trios, etc.) and choruses are used in opera productions.

| Oratorio | Opera Seria | Cantata |
|---|--|--|
| Similar to opera except no costumes or staging | Serious opera | A work for voices and instruments |
| A lot of choral numbers | Historical or mythological plots | Either sacred, resembling a short oratorio, or secular as a lyrical drama set to music |
| Typically on biblical topics | Lavish costumes and spectacular sets | Sacred cantata often involve church choirs and are not acted out |
| Vocal soloist performs in front of accompanying instruments | Showcased famous solo singers | Can include narration |
| Examples of biblical oratorios: Handel's Saul, Solomon, and Judas Maccabeus | All sung; no narration | Example: Bach's famous Reformation Cantata BWV 80: Ein feste Burg ist unser Got (A Mighty Fortress Is Our God) |
| Non-biblical examples: Handel's Hercules, Acis and Galatea, and The Triumph of Time and Truth | Acted and performed on stage | |
| | Examples: L'Ofeo, L'Arianna, The Fairy Queen (based on Shakespeare's Midsummer Night's Dream), and Ottone in Villa | |

Birth of Opera

The beginning of the Baroque period is in many ways synonymous with the birth of opera. Music drama had existed since the Middle Ages (and perhaps even earlier), but around 1600, noblemen increasingly sponsored experiments that combined singing, instrumental music, and drama in new ways. As we have seen in a previous section, Renaissance Humanism led to new interest in ancient Greece and Rome. Scholars as well as educated noblemen read descriptions of the emotional power of ancient dramas, such as those by Sophocles,

which began and ended with choruses. One particularly active group of scholars and aristocrats interested in the ancient world was the Florentine Camerata, so called because they met in the rooms (or *camerata*) of a nobleman in Florence, Italy. **The Florentine Camerata** were a group of musicians and scholars who “invented” opera while trying to recreate the spirit of Greek drama. This group, which included Vincenzo Galilei, father of Galileo Galilei, speculated that the reason for ancient drama’s being so moving was its having been entirely sung in a sort of declamatory style that was midway between speech and song. Although today we believe that actually only the choruses of ancient drama were sung, these circa 1600 beliefs led to collaborations with musicians and the development of opera. Basically, **opera** was sung secular dramas that features elaborate staging and costumes.

Less than impressed by the emotional impact of the polyphonic church music of the Renaissance, members of the Florentine Camerata argued that a simple melody supported by sparse accompaniment would be more moving. They identified a style that they called **recitative**, in which a single individual would sing a melody line that follows the inflections and rhythms of speech. The **recitative** was a type of singing speech that served as the dialogue of the opera. It was rhythmically free allowing the music to follow the text being sung to make it easy for the audience to understand the story being told. This individual would be accompanied by just one or two instruments: a keyboard instrument, such as a harpsichord or small organ, or a plucked string instrument, such as the lute. The accompaniment was called the **basso continuo**.

Basso continuo is a continuous bass line over which the harpsichord, organ, or lute added chords based on numbers or figures that appeared under the melody that functioned as the bass line. The **basso continuo** part performed by the keyboard and bass instrument (like a cello) placed emphasis on the bass line. It would become a defining feature of Baroque music. This system of indicating chords by numbers was called figured bass and allowed the instrumentalist more freedom in forming the chords than had every note of the chord been notated. This **figured bass** was a type of musical shorthand played by the basso continuo part. The flexible nature of basso continuo also underlined its supporting nature. The singer of the recitative was given license to speed up and slow down as the words and emotions of the text might direct, with the instrumental accompaniment following along. This method created a homophonic texture, which consists of one melody line with accompaniment, as you might recall from earlier chapters.

Composers of early opera combined recitatives with other musical numbers such as choruses, dances, arias, instrumental interludes, and the overture. The choruses in early Baroque opera were not unlike the late Renaissance madrigals that we studied earlier. Operatic dance numbers used the most popular dances of the day, such as pavaues and galliards. Instrumental interludes tended to be sectional—that is, having different sections that sometimes repeated, as we find in other instrumental music of the time. Operas began with an instrumental piece called the Overture.

Like recitatives, arias were homophonic compositions featuring a solo singer over accompaniment. Arias, however, were less improvisatory. The melodies sung in arias almost always conformed to a musical meter, such as duple or triple, and unfolded in phrases of similar lengths. As the century progressed, these melodies became

increasingly difficult or virtuosic. If the purpose of the recitative was to convey emotions through a simple melodic line, then the purpose of the aria was increasingly to impress the audience with the skills of the singer.

Opera was initially commissioned by Italian noblemen, often for important occasions such as marriages or births, and performed in the halls of their castles and palaces. By the mid to late seventeenth century, opera had spread not only to the courts of France, Germany, and England but also to the general public, with performances in public opera houses first in Italy and later elsewhere on the continent and in the British Isles. By the eighteenth century, opera would become as ubiquitous as movies are for us today. Most Baroque operas featured topics from the ancient world or mythology, in which humans struggled with fate and in which the heroic actions of nobles and mythological heroes were supplemented by the righteous judgments of the gods. Perhaps because of the cosmic reaches of its narratives, opera came to be called *opera seria*, or serious opera. Librettos, or the words of the opera, were to be of the highest literary quality and designed to be set to music. Italian remained the most common language of opera, and Italian opera was popular in England and Germany; the French were the first to perform operas in their native tongue.

Focus Composition: “Tu se morta” (“You are Dead”) from Monteverdi’s *Orfeo* (1607)

One of the very first operas was written by an Italian composer named Claudio Monteverdi (1567-1643; see Figure 7.4). For many years, Monteverdi worked for the Duke of Mantua in central Italy. There he wrote *Orfeo* (1607), an opera based on the mythological character of Orpheus from Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*. In many ways, Orpheus was an ideal character for early opera (and indeed many early opera composers set his story): he was a musician who could charm with the playing of his harp not only forest animals but also figures from the underworld, from the river-keeper Charon to the god of the underworld Pluto. Orpheus’s story is a tragedy. He and Eurydice have fallen in love and will be married. To celebrate, Eurydice and her female friends head to the countryside, where she is bitten by a snake and dies. Grieving but determined, Orpheus travels to the underworld to bring her back to the land of the living. Pluto grants his permission on one condition: Orpheus shall lead Eurydice out of the underworld without looking back. He is not able to do this (different versions give various causes), and the two are separated for all eternity.



Figure 7.4: Claudio Monteverdi, c1630
 | Artist: Bernardo Strozzi (1581-1644)
 | Source: [Wikimedia Commons](#) |
 License: Public Domain

One of the most famous recitatives of Monteverdi's opera is sung by Orpheus after he has just learned of the death of his beloved Eurydice. The words of his recitative move from expressing astonishment that his beloved Eurydice is dead to expressing his determination to retrieve her from the underworld. He uses poetic images referring to the stars and the great abyss before, in the end, bidding farewell to the earth, the sky, and the sun in preparation for his journey.

As recitative, Orpheus's musical line is flexible in its rhythms. Orpheus sings to the accompaniment of the basso continuo, here just a small organ and a long-necked Baroque lute called the theorbo, which follows his melodic line, pausing where he pauses and moving on where he does. Most of the chords played by the basso continuo are minor chords, emphasizing Orpheus's sadness. There are also incidents of word painting, the depiction of specific images from the text by the music.

Whether you end up liking "Tu se morta" or not, we hope that you can hear it as dramatic, as attempting to convey as vividly as possible Orpheus's deep sorrow. Not all the music of *Orfeo* is slow and sad like "Tu se morta." In this recitative, the new Baroque emphasis on music as expressive of emotions, especially tragic emotions such as sorrow on the death of a loved one, is very clear.

Video 7.1: "Tu Se Morta" ("You are dead") from *Orfeo*



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://louis.pressbooks.pub/musicappreciation/?p=1073#oembed-1>

Listening Guide

- Composer: Claudio Monteverdi
- Composition: “Tu Se Morta” from *Orfeo*
- Date: 1607
- Genre: Recitative followed by a short chorus
- Form: Through-composed
- Nature of text: Lyrics in Italian
- Performing forces: Solo vocalist and basso continuo (here organ and theorbo), followed by chorus accompanied by a small orchestra
- What we want you to remember about this composition:
 - It is from one of the first operas.
 - It is homophonic, accompanied by basso continuo.
 - It uses word painting to emphasize Orfeo’s sorrow.
- Other things to listen for:
 - Its melodic line is mostly conjunct, and the range is about an octave in range.
 - Most of its chords are minor and there are some dissonances.
 - Its notated rhythms follow the rhythms of the text and are sung flexibly within a basic duple meter.
 - It is sung in Italian like much Baroque opera.

| Timing | Performing Forces, Melody, and Texture | Text and Form |
|--------|--|--|
| 0:00 | Solo vocalist and basso continuo in homophonic texture; singer registers sadness and surprise through pauses and repetition of words such as “never to return” | “Tu se morta, se morta mia vita, e io respiro” And I breathe, you have left me. / “se’ da me par- tita per mai piu,” / You have left me forevermore, / “mai piu’ non tornare,” Never to return, |
| 0:52 | “No, No” (declaration to rescue Eurydice) intensified by being sung to high notes; melody descends to its lowest pitch on the word “abyss” | “ed io rimango-” and I remain- / “no, no, che se i versi alcuna cosa ponno,” No, no, if my verses have any power, / “n’andra sicuro a’ piu profondi abissi,” I will go confidently to the deepest abysses, |
| 1:11 | Descending pitches accompanied by dissonant chords when referring to the king of the shadows; melody ascends to high pitch for the word “stars” | “e, intenerito il cor del re de l’ombre,” And, having melted the heart of the king of shadows, / “meco trarotti a riverder le stelle,” Will bring you back to me to see the stars again, |
| 1:30 | Melody descends for the word “death” | “o se cia negherammi empio destino,” Or, if pitiless fate denies me this, / “rimarro teco in compagnia di morta.” I will remain with you in the company of death. |
| 1:53 | “Earth,” “sky,” and “sun” are set on ever higher pitches suggesting their experienced position from a human perspective | “Addio terra, addio cielo, e sole, addio;” Farewell earth, farewell sky, and sun, farewell. |
| 2:28 | Chorus & small orchestra responds; mostly homophonic texture with some polyphony; dissonance on the word “cruel.” | Oh cruel destiny, oh despicable stars, oh inexorable skies |

Lyrics:

Tu se’ morta, se morta, mia vita
 ed io respiro, tu se’ da me partita,
 se’ da me partita per mai piu,
 mai piu’ non tornare, ed io rimango-
 no, no, che se i versi alcuna cosa ponno,
 n’andra sicuro a’ piu profondi abissi,
 e, intenerito il cor del re de l’ombre,
 meco trarotti a riverder le stelle,
 o se cia negherammi empio destino,
 rimarro teco in compagnia di morta.
 Addio terra, addio cielo, e sole, addio

Translation:

You are dead, my darling, and I breathe?
 You have departed from me
 never to return, and I remain?
 No, that if my verses can do but one thing
 I will go confidently to the deepest abysses,

and having softened the heart of the king of shadows,
 I will bring you back with me to see the stars again.
 Or if impious fate were to deny me this
 I will remain with you in the company of death,
 farewell, earth; farewell, sky; and sun, farewell.

New Music for Instruments

The Baroque period saw an explosion in music written for instruments. Had you lived in the Middle Ages or Renaissance, you would have likely heard instrumental music, but much of it would have been either dance music or vocal music played by instruments. Around 1600, composers started writing more music specifically for musical instruments that might be played at a variety of occasions. One of the first composers to write for brass instruments was Giovanni Gabrieli (1554-1612). His compositions were played by ensembles having trumpets and sackbuts (the trombones of their day) as well as violins and an instrument called the cornet (which was something like a recorder with a brass mouthpiece). The early brass instruments, such as the trumpet and sackbut, as well as the early French horn, did not have any valves and were extremely difficult to play. Extreme mastery of the air column and embouchure (musculature around the mouth used to buzz the lips) were required to control the pitch of the instruments. Good Baroque trumpeters were highly sought after and in short supply. Often they were considered the aristocrats in the orchestra. Even in the wartime skirmishes of the Baroque era, trumpeters were treated as officers and given officer status when they became prisoners of war. Composers such as Bach, Vivaldi, Handel, and others selectively and carefully chose their desired instrumentation in order to achieve the exact tone colors, blend, and effects for each piece.

Giovanni Gabrieli was an innovative composer of the late Renaissance Venetian School. His masterful compositional technique carried over and established technique utilized during the Baroque era. Giovanni succeeded Andrea Gabrieli, his uncle, at Venice's St. Mark's Basilica as the organist following his uncle's death in 1586. Giovanni held the position until his death in 1612. Giovanni's works represent the peak of musical achievement for Venetian music.

Gabrieli continued and perfected the masterful traditional compositional technique known as **cori spezzati** (literally, "split choirs"). This technique was developed in the sixteenth century at St. Mark's, where composers would contrast different instrumentalists and groups of singers utilizing the effects of space in the performance venue—that is, the church. Different sub-ensembles would be placed in different areas of the sanctuary. One sub-ensemble would play the "call," and another would give the "response." This musical back-and-forth is called antiphonal performance and creates a stereophonic sound between the two ensembles. Indeed, this placement of performers and the specific writing of the parts created the first type of stereo sound and three-dimensional listening experiences for parishioners in the congregation. Many of Gabrieli's works were written for double choirs and double brass ensembles to perform simultaneously. See the interior of St. Mark's Basilica with chambers or **pergolo balconies** on the left and right in Figure 7.5 below.

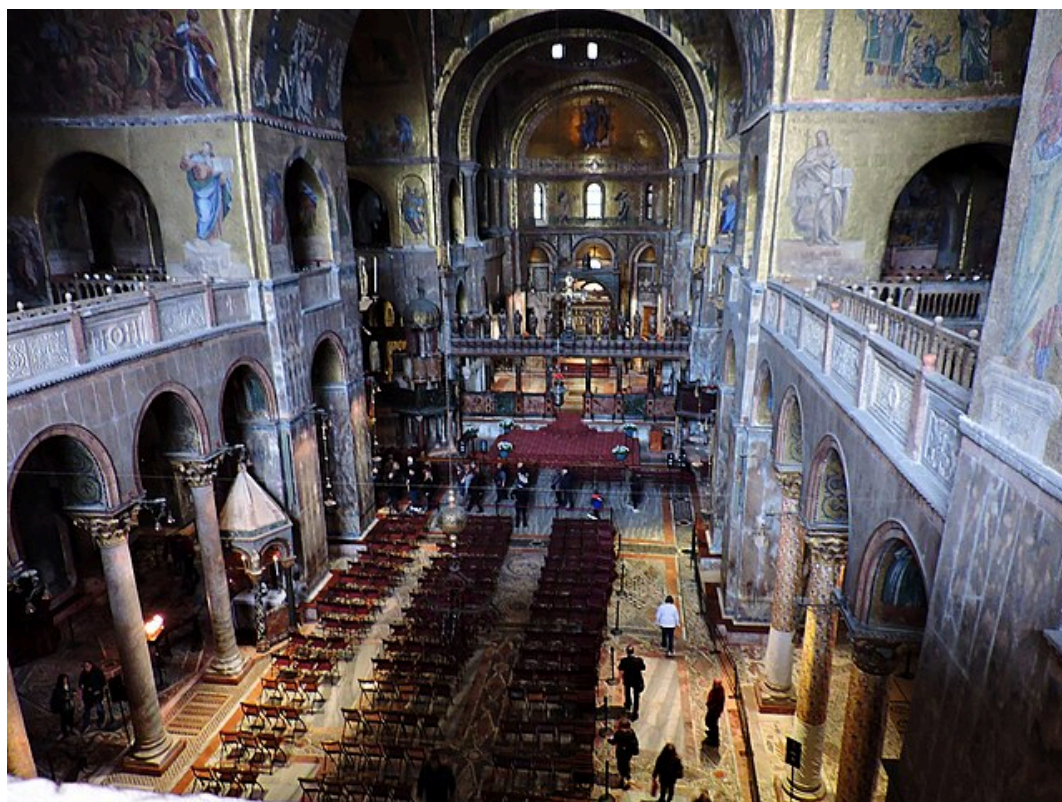


Figure 7.5: Basilica di San Marco, Venice, 2016 | Photographer: Dimitiris Kamaras | Source: [Wikimedia Commons](#) | License: [CC BY 2.0](#)

An example of one such piece with an eight-part setting is Gabrieli's *Jubilate*. In later years, Giovanni became known as a famous music teacher. His most recognized student was Heinrich Schütz of Germany.

Focus Composition: Gabrieli, "Sonata pian'e forte" from *Sacrae Symphoniae* (1597)

Another famous composition by Gabrieli in eight parts, consisting of two four-part groups, is the *Sonata pian'e forte*, which is included in the *Sacrae Symphoniae* composed in 1597. This collection includes several instrumental **canzoni** for six- to eight-part ensembles. These, in addition to several **Toccatas** and **Ricercars**, have provided a great deal of interesting repertoires for brass players. Many of the original works by Gabrieli were written for sackbuts (early versions of the modern trombone) and cornetti (cupped-shape mouthpieces on a curved wooden instrument) but have since been transcribed for various brass ensembles.

Let's listen to and study the *Sonata pian'e forte* from Gabrieli's *Sacrae Symphoniae*. This collection is pioneering in musical scoring in that Gabrieli wrote specific louds and softs (volume) into the individual parts for the performers to observe. Through the use of its two keyboards played simultaneously, the pian'e forte could achieve two relative dynamic (volume) levels, soft and loud. The introduction of writing dynamics (volume p-soft to f-loud) into music by composers is a major step toward notating expression into the music score. Gabrieli also incorporated imitative polyphony and the use of **polychoral** techniques.

Video 7.2: Sonata pian'e forte—Giovanni Gabrieli



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://louis.pressbooks.pub/musicappreciation/?p=1073#oembed-2>

Listening Guide

As performed on instruments from the Renaissance/Baroque transition era, directed by Bernard Fabre-Garrus at the Festival des Cathedrales in Picardie (timings below correspond to this version).

- Composer: Giovanni Gabrieli
- Composition: *Sonata pian e forte for 8 parts, C. 176 from Sacra Symphonia*
- Date: 1597
- Genre: Sonata
- Form: Through-composed in sections
- Nature of text: Antiphonal instrumental work in eight parts
- Performing forces: Two “choirs” (double instrumental quartet—8 parts) of traditional instruments—sackbuts (early trombones) and wooden cornets
- What we want you to remember about this composition:
 - antiphonal call and response;
 - the use of musical dynamics (louds and softs written in the individual parts);
 - and contrapuntal imitation
- Other things to listen for:
 - Listen to the noted balance so the melody is heard throughout and how the instruments sound very “vocal” as from earlier time periods (the Renaissance).
 - The piece’s texture is the division of the forces into two alternating groups in polychoral style.

| Timing | Performing Forces, Melody, and Texture | Text and Form |
|--------|---|--|
| 0:00 | Choir 1 introduces the first theme in a piano dynamic in a slow tempo and duple meter. Like many early sonatas and canzonas, the composition starts with a repeated-note motive. The notes and harmonies come from the Dorian mode, a predecessor to the minor scale. The composition starts in the key of G. | Strophe 1: Ave, generosa, “Hail generous one” |
| 0:29 | As the first choir cadences, the second choir begins, playing a new theme still at a piano dynamic and slow tempo. Later in the theme the repeated note motive (first heard in the first theme of the composition) returns. | Strophe 1 continues: Glorio- sa et intacta puella... “Noble, glorious, and whole woman...” |
| 0:52 | Choirs 1 and 2 play together in a tutti section at a forte dynamic. The new theme features faster notes than the first two themes. The key moves to the Mixolydian mode, a predecessor to the major scale, and the key moves to C. | Strophe 2: Nam hec superna infusio in te fuit... “The essences of heaven flooded into you...” |
| 1:02 | Central antiphonal section. Choir 1 opens with a short phrase using a piano dynamics and answered by choir 2 with a different short phrase, also with a piano dynamics. This call and response continues. Sometimes, the phrases last for only two measures; other times they are as long as four measures. After each passage of antiphonal exchanges, there is music of three to four measures in length where the whole ensemble joins together, usually with different melodic material (e.g., 40-43). The tonal or key center shifts during this section. There is a new theme that uses dotted rhythms that starts in measure 60 (approximately 2:07 in the recording). | Strophe 3: O pulsherrima et dulcissima... “O lovely and tender one...” |
| 2:34 | Repetition of the melody to new words sung by all with monophonic texture (the drone continues). | Strophe 4: Venter enim tuus gaudium havuit... “Your womb held joy...” |

Rise of the Orchestra and the Concerto

The Baroque period also saw the birth of the orchestra, which was initially used to accompany court spectacle and opera. In addition to providing accompaniment to the singers, the orchestra provided instrumental-only

selections during such events. These selections came to include the overture at the beginning, the interludes between scenes and during scenery changes, and accompaniments for dance sequences. Other predecessors of the orchestra included the string bands employed by absolute monarchs in France and England and the town collegium musicum of some German municipalities. By the end of the Baroque period, composers were writing compositions that might be played by orchestras in concerts, such as concertos and orchestral suites.

The makeup of the Baroque orchestra varied in number and quality much more than the orchestra has varied since the nineteenth century; in general, it was a smaller ensemble than the later orchestra. At its core was the violin family, with woodwind instruments such as the flute, recorder, and oboe, and brass instruments, such as the trumpet or horn, and the timpani for percussion filling out the texture. The Baroque orchestra was almost always accompanied by harpsichord, which, together with one or more of the cellos or a bassoonist, provided a basso continuo.

The new instruments of the violin family provided the backbone for the Baroque orchestra. The violin family—the violin, viola, cello (long form violoncello), and bass violin (or double bass)—were not the first bowed string instruments in Western classical music.



Figure 7.6: Violin



Figure 7.7: Viola



Figure 7.8: Cello



Figure 7.9: Double bass

Figures 7.6–7.9:
Modern members
of the violin family,
front and side
views

Figure 7.6: Violin |
Author: Arbaras
Gergeners |
Source: [Wikimedia
Commons](#) |
License: Public
Domain

Figure 7.7: Viola |
Author: Just plain
Bill | Source:

[Wikimedia
Commons](#) |
License: Public
Domain

Figure 7.8: Cello |
Author: George
Feitscher | Source:
[Wikimedia
Commons](#) |

License: CC BY 3.0
Figure 7.9: Double
bass | Author:

Andrew Kepert |
Source: [Wikimedia
Commons](#) |

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3.0

The Middle Ages had its fiddle (or vielle; see Figure 7.10), and the Renaissance had the **viola da gamba** (see Figure 7.11).



Figure 7.10: Vielle player in margin of Peterborough Psalter, 1320



Figure 7.11: Woman Playing a Viola de gamba, by artist Gabriel Metsu, 1663

Figures 7.10–7.11
 Figure 7.10: Vielle player in margin of Peterborough Psalter, ca. 1320 | Artist: Unknown | Source: [Wikimedia Commons](#) | License: Public Domain
 Figure 7.11: Woman Playing a Viola de gamba, 1663 | Artist: Gabriel Metsu (1629-1667) | Source: [Wikimedia Commons](#) | License: Public Domain

Bowed strings attained a new prominence in the seventeenth century with the widespread and increased manufacturing of violins, violas, cellos, and basses. Some of these instruments, such as those made by Antonio Stradivari (1644-1737), are still sought after today as some of the finest specimens of instruments ever made.

With the popularity of the violin family, instruments of the viola da gamba family fell to the sidelines. Composers started writing compositions specifically for the members of the violin family, often arranged with two groups of violins, one group of violas, and a group of cellos and double basses, who sometimes played the same bass line as played by the harpsichord. One of the first important forms of this instrumental music was the concerto. The word concerto comes from the Latin and Italian root **concertare**, which has connotations of both competition and cooperation. The musical concerto might be thought to reflect both meanings. A concerto is a composition for an instrumental soloist or soloists and orchestra; in a sense, it brings together these two forces in concert; in another sense, these two forces compete for the attention of the audience. A **concerto grosso** is a composition for a solo group (known as the **concertino**) and full orchestra (the **ripieno**). A **concerto** is an orchestral form that exploits the idea of pitting soft sounds against loud ones. Concertos are most often in three movements that follow a tempo pattern of fast–slow–fast. Most first movements of concertos are in what has come to be called ritornello form. As its name suggests, a **ritornello** is a repeated musical theme used in a concerto grosso. It is a returning to the theme or refrain played by the full orchestral ensemble. In a concerto, the ritornello alternates with the solo sections that are played by the soloist or soloists.

Some of the most famous of these concertos were the **Brandenburg Concertos** written by Johann Sebastian Bach. Bach wrote six works which he dedicated to Christian Ludwig, the Margrave of Brandenburg. Three of these works follow the concerto grosso style.

Music of Antonio Vivaldi (1678-1741)



Figure 7.12:
Engraved portrait
of Antonio Vivaldi,
1725 | Artist:
François Morellon
la Cave
(1696-1768) |
Source: [Wikimedia
Commons](#) |
License: Public
Domain

One of the most prolific and important composers of the Baroque solo concerto was the Italian **Antonio Vivaldi** (1678-1741). His father taught him to play at a young age, and he probably began lessons in music composition as a young teen.

Vivaldi began studying for the priesthood at age fifteen and, once ordained at age twenty-five, received the nickname of “**The Red Priest**” because of his hair color. He worked in a variety of locations around Europe, including at a prominent Venetian orphanage called the Ospedale della Pietà. There he taught music to girls, some of whom were illegitimate daughters of prominent noblemen and church officials from Venice. This

orphanage became famous for the quality of music performed by its inhabitants. Northern Europeans, who would travel to Italy during the winter months on what they called “The Italian Tour” —to avoid the cold and rainy weather of cities such as Paris, Berlin, and London—wrote home about the fine performances put on by these orphans in Sunday afternoon concerts.

These girls performed concertos such as Vivaldi’s well-known **Four Seasons**. The Four Seasons refers to a set of four concertos, each of which is named after one of the seasons. As such, it is an example of program music, a type of music that would become more prominent in the Baroque period. **Program music** is Instrumental descriptive music that is associated with a nonmusical idea. It is instrumental music that represents something extra musical, such as the words of a poem or narrative or the sense of a painting or idea. A composer might ask orchestral instruments to imitate the sounds of natural phenomena, such as a babbling brook or the cries of birds. Most program music carries a descriptive title that suggests what an audience member might listen for. In the case of the Four Seasons, Vivaldi connected each concerto to an Italian sonnet—that is, to a poem that was descriptive of the season to which the concerto referred. Thus, in the case of Spring, the first concerto of the series, you can listen for the “festive song” of birds, “murmuring streams,” “breezes,” and “lightning and thunder.”

Focus Composition: Vivaldi's *The Four Seasons*

Each of the concertos in the Four Seasons has three movements, organized in a fast–slow–fast succession. We’ll listen to the first fast movement of Spring. Its “Allegro” subtitle is an Italian tempo marking that indicates music that is fast. As a first movement, it is in ritornello form. The movement opens with the ritornello, in which the orchestra presents the opening theme. This theme consists of motives, small groupings of notes and rhythms that are often repeated in sequence. This ritornello might be thought to reflect the opening line from the sonnet. After the ritornello, the soloist plays with the accompaniment of only a few instruments—that is, the basso continuo. The soloist’s music uses some of the same motives found in the ritornello but plays them in a more virtuosic way, showing off one might say.

As you listen, try to hear the alternation of the ritornellos and solo sections. Listen also for the motor rhythm, the constant subdivision of the steady beat, and the melodic themes that unfold through melodic sequences. Do you hear birds, a brook, and a thunderstorm? Do you think you would have associated these musical moments with springtime if, instead of being called the Spring Concerto, the piece was simply called Concerto No. 1?

Video 7.3: A. Vivaldi: “La Primavera” (Spring)—Concerto for violin, strings, and basso continuo in E major



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://louis.pressbooks.pub/musicappreciation/?p=1073#oembed-3>

Listening Guide

Performed by: Giuliano Carmignola (solo violin); Giorgio Fava (violin I); Gino Mangiocavallo (violin II); Enrico Parizzi (viola); Walter Vestidello (violoncello); Alberto Rasi (violone); Giancarlo Rado (archlute); Andrea Marcon (harpsichord); I Sonatori de la Gioiosa Marca / Giuliano Carmignola (conductor).

- Composer: Antonio Vivaldi
- Composition: The first movement of “Spring” from *The Four Seasons*
- Date: 1720s
- Genre: Solo concerto and program music
- Nature of text: The concerto is accompanied by an Italian sonnet about springtime. The first five lines are associated with the first movement:

Springtime is upon us.
 The birds celebrate her return with festive song,
 and murmuring streams are softly caressed by the breezes.
 Thunderstorms, those heralds of Spring, roar, casting their dark mantle over heaven,
 Then they die away to silence, and the birds take up their charming songs once more.

- Performing forces: Solo violinist and string orchestra
- What we want you to remember about this composition:
 - It is the first movement of a solo concerto that uses ritornello form.
 - This is program music.
 - It uses terraced dynamics.
 - It uses a fast allegro tempo.
- Other things to listen for:
 - The orchestral ritornellos alternate with the sections for solo violin
 - Virtuoso solo violin lines
 - Motor rhythm
 - Melodic themes composed of motives that spin out in sequences

Time Performing Forces, Melody, and Texture

| | |
|------|--|
| 0:08 | Ritornello (Springtime is upon us.) Full string orchestra. Note the contrast of dynamics between loud and soft. |
| 0:36 | Solo (The birds celebrate Spring's return with festive song,) |
| 1:07 | Ritornello |
| 1:14 | Solo (and murmuring streams are softly caressed by the breezes.) |
| 1:35 | Ritornello |
| 1:42 | Solo (Thunderstorms, those heralds of Spring, roar, casting their dark mantle over heaven,) Note how Vivaldi portrays thunder AND lightning! |
| 2:07 | Ritornello (in a minor key—they got wet in the storm!) |
| 2:15 | Solo (Then they die away to silence, and the birds take up their charming songs once more.) |
| 2:32 | Ritornello? Unexplained—what is this new music doing here? (This passage is often played much faster and brighter...) |
| 2:45 | Solo (more birds...) |
| 2:58 | Ritornello |

For more about Vivaldi, watch Video 7.4: Rick Wakeman on Vivaldi's Four Seasons (2015)—(optional)



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://louis.pressbooks.pub/musicappreciation/?p=1073#oembed-4>

Something to Think About

Most program music carries a descriptive title that suggests what an audience member might listen for. In the case of the Four Seasons, Vivaldi connected each concerto to an Italian sonnet—that is, to a poem that was descriptive of the season to which the concerto referred. Thus, in the case of

Spring, the first concerto of the series, you can listen for the “festive song” of birds, “murmuring streams,” “breezes,” and “lightning and thunder.”

What popular songs today may contain program music, even containing a descriptive title?

Music of George Frideric Handel (1685-1759)

George Frideric Handel was one of the superstars of the late Baroque period. He was born the same year as one of our other Baroque superstars, Johann Sebastian Bach, not more than 150 miles away in Halle, Germany. His father was an attorney and wanted his son to follow in his footsteps, but Handel decided that he wanted to be a musician instead. With the help of a local nobleman, he persuaded his father to agree. After learning the basics of composition, Handel journeyed to Italy to learn to write opera. Italy, after all, was the home of opera, and opera was the most popular musical entertainment of the day. After writing a few operas, he took a job in London, England, where Italian opera was very much the rage, eventually establishing his own opera company and producing scores of Italian operas, which were initially very well received by the English public. After a decade or so, however, Italian opera in England imploded. Several opera companies there each competed for the public’s business. The divas who sang the main roles and whom the public bought their tickets to see demanded high salaries. In 1728, a librettist named John Gay and a composer named Johann Pepusch premiered a new sort of opera in London called a ballad opera. It was sung entirely in English, and its music was based on folk tunes known by most inhabitants of the British Isles. For the English public, the majority of whom had been attending Italian opera without understanding the language in which it was sung, English-language opera was a big hit. Both Handel’s opera company and his competitors fought for financial stability, and Handel had to find other ways to make a profit. He hit on the idea of writing English oratorio.

The **Oratorio** is a dramatic work for soloists, chorus and orchestra. It is a sung drama or sacred opera based on stories from the Bible with no staging or costumes. . Like operas, they are relatively long works, often spanning over two hours when performed in entirety. Like opera, oratorios are entirely sung to orchestral accompaniment. They feature recitatives, arias, and choruses, just like opera. Most oratorios also tell the story of an important character from the Christian Bible. But oratorios are not acted out. Historically speaking, this is the reason that they exist. During the Baroque period at sacred times in the Christian church year such as Lent, stage entertainment was prohibited. The idea was that during Lent, individuals should be looking inward and preparing themselves for Easter, and attending plays and operas would distract from that. Nevertheless, individuals still wanted entertainment, hence, oratorios. These oratorios would be performed as concerts (not in the church), but because they were not acted out, they were perceived as not having a “detrimental” effect on the spiritual lives of those in the audience. The first oratorios were performed in Italy; then they spread elsewhere on the continent and to England.

Handel realized how powerful ballad opera, sung in English, had been for the general population and started writing oratorios, but in the English language. He used the same music styles as he had in his operas, only including more choruses. In no time at all, his oratorios were being lauded as some of the most popular performances in London.

Handel's most famous oratorio is entitled *Messiah* and was first performed in 1741. About the life of Christ, it was written for a benefit concert to be held in Dublin, Ireland. Atypically, his librettist took the words for the oratorio straight from the King James Version of the Bible instead of putting the story into his own words. Once in Ireland, Handel assembled solo singers as well as a chorus of musical amateurs to sing the many choruses he wrote for the oratorio. There it was popular, if not controversial. One of the soloists was a woman who was a famous actress. Some critics remarked that it was inappropriate for a woman who normally performed on the stage to be singing words from sacred scripture. Others objected to sacred scripture being sung in a concert instead of in church. Perhaps influenced by these opinions, *Messiah* was performed only a few times during the 1740s. But when it was first performed for King George in London, he was so moved by the performance that he stood for the finale of the *Messiah*, the Hallelujah Chorus as a sign of respect to Handel's music. Since the end of the eighteenth century, however, it has been performed more than almost any other composition of classical music. While these issues may not seem controversial to us today, they remind us that people still disagree about how sacred texts should be used and about what sort of music should be used to set them.

Focus Composition: Handel's *Messiah*

We've included three numbers from Handel's *Messiah* as part of our discussion of this focus composition. We'll first listen to a recitative entitled "Comfort Ye" that is directly followed by an aria entitled "Every Valley." These two numbers are the second and third numbers in the oratorio. Then we'll listen to the Hallelujah Chorus, the most famous number from the composition that falls at the end of the second of the three parts of the oratorio.

Video 7.5: "Comfort ye my people / Every Valley" performed by Anthony Rolfe Johnson (tenor), with the Monteverdi Choir, John Elliot Gardiner, conductor



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://louis.pressbooks.pub/musicappreciation/?p=1073#oembed-5>

Listening Guide

- Composer: George Frideric Handel

- Composition: “Comfort Ye” and “Every Valley” from *Messiah*
- Date: 1741
- Genre: Accompanied recitative and aria from an oratorio
- Form: Accompanied recitative—through composed; aria—binary form AA’
- Nature of text: English-language libretto quoting the Bible
- Performing forces: Solo tenor and orchestra
- What we want you to remember about this composition:
 - As an oratorio, it uses the same styles and forms as operas but is not staged.
 - The aria is very virtuoso with its melismas and alternates between orchestral ritornellos and solo sections.
- Other things to listen for:
 - The accompanied recitative uses more instruments than standard basso continuo-accompanied recitative, but the vocal line retains the flexibility of recitative.
 - Motor rhythm in the aria
 - In a major key
 - In the aria, the second solo section is more ornamented than the first, as was often the custom.

Accompanied Recitative: “Comfort Ye” and Aria: “Every Valley” (beginning at 2:22)

| Timing | Performing Forces, Melody, and Texture | Text and Form |
|--------|--|---|
| 0:00 | Reduced orchestra playing piano (softly) repeated notes | |
| 0:13 | Mostly step-wise, conjunct sung melody; homophonic texture | Vocalist and light orchestral accompaniment: “Comfort Ye my people” |
| 0:27 | Orchestra and vocalist alternate phrases until the recitative ends | Vocalist and light orchestral accompaniment: Comfort ye my people says your God; speak ye comforter of Jerusalem; and cry upon....that her iniquity is pardoned. A voice of him that cry-eth in the wilderness. Prepare ye the way for the Lord. Make straight in the desert a highway for our God |
| 2:22 | Repeated motives; starts loud, ends with an echo | Orchestra plays ritornello |
| 2:39 | Soloist presents melodic phrase first heard in the ritornello and the orchestra echoes this phrase | Tenor and orchestra: Every valley shall be exalted |
| 2:52 | Long melisma on the word exalted...repeats High note on mountain and low note on “low” | Tenor and orchestra: Shall be exalted And every mountain and hill made low |

Video 7.6: Hallelujah Chorus, performed by English Baroque Soloists and Monteverdi Choir, conducted by John Eliot Gardiner



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://louis.pressbooks.pub/musicappreciation/?p=1073#oembed-6>

Listening Guide

- Composer: George Frideric Handel
- Composition: “Hallelujah” from *Messiah*
- Date: 1741
- Genre: Chorus from an oratorio
- Form: Sectional; sections delineated by texture changes
- Nature of text: English-language libretto quoting the Bible
- Performing forces: Solo tenor and orchestra
- What we want you to remember about this composition:
 - It is for four-part chorus and orchestra.
 - It uses a sectional form where sections are delineated by changes in texture.
- Other things to listen for:
 - In a major key, using mostly major chords
 - Key motives repeat over and over, often in sequence

| Timing | Performing Forces, Melody, and Texture | Text and Form |
|--------|---|--|
| 0:00 | Orchestra: Introduces main musical motive in a major key with a homophonic texture where parts of the orchestra play the melody and other voices provide the accompaniment | |
| 0:09 | Chorus with orchestra: Here the choir and the orchestra provide the melody and accompaniment of the homophonic texture | Hallelujah |
| 0:26 | Chorus with orchestra: Dramatic shift to monophonic with the voices and orchestra performing the same melodic line at the same time | For the Lord God omnipotent reigneth |
| 0:34 | Chorus with orchestra: Homophonic texture, as before | Hallelujah |
| 0:38 | Chorus with orchestra: Monophonic texture, as before | For the Lord God omnipotent reigneth |
| 0:45 | Chorus with orchestra: Homophonic texture, as before | Hallelujah |
| 0:49 | Chorus with orchestra: Texture shifts to non-imitative polyphonic with the initial entrance of the sopranos, then the tenors, then the altos | For the Lord God omnipotent reigneth |
| 1:17 | Chorus with orchestra: Homophonic texture, as before | The Kingdom of this world is begun |
| 1:36 | Chorus with orchestra: Imitative polyphony starts in basses, then is passed to tenors, then to the altos, and then to the sopranos | And he shall reign for ever and ever |
| 1:57 | Chorus with orchestra: Monophonic texture, as before | King of Kings |
| 2:01 | Chorus with orchestra: Homophonic texture, as before | Forever, and ever hallelujah hallelujah |
| 2:05 | Chorus with orchestra: Each entrance is sequenced higher; the women sing the monophonic repeated melody motive Monophony alternating with homophony | And Lord of Lords...Repeated alternation of the monophonic king of kings and lord of lords with homophonic for ever and ever |
| 2:36 | Chorus with orchestra: Homophonic texture | King of kings and lord of lords |
| 2:40 | Chorus with orchestra: Polyphonic texture (with some imitation) | And he shall reign for ever and ever |

| Timing | Performing Forces, Melody, and Texture | Text and Form |
|--------|--|--|
| 2:52 | Chorus with orchestra: The alternation of monophonic and homophonic textures | King of kings and lord of lords alternating with “for ever and ever” |
| 3:01 | Chorus with orchestra: Mostly homophonic | And he shall reign...Hallelujah |

Focus Composition: Movements from Handel's *Water Music Suite*

Although Handel is perhaps best known today for his operas and oratorios, he also wrote a lot of instrumental music, from concertos like Vivaldi wrote to a kind of music called the suite. Suites were compositions having many contrasting movements. The idea was to provide diverse music in one composition that might be interesting for playing and listening. They could be written for solo instruments such as the harpsichord or for orchestral forces, in which case we call them orchestral suites. They often began with movements called overtures and were modeled after the overtures played before operas. Then they typically consisted of stylized dance movements. By stylized dance, we mean a piece of music that sounds like a dance but that was not designed for dancing. In other words, a stylized dance uses the distinct characteristics of a dance and would be recognized as sounding like that dance but might be too long or too complicated to be danced to.

Dancing was very popular in the Baroque period, as it had been in the Middle Ages and Renaissance. We have several dancing textbooks from the Baroque period that mapped out the choreography for each dance. Some of the most popular dances included the saraband, gigue, minuet, and bourrée. The saraband was a slow dance in triple meter, whereas the gigue (or jig) was a very fast dance with triple subdivisions of the beats. The minuet was also in triple time but danced at a much more stately tempo. The bourrée, on the other hand, was danced at a much faster tempo, and always in duple meter.

When King George I asked Handel to compose music for an evening's diversion, the suite was the genre to which Handel turned. This composition was for an event that started at 8 p.m. on Wednesday the seventeenth of July 1717. King George I and his noble guests would launch a barge ride up the Thames River to Chelsea. After disembarking and spending some time on shore, they re-boarded at 11 p.m. and returned via the river to Whitehall Palace, from whence they came. A contemporary newspaper remarked that the king and his guests occupied one barge while another held about fifty musicians and reported that the king liked the music so much that he asked it to be repeated three times. Hence, Handel wrote the *Water Music Suite*, for King George I in 1717 to entertain his guests as they rode on a barge up and down the Thames River to Chelsea.

Many of the movements that were played for the occasion were written down and eventually published as three suites of music, each in a different key. You have two stylized dance movements from one of these suites here, a bourrée and a minuet. We do not know with any certainty in what order these movements were played or even exactly who played them on that evening in 1717, but when the music was published in the late eighteenth century, it was set for two trumpets, two horns, two oboes, first violins, second violins, violas, and a basso continuo, which included a bassoon, cello(s), and harpsichord.

The bourrée, as noted above, is fast and in duple time. The minuet is in a triple meter and taken at a more

moderate tempo. They use repeated strains or sections of melodies based on repeated motives. As written in the score, as well as interpreted today in the referenced recording, different sections of the orchestra—the strings, woodwinds, and sometimes brass instruments—each get a time to shine, providing diverse timbres and thus musical interest. Both are good examples of binary form.

Video 7.7: Handel's Water Music Suite No. 1 in F Major VII Bourrée



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://louis.pressbooks.pub/musicappreciation/?p=1073#oembed-9>

Video 7.8: Handel: Water Music Suite No. 1 in F Major, VI. Menuet



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://louis.pressbooks.pub/musicappreciation/?p=1073#oembed-10>

Music of Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750)

During the seventeenth century, many families passed their trades down to the next generation so that future generations could continue to succeed in a vocation. This practice also held true for Johann Sebastian Bach. Bach was born into one of the largest musical families in Eisenach of the central German region known as Thuringia. He was orphaned at the young age of ten and raised by an older brother in Ohrdruf, Germany. Bach's older brother was a church organist who prepared the young Johann for the family vocation. The Bach family, though great in number, were mostly of the lower musical stature of town's musicians and/or Lutheran Church organist. Only a few of the Bachs had achieved the accomplished stature of court musicians, but the Bach family members were known and respected in the region. Bach also, in turn, taught four of his sons, who later became leading composers for the next generation.

Bach received his first professional position at the age of eighteen in Arnstadt, Germany, as a church organist. Bach's first appointment was not a good philosophical match for the young aspiring musician. He felt his musical creativity and growth were being hindered and his innovation and originality unappreciated. The congregation seemed sometimes confused and felt the melody was lost in Bach's writings. He met and married his first wife while in Arnstadt, marrying Maria Barbara (possibly his cousin) in 1707. They had seven children together; two of their sons, Wilhelm Friedemann and Carl Philipp Emmanuel, as noted above, became major composers for the next generation. Bach later was offered and accepted another position in Mühlhausen.

He continued to be offered positions that he accepted and so advanced in his professional position/title up to a court position in Weimer, where he served nine years from 1708 to 1717. This position had a great number of responsibilities. Bach was required to write church music for the ducal church (the church for the duke that hired Bach), to perform as church organist, and to write organ music and sacred choral pieces for choir, in addition to writing sonatas and concertos (instrumental music) for court performance for his duke's events. While at this post, Bach's fame as an organist and the popularity of his organ works grew significantly.

Bach soon wanted to leave for another offered court musician position, and his request to be released was not received well. This difficulty attests to the work relations of court musicians and their employers. Dukes expected and demanded loyalty from their court musician employees. Because musicians were looked upon somewhat as court property, the duke of the court often felt betrayed when a court musician wanted to leave. Upon hearing of Bach's desire to leave and work for another court for the prince of Cöthen, the duke at Weimer refused to accept Bach's resignation and threw Bach into jail for almost a month for submitting his dismissal request before relenting and letting Bach go to the Cöthen court.

The prince at Cöthen was very interested in instrumental music. The prince was a developing amateur musician who did not appreciate the elaborate church music of Bach's past; instead, the prince desired instrumental court music, so Bach focused on composing instrumental music. In his five year (1717-1723) tenure at Cöthen, Bach produced an abundance of clavier music, six concerti grossi honoring the Margrave of Brandenburg, suites, concertos, and sonatas. While at Cöthen (1720), Bach's first wife, Maria Barbara, died. He later married a young singer, Anna Magdalena, and they had thirteen children together. Half of these children did not survive infancy. Two of Bach's sons birthed by Anna, Johann Christoph and Johann Christian, also went on to become two of the next generation's foremost composers.

At the age of thirty-eight, Bach assumed the position as cantor of the St. Thomas Lutheran Church in Leipzig, Germany. Several other candidates were considered for the Leipzig post, including the famous composer Telemann, who refused the offer. Some on the town council felt that since the most qualified candidates did not accept the offer, the less talented applicant would have to be hired. It was in this negative working atmosphere that Leipzig hired its greatest cantor and musician. Bach worked in Leipzig for twenty-seven years (1723-1750).

Leipzig served as a hub of Lutheran church music for Germany. Not only did Bach have to compose and perform; he also had to administer and organize music for all the churches in Leipzig. He was required to teach in choir school in addition to all of his other responsibilities. Bach composed, copied needed parts, directed, rehearsed, and performed a cantata on a near weekly basis. Cantatas are major church choir works that involve soloist, choir, and orchestra. Cantatas have several movements and last for fifteen to thirty minutes. Cantatas are still performed today by church choirs, mostly on special occasions such as Easter, Christmas, and other festive church events.

Bach felt that the rigors of his Leipzig position were too bureaucratic and restrictive due to town and church politics. Neither the town nor the church really ever appreciated Bach. The church and town council refused to pay Bach for all the extra demands/responsibilities of his position and thought basically that

they would merely tolerate their irate cantor, even though Bach was the best organist in Germany. Several of Bach's contemporary church musicians felt his music was not according to style and types considered current, a feeling that may have resulted from professional jealousy. One contemporary critic felt Bach was "old Fashioned." Beyond this professional life, Bach had a personal life centered on his large family.

He wrote a little homeschool music curriculum entitled *The Notebook of Anna Magdalena Bach*. At home, the children were taught the fundamentals of music, music copying, performance skills, and other musical content. Bach's children utilized their learned music copying skills in writing the parts from the required weekly cantatas that Sebastian was required to compose. Bach's deep spirituality is evident and felt in the meticulous attention to detail of his sacred works, such as his cantatas. Indeed, the spirituality of Bach's Passions and his Mass are unequaled by other composers.

Bach did not travel much, with the exception of being hired as a consultant with construction contracts to install organs in churches. He would be asked to test the organs and to be part of their inauguration ceremony and festivities. The fee for such a service ranged from a cord of wood to possibly a barrel of wine. In 1747, Bach went on one of these professional expeditions to the Court of Frederick the Great in Potsdam, an expedition that proved most memorable. Bach's son, Carl Philipp Emanuel, served as the accompanist for the monarch of the court, who played the flute. Upon Bach's arrival, the monarch showed Bach a new collection of pianos—pianos were beginning to replace harpsichords in homes of society. With Bach's permission, the king presented him with a theme/melody on which Bach based one of his incredible themes for the evening's performance. Upon Bach's return to Leipzig, he further developed the king's theme, adding a trio sonata, and entitled it *The Musical Offering*, attesting to his highest respect for the monarch and stating that the king should be revered.

Bach later became blind but continued composing by dictating to his children. He had also already begun to organize his compositions into orderly sets of organ chorale preludes, preludes and fugues for harpsichord, and organ fugues. He started to outline and recapitulate his conclusive thoughts about Baroque music, forms, performance, composition, fugal techniques, and genres. This knowledge and innovation appears in such works as *The Art of Fugue*—a collection of fugues all utilizing the same subject left incomplete due to his death—the thirty-three Goldberg Variations for harpsichord, and the Mass in B minor.

Bach was an intrinsically motivated composer who composed music for himself and a small group of students and close friends. This type of composition was a break from the previous norms of composers. Even after his death, Bach's music was ignored and not valued by the musical public. It was, however, appreciated and admired by great composers such as Mozart and Beethoven.

Over the course of his lifetime, Bach produced major works, including *The Well-Tempered Clavier* (forty-eight preludes and fugues in all major and minor keys), three sets of harpsichord suites (six movements in each set), the Goldberg Variations, many organ fugues and chorale preludes (chorale preludes are organ solos based upon church hymns—several by Luther), the *Brandenburg Concertos*, and composite works such as *A Musical Offering* and *The Art of Fugue*, an excess of 200 secular and sacred cantatas, two Passions from the gospels of St.

Matthew and St. John, a Christmas Oratorio, a Mass in B minor, and several chorale/hymn harmonizations, concertos, and other orchestral suites and sonatas.

Focus Composition: Bach, “A Mighty Fortress Is Our God” Cantata, BWV 80

Bach’s “A Mighty Fortress Is Our God” cantata, like most of his cantatas, has several movements. It opens with a polyphonic chorus that presents the first verse of the hymn. After several other movements (including recitatives, arias, and duets), the cantata closes with the final verse of the hymn arranged for four parts. For a comparison of cantatas, oratorios, and opera, please see the chart earlier in this chapter.

Bach composed some of this music when he was still in Weimar (BWV 80A) and then revised and expanded the cantata for performance in Leipzig around 1730 (BWV 80B), with additional reworkings between 1735 and 1740 (BWVA 80).

Cantata No. 80 “A Mighty Fortress Is Our God” BWV 80: Opening Chorale



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://louis.pressbooks.pub/musicappreciation/?p=1073#oembed-7>

Listening Guide

- Composer: Johann Sebastian Bach
- Composition: Ein feste Burg ist unser Gott, translated to “A Mighty Fortress Is Our God” from Bach Cantata 80 (BWV 80)
- Date: 1715-1740
- Genre: First-movement polyphonic chorus and final-movement chorale from a church cantata
- Form: Sectional, divided by statements of Luther’s original melody line in sustained notes in the trumpets, oboes, and cellos
- Nature of text: In German, written by Martin Luther in the late 1520s
- Performing forces: Choir and orchestra (vocal soloists appear elsewhere in the cantata). See this translation for the original [German translated by Frederick H. Hedge](#).
- What we want you to remember about this composition:
 - This is representative of Bach’s mastery of taking a Martin Luther hymn and arranging it in imitative polyphony for all four voice parts and instrumental parts.
- Other things to listen for:
 - Theme to the first verse or strophe of the hymn. He weaves these new melody lines into a beautiful

polyphonic choral work.

- Most of the time the instruments double (or play the same music as) the four voice parts.
- He also has the trumpets, oboes, and cellos divide up Luther's exact melody into nine phrases. They present the first phrase after the first section of the chorus and then subsequent phrases throughout the chorus. When they play the original melody, they do so in canon: the trumpets and oboes begin and then the cellos enter after about a measure.
- Also listen to see if you can hear the augmentation in the work. The original tune is performed in this order of the voices: Tenors, Sopranos, Tenors, Sopranos, Basses, Altos, Tenors, Sopranos, and then the Tenors.

Keyboard Instruments

Bach was born into a century that saw great advancements in keyboard instruments and keyboard music. The keyboard instruments included harpsichord, clavichord, and organ. The **harpsichord** is a keyboard instrument whose strings are put into motion by pressing a key that facilitates a plucking of a string by quills of feathers (instead of being struck by hammers like the piano). The tone produced on the harpsichord is bright but cannot be sustained without restriking the key. Dynamics are very limited on the harpsichord. In order for the tone to continue on the harpsichord, keys are replayed, trills are utilized, embellishments are added, and chords are broken into arpeggios.



Figure 7.13:
Harpsichord, ca.
1730, in the
collection in the
Museum of Arts
and Crafts in
Hamburg,
Germany | Author:
Unknown | Source:
[Wikimedia
Commons](#) |
License: Public
Domain.

During the early Baroque era, the clavichord remained the instrument of choice for the home; indeed, it is said that Bach preferred it to the harpsichord. It produced its tone by means of keys attached to metal blades

that strike the strings. As we will see in the next chapter, by the end of the 1700s, the piano would replace the harpsichord and clavichord as the instrument of choice for residences.



Figure 7.14:
Clavichord (1763) |
Artist: Christian
Kintzing
(1707-1804) |
Source: [Wikimedia Commons](#), from
the Metropolitan
Museum of Art |
License: Public
Domain

Bach was best known as a virtuoso organist, and he had the opportunity to play on some of the most advanced pipe organs of his day. Sound is produced on the organ with the depression of one or more of the keys, which activates a mechanism that opens pipes of a certain length and pitch through which wind from a wind chest rushes. The length and material of the pipe determine the tones produced. Levers called stops provide further options for different timbres. The Baroque pipe organ operated on relatively low air pressure compared to today's organs, resulting in a relatively thin transparent tone and volume.



Figure 7.15: Pipe organ in St. Martin's Baroque Church in Schwyz, Switzerland | Photographer: Gabrielle Merk | Source: [Wikimedia Commons](#) | License: CC BY-SA 4.0

Most **Baroque organs** had at least two keyboards, called manuals (after the Latin word for hand), and a pedal board played by the two feet. The presence of multiple key-boards and a pedal board made the organ an ideal instrument for polyphony. Each of the keyboards and the pedal board could be assigned different stops and thus could produce different timbres and even dynamic levels, which helped define voices of the polyphonic texture. Bach composed many of his chorale preludes and fugues for the organ.

Focus Composition: *Bach, "Little" Fugue in G Minor (BWV 578)*

The fugue is one of the most spectacular and magnificent achievements of the Baroque period. During this era of fine arts innovation, scientific research, natural laws, and systematic approaches to imitative polyphony were further developed and standardized. Polyphony first emerged in the late Middle Ages. Independent melodic lines overlapped and were woven. In the Renaissance, polyphony was further developed by a greater weaving of the independent melodic lines. The Baroque composers, under the influence of science, further organized it into a system—more on this later. The term fugue comes from the Latin word "**fuga**," which means running away or to take flight. The fugue is a contrapuntal (polyphonic) piece for a set number of musicians, usually three or four. The musical theme or main melody of a fugue is called the **subject**.

You may think of a fugue as a gossip party. The subject (of gossip) is introduced in one corner of the room between two people. Another person in the room then begins repeating the gossip while the original conversation continues. Then another person picks up on the story and begins repeating the now third-hand news, and it then continues a fourth time. A new observer walking into the room will hear bits and pieces from four conversations at one time—each repeating the original subject (gossip). This is how a fugue works. When the subject has been stated in every voice part in the fugue, we call this the **exposition**. Most fugues are in the

four standard voices: soprano, alto, tenor, and bass. We will refer to the parts in these voices for both voices and instruments.

At the beginning of the fugue, any of the four voices can begin with the subject. Then another voice starts with the subject at a time dictated in the music while the first voice continues to more material. The imitation is continued through all the voices. The exposition of the fugue is over when all the voices complete the initial subject.

Voice 1 Soprano: Subject—continues in a countersubject

Voice 2 Alto: Subject—continues in a countersubject

Voice 3 Tenor: Subject—continues in a countersubject

Voice 4 Bass: Subject—continues in a countersubject

After the exposition is completed, it may be repeated in a different order of voices, or it may continue with less weighted entrances at varying lengths known as episodes. This variation provides a little relaxation or relief from the early regimented systematic polyphony of the exposition. In longer fugues, the episodes are followed by a section in another key with continued overlapping of the subject. This episode and modulation can continue to repeat until they return to the original key.

Fugues are performed as a prelude to traditional worship on the pipe organ and are quite challenging to perform by the organist. Hands, fingers, and feet must all be controlled independently by the single organist and all at the same time. Often in non-fugal music, this type of polyphony is briefly written into a piece of music as an insert called a fugato or fugato section. When voices overlap in a fugue, it is called **stretto** (similar to strata). When the original voice continues after the second voice jumps in, the first voice is said to be singing the **countersubject**. The development of musical themes or subjects by lengthening or multiplying the durations of the notes or pitches is called **augmentation**. The shortening or dividing of the note and pitch durations is called diminution. Both augmentation and diminution are utilized in the development of the musical subjects in fugues and in theme development in other genres. The “turning upside down” of a musical line from an ascending passage to a descending passage is called **inversion**.

Let’s listen to one of Bach’s most famous fugues. You may immediately recognize the piece from your past. The *Little Fugue in G Minor* is Bach’s most famous organ piece.



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://louis.pressbooks.pub/musicappreciation/?p=1073#oembed-8>

Listening Guide

- Composer: Johann Sebastian Bach
- Composition: *Organ Fugue in G Minor* (BWR 578)

- Date: ca. 1709
- Genre: Organ fugue
- Nature of text: Bach was able to take the earlier vocal polyphony of the Renaissance period and apply it to the organ fugue. This is regarded as one of Bach's great achievements.
- Performing forces: Organ
- What we want you to remember about this composition:
 - Listen to how Bach weaves and overlaps the subject throughout the piece.
- Other things to listen for:
 - The subject (tune) is introduced in the highest voices and then is imitated in each lower voice in order: soprano, alto, tenor, and then bass in the pedals. After the exposition is completed in the bass pedals, the subject is introduced in the first voice. Upon the entrance of the second layer, the first voice goes into a countersubject. Just before the subject is introduced five more times, it is preceded by a brief episode. In each episode the subject is not played in its entirety.
 - Even though the fugue is in G minor, the piece ends with a major chord, a practice utilized during the Baroque period. Major chords were thought more conclusive than minor chords.

Timing Performing Forces, Melody, and Texture

| | |
|------|--|
| 0:00 | Subject in soprano voice alone, minor key |
| 0:18 | Subject in alto, countersubject in running notes in soprano |
| 0:42 | Subject in tenor, countersubject above it; brief episode follows |
| 1:01 | Subject in bass (pedals), countersubject in tenor |
| 1:17 | Brief episode |
| 1:28 | Subject begins in tenor, continues in soprano |
| 1:48 | Brief episode, running notes in a downward sequence |
| 1:56 | Subject in alto, major key; countersubject in soprano |
| 2:13 | Episode in major, upward leaps and running notes |
| 2:25 | Subject in bass (pedals), major key, countersubject and long trill above it |
| 2:42 | Longer episode |
| 3:00 | Subject in soprano, minor key, countersubject below it |
| 3:16 | Extended episode |
| 3:47 | Subject in bass (pedals), countersubject in soprano; fugue ends with major chord |
| 4:12 | End |

Chapter Summary

As we have seen, the Baroque period introduced the rise of musical superstar composers such as G. F. Handel and his contemporary, J. S. Bach, who, although he may have not been the most famous musician of his day, since then has become one of the most appreciated composers of Western classical music. The period between roughly 1600 and 1750 also saw the birth of genres such as opera, oratorio, cantata, concerto, and fugue. In many cases these new genres were propelled by a focus on instrumental music written for the increasingly sophisticated instruments such as harpsichords and organs of the keyboard family. The violin family also flourished and formed the basis for a new ensemble: the orchestra.

Genres such as opera, oratorio, and concerto will continue to be important in the Classical period, as will keyboard music. Orchestral music will become even more important, with the opera overtures and orchestral suites of the Baroque period giving way to the symphonies of the Classical period.

Test Your Understanding



An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:

<https://louis.pressbooks.pub/musicappreciation/?p=1073#h5p-15>

8.

MUSIC OF THE CLASSICAL PERIOD

Learning Objectives

- Analyze philosophical, historical, and social influences on the development of Classical Period music.
- Describe aspects of music that are considered “entertaining.”
- Explain how Classical Period composers reflect the concepts of simplicity, clarity, and variety in melody, rhythm, dynamics, tone color, texture, and form.

Original content by Francis Scully

Classical Timeline



An interactive HSP element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:

<https://louis.pressbooks.pub/musicappreciation/?p=1112#h5p-14>

Listening for Entertainment

Have you ever watched the Super Bowl half-time show? It’s arguably the biggest and most lavish of musical spectacles in the country. The show features a huge-name pop star (recent artists have included The Weeknd, Katy Perry, Lady Gaga), sometimes additional famous guests, and all sorts of visual spectacle (dancing,

explosions, costume changes, gigantic mechanical lions, etc.). And all of this gets packed into about 15 minutes of time!

While there's obviously a lot of visual interest as well, the Super Bowl half-time show is a place in which music takes center stage with millions and millions of people listening and viewing from the stands and in their homes. And the number one purpose of this musical event: entertainment.

Nowadays, the popular music industry is considered a part of the larger entertainment industry in the United States. But listening to music for entertainment is really only one possible way of using and appreciating music. For example, as we observed in the previous unit, much of the music that we know about from the Middle Ages and the Renaissance is functional sacred music. This is music that had a specific purpose—to help unify participants in a religious ritual and to heighten the experience of prayer.

It's certainly possible to listen to sacred music of the Renaissance for pleasure or entertainment, but that's not its intended purpose. So what makes music “entertaining”? And what are the conditions under which composers create music for entertainment and listeners seek out music for entertainment purposes?

To explore this further, we'll take a look at an era in music history in which the “pursuit of happiness” was all important. This period is known as...

The Classical Period (1750-1820s)

“Classical Music” vs. “Classical Period Music”

Now, I know what you're thinking: “Wait a minute, I thought that all of this ‘Western art music’ was ‘classical music.’” You are correct. And especially for the purposes of classifying musical genres in music stores and on streaming apps, the phrase “classical music” still works as a broad, generic term that covers “Western art music” from about 900 CE to the present day. But there's also a more specific era of music history that has come to be known as the “Classical Period.” And in fact, the composers of this era are so significant to the later history of the music that this term “classical” came to stand for this entire musical style.

Classical music, like the art and architecture of the period, centered on the aesthetic of balance and symmetry. To showcase this, composer developed new musical genres such as the symphony and the string quartet. Because of this, **Instrumental music** held greater importance than vocal music during the classical period.

The Significance of Classical Period Music in Music History

The three most famous composers in the Classical Period—Joseph Haydn, Wolfgang Mozart, and Ludwig van Beethoven—include at least two of the biggest names in music history. You may not recognize Joseph Haydn, but you most certainly know Beethoven's name and probably Mozart as well (and even if you haven't heard

any of these names, you've likely heard their music). These composers worked in and around Vienna, Austria, and established that city as an important center of music in the late-eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

While composers of the Baroque Period (1685-1750) initiated the trend for **instrumental music** (music without texted singing), composers of the Classical Period helped create and define the key instrumental musical genres, including the symphony, the sonata, and the string quartet.

The Classical Period also brought about the birth of **public concerts** devoted to these instrumental musical genres. Composers like Beethoven and Mozart helped to create the music and the institutions (concert halls and performing organizations) that caused this music to flourish. Today, there are symphony orchestras and string quartet groups all over the world that are essentially modeled after the same kinds of performance groups that came about during the Classical Period. **Johann Stamitz** (1717-1757), was director of the Mannheim Orchestra and was credited with standardizing the make up of the classical period orchestra. Most decent-sized cities all over the world have large concert halls that present public concerts of music, a trend that began in the eighteenth century.



Figure 8.1: The Orpheum Theater in New Orleans, home of the Louisiana Philharmonic Orchestra | Attribution: Wally Gobetz | Source: [Flickr](#) | License: [CC BY-NC-ND](#)

Vienna, Austria



Figure 8.2: View of 19th-century Vienna | Attribution: Johann Wenzel Zinke | Source: [Wikimedia Commons](#) | License: Public Domain

Why does Vienna become a major musical capital? Because it is centrally located in Europe and it is the capital of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, headed by the Habsburg royal family. The Empress Maria Theresa and the Emperor Joseph II were great supporters of the arts, with music in particular. Where there's money, political power, and support for music, that's where the musicians will be.

The Classical Period also coincides with what is known as “**The Age of Enlightenment.**” The main tenet of the Age of Enlightenment was, above all, **faith in human reason.** During the Enlightenment, philosophers applied scientific concepts to the social world. In other words, they sought to answer the question, “How can we design government and society so that most people can be happy and live in peace?” For an “enlightened” ruler like Emperor Joseph II of Austria, “**reason is the primary source and legitimacy for authority**” (Boundless). That is to say, political decisions made by rulers were expected to be “reasonable” and “fair.” For the first time, rulers cannot just do whatever they want because they were “chosen by God.”

With this emphasis on using reason in the social world, new understandings of “freedom” and “happiness” are born. That's how this idea, which you may recognize, emerges:

“We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.”

This is of course from the U.S. Declaration of Independence, which was issued in 1776. It is a true “Enlightenment” document.

So What Does the Word “Classical” Mean for Music?

It is worth noting that Classical Period composers like Ludwig van Beethoven, W. A. Mozart, and Joseph Boulogne weren't *trying to write* “Classical” music. They didn't think of their music as “Classical.” Indeed, the use of the term “Classical” to describe music of this era was applied retroactively by music historians after all of these composers had died. This is typical of historical practice. Historians apply labels like “Classical,” “Romantic,” or “old school” in an attempt to define a particular artistic or musical **STYLE** of a particular group of composers or a particular historical era. And it's not just that these composers all lived in and around the same place at the same time but that their *music* shares some similarities.

So, why did historians apply this term to the music of this era? As mentioned above, the composers of this era essentially *defined* the sound of this style of music. This is in a sense the “Classical” sound.

Think about also what “classical,” or even the related word “classic,” means to you. If we say that a piece of music or a movie or something is a “classic,” we mean that it can stand the test of time. People will continue to watch this movie or listen to this music long after even the creators have died.

What “stood the test of time” for Enlightenment thinkers were the “classical” civilizations of ancient Greece and Rome. Historians and scholars, especially in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, thought of these “classical” civilizations as models of “enlightened” civilizations, and they celebrated the philosophy, the political ideals (e.g., democracy), and the artistic ideals of these civilizations.



Figure 8.3: United States White House | Attribution: [MotionStudios](#) | Source: [Pixabay](#) | License: [Pixabay License](#)

Consider the above photo of the U.S. White House. It was built between 1792 and 1800, smack dab in the middle of the Classical Period. Notice its simple design and clean lines. The architect James Hoban was clearly inspired by great buildings of classical civilizations like the Parthenon of ancient Greece:



Figure 8.4: The Parthenon in Athens, Greece | Photographer: Steven Swayne | Source: [Wikimedia Commons](#) | License: [CC BY 2.0](#)

Style Characteristics of Classical Period Music

In terms of concrete musical style characteristics, Classical Period music parallels the simplicity and clarity of classical architecture and also aims to provide pleasure and entertainment for listeners.

Something to Think About:

Think about this for a second: If the overall goal is to make music “entertaining” for the largest number of listeners, how might composers do that? What would you do?

For Classical Period composers, the approach can be summed up with three words: simplicity, variety, and clarity. Let’s look at our musical structures and see/hear how they reflect this approach.

Melody (Simplicity):

For Classical Period composers and listeners, it was very important that melodies sound “natural.” What this means in practice is that the melodies should sound simple, balanced, and easy to sing or hum. In the Classical Period, you hear more “tunes.”

Listen to these examples of Classical Period melodies and notice their simplicity and tunefulness:

Audio Ex. 8.1: Haydn Surprise Symphony (2nd movement):



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://louis.pressbooks.pub/musicappreciation/?p=1112#audio-1112-1>

Audio Ex. 8.2: Haydn Joke melody:



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://louis.pressbooks.pub/musicappreciation/?p=1112#audio-1112-2>

Audio Ex. 8.3: Mozart Magic Flute melody:



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Audio Ex. 8.4: Mozart K. 136:



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://louis.pressbooks.pub/musicappreciation/?p=1112#audio-1112-4>

Rhythm (Variety):

The Classical Period approach to rhythm is going to serve the audience’s desire for “pleasing variety.” In a piece of Classical Period music, you will notice that the tempo stays steady through the whole piece (or movement), but the foreground rhythms (the patterns of long and short notes) in the melody and accompaniment change frequently. As we’ll see, Classical Period composers will use rhythmic variety to create striking emotional contrasts *within* a piece of music or movement.

Listen to an excerpt from this piano piece by Mozart. Notice that the **tempo** (fast) and **meter** (triple meter) remain constant while the rhythms change about every eight seconds or so!

Audio Ex. 8.5: Mozart, K. 332, 1st movement:



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://louis.pressbooks.pub/musicappreciation/?p=1112#audio-1112-5>

Dynamics (Variety):

To create more variety and contrast, classical composers change dynamics more frequently and also introduce more shadings of dynamics (i.e., not just “soft vs. loud,” but soft, medium-soft, extremely soft, medium, medium-loud, extremely loud, etc.). In the piano piece we just heard, there’s a lot more variety in dynamics.

The opening of this symphony brilliantly contrasts an almost aggressively loud opening statement in the full orchestra with a tender, soft response in the strings.

Audio Ex. 8.6: Mozart Jupiter dynamics:



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Tone Color (Variety):

Classical Period composers are going to expand the orchestra to include a lot more instruments and isolate individual instruments to bring out contrasting tone colors. In the Classical Period orchestra, the strings are still the foundation for the sound (with the 1st violins frequently carrying the melody), but we’ll hear additional woodwind instruments and even brass and percussion here and there.

Listen to the following:

Audio Ex. 8.7: Mozart 40, 2nd theme:



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://louis.pressbooks.pub/musicappreciation/?p=1112#audio-1112-7>

Audio Ex. 8.8: Eroica, 2nd theme; tone color:



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://louis.pressbooks.pub/musicappreciation/?p=1112#audio-1112-8>

Texture (Clarity):

In order to make it easy for the listener to follow the music along, Classical Period composers want to clearly differentiate between melody and harmony. In Classical Period music, we typically hear one clear melody, and all of the other parts of the texture are providing harmonic and rhythmic *accompaniment*. You may recall this is known as **homophonic texture**.

Even in a piece of Classical Period piano music, we can clearly hear the simplicity of the texture. Watch 45 seconds or so of this performance of Mozart’s Piano Sonata in C Major and observe the pianist’s hands. His **right** hand is playing the melody, while his **left** hand is playing accompaniment (harmony and rhythm).

Video 8.1: Mozart Sonata in C KV 545—(complete) Paul Barton, piano



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://louis.pressbooks.pub/musicappreciation/?p=1112#oembed-1>

Form (Clarity and Variety):

If Enlightenment philosophers are focused on reason, clarity, and balance, it makes sense that a piece of music that follows this philosophy ought to be clearly organized so that the listener can follow the composer’s line of thought. Classical Period composers developed several major breakthroughs in the area of form, which we’ll go into more detail at a later point, but for now I’ll point out three main ideas to keep in mind:

- **Clearly Defined Sections:** As we’ve already discussed, musical forms are built up through repetition and contrast. We’ve heard lots of different pieces that have different sections (A, B, and so on). In Classical Period music, composers make it easy to hear where one section ends and another begins.
- **Use of Repetition:** Classical Period composers typically repeat musical material within sections to give the listener another opportunity to process the tune. Forms often feature built-in repetition as well, so the musicians are required to repeat whole sections of the music.
- **Development of Standard Formal Structures:** Just as the pop song form is a kind of “standardized” formal outline into which a composer can pour their music, classical period composers will develop

several different standard forms that will prove very effective for organizing musical material. Some of these standard forms include Sonata Form, Rondo Form, Minuet Form, and Theme and Variations Form. Just as your understanding of the basic outline of pop song form helps you to know what to expect when you listen to a song, audiences familiar with these other standardized forms know what to expect.

Listen to the Mozart Piano Sonata above one more time. Now listen from the beginning until about 1:15. Notice that the music stops completely at about 0:25. It's a moment of silence that Mozart uses to separate the first section of music from the next (clearly defined sections). At about 0:50, it sounds like Mozart is announcing, "Hey everybody, this section is about to end now." The music more or less stops again at 0:55, and what do you know, at 0:56, the music *goes back* to the original melody we heard at the beginning of the piece. This is because Mozart has built this **repeat** into the music. This piece is in what we call **Sonata Form**, and we'll explore more of that in another (or the next) chapter.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, we explored how the Classical Period in music coincided with the Age of Enlightenment in the history of Western thought. Ideas about "the pursuit of happiness" informed Classical Period composers' approach to musical structures. As the middle class expanded in the late eighteenth century, composers such as Joseph Haydn, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, and Ludwig van Beethoven created music for "entertainment" that appealed to a wider audience. The resulting style embodied the ideas of simplicity, clarity, and variety.

References:

Boundless. "[The Enlightenment](#)." *History of Western Civilization II*. Lumen, License: [CC BY-SA](#).

Test Your Understanding



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<https://louis.pressbooks.pub/musicappreciation/?p=1112#h5p-9>

9.

CLASSICAL PERIOD: THE SYMPHONY

Learning Objectives

- Explain how public concerts contributed to the development of the genre of the symphony.
- Identify the essential features of the symphony that appealed to eighteenth-century audiences.
- Analyze symphonies by Joseph Boulogne and Joseph Haydn.
- Summarize the sonata form procedure and explain how the individual sections (exposition, development, recapitulation) relate to the whole.
- Compare and contrast sonata form symphonic movements by Mozart, Haydn, and Beethoven.
- Identify other instrumental genres popularized during the Classical Period.

Original content by Francis Scully

Listening to Entertainment

The Birth of Public Concerts in the Classical Period and the Birth of the Symphony

As you can hear, by pursuing the goals of natural simplicity, pleasing variety, and clarity, classical composers were making a conscious effort to make their music accessible and entertaining for a wide audience of listeners. While these composers may have been responding to Enlightenment ideals about the “pursuit of happiness,” they also had a financial incentive.

In the mid- to late 1700s, an important social shift was happening in Europe that had a direct impact on

concert life during the Classical Period. During this era, the economic middle class began to expand. They had more education and more disposable income. Composers and musical entrepreneurs began to form concert societies to put on **public concerts**. This may seem hard for us to imagine now, but in the 1700s, the idea of a “public” concert—that is, a concert that was open to *anyone* who had the money to buy a ticket—was a new thing.

Many intrepid composers, including Beethoven and Mozart, helped to organize these concerts and they made money from the ticket sales. These concerts featured a variety of musical genres, but instrumental music was a big draw. If a composer hoped to make money from concert ticket sales, they needed a piece of music that would impress and excite the audience. A new genre emerges during the classical period that will serve this purpose. This key new genre written for these public concerts was the symphony. A **symphony** is a large, multi-movement composition for orchestra, often in four movements (definition from Clark, et al. *Understanding Music*, p. 308).

We’ll listen to some symphonies, but let’s first look at some of the characteristics of the symphony that make it appeal to the ticket-buying public. A symphony is a big piece in several ways. Though it’s divided into separate parts (usually, four individual movements), a typical Classical Period symphony can last between 25 and 35 minutes.

Symphonies also use a full orchestra (sometimes called a “symphony orchestra,” because it’s an orchestra that plays symphonies), which can feature forty musicians and up to many more. Before the days of microphones and amplification, the way to make a *big* sound was to have more musicians. Even today, there’s something incredibly impressive about seeing a stage packed with musicians compared to, say, a three-piece ensemble. The advantage of this large orchestra of course is that it offers variety. Variety in soft to loud dynamics and variety in tone and color.

Dividing one large piece into several smaller sections called **movements** also offers listeners variety in tempo and moods.

The typical movement scheme of a classical symphony looks something like this:

- 1st movement: Fast tempo, though sometimes first movements may feature a short, slow introduction. This is generally the longest and most substantial movement of the four. The 1st movement is typically done in **sonata form**.
- 2nd movement: Slow tempo, with serene emotional character.
- 3rd movement: **Minuet and Trio**, a minuet being a traditional court dance in triple meter.
- 4th movement: Fast and lighter, a kind of playful *sorbet* after the main musical meal.

It should be noted that the best symphonies of the Classical Period were not just mindless entertainment music. These pieces balanced technical sophistication, which would appeal to a middle-class audience that fancied itself educated and cultivated, but with all of the pleasure that comes from the excitement, variety, and tunefulness that Classical Period composers could provide. (We all watch “mindless” entertainment TV

from time to time, but the best shows and movies are the ones that entertain us *while also making us think*, challenging us, and providing opportunities for us to reflect on our lives.)

We'll hear two symphonies from Classical Period composers to get a feel for how the genre works.

Joseph Boulogne (1745-1799)



Figure 9.1: Joseph Boulogne, Chevalier de Saint Georges, 1789 | Artists: D'après Mather Brown (1761-1831) & William Ward (1766-1826) | Source: [Wikimedia Commons](#) | License: Public Domain

Boulogne Biography

One of the important figures in presenting and performing public concerts in the French capital of Paris in the early part of the classical period was the composer and violinist Joseph Boulogne. Born in the French colony of Guadeloupe as the illegitimate son of a French plantation owner and enslaved African, Boulogne was of mixed-race ancestry. He was brought to Paris by his father, educated, and trained in the arts of fencing and music. While he was barred from certain professional appointments due to the prevailing racism of the time, Boulogne's talent as a violin virtuoso led to some important positions. He became the first violinist and conductor of the Concert de La Loge Olympique, an orchestra that performed many important public concerts (including the premieres of several symphonies by Haydn). He was also music tutor to Marie Antoinette, queen of France. As leader of an orchestra, he composed several symphonies as well as violin concertos for himself to perform as soloists. He was one of the great violin virtuosos of his era.

Symphony No. 1 by Joseph Boulogne (1779)

We'll listen to Boulogne's *Symphony no. 1* (1779). Unlike most later symphonies, this piece is in three movements, fast-slow-fast. As you listen, see if you can notice some of the hallmarks of classical-period style: the simplicity and clarity of the melodic ideas, the pleasing variety (contrasts between loud and soft), and the clarity of the form and texture.

Video 9.1: Symphony No. 1 in G Major, Op. 11 by Joseph Boulogne, Chevalier de Saint Georges:



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://louis.pressbooks.pub/musicappreciation/?p=1131#oembed-1>

1st movement (0:00-4:45): Just notice the contrasts between soft and loud and the different rhythms of the themes. For example, the very beginning of the piece contrasts right away with a forceful loud chord in the orchestra followed by a little tip-toeing tune in the violins. Later in the piece (around 0:39 in this recording), there's a more lyrical, song-like melody which contrasts strongly with the opening melody.

2nd movement (4:46-10:46): This movement features a sweet and peaceful melody. It's relaxing. At 5:58, you hear an example of clear-cut section endings. The music clearly indicates that the section comes to an end.

3rd movement (10:47-14:39): An exuberant closer. The melodies are almost folk-like, even simpler than in the first movement.

Joseph Haydn (1732–1809)



Figure 9.2: Joseph Haydn, 1791 | Artist: Thomas Hardy | Source: [Wikimedia Commons](#) | License: Public Domain

Joseph Haydn (pronounced like “Hi-din” not “HEY-din”) is generally considered the “father of the symphony,” not because he invented the genre, but because he wrote *so many of them* (at least 104!) and his symphonies were by far the most popular symphonies around Europe in the late eighteenth century. We’ll listen to his *Symphony no. 99*, which is part of a collection of twelve symphonies that Haydn wrote especially for a series of public concerts in London, England.

Haydn Biography

Haydn did not come from a musical family, but because of his beautiful voice, he sang in the **Vienna Boys Choir** as a choir boy at St. Stephen’s Cathedral. As he grew older, his voice changed and he was dismissed from the choir.

He was employed for most of his musical career under the patronage of **Prince Paul Anton Esterhazy**, who was a passionate music lover. For 30 years, Haydn oversaw all musical activities at this court. Haydn wrote music for the prince’s chapel, private opera house, orchestral performances, and Marionette Theater, *and* administrated musical activities. But as his position at the palace was that of a high ranking **servant**, much of Haydn’s compositions during that time period were **owned** by the Prince. His compositional output is astounding and includes 104 symphonies, 83 string quartets, numerous sonatas, and over 20 operas.

Characteristics of Haydn’s music: compositional ingenuity, humor, and wit.

Haydn’s Symphony no. 45, the **“Farewell Symphony”** was written after the Prince had been in residence at his palace entertaining his guests for an extended length of time. The musicians had not seen their families in

a long time and were ready to go home. During the last movement of the symphony, musicians stop at various points in the music and leave the stage. The Prince got the hint and allowed them to go home.

Haydn's sense of humor and the good relationship he had with the Prince is evident in his Symphony no. 94, the **"Surprise Symphony"**. The music continued to get softer and softer for several measures, lulling the audience into a sense of serene comfort. A loud chord was sounded unexpectedly, "surprising" the listener and meant to wake up the Prince if he fell asleep during a rather long concert.

Key works: 104 symphonies (**"Father of the Symphony"**), 2 oratorios (*The Creation* and *The Seasons*), tons of chamber music, 6 masses, trumpet concerto, and 20 operas. Considered the **Master of the String Quartet**.

Haydn's Symphony No. 99 in E-flat Major (1793)

I'll make a couple of observations about the piece and its individual movements and then you can listen to the whole thing.

1st movement *Adagio-Vivace Assai* (0:00-9:02): This symphony begins with a grandiose, slow **introduction** (Adagio) before it launches into the main part of the piece, which begins at 2:13. This movement has two main **themes**.

Audio Ex. 9.1: The 1st theme sounds like this:



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://louis.pressbooks.pub/musicappreciation/?p=1131#audio-1131-1>

Audio Ex. 9.2: The 2nd theme sounds like this:



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://louis.pressbooks.pub/musicappreciation/?p=1131#audio-1131-2>

Listening Guide

As you listen to the entire work, note the following.

At about 6:00, Haydn begins to "develop" those themes. You'll recognize the tunes you've already heard, but Haydn will mess around with them. Then at about 7:20, you'll hear a decisive **return** to the first theme that we heard at 2:13.

2nd movement *Adagio* (9:05-16:58): The movement opens with a tender, graceful melody. But don't be fooled by this. It's not "all one mood." At 13:51, there's a turbulent outburst section, but then the music finds a way to return to the initial theme. Notice also lots of wonderful solo moments for the woodwinds and occasional "conversations" between woodwinds and strings.

3rd movement, Minuet, *Allegretto* (17:00-21:12): A nice light "dance" movement. Notice the simplicity and clarity of the melody—two measures soft, then two measures loud.

4th movement *Vivace* (21:13-25:37): A rollicking, fast movement to send audiences into the night with a smile on their faces. We hear one simple, tuneful theme, but pay attention to how Haydn "develops" this theme. You'll hear the rhythms of this theme all over the rest of the movement even when you don't hear the full-blown theme in its original state.

Video 9.2: Haydn's Symphony No. 99 in E-flat Major



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://louis.pressbooks.pub/musicappreciation/?p=1131#oembed-2>

The Symphony and Sonata Form

In the classical period, the **first movement** of a symphony (or string quartet or piano sonata) is generally the most dramatic and longest (duration) movement. This was true of both the Boulogne and the Haydn symphonies we heard. The form of the **first movement of a classical symphony is almost always *sonata form***. **Sonata form** is an ingenious way of organizing musical material that developed in the Classical Period. Remember that in the Classical Period, reason, balance, and clarity were of utmost importance, so it makes sense that this brilliant way of presenting musical ideas would come out of this time period.

One of the amazing breakthroughs of sonata form is that it is going to allow composers to present **contrasting** emotions—that is, to present *more than one* emotion—within one *movement*. This is a bit of an unusual twist compared to a lot of the popular music that we listen to. A typical popular song usually sets one predominant mood or emotional character, and that mood persists throughout the 3-4 minutes of the song. With a piece of music in **sonata form**, the music may start with a certain mood, but it almost invariably changes mood along the way.

In summary, the **sonata form** (1) was an effective way of clearly organizing musical material and (2) provided a way for composers to present two or more contrasting emotions within one movement.

Sonata Form

Sonata form has **three** large sections, and it is not unlike an ABA' form, where the return of the A section is slightly altered. But **sonata form** differs from ABA' in important ways, so we actually have formal names for each of the three parts: **Exposition**, **Development**, and **Recapitulation**.

Sonata form is really where we first encounter the concept of **theme**. Remember, from our fundamentals discussion of melody—the key idea behind composers' use of **theme** is that they can be repeated and developed.

What distinguishes **sonata form** is the way it allows for the juxtaposition of different themes. Sonata form is also a dynamic form because **tonality** plays an important role in the movement. For example, a piece may begin in the key of D major, but at some point it will probably change to the key of A major. This can be difficult for the trained or untrained listener to hear, but it's an important part of how sonata form functions, and surely we *feel* the change even if it's not on the conscious level.

Part I: Exposition

In the exposition, a composer presents (“exposes”) all of the important musical material in the piece. The **exposition** has two themes in two different keys. By musical material, I mean the important **themes**. The exposition is played through and often repeated (that is, the musicians get to the end of the exposition and flip the page back and play the entire section again).

The **first theme** is presented in the original, or home key (e.g., if the symphony is in the key of g minor, the first theme will be in g minor). Keep in mind that theme can be a tune or even just a memorable motive. The first theme is established at the beginning and it is likely played twice. Here's an example of the **first theme** from Mozart's Symphony No. 40.

Audio Ex. 9.3: Mozart, Symphony No. 40 1st theme



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Bridge/Transition—Then, there is a transitional section. The purpose of this music here is to **change key**.

When we get to the **second theme group**, we have fully arrived from the transition into a **new key**. For example, we started in G minor, and now the second theme will be in B-flat major. Now, you will hear a brand-new melodic idea and it will also have a new harmonic center. Probably also, the second theme will have a contrasting rhythmic quality from the first theme.

Here's an example of the **second theme** from Mozart's Symphony No. 40:

Audio Ex. 9.4: Mozart, Symphony No. 40, 2nd theme



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Closing theme—The closing theme section is also in the same key of the second theme. This section serves to bring the exposition to a close and solidifies the key of the second theme group. In Mozart’s Symphony No. 40, the closing theme is *also* in B-flat major. Very often, the closing theme is made up of material from the first theme. In the Symphony No. 40 by Mozart, we hear the short two-note motive from the 1st theme repeated in the closing theme. Here’s the two-note motive (played twice) that you’ll hear throughout the movement:

Audio Ex. 9.5: Mozart, Symphony No. 40, two-note motive



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://louis.pressbooks.pub/musicappreciation/?p=1131#audio-1131-5>

Part II: Development

In the development, musical material that was presented in the exposition is now “developed.” The **development section** creates variations on the original themes in different keys. You will recognize the basic shapes of the original themes, but they will sound different because a composer will break them apart, put the themes in different instruments, and combine themes with another melody in polyphonic texture, which creates a sense of conflict and drama. The composer might also transform a theme by rearranging some of the notes or by adding new notes to a part of a theme.

Notice, we aren’t likely to hear anything completely new, just the composer *playing around* with music that we’ve already heard in the exposition. We arrive at the development in the key of the **second** theme, but we will likely change keys several times within the development section. The point of the development section is to create a dramatic sense of conflict. The **development** eventually transitions back to ORIGINAL key for the...

Part III: Recapitulation

The **recapitulation section**, sometimes called “recap” for short, is like a repeat of the **exposition**, but with one important difference—*all* of the music now is in the **original key**. That is, the recapitulation doesn’t change key like the exposition.

The first theme is back in the original key just like we heard at the beginning of the piece.

The bridge/transition **does not** modulate (change key). The music for the transition section has to be altered because recall that in the exposition, this music helped to change key, but we don't want to change key in the recap.

The second theme group is in the **tonic** (original) key.

The closing theme is also in the **tonic** key.

Part IV (Optional): Coda

The **coda** is an optional, post-mortem wrap-up to help bring a close to the whole piece.

Let's hear the first movement of Mozart's Symphony No. 40 again, now following Mozart's use of the **sonata form**.

Video 9.3: Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart—Symphony No. 40 in G Minor (1788)—1st Movement



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://louis.pressbooks.pub/musicappreciation/?p=1131#oembed-3>

Listening Chart (timings in brackets refer to the above linked recording):

Exposition:

[0:07–0:34] **1st Theme**. The theme is heard once in its entirety. Then it is repeated and segues directly into the...

[0:35–0:51] **Transition**. The music changes key from G minor to the key of Bb Major. The music of the transition comes to a complete stop (classical composers want it to be easy to follow the form).

[0:52–1:24] **2nd Theme**. After the transition comes to a complete stop, we hear the lyrical and softer 2nd theme in B-flat major. Listen to how Mozart divides parts of the melody between strings and woodwind instruments (variety).

[1:52–1:55] **Closing Theme**. Listen to the woodwinds echoing the strings. You can hear the 2-note motive from the 1st theme in the woodwinds. Repeated cadences at the end of this section make it very clear that the exposition is coming to a close.

The entire **exposition** now is **repeated** [1:56–3:46]. In the repeat, try to identify the different sections of the exposition on your own.

Development [3:47–4:56]:

Here Mozart is going to **develop** his musical material. Hear how Mozart varies the music in these different sections of the development.

[3:47–3:59] Presentation of 1st theme in descending **sequence** changing keys—piano dynamic (soft)

[4:00–4:24] Polyphonic exploration of 1st theme. An “outburst” in **forte** dynamic (loud).

[4:25–4:39] Tradeoff of 1st theme motive between strings and woodwinds—**piano** dynamic

[4:40–4:47] Tradeoff between high and low strings—**forte**

[4:48–4:55] Melodic line in the woodwinds which descends in pitch re-transitions seamlessly back to the...

Recapitulation

[4:57–5:26] **1st Theme** (as in exposition). We are back in the **home key** of G minor now.

[5:28–6:01] **Transition**. This section is considerably longer than the analogous section in the exposition.

Mozart has to do some harmonic twists and turns this time to **not** change key as he does in the exposition.

[6:03–6:41] **2nd Theme**. Now the 2nd theme in the recap is also in G minor.

[6:42–7:10] **Closing Theme**. The closing theme in the recap is also in the original home key (G minor).

[7:11–end(7:27)] **Coda**. This movement features the short, optional section that helps to bring the movement to a close.

As an exercise, use the progress bar in the player to find the 2nd theme in the exposition at 0:52, then compare it with the 2nd theme in the recapitulation at 6:03. Do you hear that the same music in the recap is lower-pitched and in a minor key?

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756–1791)



Figure 9.3: Mozart
ca. 1780, detail
from portrait |
Artist: Johann
Nepomuk della
Croce | Source:
[Wikimedia
Commons](#) |
License: Public
Domain

Mozart Biography

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart was born in Salzburg, Austria (west of Vienna). His father, Leopold Mozart, was a

court composer and musician for the Archbishop of Salzburg. Wolfgang and sister Nannerl were child prodigy musicians and were taken all over Europe and put on display to perform. His principal instrument was the keyboard (harpsichord). **Mozart** wrote his first symphony when he was 8 years old. Later, he worked in the court of Salzburg, but he was unhappy in this position and he left this situation when he was 25 and moved to Vienna to become a freelance musician. He also moved to Vienna to escape his controlling father and marry Constanze Weber (against Leopold's wishes). He made his living teaching and giving public concerts. Mozart was a very prolific composer. Mozart said, in essence, that he composed the music in his head and later simply wrote it down. He was underappreciated in his lifetime and had constant money troubles. He **died** (scholars are still uncertain of the cause) suddenly at age 35 and was buried in a communal **pauper's grave**. At the time of his death, he was writing a Requiem mass, which he did not complete, commissioned by an anonymous patron. When Mozart died, his music was in an unorganized disarray. A man by the name of **Ludwig von Köchel**, was tasked with cataloging all of Mozart's work. You will see the letter K for **Köchel** and a number behind Mozart's works.

Key Works: Several operatic masterpieces: *Le Nozze di Figaro*, *Don Giovanni*, *Così fan tutte*, *The Magic Flute*; 41 symphonies; 27 piano concertos; 5 violin concertos; string quartets; sonatas; several masses for church performance (including the uncompleted Requiem). **Mozart** was considered the greatest classical period composer of Opera.

Now, let's hear how Joseph Haydn works in the **sonata form**.

Though Haydn was older than Mozart, he lived a good deal longer. He composed 104 symphonies and is considered the "father" of the symphony. His last twelve symphonies (Symphonies No. 93–104) were composed when he was a famous musician all around Europe and were written specifically for a series of public concerts in London, England. Consequently, these symphonies are known as the "London Symphonies."

We listened to this symphony previously, but let's hear it again and examine the sections of the **sonata form** first movement now that we have learned more about the form. This is a good time to point out that your understanding of this music will only improve with repeated listening.

Video 9.4: Haydn—Symphony No. 99 (1793), 1st movement

This piece has a slow introduction. The sonata form begins right when the fast section starts. We've already listened to this piece, but this is a different performance. The notes, rhythms, melodies, etc. are the same, of course, but you might notice that the performers in this video do certain things slightly differently.



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1st Movement:

Introduction [0:01–1:39]

Exposition:

[1:40–2:02] 1st Theme.

[2:02–3:00] Transition. Notice again that the music comes to a complete stop before the 2nd theme. The music changes **key**.

[3:01–3:17] 2nd Theme. This theme is a little lighter than the 1st theme.

[3:17–3:32] Closing Theme.

[3:33–5:21] Full repeat of the exposition.

[5:24–6:41] Development

[6:42–end] Recapitulation. Notice that the recapitulation is considerably more condensed and compressed than the exposition. Haydn takes less time with the transition to the second theme, and there is no coda in this movement.

Other Instrumental Genres

With the classical period, we have solidified many of the main genres of instrumental music. All of the institutions—the opera house and the concert hall—are firmly in place. The **pianoforte**, named for the ability to play soft (piano) and loud (forte), and later shortened to the piano, was also invented during the Classical period. The older keyboards were not able to sustain their sound when played, with the sound diminishing quickly. The piano was able to do this and more. Many composers were eager to write pieces that reflected this new and wonderful instrument.

The **solo concerto** was a three-movement genre featuring the contrast of soloist and orchestra and was the type of concerto popular during the classical period. Classical Period composers of course wrote plenty of pieces in the **concerto** genre. For example, Mozart wrote 27 piano concertos in his career. A piano concerto is of course a concerto for **piano solo** and orchestra. **The violin and the piano** were the two instruments favored by the composer during the Classical Period for solo concertos.

Watch a few minutes of Mozart's great *Piano Concerto No. 20 in D Minor* to get an idea of how a Classical Period concerto sounds. The basic idea, contrast between soloist and orchestra, is of course still the main feature. The **cadenza** was a section in the concerto where the orchestra would stop playing and the soloist would improvise around the main theme, playing whatever music wanted to show off their skills as a performer. Mozart who was always ahead of his time, wrote **suggested cadenzas** for the soloist in case they chose not to improvise. The soloist would give a signal to the conductor and the orchestra that their cadenza was coming to a conclusion by playing something called a trill. A **trill** is the rapid alternation between two notes.

Video 9.5: Mozart: *Concerto for Piano and Orchestra (D-Minor)* K.466 (note that the video should play when clicking the play button)



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So far we've looked at **large** instrumental genres, such as the **concerto** and the **symphony**, but it bears some mentioning that there's so much great instrumental music written for smaller ensembles. Music that would be performed in a room (sometimes called a "chamber") or smaller auditorium is known as chamber music.

Chamber music is typically music for two to nine players, usually with one player per part.

Also, during the classical period, people didn't have CD or mp3 players; they bought pianos and they played string quartets together. People sold sheet music. If you wanted to hear the "top 40" in 1785, you had to play it yourself.

Here are some important genres of **chamber music**.

A **sonata** is a piece for a single instrument or small group of instruments. The term is a very general term, which you recognize from the earlier discussion of **sonata form**. **Sonata form** refers to the form that a lot of movements in sonatas and symphonies use. You might come across **piano sonatas** (written for solo piano), **violin and piano sonatas** (violin and piano), **cello sonatas** (cello and piano), **etc.** Sonatas frequently have a solo instrument and keyboard or are for keyboard alone.

A **string quartet** is a piece for four string instruments: two violins, a viola, and a cello. It is a large-scale piece like the symphony, usually in four movements (fast sonata form, slow movement, minuet, fast 4th movement), but obviously it is more intimate and without the tone color possibilities of the orchestra.

Our three classical masters, Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven, all produced numerous masterworks for string quartet, solo piano sonatas, and piano trios (piano, cello, and violin).

Here's a great example of the first movement of a string quartet by Joseph Haydn:

Video 9.6: Haydn Op. 20 No. 3—First Movement



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It's a fast movement in **sonata form**, but the experience of **tone** and **color** is different from the orchestra. It's not as loud and varied in color, but it's more intimate than a symphony.

Beethoven

Adapted from *Understanding Music: Past and Present*

By Jeffrey Klubal and Elizabeth Kramer,

Edited by Johnathan Kulp

Adapted & edited by Francis Scully



Figure 9.4: Portrait of Ludwig van Beethoven, 1820 | Artist: Joseph Karl Stieler | Source: [Wikimedia Commons](#) | License: Public Domain

The Music of Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827)

Beethoven was born in Bonn in December of 1770. As you can see from the map at the beginning of this chapter, Bonn sat at the Western edge of the Germanic lands, on the Rhine River. Those in Bonn were well-acquainted with traditions of the Netherlands and of the French; they would be some of the first to hear of the revolutionary ideas coming out of France in the 1780s. The area was ruled by the Elector of Cologne. As the Kapellmeister for the Elector, Beethoven's grandfather held the most important musical position in Bonn; he died when Beethoven was three years old. Beethoven's father, Johann Beethoven, sang in the Electoral Chapel his entire life. While he may have provided his son with music lessons at an early stage of Ludwig's life, it appears that Johann had given into alcoholism and depression, especially after the death of Maria Magdalena Keverich (Johann's wife and Ludwig's mother) in 1787.

Although hundreds of miles east of Vienna, the Electorate of Cologne was under the jurisdiction of the Austrian Habsburg empire that was ruled from this Eastern European city. The close ties between these lands made it convenient for the Elector, with the support of the music-loving Count Ferdinand Ernst Gabriel von Waldstein (1762-1823), to send Beethoven to Vienna to further his music training. Ferdinand was the youngest of an aristocratic family in Bonn. He greatly supported the arts and became a patron of Beethoven. Beethoven's

first stay in Vienna in 1787 was interrupted by the death of his mother. In 1792, he returned to Vienna for good.

Perhaps the most universally-known fact of Beethoven's life is that he went deaf. You can read entire books on the topic; for our present purposes, the timing of his hearing loss is most important. It was at the end of the 1790s that Beethoven first recognized that he was losing his hearing. By 1801, he was writing about it to his most trusted friends. It is clear that the loss of his hearing was an existential crisis for Beethoven.

Something to Think About:

During the fall of 1802, Beethoven composed a letter to his brothers that included his last will and testament, a document that we've come to know as the "Heiligenstadt Testament," named after the small town of Heiligenstadt, north of the Viennese city center, where he was staying. To view the Testament, visit [Heiligenstadt Testament](#), which provides us insight into Beethoven's heart and mind. Most striking is his statement that his experiences of social alienation, connected to his hearing loss, "drove me almost to despair, a little more of that and I would have ended my life—it was only *my art* that held me back."

The idea that Beethoven found in art a reason to live suggests both his valuing of art and a certain self-awareness of what he had to offer music. Beethoven and his physicians tried various means to counter the hearing loss and improve his ability to function in society. By 1818, however, Beethoven was **completely deaf**. After he went deaf, he communicated via **notebooks** that others wrote in so he could understand what was being said. But his frustration was evident as we see in the letter he wrote to his brothers which we know as the Heiligenstadt Testament.

Beethoven had a complex personality. Although he read the most profound philosophers of his day and was compelled by lofty philosophical ideals, his own writing was broken and his personal accounts show errors in basic math. He craved close human relationships yet had difficulty sustaining them. By 1810, he had secured a lifetime annuity from local noblemen, meaning that Beethoven never lacked for money. Still, his letters—as well as the accounts of contemporaries—suggest a man suspicious of others and preoccupied with the compensation he was receiving.

Overview of Beethoven's Music

Upon arriving in Vienna in the early 1790s, **Beethoven** lived primarily off his earnings from the concert

hall and sale of music to publishers. Beethoven supported himself by playing piano at salons and by giving music lessons. Salons were gatherings of literary types, visual artists, musicians, and thinkers, often hosted by noblewomen for their friends. Here Beethoven both played music of his own composition and improvised upon musical themes given to him by those in attendance.

Beethoven was the first major composer to demand equal footing with the aristocracy. In April of 1800 Beethoven gave his first concert for his own benefit, held at the important Burgtheater. As typical for the time, the concert included a variety of types of music—vocal, orchestral, and even, in this case, chamber music. Many of the selections were by Haydn and Mozart, for Beethoven’s music from this period was profoundly influenced by these two composers.

Scholars have traditionally divided Beethoven’s composing into **three chronological periods**: early, middle, and late. Like all efforts to categorize, this one proposes boundaries that are open to debate. Probably most controversial is the dating of the end of the middle period and the beginning of the late period. Beethoven did not compose much music between 1814 and 1818, meaning that any division of those years would fall more on Beethoven’s life than on his music.

In general, the music of Beethoven’s first period (roughly until 1803) reflects the influence of Haydn and Mozart. Beethoven’s second period (1803-1814) is sometimes called his “heroic” period, based on his recovery from depression documented in the “Heiligenstadt Testament” mentioned earlier. This period includes such music compositions as his Third Symphony, which Beethoven subtitled “*Eroica*” (that is, heroic), the Fifth Symphony, and Beethoven’s one opera, *Fidelio*, which took the French Revolution as its inspiration. Other works composed during this time include Symphonies No. 3 through No. 8 and famous piano works, such as the sonatas “Waldstein,” “Appassionata,” and “Lebewohl” and Concertos No. 4 and No. 5. He continued to write instrumental chamber music, choral music, and songs into his heroic middle period. In these works of his middle period, Beethoven is often regarded as having come into his own because they display a new and original musical style. In comparison to the works of Haydn and Mozart and Beethoven’s earlier music, these longer compositions feature larger performing forces, thicker polyphonic textures, more complex motivic relationships, more dissonance and delayed resolution of dissonance, more syncopation and **hemiola** (hemiola is the momentary simultaneous sense of being in two meters at the same time), and more elaborate forms. Partly because of his growing deafness, he **increased** the size of the orchestra primarily by adding brass and woodwinds, giving his music a bigger, fuller sound. He is also spent a great deal of time on **orchestration**, writing and arranging music for orchestra, emphasizing the strengths and capabilities of the instruments.

When Beethoven started composing again in 1818, his music was much more experimental. Some of his contemporaries believed that he had lost his ability to compose as he lost his hearing. The late piano sonatas, last five string quartets, monumental *Missa Solemnis*, and Symphony No. 9 in D minor (*The Choral Symphony*) are now perceived to be some of Beethoven’s most revolutionary compositions, although they were not uniformly applauded during his lifetime. Beethoven’s late style was one of contrasts: extremely slow music next to extremely fast music and extremely complex and dissonant music next to extremely simple and consonant music.

Although this chapter will not discuss the music of Beethoven's early period or late period in any depth, you might want to explore this music on your own. Beethoven's first published piano sonata, the Sonata in F minor, Op. 2, No. 1 (1795), shows the influence of its dedicatee, Joseph Haydn. One of Beethoven's last works, his famous Ninth Symphony, departs from the norms of the day by incorporating vocal soloists and a choir into a symphony, which was almost always written only for orchestral instruments. The Ninth Symphony is Beethoven's longest; its first three movements, although innovative in many ways, use the expected forms: a fast sonata form, a ***scherzo*** (which by the early nineteenth century—as we will see in our discussion of the Fifth Symphony—had replaced the minuet and trio and had a faster tempo), and a slow theme and variations form. **Theme and variations** was a structural form based on a theme followed by alternate versions of that theme. The finale, in which the vocalists participate, is truly revolutionary in terms of its length, the sheer extremes of the musical styles it uses, and the combination of large orchestra and choir. The text or words that Beethoven chose for the vocalists speak of joy and the hope that all humankind might live together in brotherly love. The “Ode to Joy” melody to which Beethoven set these words was later used for the hymn “Joyful, Joyful, We Adore Thee.”

Focus Composition: Beethoven, Symphony No. 5 in C Minor, Op. 67 (1808)

In this chapter, we will focus on possibly Beethoven's most famous composition, his Fifth Symphony (1808). The premier of the Fifth Symphony took place at perhaps the most infamous of all of Beethoven's concerts, an event that lasted for some four hours in an unheated theater on a bitterly cold Viennese evening. At this time, Beethoven was not on good terms with the performers, several of whom refused to rehearse with the composer in the room. In addition, the final number of the performance was finished too late to be sufficiently practiced, and in the concert, it had to be stopped and restarted. Belying its less than auspicious first performance, once published, the Fifth Symphony quickly gained the critical acclaim it has held ever since.

The most famous part of the Fifth Symphony is its commanding opening. This opening features the entire orchestra playing in unison a musical motive that we will call the **short-short-short-long (SSSL)** motive, because of the rhythm of its four notes. We will also refer to it as the Fate motive, because at least since the 1830s, music critics have likened it to fate knocking on the door, as discussed at [http:// www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=5473894](http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=5473894). The short notes repeat the same pitch and then the long, held-out note leaps down a third. After the orchestra releases the held note, it plays the motive again, now sequenced a step lower, then again at the original pitches, then at higher pitches. This sequenced phrase, which has become the first theme of the movement, then repeats, and the fast sonata-form movement starts to pick up steam. This is the exposition of the movement.



Figure 9.5:
Opening notes of
Symphony No. 5,
Op. 67 | Composer:
Ludwig van
Beethoven |
Source: [Wikipedia](#) |
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Audio Ex. 9.6: Beethoven's Symphony No. 5, opening bars



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After a transition, the second theme is heard. It also starts with the SSSL motive, although the pitches heard are quite different. The horn presents the question phrase of the second theme; then, the strings respond with the answer phrase of the second theme.

You should note that the key has changed—the music is now in E flat major, which has a much more peaceful feel than C minor—and the answer phrase of the second theme is much more legato than anything yet heard in the symphony. This tuneful legato music does not last for long, and the closing section returns to the rapid sequencing of the SSSL motive. Then the orchestra returns to the beginning of the movement for a repeat of the exposition.

The development section of this first movement does everything we might expect of a development: the SSSL motive appears in sequence and is altered as the keys change rapidly. Also, we hear more polyphonic imitative in the development than elsewhere in the movement. Near the end of the development, the dynamics alternate between piano and forte, and before the listener knows it, the music has returned to the home key of C minor as well as the opening version of the SSSL motive: this starts the recapitulation. The music transitions to the second theme—now still in the home key of C minor—and the closing section. Then, just when the listener expects the recapitulation to end, Beethoven extends the movement in a coda. This coda is much longer than any coda we have yet listened to in the music of Haydn or Mozart, although it is not as long as the coda to the final movement of this symphony. These long codas are also another element that Beethoven is known for. He often restates the conclusive cadence many times and in many rhythmic durations.

1st Movement:

Listen and observe just how much you hear the SSSL motive throughout this movement. This movement is of course in **sonata form**.

Video 9.7: 1st movement, “Allegro con brio” of Beethoven’s 5th Symphony



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Listening Guide

Exposition:

1st theme (0:00-0:31)

Transition (0:32-0:49)

2nd theme (0:50-1:19) Listen for the **motive** in the bass underneath the lyrical melody in the violins.

Closing theme (1:21-1:30)

Exposition is repeated (1:31-2:58)

Development (2:59-4:23)

Recapitulation (4:24-6:21)

Coda (6:22-end)

2nd Movement

The second movement is a lyrical theme and variations movement in a major key, which provides a few minutes of respite from the menacing C minor. Even though it is a new movement, we hear the SSSL motive transformed. In the second movement, the **motive** sounds like this:

Audio Ex. 9.7: Beethoven Symphony No. 5, 2nd movement motive:



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It sounds quite a bit different from the first movement motive, but the rhythm is there—three short notes followed by one long note.

Listen to the following for the second movement from 7:20 (the first mark in the progress bar) up to 17:10:

Video 9.8: Beethoven: Symphony No. 5



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3rd and 4th Movements

The third movement returns to C minor and is a scherzo. Scherzos retain the form of the minuet, having a contrasting trio section that divides the two presentations of the scherzo. Like the minuet, scherzos also have a triple feel, although they tend to be somewhat faster in tempo than the minuet.

This scherzo third movement opens with a mysterious, even spooky, opening theme played by the lower strings. The second theme returns to the SSSL motive, although now with different pitches.

Listening

Audio Ex. 9.8: Beethoven, Symphony No. 5, 3rd movement motive:



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The mood changes with a very imitative and very polyphonic trio in C major, but the spooky theme reappears, alongside the fate motive, with the repeat of the scherzo. Instead of making the scherzo a discrete movement, Beethoven chose to write a musical transition between the scherzo and the final movement so that the music runs continuously from one movement to another. After suddenly getting very soft, the music gradually grows in dynamic as the motive sequences higher and higher until the fourth movement bursts onto the scene with a triumphant and loud C major theme. It seems that perhaps our hero, whether we think of the hero as the music of the symphony or perhaps as Beethoven himself, has finally triumphed over Fate.

The fourth movement is a rather typical fast sonata form finale with one exception. The second theme of the scherzo (b), which contains the SSSL fate motive, appears one final time at the end of the movement's development section, as if to try one more time to derail the hero's conquest. But the movement ultimately ends with a lot of loud cadences in C major, providing ample support for an interpretation of the composition as the overcoming of Fate. This is the interpretation that most commentators for almost two hundred years have given the symphony. It is pretty amazing to think that a musical composition might express so aptly the human theme of struggle and triumph. Listen to the piece and see if you hear it the same way.

Listening: Continue listening to the third and fourth movements, beginning at 17:12 (the third mark in

the progress bar) through to the end, and notice how the third movement transitions directly into the fourth movement at 22:21 without a break, thus emphasizing the sense of dramatic progression through all four movements of the piece:



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Listening Guide

Third Movement (Scherzo–Allegro)

A (17:12–19:03)

B (19:04–20:30)

A (20:31–22:20)

Fourth Movement (Allegro)

Exposition:

1st theme (22:21–22:53)

Transition (22:54–23:20)

2nd theme (23:20–23:45): Hear the 3 short notes and 1 long note of the MOTIVE.

Closing theme (23:46–24:15)

Repeat of exposition (24:16–26:18)

Development (26:18–28:20)

Notice at 27:45 that it sounds as if the music is going **back** to the **third movement**. This doesn't last; it erupts again and brings us to the...

Recapitulation (28:21–30:52)

The huge chords make it sound like the piece is coming to a close, but then we go into the...

Coda (30:53–end)

In the coda, Beethoven just hammers away on C major chords. He makes sure you know that the symphony is coming to a triumphant close.

Chapter Summary

By Francis Scully

In this chapter, we explored how the birth of public concerts sparked enthusiasm for a dynamic new instrumental music genre known as the symphony. Symphonies were appealing to audiences because they provided thrilling sonic variety (variety in tone color and dynamics) as well as contrasts in tempo and emotional

character. While symphonies share a number of features, like a large orchestra and a four-movement structure, the symphony examples by Boulogne, Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven make it clear that the genre by no means restricted creative possibilities. We also explored how symphony composers in the Classical Period employed sonata form to create emotional contrast in their music and through this form created music that was dynamic and dramatic. At the same time, the clarity of the formal procedure allowed audiences to easily follow along with the music.

Test Your Understanding



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10.

MUSIC OF THE ROMANTIC PERIOD AND 19TH CENTURY

Learning Objectives

- Describe the historical and cultural contexts of nineteenth-century music, including musical Romanticism and nationalism.
- Identify selected genres of nineteenth-century music and their associated expressive aims, uses, and styles.
- Identify the music of selected composers of nineteenth-century music and their associated styles.
- Explain ways in which music and other cultural forms interact in nineteenth-century music in genres such as the art song, program music, opera, and musical nationalism.

Excerpts from *Understanding Music*
By Jeff Kluball and Elizabeth Kramer
Edited by Bonnie Le

Timeline



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- 1801: Wordsworth publishes his *Lyrical Ballades*
- 1814-1815: Congress of Vienna, ending Napoleon's conquest of Europe and Russia
- 1815: Schubert publishes *The Erlking*
- 1818: Mary Shelley publishes *Frankenstein*
- 1818: Caspar David Friedrich paints *Wanderer above the Sea of Fog*
- 1827: Beethoven dies
- 1829: Felix Mendelssohn leads a revival of Bach's *St. Matthew Passion*, which leads to a revival of Bach's music more generally
- 1830s: Eugène Delacroix captures revolutionary and nationalist fervor in his paintings
- 1830s: Clara Wieck and Franz Liszt tour (separately) as virtuoso pianists
- 1831: Fryderyk Chopin immigrates to Paris from the political turmoil in his native country of Poland
- 1832: Johann Wolfgang von Goethe dies
- 1840: Clara and Robert Schumann marry
- 1850s: Realism becomes prominent in art and literature
- 1853: Verdi composes *La Traviata*
- 1861-1865: Civil War in the U.S.
- 1870-71: Franco-Prussian War
- 1874: Bedřich Smetana composes *The Moldau*
- 1876: Johannes Brahms completes his First Symphony
- 1876: Wagner premieres *The Ring of the Nibelungen* at his Festival Theatre in Bayreuth, Germany
- 1882: Tchaikovsky writes the *1812 Overture*
- 1891-1892: John Philip Sousa tours the U.S. leading the U.S. Marine Band
- 1892-1895: Antonín Dvořák visits the U.S., helps establish the first American music conservatory, and composes the *New World Symphony*

Introduction and Historical Context

This chapter considers music of the nineteenth century, a period often called the “Romantic era” in music. Romanticism might be defined as a cultural movement stressing emotion, imagination, and individuality. It started in literature around 1800 and then spread to art and music. By around 1850, the dominant aesthetic (artistic philosophy) of literature and visual art began to shift to what is now often called a time of realism (cultural expressions of what is perceived as common and contemporary). Cultural Nationalism (pride in one's culture) and Exoticism (fascination with the other) also became more pronounced after 1850, as reflected in art, literature, and music. Realism, nationalism, and Exoticism were prominent in music as well, although we tend to treat them as sub-categories under a period of musical Romanticism that spanned the entire century.

The power and expression of emotion exalted by literary Romanticism were equally important for nineteenth-century music, which often explicitly attempted to represent every shade of human emotion,

the most prominent of which are love and sorrow. Furthermore, the Romantics were very interested in the connections between music, literature, and the visual arts. Poets and philosophers rhapsodized about the power of music, and musicians composed both vocal and instrumental program music explicitly inspired by literature and visual art. In fact, for many nineteenth-century thinkers, music had risen to the top of the aesthetic hierarchy. Music was previously perceived as inferior to poetry and sculpture, as it had no words or form. In the nineteenth century, however, music was understood to express what words could not express, thus transcending the material for something more ideal and spiritual; some called this expression “absolute music.”

As we listen to nineteenth-century music, we might hear some similarities with music of the classical era, but there are also differences. Aesthetically speaking, classicism tends to emphasize balance, control, proportion, symmetry, and restraint. Romanticism seeks out the new, the curious, and the adventurous, emphasizing qualities of remoteness, boundlessness, and strangeness. It is characterized by restless longing and impulsive reaction, as well as freedom of expression and pursuit of the unattainable.

Geo-politically, the nineteenth century extends from the French Revolution to a decade or so before World War I. The French Revolution wound down around 1799, when the Napoleonic Wars then ensued. The Napoleonic Wars were waged by Napoléon Bonaparte, who had declared himself emperor of France. Another war was the United States Civil War from 1861 to 1865. The United States also saw expansion westward as the gold rush brought in daring settlers. Even though the United States was growing, England was currently the dominant world power. Its whaling trade kept ships sailing and lamps burning. Coal fueled the Industrial Revolution and the ever-expanding rail system. Economic and social power shifted increasingly towards the common people due to revolts. These political changes affected nineteenth-century music as composers began to aim their music at the more common people, rather than just the rich.

Political nationalism was on the rise in the nineteenth century. Early in the century, Bonaparte’s conquests spurred on this nationalism, inspiring Italians, Austrians, Germans, Eastern Europeans, and Russians to assert their cultural identities, even while enduring the political domination of the French. After France’s political power diminished with the Congress of Vienna in 1814-1815, politics throughout much of Europe were still punctuated by revolutions, first a minor revolution in 1848 in what is now Germany and then the Franco-Prussian War of 1870-1871. Later in the century, Eastern Europeans, in what is now the Czech Republic and Slovakia, and the Russians developed schools of national music in the face of Austro-German cultural, and sometimes political, hegemony. Nationalism was fed by the continued rise of the middle class as well as the rise of republicanism and democracy, which defines human beings as individuals with responsibilities and rights derived as much from the social contract as from family, class, or creed.

Romantics were fascinated by nature, and the middle-class public followed naturalists like Americans John James Audubon (1785-1851) and John Muir (1838-1914) and the Englishman Charles Darwin (1809-1882) as they observed and recorded life in the wild. Darwin’s evolutionary theories based on his voyages to locales such as the Galapagos Islands were avidly debated among the people of his day.



Figure 10.1: John James Audubon, 1826 | Artist: John Syme | Source: [Wikimedia Commons](#) | License: Public Domain

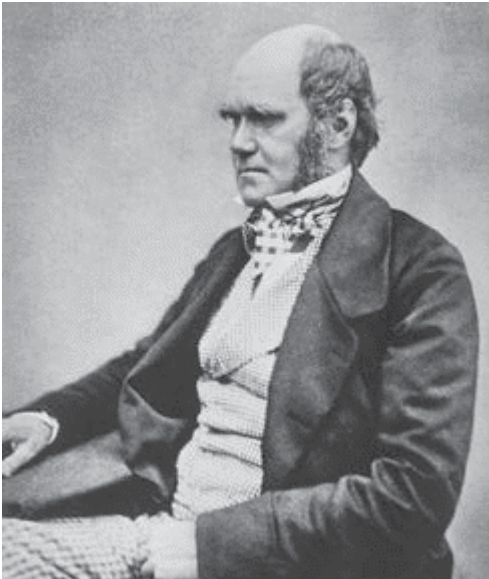


Figure 10.2: Charles Darwin, 1854 | Photographers: Henry Maull and John Fox | Source: [Wikimedia Commons](#) | License: Public Domain

Visual Art

Romantics were fascinated by the imaginary, the grotesque, and by that which was chronologically or geographically foreign. Romantics were also intrigued by the Gothic style: a young Göethe raved about it after visiting the Gothic Cathedral in Strasbourg, France. His writings, in turn, spurred the completion of the Cathedral in Cologne, Germany, which had been started in the Gothic style in 1248 and then completed in that same style between the years 1842 and 1880 (Figure 10.3).

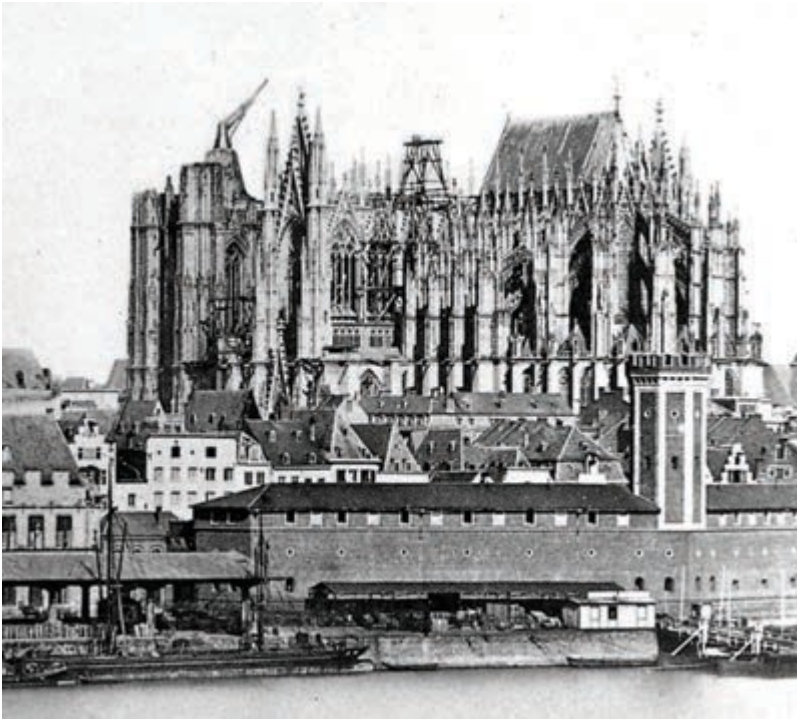


Figure 10.3:
Cologne Cathedral
| Photographer:
Johann Franz
Michiels | Source:
[Wikimedia
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Domain

Romantic interest in the individual, nature, and the supernatural is also very evident in nineteenth-century landscapes, including those of Caspar David Friedrich (1774-1840). One of his most famous paintings, *Wanderer above the Sea of Fog* (1818; Figure 10.4), shows a lone man with his walking stick, surrounded by a vast horizon. The man has progressed to the top of a mountain, but there his vision is limited due to the fog. We do not see his face, perhaps suggesting the solitary reality of a human subject both separate from and somehow spiritually attuned to the natural and supernatural.



Figure 10.4: The
Wanderer above
the Sea of Fog |
Artist: Caspar
David Friedrich |
Source: [Wikimedia
Commons](#) |
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Domain

As the nineteenth century progressed, European artists became increasingly interested in what they called

“realist” topics—that is, in depicting the lives of the average human as he or she went about living in the present moment. While the realism in such art is not devoid of idealizing forces, it does emphasize the validity of everyday life as a topic for art alongside the value of craft and technique in bringing such “realist” scenes to life.

Literature

The novel, which had emerged forcefully in the eighteenth century, became the literary genre of choice in the nineteenth century. Many German novels focused on a character’s development; most important of these novels are those by the German philosopher, poet, and playwright Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, who was fascinated with the supernatural and set the story of Faust. Faust is a man who sells his soul to the devil in exchange for knowledge, in an epic two-part drama. English author Mary Shelley (1797-1851) explored nature and the supernatural in the novel *Frankenstein, or the Modern Prometheus* (1818), which examines current scientific discoveries as participating in the ancient quest to control nature. Later in the century, British author Charles Dickens exposed the plight of the common man during a time of Industrialization. In France, Victor Hugo (1802-1885) wrote on a broad range of themes, from what his age saw as the grotesque in *The Hunchback of Notre-Dame* (1831) to the topic of French Revolution in *Les Misérables* (1862). Another Frenchman, Gustav Flaubert, captured the psychological and emotional life of a “real” woman in *Madame Bovary* (1856). In the United States, Mark Twain created *Tom Sawyer* (1876).

Nineteenth-Century Musical Contexts

Music’s influence grew in the nineteenth century, becoming more prominent in the education of the still growing middle class; even in the United States, music education appeared in the public schools by the end of the century. Amateur music making in the home and in local civic groups was at its height. Piano music was a major component of private music making. The salons and soirées of upper-middle-class and aristocratic women drew many of these private musical performances.

More concerts in public venues enjoyed increased attendance; some of these concerts were solo recitals, and others featured large symphony orchestras, sometimes accompanied by choirs. Their performers were often trained in highly specialized music schools called conservatories, which took root in major European cities. By the end of the nineteenth century, traveling virtuoso performers and composers were some of the most famous personalities of their time. These musicians hailed from all over Europe.

Romantic aesthetics tended to conceptualize musicians as highly individualistic and often eccentric. Beethoven modeled these concepts and was the most influential figure of nineteenth-century music, even after his death in 1827. His perceived alienation from society, the respect he was given, and the belief in the transformative power of music that was often identified in his compositions galvanized Romantic perceptions. His music, popular in its own day, only became more popular after his death.

Music in the Nineteenth Century

Music Comparison Overview

| Classical Music | Nineteenth-Century Music |
|--|--|
| Mostly homophony, but with variation | Lyrical melodies, often with wider leaps |
| New genres such as the symphony and string quartet | Homophonic style still prevalent, but with variation |
| Use of crescendos and decrescendos | Larger performing forces using more diverse registers, dynamic ranges, and timbres |
| Question and answer (a.k.a. antecedent consequent) phrases that are shorter than earlier phrases | More rubato and tempo fluctuation within a composition |
| New emphasis on musical form: for example, sonata form, theme and variations, minuet and trio, rondo, and first-movement concerto form | More chromatic and dissonant harmonies with increasingly delayed resolutions |
| Greater use of contrasting dynamics, articulations, and tempos | Symphonies, string quartets, concertos, operas, and sonata-form movements continue to be written |
| | Newly important miniature genres and forms such as the Lied and short piano composition |
| | Program music increasingly prominent |
| | Further development in performers' virtuosity |
| | No more patronage system |

General Trends in Nineteenth-Century Music

Musical Style, Performing Forces, and Forms

The nineteenth century is marked by a great diversity in musical styles, from the conservative to the progressive. As identified by the style comparison chart above, nineteenth-century melodies continue to be tuneful and are perhaps even more songlike than classical-style melodies, although they may contain wider leaps. They still use sequences, which are often as a part of modulation from one key to another. Melodies use more chromatic (or “colorful”) pitches from outside the home key and scale of a composition.

Harmonies in nineteenth-century music are more dissonant than ever. These dissonances may be sustained for some time before resolving to a chord that is consonant. One composition may modulate between several keys, and these keys often have very different pitch contents. Such modulations tend to disorient the listening and add to the chaos of the musical selection. Composers were in effect “pushing the harmonic envelope.”

The lengths of nineteenth-century musical compositions ran from the minute to the monumental. Songs and short piano pieces were sometimes grouped together in cycles or collections. On the other hand, symphonies and operas grew. By the end of the century, a typical symphony might be an hour long, with the operas of Verdi, Wagner, and Puccini clocking in at several hours each. There is much nineteenth-century music for solo piano or solo voice with piano accompaniment. The piano achieved a modern form, with the full eighty-eight-note keyboard that is still used today and an iron frame that allowed for greater string tension and a wider range of dynamics.

During the nineteenth century, the Industrial Revolution facilitated and enabled marked improvements to many musical instruments besides the piano with its improved and updated iron frame and tempered metal strings. Efficient valves were added to the trumpet, and a general improvement in metal works tightened tolerances and metal fittings of all brass instruments. Along with the many improvements to instruments, new instruments were researched and created, including the piccolo, English horn, tuba, contrabassoon, and saxophone.

Orchestras also increased in size and became more diverse in makeup, thereby allowing composers to exploit even more divergent dynamics and timbres. With orchestral compositions requiring over 50 (and sometimes over 100) musicians, a conductor was important, and the first famous conductors date from this period. In fact, the nineteenth-century orchestra looked not unlike what you might see today at most concerts by most professional orchestras (see Figure 10.5). The wider nineteenth-century interest in emotion and in exploring connections between all the arts led to musical scores with more poetic or prose instructions from the composer. It also led to more program music, which as you will recall, is instrumental music that represents something “extra musical,” that is, something outside of music itself, such as nature, a literary text, or a painting. Extra musical influences, from the characteristic title to a narrative attached to a musical score, guided composers and listeners as they composed and heard musical forms.

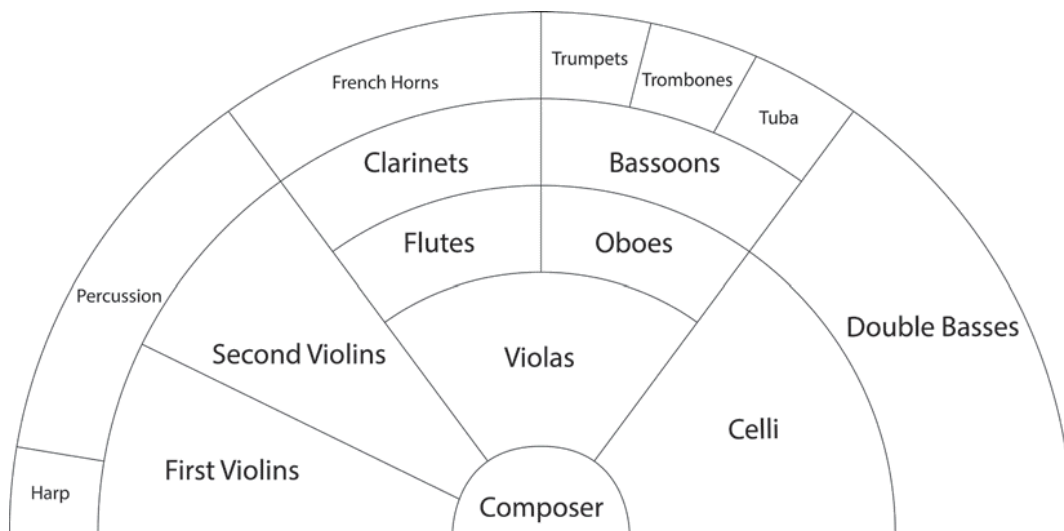


Figure 10.5:
Nineteenth-Century Orchestra
Diagram | Author:
Corey Parson |
Source: Original
Work | License: [CC BY-SA 4.0](#)

Genres of Instrumental Music

Some nineteenth-century compositions use titles like those found in classical-style music, such as “Symphony No. 3,” “Concerto, Op. 3,” or “String Quartet in C Minor.” These compositions are sometimes referred to as examples of absolute music (that is, music for the sake of music). Program music with titles came in several forms. Short piano compositions were described as “character pieces” and took on names reflecting their emotional mood, state, or reference. Orchestral program music included the program symphony and the symphonic poem (also known as the tone poem). The program symphony was a multi-movement composition for orchestra that represented something extra musical, a composition such as Hector Berlioz’s *Symphonie Fantastique* (discussed below). A symphonic or tone poem was a one-movement composition for orchestra, again with an extra musical referent, such as Bedřich Smetana’s *Moldau*.

Genres of Vocal Music

Opera continued to be popular in the nineteenth century and was dominated by Italian styles and form, much as it had been since the seventeenth century. Italian opera composer Giacomo Rossini even rivaled Beethoven in popularity. By the 1820s, however, other national schools were becoming more influential. Carl Maria von Weber’s German operas enhanced the role of the orchestra, whereas French grand opera by Meyerbeer and others was marked by the use of large choruses and elaborate sets. Later in the century, composers such as Giuseppe Verdi and Richard Wagner would synthesize and transform opera into an even more dramatic genre.

Other large-scale choral works in the tradition of the Baroque cantata and oratorio were written for civic choirs, which would sometimes band together into larger choral ensembles in annual choral festivals. The song for voice and piano saw revived interest, and art songs were chief among the music performed in the home for private and group entertainment. The art song is a composition for solo voice and piano that merges poetic and musical concerns. It became one of the most popular genres of nineteenth-century Romanticism, a movement that was always looking for connections between the arts. Sometimes these art songs were grouped into larger collections called song cycles or, in German, *Liederkreis*. Among the important composers of early nineteenth-century German *Lieder* were Robert and Clara Schumann, Johannes Brahms, and Franz Schubert.

Nineteenth-Century & Romantic-Era Composers

Music of Franz Schubert (1797-1828)



Figure 10.6: Franz Schubert | Artist: Wilhelm August Rieder | Source: [Wikimedia Commons](#) | License: Public Domain

Franz Schubert lived a short but prolific musical life. Like Joseph Haydn, he performed as a choirboy until his voice broke. He also received music lessons in violin, piano, organ, voice, and musical harmony: many of his teachers remarked on the young boy's genius. Schubert followed in his father's footsteps for several years, teaching school through his late teens, until he shifted his attention to music composition fulltime in 1818. By that time, he had already composed masterpieces for which he is still known, including the German **Lied** (art song), *Der Erlkönig* (in English, *The Erlking*), which we will discuss.

Schubert spent his entire life in Vienna in the shadow of the two most famous composers of his day: Ludwig van Beethoven, whose music we have already discussed, and Gioachino Rossini, whose Italian operas were particularly popular in Vienna in the first decade. Inspired by the music of Beethoven, Schubert wrote powerful symphonies and chamber music, which are still played today; his "Great" Symphony in C major is thought by many to be Schubert's finest contribution to the genre. He wrote the symphony in 1825 and 1826, but it remained unpublished and indeed perhaps unperformed until Robert Schumann discovered it in 1838.

Schubert also wrote operas and church music. His greatest legacy, however, lies in his more than 600 *Lieder*, or art songs. Schubert was known as a master of the art song, or *lied*. His songs are notable for their beautiful melodies and clever use of piano accompaniment and bring together poetry and music in an exemplary fashion. Most are short, stand-alone pieces of one and a half to five minutes in length, but he also wrote a couple of song cycles. These songs were published and performed in many private homes and, along with all his compositions, provided so much entertainment in the private musical gatherings in Vienna that these events were renamed Schubertiades (see the famous depiction of one Schubertiade by the composer's close friend

Moritz Schwind, painted years after the fact from memory in 1868; Figure 10.7). Many of Schubert's songs are about romantic love, a perennial song topic. Others, such as *The Erlking*, put to music Romantic responses to nature and to the supernatural. *The Erlking* is strikingly dramatic, a particular reminder that music and drama interacted in several nineteenth-century genres, even if their connections can be most fully developed in a lengthy composition, such as an opera.



Figure 10.7:
Schubertiade 1868
| Artist: Moritz von
Schwind | Source:
[Wikimedia
Commons](#) |
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Domain

Focus Composition: Schubert, *The Erlking* (1815)

Schubert set the words of several poets of his day, and *The Erlking* (1815) is drawn from the poetry of Johann Wolfgang von Goethe. *The Erlking* tells the story of a father who is rushing on horseback with his ailing son to the doctor. Delirious from fever, the son hears the voice of the Erlking, a grim reaper sort of king of the fairies who appears to young children when they are about to die, luring them into the world beyond. The father tries to reassure his son that his fear is imagined, but when the father and son reach the courtyard of the doctor's house, the child is found to be dead.

As you listen to the song, follow along with its words. You may have to listen several times to hear the multiple connections between the music and the text. Are the ways in which you hear the music and text interacting beyond those pointed out in the listening guide?

Video 10.1: Erlking by Schubert, Samuel Hasselhorn, Baritone



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://louis.pressbooks.pub/musicappreciation/?p=1077#oembed-1>

Listening Guide

- Composer: Franz Schubert
- Composition: *The Erlkönig* (in English, *The Erlking*)
- Date: 1815
- Genre: Art song
- Form: Through-composed
- Nature of text: In German
- Performing forces: Solo voice singing four roles (narrator, father, son and the Erlking) and piano
- What we want you to remember about this composition:
 - It is an art song that sets a poem for solo voice and piano.
 - The poem tells the story of three characters, who are depicted in the music through changes in melody, harmony, and range.
 - The piano sets the general mood and supports the singer by depicting images from the text.
- Other things to listen for:
 - Piano accompaniment at the beginning that outlines a minor scale (perhaps the wind)
 - Repeated fast triplet pattern in the piano, suggesting urgency and the running horse
 - Shifts of the melody line from high to low range, depending on the character “speaking”
 - Change of key from minor to major when the Erlking sings
 - The slowing note values at the end of the song and the very dissonant chord

Music of the Mendelssohns



Figure 10.8: Felix Mendelssohn-Bartoldy | Artist: James Warren Childe | Source: [Wikimedia Commons](#) | License: Public Domain

In terms of musical craft, few nineteenth-century composers were more accomplished than Felix Mendelssohn-

Bartholdy (1809-1847). Growing up in an artistically rich, upper-middle-class household in Berlin, Germany, Felix Mendelssohn received a fine private education in the arts and sciences and proved himself to be precociously talented from a very young age. He would go on to write chamber music for piano and strings, art songs, church music, four symphonies, and oratorios as well as conduct many of Beethoven's works as principal director of the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra. All his music emulates the motivic and organic styles of Beethoven's compositions, from his chamber music to his more monumental compositions. Felix was also well versed in the musical styles of Mozart, Handel, and Bach.

Felix descended from a family of prominent Jewish intellectuals; his grandfather, Moses Mendelssohn, was one of the leaders of the eighteenth-century German Enlightenment. His parents, however, seeking to break from this religious tradition, had their children baptized as Reformed Christians in 1816. Anti-Semitism was a fact of life in nineteenth-century Germany, and such a baptism opened some, if not all, doors for the family. Most agree that in 1832, the failure of Felix's application for the position as head of the Berlin *Singakademie* was partly due to his Jewish ethnicity. This failure was a blow to the young musician, who had performed frequently with this civic choral society, most importantly in 1829, when he had led a revival of the *St. Matthew Passion* by Johann Sebastian Bach. Although today we think of Bach as a pivotal figure of the Baroque period, his music went through a period of neglect until this revival.

Initially, Felix's father was reluctant to see his son become a professional musician; like many upper-middle-class businessmen, he would have preferred that his son enjoy music as an amateur. Felix, however, was both determined and talented and eventually secured employment as a choral and orchestral conductor, first in Düsseldorf and then in Leipzig, Germany, where he lived from 1835 until his death. In Leipzig, Felix conducted the orchestra and founded the town's first music conservatory.

Focus Composition: Mendelssohn, Excerpts from *Elijah* (1846)

One of his last works, his oratorio *Elijah*, was commissioned by the Birmingham Festival in Birmingham, England. The Birmingham Festival was one of many nineteenth-century choral festivals that provided opportunities for amateur and professional musicians to gather once a year to make music together. Mendelssohn's music was very popular in England, and the Birmingham Festival had already performed another Mendelssohn oratorio in the 1830s, giving the premier of *Elijah* in English in 1846.

Elijah is interesting because it is an example of music composed for middle-class music making. The chorus of singers was expected to be largely made up of musical amateurs, with professional singers brought in to sing the solos. The topic of the oratorio, the Hebrew prophet Elijah, is interesting as a figure significant to both the Jewish and Christian traditions, both of which Felix embraced to a certain extent. This composition shows Felix's indebtedness to both Baroque composers Bach and Handel, while at the same time it uses more nineteenth-century harmonies and textures.

The following excerpt is from the first part of the oratorio and sets the dramatic story of Elijah calling the followers of the pagan god Baal to light a sacrifice on fire. Baal fails his devotees; Elijah then summons the God of Abraham to a display of power with great success. The excerpt here involves a baritone soloist who sings the

role of Elijah and the chorus that provides commentary. Elijah first sings a short, accompanied recitative, not unlike what we heard in the music of Handel's *Messiah*. The first chorus is highly polyphonic in announcing the flames from heaven before shifting to a more homophonic and deliberate style that uses longer note values to proclaim the central tenet of Western religion: "The Lord is God; the Lord is God! O Israel hear! Our God is one Lord, and we will have no other gods before the Lord." After another recitative and another chorus, Elijah sings a very melismatic and virtuoso aria.

Elijah was very popular in its day, in both its English and German versions, both for music makers and musical audiences, and continues to be performed by choral societies today.

Video 10.2: *Elijah*

Performed by the Texas A&M Century Singers with orchestra and baritone soloist Weston Hurt



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://louis.pressbooks.pub/musicappreciation/?p=1077#oembed-2>

Listening Guide

- Composer: Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy
- Composition: Excerpts from *Elijah*
- Date: 1846
- Genre: Recitative, choruses, and aria from an oratorio
- Form: Through-composed
- Nature of text:
 - Elijah (recitative): O Thou, who makest Thine angels spirits; Thou, whose ministers are flaming fires: let them now descend!
 - The People (chorus): The fire descends from heaven! The flames consume his offering! Before Him upon your faces fall! The Lord is God, the Lord is God! O Israel hear! Our God is one Lord, and we will have no other gods before the Lord.
 - Elijah (recitative): Take all the prophets of Baal, and let not one of them escape you. Bring them down to Kishon's brook, and there let them be slain.
 - The People (chorus): Take all the prophets of Baal and let not one of them escape us: bring all and slay them!
 - Elijah (aria): Is not His word like a fire, and like a hammer that breaketh the rock into pieces! For God is angry with the wicked every day. And if the wicked turn not, the Lord will whet His sword; and He hath bent His bow, and made it ready.

- Performing forces: Baritone soloist (Elijah), four-part chorus, orchestra
- What we want you to remember about this composition:
 - It's an oratorio composed for amateurs and professionals to perform at a choral festival.
 - It uses traditional forms of accompanied recitative, chorus, and aria to tell a dramatic story.
- Other things to listen for:
 - A much larger orchestra than heard in the oratorios of Handel
 - A very melismatic and virtuoso aria in the style of Handel's arias
 - More flexible use of recitatives, arias, and choruses than in earlier oratorios
 - More dissonance and chromaticism than in earlier oratorios



Figure 10.9: Fanny Mendelssohn Hensel (1842) | Artist: Moritz Daniel Oppenheim | Source: [Wikimedia Commons](#) | License: Public Domain

Felix was not the only musically precocious Mendelssohn in his household. In fact, the talent of his older sister Fanny (1805-1847) initially exceeded that of her younger brother. Born into a household of intelligent, educated, and socially sophisticated women, Fanny was given the same education as her younger brother. However, for her, as for most nineteenth-century married women from middle-class families, a career as a professional musician was frowned upon. Her husband, Wilhelm Hensel, supported her composing and presenting her music at private house concerts held at the Mendelssohn's family residence. Felix also supported Fanny's private activities, although he discouraged her from publishing her works under her own name. In 1846, Fanny went ahead and published six songs without seeking her husband's or brother's permission.

Musicians today perform many of the more than 450 compositions that Fanny wrote for piano, voice, and chamber ensemble. Among some of her best works are the four-movement Piano Trio in D minor, Op. 11, and several volumes of songs and piano compositions. This piano trio holds its own with the piano trios, piano quartets, piano quintets, and string quartets composed by other nineteenth-century composers, from Beethoven and Schubert to the Schumanns, Johannes Brahms, and Antonín Dvořák.

Video 10.3: Fanny Mendelssohn Hensel, Piano trio in D Minor, Op. 11, Movement 1



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://louis.pressbooks.pub/musicappreciation/?p=1077#oembed-3>

Music of the Schumanns



Figure 10.10:
Robert and Clara
Schumann | Artist:
Eduard Kaiser |
Source: [Wikimedia
Commons](#) |
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Domain

The couple became acquainted after Robert (1810-1856) moved to Leipzig and started studying piano with Friedrich Wieck, the father of the young piano prodigy Clara (1819-1896). The nine-year-old Clara was just starting to embark on her musical career. Throughout her teens, she would travel giving concerts, dazzling aristocratic and public audiences with her virtuosity. She also started publishing her compositions, which she often incorporated into her concerts. Her father, perhaps realizing what marriage would mean for the career of his daughter, refused to consent to her marriage with Robert Schumann, a marriage she desired, as she and Robert had fallen in love. They subsequently married in 1840, shortly before Clara's twenty-first birthday, after a protracted court battle with her father.

Once the two were married, Robert's musical activities became the couple's priority. Robert began his musical career with aims of becoming a professional pianist. When he suffered weakness of the fingers and hands, he shifted his focus to music journalism and music composition. He founded a music magazine dedicated to showcasing the newer and more experimental music then being composed. In addition, he started writing piano compositions, songs, chamber music, and eventually orchestral music, the most important of which include four symphonies and a piano concerto, premiered by Clara in 1846. While Robert was gaining

recognition as a composer and conductor, Clara's composition and performance activities were restricted by her giving birth to eight children. Then in early 1854, Robert started showing signs of psychosis and, after a suicide attempt, was taken to an asylum. Although one of the more progressive hospitals of its day, this asylum did not allow visits from close relatives, so Clara would not see her husband for over two years, and then only in the two days before his death. After his death, Clara returned to a more active career as a performer; indeed, she spent the rest of her life supporting her children and grandchildren through her public appearances and teaching. Her busy calendar may have been one of the reasons why she did not compose after Robert's death.

The compositional careers of Robert and Clara followed a similar trajectory. Both started their compositional work with short piano pieces that were either virtuoso showpieces or reflective character pieces that explored extra musical ideas in musical form. Theirs were just a portion of the many character pieces, especially those at a level of difficulty appropriate for the enthusiastic amateur pianist, published throughout Europe. After their marriage, they both merged poetic and musical concerns in **Lieder** (art songs); Robert published many song cycles, and he and Clara joined forces on a song cycle published in 1841. They also both turned to traditional genres, such as the sonata and larger four-movement chamber music compositions.

Focus Composition: Character Pieces by Robert and Clara Schumann

We'll listen to two character pieces from the 1830s. Robert Schumann's "Chiarina" was written between 1834 and 1835 and published in 1837 in a cycle of piano character pieces that he called *Carnaval*, after the festive celebrations that occurred each year before the beginning of the Christian season of Lent. Each short piece in the collection has a title, some of which refer to imaginary characters that Robert employed to give musical opinions in his music journalism. Others, such as "Chopin" and "Chiarina," refer to real people, the former referring to the popular French-Polish pianist Fryderyk Chopin, and the later referring to the young Clara. At the beginning of the "Chiarina," Robert inscribed the performance instruction "passionata," meaning that the pianist should play the piece with passion. "Chiarina" is a little over a minute long and consists of two slightly contrasting musical phrases.

Video 10.4: "Chiarina" from *Carnaval*

Performed by Daniel Barenboim, 1979



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://louis.pressbooks.pub/musicappreciation/?p=1077#oembed-4>

Listening Guide

- Composer: Robert Schumann
- Composition: “Chiarina” from *Carnaval*
- Date: 1837
- Genre: Piano character piece
- Form: aaba’ba’
- Nature of text: The title refers to Clara
- Performing forces: Piano solo
- What we want you to remember about this piece:
 - This is a character piece for solo piano.
 - A dance-like mood is conveyed by its triple meter and moderately fast tempo.
- Other things to listen for:
 - It has a leaping melody in the right hand and is accompanied by chords in the left hand.
 - It uses two slightly different melodies.

The second character piece is one written by Clara Schumann between 1834 and 1836 and published as one piece in the collection *Soirées Musicales* in 1836 (a *soirée* was an event generally held in the home of a well-to-do lover of the arts where musicians, and other artists were invited for entertainment and conversation). Clara called this composition *Ballade in D minor*. The meaning of the title seems to have been vague almost by design, but most broadly considered, a ballade referred to a composition thought of as a narrative. As a character piece, it tells its narrative completely through music. Several contemporary composers wrote ballades of different moods and styles; Clara’s “Ballade” shows some influence of Chopin.

Clara’s *Ballade*, like Robert’s “Chiarina,” has a homophonic texture and starts in a minor key. A longer piece than “Chiarina,” the *Ballade in D minor* modulates to D major before returning to D minor for a reprise of the A section. Its themes are not nearly as clearly delineated as the themes in “Chiarina.” Instead, phrases start multiple times, each time slightly varied. You may hear what we call musical embellishments. These are notes the composer adds to a melody to provide variations. You might think of them like jewelry on a dress or ornaments on a Christmas tree. One of the most famous sorts of ornaments is the trill, in which the performer rapidly and repeatedly alternates between two pitches. We also talk of turns, in which the performer traces a rapid stepwise ascent and descent (or descent and ascent) for effect. You should also note that as the pianist in this recording plays, he seems to hold back notes at some moments and rush ahead at others: this is called *rubato*—that is, the robbing of time from one note to give it to another. We will see the use of *rubato* even more prominently in the music of Chopin.

Video 10.5: *Soirées Musicales*, Op. 6: No. 4, *Ballade in D Minor*

Performed by Jozef de Beenhouwer



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://louis.pressbooks.pub/musicappreciation/?p=1077#oembed-5>

Listening Guide

- Composer: Clara Wieck Schumann
- Composition: Ballade in D minor, Op. 6, No. 4
- Date: 1836
- Genre: Piano character piece
- Form: ABA
- Nature of text: This is a ballade—that is, a composition with narrative premises
- Performing forces: Piano
- What we want you to remember about this composition:
 - A lyrical melody over chordal accompaniment making this homophonic texture
 - A moderate to slow tempo
 - In duple time (in this case, four beats per measure)
- Other things to listen for:
 - Musical themes that develop and repeat
 - Musical embellishments in the form of trills and turns

Music of Fryderyk Chopin (1810–1849)



Figure 10.11:
Fryderyk Chopin |
Artist: Eugène
Delacroix | Source:
[Wikimedia
Commons](#) |
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Domain

Fryderyk Chopin grew up in and around Warsaw, Poland, the son of a French father and Polish mother. His family was a member of the educated middle class; consequently, Chopin had contact with academics and wealthier members of the gentry and middle class. He learned as much as he could from the composition instructors in Warsaw—including the keyboard music of Bach, Mozart, and Beethoven—before deciding to head off on a European tour in 1830. The first leg of the tour was Vienna, where Chopin expected to give concerts and then head farther west. About a week after his arrival, however, Poland saw political turmoil in the Warsaw uprising, which eventually led to Russian occupation of his home country. After great efforts, Chopin secured a passport and, in the summer of 1831, traveled to Paris, which would become his adopted home. Paris was full of Polish émigrés, who were well received within musical circles. After giving a few public concerts, Chopin was able to focus his attention on the salons, salons being smaller, semi-private events, similar to soirées, generally hosted by aristocratic women for artistic edification. There and as a teacher, he was in great demand and could charge heavy fees.

Much like Robert and Clara Schumann, Chopin's first compositions were designed to impress his audiences with his virtuoso playing. As he grew older and more established, his music became more subtle. In addition, like the Schumanns, he composed pieces appropriate in difficulty for the musical amateur as well as work for virtuosos such as himself. Unlike many of the other composers we have discussed, Chopin wrote piano music almost exclusively. He was best known for character pieces, such as mazurkas, waltzes, nocturnes, etudes, ballades, polonaises, and preludes.

Focus Composition: Chopin Mazurka in F Minor, Op. 7, No. 1 (1832)

The composition on which we will focus is the Mazurka in F minor, Op. 7, No. 1, which was published in Leipzig in 1832 and then in Paris and London in 1833. The mazurka is a Polish dance, and mazurkas were rather popular in Western Europe as exotic stylized dances. Mazurkas are marked by their triple meter in which beat two rather than beat one gets the stress. They are typically composed in strains and are homophonic in texture. Chopin sometimes incorporated folk-like sounds in his mazurkas, sounds such as drones and augmented seconds. A drone is a sustained pitch or pitches. The augmented second is an interval that was commonly used in Eastern European folk music but very rarely in the tonal music of Western European composers.

These characteristics can be heard in the Mazurka in F minor, Op. 7, No. 1, together with the employment of rubato. Chopin was the first composer to widely request that pianists use rubato when playing his music.

Video 10.6: Chopin Mazurka Op. 7 No. 1 performed by Arthur Rubinstein (24/154)



— One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://louis.pressbooks.pub/musicappreciation/?p=1077#oembed-6>

Listening Guide

- Composer: Fryderyk Chopin
- Composition: Mazurka in F Minor, Op. 7, No. 1
- Date: 1836
- Genre: Piano character piece
- Form: aaba'ba'ca'ca
- Nature of text: The title indicates a stylized dance based on the Polish mazurka
- Performing forces: Solo piano
- What we want you to remember about this composition:
 - This mazurka is in triple time with an emphasis on beat two.
 - The texture is homophonic.
 - Chopin asks the performer to use rubato.
- Other things to listen for:
 - Its “c” strain uses a drone and augmented seconds.

Music of Franz Liszt (1811-1886)

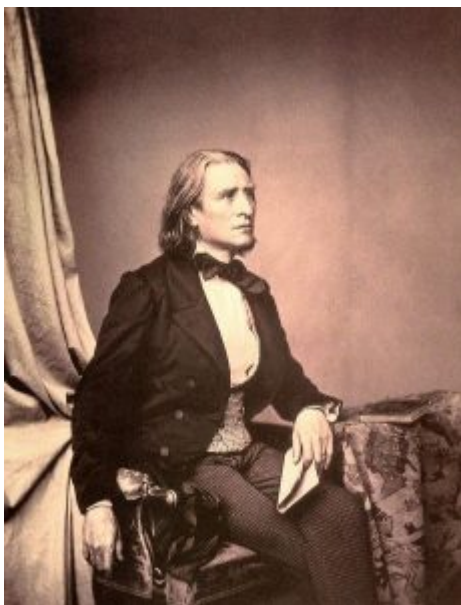


Figure 10.12: Franz Liszt (1858) | Photographer: Franz Hanfstaengl (1804-1877) | Source: [Wikimedia Commons](#) | License: Public Domain

Franz Liszt (1811-1886) was born in Doborján, Hungary (now Raiding, Austria). His father, employed as a steward for a wealthy family, was an amateur musician who recognized his son's talent. A group of Hungarian noblemen sponsored him with a stipend that enabled Franz to pursue his musical interest in Paris. There, he became the friend of Mendelssohn, Hugo, Chopin, Delacroix, George Sand, and Berlioz; these friends influenced him to become part of the French Romanticism movement.

Also, in Paris in 1831, Liszt attended a performance of virtuoso violinist Paganini, who was touring. Paganini's style and success helped make Liszt aware of the demand for a solo artist who performed with showmanship. The ever-growing public audiences desired gifted virtuoso soloist performers at the time. Liszt, one of the best pianists of his time, became a great showman who knew how to energize an audience. Up until Liszt, the standard practice of performing piano solos was with the solo artist's back to the audience. This limited—and blocked—the audience from viewing the artist's hands, facial expression, and musical nuance. Liszt changed the entire presentation by turning the piano sideways so the audience could view his facial expressions and the way his fingers interacted with the keys, from playing loud and thunderously to gracefully light and legato. Liszt possessed great charisma and performance appeal; indeed, he had a following of young ladies that idolized his performances. During his career of music stardom, Liszt never married and was considered one of the most eligible bachelors of the time. However, he did have several “relationships” with different women, one of whom was the novelist Countess Marie d'Agoult, who wrote under the pen name of Daniel Stern. She and Liszt traveled to Switzerland for a few years, and they had three children, including Cosima, who ultimately married Wagner.

While at the height of his performance career, Liszt retreated from his piano soloist career to devote all his energy to composition. He moved to Weimar in 1848 and assumed the post of court musician for the Grand Duke, remaining in Weimar until 1861. There, he produced his greatest orchestral works. His position in Weimar included the responsibility as director to the Grand Duke's opera house. In this position, Liszt could influence the public's taste in music and construct musical expectations for future compositions. And he used his influential position to program what Wagner called “Music of the Future.” Liszt and Wagner both advocated and promoted highly dramatic music in Weimar, with Liszt conducting the first performances of Wagner's *Lohengrin* and Berlioz's *Benevenuto Cellini*, as well as many other contemporary compositions.

While in Weimar, Liszt began a relationship with a woman who had a tremendous influence on his life and music. A wife of a nobleman in the court of the Tsar, Princess Carolyne Sayn-Wittenstein met and fell in love with Liszt on his final performance tour of Russia. Later she left her husband and moved to Weimar to be with Liszt. She assisted Liszt in writing literary works, among which included a fabricated biography by Liszt on the *Life of Chopin* and a book on “Gypsy,” a book considered eccentric and inaccurate.

While Liszt had an eventful romantic life, he remained a Roman Catholic, and he eventually sought solitude in the Catholic Church. His association with the church led to the writing of his major religious works. He also joined the Oratory of the Madonna del Rosario and studied the preliminary stage for priesthood, taking his minor orders and becoming known as the Abbé Liszt. He dressed as a priest and composed Masses, oratorios, and religious music for the church.

Still active at the age of seventy-five, he earned respect from England as a composer and was awarded an honor in person by Queen Victoria. Returning from this celebration, he met Claude Debussy in Paris, then journeyed to visit his widowed daughter Cosima in Bayreuth and attended a Wagnerian Festival. He died during that festival, and even on his deathbed dying of pneumonia, Liszt named Wagner's *Tristan* as one of the "Music of the Future" masterpieces.

Liszt's primary goal in music composition was pure expression through the idiom of tone. His freedom of expression necessitated his creation of the **symphonic poem**, sometimes called a **tone poem**—a one-movement program piece written for orchestra that portrays images of a place, story, novel, landscape, or non-musical source or image. This form utilizes transformations of a few themes through the entire work for continuity. The themes are varied by adjusting the rhythm, harmony, dynamics, tempos, instrumental registers, instrumentation in the orchestra, timbre, and melodic outline or shape. By making these slight-to-major adjustments, Liszt found it possible to convey the extremes of emotion—from love to hate, war to peace, triumph to defeat—within a thematic piece. His thirteen symphonic poems greatly influenced the nineteenth century, an influence that continues through today. Liszt's most famous piece for orchestra is the three-portrait work *Symphony after Goethe's Faust* (the portraits include Faust, Gretchen, and Mephistopheles). A similar work, his *Symphony of Dante's Divine Comedy*, has three movements: *Inferno*, *Purgatory*, and *Vision of Paradise*. His most famous of the symphonic poems is *Les Preludes (The Preludes)*, written in 1854.

His best-known works include nineteen Hungarian Rhapsodies, Piano concertos, Mephisto Waltzes, Faust Symphony, and Liebesträume.

Focus Composition: Liszt's Hungarian Rhapsody No. 2

Video 10.7: Liszt's Hungarian Rhapsody No. 2 performed by Jeneba Kanneh-Mason



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://louis.pressbooks.pub/musicappreciation/?p=1077#oembed-7>

Listening Guide

- Composer: Franz Liszt
- Composition: Hungarian Rhapsody No. 2
- Date: 1847
- Genre: The second of a set of 19 Hungarian Rhapsodies
- Performing forces: Piano solo

- What we want you to remember about this composition:
 - Widely popular, this piece offers the pianist the opportunity to reveal exceptional skill as a virtuoso while providing the listener with an immediate and irresistible musical appeal.
 - Interest in this piece is rooted in the period's interests in "Exoticism" (music from other cultures).
 - This piece was used in many animated classic cartoons in contemporary culture, including "Tom and Jerry," "Bugs Bunny," "Woody Woodpecker," and others.
- Other things to listen for:
 - Listen to the dance rhythms and strong pulse even at the slower tempos.
 - The piece begins with the "**lasson**," a dramatic introduction that is followed by the "**friska**," an energy-building section that builds to a tempest of sound and momentum.

Music of Hector Berlioz (1803-1869)

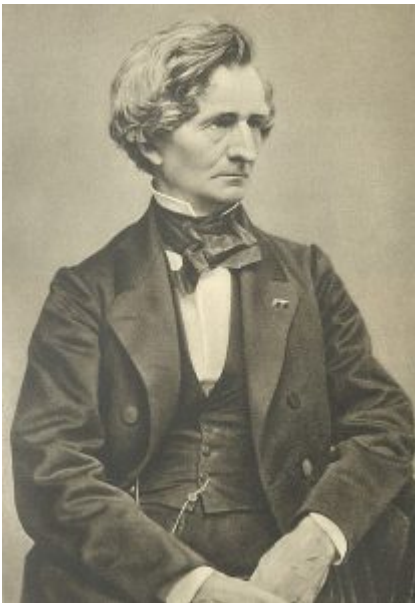


Figure 10.13:
Hector Berlioz
(1862) |
Photographer:
Pierre Petit |
Source: [Wikimedia Commons](#) |
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Hector Berlioz (1803-1869) was born in France in La Côte-Saint-André, Isère, near Grenoble. His father was a wealthy doctor and planned on Hector's pursuing the profession of a physician. At the age of eighteen, Hector was sent to study medicine in Paris. Music at the Conservatory and at the Opera, however, became the focus of his attention. A year later, his family grew alarmed when they realized that the young student had decided to study music instead of medicine.

At this time, Paris was in a Romantic revolution. Berlioz found himself in the company of novelist Victor Hugo and painter Delacroix. No longer receiving financial support from his parents, the young Berlioz sang in the theater choruses, performed musical chores, and gave music lessons. As a young student, Berlioz was amazed and intrigued by the works of Beethoven. Berlioz also developed interest in Shakespeare, whose popularity in Paris had recently increased with the performance of his plays by a visiting British troupe. Hector

became impassioned with the Shakespearean characters of Ophelia and Juliet as they were portrayed by the alluring actress Harriet Smithson. Berlioz became obsessed with the young actress and overwhelmed by sadness due to her lack of interest in him as a suitor. Berlioz became known for his violent mood swings, a condition known today as manic depression.

In 1830, Berlioz earned his first recognition for his musical gift when he won the much sought-after Prix de Rome. This highly esteemed award provided him a stipend and the opportunity to work and live in Paris, thus providing Berlioz with the chance to complete his most famous work, the *Symphonie Fantastique*, that year.

Upon his return to Rome, he began his intense courtship of Harriet Smithson. Both her family and his vehemently opposed their relationship. Several violent and arduous situations occurred, one of which involved Berlioz's unsuccessfully attempting suicide. After recovering from this attempt, Hector married Harriet. Once the previously unattainable matrimonial goal had been attained, Berlioz's passion somewhat cooled, and he discovered that it was Harriet's Shakespearean roles that she performed, rather than Harriet herself, that really intrigued him. The first year of their marriage was the most fruitful for him musically. By the time he was forty, he had composed most of his famous works. Bitter from giving up her acting career for marriage, Harriet became an alcoholic. The two separated in 1841. Berlioz then married his long-time mistress Marie Recio, an attractive but average singer who demanded to perform in his concerts.

To supplement his income during his career, Berlioz turned to writing as a music critic, producing a steady stream of articles and reviews. He successfully utilized this vocation as a way to support his own works by persuading the audience to accept and appreciate them. His critical writing also helped to educate audiences so they could understand his complex and innovative pieces. As a prose writer, Berlioz wrote *The Treatise on Modern Instrumentation and Orchestration*. He also wrote *Les Soirées de l'Orchestre* (*Evenings with the Orchestra*), a compilation of his articles on musical life in nineteenth-century France, and an autobiography entitled *Mémoires*. Later in life, he conducted his music in all the capitals of Europe, except for Paris. It was one location where the public would not accept his work. The Parisian public would read his reviews and learn to welcome lesser composers, but they would not accept Berlioz's music. As over the years, Berlioz saw his own works neglected by the public of Paris while they cheered and supported others, he became disgusted and bitter from the neglect. His final work composed to gain acceptance from Parisian audiences was the opera *Béatrice et Bénédicte* with his own libretto based upon Shakespeare's *Much Ado about Nothing*. But the Parisian public did not appreciate it. After this final effort, the disillusioned and embittered Berlioz composed no more in his seven remaining years, dying rejected and tormented at the age of sixty-six. Only after his death would France appreciate his achievements.

His operas include *Benvenuto Cellini*, *Le Troyens*, *Béatrice et Bénédicte*, *Les Francs-Juges* (never performed, score missing sections), *Grande Messe des Morts* (Requiem), *La Damnation de Faust*, *Te Deum*, and *L'Enfance du Christ*. His major orchestral compositions include *Symphonie Fantastique*, *Harold en Italie*, *Romeo et Juliette*, *The Corsair*, *King Lear*, and *Grande Symphonie Funèbre et Triomphale*. Berlioz is credited for changing the modern sound of orchestras.

Focus Composition: Berlioz's *Symphonie Fantastique*, Op. 14, 1st movement

Video 10.8: Berlioz's *Symphonie Fantastique*, Op. 14, 1st movement (watch until 15:07)



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://louis.pressbooks.pub/musicappreciation/?p=1077#oembed-8>

Berlioz's *Symphonie Fantastique* is important for several reasons: it is a program symphony, it incorporates an **idée fixe** (a recurring theme representing an ideology or person that provides continuity through a musical work), and it contains five movements rather than the four of most symphonies.

Listening Guide

- Composer: Hector Berlioz
- Composition: *Symphonie Fantastique*, Op. 14: 1st movement Reveries—Passions
- Date: 1830
- Genre: Symphony, first movement
- Form: Sonata
- Performing forces: Full symphony orchestra
- What we want you to remember about this composition:
 - The largo (slow) opening is pensive and expressive, depicting the depression, the joy, and the fruitless passion Berlioz felt. It is followed by a long and very fast section with a great amount of expression, with the *idée fixe* (a short recurring musical theme/motive associated with a person, place, or idea) indicating the appearance of his beloved.
 - The title for the movement is “Dreams, Passions.” It represents his uneasy and uncertain state of mind. The mood quickly changes as his love appears to him. He reflects on the love inspired by her. He notes the power of his enraged jealousy for her and of his religious consolation at the end.
- Other things to listen for:
 - Berlioz is known for being one of the greatest orchestrators of all time. He even wrote the first comprehensive book on orchestration. He always thought in terms of the exact sound (tone or timbre) of the orchestra and the mixture of individual sounds to blend through orchestration. He gave very detailed instructions to the conductor and individual performers regarding articulations and how he wanted them to play. Listen to the subtleties and nuance of the performance. Berlioz left little up to chance, since he was so thorough in his compositions.

Music of Johannes Brahms (1833-1897)

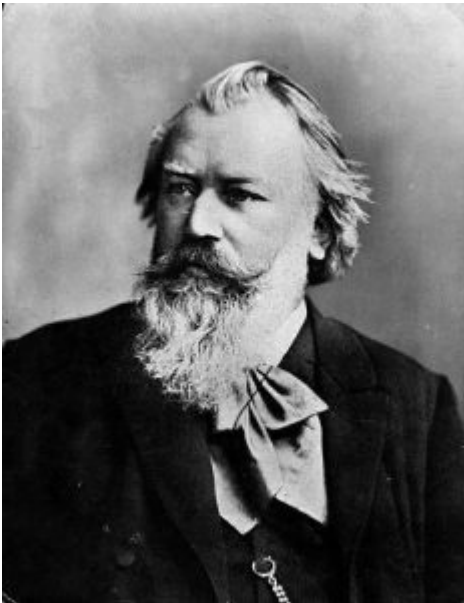


Figure 10.14:
Johannes Brahms
(1889) |
Photographer:
Carl. Brasch |
Source: [Wikimedia
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Whereas Berlioz’s program symphony might be heard as a radical departure from earlier symphonies, the music of Johannes Brahms is often thought of as breathing new life into classical forms. For centuries, musical performances were of compositions by composers who were still alive and working. In the nineteenth century, that trend changed. By the time that Johannes Brahms was twenty, over half of all music performed in concerts was by composers who were no longer living; by the time that he was forty, that amount increased to over two-thirds. Brahms knew and loved the music of forebears such as Bach, Handel, Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, Schubert, and Schumann. He wrote in the genres they had developed, including symphonies, concertos, string quartets, sonatas, and songs. To these traditional genres and forms, he brought sweeping nineteenth-century melodies, much more chromatic harmonies, and the forces of the modern symphony orchestra. He did not, however, compose symphonic poems or program music as did Hector Berlioz and Franz Liszt.

Brahms himself was keenly aware of walking in Beethoven’s shadow. In the early 1870s, he wrote to conductor friend Hermann Levi, “I shall never compose a symphony.” Continuing, he reflected, “You have no idea how someone like me feels when he hears such a giant marching behind him all of the time.” Nevertheless, some six years later, after a twenty-year period of germination, he premiered his first symphony. Brahms’s music engages Romantic lyricism, rich chromaticism, thick orchestration, and rhythmic dislocation in a way that clearly goes beyond what Beethoven had done. Still, his intensely motivic and organic style and his use of a four-movement symphonic model that features sonata, variations, and ABA forms are indebted to Beethoven.

The third movement of Brahms’s *First Symphony* is a case in point. It follows the ABA form, as had most moderate-tempo, dance-like third movements since the minuets of the eighteenth-century symphonies and scherzos of the early nineteenth-century symphonies. This movement uses more instruments and grants more solos to the woodwind instruments than earlier symphonies did (listen especially for the clarinet solos). The

musical texture is thicker as well, even though the melody always soars above the other instruments. Finally, this movement is more graceful and songlike than any minuet or scherzo that preceded it. In this regard, it is more like the lyrical character pieces of Chopin, Mendelssohn, and the Schumanns than like most movements of Beethoven's symphonies. But it does not have an extra musical referent; in fact, Brahms's music is often called "absolute" music—that is, music for the sake of music. The music might call to a listener's mind any number of pictures or ideas, but they are of the listener's imagination, from the listener's interpretation of the melodies, harmonies, rhythms, and textures written by Brahms. In this way, such a movement is very different than a movement from a program symphony such as Berlioz's *Symphonie Fantastique*. Public opinion has often split over program music and absolute music. What do you think? Do you prefer a composition in which the musical and extra musical are explicitly linked, or would you rather make up your own interpretation of the music, without guidance from a title or story?

Focus Composition: Brahms Symphony No. 1 in C Minor, Op. 68, III

Video 10.9: Brahms Symphony No. 1 in C Minor, Op. 68, III



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://louis.pressbooks.pub/musicappreciation/?p=1077#oembed-9>

Listening Guide

- Composer: Johannes Brahms
- Composition: Symphony No. 1 in C minor, Op. 68, III; un poco allegretto e grazioso (a little allegretto and graceful)
- Date: 1876
- Genre: Symphony
- Form: ABA moderate-tempo, dancelike movement from a symphony
- Performing forces: Romantic symphony orchestra, including two flutes, two oboes, two clarinets, two bassoons, one contrabassoon, four horns, two trumpets, three trombones, timpani, violins (first and second), violas, cellos, and double basses.
- What we want you to remember about this composition:
 - Its lilting tuneful melodies transform the scherzo mood into something more romantic.
 - It is in ABA form.
 - It is in A-flat major (providing respite from the C minor pervading the rest of the symphony).
- Other things to listen for:

- The winds as well as the strings get the melodic themes from the beginning.

Music of Nationalism

As noted at the beginning of this chapter, political and cultural nationalism strongly influenced many creative works of the nineteenth century. We have already observed aspects of nationalism in the piano music of Chopin and Liszt. Later nineteenth-century composers invested even more heavily in nationalist themes.

Nationalism, found in many genres, is marked using folk songs or nationalist themes in operas or instrumental music. Nationalist composers of different countries include:

- Russian composers such as Modest Mussorgsky, Alexander Borodin, and Nicolai Rimsky-Korsakov (members of the “Kuchka”);
- Bohemian composers such as Antonín Dvořák and Bedřich Smetana;
- Hungarian composers such as Liszt;
- Scandinavian composers such as Edvard Grieg and Jean Sibelius;
- Spanish composers such as Enrique Granados, Joaquín Turina, and Manuel de Falla; and
- British composers such as Ralph Vaughan Williams.

Composers looked to their native as well as exotic (from other countries) music to add to their palette of ideas. Nationalism was expressed in several ways:

- Songs and dances of native people
- Mythology: dramatic works based on folklore of peasant life (Tchaikovsky’s Russian fairy-tale operas and ballets)
- Celebration of a national hero, historic event, or scenic beauty of a country

Music of Bedřich Smetana (1824-1884)



Figure 10.15:
Bedřich Smetana
(1880) |
Photographer:
Unknown | Source:
[Wikimedia
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Bedřich Smetana (1824-1884) was born in Litomysl, Bohemia, while under Austrian rule (now the Czech Republic). Smetana was the son of a brewer and violinist and his father's third wife. Smetana was a talented pianist who gave public performances from the age of six. Bohemia under Austrian rule was politically very volatile. In 1848, Smetana aligned himself with those seeking independent statehood from Austria. After that revolution was crushed, Prague and the surrounding areas were brutally suppressed—especially those areas and people suspected of being sympathetic to Bohemian nationalism. In 1856, Smetana left for Sweden to accept a conductorship post. He hoped to follow in the footsteps of such music predecessors as Liszt. He thus expresses his admiration, “By the grace of God and with His help, I shall one day be a Liszt in technique and a Mozart in composition,” as he wrote in a diary entry according to this [biography](#).

As a composer, Smetana began incorporating nationalist themes, plots, and dances in his operas and symphonic poems. He founded the Czech national school after he left Sweden and was a pioneer at incorporating Czech folk tunes, rhythms, and dances into his major works. Smetana returned to Bohemia in 1861 and assumed his role as national composer. He worked to open and establish a theater venue in Prague where performances would be performed in their native tongue. Of his eight original operas, seven are still performed in native tongue today. One of these operas, *The Bartered Bride*, was and is still acclaimed. He composed several folk dances, including polkas for orchestra. These polkas incorporated the style and levity of his Bohemian culture.

Selected Compositions

Video 10.10: *Louisa's Polka*, performed by the Brno State Philharmonic Orchestra, 2015



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://louis.pressbooks.pub/musicappreciation/?p=1077#oembed-10>

Smetana also is known for composing the cycle of six symphonic poems entitled *My Country*. These poems are program music, representing the beautiful Bohemian countryside, Bohemian folk dance and song rhythms, and the pageantry of Bohemian legends. The first of these symphonic poems is called *Má vlast* (*My Fatherland*) and is symbolic program music representing his birthplace.

Video 10.11: *Má vlast (My Fatherland)* performed by the Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra, 1984



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://louis.pressbooks.pub/musicappreciation/?p=1077#oembed-11>

The second of these, *Vltava* (*The Moldau*), is recognized as Smetana's greatest orchestral work. Notes in the conductor's score state:

The Moldau represents an exceptional expression of patriotic or nationalistic music. The musical poem reflects the pride, oppression, and hope of the Bohemian people. Two springs pour forth in the shade of the Bohemian Forest, one warm and gushing, the other cold and peaceful. Their waves, gaily flowing over rocky beds, join and glisten in the rays of the morning sun. The forest brook, hastening on, becomes the river Vltava (Moldau). Coursing through Bohemia's valleys, it grows into a mighty stream. Through thick woods it flows, as the gay sounds of the hunt and the notes of the hunter's horn are heard ever nearer. It flows through grass-grown pastures and lowlands where a wedding feast is being celebrated with song and dance. At night wood and water nymphs revel in its sparkling waves. Reflected on its surface are fortresses and castles—witnesses of bygone days of knightly splendor and the vanished glory of fighting times. At the St. John Rapids the stream races ahead, winding through the cataracts, heaving on a path with its foaming waves through the rocky chasm into the broad river bed—finally. Flowing on in majestic peace toward Prague—finally. Flowing on in majestic peace toward Prague and welcomed by time-honored Vysehrad (castle.) Then it vanishes far beyond the poet's gaze. —Preface to the original score, Philharmonic Symphony Society of New York, *The Concert Companion*, p. 672.

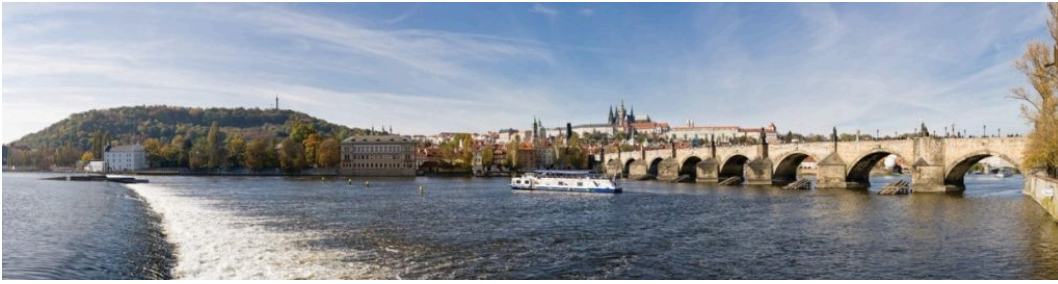


Figure 10.16: A panoramic view looking northwest across the Vltava River to Prague Castle and the Charles Bridge, 2010 | Author: Diliff | Source: [Wikimedia Commons](#) | License: [CC BY-SA 3.0](#)

Focus Composition: Bedřich Smetana, *The Moldau (Vlatava)*

Video 10.12: *Vltava (The Moldau)* by Bedřich Smetana, BBC Symphony, Vilem Tausky: Conductor



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://louis.pressbooks.pub/musicappreciation/?p=1077#oembed-12>

Listening Guide

- Composer: Bedřich Smetana (1824-1884)
- Composition: *The Moldau (Vlatava)*
- Date: 1874
- Genre: Symphonic poem
- Form: Symphonic poem (tone poem)
- Performing forces: Piccolo, two flutes, two oboes, two clarinets, two bassoons, four French horns, two trumpets, three trombones, tuba, timpani, bass drum, triangle, cymbals, harp, and strings
- What we want you to remember about this composition:
 - The *Moldau (Vlatava)* is a programmatic symphonic poem portraying the story of the main river in Bohemia as it flows through Smetana's homeland countryside. Each section portrays a different scene, often contrasting, that the river encounters.
 - This piece is a good representation of Czech nationalism and also of a romantic setting of nature.
 - The composer wrote the work following a trip he took down the river as part of a larger cycle of six symphonic poems written between 1874 and 1879 entitled *Má Vlast (My Country)*.

- Note that each section of the work has its own descriptive title in bold print.

Music of Antonín Dvořák (1841-1904)



Figure 10.17:
Antonín Dvořák,
1882 | Author:
Unknown | Source:
[Wikimedia
Commons](#) |
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Domain

Antonín Dvořák (pronounced Antoneen Duhvorszhak) was born in a Bohemian village of Nelahozeves near Prague. Following in Smetana's footsteps, Dvořák became a leading composer in the Czech nationalism music campaign. Indeed, Dvořák and Smetana are considered the founders of the Czech national school. Dvořák, at the age of sixteen, moved to Prague. As a young aspiring violinist, Dvořák earned a seat in the Czech National Theater. Dvořák learned to play viola and became a professional violist; for a time in his career, he performed under Smetana. Dvořák became recognized by Brahms, who encouraged Dvořák to devote his energy to composing. Early in his career, he was musically under the German influence of Beethoven, Brahms, and Mendelssohn. Later, however, Dvořák explored his own culture, rooting his music in the dances and songs of Bohemia. Indeed, he never lost touch with his humble upbringing by his innkeeper and butcher father.

Dvořák's compositions received favorable recognition abroad and reluctant recognition at home. From 1892 to 1895, Dvořák served as director of the National Conservatory in the United States. During this time, his compositions added American influences to the Bohemian. He fused "old world" harmonic theory with "new world" style. Very interested in American folk music, Dvořák took as one of his pupils an African-American baritone singer named Henry T. Burleigh, who was an arranger and singer of spirituals. You can hear Harry T. Burleigh sing the spiritual "[Go Down Moses](#)." Dvořák's admiration and enthusiasm for the African-American spiritual is conveyed as he stated,

I am convinced that the future music of this country must be founded on what are called Negro melodies. These can be the foundation of a serious and original school of composition, to be developed in the United States.

—[Interviewed by James Creelman, *New York Herald*, May 21, 1893](#)

The spirituals, along with Native American and cowboy songs, interested Dvořák and influenced his compositions for years to come. His love for this American folk music was contagious and soon spread to other American composers. Up until this point, American composers were under the heavy influence of their European counterparts. Dvořák's influence and legacy as an educator and composer can be traced in the music of Aaron Copland and George Gershwin.

Something to Think About

Although he gained much from his time in America, Dvořák yearned for his homeland, to which he returned after three years away, resisting invitations from Brahms to relocate in Vienna. Dvořák desired the simpler life of his homeland, where he died in 1904, shortly after his last opera, *Armida*, was first performed.

Can you think of any other famous musicians or composers who were uprooted from their homeland and poured their yearning for their homeland into their music?

Music for Orchestra

In his lifetime, Dvořák wrote in various music forms, including the symphony. He composed nine symphonies in all, with his most famous being the ninth, *From the New World* (1893). This symphony was commissioned by the New York Philharmonic, which premiered it in New York on December 16, 1893, the same year as its completion. The symphony was partially inspired by a Czech translation of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's poem *Hiawatha*.

Dvořák also composed a cello concerto for solo instrument and orchestra, a violin concerto, and a lesser-known piano concerto. Dvořák received recognition for *Romance* for solo violin and orchestra and *Silent Woods* for cello and orchestra. These two pieces make significant contributions to the solo repertoire for both string instruments.

Dvořák composed several piano duets that he later orchestrated for symphony orchestra. They include his ten *Legends*, two sets of *Slavonic Dances*, and three *Slavic Rhapsodies*. His overtures include *In Nature's Realm*, *My Home*, *Carnival*, *Hussite*, and *Othello*. He also composed a polonaise *Scherzo Capriccioso* and the much-admired *Serenade for Strings*. His symphonic poems include *The World Dove*, *The Golden Spinning-Wheel*, and *The Noonday Witch*.

Music for Chamber Ensembles

Dvořák also composed chamber music, including fourteen string quartets. No. 12, the “American” Quartet, was written in 1893, the same year as the *New World Symphony*. Also from the American period, Dvořák composed the G major Sonatinas for violin and piano, whose second movement is known as “Indian Lament.” Of the four remaining found Dvořák piano trios, the *Dumky* trio is famous for using the Bohemian national dance form. His quintets for piano and strings or strings alone for listening enjoyment are much appreciated, as are his string sextet and the trio of two violins and viola, *Terzetto*.

Humoresque in G-flat Major is the best known of the eight Dvořák piano pieces placed in a set. He also composed two sets of piano duets entitled *Slavonic Dances*.

Operas

From 1870 to 1903, Dvořák wrote ten operas. The famous aria “O Silver Moon” (1900) from *Rusalka* is one of his most famous pieces. Dvořák wrote many of his operas with village theaters and comic village plots in mind, much the same as Smetana’s *The Bartered Bride*.

Choral and Vocal Works

Several of Dvořák’s choral works were composed for many of the amateur choral societies, such as those found in Birmingham, Leeds, and London in England. The oratorio *St. Ludmilla* was composed for such societies, as were settings of the Mass, Requiem Mass, and the *Te Deum*, which was first performed in 1892 in New York. Earlier choral works and settings, such as *Stabat Mater* and Psalm CXLIX, were performed in Prague 1879-1880.

Dvořák composed several songs, including the appreciated set of *Moravian Duets* for soprano and contralto. The most famous of his vocal pieces is the “Songs My Mother Taught Me,” which is the fourth in the *Seven Gypsy Songs*, opus 55, set.

Focus Composition: Dvořák's Symphony No. 9 (From the New World) Movement 2

Video 10.13: Dvořák's Symphony No. 9 (From the New World) Movement 2



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://louis.pressbooks.pub/musicappreciation/?p=1077#oembed-13>

Listening Guide

- Composer: Antonín Dvořák
- Composition: Symphony No. 9 From the New World, movement 2 Largo
- Date: 1893
- Genre: Symphony
- Performing forces: Chicago Symphony Orchestra, Sir George Solti, conductor
- What we want you to remember about this composition:
 - The theme. The “coming home theme” is said to possibly be from a negro spiritual or Czech folk tune. It is introduced in what some call the most famous English horn solo.
- Other things to listen for:
 - The weaving of these very beautiful but simple melodies. Listen to how “western American” the piece sounds at times. American music (western, spirituals, and folk) had a profound influence on Dvořák’s compositions.

You are encouraged to listen to the entire symphony. For more information, visit [Antonín Dvořák: Symphony No. 9 “From the New World” analysis by Gerard Schwarz Part 1](#) from Khan Academy.

Music of Pyotr Tchaikovsky (1840-1893)



Figure 10.18: Pyotr Tchaikovsky (1893)
 | Artist: Nikolai Dmitriyevich Kuznetsov |
 Source: [Wikimedia Commons](#) |
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Pyotr (Peter) Ilyich Tchaikovsky was born in Votkinsk, a small mining town in Russia. He was a son of a government official and started taking piano at the age of five, though his family intended him to have a career as a government official. His mother died of cholera when he was fourteen, a tragedy that had a profound and lasting effect on him. He attended the aristocratic school in St. Petersburg called the School of Jurisprudence and, upon completion, obtained a minor government post in the Ministry of Justice. Nevertheless, Pyotr always had a strong interest in music and yearned to study it.

At the age of twenty-three, he resigned his government post and entered the newly created Conservatory of St. Petersburg to study music. From the age of twenty-three to twenty-six, he studied intently and completed his study in three years. His primary teachers at the conservatory were Anton Rubinstein and Konstantin Zarembe, but he himself taught lessons while he studied. Upon completion, Tchaikovsky was recommended by Rubinstein, director of the school as well as teacher, to a teaching post at the new conservatory of Moscow. The young professor of harmony had full teaching responsibilities with long hours and a large class. Despite his heavy workload, his twelve years at the conservatory saw the composing of some of his most famous works, including his first symphony. At the age of twenty-nine, he completed his first opera, *Voyevoda*, and composed the *Romeo and Juliet* overture. At the age of thirty-three, he started supplementing his income by writing as a music critic and composed his second symphony, his first piano concerto, and his first ballet, *Swan Lake*.

The reception of his music sometimes included criticism, and Tchaikovsky took criticism very personally, being prone as he was to (attacks of) depression. These bouts with depression were exacerbated by an impaired personal social life. To calm and smooth that personal life, Tchaikovsky entered a relationship and marriage with a conservatory student named Antonina Ivanovna Miliukova in 1877. She was star-struck and had fallen immediately and rather despairingly in love with him. His pity for her soon turned into unmanageable dislike

to the point that he avoided her at all costs. Once in a fit of depression and aversion, he even strolled into the icy waters of the Moscow River to avoid her. Many contemporaries believe the effort was a suicide attempt. A few days later, nearly approaching a complete mental breakdown, he sought refuge and solace, fleeing to his brothers in St. Petersburg. The marriage lasted less than a month.

At this darkest hour for Tchaikovsky, a kind, wealthy benefactress who admired his music became his sponsor. Her financial support helped restore Tchaikovsky to health, freed him from his burdensome teaching responsibilities, and permitted him to focus on his compositions. His benefactor was a widowed industrialist, Nadezhda von Meck, who was dominating and emotional and who loved his music. From her secluded estate, she raised her eleven children and managed her estate and railroads. Due to the social norms of the era, she had to be very careful to make sure that her intentions in supporting the composer went toward his music and not toward the composer as a man; consequently, they never met one another other than possibly through the undirected mutual glances at a crowded concert hall or theater. They communicated through a series of letters to one another, and this distance letter-friendship soon became one of fervent attachment.

In his letters to Meck, Tchaikovsky would explain how he envisioned and wrote his music, describing it as a holistic compositional process, with his envisioning the thematic development to the instrumentation being all one thought. The secured environment she afforded Tchaikovsky enabled him to compose unrestrainedly and very creatively. In appreciation and respect for his patron, Tchaikovsky dedicated his fourth symphony to Meck. He composed that work in his mid-thirties, a decade when he premiered his opera *Eugene Onegin* and composed the *1812 Overture* and *Serenade for Strings*.

Tchaikovsky's music ultimately earned him international acclaim, leading to his receiving a lifelong subsidy from the tsar in 1885. He overcame his shyness and started conducting appearances in concert halls throughout Europe, making his music the first of any Russian composer to be accepted and appreciated by Western music consumers. At the age of fifty, he premiered *Sleeping Beauty* and *The Queen of Spades* in St. Petersburg. A year later, in 1891, he was invited to the United States to participate in the opening ceremonies for Carnegie Hall. He also toured the United States, where he was afforded impressive hospitality. He grew to admire the American spirit, feeling awed by New York's skyline and Broadway. He wrote that he felt he was more appreciated in America than in Europe.

While his composition career sometimes left him feeling dry of musical ideas, Tchaikovsky's musical output was astonishing and included at this later stage of his life two of his greatest compositions: *The Nutcracker*, a ballet, and *Iolanta*, an opera. Both premiered in St. Petersburg. He conducted the premier of his sixth symphony, *Pathétique*, in St. Petersburg as well but received only a lukewarm reception, partially due to his shy, lack-luster personality. The persona carried over into his conducting technique that was rather reserved and subdued, leading to a less than emotion-packed performance by his orchestra.

A few days after the premier, while he was still in St. Petersburg, Tchaikovsky ignored warnings against drinking unboiled water, warnings due to the current prevalence of cholera there. He contracted the disease and died within a week at the age of fifty-three years old. Immediately upon his tragic death, the *Symphonie Pathétique* earned great acclaim that it has held ever since.

In the nineteenth century and still today, Tchaikovsky is among the most highly esteemed of composers. Russians have the highest regard for Tchaikovsky as a national artist. Tchaikovsky incorporated the national feelings and culture—from its simple countryside to its busy cities—into his music. Along with his nationalism influences, such as Russian folk song, Tchaikovsky enjoyed studying and incorporating German symphony, Italian opera, and French ballet. He was comfortable with all these disparate sources and gave all his music lavish melodies flooding with emotion.

Tchaikovsky composed a tremendously wide spectrum of music, with ten operas, including *Eugene Onegin*, *The Maid of Orleans*, *Queen of Spades*, and *Iolanta*; internationally acclaimed ballets, including *Swan Lake*, *The Sleeping Beauty*, *The Nutcracker*, *Snow Maiden*, and *Hamlet*; six symphonies, three piano concertos, various overtures, chamber music, piano solos, songs, and choral works.

Focus Composition: Tchaikovsky's 1812 Overture

Video 10.14: Tchaikovsky's 1812 Overture



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://louis.pressbooks.pub/musicappreciation/?p=1077#oembed-14>

Listening Guide

- Composer: Pyotr (Peter) Ilyich Tchaikovsky
- Composition: *1812 Overture*
- Date: 1882
- Genre: Symphony overture
- Form: Two-part overture—choral and finale
- Performing forces: Large orchestra, including a percussion section with large bells and a battery of cannons
- What we want you to remember about this composition:
 - The piece depicts preparation for war, the actual conflict, and victory after the war is ended. It is quite descriptive in nature.
 - Tchaikovsky's *1812 Overture* is one of the most famous and forceful pieces of classical music. It is particularly famous for its epic finale.
 - It was made famous and mainstream to the public in the United States through public concerts on July 4th by city orchestras such as the Boston Pops.
 - Though the piece was written to celebrate the anniversary of Russia's victory over France in 1812,

the piece's finale is very often used for the 4th of July during fireworks displays.

Music of John Philip Sousa (1854-1939)



Figure 10.19: John Philip Sousa (1900)
| Photographer: Elmer Chickering |
Source: [Wikimedia Commons](#) |
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John Philip Sousa, (b. Nov. 6, 1854-1939) was born in Washington, D.C., to a father, John Antonio Sousa, who played trombone in the U.S. Marine Band, and a mother, Maria Elisabeth Trinkaus, of Bavarian descent. The young Sousa was raised in a very musical environment and began studying voice, violin, piano, flute, baritone, trombone, and alto horn when his peers were just beginning first grade.

Sousa was an adventurous young man. At the young age of thirteen, he unsuccessfully tried to run away to join a circus band. Immediately after this episode, his father enlisted him in the Marines as a band apprentice in the Marine Band. There he remained until he reached the age of twenty, complementing his Marine Band training in music by studying composition and music theory with the locally highly acclaimed orchestra leader George Felix Benkert. During these early years with the Marine Band and under the music mentorship of Benkert, Sousa composed his first piece, *Moonlight on the Potomac Waltzes*.

Upon his honorable discharge from the Marines in 1875, the twenty-one-year-old Sousa began performing on violin and touring. While playing violin, Sousa performed under the baton of Jacques Offenbach at the Centenary Exhibition in Philadelphia, and Sousa's music later showed Offenbach's influence. While playing the violin in various theater orchestras, Sousa learned to conduct, a skill he would use for the remainder of his career. This period of Sousa's career eventually led to his conducting Gilbert and Sullivan's *H. M. S. Pinafore* on Broadway in New York. In 1879, while conducting in Broadway, Sousa met Jane van Middlesworth, whom he married in December of that year. About a year later, Sousa assumed the leadership post of the Marine Band, with the couple moving to Washington, D.C. Sousa conducted the Marine Band for the following twelve years, under the presidential administrations of Rutherford Hayes, James Garfield, Grover Cleveland, Chester

Arthur, and Benjamin Harrison. Sousa composed and performed repertoire at the request of these presidents and their respective first families.

In 1879, Sousa composed his first operetta. In 1886, *The Gladiator*, using his most recognizable music form of the march, received national recognition from military bandleaders. Two years later, he dedicated his newly composed march *Semper Fidelis* to the officers and men of the Marine Corps; that piece now is traditionally known as the “official” march of the Marine Corps.

The Marine Band made its first recordings under Sousa’s leadership. The phonograph had just recently been invented, and the Columbia Phonograph Company, seeking a military band to record, selected the Marine Band. They first released sixty recording cylinders and, within the decade, recorded and released for sale more than 400 different titles. These recordings made Sousa’s marches and their performance by the Marine Band among the most popular to be recorded.

Having achieved stardom, the Marine Band went on two limited but successful tours in 1891-92. After completing these tours, promoter David Blakely convinced Sousa to resign his post to organize a civilian concert band. Sousa did so, forming the New Marine Band, which was a concert rather than a marching band. After receiving criticism from Washington for using the word “Marine” in the title of his civilian band, Sousa eventually dropped it from its name. The new band’s first performance was on September 26, 1892, in Stillman Music Hall in Plainfield, New Jersey. Two days prior to the concert, acclaimed bandmaster Patrick Gilmore died in St. Louis. Eventually nineteen former musicians from Gilmore’s band joined Sousa’s band. The names of many of these nineteen musicians are still recognized today, including Herbert L. Clark on cornet and E. A. Lefebvre on saxophone.

While conducting this new band, Sousa also continued to compose music. When vacationing in Europe with his wife in 1896, he received news that David Blakely had died. The couple immediately departed for home. During this time traveling back to the United States, Sousa wrote his most famous composition, *The Stars and Stripes Forever*.

From 1900 to 1910, the Sousa band toured extensively. Tours included performances in the United States, Great Britain, Europe, South Africa, Australia, Canada, New Zealand, Hawaii, and the South Pacific in the Canary Islands. These performances and tours contributed to Sousa’s band’s reputation as the most admired American band of its time.

After World War I, Sousa continued to tour with his band and became a champion and advocate for music education for all children; he also testified for composer’s rights before Congress in 1927 and 1928. His success won him many titles and honorary degrees. Other successes included his serving as guest speaker and conductor for the Marine Band in Washington, D.C., in 1932, performing *The Stars and Stripes Forever*. Later that same year, following a rehearsal of the Ringgold Band in Reading, Pennsylvania, the seventy-seven-year-old Sousa passed away.

Sousa had composed 136 marches, many on the fly in preparation for a performance in the next town. Sousa’s best known marches include *The Stars and Stripes Forever*, *Semper Fidelis*, *The Washington Post*, *The Liberty Bell*, *Daughters of Texas*, *The Thunderer*, *King Cotton*, and *Manhattan Beach*.

Sousa also wrote ten operas, including *El Capitan*, *The Queen of Hearts*, *The Smugglers*, and *Desiree*, as well as a series of music suites and seventy songs. Besides writing music, he authored several articles and letters to the editors on various subjects and wrote three novels, *The Fifth String*, *Pipedown Sandy*, and *The Transit of Venus*. *Marching Along* was his comprehensive autobiography.

A sign of his continuing fame, dedications and recognitions to the Sousa name include a memory dedication of the newly built 1939 Pennsylvania Avenue Bridge across the Anacostia River in Washington, D.C.; renaming of the Marine Barracks band hall in his honor in 1974; and many others. In 1987, *The Stars and Stripes Forever* march was designated as the national march of the United States. Sousa became known as the “March King.”

Focus Composition: John Philip Sousa's *The Stars and Stripes Forever*

Video 10.15: *The Stars and Stripes Forever* by John Philip Sousa (1896)

Performed by “The President’s Own” United States Marine Band, 2016.



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://louis.pressbooks.pub/musicappreciation/?p=1077#oembed-15>

Listening Guide

- Composer: John Philip Sousa
- Composition: *The Stars and Stripes Forever*
- Date: 1896
- Genre: March
- Performing forces: Large military band
- What we want you to remember about this composition:
 - It is the official National March of the United States.
- Other things to listen for:
 - After the introduction, the sections of the march are called strains and then a trio section. The trio sections often have a contrasting section traditionally called a dogfight strain. These often are representative of a traditional silent-movie battle scene. The “fight scene” is staged between the different sections of the band (upper and lower voices, brass against the woodwind, brass, woodwind and percussion).

Chapter Summary

As we have seen, nineteenth-century music was diverse and pervasive. Music was a part of everyday life, as middle-class children received music education and as concerts became important social events across social strata. Aesthetic movements of Romanticism, Realism, Exoticism, and cultural nationalism shaped musical styles. Composers such as Franz Schubert, Felix and Fanny Mendelssohn, Robert and Clara Schumann, Fryderyk Chopin, Franz Liszt, Hector Berlioz, Johannes Brahms, Bedřich Smetana, Antonín Dvořák, John Philip Sousa, Pyotr Tchaikovsky, Giuseppe Verdi, and Richard Wagner (the last two are discussed in the chapter on Romantic Opera) wrote eclectic music across German, French, Italian, Czech, Polish, American, and Russian lands. Many of them continued with genres developed in the Baroque and classical periods, such as the concerto, symphony, opera, and oratorio, while others forged new paths, especially as music and poetry, drama, and visual art interacted in such new genres as the art song, piano character piece, program symphony, symphonic poem, and music drama or opera. Despite the larger performing forces that were available, composers continued to privilege singable melodies, even if they were much more chromatic than before. These transformations of musical form and harmony continued into the early twentieth century as musicians sought to be more modern than ever before and, in so doing, questioned the very foundations basic to music of the previous two centuries.

Test Your Understanding



An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:

<https://louis.pressbooks.pub/musicappreciation/?p=1077#h5p-21>

PART IV

MUSIC OF THE 20TH AND 21ST CENTURIES

11.

MUSIC OF THE 20TH AND 21ST CENTURIES

Learning Objectives

- Explain how progressive modern music sounds different from music of the “common practice era.”
- Identify the historical and ideological changes that caused the stylistic upheaval of modernism.
- Identify key stylistic attributes of twentieth-century modernist music.
- Compare and contrast the stylistic characteristics of different movements in twentieth- and twenty-first-century music, including impressionism, expressionism, primitivism, neoclassicism, minimalism, and post-minimalism.
- Explain ways that technology and media have influenced music in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.
- Identify important trends in twenty-first-century classical music.

Adapted from “Making Music Modern” from *Sound Reasoning*
by Anthony Brandt

Edited by Francis Scully

What makes music “modern”? This module proposes that heightened ambiguity differentiates experimental twentieth-century music from the classical repertoire.

Introduction

In this module, we will study the ways in which progressive modern music differs from classical music. We will

then use the conceptual and listening tools that we have developed in earlier modules as an entryway into the modern repertoire.

The Shock of the New

A little over three hundred years ago, Sir Isaac Newton created the first mathematically coherent explanation of the universe. To Sir Isaac Newton, nature behaved like a well-regulated, predictable machine. Give Newton comprehensive information about the universe and he could have predicted the future. Famously inspired by a falling apple, Newton's laws are confirmed by our direct perceptions and agree with our common sense. We still launch satellites into orbit using his method of calculation. But Newton's view of a predictable universe turned out to be deeply flawed. Perhaps the most fundamental scientific discovery of the 20th century was the recognition that ambiguity is irrevocably built into nature.

The Theory of Relativity

Einstein's Theory of Relativity stipulates that the speed of light is constant for all observers. One startling consequence of this is that simultaneity and cause and effect are not absolute but relative to one's perspective. It is possible for one observer to report two events as happening at the same time that another observer sees as happening in sequence. Thus, according to the Theory of Relativity, there is no definitive "reality," no commanding perspective that overrides all others. Instead, nature allows for multiple, and even contradictory, points of view. Decades of experiments have confirmed Einstein's theory.

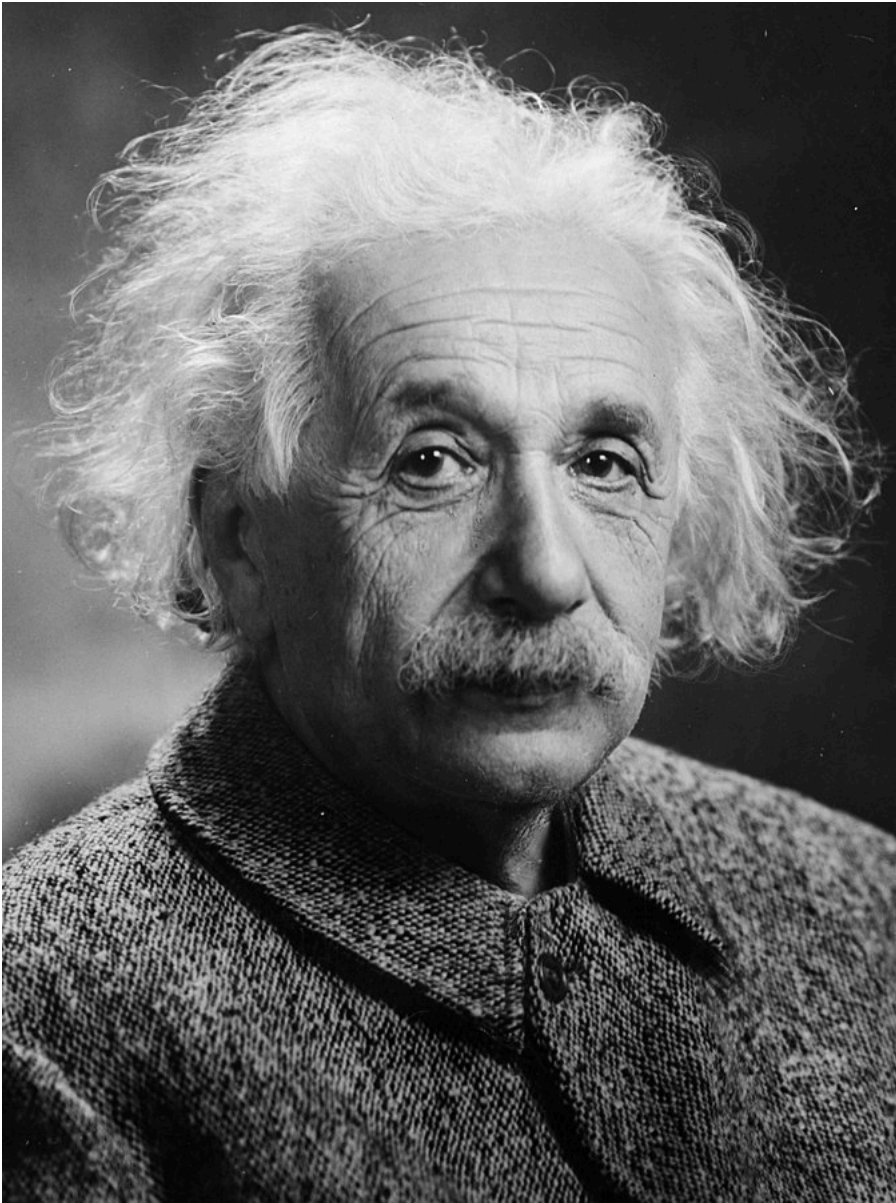


Figure 11.1: Albert Einstein, 1879-1955
| Photographer: Orren Jack Turner |
Source: [Library of Congress: Prints & Photographs Online Catalog](#) |
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Psychology

It is not just the outer world that is saturated with ambiguity. Sigmund Freud was the first scientist to deeply explore the concept of the unconscious—mental processes that lie beyond our direct awareness. These range from metabolic processes like breathing to the complex motivations that underlie everyday decisions. A century of research has established that most of human thinking is unconscious. Various experimental methods have been devised to explore the unconscious, from dream analysis to word association, Rorschach tests, brain scans, and more. Yet deciphering our unconscious thoughts remains elusive. Thus, not only must we accept the ambiguities of the natural world, we must acknowledge it within ourselves.

Nature's Ambiguities and Daily Life

Nature's ambiguities generally lie outside our direct perception. Relativistic effects only become pronounced near the speed of light. Unconscious thoughts, by definition, lie outside our immediate awareness. Thus, it is possible to be largely oblivious to the ambiguities inherent in nature. However, one hundred years of scientific research has established that ambiguity imbues the world around and within us.

Ambiguity in Art

As ambiguity became heightened in science, so too did ambiguity become heightened in art.

All great works of art leave questions open: Is Hamlet mad or just pretending to be? Is the Mona Lisa smiling? Twentieth-century artists didn't need to make their art ambiguous—it already was. Instead, they strove to amplify art's ambiguity. Painters created abstract images that did not refer explicitly to observable reality. Writers created non-linear narratives that shifted around in time or were told from multiple perspectives. How did composers heighten the ambiguity in music?



Figure 11.2:
Composition 6,
1913 (oil on canvas)
| Artist: Wassily
Kandinsky
(1866-1944) |
Source: [Wikimedia Commons](#) |
License: Public
Domain

Heightening Musical Ambiguity

Because it is non-verbal and often non-representational, music is particularly ambiguous. And yet, as the following discussion will make clear, classical composers put a high value on clarity and resolution. Progressive twentieth-century composers shifted the balance much more strongly towards the uncertain and the unresolved.

Individualized Musical Languages

“U tita enska aka ca vik i totar i tari”

Speaking in a personal language—no matter how thoroughly imagined and consistent—automatically heightens ambiguity. The sentence above—an example of Skerre, a language invented by linguist Doug Ball—would take a long time and a great deal of analysis to decipher. Language functions most conveniently in a community where everyone shares a similar vocabulary and syntax. Because music does not have fixed definitions, linguistic parallels are often misleading. Nevertheless, the shared materials and formal methods of the “**common practice era**” (the large area of music history that encompasses the baroque, classical, and romantic periods) helped to make music more accessible. Listening to one common practice era work will help you understand how to listen to others from the same era.

The following excerpts by Franz Schubert and Johannes Brahms were written seventy years apart. If Schubert had been alive to hear Brahms’s work, the music would no doubt have been intelligible to him.

Audio Ex. 11.1: Franz Schubert, Sonata in A-Major, D. 664



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://louis.pressbooks.pub/musicappreciation/?p=1352#audio-1352-1>

Audio Ex. 11.2: Johannes Brahms, Intermezzo in A-Major, Opus 117



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://louis.pressbooks.pub/musicappreciation/?p=1352#audio-1352-2>

During the twentieth century, the common practice era came to an end. Composers intensified the individuality of their musical voices. The following works for speaker and ensemble were written within several years of each other:

Audio Ex. 11.3: Igor Stravinsky, March from L’Histoire du Soldat



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://louis.pressbooks.pub/musicappreciation/?p=1352#audio-1352-3>

Audio Ex. 11.4: Arnold Schonberg, Mondestrunken from Pierrot Lunaire



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://louis.pressbooks.pub/musicappreciation/?p=1352#audio-1352-4>

A few decades later, the following string quartets were written very close together:

Audio Ex. 11.5: Elliot Carter, String Quartet No. 1, II



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://louis.pressbooks.pub/musicappreciation/?p=1352#audio-1352-5>

Audio Ex. 11.6: John Cage, String Quartet in 4 parts, IV



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://louis.pressbooks.pub/musicappreciation/?p=1352#audio-1352-6>

Finally, the following works for two pianos were written at nearly the same time:

Audio Ex. 11.7: Steve Reich, Piano Phase



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://louis.pressbooks.pub/musicappreciation/?p=1352#audio-1352-7>

Audio Ex. 11.8: Pierre Boulez, Structures for Two Pianos



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://louis.pressbooks.pub/musicappreciation/?p=1352#audio-1352-8>

Even though these pieces share the same instrumentation and are written around the same time, they don't share the same musical language. Listening to one piece does not help teach you how to listen to the other. Each work must be considered on its own terms.

The personalities of individual musical languages were established in a myriad of ways. Some composers, such as Harry Partch, invented their own instruments. (Partch gave his instruments such fanciful names as Cloud-Chamber Bowls, Diamond Marimba, and Chromolodeon.)

Audio Ex. 11.9: Harry Partch, "Vanity" from *Eleven Intrusions*



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://louis.pressbooks.pub/musicappreciation/?p=1352#audio-1352-9>

Some, like Mario Davidovsky, pioneered the use of electronic sounds. In Davidovsky's Synchronism No. 9, live and recorded, electronically transformed violin sounds are intertwined.

Audio Ex. 11.10: Mario Davidovsky, Synchronism No. 9



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://louis.pressbooks.pub/musicappreciation/?p=1352#audio-1352-10>

Some, such as Charles Ives, blended familiar music in unusual ways. In this excerpt from his String Quartet No. 2, Ives creates a musical "discussion" in which American folk tunes from North and South are quoted in opposition to each other.

Audio Ex. 11.11: Charles Ives, String Quartet No. 2



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://louis.pressbooks.pub/musicappreciation/?p=1352#audio-1352-11>

Some, such as Lou Harrison, incorporated influences from other cultures. This excerpt from Harrison's Song of Quetzalcoatl uses many exotic percussion instruments.

Audio Ex. 11.12: Lou Harrison, Song of Quetzalcoatl



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://louis.pressbooks.pub/musicappreciation/?p=1352#audio-1352-12>

Others, such as Elliott Carter and Milton Babbitt, developed sophisticated, very carefully constructed musical methods. In this excerpt from Carter’s *Variations for Orchestra*, ensembles within the orchestra are characterized uniquely—the winds, for instance, are soft and slow-paced—and then layered on top of each other in a complex counterpoint.

Audio Ex. 11.13: Elliott Carter, *Variations for Orchestra*



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://louis.pressbooks.pub/musicappreciation/?p=1352#audio-1352-13>

Now, over a hundred years after the end of the “common practice” period, there is an enormous proliferation of musical styles. The break-up of the musical community in favor of much more personal musical languages greatly heightened ambiguity.

Absence of Pulse

A steady pulse or “backbeat,” so crucial to pop music, jazz, and much world music, provides continuity and predictability: You tap your feet to the beat.

Audio Ex. 11.14: John Barry, “Into Miami” from *Goldfinger* soundtrack



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://louis.pressbooks.pub/musicappreciation/?p=1352#audio-1352-14>

A steady meter divides musical time into a fixed cycle of beats. Classical ballet and ballroom dancing depend on a steady meter.

Audio Ex. 11.15: Peter Tchaikovsky, “Waltz of the Flowers” from *The Nutcracker* ballet



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://louis.pressbooks.pub/musicappreciation/?p=1352#audio-1352-15>

Removing the steady pulse or meter disrupts the musical continuity and makes events much harder to predict. There are two main ways to accomplish this: One is to make the pulse or meter erratic.

Audio Ex. 11.16: Igor Stravinsky, “Sacrificial Dance” from *The Rite of Spring*



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://louis.pressbooks.pub/musicappreciation/?p=1352#audio-1352-16>

The second is to remove the sense of pulse and meter altogether, creating what Pierre Boulez has termed “**unstriated time**.” In the following example from Boulez’s *Eclat*, the solitary, sporadic events seem to float freely, unanchored by meter or pulse.

Audio Ex. 11.17: Pierre Boulez, *Éclat*



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://louis.pressbooks.pub/musicappreciation/?p=1352#audio-1352-17>

Weakening the sense of pulse or meter heightens ambiguity by removing an important frame of reference.

Unpredictable Continuity

It is frequently remarked that classical music is constantly creating expectations that encourage us to guess what will happen next. When the music is striving for maximum clarity, many of those expectations will be met. For instance, listen to the opening of J. S. Bach’s Prelude in E-flat from the Well-Tempered Clavier, Book I, which was published in 1722. Can you predict what happens next?

Audio Ex. 11.18: J. S. Bach, Prelude No. 7 / Well-Tempered Clavier, Book I



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://louis.pressbooks.pub/musicappreciation/?p=1352#audio-1352-18>

Does the upper register continue with fast motion? Or does the lower register answer the upper with fast motion? Or do both registers move in slow values?

Now, listen to the actual continuation.

Audio Ex. 11.19: J. S. Bach, Prelude No. 7 / Well-Tempered Clavier, Book I



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://louis.pressbooks.pub/musicappreciation/?p=1352#audio-1352-19>

The first few exchanges between upper and lower registers created the expectation that the lower register will continue to imitate the upper. Sure enough, the lower register answers in fast motion, confirming our prediction.

A surprise occurs when one outcome is strongly anticipated but another one occurs. Ambiguity arises when multiple outcomes are all equally expected or no good forecast can be made. Listen to the opening of the second movement of Igor Stravinsky's Three Pieces for String Quartet, which was published in 1922. Can you predict what happens next?

Audio Ex. 11.20: Igor Stravinsky, Three Pieces for String Quartet, II



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://louis.pressbooks.pub/musicappreciation/?p=1352#audio-1352-20>

Which of the various gestures that Stravinsky has introduced follows next? How sure are you? Here is how the music actually continues:

Audio Ex. 11.21: Igor Stravinsky, Three Pieces for String Quartet, II, continuation





One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://louis.pressbooks.pub/musicappreciation/?p=1352#audio-1352-21>

This time, you were likely to have been much less confident of your answer. In the Bach example, a pattern was established: the upper voice was repeatedly answered by the lower. Stravinsky does not establish a consistent pattern, making any predictions much more uncertain. When we cannot confidently forecast what will happen in the future, ambiguity is heightened.

Minimal Exposition

In football, the quarterback announces the play in the huddle; then the offense steps up to the line of scrimmage and runs the play. In music, expository statements establish the identity of a musical idea; developmental passages put the idea into action. Most classical music operates like a football offense: an idea is first introduced, then put into action.

Audio Ex. 11.22: J. S. Bach, “Contrapunctus IX” from *The Art of the Fugue*



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://louis.pressbooks.pub/musicappreciation/?p=1352#audio-1352-22>

In a no-huddle offense, the quarterback calls out the plays at the line of scrimmage. Teams use the no-huddle offense to speed up the pace of the game and confuse the defense. This creates a much more ambiguous and hectic situation. It is harder to defend, because there is less time to analyze formations. Analogously, in music, when exposition is abbreviated and development intensified, ambiguity is heightened.

Audio Ex. 11.23: Milton Babbitt, Post-Partitions



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://louis.pressbooks.pub/musicappreciation/?p=1352#audio-1352-23>

In the most extreme cases, a modern work may consist exclusively of development. This is as if a team were to

spend the entire game in a no-huddle offense! In such cases, the identity of the underlying material may be very difficult to perceive.

Lack of Literal Repetition

We establish our identity through our name, driver's license, social security number, credit cards, personal belongings, habits, tastes, family, and friendships. In music, the most forceful and clear way to establish identity is through literal repetition. Literal repetition is the strongest way to make a musical idea recognizable.

Audio Ex. 11.24: Peter Tchaikovsky, "Peppermint Candy Canes" from *The Nutcracker* ballet



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://louis.pressbooks.pub/musicappreciation/?p=1352#audio-1352-24>

Buddhism challenges the concept of identity, considering it an illusion. We may cling to the emblems of an enduring self, but they are no more substantial than sand castles. The only permanent truth is "impermanence." This finds a powerful correlation in one of modern music's most radical innovations: the elimination of literal repetition. Removing literal repetition weakens any sense of a stable "musical identity" and heightens the music's sense of impermanence and flux.

Audio Ex. 11.25: Milton Babbitt, All set for jazz ensemble



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://louis.pressbooks.pub/musicappreciation/?p=1352#audio-1352-25>

Lack of Resolution

In classical music, a **dissonance** is a **tendency tone** that is considered unstable. A dissonance demands continuation: It must resolve to a stable tone, called a **consonance**.

Audio Ex. 11.26: Gustav Mahler, Symphony No. 1, IV





One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://louis.pressbooks.pub/musicappreciation/?p=1352#audio-1352-26>

Classical music makes an essential promise: All dissonances will resolve. Sometimes, resolutions are delayed or new dissonances enter just as others are resolved. Eventually, however, the music will reach a state of repose and clarity.

Audio Ex. 11.27: Gustav Mahler, Symphony No. 1, IV, continuation



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://louis.pressbooks.pub/musicappreciation/?p=1352#audio-1352-27>

In progressive modern music, dissonance is frequently intensified and sustained way beyond classical expectations.

Audio Ex. 11.28: Henry Cowell, Tiger



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://louis.pressbooks.pub/musicappreciation/?p=1352#audio-1352-28>

In addition, there is a new paradigm: Dissonances no longer must resolve. Stability and clarification are no longer guaranteed.

Audio Ex. 11.29: Gyorgy Kurtag, Twelve Microludes, XI



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://louis.pressbooks.pub/musicappreciation/?p=1352#audio-1352-29>

Nowhere is the clarity of classical music more strongly established than at the end of a work. There, the music summons its greatest powers of resolution. Beethoven's Symphony No. 5 ends with an emphatic affirmation of stability.

Audio Ex. 11.30: Ludwig van Beethoven, Symphony No. 5, IV, ending



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://louis.pressbooks.pub/musicappreciation/?p=1352#audio-1352-30>

The absence of resolution at a work's close guarantees greater ambiguity. In the following example from Pierre Boulez's *Dérive* (1984), a stable sound is sustained by the violin. The other instruments dart towards and away from this sound, never wholeheartedly coinciding with it. The effect is much more precarious than in the Beethoven example.

Audio Ex. 11.31: Pierre Boulez, *Dérive*

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://louis.pressbooks.pub/musicappreciation/?p=1352#audio-1352-31>

There is nothing that we can do to make Boulez's ending sound as secure as Beethoven's: It is inherently more ambivalent.

Heightened Dissonance

In music theory, dissonance is a functional term. To listeners, though, “dissonant” is often a value judgment, typically meaning “harsh” and “unpleasant.” Those attributes, though, are subjective and carry strong negative connotations. I would prefer a different description. Acoustically, a stable sound is more “transparent”: It is easier to identify its inner constituents. A sound with a lot of dissonance is more “opaque”: The greater the amount of dissonance, the harder it is to analyze and interpret the sound.

Audio Ex. 11.32: Gyorgy Ligeti, “Kyrie” from *Requiem*

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://louis.pressbooks.pub/musicappreciation/?p=1352#audio-1352-32>

It is easy to understand, then, why modern composers might heighten dissonance: not necessarily to make the music more strident but rather to increase the ambiguity by making the sounds harder to aurally decipher.

Harmonic Independence

In a family-style restaurant, everyone sitting at one table is fed the same food. As the platters are brought to the table, the guests choose their own portions; yet they are bound together by sharing the same meal. If someone were to ask about the menu of the day, there would be a clear and united answer.

The word **harmony** describes the notes that are sounding at the same time. In classical music, no matter how many instruments are playing, they will share the same harmony. As one harmony leads to another, the instruments will move together, partaking of the same notes. In addition to a steady pulse, **harmonic coordination** is the primary way that classical music **coheres**. Harmony is the reason that the instruments “sound good together” even when they are playing independent lines.

Audio Ex. 11.33: Ludwig van Beethoven, Symphony No. 9, IV



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://louis.pressbooks.pub/musicappreciation/?p=1352#audio-1352-33>

At a salad bar, each person creates his or her own meal. One person might make one trip to the buffet; another might visit repeatedly, each time choosing different items. The diners no longer cohere in the same way: It would be impossible to know from one person’s plate what someone else was eating.

In music, the absence of **harmonic coordination** may create great ambiguity and complexity. **Harmonic independence** makes it much harder to get a “comprehensive” overview of how the instruments fit together. The third movement of Luciano Berio’s *Sinfonia* (1968) dramatizes this effect. In this movement, the scherzo from Mahler’s Second Symphony is played continuously. On top of it, an elaborate collage of music and text is layered: graffiti from the walls of the Sorbonne, quotes from Samuel Beckett, excerpts from classical and modern music. Strong clashes arise because the collage elements do not agree harmonically with the Mahler.

Audio Ex. 11.34: Luciano Berio, *Sinfonia*



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://louis.pressbooks.pub/musicappreciation/?p=1352#audio-1352-34>

Harmonic independence does not mean that modern composers do not care how independent lines sound

together. They *do* care, but they are trying to create ambiguity rather than clarity. Giving each instrument its own “plate of food,” which may complement others in intricate ways, leads to radically new resulting sounds.

Weak Rhetorical Reinforcement

When the winner is declared in a typical presidential election, streamers and balloons fall down from the ceiling, supporters cheer, cameras flash—all reinforcing the decisive outcome.

In classical music, united emphasis or “rhetorical reinforcement” is a primary means of creating structural clarity. In Beethoven’s Symphony No. 5, the third movement continues into the fourth without a break. The boundary between the movements is marked by strong rhetorical reinforcement: The dynamics, texture, meter, and speed all change at once to herald the opening of the fourth movement.

Audio Ex. 11.35: Ludwig van Beethoven, Symphony No. 5, III-IV



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://louis.pressbooks.pub/musicappreciation/?p=1352#audio-1352-35>

Election Night 2000 offered a different picture: No balloons fell, people milled about in a state of confusion, television announcers nervously shuffled their papers. Indeed, the country managed to peacefully sustain the uncertain outcome for the seven weeks that followed.

In progressive twentieth-century music, rhetorical reinforcement is often weak or absent. This makes the structural arrival points much more difficult to perceive. In Henri Dutilleux’s *Ainsi la nuit...* (1977), the individual movements are played without a pause. However, the boundaries between movements are difficult to discern because there are conflicting cues.

Audio Ex. 11.36: Henri Dutilleux, *Ainsi la nuit...* (1977)



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://louis.pressbooks.pub/musicappreciation/?p=1352#audio-1352-36>

Perhaps you recognized that the second movement begins with the loud gesture played a little over a minute into the excerpt. However, this gesture does not have a greater perceptual priority than other potential markers, such as the long silences. As a result, you are likely to be far less certain about the formal boundary.

In traditional ballet, music and movement typically reinforce each other: For instance, the music will reflect the change from a solo to an ensemble number. However, when composer John Cage and choreographer

Merce Cunningham collaborated, they did not coordinate their work. Music and dance were combined for the first time at the premiere. This made rhetorical reinforcement highly unlikely; if it did occur, it could only be the result of chance. Thus, the method of collaboration guaranteed greater ambiguity.

Silence

Many musical traditions treat silence as the “absence of music.” Silence is almost totally absent from pop music. In classical music, it is used sparingly: It may occur as a “breath” to short phrases or as a way to clearly separate one section of the form from another (e.g., the first theme from the second theme in a sonata form). The opening of Mozart’s Symphony No. 40 (1788) consists of continuous sound until the arrival of the contrasting section, which is marked by silence:

Audio Ex. 11.37: Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, Symphony No. 40, I



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://louis.pressbooks.pub/musicappreciation/?p=1352#audio-1352-37>

In progressive twentieth-century music, silence began to be treated as a musical material in its own right. Its musical information is limited: All we can analyze is how long it lasts. But, in seeking to heighten ambiguity, this limitation became a strength. We can read many possible meanings and inferences into silence: It is a hesitation, an interruption, a “trap door” into the unexpected.

Audio Ex. 11.38: Earl Kim, “Thither” from *Then and Now*



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://louis.pressbooks.pub/musicappreciation/?p=1352#audio-1352-38>

To John Cage, silence marked a musical event over which the composer had no control, which could function as a “window” into other sounds. His *Imaginary Landscape No. 4* is scored for twelve radios. The performers move the frequency and volume dials according to precisely timed instructions. Cage has no control over the resulting sound: It depends entirely on what is being broadcast that day. At one performance, none of the frequencies marked in the score coincided with stations in that location, resulting in a completely silent performance.

The greater the use of silence, the greater the ambiguity.

Noise

If silence is the “absence of sound,” then noise is “indiscriminate” or “indistinguishable” sound, in which it is impossible to tell the pitches or what instruments are playing. Classical music is generally purged of noise. Exceptions such as the following are rare:

Audio Ex. 11.39: Peter Tchaikovsky, 1812 Overture



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://louis.pressbooks.pub/musicappreciation/?p=1352#audio-1352-39>

To progressive twentieth-century composers, the inherent ambiguity of noise became very attractive.

Composers incorporated noise in their music in numerous ways. Some brought the outside world into the concert hall. For instance, to create his electronic composition *Finnegan's Wake*, John Cage recorded sounds in the Dublin neighborhood where a scene from James Joyce's novel on which the piece was based occurred; he then layered these in a complex collage.

Audio Ex. 11.40: John Cage, Roaratorio



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://louis.pressbooks.pub/musicappreciation/?p=1352#audio-1352-40>

Other composers asked for standard instruments to be played in non-traditional ways. In his string quartet *Black Angels* (1970), George Crumb has an amplified string quartet run their fingers rapidly up and down their fingerboards, creating a sound meant to evoke the frantic buzzing of insects.

Audio Ex. 11.41: George Crumb, *Black Angels*



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://louis.pressbooks.pub/musicappreciation/?p=1352#audio-1352-41>

As with silence, the more noise, the greater the ambiguity.

Ambiguous Notation

The furniture from IKEA comes in a box, with a manual on how to put it together. There is room for individual touches, but the over-arching goal is to create a piece of furniture that matches the instructions.

Classical music also comes with detailed instructions. A classical score typically specifies the instrumentation, pitches and rhythms, speed, dynamics, and articulations. Not everything is marked with equal precision, leaving room for interpretation. However, the purpose of the score is to create a recognizable performance: Much more is shared between interpretations than differs. For instance, compare two performances of Beethoven's Bagatelle, Opus 126, No. 1 (1825).

Audio Ex. 11.42: Ludwig van Beethoven, Bagatelle, Opus 126, No. 1, performed by Walter Chodak



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://louis.pressbooks.pub/musicappreciation/?p=1352#audio-1352-42>

Audio Ex. 11.43: Ludwig van Beethoven, Bagatelle, Opus 126, No. 1, performed by Mia Chung



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://louis.pressbooks.pub/musicappreciation/?p=1352#audio-1352-43>

Some modern composers sometimes sold their furniture with the barest of instructions. Compare the following two recordings.

Audio Ex. 11.44: Earle Brown, *December 1952*, performed by Eberhard Blum (piano), Frances-Marie Uitti (cello), & Nils Vigeland (piano)



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://louis.pressbooks.pub/musicappreciation/?p=1352#audio-1352-44>

Audio Ex. 11.45: Earle Brown, *December 1952*, performed by David Tudor (piano)



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://louis.pressbooks.pub/musicappreciation/?p=1352#audio-1352-45>

Hard as it may be to believe, those are actually two performances of the same work: Earle Brown's *December 1952*. How can that possibly be? The instrumentation is different. The musical content—the pattern of sounds and silences—is totally different. Not a single detail is the same. The first performance lasts just 45 seconds. The second is actually only an excerpt of a 6-minute performance.

The sheet music score for Brown's work is shown below:



Figure 11.3: Score for Brown's *December 1952* | Composer: Earle Brown | Source: *December Variations (on a Theme by Earle Brown)*, Conference Paper by Richard Hoadley, DOI: [10.13140/2.1.4210.8480](https://doi.org/10.13140/2.1.4210.8480)

The composer offers no suggestions as to how to interpret the image: All decisions are left up to the performer. Brown's goal was to provide the impetus for a musical performance but not to impose an outcome. With such ambiguity in the notation, enormous variation in performance is possible.

Ambiguity in notation represents perhaps the greatest extreme reached in modern music. The more the musical text leaves open, the more it moves away from the constructive clarity of the classical era.

Something to Think About: “Something Familiar”

Some of the ideas and events that shaped modernist music also impacted popular music, though often with different musical results. Consider the characteristics of progressive modern music discussed above and think about which characteristics might be familiar to you in some of the popular music you enjoy. Which of the characteristics of progressive modernist music discussed above might you find in contemporary popular music? Alternatively, which characteristics of progressive modernist music do you find wholly alien to contemporary popular music?

Listening to Ambiguity

Tolerating the Ambiguity

In Samuel Beckett’s *Waiting for Godot*, two vagabonds—Vladimir and Estragon—await the arrival of a mysterious visitor, Godot. Godot’s arrival is anticipated, it is hoped for, it is repeatedly heralded—but it never happens. No matter how many times you see the play, Godot will never appear. Similarly, the ambiguities in a modern musical work are built in and can never be removed. Acknowledging this is the first step to a deeper understanding. Listeners are so often frustrated because they expect the ambiguities eventually to be clarified—if only they knew more or could listen more attentively. Doing so does not remove the ambiguities; it only makes them more **acute** and **palpable**.

Thinking Clearly about Ambiguity

Once you learn to tolerate the ambiguity, you can begin to discover its source. Are pulse and meter absent or erratic? Is dissonance heightened? Is the continuity unpredictable? Is there minimal exposition? Perpetual variation? Do noise and silence figure prominently? Any or all of these may contribute to the work’s open-endedness.

Considering the sources of the ambiguity will help you relate different pieces to each other and enable you to become more articulate about what you hear.

Be Prepared for More Personal Reactions

Progressive modern works often do not strongly direct the listener's attention: There may not be a clear hierarchy of theme and accompaniment; structural arrival points may be more subtle or evasive. Be prepared for your reaction to be more personal, and be prepared for your perspective to change with repeated hearings as you focus on different aspects of the work.

Celebrating Ambiguity

In the same way that a Jackson Pollock drip painting will never resolve itself into a clear image, the ambiguity in a progressive modern composition is irreversible. Whether it is now or in fifty or five hundred years, the only way to appreciate such music is to learn to sustain, tolerate, and celebrate the ambiguity. There's nothing that we can do to make the ending of Boulez's *Dérive* sound like the end of Beethoven's 5th. We cannot remove the noise from *Black Angels* or make a single performance of Earle Brown's *December 1952* definitive.

In an art form that is already abstract and non-verbal, heightening the ambiguity only increases the feelings of isolation and uncertainty. In addition, music is conventionally taught using concepts and terms specific to the common practice era. This training conditions listeners to certain expectations that modern music often fails to meet, leaving them baffled. To enjoy modern music, you must recognize the integrity of your own experience with the music—you must learn to trust your ears. You must also learn to abandon your pre-conceptions and listen in a style-independent way.

Most of us live comfortably in a Newtonian world, with modern advances in physics only at the periphery of our awareness. In a recent Op-Ed piece in the *New York Times*, the physicist Brian Greene lamented that, even one hundred years after Einstein's insights, the Theory of Relativity has not yet infiltrated our daily experience. In life and in music, we often long for clarity. And yet, in so many ways, we are learning how deeply ambiguity is embedded in our experience and how acknowledging and tolerating it enlarges our spirit. Progressive modern music offers one of the safest ways to experience ambiguity. If we can learn to reckon with modern music with an open mind and careful attention, it may help us deal more patiently and constructively with a world filled with contradictions and paradoxes.

Compositional Styles: The “-isms”

Adapted from “The Twentieth Century and Beyond,”
Understanding Music: Past and Present
 with additional content by Francis Scully

Now that we have examined all the ways that twentieth-century composers departed from earlier styles, we will explore several of the important stylistic trends or “-isms” of twentieth-century music.

Impressionism

The two major composers associated with the Impressionist movement are Claude Debussy (1862–1918) and Maurice Ravel (1875–1937). Both French-born composers were searching for ways to break free from the rules of tonality that had evolved over the previous centuries. Impressionism in music, as in art, focused on the creator's impression of an object, concept, or event. The painting below, *Rouen Cathedral*, by the French impressionist painter Claude Monet, suggests a church or cathedral, but it is not a clear portrait. It comprises a series of paint daubs that suggest something that we may have seen but that is slightly out of focus.

In the painting *Impression Sunrise*, we see how Monet distilled a scene into its most basic elements. The attention to detail of previous centuries is abandoned in favor of broad brushstrokes that are meant to capture the momentary “impression” of the scene. To Monet, the objects in the scene, such as the trees and boats, are less important than the interplay between light and water. To further emphasize this interplay, Monet pares the color palette of the painting down to draw the focus to the sunlight and the water.



Figure 11.4: *Rouen Cathedral: The Portal (Sunlight)*, 1894 | Artist: Claude Monet | Source: [Wikimedia Commons](#) | License: Public Domain



Figure 11.5:
*Impression, soleil
 levant (Impression
 Sunrise)*, 1872 |
 Artist: Claude
 Monet | Source:
[Wikimedia
 Commons](#) |
 License: Public
 Domain

Similarly, Impressionist music does not attempt to follow a story-like “program” like some Romantic period compositions. Rather, it seeks to suggest an emotion or series of emotions or perceptions. In Debussy’s orchestral work *La Mer (The Sea)*, Debussy’s music captures the play of wind, water, and light on the ocean at different times of the day. There is no heroic individual figure in this musical picture, merely the impressions of nature without the interference of humans. While Debussy retained the large Romantic-sized orchestra and still uses mostly traditional scales and chords, the harmonies do not always resolve in traditional ways. He also makes evocative use of silence. Listen to a few minutes of the first movement of *La Mer*.

Video 11.1: Debussy, *La Mer*, performed by the Los Angeles Philharmonic



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://louis.pressbooks.pub/musicappreciation/?p=1352#oembed-1>

Unlike composers such as Bach, Maurice Ravel was not born into a family of musicians. His father was an engineer, but one who encouraged Ravel’s musical talents. After attending the Paris Conservatory as a young man, Ravel drove a munitions truck during World War I. Throughout all this time, he composed compositions of such lushness and creativity that he became one of the most admired composers in France, along with

Claude Debussy. His best-known works include *Bolero*, Concerto in G for Piano, *La Valse*, and an orchestral work entitled *Daphnis et Chloé*.

Daphnis et Chloé was originally conceived as a ballet in one act and three scenes and was loosely based on a Greek drama by the poet Longus. The plot on which the piece is based concerns a love affair between the title characters Daphnis and Chloe. The first two scenes of the ballet depict the abduction and escape of Chloe from a group of pirates. However, it is the third scene that has become so immortalized in the minds of music lovers ever since. “Lever du jour,” or “Daybreak,” takes place in a sacred grove and depicts the slow build of daybreak from the quiet sounds of a brook to the birdcalls in the distance. As dawn turns to day, a beautiful melody builds to a soaring climax, depicting the awakening of Daphnis and his reunion with Chloe.

After the ballet’s premier in June of 1912, the music was reorganized into two suites, the second of which features the music of “Daybreak.” Listen to the recording below and try to imagine the pastel colors of daybreak slowly giving way to the bright light of day.

Video 11.2: *Daphnis et Chloé*: X. Lever du jour



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://louis.pressbooks.pub/musicappreciation/?p=1352#oembed-2>

Listening Guide: *Daphnis and Chloe*, Suite No. 2: “Lever du jour”

- Composer: Maurice Ravel
- Composition: *Daphnis and Chloe*, Suite No. 2: “Lever du jour”
- Date: 1913
- Genre: Orchestral suite
- Form: Through-composed
- Performing forces: Orchestra/chorus

Timing Performing Forces, Melody, and Texture

| | |
|------|--|
| 0:00 | Murmuring figures depicting a brook. Woodwinds, strings and harps, with more instruments entering periodically. Languid and flowing. Tonal, with ambiguous key centers and lush harmony typical of much Impressionistic music. |
| 0:52 | Sweeping melody reaches first climax, and then dies down slowly. Strings over murmuring accompaniment. |
| 1:09 | Strings and clarinet enter with song-like melody. Melody over murmuring strings. |
| 1:30 | Flute enters with dance-like melody. Melody over murmuring strings. |
| 1:48 | Clarinet states a contrasting melody. Melody over murmuring strings. |
| 2:13 | Chorus enters while strings continue melody. Melody over murmuring strings and “Ah” of chorus. |
| 2:53 | Melody rises to a climax and then slowly diminishes. Full Orchestra and Chorus. |
| 3:13 | Sweeping melody enters in strings to a new climactic moment. Full Orchestra. |
| 3:19 | Motif starts in low strings and then rises through the orchestra. Full Orchestra. |
| 4:05 | Chorus enters for a final climactic moment, then slowly dies away. Full Orchestra and Chorus. |
| 4:34 | Oboe enters with repeating melody. |
| 4:58 | Clarinet takes over repeating melody and the piece slows to a stop. As the piece comes to an end, the texture becomes more Spartan with fewer instruments. |

Expressionism and Serialism

While the Impressionist composers attempted to move further away from Romantic forms and Romantic harmony, some [expressionist](#) composers succeeded in completely eliminating tonal harmony and melody (music based on one specific pitch, or tonal center) from their music. The resultant sounds were often not very melodically and harmonically pleasant to hear, and as a result, the expressionist style of music did not (and still does not) appeal to the majority of audiences.

The expressionist period was not a time when composers sought to express themselves emotionally in a romantic, beautiful, or programmatic way. Instead, expressionism seems more appropriate for evoking more extreme, and sometimes even harsh, emotions. Using this experimental style of writing, composers such as [Arnold Schoenberg](#) (1874–1951) attempted to intentionally eliminate tonality: music that is based on scales and the progression (movement) of chords from one to another. The dissonance of this music is meant to reflect the dark recesses of the human subconscious.

In [Edvard Munch](#)’s famous painting *The Scream*, we see an excellent example of the parallel movement of expressionism taking place in the visual arts. Expressionists looked inward, specifically to the anxiety they felt towards the outside world. Expressionist paintings relied on stark colors and harsh swirling brushstrokes to convey the artist’s reaction to the ugliness of the modern world.



Figure 11.6: *The Scream* (1893) | Artist: Edvard Munch | Source: [Wikimedia Commons](#) | License: Public Domain

[Abstract expressionism](#) took this concept to a greater extreme by abandoning shape altogether for pure abstraction. This style is typified by the works of the American painter [Jackson Pollock](#).



Figure 11.7: No. 5
(1948) | Artist:
Jackson Pollock |
Source: [Wikipedia](#) |
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Many of the early works of Austrian-born Arnold Schoenberg (1874–1951) exemplify an expressionistic musical style. His music is highly dissonant and sounds quite radical when compared to earlier music, which uses dissonance only as a means to return eventually to the stasis of consonance. Schoenberg's 1912 song cycle *Pierrot Lunaire* for solo soprano and five instrumentalists is one of the most famous examples of expressionist style. The piece sets 21 poems by the Belgian symbolist Albert Guiraud. Pierrot, the “sad clown,” is a stock character from the Italian street theater tradition known as *Commedia dell'arte*. Guiraud's poems, full of suggestive dream and nightmare imagery, present the adventures of Pierrot as he wanders about obsessed with the moon (“lunaire”), unlucky in love, and feeling alienated from society (perhaps Pierrot also represents the figure of the artist in the twentieth century who was perpetually misunderstood).

For this song cycle, Schoenberg invents a style of singing called *Sprechstimme*, a kind of half-singing, half-speaking where the singer only approximates singing exact pitches. The result is a highly theatrical singing style that effectively captures the extreme psychological states.

We'll hear two of the songs, No. 1 “Moondrunk” and No. 8 “Night.”

No. 1 “Moondrunk”: In this song, Schoenberg represents the moonlight with a dissonant descending melody in the piano. You'll hear this repeated through the piece and shared with other instruments.

No. 8 “Night”: In this one, you hear the low instruments (cello, bass clarinet, and piano) depict the black

moths of the poem. You will hear a three-note theme that is repeated again and again throughout the piece as Pierrot is overwhelmed with the arrival of night.

Read a translation of the German text and listen:

“Moondrunk” text

The wine which through our eyes we drink
 Pours from the moon in waves upon us
 And like a springtide
 Overflows the stillness of the night.
 Desires so thrilling and so sweet,
 Cascading through the floods in thousands:
 The wine which through our eyes we drink,
 Pours from the moon in waves upon us.
 The writer, so divinely moved,
 Is greedy for the holy liquid,
 And skyward he directs his dizzy head,
 Then reeling, gulps and slurps down
 The wine which through our eyes we drink.

“Night” text

Obscure, black giant moths
 Killed the sun’s splendour.
 A closed book of spells,
 The horizon settles—hushed
 From the mists of lost depths
 Wafts a scent—remembrance murdered!
 Obscure, black giant moths
 Killed the sun’s splendour.
 And from the sky earthwards
 Sinking on heavy wings
 Unseeable the monsters (glide)
 Down into the human . . .
 Obscure, black giant moths.

Video 11.3: Listen to Schoenberg, *Pierrot Lunaire*, Moondrunk & Night, Marianne Pousseur, Pierre Boulez, Ensemble Intercont





One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://louis.pressbooks.pub/musicappreciation/?p=1352#oembed-3>

Part of what creates this expressionistic atmosphere in *Pierrot Lunaire* is that the music consciously avoids any sense of a tonal center (unlike a string quartet “in D” or a piano sonata “in B-flat,” these songs have no central pitch around which the music revolves). In later works, Schoenberg built upon this “atonal” style and developed a system whereby the twelve notes of the chromatic scale were organized into scale units that he called the [twelve-tone row](#). These rows could then be further “serialized” by a number of different techniques. This idea of assigning values to musical information is called the [12-Tone Technique](#), which is a kind of [Serialism](#). In 1921, Schoenberg composed his Piano Suite opus 25, the first composition written using the 12-tone method. Each 12-tone composition is built from a series of 12 different pitches that may be arranged in a number of different ways. The original row may be played forward, backwards (retrograde), upside down (inverted), and backwards and inverted (retrograde inversion). All of the melodies and harmonies in a 12-tone piece must be derived in some way from the original row or from fragments of the original row. This creates a sense of compositional unity and order within a highly dissonant and fragmented texture. Schoenberg’s ideas were further developed by his two famous students, [Alban Berg](#) and [Anton Webern](#). Together, the three came to be known as the [Second Viennese School](#), in reference to the first Viennese School, which consisted of Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven. While these three composers were colleagues and aligned artistically, they each produced unique versions of the expressionistic style.

Primitivism in Music

The brilliant [Igor Stravinsky](#) (1882–1971) was truly a cosmopolitan figure, having lived and composed in Russia, France, Switzerland, and the United States. His music influenced numerous composers, including the famed French composition teacher [Nadia Boulanger](#). Stravinsky caused quite a stir when the ballet entitled [The Rite of Spring](#) premiered in Paris in 1913. He composed the music for a ballet that was commissioned by [Sergei Diaghilev](#) and choreographed by [Vaslav Nijinsky](#), and it was so new and different that it famously caused a riot in the audience. The orchestral version (without the dancing) has become one of the most admired compositions of the twentieth century.

Stravinsky’s *The Rite of Spring* is an example of Primitivism. Stravinsky’s use of “primitive” sounding rhythms to depict several pagan ritual scenes makes the term [Primitivism](#) seem appropriate. Use the listening guide below to follow Stravinsky’s *The Rite of Spring*.

Video 11.4: *The Rite of Spring*—Sacrificial Dance—Nijinsky reconstruction



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://louis.pressbooks.pub/musicappreciation/?p=1352#oembed-4>

Listening Guide: *The Rite of Spring*—Sacrificial Dance

- Composer: Igor Stravinsky
- Composition: *Rite of Spring*, Sacrificial Dance
- Date: 1913
- Genre: Ballet music
- Form: Specific passages accompany changes in choreography
- Performing forces: Full orchestra

Timing Performing Forces, Melody, and Texture

| | |
|------|--|
| 0:15 | Strings. String section with percussion. Short, hard notes, irregular rhythms. |
| 0:47 | Strings. Winds and soft plucked stringed accompaniment. |
| 1:00 | Trombones. Winds and soft plucked stringed accompaniment. Triplet trombone fanfare over plucked string parts. Muted trumpets and strings answer. |
| 1:18 | Strings. Plucked stringed accompaniment becomes immediately loud. |
| 1:23 | Trumpet fanfare. Plucked stringed accompaniment remains loud. |
| 1:31 | French horns join fanfare section. Plucked stringed accompaniment remains loud. |
| 1:39 | Plucked stringed accompaniment becomes the melody. |
| 1:51 | Winds and soft plucked stringed accompaniment. |
| 2:06 | Violins. Scale patterns become very fast and loud. |
| 2:15 | Silence. |
| 2:17 | Strings and percussion. Restatement of section at 0:15 |
| 2:48 | Brass and percussion. Brass and percussion. Percussion faster and louder. |
| 3:18 | Horn riffs up to high notes. Add high clarinet. |
| 3:24 | Silence. |
| 3:26 | Strings and percussion. Brief restatement of section at 0:15 and 2:17 then back to material from 2:48 |
| 3:40 | Full orchestra. Multiple loud fanfare-like parts in many sections. Piece builds. |
| 3:54 | Strings. Similar to 0:07, 2:02 but more intense. |
| 4:32 | Brass. Full orchestra. Rhythmic figure carries intensity of the dance to end. |

Neoclassicism

In the decades between World War I and World War II, many composers in the Western world began to write in a style we now call [neoclassicism](#). When composing in a Neoclassic manner, composers were looking back to the past and incorporating many of the characteristics of the classical period into their music, incorporating concepts like balance (of form and phrase), economy of material, emotional restraint, and clarity in design. They also returned to popular classical forms like the Fugue, the Concerto Grosso, and the Symphony. But these pieces are not simply imitations of an older style. They continue to push musical boundaries through crunchy modernist harmonies and experimental approaches to rhythm and meter. For composers traumatized by the devastation of World War I, neoclassicism was attractive for its anti-Romantic avoidance of emotionalism. Writing about his *Octet for Winds* from 1923, Stravinsky claimed, “My octet is a musical object. My Octet is not an ‘emotive’ work but a musical composition based on objective elements which are sufficient themselves...like all other objects it has weight and occupies a place in space.... I consider music by its

very nature powerless to express anything: a feeling, an attitude, a psychological state, a natural phenomenon, etc.”

Listen to the first movement of Stravinsky’s *Dumbarton Oaks* (1937). This is a concerto grosso modeled on the *Brandenburg Concertos* (1721) of J. S. Bach, but you’ll hear Stravinsky’s characteristic rhythmic technique and sharp modernist harmonies.

Video 11.5: Listen from the beginning until 4:54



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://louis.pressbooks.pub/musicappreciation/?p=1352#oembed-5>

Other important neoclassical works include Stravinsky’s *Symphony of Psalms* (1930), *Pulcinella* (1920), and *Apollo* (1928); Sergei Prokofiev’s *Symphony No. 1* (1918) and *Violin Concerto No. 2* (1935); and Maurice Ravel’s *Piano Concerto in G* (1931) and *Le Tombeau de Couperin* (1917).

The Late Twentieth Century

Minimalism

[Minimalism](#) is a movement that began in New York during the 1960s, and it stands in stark contrast to much of the music of the early twentieth century. Minimalist composers sought to distill music down to its fundamental elements. Minimalist pieces were highly consonant (unlike the atonal music of earlier composers) and often relied on the familiar sounds of triads. Instead of featuring rhythmic complexity, minimalist composers established a steady pulse and meter. And unlike twelve-tone music, which avoided repetition at all costs, minimalist composers made repetition the very focus of their music. Change was introduced very slowly through small variations of repeated patterns, and in many cases, these changes were almost imperceptible to the listener. Arguably the most famous two composers of the minimalistic style were [Steve Reich](#) (b. 1936) and [Philip Glass](#) (b. 1937). Glass composed pieces for small ensembles composed of wind instruments, voices, or organ, while Reich’s music often featured various percussion instruments.

But minimalism wasn’t confined to the realm of music. In [Barnett Newman](#)’s (1905–1970) painting (Image 7.5) *Voice of Fire* (1967), we see that many of these same concepts of simplification applied to the visual arts. Minimalist painters such as Newman created starkly simple artwork consisting of basic shapes, straight lines, and primary colors. This was a departure from the abstract expressionists such as Jackson Pollock in the same way that Steve Reich’s compositions were a departure from the complexity of Arnold Schoenberg’s music.



Figure 11.8: *Voice of Fire* (1967) |
Artist: Barnett
Newman | Source:
[Wikipedia](#) |
License: Fair Use

Steve Reich's *Music for 18 Musicians* is a composition featuring eleven related sections performed by an unorthodox ensemble consisting of mallet instruments, women's voices, woodwinds, and percussion. Section VII below is constructed of a steady six-beat rhythmic pattern that is established at the beginning of the piece. Over this unfaltering rhythmic pattern, various instruments enter with their own repeated melodic motifs. The only real changes in the piece take place in very slow variations of rhythmic density, overall texture, and instrumental range. All of the melodic patterns in the piece fit neatly into a simple three-chord pattern, which is also repeated throughout the piece. Most minimalistic pieces follow this template of slow variations over a simple pattern. This repetition results in music with a hypnotic quality, but also with just enough change to hold the listener's interest.

Video 11.6: Steve Reich "Music for 18 Musicians"—Section VII



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://louis.pressbooks.pub/musicappreciation/?p=1352#oembed-6>

Listening Guide: Steve Reich *Music for 18 Musicians*—Section VII

- Composer: Steve Reich
- Composition: *Music for 18 Musicians*
- Date: 1976
- Genre: Minimalist composition comprising eleven sections
- Performing forces: Orchestra

Timing Performing Forces, Melody, and Texture

| | |
|------|--|
| 0:00 | Six-beat motif repeated by marimbas, mallet percussion, pianos and shaker. Steady meter is established throughout the piece. Only the texture changes. Single tonic minor chord. |
| 0:20 | Strings, woodwinds and voices enter with repeated motif, creating a more dense texture. Mallet percussion, pianos, shaker, strings, women's voices and clarinets. |
| 0:40 | Vibraphone enters, voice, woodwind and string parts begin to change, rising and becoming more dense. Underlying three-chord motif is established and repeated. |
| 3:05 | Piece has reached its apex. From here the string, voice, and woodwind melody slowly descends and becomes less rhythmically dense. |
| 3:40 | Piece returns to original texture of mallet instruments. mallet percussion, pianos, and shaker with simple closing melody played by vibraphone. Returns to single minor chord. |

Electronic Music

Modern electronic inventions continue to change and shape our lives. Music has not been immune to these changes. Computers, synthesizers, and massive sound systems have become common throughout the western world.

Musique concrète (a French term meaning “concrete music”) is a type of electro-acoustic music that uses both electronically produced sounds (like synthesizers) and recorded natural sounds (like instruments, voices, and sounds from nature). Pierre Schaeffer (in the 1940s) was a leader in developing this technique. Unlike traditional composers, composers of musique concrète are not restricted to using rhythm, melody, harmony, instrumentation, form, and other musical elements. The video linked below offers an excellent narrative on musique concrète.

Video 11.7: Watch Musique Concrète



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://louis.pressbooks.pub/musicappreciation/?p=1352#oembed-7>

Below is a link to one of Pierre Schaeffer's musique concrète compositions.

Video 11.8: Pierre Schaeffer — Études de bruits (1948) — YouTube



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://louis.pressbooks.pub/musicappreciation/?p=1352#oembed-8>

Elektronische Musik (German term meaning “electronic music”) is composed by manipulating only electronically produced sounds (not recorded sounds.) Like expressionism, both musique concrète and elektronische Musik did not last long as popular techniques. [Karlheinz Stockhausen](#) was a leader in the creation of elektronische Musik.

Listen to this example of elektronische Musik.

Video 11.9: Stockhausen—Kontakte, Work No. 12 1/2



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://louis.pressbooks.pub/musicappreciation/?p=1352#oembed-9>

Post-minimalism or Postmodern Eclecticism

As we’ve observed in this module, composers throughout the twentieth century, much like scientists tinkering in a laboratory, brought a sense of experimentation to musical composition, and the search for new languages of art and music resulted in some wildly musical sounds.

But where do you go once it seems as if all the radical experiments have been conducted? For many composers of the late-twentieth century, the end of modernism brought the opportunity to freely pick and choose from various styles. Nowadays, a composer might incorporate twentieth-century modernist styles, Romantic-era sounds, classical style, and baroque style and bring in elements of popular music, global music, and jazz.

John Adams (b. 1947) is probably the most well-known American composer living today. His early music was written in a minimalist style, but he has embraced 12-tone style, pop music styles, and opera and often writes for a large, Romantic-sized orchestra.

Nowadays, classical music is a global phenomenon. Composers from all over the world are writing operas, symphonies, concertos, string quartets, etc. There are composers writing exciting classical music in Africa, the Middle East, South America, all over. The 2000 film *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* (dir. Ang Lee) was an

enormously popular film that won an academy award for Best Original Score. The music for the film includes a cello concerto written by the Chinese composer Tan Dun (b. 1957), which incorporates traditional Chinese music styles with the Western classical tradition.

Osvaldo Golijov (b. 1960) is another composer that represents the global trend in contemporary classical music. Golijov is Argentine of Israeli descent, and his music reflects the influences of Jewish culture and South American culture, as well as contemporary popular music.

Listen to a few minutes of *Mariel*, his 2008 piece for cello and electronics

Video 11.10: Maya Beiser performing “Mariel”



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://louis.pressbooks.pub/musicappreciation/?p=1352#oembed-10>

Twenty-first-century classical music is also no longer dominated by male composers, and there are many fascinating female composers who are making their mark in concert halls all over the world. A few names of prominent female composers today include Kaija Saariaho (Finland), Sofia Gubaidulina (Russia), Jennifer Higdon (United States), Chen Yi (China), and Julia Wolfe (United States).

In fact, the winner of the 2012 Pulitzer Prize in music (the highest honor for a composer in the United States) is a young female composer named Caroline Shaw (b. 1982).

At 30 years old, she was the youngest ever recipient of the award. Take a listen to the first movement of her piece *Partita for 8 Voices* (2012).

Video 11.11: Roomful of Teeth—Shaw: Allemande (1st movement) from Partita for 8 Voices



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://louis.pressbooks.pub/musicappreciation/?p=1352#oembed-11>

Film Music

Although modern audiences may no longer visit the local symphony or opera house on a regular basis, they do visit the local movie theater. In this way, symphonic music lives on in our everyday lives in the form of music for film, as well as for television shows, commercials, and video games.

More than any other form of media in the twentieth century, film has made an indelible mark on our culture. The first known public exhibition of film with accompanying sound took place in Paris in 1900, but not until

the 1920s did talking pictures, or “talkies,” become commercially viable. Inevitably, part of the magic of film is due to its marriage with music. After opera, film music was the next step in the evolution of music for drama. In fact, film music follows many of the same rules established by the nineteenth-century opera and before, such as the use of overtures, leitmotifs, and incidental music. Many of the most famous themes in the history of film are known throughout the world in the same way that an aria from a famous opera would have been known to the mass audiences of the previous century. For example, who of us cannot sing the theme from *Star Wars*?

Unlike the music of forward-thinking twentieth-century composers such as Schoenberg and Webern, music for film is not designed to push musical boundaries; instead, it draws on compositional devices from across the vast history of Western music. Music for a film depicting a love story might rely on sweeping melodies reminiscent of Wagner or Tchaikovsky. A science fiction movie might draw on dense note clusters and unconventional synthesized sounds to evoke the strangeness of encountering beings from another world. A documentary might feature music that is emotionally detached, such as the twentieth-century minimalistic style of [Philip Glass](#). It all depends on what style best complements the visuals.

The following example is one of the most famous melodies in cinema history, the main theme from *Star Wars*, composed by [John Williams](#). Because *Star Wars* tells a story in a galaxy far, far away, its music should logically sound futuristic, but director George Lucas opted for an entirely different approach. He asked the film’s John Williams to compose something romantic in nature so as to ground the characters of this strange universe in something emotionally familiar. Williams achieved this goal by creating a musical landscape deeply rooted in the style of Wagner, especially in his use of heroic themes and leitmotifs. Listen to the example below and pay special note to the sense of adventure it evokes.

Video 11.12: Star Wars Main Theme (Full)



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://louis.pressbooks.pub/musicappreciation/?p=1352#oembed-12>

Listening Guide: Star Wars Main Theme (Full)

- Composer: John Williams
- Composition: Star Wars Main Title
- Date: 1977
- Genre: Motion Picture Soundtrack
- Performing forces: Orchestra

Timing Performing Forces, Melody, and Texture

| | |
|------|---|
| 0:00 | Opening Fanfare: Use of perfect fourths to evoke heroism. Orchestral: trumpets and brass. Triplet figures create a sense of excitement. Opens on a loud tonic chord to convey strength. |
| 0:08 | Main Theme. High brass alternating with strings. Heroic march. Strong tonal center. |
| 1:11 | Transition to space battle music as Imperial Star Destroyer looms over a smaller ship. Ascending strings followed by lone flute solo and stabbing brass notes. Floating time followed by jarring triplet figures. Moves towards dissonance to create sense of impending danger. |
| 2:03 | Battle Music: Melody spells out a diminished chord, evoking conflict. Low brass takes over melody. Faster march creates a sense of urgency. Minor key depicts danger. |
| 2:14 | Main theme returns. Melody switches to the French horns. Heroic march. Returns to major key. |
| 3:19 | Leia's Theme. Sweeping romantic melody in strings. Slow moving tempo. Lush romantic chords. |
| 4:06 | Main Theme returns. |
| 4:39 | Battle Theme returns. |
| 5:17 | Closing Section (Coronation Theme). Full Orchestra. Slow and majestic. Ends on a strong tonic chord. |

We talked about Leitmotifs in our chapter on nineteenth-century opera. The music of *Star Wars* relies heavily on this technique, and most of its characters have their own unique themes, which appear in different forms throughout the movies. Perhaps the most famous of these leitmotifs is the “Force Theme.” The link below is a compilation of the various uses of this theme throughout the trilogy.

Video 11.13: Force Theme—Star Wars Original Trilogy—Leitmotiv thru the Saga



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://louis.pressbooks.pub/musicappreciation/?p=1352#oembed-13>

Music for New Media

Although the movies continue to flourish in the twenty-first century, new technologies bring new media and, with it, new music. One of the fastest growing examples of new media comes in the form of video games. The music of the first commercially available video games of the 1970s was rudimentary at best. Fast-forward to the twenty-first century, and video games feature complex and original musical backdrops which complement incredibly realistic graphics and game play. These games require a cinematic style of music that can adapt to the actions of the player.

Listen to the example below from the original for the Nintendo Entertainment System. Early video game music is not unlike the music of the Renaissance in that it was limited to polyphony between a small number of

voices. The original NES system put significant restraints on composers, as it was only possible to sound three to four notes simultaneously, and a great deal of effort was put into getting as rich a sound as possible within these constraints. Listen below to the two versions of the main Zelda theme (called the “Overworld Theme”). Conceived by acclaimed video game composer Koji Kondo, it is one of the most famous video game themes of all time. This theme has been featured in almost all of the *Legend of Zelda* games. Notice how the composer uses imitative polyphony to create the illusion of a full texture.

Video 11.14: The Legend of Zelda—Overworld



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://louis.pressbooks.pub/musicappreciation/?p=1352#oembed-14>

Listening Guide: The Legend of Zelda—Overworld

- Composer: Koji Kondo
- Composition: The Legend of Zelda (Overworld Theme)
- Date: 1986
- Genre: Video game music
- Performing forces: Orchestra

Timing Performing Forces, Melody, and Texture

| | |
|------|---|
| 0:00 | Introduction. Synthesized sounds. Heroic march implied by rudimentary percussion sounds. Basic chord structure implied through limited polyphony. |
| 0:07 | Main Theme. Synthesized sounds. Heroic march. Imitative polyphony creates a sense of full texture. |

Video 11.15: Skyward Sword Music—Legend of Zelda Main Theme



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://louis.pressbooks.pub/musicappreciation/?p=1352#oembed-15>

Listening Guide: Skyward Sword Music—Legend of Zelda Main Theme

- Composer: Koji Kondo

- Composition: The Legend of Zelda (Overworld Theme)
- Date: 1986 (2011 arrangement)
- Genre: Video game music
- Performing forces: Orchestra

Timing Performing Forces, Melody, and Texture

| | |
|------|--|
| 0:00 | Introduction. Orchestral: Strings with brass hits. Heroic march. Rising chords create sense of anticipation. |
| 0:14 | Main Theme. Trumpets take melody followed by strings. Heroic march. |

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, we explored some of the parallels between new scientific ideas in the twentieth century and the new languages of art developed by modernists. In music, composers heightened musical ambiguity and created highly individualized languages that departed significantly from the music of the “common practice era.” We then explored the general characteristics of modernist music, which included the absence of pulse, unpredictable continuity, minimal exposition, a lack of literal repetition, lack of resolution, harmonic independence, heightened dissonance, weak rhetorical reinforcement, silence, noise, and ambiguous notation. We also took a closer look at some of the significant twentieth-century musical trends and their composers. We examined the Impressionist style of music and its two main composers, Ravel and Debussy. We also looked at a new approach to harmony and composition developed by Schoenberg, Berg, and others that became known as expressionism. We then briefly touched on Stravinsky’s primitivism as well as his and other composers’ foray into neoclassicism. In the late twentieth century, we saw how the minimalist composers sought to create music from its most fundamental rhythmic and melodic elements, returning to the consonant sounds of triads and the strict application of steady meter. We also looked at several approaches to electronic music. Once the twentieth-century modernist experiments had been exhausted, composers felt free to mix and match compositional techniques in a style we called post-minimalism or postmodern eclecticism. We also observed how the classical music world in the twenty-first century has become a global phenomenon and includes many exciting female composers. Finally, we looked at music for motion pictures and at one of the most recent developments in electronic and digital entertainment: music for video games.

Test Your Understanding



An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:

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PART V

LISTENING TO GENRES

12.

INTRODUCTION TO OPERA

Learning Objectives

- Identify the challenges of combining drama and music and explain how operatic conventions like recitative, aria, and ensemble help make the music and the text intelligible to audiences.
- Compare and contrast the dramatic and musical attributes of recitative, aria, and ensemble.
- Explain how opera emerged in Italy in the early seventeenth century.
- Apply understanding of the conventions of opera buffa to an analysis of selected scenes from Mozart's *The Marriage of Figaro*.

By Francis Scully

In this section of the course, we'll look at a genre of music that not only tells a story (narrative, plot, characters, action, etc.) but presents that story on a stage right before our eyes. The combination of music and theater is probably as old as civilization itself, but we will look at a particular approach to storytelling through music that emerged in Italy around 1600. This genre is known as opera.

Even if you've never heard or attended a performance of an opera, chances are you've encountered some version of the essential idea in popular culture. This essential idea, our definition of opera, is a form of staged music drama in which all or part of the text is sung (*Resonances*, p. 544). **Opera** is a sung secular drama that features elaborate staging and costumes. One of the earliest surviving operas from the Camerata was *Euridice*, composed by Jacopo Peri in 1600. Many of the early Baroque period operas were based on **Greek legends**.

Opera is like a stage play (the drama part) with characters, costumes, setting, and a plot, but the characters are singing and there is accompaniment to the singing, either a full orchestra, or a band, or even just a solo piano.

If you've ever seen a **musical** (on stage or on screen) like *Hamilton*, *Wicked*, or *Phantom of the Opera*, you've

seen and heard **staged music drama**. Other examples include Disney movies (there's a story with characters, but it is interspersed with music) and even many music videos combine the music in the video with some kind of dramatic presentation.

How Does It Work?

Typically, the composition of an opera begins with the **words**. A writer would supply the text of the drama (just like if you would open a copy of *Romeo and Juliet* or *A Streetcar Named Desire* you would see the list of characters, stage directions, and the lines of spoken speech and dialogue). Then, the musical composer would take these words, known as the **libretto** (Italian for “little book”; the **libretto** is the words of an opera), and set them to music.

The photo below shows an example of an opera **libretto** in Italian. As you can see, it lists characters on the left page with the scene description and speech that characters make in the first scene. This is the “little book” that a composer would then take and set to music.



Figure 12.1: Pages 8-9 from [Alessandro nell'Indie](#). Italian Libretto. | Composer: [Leonardo Vinci \(1690-1730\)](#) | Librettist: [Pietro Metastasio](#) | Source: [Library of Congress](#) | License: Public Domain

The next image shows how an operatic text (libretto) is then set to music (melody, rhythm, and accompaniment).

976

LOVE IS LIKE A BIRD REBELLIOUS

L'AMOUR EST UN OISEAU REBELLE

AMOR MISTERIOSO ANGELLO

(Habanera from "Carmen," Act I.)

English version by
George Cooper

GEORGES BIZET

Allegretto quasi andantino

p

Love is
L'a - mour
A - mor

pp

just like a bird re - bell - ing, And how to con - quer him, who knows? Vain his
est un oi - seau re - bel - le Que nul ne peut ap - pri - voi - ser, Et c'est
mi - ste - ri - o - so au - gel - lo Nes - sun lo può do - me - sti - car, O - gnor

pp *simili*

portamento

whims you may think of quell - ing, If he re - fuse what you pro - pose! Deaf to
bien en vain qu'on l'ap - pelle, — S'il lui con - vient de re - fu - ser Rien n'y
ci si mo - stra ru - bel - lo, Se gli con - vien di re - cu - sar, Non u -

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Figure 12.2: Page 976 from *Carmen* (complete vocal score, medium voice, D major) | Composer: Georges Bizet | English Translator: George Cooper | Source: [ISMLP: Petrucci Music Library](#) | License: Public Domain.

Finally, all of this is **staged**. That is, singers portray the different characters in the drama, they put on some costumes, practice singing and acting on stage, and all of this is performed before a live audience. This photo shows a still from the opera *The Marriage of Figaro*. Notice the costumes, the stage sets, and the elaborate lighting.



Figure 12.3: Scene from *The Marriage of Figaro*, Act IV. | Attribution: Florida Grand Opera, Chris Kakol (photographer) | Source: [Flickr](#) | License: [CC BY 2.0](#)

How to Present Drama in Music: The Challenge of Opera

Although combining drama and music seems like a natural fit and we encounter it a lot (again, Disney, certain music videos), combining these two different art forms proves more complicated than you might think. Consider the following issues.

The Challenge of Opera no. 1: Music is imprecise.

As we’ve observed in our explorations of Classical Period and Romantic Period music, music by itself—that is, instrumental music without words—is inherently imprecise in depicting concrete ideas or images. I may be able to write a piece of music that imitates the sounds of a thunderstorm, but I can’t create a piece of music that can tell the listener, “Cheryl is skydiving out of the airplane into the raging thunderstorm below.” I might be able to write a piece of music that generally expresses “sadness,” but I can’t write a piece that tells the listener, “Jeremy is sad because he failed to get the promotion at work that he hoped for.” These are even relatively simple scenarios, so you can imagine how challenging this would be to construct a whole plot.

Now I know what you’re thinking: “Obviously just add *words* to the music and you’re good to go.” Not so fast...

The Challenge of Opera no. 2: Music makes words difficult to hear and understand.

As soon as you add pitch and rhythm to words (not to mention other accompanying features like harmony, rhythmic texture, additional instruments, etc.), your brain must process more information to understand and

clearly hear the words. This is part of the reason popular songs feature a lot of **repetition** of lyrics, so the listener can eventually get the message. In spite of this, it still doesn't stop people from mishearing words. Don't believe me? Check out some of [these commonly misheard lyrics](#).

Misheard lyrics aren't really a problem in a three-minute pop song because you can get the main idea without hearing every single word and you get a lot of repetition (and I would argue that most pop songs don't truly tell a complex story, i.e., one that has a beginning, middle, and end, anyway). But for any complicated plot that builds on previous actions and important exchanges of dialogue, missing some critical words and actions could be deadly.

Lest you think the problems of combining music and drama come only from the music side, consider...

The Challenge of Opera no. 3: Real people don't sing.

Have you ever stopped to consider how utterly weird Disney movies are? We watch these characters (sometimes they are animals!) walking around and talking, and suddenly they burst into song?! This is something we've come to expect when we watch these movies, but it's fair to say that it's a long way from real life. Part of the reason why people don't sing to each other (or to themselves) highlights another fundamental difference between the real world of thought and speech and the world of music, namely...

The Challenge of Opera no. 4: Dramatic/speech-time moves faster than music-Time

Say the following sentence out loud to yourself: "Somewhere over the rainbow, way up high, there's a land that I heard of, once in a lullaby." Now sing these words (or hear it in your mind) to the **melody** of "Somewhere over the Rainbow." The music slows down the words quite a lot. If you're trying to create suspense and really move plot action along, music takes longer.

How to Confront Opera's Challenges: Conventions of Opera

In order to bring music and drama together, operatic composers employ a number of **conventions** to make the combination of music and drama work successfully together (a convention is a standard practice that people use and come to expect in certain situations). Consider first how Disney confronts the challenges of music and drama.

Video 12.1: Scene from *Beauty and the Beast* | Walt Disney Animation Studios (1991) | Included on the basis of fair use as described in the [Code of Best Practices for Fair Use in Open Education](#).

Watch this short scene from Disney's *Beauty and the Beast*:



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://louis.pressbooks.pub/musicappreciation/?p=1236#video-1236-1>

Notice that we get some important character and plot information here (Belle’s encouragement of her father, Belle’s concern that she doesn’t fit in, the fixing and success of the wood-cutting invention, the father leaves for the fair). We get a good bit of information in a short amount of time. At no point do the characters sing. To get all this information and action out quickly, the characters speak normally. There is some background music (what we call in film music “underscoring”), but the characters’ speech is not synchronized with the music at all.

Now watch another scene from the same film:

Video 12.2: Walt Disney Studios’ Belle (Reprise)—*Beauty and the Beast*



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://louis.pressbooks.pub/musicappreciation/?p=1236#oembed-1>

As in the previous scene, this scene begins with talking as Belle explains (to the animals) her disgust at the prospect of marrying Gaston. Her speech is independent of the music underneath it. At about 0:12, she suddenly joins that music and begins to sing (“Madame, Gaston can you just see...”). Now her words have a musical rhythm and pitch. The music builds as she runs into the meadow and arrives at this grand melody (“I want adventure in the great wide...”). We have a really emotional moment and a memorable **melody**. At this moment, we don’t require plot information/action here because Belle is just taking a moment for emotional reflection (i.e., she doesn’t want to be confined to this country village and she longs for love).

Right after this scene, the music comes to a complete stop, a horse comes in, and Belle returns to **speech**: “What are you doing here?” Suddenly, an important plot event is about to take place and we the audience need concrete information. Crucially, the music stops when we need **speech** to give us important dramatic information.

To summarize the Disney conventions (and also conventions from musical theater like *Hamilton*, or *Oklahoma*, or *Phantom of the Opera*): when we have important **plot information** and **dialogue**, the characters **speak**. When we need important **emotional moments/reflection**, the characters **sing**.

In opera, the characters are singing the whole time, but composers carefully distinguish between singing that sounds like speech and singing that sounds like song.

When composers need to introduce important plot action and dialogue, they use a style of singing known

as recitative. **Recitative** is a speech-like style of singing that allows the singer to freely deliver the text. This style follows basic speech rhythms or speech patterns, lacks any steady rhythmic pulse, and avoids memorable melodic patterns. As you can see, the word recitative resembles the word “recite” (or “recitation”), so it sounds as much like impassioned speech as it sounds like singing.

Once you know what you’re listening for, it’s really easy to hear recitative. It sounds and looks like the characters are just having a conversation, but sort of singing it.

Video 12.3: Recitativo Don Giovanni & Leporello,



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://louis.pressbooks.pub/musicappreciation/?p=1236#oembed-2>

In this scene from Mozart’s *Don Giovanni* (1787), the main character Don Giovanni (a.k.a., Don Juan) is talking with his servant Leporello. They had been separated in the previous scene, so they need to tell each other (and us, the audience) what has been going on (i.e., plot action and dialogue). The two characters have switched identities; Leporello is being chased (because everyone is after Don Giovanni), and Don Giovanni (in disguise as his servant) has just met a lovely young woman.

Watch this short exchange and just observe how the characters’ singing sounds more like the rhythms of speech than it sounds like music (there’s no “melody” here). The subtitles show the Italian text that they’re singing, so you can observe how the singers kind of fling around the words like real people talking.

Recitative allows for important plot information and dialogue to be clearly heard and understood by the audience. **Recitative** is a combination of singing and speech that serves as dialogue in opera. But when composers want to present intense emotional moments, they need the power of song. For these moments, composers use arias. An aria is the “song part” of opera in which a solo singer expresses and reflects their feelings and responses toward the dramatic situation. The **aria** became a focal point because they are more expressive than recitative and showcased the soloist. Unlike recitative, arias have a steady pulse and a clear, memorable melody. Words and phrases of the poetic text may be repeated. The orchestra accompanies, but instruments may also function as wordless characters that counterpoint and converse with the voice (adapted from *Music: Its Language, History, and Culture*, p. 97). To borrow musicologist Richard Taruskin’s formulation, arias are a kind of “emotional freeze-time” with a great tune.

Watch and listen to two very different but famous arias from opera.

The first one is from Georges Bizet’s *Carmen* (1875), and it’s probably a tune you already know. The title character is a gypsy woman in Spain who works in a cigar factory. She seduces Don Jose, a military officer, who abandons his duties to be with her. Carmen sings this aria in her first entrance in Act I, and the music and text express her life philosophy: l’amour est un oiseau rebelle (“Love is a rebellious bird,” i.e., you can’t control

love, and if you fall in love with me, you better watch out!). The music captures both the Spanish location (the music is set to a habanera rhythm, which is a Spanish dance) and the character's sensuality.

Video 12.4: Watch “L’amour est un oiseau rebelle” from Act I of Georges Bizet’s *Carmen*.



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://louis.pressbooks.pub/musicappreciation/?p=1236#oembed-3>

The next aria comes from the end of Giacomo Puccini’s 1926 opera *Turandot*. The character Calaf is betrothed to the cruel princess Turandot. If she can guess his name by the next morning, then he will be killed and she can avoid marrying him. If she fails to guess his name, the two must be wed. She declares to her subjects that no one is allowed to sleep in order to guess the name.

Video 12.5: Watch “Nessun dorma” from Puccini’s *Turandot*.



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://louis.pressbooks.pub/musicappreciation/?p=1236#oembed-4>

As you can see from both scenes, there is not much **plot** happening. The aria is really about emotional reflection, but these gorgeous melodies make for some of the most unforgettable moments.

The Birth of Opera: A Short History of Opera's Origins

As I mentioned above, the idea of connecting music and drama has likely been around for a very, very long time, but the art form that we know as “opera” first originated in Italy around 1600. As you may recall, this is around the beginning of the **Baroque era** in music. There are several reasons why this Baroque era was optimal for the development of this new art form. This was a time when philosophers (and musicians) were looking back at the past, specifically ancient Greek and Roman civilizations, for information about science, politics, and the arts.

One group of intellectuals based in Florence, Italy, known as the Florentine Camerata, began reading the great ancient Greek plays of Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides. These intellectuals hypothesized (this was speculation, since they had no DVDs or YouTube files of these old performances) that the characters in these ancient plays sang the lines of poetry rather than spoke them. By singing instead of speaking, the actors heighten the words and make them even more emotionally intense. Despite the difficulties and “challenges of

opera” that we mentioned above, music’s unparalleled ability to enhance the emotion of words is, in essence, the key advantage of combining music and drama.

Another element of opera that appealed to patrons of arts (that is, the dudes who paid the bills) in the Baroque era is that opera is extravagant, elaborate, and ludicrously expensive.

Opera Goes Public

The predominant style of opera in the baroque period was called (in Italian) **opera seria**—that is, serious opera. It originated in Italy, though it was exported around Europe. It was called “serious” because the subject material for these operas was very serious, presenting historical subjects (usually Roman history) or Greek/Roman mythology (gods and goddesses).

Opera began in Florence around 1600, but in 1637, a “**public**” **opera house** opened in Venice. This meant that anyone (or those in the moneyed classes anyway) could buy a ticket and hear an opera performance. You didn’t have to be a prince or be a part of some royal entourage. Claudio Monteverdi’s famous opera *The Coronation of Poppea* was a public opera composed for an opera house in Venice in 1642.

How is this new development, public opera, going to impact composers of opera? It worked the same way as a Hollywood movie. If people like your opera, they will buy tickets and they will tell their friends to go hear it. Then the opera (or the movie) will make money.

Composers had to write to impress the ticket-buying public. What did the ticket-buying public want? What you might expect: beautiful costumes and sets, intense drama and emotions, and above all, virtuoso singing full of brilliant runs, fast scales, and soaring high notes. While opera has undergone numerous developments since the 1600s, the genre’s celebration of impressive singing has never gone out of style.

Opera in the Classical Period

By the time we reach the Classical Period, the **opera seria** style of opera began to go out of fashion. The show-stopping virtuoso arias were impressive, but the dramatic plots were clunky, the subject matter (ancient Roman emperors or Roman mythological gods and goddesses) were boring and old-fashioned, and the frequent use of recitative grew tiresome.

A new style of opera emerged in the Classical Period known as **Opera Buffa**.

Opera Buffa is Italian comic opera (Buffo = Italian word for “buffoon”). Instead of ancient subjects, we get contemporary stories and down-to-earth characters, like peasant girls and soldiers. As you may gather as well, comic opera is meant to be funny. Happy resolutions to the conflict come about through amusing plot twists and schemes rather than some royal decree by an ancient god or emperor.

And what’s the secret to comedy? . . . Timing.

Comic plots in particular require events (often complicated plot events) and action to occur quickly and

characters to be able to engage in rapid-fire dialogue exchanges. The old opera format of switching between recitative to aria to recitative to aria doesn't work for comedy, so composers needed a new form that allowed them to present contrasting emotions simultaneously during one piece of music. The solution is known as **ensemble**.

An **operatic ensemble** is a number sung by two or more people. Not surprisingly, this innovation coincides with the innovation of **sonata form**. In **sonata form**, composers could present contrasting melodies and create a sense of dramatic development within a single movement. In an operatic ensemble, the music can depict different emotions simultaneously. Also, an ensemble can present sentiments changing as the drama and music unfold. An ensemble combines interesting music (melody and a steady pulse, as in an aria) with dramatic action (as in recitative).

Classical Period composers will still use the recitative-aria-recitative format, but they can add the ensemble in important dramatic moments (e.g., at the end of an act) when they want to keep the action and the music going.

Mozart is undoubtedly the master of opera buffa in the Classical Period, and we'll get to see and hear two great scenes from his operatic masterworks. Mozart wrote many operas, but he wrote three masterpieces of Italian opera buffa in collaboration with the librettist Lorenzo da Ponte (1749-1838): *The Marriage of Figaro*, *Don Giovanni*, and *Così fan tutte*.

The Marriage of Figaro (1786) was Mozart's first Italian opera produced for the city of Vienna as well as his first collaboration with the librettist Lorenzo da Ponte. The libretto was based on a play of the same name written in 1778 by the French author Beaumarchais. The play is old now obviously, but in 1786 it was very contemporary and dealt with issues of class conflict. The action concerns a noble couple, Count Almaviva and his wife Countess Rosina, and their servants, Figaro and Susanna. Figaro and Susanna are hoping to get married, but the lecherous Count Almaviva wants to sleep with Susanna before they are wed. Consequently, he tries to disrupt the wedding. The countess is sad that her husband is always trying to cheat on her. Another character, the sex-obsessed adolescent page boy Cherubino, is always getting in the count's way. See the full synopsis here: [The Marriage of Figaro, Synopsis](#)

In the finale of Act II (the second of four acts), Cherubino is in the countess's room with Susanna and the countess. The count comes in and Cherubino hides in the closet. The count is wildly jealous (ironic, considering his own intention to cheat on the countess) and assumes that the countess is hiding a lover in her closet. When the count goes to get some tools to break open the locked door, Susanna sneaks Cherubino out the window and hides herself in the closet.

When the count and countess return, the countess still believes that Cherubino is in the closet. The count of course believes that she's hiding a lover in the closet. The countess prepares for the count's wrath when the closet door is opened.

Listening Guide

The scene begins with traditional recitative with the count and countess. Harpsichord accompaniment and free rhythms reflect the natural rhythms of speech.

The recitative ends, and now the orchestra enters and the ensemble begins. It begins as a duet (for two singers) and expands and expands. Mozart can brilliantly present the two different emotions side-by-side.

A few minutes into this, the count discovers in fact that Cherubino is not in the closet; instead it is Susanna! The duet then becomes a trio (three singers). How do the emotions of the character change when Susanna emerges from the closet?

If you continue watching the scene, you'll hear how Mozart continues to add voices to this scene. Figaro enters, and then later the gardener of the estate enters, and the scene gets crazier and crazier.

Video 12.6: *Le Nozze di Figaro* (*The Marriage of Figaro*); start the video and fast forward to about 1:15:00; watch until at least 1:24:42.



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://louis.pressbooks.pub/musicappreciation/?p=1236#oembed-5>

Later in the opera, you can also hear Mozart's ability to write beautiful arias. Here's a recitative and aria with the countess reminiscing about the good times with her husband, Act III Recit and Aria "E Susanna non vien...Dove Sono." Fast forward to about 1:58:26 and listen up to 2:04:59.

Something to Think About

In this chapter, we examine the difficulties of combining drama and music. Arguably, most songs (either in the classical tradition or in popular music) do not necessarily trace a drama or story in the sense that the characters go through some dramatic conflict in the middle of the song that is resolved by the end of the song. Think of a song that you like and analyze its dramatic structure. (Are there characters? Is there a setting? Is there a conflict? Does the song present a resolution to the conflict?) Does the conflict and/or resolution unfold within the song or before/after the song

begins? In other words, does the combination of music and words in the song really unfold a drama, or does it simply present an expanded moment of emotional reflection? Get creative: If you were to stage this song or make a movie of it, what does the character do? What does the set look like?

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, we looked at the inherent difficulties of combining drama with music in the art form known as opera. Opera composers developed several conventional procedures to help make the drama intelligible to audiences without sacrificing musical interest. Recitative, which is typically used for moments of plot action and dialogue, features minimal accompaniment, and the words are delivered in a free, speech-like rhythm. An aria, on the other hand, offers a character an opportunity for solo emotional reflection. Arias are the “song” part of opera and typically feature a memorable melody, a steady pulse, and full orchestral accompaniment. Opera was born in Italy around 1600 as part of a project to imitate the power of Greek drama, but the art form has evolved through the centuries. Opera buffa, or Italian comic opera, was an operatic style that became popular during the Classical Period. Opera buffa frequently makes use of ensembles to maintain the necessary pacing for comedy while also sustaining musical interest. Mozart’s *The Marriage of Figaro* is one of the most beloved opera buffas of the Classical Period.

Test Your Understanding



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<https://louis.pressbooks.pub/musicappreciation/?p=1236#h5p-16>

13.

ROMANTIC PERIOD: OPERA

Learning Objectives

- Explain how Giuseppe Verdi's Romantic Period operatic style reflects the Italian bel canto tradition.
- Explain how Romantic Period opera differs from Classical Period opera in the distinctions between recitative and aria and the use of the orchestra.
- Analyze Verdi's melodic gift and his combination of comedy and tragedy in scenes from Act III of *Rigoletto*.
- Compare and contrast the operatic styles of Giuseppe Verdi and Richard Wagner.
- Explain how Richard Wagner's music dramas reflect Wagner's background in symphonic music, particularly the symphonies of Beethoven.
- Explain the concept of a Leitmotiv and identify their use in the final scene from *The Valkyrie*.
- Explain how Leitmotifs influenced the development of film music.

Francis Scully

Romantic Opera

Given Romantic composers' interest in connecting to other arts (literature, visual art), **opera** is obviously going to be a big deal in the nineteenth century. Like all art and music in the Romantic era, opera is going to get more "serious." It's no longer simply a vehicle for spectacle and entertainment.

There are many great opera composers and operas in the Romantic Period, but two names tower above them all: the Italian opera composer Giuseppe Verdi and the German opera composer Richard Wagner.

Verdi, Giuseppe (1813-1901)

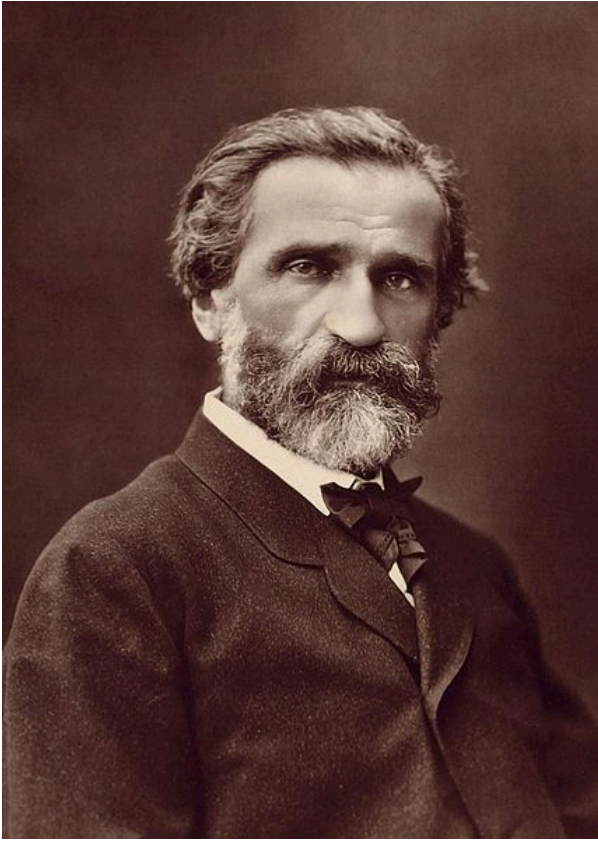


Figure 13.1:
Giuseppe Verdi, ca.
1870 |
Photographer:
[Ferdinand Mulinier](#)
(1817-1891) |
Source: [Wikimedia](#)
[Commons](#) |
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Verdi is considered the greatest of Italian opera composers. He studied music in Milan, home of the famous La Scala Opera House (still one of the major opera houses of the world), and he composed opera almost exclusively in his career. He had his first big success with *Nabucco* (1842), and in the 1850s, he brought out his trio of “smash hits” *Rigoletto* (1851), *Il Trovatore* (1853), and *La Traviata* (1853). Verdi was politically involved as a supporter of the Italian liberation movement. In his seventies, he wrote two of his greatest works, both based on Shakespeare: *Falstaff* and *Otello*. Other important works include *Aida* (1871) and a brilliant and dramatic Requiem Mass.

Verdi inherits a style of early nineteenth-century Italian opera known as “**bel canto**,” which literally means “beautiful singing.” For the bel canto composers like Rossini, Bellini, and Donizetti, music was intended to showcase the beauty of the human voice. Verdi is similarly praised for his ability to foreground spectacular feats of virtuoso singing, and he is celebrated for his astonishing gift for writing memorable melodies. Verdi wrote some of the most beloved arias in the operatic repertoire, and they are often extracted for concert performances. Watch this **aria** (“La donna è mobile”) from Verdi’s opera *Rigoletto* and you’ll instantly recognize Verdi’s melodic gift:

Video 13.1: *Rigoletto* La Donna e mobile, performed by Luciano Pavarotti



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://louis.pressbooks.pub/musicappreciation/?p=1263#oembed-1>

Like his bel canto compatriots, Verdi values the beauty of the human voice as the basis of opera, and he writes a lot of gorgeous melodies that highlight this, but Verdi does not allow this emphasis on singers to overshadow his real interest, which is **drama**, placing vivid characters in extreme situations and ratcheting up the tension.

Dramatic Fluidity

If you recall from previous discussion of opera and the scenes in Mozart's *The Marriage of Figaro*, there was a clear distinction between the **recitative** and the **aria** (or **ensemble**). The recitative almost always had a simple harpsichord accompaniment and was musically less interesting. The arias and ensembles provided the musical interest. In a certain sense, the piece essentially switched back and forth between drama (recitative) and music (aria/ensemble). In the Romantic Period, however, composers were interested in creating a more fluid and unified opera, one in which the music works hand-in-hand with the drama continuously.

To do this, Romantic Period composers get rid of the harpsichord (the simple keyboard accompaniment, playing rolled chords underneath recitative) altogether. Instead, they use the orchestra throughout the whole opera. Of course, they still need some kind of recitative-like sections in order to clearly present plot action and dialogue, but now the orchestra plays more active, motivic, and dramatic music as opposed to the simple chords of 18th-century recitative. Notice in the two Romantic Period operas that we will watch that the distinction between aria and recitative is increasingly blurred.

Rigoletto (1851)

To get a sense of how Verdi unifies spectacular singing, memorable melodies, and intense drama, we will watch two scenes from Verdi's 1851 opera *Rigoletto*.

Rigoletto was based on a play called "Le Roi s'amuse" (The King Amuses Himself) by the French Romantic writer Victor Hugo, who is best known for his novels *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* (1833) and *Les Misérables* (1862). The opera is set in the Italian city of Mantua during the 1500s, where the title character, Rigoletto, serves as the hunchbacked court jester to womanizing lothario, Duke of Mantua. In the aria that we heard above ("La donna è mobile"), the Duke of Mantua presents his womanizing philosophy of life (to paraphrase, something like "women...you can't live with them, you can't live without them, might as well have some fun with them"). Rigoletto typically mocks the various men whose wives and girlfriends fall for the Duke, and in the opera's first scene, Count Monterone, one of the Duke's victims who has been mercilessly taunted by

Rigoletto, pronounces a curse on Rigoletto. Later in the opera, Rigoletto learns, much to his horror, that his precious young daughter Gilda has also been seduced by the Duke.

In the opera's final act (Act III), Rigoletto plots his revenge against his employer by hiring the assassin Sparafucile to kill the Duke. But first, Rigoletto wants his daughter to see the Duke in the act of cheating on her. Rigoletto and Gilda perch outside of an inn where Sparafucile's sister Maddalena has lured the Duke to set up the assassination. The Duke and Maddalena flirt with each other while Rigoletto and Gilda watch in horror. In this masterful ensemble, we hear the emotions of the four different characters *at the same time*. Verdi accomplishes this by using different rhythms, different melodic shapes, and different pitch ranges for each of the voices (Gilda = soprano, Maddalena = alto, Duke = tenor, Rigoletto = bass). What's more, in this incisive scene, Verdi deftly combines tragedy (the anger and despair experienced by Rigoletto and Gilda) with comedy (the flirting and playfulness of Maddalena and the Duke's exchange). We will start the scene with the Duke's aria and observe again how the different sections of Romantic opera unfold more seamlessly than in Classical Period opera.

Video 13.2: *Rigoletto*, Verdi, Watch from 1:28:51 to 1:37:05



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://louis.pressbooks.pub/musicappreciation/?p=1263#oembed-2>

Listening Guide: *Rigoletto* from 1:28:51 to 1:37:05

| Time | Description |
|-----------------|---|
| 1:28:51–1:31:15 | The Duke sings his trademark aria “La donna è mobile.” |
| 1:31:16–1:33:11 | Transitional section where the Duke woos Maddalena while Rigoletto and Gilda look on. |
| 1:33:12–1:37:05 | “Bella figlia dell’amore”: The quartet in which each character presents conflicting emotions. |

Following this scene, the Duke goes to sleep in the inn, where he sings another verse of “La donna è mobile” as he dozes off (Verdi is also cleverly reminding the audience of his “hit tune”). Maddalena, who has now fallen under the Duke's spell, feels sympathy for him and pleads with her brother to spare his life. But Sparafucile is an honorable businessman and only agrees to spare the Duke if someone arrives at the inn before dawn, when Rigoletto agrees to return for the body. Gilda, who has snuck away from her father, overhears the exchange, and in the middle of a raging storm, knocks on the door, willing to sacrifice her life to save the Duke. In the morning, Rigoletto returns to the inn to pay Sparafucile the rest of his fee and gloat over the dead body of the Duke. Little does he know, the body that he's collecting from Sparafucile is that of his own daughter! Rigoletto plans to take the body to dump in the river when he overhears the Duke waking up and singing (yet again) his

signature tune. The playful melody delivers the shock to Rigoletto that the body in the body bag is not that of his nemesis. He opens it up to discover his daughter. This being opera, Gilda is just conscious enough to sing an impassioned duet as father and daughter say goodbye to each other and Gilda expires.

Video 13.3: Now watch from 1:46:55 to 1:58:10



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://louis.pressbooks.pub/musicappreciation/?p=1263#oembed-3>

Listening Guide: *Rigoletto* from 1:46:55 to 1:58:10

| Time | Description |
|-----------------|---|
| 1:46:55–1:48:35 | Rigoletto prepares to meet Sparafucile. |
| 1:48:36–1:50:31 | Rigoletto receives the body from Sparafucile and he begins to celebrate. |
| 1:50:32–1:54:39 | The Duke sings “La donna è mobile” and Rigoletto realizes that his daughter is in the body bag. Gilda explains how she came to be Sparafucile’s victim. |
| 1:54:40–1:58:10 | Rigoletto and Gilda sing a tender duet as Gilda dies. Rigoletto realizes that Count Monterone’s curse has been fulfilled. |

Richard Wagner (1813-1883)

Adapted from “Music of Richard Wagner,” *Understanding Music*
By Alan Clark, Thomas Heflin, Jeffrey Kluball, & Elizabeth Kramer

Revised by Jonathan Kulp

Adapted by Francis Scully

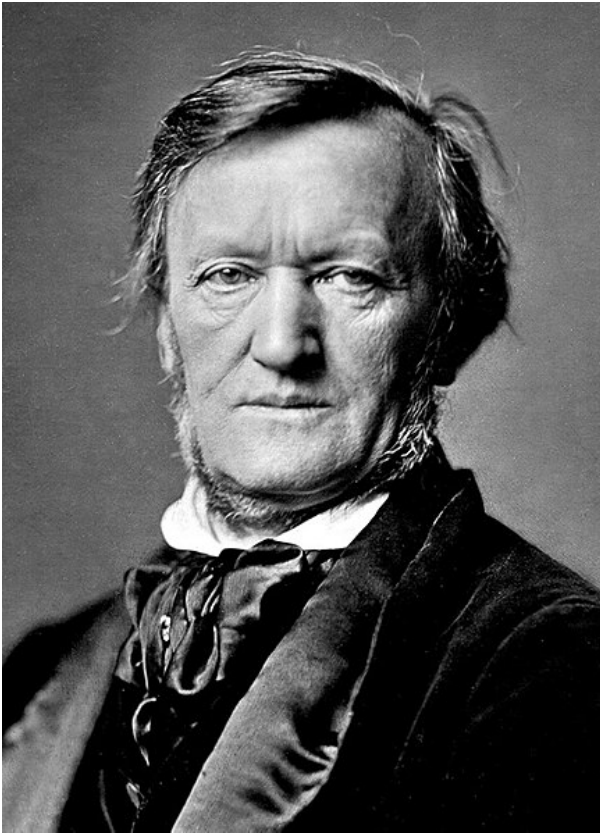


Figure 13.2: Richard Wagner, 1871 |
 Photographer: [Jean-Marc Nattier \(1804-1877\)](#) |
 Source: [Wikimedia Commons](#) |
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If Verdi continued the long tradition of Italian opera, Richard Wagner provided a new path for German opera. Wagner (1813-1883) may well have been the most influential European composer of the second half of the nineteenth century. Never shy about self-promotion, Wagner himself clearly thought so. Wagner's influence was both musical and literary. His dissonant and chromatic harmonic experiments even influenced the French, whose music belies their many verbal denunciations of Wagner and his music. His essays about music and autobiographical accounts of his musical experiences were widely followed by nineteenth-century individuals, from the average bourgeois music enthusiast to philosophers such as Friedrich Nietzsche. Most disturbingly, Wagner was rabidly anti-Semitic, and generations later, his writing and music provided propaganda for the Nazi Third Reich.

Born in Leipzig, Germany, Wagner initially wanted to be a playwright like Goethe, until as a teenager he heard the music of Beethoven and decided to become a composer instead. He was particularly taken by Beethoven's *Ninth Symphony* and the addition of voices as performing forces into the symphony, a type of composition traditionally written for orchestra. Seeing in this work an acknowledgment of the powers of vocal music, Wagner set about becoming an opera composer. Coming of age during a time of rising nationalism, Wagner criticized Italian opera as consisting of cheap melodies and insipid orchestration unconnected to its dramatic purposes, and he set about providing a German alternative. He called his operas "music dramas" in order to emphasize a unity of text, music, and action and declared that they would be *Gesamtkunstwerk*, or "total works of art." As part of his program, he wrote his own librettos and aimed for what he called unending melody: the idea was for a constant lyricism, carried as much by the orchestra as by the singers.

Perhaps most importantly, Wagner developed a system of what scholars have come to call **Leitmotifs**. **Leitmotifs**, or “guiding motives,” are musical motives that are associated with a specific character, theme, or locale in a drama. Wagner integrated these musical motives in the vocal lines and orchestration of his music dramas at many points. Wagner believed in the flexibility of such motives to reinforce an overall sense of unity within his compositions, even if primarily at a subconscious level. Thus, while a character might be singing a melody line using one leitmotiv, the orchestration might incorporate a different leitmotiv, suggesting a connection between the referenced entities. The use of leitmotifs also reflects Wagner’s understanding of opera as a symbolic artform rather than a “realistic” form of drama. To that end, his mature operas are all based on either medieval legends (*Tannhäuser* [1845], *Tristan und Isolde* [1859], *Parsifal* [1882]) or Germanic mythology (*The Ring of the Nibelungs* [1876]).

Wagner also designed and built a theater for the performance of his own music dramas. The Festival Theatre in Bayreuth, Germany, was the first to use a sunken orchestra pit, and its huge backstage area allowed for some of the most elaborate sets of Wagner’s day. It was here that his famous cycle of music dramas, *The Ring of the Nibelungen*, was performed, starting in 1876. *The Ring of the Nibelungen* consists of four music dramas with over fifteen hours of music. Wagner took the story from a Nordic mythological legend that stems back to the Middle Ages. In it, a piece of gold is stolen from the Rhine River and fashioned into a ring, which gives its bearer ultimate power. The cursed ring changes hands, causing destruction around whoever possesses it. Eventually the ring is returned to the Rhine River, thereby closing the cycle. Into that story, which some may recognize from the much later fiction of J. R. R. Tolkien’s *Lord of the Rings*, Wagner interwove stories of the Norse gods and men. Wagner’s four music dramas trace the saga of the king of the gods, Wotan, as he builds Valhalla, the home of the gods, and attempts to order the lives of his children, including that of his daughter, the Valkyrie warrior Brünnhilde.

Focus Composition: Conclusion to *The Valkyrie* (1876)

In the excerpt we’ll watch from the end of *The Valkyrie*, the second of the four music dramas, Brünnhilde has gone against her father, and because Wotan cannot bring himself to kill her, he puts her to sleep before encircling her with flames, a fiery ring that both imprisons and protects his daughter. This excerpt provides several examples of the *Leitmotifs* for which Wagner is so famous. Their presence, often subtle, is designed to guide the audience through the drama. They include melodies, harmonies, and textures that represent Wotan’s spear, the god Loge—a shape-shifting life force that here takes the form of fire—sleep, the magic sword, and fate. The sounds of these motives are discussed briefly below and accompanied by excerpts from the musical score for those of you who can read musical notation.

The first motive heard in the video you will watch is **Wotan’s Spear**. The spear represents Wotan’s power. In this scene, Wotan is pointing it toward his daughter Brünnhilde, ready to conjure the ring of fire that will both imprison and protect her. Representing a symbol of power, the spear motive is played here at a *forte* dynamic on piano. Here it descends in a minor scale that reinforces the seriousness of Wotan’s actions.



Figure 13.3: Musical notation of “Wotan’s Spear,” from *The Valkyrie* | Attribution: Richard Wagner, composer | Source: *Understanding Music: Past and Present* | License: Public Domain

Audio ex. 13.1: Wotan’s Spear, from *The Valkyries*, Richard Wagner, composer



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://louis.pressbooks.pub/musicappreciation/?p=1263#audio-1263-1>

Wotan commands Loge to appear, and suddenly the music breaks out in a completely different style. **Loge’s music**—sometimes also referred to as the magic fire music—is in a major key and appears in upper woodwinds such as the flutes. Its notes move quickly with staccato articulations suggesting Loge’s free spirit and shifting shapes.



Figure 13.4: Musical notation of Loge’s Music (a.k.a. The Magic Fire Music) | Attribution: Richard Wagner, composer | Source: *Understanding Music: Past and Present* | License: Public Domain

Depicting Brünnhilde’s descent into sleep, Wagner wrote a chromatic musical line that starts high and slowly moves downward. We call this phrase the Sleep motive:



Figure 13.5: Musical notation of Brünnhilde's sleep motive | Attribution: Richard Wagner, composer | Source: *Understanding Music: Past and Present* | License: Public Domain

Audio ex. 13.2: Brünnhilde's sleep motive from *The Valkyries*, Richard Wagner, composer



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After casting his spell, Wotan warns anyone who is listening that whoever would dare to trespass the ring of fire will have to face his spear. As the drama unfolds in the next opera of the tetralogy, one character will do just that: Siegfried, Wotan's own grandson. He will release Brünnhilde using a magic sword. The melody to which Wotan sings his warning with its wide leaps and overall disjunct motion sounds a little bit like the motive representing Siegfried's sword.



Figure 13.6: Musical notation of "Siegfried's Sword" | Attribution: Richard Wagner, composer | Source: *Understanding Music: Past and Present* | License: Public Domain

Audio ex. 13.3: "Siegfried's Sword" from *The Valkyries*, Richard Wagner, composer



— One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://louis.pressbooks.pub/musicappreciation/?p=1263#audio-1263-3>

One final motive is prominent at the end of *The Valkyrie*, a motive which is referred to as Fate. It appears in the horns and features three notes: a sustained pitch that slips down just one step and then rises the small interval of a minor third to another sustained pitch.

The image shows a page of musical notation from Richard Wagner's opera *The Valkyrie*. The title "WOTAN." is at the top left. The score is in D major (two sharps) and 2/4 time. It features a vocal line for Wotan and piano accompaniment. The vocal line includes the lyrics "Wer mei - nes la melodia sempre legato" and "Spee - res Spit - ze fürch -". The piano accompaniment includes markings like "sempre stacc.", "cresc poco", "a poco", and "pp". The notation includes various musical symbols such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings.

Figure 13.7: Musical notation of “Wotan’s Warning” (subtly alluding to Siegfried’s sword) | Attribution: Richard Wagner, composer | Source: *Understanding Music: Past and Present* | License: Public Domain

Figure 13.8: Musical notation of the Fate motive (starts in the second measure) | Attribution: Richard Wagner, composer | Source: *Understanding Music: Past and Present* | License: Public Domain

Now that you've been introduced to all of the leitmotifs in the excerpt, follow along with the listening guide. As you listen, notice how prominent the huge orchestra is throughout the scene, how it provides the melodies, and how the strong and large voice of the bass-baritone singing Wotan soars over the top of the orchestra (Wagner's music required larger voices than earlier opera as well as new singing techniques). See if you can hear the *Leitmotifs*, there to absorb you in the drama. Remember that this is just one short scene from the midpoint of the approximately fifteen-hour-long tetralogy.

Video 13.4: Wotan's Farewell, performed by Sir John Tomlinson



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://louis.pressbooks.pub/musicappreciation/?p=1263#oembed-4>

Listening Guide

- Composer: Richard Wagner
- Composition: *The Valkyries*, Final Scene: Wotan's Farewell
- Date: 1870
- Genre: Music drama (or nineteenth-century German opera)
- Form: Through-composed, using *Leitmotifs*
- Nature of text:

Loge, hear! List to my word!

As I found thee of old, a glimmering flame,
as from me thou didst vanish,
in wandering fire;

as once I stayed thee, stir I thee now!

Appear! come, waving fire,

and wind thee in flames round the fell!

(During the following he strikes the rock thrice with his spear.)

Loge! Loge! appear!

He who my spearpoint's sharpness feareth
shall cross not the flaming fire!

- Performing forces: Bass-baritone Wotan, large orchestra
- What we want you to remember about this composition:
 - It uses *Leitmotifs*.

- The orchestra provides an “unending melody” over which the characters sing.
- Other things to listen for:
 - Listen for the specific *Leitmotivs*.

Listening Guide: *The Valkyries, Wotan's Farewell*

| Timing | Performing Forces, Melody, and Texture | Leitmotiv and Form |
|--------|--|--|
| 0:00 | Descending melodic line played in octaves by the lower brass | Wotan's spear: Just the orchestra |
| 0:08 | Wotan sings a motivic phrase that ascends; the orchestra ascends, too, supporting his melodic line | Löge, hör! Lausche hieher! Wie zuerst ich dich fand, als feurige Glut, wie dann einst du mir schwandest, als schweifende Lohe; wie ich dich band |
| 0:28 | Appears as Wotan transitions to new words still in the lower brass | Spear again: Bann ich dich heut'! |
| 0:29 | Trills in the strings and a rising chromatic scale introduce Wotan's striking of his spear and producing fire introducing the . . . | Fire music: Herauf, wabernde Loge, umlodre mir feurig den Fels! Loge! Loge! Hieher! |
| 0:58 | fire music played by the upper woodwinds (flutes, oboes, and clarinets). | Fire music: Just the orchestra |
| 1:41 | Slower, descending chromatic scale in the winds represents Brünnhilde's descent into sleep | Sleep: Just the orchestra |
| 2:06 | As Wotan sings again, his melodic line seems to allude to the sword motive, doubled by the horns and supported by a full orchestra. | Sword motive: Wer meines Speeres Spitze fürchtet, durchschreite das Feuer nie! |
| 2:40 | Lower brass prominently plays the sword motive while the strings and upper woodwinds play motives from the fire music; a gradual decrescendo | Sword motive; fire music continues: Just the orchestra |
| 4:05 | The horns and trombones play the narrow-raged fate melody as the curtain closes | Fate motive: Just the orchestra |

Something to Think About

Compare and contrast the operatic styles of Verdi (in *Rigoletto*) and Richard Wagner (in his opera *The Valkyrie*). Consider how the two composers use the voice, how they use the orchestra, and the subject matter. Which approach do you find more effective? Entertaining? Dramatically satisfying? Musically satisfying?

Leitmotifs in *Lord of the Rings*

Wagner's Leitmotif technique was one of the most influential techniques to come out of the 19th century. Hollywood composers have been using it for many years to represent things like giant sharks in *Jaws* (John Williams, 1976), forces of evil in *Star Wars*, and many other ideas, characters, and objects in other films. You might find it interesting to watch this video about the Leitmotifs that are at work in the score for *The Lord of the Rings*.

Video 13.5



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://louis.pressbooks.pub/musicappreciation/?p=1263#oembed-5>

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, we looked at the music of two of the giants of Romantic Period opera, the Italian composer Giuseppe Verdi and the German composer Richard Wagner. Verdi hailed from the bel canto Italian tradition, which put the human voice at the center of the operatic spectacle. But Verdi never let his beautiful melodies hamper the passionate intensity of the drama. While Wagner's operas are no less dependent on superhuman singing abilities, Wagner transformed the role of the orchestra in his works. Through the presentation and development of *leitmotifs*, the orchestra becomes an essential character in the drama, providing psychological commentary on the stage action, as well as propelling the action forward. Wagner returned to myths and

legends for the literary material for his operas to create more of a symbolic artwork. While Wagner lived many years before the development of motion pictures, his *Leitmotiv* technique became an essential component of musical storytelling in film.

Test Your Understanding



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<https://louis.pressbooks.pub/musicappreciation/?p=1263#h5p-17>

14.

LISTENING TO JAZZ STYLES

Learning Objectives

- Identify representative music from various jazz styles.
- Identify important style traits of Early Jazz, the Blues, Big Band Jazz, Bebop, Cool Jazz, and Fusion.
- Identify important composers and performers of Early Jazz, the Blues, Big Band Jazz, Bebop, Cool Jazz, and Fusion.

By Jesse Boyd

Introduction

Please listen a little first. Honestly, it might be best to start at the end of this chapter and go backwards.

Video 14.1: Herbie Hancock “Cantaloupe Island” performed live in 1990



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://louis.pressbooks.pub/musicappreciation/?p=1318#oembed-1>

Jazz is a way of life. It’s a way of thinking. It’s a way of listening and speaking. It’s the way your soul sees the world. At the heart of Jazz is improvisation. And Jazzers improvise with style. Jazz means to be cool, to lay back, to play a little behind the beat. This style we call Swing. Swing is about momentum. It’s about playing

together. Swing creates a force of moving ahead, moving on down the road to the next bit of coolness that we can experience and enjoy together.

Musically, Jazz is a language. The conversation began in New Orleans around 1900 and was the result of music from all over the world coming together at a magical time. The Mississippi River offered jobs and promise to people who packed up their families and moved to create a new life, a new beginning. Part of this new beginning was Jazz.

Jazz, even before it was known as Jazz, was an integral part of New Orleans. Music has been called the “universal language,” and it couldn’t have been truer than in New Orleans. Music was the thread that wove the new and diverse cultures together, and this music was improvised.

Some of the music that led to Jazz was Ragtime, Blues, Gospel, Marching Band, Classical, Caribbean, and African. Congo Square played an integral role because the slaves played drums there on Sundays in New Orleans.

Buddy Bolden (1877-1931)



Figure 14.1: Buddy Bolden's band, Bolden, second row, second from left; 1900-1906. | Attribution: Photographer unknown from personal collection of trombonist Willie Cornish | Source: [Wikimedia Commons](#) | License: Public Domain

Buddy Bolden was the first musician whose name was associated with Jazz. Please keep in mind that if the up-and-coming Jazz musicians had been labeled, they would’ve been called Ragtime musicians. After Buddy Bolden, some of the first generation of Jazz players were Jelly Roll Morton, Joe “King” Oliver, Sidney Bechet, the Original Dixieland Jazz Band, and of course, Louis Armstrong.

Louis Armstrong (1901-1971)



Figure 14.2: Louis Armstrong (1953) | Photographer: Unknown | Source: [Library of Congress: Prints and Photographs Division](#) | License: Public Domain.

Louis Armstrong is the Father of Jazz. Prior to Armstrong, Jazz was a loosely assembled group or “collective” improvisation. This worked because each instrument had a role. Armstrong changed the arrangement by becoming the only soloist, while the rest of the band supported him. This transformation in Jazz might be compared to Classical music’s transformation from polyphony to homophony. Armstrong’s phrases made perfect sense and were complete. And there was so much joy. Even if you can’t see him play, listening to his music will make you smile.

Swing

The **Swing Era** is about the big band. The King of Swing was Benny Goodman. Other key figures are Duke Ellington, Glenn Miller, Count Basie, Cab Calloway, Tommy Dorsey, and vocalists Billie Holiday and Ella Fitzgerald. This is Top 40 music, a very slick show, and is all about the dancing.



Figure 14.3: Benny Goodman, screenshot from the film Stage Door Canteen, 1943 | Attribution: United Artists | Source: [Wikimedia Commons](#) | License: Public Domain

Video 14.2: Duke Ellington and his Orchestra—Take the A Train (1962)



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Bebop

Bebop is the beginning of “modern jazz.” This music was not for dancing but was instead intended for listening. Some musicians from the big bands felt that they were not really getting to play on the gigs, so they’d go to small clubs like Minton’s Playhouse and improvise until the wee hours of the morning. Charlie Parker, Dizzy Gillespie, Thelonious Monk, and Bud Powell are just a few of the Bebop musicians. Whereas Swing was about dance and boasted tight arrangements, Bebop asked you not to dance and was all about the solo. It was all about improvisation.



Figures 14.4–14.7:
Left to right,
Charlie Parker,
Thelonious Monk,
Dizzy Gillespie, and
Bud Powell |

Figure 14.4: Charlie
Parker (1947) |

Photographer:
William P. Gottlieb

| Source: [Library of
Congress](#) | License:
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Figure 14.5:
Thelonious Monk
(1947) |

Photographer:
William P. Gottlieb

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Figure 14.6: Dizzy
Gillespie (1946) |

Photographer:
William P. Gottlieb

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Figure 14.7: Bud
Powell (1960;
cropped image) |

Photographer:
Unknown | Source:

[Wikimedia
Commons](#) |

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Video 14.3: Jazz Fundamentals: What Is Free Jazz?



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In the 1950s after Bebop, Jazz branched out into Hard Bop, Modal, and in the '60s, we played Free Jazz and Bossa Nova. Hard Bop is Jazz with a little Rhythm & Blues and Gospel. Modal Jazz is about the music in a

slightly different way. Instead of playing off the chords, the improvisation is based on a mode, which is just another word for scale. The pinnacle of Modal Jazz is an album by Miles Davis called *Kind of Blue*. The musicians on this recording all deserve the highest recognition. It's Miles on trumpet, John Coltrane on tenor sax, Cannonball Adderley on alto sax, Bill Evans on piano, Wynton Kelly on piano on Freddie Freeloader, Paul Chambers on bass, and Jimmy Cobb on drums.



Figure 14.8: Miles Davis, ca. 1955-56 |
Photographer: Tom Palumbo |
Source: [Wikimedia Commons](#) |
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Video 14.4: Miles Davis—"So What" from *Kind of Blue*



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Free Jazz seeks to explore Jazz with few restrictions. The music could be based on a single phrase or melody, a set of chords (in no specific order), or maybe just an idea. Free Jazz is unbridled emotion. Bossa Nova, Jazz originating in Brazil, on the other hand, is some of the most beautiful, lyrical music that you'll ever hear. And contrary to Free Jazz, which is instrumental, Bossa Nova often focuses on a vocalist delivering the gorgeous melody. Melodies are accompanied by a seamless series of magical chords, and the beat is nothing short of paradise.

Miles Davis shared the stage with several phenomenal pianists in the 1960s: Keith Jarrett, Herbie Hancock, and Chick Corea.

Fusion was a popular style of Jazz in the 1970s. It began with the Miles Davis recordings, *In a Silent Way* and *Bitches Brew*. Fusion is Jazz mixed with Rock & Roll, Rhythm & Blues, and is played on electric instruments. Many of the key players on *Bitches Brew* formed their own bands. Herbie Hancock started

Headhunters, Chick Corea founded Return to Forever, John McLaughlin started The Mahavishnu Orchestra, and Wayne Shorter and Joe Zawinul formed Weather Report.

Video 14.5: Chick Corea, Herbie Hancock, John McLaughlin, Carlos Santana, et al.



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://louis.pressbooks.pub/musicappreciation/?p=1318#oembed-5>

In the early 1980s, the world was introduced to the Marsalis family from New Orleans. The father, Ellis, played piano (passed 4/1/2020), Branford plays sax, Wynton plays trumpet, Delfeayo plays trombone, and Jason plays drums. They are all extraordinary players and scholars of the music. Ellis played around the world but stayed in New Orleans and could be heard most Friday nights at Snug Harbor on Frenchmen St. in New Orleans. Wynton was the first musician to win Grammys in Classical and Jazz in the same year. His technique and mastery of the instrument are truly amazing. He is currently the music director of the Lincoln Center Jazz Orchestra in New York and was a chief contributor on Ken Burns *Jazz* and the recent Buddy Bolden movie, just to name a few. His style for quite a few years has been historical. A staple of his recent musical repertoire has been the music of Duke Ellington.

Branford played with Sting for a few years, led the *Tonight Show* Band for a few years, and now concentrates on his quartet. His music is some of the most innovative in Jazz. Delfeayo and Jason are brilliant as well. Ellis used to tell me that Jason has the most talent. You can hear them in New Orleans when they're not on the road.

Piano players have always played significant roles in Jazz. In early Jazz, it was Jelly Roll Morton, then Duke Ellington and Count Basie in the Swing Era. Thelonious Monk and Bud Powell were pioneers in Bebop, and Bill Evans developed modality with Miles Davis. There are three pianists who played with Miles in the '60s that went on to become icons in the Jazz world. These players are Herbie Hancock, Chick Corea, and Keith Jarrett.

Something to Think About

What if Jazz had emerged somewhere other than New Orleans? What are some possible differences? Would it even be Jazz?

Chapter Summary

Jazz has roots in European harmonies and African rhythms. Since its inception, it has been many things to many different people. To some, it's dance music. To others, it provides a place to think. To yet others, it's simply about emotion. Sometimes a listener might select a song to suit their emotion, and yet other times, the listener might want to pick a song that will change the mood.

Test Your Understanding



An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:

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PART VI

MUSIC OF LOUISIANA, THE AMERICAS, AND THE WORLD

15.

LOUISIANA MUSIC AND CULTURE

Edited by Bonnie Le

Learning Objectives

- Describe a brief history of the Acadians in Southern Louisiana.
- Identify the different instruments used in Cajun music.
- Describe how the style of Cajun music was developed and performed.
- Describe the roles music and dance play in reproducing Cajun culture and community.
- Identify prominent Cajun musicians and songwriters.
- Describe a brief history of Zydeco music.
- Identify selected current Zydeco musicians.

Timeline of Acadian and Cajun History and Music



An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:

<https://louis.pressbooks.pub/musicappreciation/?p=1321#h5p-23>

Cajuns

Adapted from “[Cajuns](#),” *Wikipedia*, 2022, License: [CC BY-SA 3.0](#)

Who Are the Cajuns?

The Cajuns (keɪdʒənz), also known as Louisiana Acadians (French: les Acadiens), are an ethnic group mainly living in the U.S. state of Louisiana. While Cajuns are usually described as the descendants of the Acadian exiles, Louisianans frequently use Cajun as a broad cultural term (particularly when referencing Acadiana). Although Cajun and Creole today are often portrayed as separate identities, Louisianans of Cajun descent were historically considered to be Louisiana Creoles. Cajuns make up a significant portion of south Louisiana's population and have had an enormous impact on the state's culture.

While Lower Louisiana had been settled by French colonists since the late 17th century, many Cajuns trace their roots to the influx of Acadian settlers after the Great Expulsion from their homeland during the French and British hostilities prior to the Seven Years' War (1756 to 1763). The Acadia region to which modern Cajuns trace their origin consisted largely of what are now Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, and Prince Edward Island plus parts of eastern Quebec and northern Maine. Since their establishment in Louisiana, the Cajuns have become famous for their French dialect, Louisiana French (also called "Cajun French"), and have developed a vibrant culture including folkways, music, and cuisine. The Acadiana region is heavily associated with them.

History of Acadian Ancestors

The British conquest of Acadia happened in 1710. Over the next 45 years, the Acadians refused to sign an unconditional oath of allegiance to the Crown. During this period, Acadians participated in various military operations against the British and maintained vital supply lines to the French fortress of Louisbourg and Fort Beausejour. During the French and Indian War (part of the Seven Years' War and known by that name in Canada and Europe), the British sought to neutralize the Acadian military threat and to interrupt their vital supply lines to Louisbourg by deporting Acadians from Acadia (see figure 15.2). The territory of Acadia was afterward divided and apportioned to various British colonies, now Canadian provinces: Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island, and the Gaspé Peninsula in the province of Quebec. The deportation of the Acadians from these areas beginning in 1755 has become known as the Great Upheaval or Le Grand Dérangement.

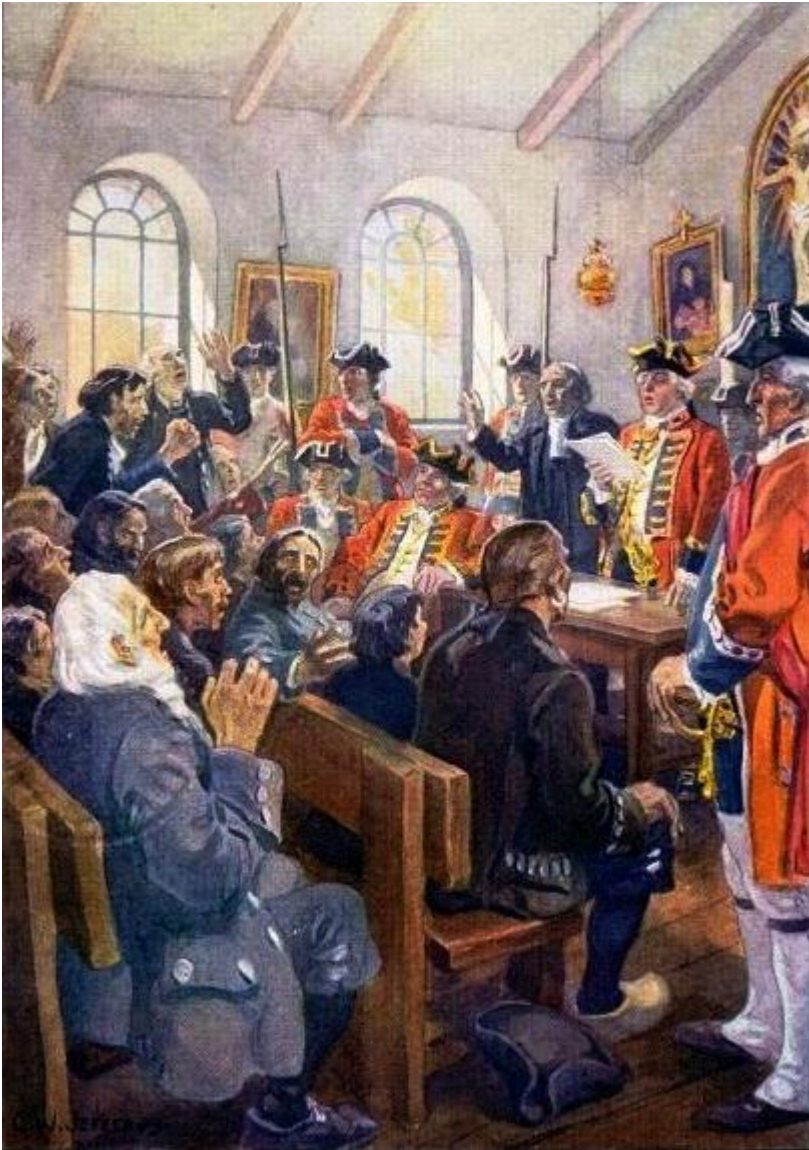


Figure 15.2:
Reading the Order
of expulsion to the
Acadians in the
parish Church at
Grand-Pré, in 1755
(1923) | Artist:
Charles William
Jefferys
(1869-1951) |
Photographer:
Arthur G. Doughty,
1916 | Source:
[Wikimedia
Commons](#) |
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Domain

The Acadians' migration from Canada was spurred by the 1763 Treaty of Paris, which ended the war. The treaty terms provided 18 months for unrestrained emigration. Many Acadians moved to the region of the Atakapa in present-day Louisiana, often traveling via the French colony of Saint-Domingue (now Haiti). Joseph Broussard led the first group of 200 Acadians to arrive in Louisiana on February 27, 1765, aboard the *Santo Domingo* (see figure 15.3). On April 8, 1765, he was appointed militia captain and commander of the "Acadians of the Atakapas" region in St. Martinville.



Figure 15.3: “Joseph Broussard dit Beausoleil in Acadia,” 2009 | Artist: Herb Roe | Source: [Wikimedia Commons](#) | License: [CC BY-SA 4.0](#)

Some of the settlers wrote to their family scattered around the Atlantic to encourage them to join them at New Orleans. For example, Jean-Baptiste Semer wrote to his father in France:

My dear father . . . you can come here boldly with my dear mother and all the other Acadian families. They will always be better off than in France. There are neither duties nor taxes to pay and the more one works, the more one earns without doing harm to anyone.

— Jean-Baptiste Semer, 1766

The Acadians were scattered throughout the eastern seaboard. Families were split and boarded ships with different destinations. Many ended up west of the Mississippi River in what was then French-colonized Louisiana, including territory as far north as Dakota territory. France had ceded the colony to Spain in 1762, prior to their defeat by Britain and two years before the first Acadians began settling in Louisiana. The interim French officials provided land and supplies to the new settlers. The Spanish governor, Bernardo de Gálvez, later proved to be hospitable, permitting the Acadians to continue to speak their language, practice their native religion (Roman Catholicism, which was also the official religion of Spain), and otherwise pursue their livelihoods with minimal interference. Some families and individuals did travel north through the Louisiana territory to set up homes as far north as Wisconsin. Acadians fought in the American Revolution. Although they fought for Spanish General Galvez, their contribution to the winning of the war has been recognized.

Galvez left New Orleans with an army of Spanish regulars and the Louisiana militia made up of 600 Acadian volunteers and captured the British strongholds of Fort Bute at Bayou Manchac, across from the Acadian settlement at St. Gabriel. On September 7, 1779, Galvez attacked Fort Bute and then on September 21, 1779, attacked and captured Baton Rouge.

The Spanish colonial government settled the earliest group of Acadian exiles west of New Orleans in what is now south-central Louisiana—an area known at the time as Attakapas and later the center of the Acadiana region. As Brasseaux wrote, “The oldest of the pioneer communities . . . Fausse Point, was established near present-day Loreauville by late June 1765.” The Acadians shared the swamps, bayous, and prairies with the Attakapa and Chitimacha Native American tribes.

After the end of the American Revolutionary War, about 1,500 more Acadians arrived in New Orleans. About 3,000 Acadians had been deported to France during the Great Upheaval. In 1785, about 1,500 were authorized to immigrate to Louisiana, often to be reunited with their families or because they could not settle in France. Living in a relatively isolated region until the early 20th century, Cajuns today are largely assimilated into mainstream society and culture. Some Cajuns live in communities outside Louisiana. Also, some people identify themselves as Cajun culturally despite lacking Acadian ancestry.

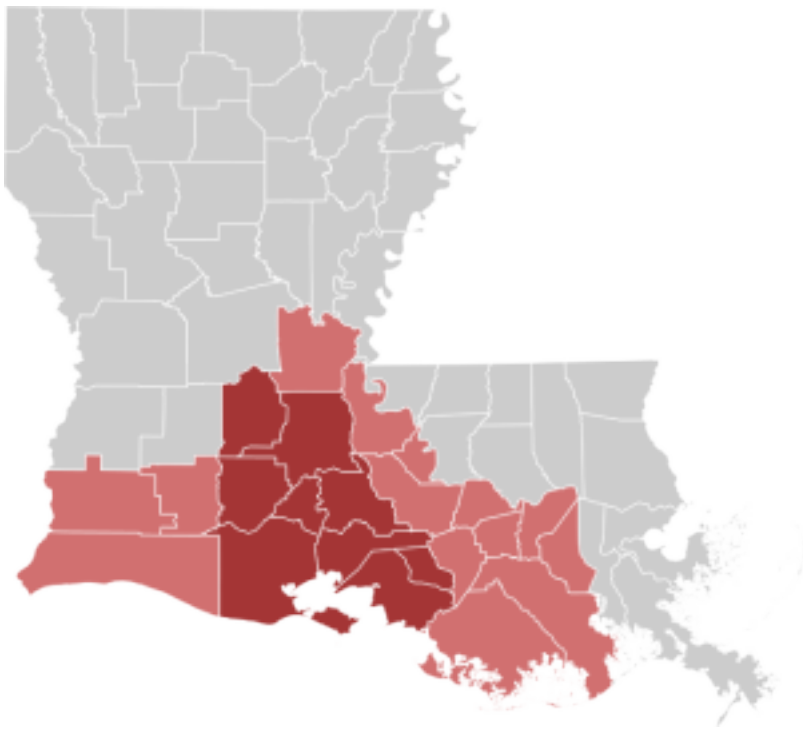


Figure 15.4:
Acadiana Louisiana
region map, with
the traditional 22
parishes in
Southern
Louisiana that
belong to the
Acadiana Region
with the “Cajun
Heartland USA”
subregion in a
darker shade,
2006. | Author:
Unstated | Source:
[Wikimedia
Commons](#) |
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Cajun Music

By Joshua Caffery, [64 Parishes](#), (c) 2020. Text used with permission.

Cajun music is an accordion- and fiddle-based largely francophone folk music originating in southwestern Louisiana. Most people identify Cajun music with Louisiana’s Acadian settlers and their descendants, the Cajuns, but this music in fact refers to an indigenous mixture with complex roots in Irish, African, German, Appalachian as well as Acadian traditions. As distinct from zydeco music, Cajun music is most often performed by white musicians. While zydeco tends to incorporate elements of rhythm and blues, blues, and more recently hip-hop and rap, Cajun music has historically been influenced by Western swing, rock ’n’ roll,

and country music. Although the historical and cultural center of Cajun music continues to be southwestern Louisiana, interest in the music has spread in recent decades, and practitioners and fans of Cajun music can be found today throughout the world.

Something to Think About

While zydeco tends to incorporate elements of rhythm and blues, blues, and more recently hip-hop and rap, Cajun music has historically been influenced by Western swing, rock 'n' roll, and country music. What are the similarities of zydeco and Cajun music? How are the two styles of music influenced by their customs and culture?

Instrumentation

Cajun music is marked by its exclusive use of the diatonic accordion (zydeco musicians, in contrast, use either the triple-row, chromatic, or diatonic accordion). Resilient folk instruments that may have been brought to Louisiana by German settlers—though the earliest documentary evidence finds them in the hands of African American musicians—diatonic accordions are button accordions that feature a fairly limited melodic range. Most diatonic accordions played by Cajun musicians are tuned to either C or D major scales. Accordions are the loudest instrument in Cajun music and often begin and end any particular song (see figure 15.5). Along with the diatonic accordion, the fiddle is the instrument most central to Cajun music. Although a variety of tunings may be employed, Cajun musicians normally play in standard violin tuning (GDAE) or “tuned-down,” one whole-step below standard tuning (see figure 15.6).

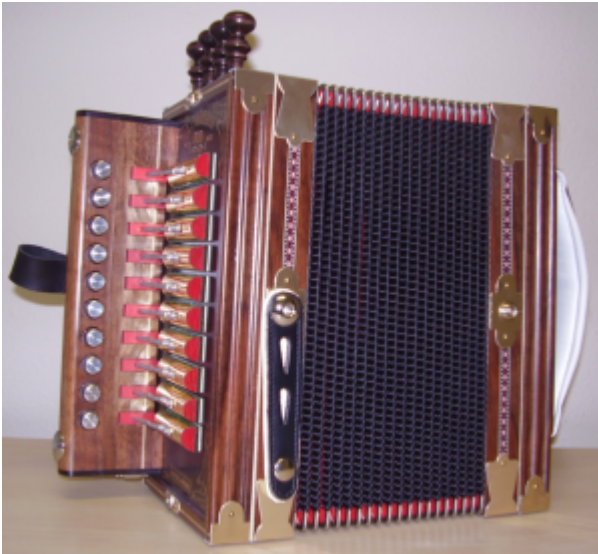


Figure 15.5: Cajun accordion built by Marc Savoy from Eunice, Louisiana, 2009 |

Photographer: Michael Miceli |
Source: [Wikimedia Commons](#) |
License: Public Domain



Figure 15.6: Cajun Fiddler Doug Kershaw, 2009 Festivals Acadiens et Créoles |

Photographer: David Simpson |
Source: [Wikimedia Commons](#) |
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A typical modern Cajun band, performing for a public dance, includes accordion, fiddle, guitar, bass, and drums. Other instruments, including the pedal steel guitar and the triangle (or 'tit fer), are also common. Many early recordings of Cajun music feature a trio of accordion, fiddle, and acoustic guitar or simply accordion and fiddle. In addition, a distinct twin-fiddling style associated with Cajun music exists, in which one fiddler plays a melody while the other provides rhythmic accompaniment, or “seconding.” In most instances, accordion and fiddle provide melody (together or separately) while the rest of the band acts as a rhythm section. Steel and six-string guitars, however, also may be used as melody instruments (see figure 15.7).



Figure 15.7: Steve Riley and the Mamou Playboys at New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Festival, 2009 | Photographer: NawlinWiki | Source: [Wikimedia Commons](#) | License: [CC BY-SA 3.0](#)

Style

In a public dance setting, most Cajun songs can be described as two-steps or waltzes, in accordance with the tradition's most common dance steps. Two-steps are faster songs in a 2/4 time signature, while waltzes are slower songs, in 3/4 time. In Cajun music, a "blues" normally refers to a slower song in 2/4 time, which may or may not conform to a standard 12-bar blues formula. Cajun two-steps, in addition, may be played with a "swing" feel, reflecting the historical influence of Western swing on the Cajun genre.

Video 15.1: How to Dance the Cajun Two-Step



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://louis.pressbooks.pub/musicappreciation/?p=1321#oembed-1>

Video 15.2: Cajun Two-Step Performance by Jubilee American Dance Theatre, part of a Cajun Suite of dances, 2005



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://louis.pressbooks.pub/musicappreciation/?p=1321#oembed-2>

Both early recordings and field recordings made by folklorists in the homes of Cajun musicians throughout the twentieth century point to a broader array of song types than those found in public dance performance—an older tradition related to, but distinct from, the indigenous accordion and fiddle-based styles. A cappella ballads, some dating back hundreds of years, have persisted into the twentieth century, primarily in the private, domestic repertoire of female singers. Other song styles with roots in European folk music and dance, such as the mazurka, the hornpipe, and the reel, are evident in early recordings, though they have largely disappeared from modern Cajun music.

Songs

The contemporary Cajun music repertoire includes hundreds of traditional songs and an ever-expanding list of newer material. Although many authors of the songs that form the core repertoire have been lost to time, commercial recordings have helped preserve credits for many twentieth-century songs. Prominent songwriters, including D. L. Menard, Marc Savoy, Adam Hebert, and Ivy Dugas, have succeeded in writing new songs in a traditional vein. Although the fluency in southwestern Louisiana’s vernacular French continues to decline with the demise of native speakers, young songwriters continue to compose in French and add original songs to the repertoire.

Over time, a small number of Cajun songs have become “hits,” reaching audiences outside the local Cajun population and crossing over into mainstream popular culture. Most famously, the song “Jolie Blonde,” first popularized in the 1946 recording by Cajun swing fiddler Harry Choates and by numerous artists afterward, became a nationwide hit. In addition, a number of songs qualify as regional hits, including Jimmy C. Newman’s “Lâche pas la Patate” and D. L. Menard’s “La Porte d’en Arrière.” As these hits have faded from broader popularity, they have been retained as part of the traditional repertoire.

A Brief Chronology

Although Cajun music has remained dynamic over time, certain trends and currents are evident in commercial recordings, the first of which were made in the late 1920s. These first recordings have come to embody a “classic” period in the music, largely because they were the first recordings of the music widely available. “Lafayette” by Cléoma and Joe Falcon, as well as the duos of fiddler Dennis McGee with both Creole accordionist Amédée Ardoin and fiddler Sady Courville, form the core of the early “classic” acoustic sound. In

the late 1930s and early 1940s, the Cajun accordion temporarily faded in prominence, largely because of the craze for fiddle-based, more melodically complex Western swing.

After World War II, interest in the accordion reignited with the powerful playing and singing of Iry LeJeune. The 1950s saw the rise of figures such as songwriter/accordionist Lawrence Walker, who managed to accommodate the accordion to a smoother style reminiscent of the swing era, but owing more to the influence of country and honky-tonk sounds. In the 1960s, Aldus Roger and the Lafayette Playboys helped to merge the driving accordion style of LeJeune with the smoother sensibilities of Walker, even as the Balfa Brothers, in step with the nationwide folk boom, found widespread acclaim with a more acoustic, folksy sound. Some musicians, such as D. L. Menard, ran the gamut of stylistic possibilities, playing in acoustic settings while also performing with a full band in the Cajun/honky-tonk style that earned him the moniker “The Cajun Hank Williams.”

Beginning with the triumphant performance of Dewey Balfa, Louis Lejeune, and Gladdy Thibodeaux at the 1964 Newport Folk Festival, Cajun musicians increasingly began traveling and performing abroad, typically via the emerging folk festival circuit. As a result of the music’s broadening recognition, young revivalists of the 1970s and 1980s, such as Zachary Richard, Michael Doucet and Beausoleil, and Cajun/rock sensation Wayne Toups, established successful professional careers that persist to this day. During the same period and into the 1990s, husband-and-wife duo Marc and Ann Savoy cultivated a barebones acoustic approach to the music, while Steve Riley and the Mamou Playboys explored both traditional and progressive sounds.

While all of the different styles discussed above persist in one way or another today, the late 1990s and early twenty-first century can be characterized as a neotraditional phase, in which many of the most popular groups scoured past recordings for inspiration. Bands such as the Red Stick Ramblers and the Lost Bayou Ramblers hearkened back to the experimentations of the early swing era, while Balfa Toujours (led by Dewey Balfa’s daughter, Christine) and the Pine Leaf Boys perpetuated both the twin-fiddling style of the Balfa Brothers as well as the dancehall styles of earlier decades.

In general, contemporary Cajun music features a dynamic range of styles, drawn both from the local tradition and from other genres of American music. Live Cajun music may be heard throughout southwestern Louisiana at dance halls like La Poussière in Breaux Bridge and Randol’s Restaurant in Lafayette, as well as at local festivals like the annual Festivals Acadien et Créole or the Breaux Bridge Crawfish Festival.

Major Cajun Musicians

Marc Savoy

Adapted from “[Marc Savoy](#),” *Wikipedia*, 2022, [CC BY-SA 3.0](#)

Marc Savoy (sah-vwah), born October 1, 1940, is an American musician and builder and player of the Cajun accordion. Born on his grandfather’s rice farm near Eunice, Louisiana, his grandfather was a fiddler who occasionally played with the legendary Dennis McGee, who was once a tenant farmer on his grandfather’s

property. Marc Savoy began playing traditional music when he was 12 years old. Savoy holds a degree in chemical engineering, but his primary income is derived from his accordion-making business based at his Savoy Music Center in Eunice. His wife is a singer and guitarist, and they often perform together; see Marc Savoy on accordion, Ann Savoy on guitar, and others pictured below, figure 15.8.



Figure 15.8: Savoy Family Band at Festivals Acadiens et Creoles in Lafayette, LA, 2018 | Photographer: NOLA1982 | Source: [Wikimedia Commons](#) | License: [CC BY-SA 4.0](#)

Video 15.3: One of Marc Savoy's songs is "Under the Green Oak Tree," written in 1976 with Dewey Balfa and D. L. Menard.



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://louis.pressbooks.pub/musicappreciation/?p=1321#oembed-3>

Dewey Balfa

Adapted from "[Dewey Balfa](#)," *Wikipedia*, 2021, [CC BY-SA 3.0](#)

Dewey Balfa (1927-1992) was an American Cajun fiddler and singer who contributed significantly to the popularity of Cajun music. Balfa was born near Mamou, Louisiana, and is best known for his 1964 performance at the Newport Folk Festival with Gladius Thibodeaux and Vinus Lejeune, where the group received an enthusiastic response from over seventeen thousand audience members. He sang the song "Parlez Nous a Boire" in the 1981 cult film *Southern Comfort* in which he had a small role.

Video 15.4: Parlez-nous a boire—Balfa brothers Marc Savoy, scene from *Southern Comfort*



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://louis.pressbooks.pub/musicappreciation/?p=1321#oembed-4>

Dewey Balfa was born in Grand Louis, Louisiana, a small community west of Mamou. He was the son of Amay (née Ardoin) and Charles Balfa, who were sharecroppers. Balfa had learned most of his songs from his grandmother and his father, who was a fiddle player.

In 1965, he formed the Balfa Brothers after the enthusiastic response from the performance at the Newport Folk Festival. This led to their first LP, produced by Swallow Records.



Figure 15.9: The Balfa Brothers Band |
Photographer: Unidentified |
Source: Louisiana State Museum |
License: Copyrighted, used with permission.

Balfa appears in a documentary film entitled *Les Blues de Balfa*, produced by Yasha Aginsky. In one scene, Balfa is shown with Nathan Abshire entertaining a group of school children. Balfa gives a short lecture concerning the origins of Cajun music:

We are here to tell you a little bit about what a Cajun is. A Cajun is a person who his homeland was France. Went into Nova Scotia, at the time Acadia, and settled there and was there for about a hundred years, and afterwards the British took over the territory and then the French-speaking people, the French descendants, known as the Acadians, came down to the South-Western part of Louisiana, and that was back in 1755. So over all of these years, your language, and your music has been preserved from daddy to son or daddy to daughter or momma to daughter.

Video 15.5: Dewey Balfa and Robert Jardell, “Calcasieu Waltz,” 1983, shot by Alan Lomax and crew in Scott, Louisiana



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://louis.pressbooks.pub/musicappreciation/?p=1321#oembed-5>

BeauSoleil avec Michael Doucet

By Roger Hahn, *64 Parishes*, 2019. Text used with permission



Figure 15.10:
Michael Doucet
with BeauSoleil at
Dewey Balfa Cajun
and Creole
Heritage Week at
Chicot State Park,
2008 |
Photographer:
cajunzydecophotos
| Source: [Flickr](#) |
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2.0

Formed during the Cajun revival of the 1970s, BeauSoleil and its founder, fiddler Michael Doucet, are among Louisiana’s most prominent ambassadors of Cajun music and culture. The band is particularly known and respected for emphasizing a wide range of Cajun musical traditions. Never content to re-create precise historical renderings of traditional Cajun music, BeauSoleil highlights the music’s inherent adaptability by incorporating elements of zydeco, blues, swamp pop, traditional New Orleans jazz, calypso, country, western swing, and rock and roll. Having recorded more than two dozen albums, BeauSoleil has received eleven nominations and two Grammy awards.

Origins and Influences

The origins of BeauSoleil lie in the experiences of its founder, Michael Doucet. Born in Lafayette Parish on February 14, 1951, he is the son of Louis Pierre Doucet and Mary Frances Leblanc Doucet. Raised in an extended family full of amateur and professional musicians, Doucet began playing banjo at age six and guitar at age eight. His uncle Will Knight played Cajun fiddle, banjo, and bass and was particularly influential. His grandmother learned about the family's Acadian and French roots while serving as a nurse in France during World War I (1914–1918), and his mother was an avid student of the French oral tradition of storytelling. As a teen, Doucet and his cousin Zachary Richard formed a contemporary folk-rock band, the Bayou Drifters. In 1974, a music promoter hired the band to play at a folk music festival in France, sparking Doucet's interest in the origins of Cajun music.

On his return to Louisiana, Doucet threw himself into an investigation of Cajun traditions and explored ways of translating them for contemporary audiences. With a 1975 Folk Arts Apprenticeship grant from the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA), he set about meeting and learning from as many traditional Cajun musicians as he could. Dewey Balfa, Sady Courville, Varise Connor, Freeman Fontenot, Luderin Darbone, Hector Duhon, Doc Guidry, Bébé Carrière, Lionel LeLeux, and Dennis McGee were among those he studied. At the same time, he helped form Coteau, a folk-rock band that played a traditional French Cajun repertoire while utilizing twin electric lead guitars. The group became popular enough along the Louisiana Gulf Coast to attract increasingly larger young audiences and, as a result, began to reenergize the local music scene.

As a side project, in 1975 Doucet formed a small acoustic ensemble dedicated strictly to the performance of traditional Cajun music. He named this endeavor BeauSoleil in an apparent double entendre. Although BeauSoleil translates as “beautiful sun,” it was also a nickname for Joseph Broussard, a legendary leader of the Acadian resistance movement in mid-eighteenth-century Canada. For Doucet, this covert allusion had a personal significance as well, since his mother's side of the family included generations of Broussards.

Frustrated by their inability to negotiate a major recording contract, the members of Coteau parted ways in the late 1970s, and BeauSoleil became Doucet's primary musical focus. In addition to Doucet, the band included David Doucet (Michael's brother) on guitar and vocals, Jimmy Breaux on accordion, Mitchell Reed on fiddle and bass, Tommy Alesi on drums, and Billy Ware on percussion. In 1977, the band recorded its first album, *The Spirit of Cajun Music*, on Swallow Records. The *Rolling Stone Encyclopedia of Rock & Roll* described it as “an eclectic mix of blues, ballads, standards, and traditional music.”

Musical Style

The band's unique combination of musical innovation and tradition reflected Doucet's own instincts and previous experiences. His apprenticeships with Dennis McGee, a Cajun fiddler heavily influenced by French musical traditions, and Canray Fontenot, a Creole musician who incorporated elements of Afro-Caribbean culture, proved particularly influential. For Doucet, musical traditions were dynamic rather than static; he understood that folk music had absorbed multiple influences over centuries and believed it must continue

to do so in order to remain alive and relevant. “Everything I play I learned from Louisiana,” he told *Fiddler Magazine* interviewer Niles Hokkanen. “I went back in time—not only to French music, but to blues, jazz, popular music, Irish music, whatever was there. As more old records are brought to light, you can see those influences and what a hotbed Louisiana was ... so, my influences are the spectrum of Louisiana music.”

A confluence of events in the mid-1980s brought BeauSoleil’s innovative traditionalism to the world’s attention. First, tracks from the band were included in two movie soundtracks: *Belizaire the Cajun* (1986) and *The Big Easy* (1987). In addition, BeauSoleil became regular guests on the National Public Radio variety show *Prairie Home Companion*. Finally, in 1986, the band signed a deal with Rounder Records, assuring them national distribution and greater mainstream exposure. Between 1987 and 1997, the band released a dozen albums, and in 1988, they appeared as guest artists on *Talk Is Cheap*, a solo effort by Rolling Stones lead guitarist Keith Richards. Two years later, country-folk artist Mary Chapin Carpenter made reference to the band in her song “Down at the Twist and Shout,” which rose to number two on *Billboard* magazine’s country-music sales charts.

National recognition became a powerful catalyst for experimentation. BeauSoleil’s 1987 Rounder release, *Bayou Boogie*, featured guest artist Sonny Landreth, a southwestern Louisiana native who had developed an electric guitar style that seamlessly combined fingered chords with slide guitar effects. The band’s 1989 follow-up, *Bayou Cadillac*, featured zydeco, traditional Cajun, blues, traditional New Orleans jazz, and calypso, as well as original compositions and a medley that combined Buddy Holly’s “Not Fade Away,” the Bo Diddley anthem “Bo Diddley,” and the New Orleans Mardi Gras Indian-inspired “Iko Iko.” Rolling Stone critic Steven Pond described the album as “world music, south-Louisiana style,” and over the next twenty years, BeauSoleil would release a half-dozen top twenty hits on *Billboard*’s World Music Album sales chart.

Video 15.6: Michael Doucet and BeauSoleil, “Courtableau”



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://louis.pressbooks.pub/musicappreciation/?p=1321#oembed-6>

The band’s studio output slowed considerably in the first decade of the twenty-first century, but BeauSoleil is still regarded as “an American institution,” as musician/music journalist James Christopher Monger observed in a review of their 2009 Grammy-nominated release, *Alligator Purse*. Numerous organizations have also honored Doucet’s contribution to traditional Cajun music. The NEA honored him with a National Heritage Fellowship in 2005. In addition, the United States Artists, a nonprofit organization formed in 2005 to encourage the careers of American artists through noncommercial financial support, awarded him a fellowship in 2007. In the eyes and ears of many, BeauSoleil remains a bellwether of Cajun excellence and a musical phenomenon that *People* magazine once described as “Louisiana’s hottest export since Tabasco Sauce.”

Zydeco

Adapted from “[Zydeco](#),” *Wikipedia*, [CC BY-SA 3.0](#)

Zydeco (/ˈzaɪdɪˌkou/ *ZY-dih-koh* or /ˈzaɪdɪˌkou/ *ZY-dee-koh*, French: *Zarico*) is a music genre that evolved in southwest Louisiana by French Creole speakers that blends blues, rhythm and blues, and music indigenous to the Louisiana Creoles and the Native American people of Louisiana. Although it is distinct in origin from the Cajun music of Louisiana, the two forms influenced each other, forming a complex of genres native to the region.

Characteristics

Zydeco music is typically played in an up-tempo, syncopated manner with a strong rhythmic core and often incorporates elements of blues, rock and roll, soul music, R&B, Afro-Caribbean, Cajun, and early Creole music. Zydeco music is centered around the accordion, which leads the rest of the band, and a specialized washboard, called a vest frottoir, as a prominent percussive instrument. Other common instruments in zydeco are the electric guitar, bass, keyboard, and drum set. If there are accompanying lyrics, they are typically sung in English or French. Many zydeco performers create original zydeco compositions, though it is also common for musicians to adapt blues standards, R&B hits, and traditional Cajun tunes into the zydeco style.



Figure 15.11:
Chenier Brothers
performing at Jay's
Lounge and
Cockpit, in
Cankton, LA, Mardi
Gras 1975 |
Photographer:
Bozotexino |
Source: [Wikimedia
Commons](#) |
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Video 15.7: C.J. Chenier & The Red Hot Louisiana Band—Man Smart, Woman Smarter



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Zydeco Musicians

Young zydeco musicians such as C. J. Chenier (son of Clifton Chenier), Chubby Carrier, Geno Delafosse, Terrance Simien, Nathan Williams, and others began touring internationally during the 1980s. Beau Jocque was a monumental songwriter and innovator who infused zydeco with powerful beats and bass lines in the 1990s, adding striking production and elements of funk, hip-hop, and rap. Young performers like Chris Ardoin, Keith Frank, and Zydeco Force added further by tying the sound to the bass drum rhythm to accentuate or syncopate the backbeat even more. This style is sometimes called “double clutching.”



Figure 15.12: C. J. Chenier & Red Hot Louisiana Band at Rawa Blues Festival (Poland), 2011 | Photographer: Piotr Drabik | Source: [Flickr](#) | License: [CC BY 2.0](#)

Hundreds of zydeco bands continue the music traditions across the U.S. and in Europe, Japan, the UK, and Australia. A precocious 7-year-old zydeco accordionist, Guyland Leday, was featured in an HBO documentary about music and young people.

In 2007, zydeco achieved a separate category in the Grammy awards, the Grammy Award for Best Zydeco or Cajun Music Album category. But in 2011, the Grammy awards eliminated the category and folded the genre

into its new Best Regional Roots Album category. More recent zydeco artists include Lil' Nate, Leon Chavis, Mo' Mojo, and Kenne' Wayne. Torchbearer Andre Thierry has kept the tradition alive on the West Coast. Leading the world of traditional zydeco today is Dwayne Dopsie (son of Rockin' Dopsie) and his band, the Zydeco Hellraisers. They were nominated for best Regional Roots Album in the 2017 Grammy Awards.



Figure 15.13:
Dwayne Dopsie
(accordion) & the
Zydeco Hellraisers
(Paul Lafleur on
washboard) at
Louisiana Cajun
Zydeco Festival,
New Orleans, LA,
2014 |
Photographer:
Kent Kanouse |
Source: [Flickr](#) |
License: [CC BY-NC
2.0](#)

Video 15.8: Dwayne Dopsie & The Hellraisers Live in Peer, Belgium—Where'd My Baby Go



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://louis.pressbooks.pub/musicappreciation/?p=1321#oembed-8>

While zydeco is a genre that has become synonymous with the cultural and musical identity of Louisiana and an important part of the musical landscape of the United States, this southern black music tradition has received wide recognition throughout the country. Because of the migration of the French-speaking blacks and multiracial Creoles, the mixing of Cajun and Creole musicians, and the warm embrace of people from outside these cultures, there are multiple hotbeds of zydeco: Louisiana, Texas, Oregon, California, and Europe as far north as Scandinavia. There are zydeco festivals throughout America and Europe.

Summary

This chapter looked briefly at the history of the Louisiana Acadians, an ethnic group mainly living in the U.S.

state of Louisiana who became commonly known as “Cajuns” starting with the British conquest of Acadia in 1710 and the Acadians’ refusal to sign an unconditional oath of allegiance to the Crown. This led to the Acadians being deported and eventually settling in Louisiana. We then looked at Cajun music, its instruments, and the style of dance associated with the music. A chronology of the music and the musicians was given. This chapter looked at various Cajun musicians and their music, such as Marc Savoy, an American musician, builder, and player of the Cajun accordion. The chapter then gave a brief history of Dewey Balfa, an American Cajun fiddler and singer who contributed significantly to the popularity of Cajun music. This chapter also explored the music of Michael Doucet, who came from a family full of amateur and professional musicians, and how he and his band Beausoleil influenced Cajun music. The chapter concluded with a brief history of zydeco music, its characteristics, and current zydeco musicians.

Suggested Readings

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- Lichtenstein, Grace, and Danker, Laura. “Ragin’ Cajuns.” In *Musical Gumbo: The Music of New Orleans*, pp. 195–235. New York: W. W. Norton, 1993.
- Savoy, Ann A. *Cajun Music: A Reflection of a People*. Eunice, LA: Bluebird Press, 1984.

Suggested Listening

- Balfa, Dewey, Marc Savoy, and D. L. Menard. *Under a Green Oak Tree*. Audio CD. El Cerrito: Arhoolie Records, 1993.
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Test Your Understanding



An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:

<https://louis.pressbooks.pub/musicappreciation/?p=1321#h5p-24>

16.

VERNACULAR MUSIC OF THE AMERICAS

Learning Objectives

- Describe the difference between vernacular and art music.
- Identify types of folk, popular, and classical music in the Americas.
- Discuss the origins and performing practices of both the Anglo-American Ballad and African American Spiritual.
- Discuss various genres and music styles considered popular music.
- Describe styles of American vernacular music by identifying and analyzing examples from a historical perspective.

This chapter is an adaptation of chapters from two texts: *Understanding Music: Past and Present* by N. Alan Clark, Thomas Heflin Jeffrey Klubal, and Elizabeth Kramer, license: CC BY-SA 4.0; and *Music: Its Language, History, and Culture* by Douglas Cohen, license: [CC BY](#). It also includes original content as noted. It covers indigenous and folk music from North, Central, and South America and the Caribbean.

Introduction

Adapted from “American Vernacular Music,”
Music: Its Language, History, and Culture, by Douglas Cohen.



Figure 16.1: New Orleans Street Musician, French Quarter, New Orleans, LA, April 28, 2015 | Attribution: sswj | Source: [Flicker](#) | License: [CC BY-NC-ND](#)

Western culture has tended to divide musical practices into two very broad fields, the vernacular and the cultivated. Vernacular refers to everyday, informal musical practices located outside the official arena of high culture—the conservatory, the concert hall, and the high church. The field of vernacular music is often further subdivided into the domains of folk music (orally transmitted and community based) and popular music (mediated for a mass audience). Cultivated music, often referred to as classical or art music, is associated with formal training and written composition. The boundaries between so-called folk, popular, and classical music are becoming increasingly blurred as we enter into the 21st century, due to the pervasive effects of mass media that have made music of all American ethnic/racial groups, classes, and regions available to everyone.

Historians and musicologists now agree that America’s most distinctive musical expressions are found, or have roots in, its vernacular music. Early immigrants from Western Europe and the slaves stolen from Africa brought with them rich traditions of oral folk music that mixed and mingled throughout the 18th and 19th centuries to develop uniquely American ballads, instrumental dance music, and spirituals. By the early 20th century, the folk blues emerged and would go on to form the foundation of much of our popular music. Beginning with 19th-century minstrel and parlor song collections, and threading through the 20th-century recordings of Tin Pan Alley song, gospel, rhythm and blues, country, rock, soul, and rap, the print and electronic media fueled the growth of American popular musical styles that today have proliferated across the globe. Jazz, sometimes considered America’s “classical” music, certainly had roots in early 20th-century folk and popular styles (see the chapter “Listening to Jazz Styles”). And many of America’s best-known classical composers including George Gershwin, Aaron Copland, Virgil Thomson, and Duke Ellington based their extended compositions on vernacular folk and popular themes.

Native American Music

Adapted from “Appendix: Music of the World,”
Understanding Music: Past and Present, by N. Alan Clark and Thomas Heflin



Figure 16.2: Chasi, Bonito's Son, an Apache musician playing the "Apache fiddle" (1886) | Photographer: A. Frank Randall | Source: [Wikimedia Commons](#) | License: Public Domain

Throughout history, certain cultures have had more opportunity to develop music than others. Often, the effort required to hunt, gather, or raise food has been all encompassing and has left little time for leisure or artistic pursuits. Therefore, music was only performed when the people thought it was necessary or important. Like many other cultures, traditional Native American music was normally performed as a part of important rituals meant to ask specific deities for various benefits, such as increased health, successful hunting, success in war or rain or to contact the spirit world for other reasons.

Most traditional Native American music was vocal music. It was used to tell a story, express a wish, or describe an emotional state, and it was almost always accompanied by percussion. The percussion instruments used were normally drums made of stretched animal skins, rattles, and, later, metallic bells. Vertical flutes and panpipes were sometimes used to accompany love songs. These songs had a small range with a few different pitches and were quite often based on the **pentatonic scale**, a five-note scale used in many different cultures. Most Native American music was not harmonized and did not have any form of harmonic accompaniment.

Video 16.1: Crown Dancer Song #1: *Traditional & Spiritual Apache Songs*



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Video 16.2: Chikasha Poya: We Are Chickasaw, 2014

In this video, two performers talk about and demonstrate flutes used in Native American music and discuss how Native American music has adapted.



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Tejano (TexMex)

Tejano or TexMex music is a blend of Central American and European influences. TexMex specifically refers to the music that grew out of both Mexico and Texas. It is dance oriented and uses European scales and chords. Instruments often include upright bass, drums, guitar, accordion, and solo vocal.

Video 16.3: Flaco Jimenez—Ay te dejo en San Antonio—”Pelicula El Infierno 2010”



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The following example is based on the Western European dance called the waltz. It is in three-quarter time, with the emphasis on beat one. Listen for the ukulele, trumpet, drums, guitar, vocal harmony, and the trombone.

Video 16.4: El Coyote y su Banda Tierra Santa perform “Arboles de la Barranca”



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American Folk Music

Adapted from “American Vernacular Music,”

Music: Its Language, History, and Culture, by Douglas Cohen.

Folk music was once thought of as being simple, old, anonymously composed music played by poor, rural, nonliterate people representing the lower strata of our society (mountain hillbillies, southern black sharecroppers, cowboys, etc.). Today scholars have expanded the field by defining folk music as orally transmitted songs and instrumental expressions that are passed on in community settings and generally show

a degree of stability over time. Rather than viewing folk expressions as vanishing antiquities, this perspective suggests folk music can be a dynamic process that continues to flourish within many communities of our modern society. Using this model, popular music may be defined as mass-mediated expression that changes rapidly over time and classical/art music as musical practices centered in formal training and written composition.

In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, American folk music collectors wrote down the words and melodies to a variety of traditional expressions, including Native American ritual songs, African American spirituals and work songs, Anglo American ballads and fiddle tunes, and western cowboy songs. Later they broadened their interest to include the traditional expressions of ethnic and immigrant communities, such as the practices of Hispanic, Irish, Jewish, Caribbean, and Chinese Americans, most of whom lived in urban areas. With the advent of portable recording technology in the 1930s, folklorists like Alan Lomax began the task of documenting America's folk music and compiling the Archive of American Folk Song, which today, along with the Smithsonian Folkways Recordings, offers students the chance to hear and study authentic regional folk styles.



Figure 16.3: Ruthie Foster, an American singer-songwriter of blues and folk music, Oct. 12, 2011 | Photographer: John Carrico | Source: [Wikimedia Commons](#) | License: [CC BY-SA 3.0](#).

Most Anglo and African American folk genres are built around relatively simple (often pentatonic) melodies, duple or triple meter time signatures, and a series of harmonic structures built around the tonic, subdominant, and dominant chords. But much of the emotional appeal of folk music comes from the grain or tension of the voice. Vocal textures vary greatly, ranging from the high, tense, nasal delivery associated with white mountain singers to the more relaxed, throaty, rough timbre of southern African American blues and spiritual singers.

In addition to studying song texts and melodies, folk music scholars have paid a great deal of attention to the social function of folk music. They seek to understand how a particular song or instrumental piece works within a specific social situation for a particular group of people. For example, how do Native American chants and African American spirituals operate within the context of a religious or worship ceremony; how are Anglo and Celtic American fiddle tunes central to Appalachian and community gatherings; how did traditional blues and ballads reflect contrasting world views of southern blacks and whites; and how do West Indian steel bands and Jewish klezmer ensembles serve as markers of cultural pride?

The self-conscious revival of folk music by middle-class urban Americans has been going on since the 1930s. During the Depression and World War II years, folk artists like Louisiana-born Huddie “Lead Belly” Ledbetter and Oklahoma-born Woody Guthrie introduced city audiences to rural folk music, and along with left-leaning topical folk singers like Pete Seeger, they helped spawn the great folk revival of the post–World War II years. Folk music spilled into the popular arena with artists like the Kingston Trio; Burl Ives; Peter, Paul & Mary; and Bob Dylan writing and recording hit folk songs.

Anglo American Ballads

Ballads are basically folk songs that tell stories through the introduction of characters in a specific situation, the building up of dramatic tension, and the resolution of that tension. Ballads were originally brought to America by British, Scottish, and Scotch-Irish immigrants, many of whom eventually settled in the mountainous regions of the American south.

The melodies of Anglo-American ballads are simple, often built around archaic-sounding pentatonic (five note) and hexatonic (six-tone) scales that may feature large jumps or gaps between notes. Songs are traditionally sung a cappella in a free meter style or with simple guitar or banjo accompaniment. The voice is delivered in a high, tense, nasal style.

Ballads are most often set in four-line stanzas, with the second and fourth line rhyming:

I was born in West Virginia,
among the beautiful hills.
And the memory of my childhood,
lies deep within me still.

While older British and Scottish ballads found in the American South dealt with themes of ancient kings, queens, and magical happenings in faraway places, the 18th- and 19th-century ballads that developed in America tell stories of everyday folk involved in everyday life events, usually set in the present or recent past. Sentimental and tragic love stories, often involving violence and death, were common. Many American ballads express strong moral sentiments, warning listeners about the consequences of irresponsible behavior:

I courted a fair maiden,
her name I will not tell
For I have now disgraced her,
and I am doomed to hell.
It was on one beautiful evening,
the stars were shining bright
And with that faithful dagger,
I did her spirit flight.
So justice overtook me,
you all can plainly see.

My soul is doomed forever,
throughout eternity.

The sentimental and tragic themes of Anglo American ballads, along with the high-pitched, “whiny” vocal style, have survived and flourished in 20th-century popular country music.

Video 16.5: Returning Sweetheart—Sharp 98—A Pretty Fair Maid Down in the Garden—The Broken Token



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Country and Western Music

From “Popular Music in the United States,”

Understanding Music: Past and Present, by N. Alan Clark and Thomas Hefflin.

Country music has come to define a broad variety of musical styles encompassing Bluegrass, Hillbilly music, and Contemporary Country among others. Generally speaking, most types of music that fall under this category originated in the American South (although it also encompasses Western Swing and cowboy songs) and feature a singing style with a distinctly rural southern accent, as well as an instrumentation that favors string instruments such as the banjo, guitar, or fiddle.

Bluegrass music is a variation of country music that developed largely in the Appalachian region; it features fiddle, guitar, mandolin, bass guitar, and the five-string banjo. Often associated with Appalachia, bluegrass combines many of the song forms that are common in the region’s Scottish/English musical heritage. For example, bluegrass blends the Scottish/English ballad with blues inflections. Some bluegrass songs are fast instrumental pieces featuring amazing technique by the performers.

Video 16.6: Listen to Bill Monroe and the Bluegrass Boys perform “Blue Grass Breakdown.”



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Hillbilly music was an alternative to the jazz and dance music of the 1920s. It was portrayed as wholesome and as the music of the “good old days.” Nashville’s Grand Ole Opry radio show became a very successful weekly

network radio broadcast heard nationwide. Noticing an opportunity, record companies soon opened offices in Nashville. Country music became a source of big money for producers, songwriters, and artists.

Video 16.7: The Hillbillies—“Cluck Old Hen,” 1927



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Honky-tonk music developed as Hillbilly music went west to entertain in saloons called “honky tonks.” Many of the songs dealt with subjects associated with honky tonks, such as infidelity and drinking. Although the first use of the term “honky tonk” referred to a ragtime-like piano style, it later came to refer to a country combo style that became quite popular in the 1940s and 1950s.



Figure 16.4: Hank Williams, 1948 (1923-1953) | Attribution: Hank Williams MGM Records 1948 | Source: [Wikimedia Commons](#) | License: Public Domain

Video 16.8: Listen to Hank Williams’s original recording from 1947



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African American Spirituals and Gospel Music

Adapted from “American Vernacular Music,”

Music: Its Language, History, and Culture, by Douglas Cohen.

The African American Spiritual has its origins in the religious practices of 18th- and 19th-century American slaves who converted to Christianity during the great awakening revivals. The earliest spirituals were African-style ring shouts based on simple call-and-response lyrics chanted against a driving rhythm produced by clapping and foot stomping. Participants would shuffle around in a ring formation and “shout” when they felt the spirit. More complex melodies and verse/chorus structures began to evolve, reflecting the influence of European American hymn singing, and accompaniment by guitar, piano, and percussion became common. Vocal ornamentations (slides, glides, extended use of falsetto), call-and-response singing, and blues tonality characterized these folk spirituals. In the reconstruction period, black college choirs such as the Fisk Jubilee Singers arranged folk spirituals into four-part harmony, a form that became known as the concert spiritual. A blend of African and European musical practices, the spiritual epitomizes the syncretic (blended) nature of much American folk music resulting from the mixing of Africans and Europeans in the Americas.



MAGGIE PORTER. E. W. WATKINS. H. D. ALEXANDER. F. J. LOUDIN. THOMAS RUTLING.
JENNIE JACKSON. MABEL LEWIS. ELLA SHEPPARD. MAGGIE CARNES. AMERICA-W. ROBINSON.

Figure 16.5: Fisk Jubilee Singers in London; photograph commissioned by Queen Victoria, 1876 | Photographer: Unknown | Source: [Wikimedia Commons](#) | License: Public Domain.

The texts of many spirituals are taken from Old Testament themes and stories. The slaves were particularly moved by Old Testament figures like Daniel (who was saved from the lion’s den), Jonah (who was delivered from the belly of the whale), Noah (who survived the flood), and David (who defeated the giant Goliath) who

struggled and triumphed over adverse conditions. The plight of the Israelites and their escape from bondage to the Promised Land was an especially powerful story retold by the spirituals:

When Israel was in Egypt's land,
 O let my people go!
 Oppressed so hard they could not stand,
 O let my people go!
 Go Down, Moses,
 Away down to Egypt's land.
 And tell old Pharaoh,
 To let my people go!

The spiritual's emphasis on redemption and deliverance in this world has led historians to suggest the songs had double meaning for the slaves—they affirmed their belief in the Bible as well as their trust that a just God would deliver them from the evils of slavery. The spirituals are thus seen as expressions of religious faith and resistance to slavery.

In the 20th century, spirituals evolved into the more urban, New Testament–centered gospel songs. Following the first “great migration” of southern African Americans to urban centers like Chicago, New York, and Philadelphia in the post–World War I years, a new genre of black American sacred songs known as gospel began to appear. Unlike the anonymous folk spirituals, gospel songs were composed and copyrighted by songwriters like Thomas Dorsey and Reverend William Herbert Brewster and by the 1930s were being recorded by urban church singers. Some, like Mahalia Jackson, the Dixie Hummingbirds, and the Ward Singers, turned professional and reached national and international audiences through their tours and recordings. But most gospel singing remained rooted in African American church ritual and to this day can be heard in black communities throughout the north and south.

Musically, gospel is a blending of spirituals, blues, and the song sermons of the black preacher. Gospel songs are usually organized in a 16- or 32-bar verse/chorus form, often featuring call-and-response singing between a leader and a chorus. Blues tonalities are common, and singers are known for their intensive vocal ornamentations, which include bending and slurring notes, falsetto swoops, and melismas (groups of notes or tones sung across one syllable of a word). Gospel singers often end a song with a prolonged section of improvisation that combines singing, chanting, and shouting in hopes of “bringing down the spirit.” Lyrics are most often New Testament–centered, focusing on the redeeming power of Jesus and the singer's personal relationship with the Savior.

Although gospel lyrics are strictly religious in nature, gospel music derives much of its sound from blues and jazz. Likewise, gospel music has been a source for various secular styles, including early rock and roll, soul music, and most recently gospel rap. During the Civil Rights era, the melodies of old spirituals and gospel songs were used with new lyrics expressing the need to overcome Jim Crow segregation.

Video 16.9: African American Spiritual—Give Me Jesus (Brenda Wimberly)



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Video 16.10: Black Gospel—I Will Trust in the Lord (Rev. C. L. Franklin)



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The Blues

Adapted from “American Vernacular Music,”

Music: Its Language, History, and Culture, by Douglas Cohen.

Blues music was the first significant form of secular music created by African American ex-slaves in the deep South in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Growing out of earlier black spirituals, work songs, field hollers, and dance music, the blues addressed the social experiences of the ex-slaves as they struggled to establish themselves in post-Reconstruction southern culture.

Common themes addressed in early country blues songs were conflicts in love relations, loneliness, hardship, poverty, and travel. But it would be a mistake to assume that the blues were exclusively about sorrow—blues celebrated life’s ups and downs and often reflected a keen sense of ironic wit and a resolve to struggle on against difficult circumstances.

Most of the early recordings of country blues from the 1920s feature a solo male singer like Charlie Patton, Blind Lemon Jefferson, Blind Blake, or Son House accompanying himself with an acoustic guitar. But blues singers also used banjos, mandolins, fiddles, and harmonicas and often played in small ensembles that provided dance music at country juke joints. Although blues has been interpreted as a highly individualistic expression because of the solo voice and first-person text, the music was often played in social settings where African Americans danced, communed, and solidified their group identity.



Figure 16.6: Blind Lemon Jefferson, publicity photograph taken between 1926 and 1929 (1893?–1929) | Photographer: Unknown | Source: [Wikimedia Commons](#) | License: Public Domain

Early blues lyrics were built around rhymed couplets that eventually became standardized in a 12-bar (measure) format that featured an AAB structure with a couplet being repeated twice and answered by a second couplet:

I woke up this morning,
 I was feeling sad and blue. [A]
 I woke up the morning,
 I was feeling sad and blue. [A]
 My sweet gal she left me,
 got no one to sing my troubles to. [B]

The tonality is major, most often built around a 12-bar (measure) progression of the I (tonic), IV (subdominant), and V (dominant) chords. The melodic line often features bent and slurred notes, with generous use of the flatted third and seventh tones (known as “blue” notes) of the diatonic scale. The meter is usually duple (4/4), and tempos may vary from a slow drag to a fast boogie.

While the first blues were undoubtedly rural in origin, by the 1920s, blues music had made its way to the city. Urban singers like Ma Rainey and Bessie Smith recorded and popularized sophisticated, jazz-tinged arrangements of blues in the 1920s, and composers like W. C. Handy incorporated blues forms into popular orchestral pieces like “St. Louis Blues” and “Memphis Blues.” In the post–World War II years, the country blues was electrified and transformed into rhythm and blues (R&B) by Chicago-based artists Muddy Waters (McKinley Morganfield), Howlin’ Wolf (Chester Burnett), and Elmore James and Memphis bluesman B. B. King. By the mid-1950s, southern white singers like Elvis Presley, Jerry Lee Lewis, and Buddy Holly were blending rhythm and blues with elements of country music to create the new pop genre of rock and roll.



Figure 16.7:
Howlin' Wolf, 1972
(Chester Burnett,
1910-1976) |
Photographer:
Doug Fulton |
Source: [Wikimedia
Commons](#) |
License: Public
Domain

Video 16.11: Blues-Death Letter Blues (Son House)



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Rock and Roll

Adapted from “American Vernacular Music,”

Music: Its Language, History, and Culture, by Douglas Cohen.

Perhaps America’s most influential contribution to the world of popular music has been the development of rock and roll in the 1950s. Many streams of folk and vernacular music styles, including blues, spirituals, gospel, ballads, hillbilly music, and early jazz, contributed to the evolution of rock and roll (R&R). But it was the convergence of African American rhythm and blues and Anglo American honky-tonk (country) music that led to the emergence of a distinctive new style that would dominate the field of popular music in post–World War II America.

Honky-tonk, often referred to as the voice of the downcast, working-class southern whites, was the dominant form of country music during the 1940s and early 1950s, with Hank Williams being its most famous practitioner. The music featured the tense, nasal vocal style associated with the earlier ballad tradition, accompanied by twangy guitars and fiddles, and lyrics centered on stories of loneliness and broken love relationships. Rhythm and blues was an urbanized version of older country blues that developed in cities like Memphis and Chicago during and immediately after the Second World War. Singers like Muddy Waters,

Howlin' Wolf, and B. B. King shouted and pleaded to their audiences, backed by screaming electric guitars, amplified harmonicas, and a rhythm section of drums, bass, and piano. The music was loud, aggressive, and sensual, with lyrics boasting of sexual conquest or lamenting failed love.

The earliest rock-and-roll recordings were made by both white and black singers in the mid-1950s. The southern white artists like Elvis Presley, Johnny Cash, Carl Perkins, Jerry Lee Lewis, and Bill Haley were dubbed rockabillys because their sounds were rooted in hillbilly and honky-tonk country styles. Their covers of black rhythm and blues songs like “Rock Around the Clock” (Haley) and “Good Rockin’ Tonight” (Presley) provided some of the first and most powerful examples of how white country and black R&B could blend to form the new style of R&R. From the other side of the racial divide came black R&B singers like Chuck Berry, Little Richard, and Fats Domino, who cut their R&B sound with smoother vocals (and in Berry’s case, country-influenced guitar licks) to forge a black style of R&R that was close (and at times indistinguishable) from that of their white counterparts.

Video 16.12: Johnny Cash—Rockabilly Blues



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://louis.pressbooks.pub/musicappreciation/?p=1337#oembed-12>

Thus, R&R was the inevitable result of an interracial musical stew that had been simmering in the southern United States for several centuries. Its appearance in the mid-1950s was no accident, because this was precisely when independent record companies like Sun (Memphis) and Chess (Chicago) and innovative radio stations like WDIA (Memphis) were beginning to bring black vernacular music to a burgeoning baby boomer audience, and the nascent civil rights movements were increasing public awareness of black culture. R&R was a popular style created in the studio and marketed directly for legions of young, predominantly white consumers who, thanks to the relative affluence of the post–World War II years, were in search of new leisure activities.

Musically, the earliest R&R recordings were 12-bar blues played in an up-tempo 4/4 meter. Singers, black and white, would sometimes shout and snarl but were careful to articulate their words in a style smooth enough for their predominantly white audiences to comprehend. The music was backed by a strong, insistent rhythm that accented the second and fourth beat of each measure, creating a sound that was easy to dance to. Rock’s gyrating singers and sensual dancing led many middle-class Americans, black and white, to condemn it as an immoral and corrupting force. When Elvis Presley first appeared on the nationally broadcast TV variety show hosted by Ed Sullivan in 1956, the cameras would only show him from the waist up in order to avoid his sexy moves that had earned him the title “Elvis the Pelvis.”

The lyrics to the most successful early R&R songs centered on teenage romance and adventure, recounting high times cruising in automobiles, dancing at the hop, and falling in and out of love. The lyrics to sexually suggestive R&B songs covered by R&R singers were consciously cleaned up so the music would be less

offensive to middle-class (black and white) teens and their parents. Eventually, the 12-bar blues form was eclipsed by the verse/chorus structure organized in 8- or 16-bar stanzas. As in earlier American popular songs, the repeated chorus was usually based on a simple but engaging melody (often referred to as the “hook”) that was easy to sing along to.

In the 1960s, groups like the Beatles and folk rock singer Bob Dylan transformed R&R by writing more sophisticated lyrics addressing the complexities of love and sexual relations, alienation in Western society, and the utopian search for a new world through drugs and counterculture activities. Both American and British rock groups of the 1960s demonstrated that popular music could provide serious social commentary that had previously been associated with the arenas of modern art and literature and the urban folk song movement. Over the past four decades, R&R (often referred to as “rock” to differentiate it from the R&R of the 1950s) has evolved in many directions (art rock, heavy metal, punk, indie), often cross-pollinating with related styles like soul, funk, disco, country, reggae, and most recently hip-hop. At times rock has served as the political voice of angry and alienated youth and at other times simply as good-time party and dance music.

Rap

Adapted from “American Vernacular Music,”

Music: Its Language, History, and Culture, by Douglas Cohen.

Rap is poetry recited rhythmically over musical accompaniment. Rap is part of hip-hop culture, which emerged in the mid-1970s in the Bronx. Graffiti art and break-dance are the other major elements of hip-hop culture. Rap lyrics display clever use of words and rhymes, verbal dexterity, and intricate rhythmic patterning. Rap artists take on different roles and speak from perspectives ranging from comedic to political to dramatic, often narrating stories that reflect or comment on contemporary urban life. Rap artists may be soloists, or members of a rap group (or crew), and may recite in call-and-response format. Rap songs are generally in duple meter at a medium tempo (about 80 to 90 bpm). The musical accompaniment of rap is made up of one or several continuously repeated short phrases, each phrase combining relatively simple rhythmic patterns produced by acoustic and/or synthetic percussion instruments. Other sounds are often added for timbral variety, textural complexity, and melodic/harmonic interest. A bass line provided by electric bass guitar or synthesizer reinforces the meter and defines the tonal center.

Old School Rap (1974-1986)

Old school rap was created by DJs (disc jockeys) and one or more MCs (originally Master of Ceremonies, later Microphone Controller). DJ Kool Herc began this period, providing a portable sound system and spinning records for dances at outdoor parties and small social clubs. He noticed that b-boys and b-girls favored dancing to the “break” in a record, the short section of a song when the band drops out and the percussion continues. Using two copies of the same record on two turntables, Herc was able to make the break repeat

continuously, creating the “breakbeat” that became the basic musical structure over which the MC spoke or rapped. DJs Grandmaster Flash, Jazzy Jeff, and Grand Wizard Theodore invented additional turntable techniques: “blending” different records together, scratching (manually moving the record back and forth on the turntable to create rhythmic patterns with scratchy timbres), and mixing in synthetic drum sounds and other effects. An excellent example of turntable techniques is Flash’s “The Adventures of Grandmaster Flash on the Wheels of Steel” (1981). DJs, most importantly Afrika Bambaataa, also promoted hip-hop culture through parties and other events spread by word of mouth and at venues throughout New York City.



Figure 16.8: DJ Kool Herc, 2006 |
Photographer:
Richard Alexander
Caraballo | Source:
[Flickr](#) | License: [CC BY-NC-SA 2.0](#)

At first MCs spoke over records in the Jamaican DJ traditions of toasting (calling out friends’ names) and boasting (touting the superiority of their own sound system and DJ skills). Both traditions became central elements of the assertive and competitive spirit of rap and hip-hop. Rap drew on other African-American sources for some of its important features: the improvisational verbal skills and call-and-response format of the dozens (an African-American verbal competition trading witty insults), the rhyming aphorisms of heavyweight champion Mohammed Ali (“Float like a butterfly, sting like a bee / Your hands can’t hit what your eyes can’t see”), the songs and vocal stylings of the great soul-funk artist James Brown, and The Last Poets, whose members spoke or chanted politically charged poems over drumming.

The first MCs to develop extended lyrical forms by rhyming over break beats were Grandmaster Caz and DJ Hollywood. The interplay of vocal and accompaniment rhythms, rhyme schemes, and phrasing are the main elements of what is known as flow. Old school flow is more regular and less syncopated than later styles. Two-line units (couplets) rhyming at the end of the lines are common during this period, such as, “Pump it up homeboy, just don’t stop / Chef Boy-ar-dee coolin’ on the pot” (The Beastie Boys). Before rap entered into the mainstream entertainment industry, portable cassette players provided a cheap and robust route of dissemination for the music throughout the city. It was the success of Sugar Hill Gang’s “Rapper’s Delight,” issued on a small independent label in 1979, that brought rap to national attention and gave the genre its name. MC Kurtis Blow’s “The Breaks” (1980), and “Rapture” by the pop group Blondie (1981) are also milestones in the early history of rap.

During the first part of the 1980s, the entertainment industry was slow to realize rap’s potential and it was left to entrepreneurs like Russell Simmons to popularize rap and to demonstrate its long-term commercial

viability by organizing national hip-hop concert tours and producing hits by many of the most important artists of the period including L.L. Cool J, Slick Rick, and Foxy Brown. Independent films like *Wild Style*, *Beat Street*, and *Style Wars* introduced hip-hop to a global audience. Rap music videos began to be produced and all-rap radio stations began broadcasting. Independent labels gained ground, and rap was incorporated into the established recording and distribution industry. By 1986, hip-hop culture was the most successful popular music in the nation, and rap had developed in three general directions. Pop rap (or party rap) is light, danceable, and often humorous; it quickly became a crossover genre, generating national hits by Salt-N-Pepa (the first successful female rap group), MC Hammer, Vanilla Ice, and many others. Rock rap combines the vocalizations of rap with the sounds and rhythms of rock bands. The hip-hop trio Run-D.M.C. brought rap rock to national prominence with *King of Rock* (the first hip-hop platinum album, 1985). The Beastie Boys, the first white rap group, appealed to a youth market by smartly combining humor and rebellion in songs from their 1986 debut album *Licensed to Ill*. Rock rap set the stage for other hybrids that flourished in the 1990s, such as Rage Against the Machine and Linkin Park. Socially conscious rap portrays and comments on the urban ills of poverty, crime, drugs, and racism. The first example is Melle Mel's "The Message" (1982), a series of bleak pictures of life and death in the ghetto.

Video 16.13: Gil Scott Heron—The Revolution Will Not Be Televised



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://louis.pressbooks.pub/musicappreciation/?p=1337#oembed-13>

New School Rap

New school rap dates from 1986, when Rakim and DJ Eric B introduced a vocal style that was faster and rhythmically more complex than the simple sing-song couplets of much old school rap. Writers (rap poets/performers) in the new "effusive" style, notably Nas, employed irregular poetic meters, asymmetric phrasing, and intricate rhyme schemes, all of which added depth and complexity to the flow. Much of the new music (and new styles of graffiti and dance) came from the West Coast and increasingly from the South and Midwest. Hip-hop culture was spreading to Europe and Asia as well.



Figure 16.9: Rakim performing in Cat's Cradle in North Carolina, 2006 | Photographer: Bret Dougherty | Source: [Flickr](#) | License: [CC BY 2.0](#)

The accompaniment for rap also became more complex and varied. CDs largely replaced vinyl records, and samplers became commercially available. Producers working with samplers, programmable drum machines, and synthesizers could, with the push of a button, mix and modify sounds imported from a virtually unlimited selection and so largely replaced DJs as the creators of rap's musical accompaniment. The New York production team Bomb Squad and producers RZA and DJ Premier layered multiple samples to create dense, harmonically rich textures and grating "out of tune" combinations of sounds, while West Coast producers developed G-funk by using live instrumentation and conventional harmonies associated with funk music.

The year 1988 was an important turning point for rap. *The Source*, the first magazine devoted to rap and hip-hop, appeared that year, and was soon followed by *Vibe*, *XXL*, and many others. The first nationally televised rap music videos on Fab Five Freddy's weekly show "Yo, MTV Raps!" brought hip-hop images and dances to national attention. That same year, four new rap genres emerged, partly in response to worsened social conditions in black urban communities: unemployment, drastic cutbacks in education, the crack cocaine epidemic, proliferation of deadly weapons, gang violence, militaristic police tactics, and Draconian drug laws, all leading to an explosion in the prison population. Political rap was led by writer KRS-One, with Boogie Down Productions, whose album *By All Means Necessary* explored police corruption, violence in the hip-hop community, and other controversial topics. On the West Coast, N.W.A. were cultivating harsh timbres and a raw, angry sound in their nihilistic tales of Los Angeles police violence and gang life in *Straight Outta Compton*, the first gangsta rap album. Jazz rap, characterized by use of samples from jazz classics and positive, uplifting lyrics was introduced by Gang Starr (DJ Premier and MC Guru) and hip-hop group Stetsasonic. Another answer to West Coast gangsta rap was New York hardcore rap, led by producer Marley Marl, whose hip-hop collective The Juicy Crew achieved their breakthrough with the posse track "The Symphony." Each genre had important followers. Black nationalism informed the political lyrics of Public Enemy (led by Chuck D), whose critical and commercial success in 1988-90 proved the crossover appeal of the new wave of socially conscious rap. Houston-based gangsta rap group The Geto Boys combined ultra-violent fantasies with cutting social commentary in a blues-inflected style that came to characterize the "Dirty South" sound in their 1990 debut album. Jazz rap's Afrocentric lyrics, fashion, and imagery were shared by important new rap artists Queen Latifah and Busta Rhymes. Latifah provided a feminist response to the often misogynist lyrics of male rappers. Wu-Tang Clan's *Enter the Wu-Tang* (1993) reclaimed New York's reputation for cutting-edge hardcore rap.

The minimalist production style on the album by this Staten Island group was much imitated through the next decade.

In the 1990s, a style called new jack swing, originating with producers Teddy Riley and Puff Daddy, integrated R&B into rap and softened rap's hardcore content while retaining the edge of black street culture. Notorious B.I.G.'s "Juicy" from *Ready to Die* (1994) exemplifies the laid-back vocal delivery and slower tempo that characterize new jack. Lil' Kim's rap on "Gettin' Money" captures the "ghettofabulous" image of the new jack rapper in lyrics that mix gats and six-shooters with Armani and Chanel. The song draws on the iconic American figure of the Mafia don to create metaphors that celebrate materialism and luxury. Tupac Shakur and Notorious B.I.G. were the most critically acclaimed and best-selling rappers during the middle of the 1990s. Shakur was murdered in 1996 and Notorious B.I.G. in 1997. In the eyes of many fans, hip-hop had lost its two greatest artists. Three important figures—Eminem, Jay-Z, and Missy Elliott—led rap into the new millennium.

Video 16.14: Common—The People (Official Music Video)



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Music of the Caribbean

Adapted from "World Music,"

Music: Its Language, History, and Culture, by Douglas Cohen.

Stretching from Cuba, located only 90 miles south of Florida, east and south to Trinidad, just off the coast of South America, the Caribbean is one of the most culturally diverse and musically rich regions of the world. Spanish conquest and settlement in the 17th century wiped out most of the native Carib people. English, French, and Dutch settlement followed, and sugar production became the primary industry of the area. In order to operate the labor-intensive sugar plantations, millions of African slaves were imported during the 17th, 18th, and early 19th centuries. When slavery was abolished, large numbers of East Indians came to English-speaking islands to work the sugar plantations. Today each island has its own mix of European, African, and Asian populations. Haiti, for example, is predominantly African, while Puerto Rico boasts a mix of African and Spanish people, and Trinidad is nearly evenly split between citizens of African and East Indian ancestry. Reflecting this diverse population, the islands have developed a wide range of distinctive linguistic, religious, culinary, and musical traditions.

The concept of **creolization** is essential to understand the music and culture of the Caribbean. **Creolization** refers to the development of a distinctive new cultural form resulting from contact between

two or more different cultures. Throughout the Caribbean, the blending of African and European (and occasionally East Indian) cultures has led to the emergence of new forms of language, religion, food, and of course music. With regard to music, African concepts of **polyrhythm**, call-and-response singing, repetition and subtle variation, along with use of percussion instruments (particularly skin drums) have blended with European melodies, harmonic accompaniment, verse/chorus song structure, and use of string and brass instruments. The diversity of Caribbean folk musical styles may be organized on a stylistic continuum, with neo-African drumming and ritual song/chant on one end and European-sounding hymn singing, military marches, social dance music, and lyrical ballads on the other. In between lie an array of truly mixed, creolized song/dance forms including the **son** of Cuba, the **plena** of Puerto Rico, the meringue of the Dominican, the **mento** of Jamaica, and the **calypso** of Trinidad. During the 20th century independence, urbanization, and emigration, along with a decline in the sugar industry and the rise of tourism, have brought sweeping changes to the Caribbean cultural landscape. The rise of mass media and international travel resulted in further mixing of Caribbean music with American and African popular styles, resulting in modern pop dance forms such as the Cuban/Puerto Rican/NYC **salsa**, Trinidadian **socca**, Jamaican **reggae**, Haitian **konpa**, and **zouk** from Martinique and Guadeloupe. Many of these styles have become popular in urban centers outside of the Caribbean with large populations of Island immigrants such as New York, Miami, and London. Today New York City's dance and concert halls feature the top salsa, meringue, reggae, konpa, and socca stars, and Brooklyn's Labor Day West Indian Carnival has grown into the largest ethnic outdoor festival in the United States.

Video 16.15: Música Cubana, Cuban Music, Son Cubano, Kiki Valera



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Figure 16.10: Bob Marley in concert, 1980 |
 Photographer: Eddie Mallin |
 Source: [Wikimedia Commons](#) |
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Video 16.16: Jamaican Reggae: “One Love/People Get Ready,” Bob Marley & The Wailers, *Exodus*, 1977



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Video 16.17: Kawe Calypso, Segundo (Costa Rica)



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Pre-Columbian Music of Central and South America

Adapted from “Appendix: Music of the World,”

Understanding Music: Past and Present, by N. Alan Clark and Thomas Heflin

Pre-Columbian music in many parts of South America is similar to folk music of Native Americans as well as folk music from parts of Africa. Stretched-skin drums, wooden flutes, rattles, pentatonic-sounding scales, and vocal music are all popular in this region. The following videos include a brief discussion of the role of music

in ancient Mesoamerica along with music performed on ancient ocarinas, a modern performance of traditional Aztec music, and Mayan music.

Video 16.18: Resurrecting Ancient Mesoamerican Music



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://louis.pressbooks.pub/musicappreciation/?p=1337#oembed-18>

Video 16.19: Aztec Music of Mexico: a sample of pre-Columbian music of the Aztecs on accurate reproductions of Aztec instruments



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://louis.pressbooks.pub/musicappreciation/?p=1337#oembed-19>

Video 16.20: Musica Maya: Xet Kewel



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://louis.pressbooks.pub/musicappreciation/?p=1337#oembed-20>

Video 16.21: Traditional Inca music—Cusco—Peru—2018



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South America

Adapted from “World Music,”
Music: Its Language, History, and Culture, by Douglas Cohen.

Until fairly recently, there had been a tendency to see the cultural traditions of the massive South American continent as monolithic. However, in the 1960s, scholars began to unravel the area's rich tapestry of musical cultures and practices, and with the increase in recordings, the public is better able to appreciate the variety of musical traditions found here.

As many as 117 languages are spoken in the continent, in perhaps 2000 different dialects. Until the 16th century, South America boasted some of the world's most sophisticated cultures (the most famous being, perhaps, the Incas of the Andean regions). In the 1530s, the Spanish conquistadors arrived, followed by the Portuguese. They brought with them elements of European culture, as well as Catholicism, but a variety of diseases as well that devastated parts of the indigenous population. Some indigenous traditions have remained nearly untouched until quite recently because of the geographical remoteness of the cultures that created them (vast areas of rainforest and mountain terrain had remained unexplored until quite recently). But for the most part, South American music is a fascinating mix of Spanish, Portuguese, and indigenous art forms, as well as the music of Africans who were brought to the continent as slaves. Repertories can be as diverse as the **romanzas** found throughout South America (historically linked to folk songs of the Spanish renaissance) and the music of the Brazilian **capoeira** tradition, an art form strongly influenced by African music that is accompanied by physical movements resembling martial arts.

Video 16.22: Romanza—Antonio Y Ruben



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://louis.pressbooks.pub/musicappreciation/?p=1337#oembed-22>

Video 16.23: Zum Zum Zum (Diego Aguilar B. Capoeira)



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://louis.pressbooks.pub/musicappreciation/?p=1337#oembed-23>

Argentina and Tango

In music of both its indigenous peoples and that of the Spanish conquistadors of the 16th century, as well as more recent immigrants, Argentina boasts a rich and varied heritage of art, folk, and popular traditions. Perhaps the musical genre most closely associated with this diverse country of nearly forty million is the tango. In fact, few artistic expressions are so closely associated with their country of origin as the **tango** is with

Argentina, though variations of this popular dance arose in many Latin American countries. Perhaps no other proof is necessary than the fact that the climactic song “Don’t Cry For Me, Argentina,” from Andrew Lloyd Webber’s *Evita*, is cast in a tango style. As both a seductive dance and a musical genre, tango had lowly origins in the brothels of Buenos Aires, Argentina’s capital city, where it took shape during the last three decades of the 19th century, drawing on a variety of earlier Spanish and Creole forms. However, by the turn of the century, the dance and its music had begun to be accepted by the urban middle class and had been exported to the world. In the early 1910s, tango, perhaps because of its aura of the risqué (in its most popular form, it is a couples dance, with the dancers tightly clasped together and the male performing stylized moves that suggest erotic power and conquest), created a sensation in Europe and the United States. As a result, any music with the tango’s characteristic “habanera” rhythm (think of the title character’s famous aria in Bizet’s opera *Carmen*) began to be called a “tango,” though true Argentinean tango continued to develop as a distinctive art form. The earliest tango ensembles were made up simply of violin, flute, and guitar, though the guitar was occasionally replaced by an accordion. The turn of the century saw the incorporation of the bandoneón, a special type of 38-key accordion, as well as the piano. Later groups brought in additional string instruments, including the double bass. By the time of tango’s “Golden Age” in the 1940s, some ensembles had grown to the size of small orchestras, with full string sections, several bandoneones, and often vocalists. By the late 1950s and early 1960s, the popularity of tango in its native Argentina had been largely eclipsed by newer forms of popular and folk music. But with the rise in popularity of composer and bandoneón virtuoso Astor Piazzolla (1921-1992) and his “New Tango” (see Musician Biographies), tango reached a new international audience, culminating in the wildly successful world tour of the Tango Argentino show, a stage extravaganza created in the early 1980s by Claudio Segovia and Hector Orezzoli that eventually made its way to Broadway.

Video 16.24: Argentine Tango: “Libertango” by Astor Piazzolla



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Chapter Summary

Historians and musicologists now agree that America’s most distinctive musical expressions have roots in its vernacular music from native American drum circles, early immigrants from Europe, to the enslaved stolen from Africa. Throughout the 18th and 19th centuries, from that vantage point they have played a vital role in transmitting songs and instrumental expressions, helping to develop what is uniquely American music today. The boundaries between so-called folk, popular, and classical music are becoming increasingly blurred as we

enter the 21st century, due to the pervasive effects of mass media that have made music of all American ethnic/racial groups, classes, and regions available to everyone.

Test Your Understanding



An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:

<https://louis.pressbooks.pub/musicappreciation/?p=1337#h5p-18>

17.

MUSIC AROUND THE WORLD

Learning Objectives

- Identify music from various countries and cultures.
- Describe how everyday life influences music from various countries and cultures.
- Identify instruments unique to the various countries and cultures.
- Describe how American music has been influenced by music from various countries and cultures

This chapter is an adaptation of chapters from three texts: *Understanding Music: Past and Present*, by N. Alan Clark, Thomas Heflin, Jeffrey Klubal, and Elizabeth Kramer; *Music: Its Language, History, and Culture*, by Douglas Cohen; and *Resonances: Engaging Music in Its Cultural Context*, by Ester M. Morgan-Ellis (editor-in-chief). It also includes original content and information from Wikipedia as noted. Reviewed and edited by Bonnie Le and Francis Scully.

Introduction

Adapted from *Understanding Music: Past and Present*, by N. Alan Clark and Thomas Heflin

Just as we have observed in the Western concert music that we've explored, musical cultures all across the globe have their own traditions, styles, practices, rules, and instruments that are often vastly different from the music many Americans are used to.

The following sections provide examples of many different music styles from all over the world. This review will be a very cursory introduction to only a handful of the thousands of musical styles that exist across the globe with which you may not be familiar. Bear in mind that many of these musical traditions date back hundreds and sometimes thousands of years and deserve further exploration outside of the context of this

textbook. Beyond these examples, much more music is available to you through YouTube. In this review, we will primarily focus on the musical elements of melody, rhythm, instrumentation, and harmony and describe the processes that different societies use to combine these elements.

Original content by Constance Chemay

You will find numerous mentions of the **pentatonic scale** throughout this chapter in various cultures and countries around the world. The following video is an excerpt from a much longer discussion titled [“Notes & Neurons: In Search of the Common Chord,”](#) part of the World Science Festival, June 2009, which discusses whether music in human society comes naturally, if it is influenced by our surroundings, or both. The discussion that led up to this segment was on the apparent prevalence of certain scales in different cultures’ and countries’ traditional music, differences in what emotions are evoked, and what listeners may or may not expect to hear in music.

Video 17.1: Bobby McFerrin Demonstrates the Power of the Pentatonic Scale (2009)



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://louis.pressbooks.pub/musicappreciation/?p=1323#oembed-1>

Africa

Adapted from *Music: Its Language, History, and Culture*, by Douglas Cohen

Africa is the second largest continent in the world and home to a tenth of the world’s population and at least a thousand different indigenous languages. Therefore, it is impossible to describe a single entity called “African music.” One need only compare the sacred music of the Gnawa musicians of Morocco with the choral traditions that arose in the townships of South Africa to see the vast range of musical practices found throughout this huge and complex region.

As different as African musical traditions may sound from each other, they do tend to share some cultural and musical elements. However, one must always be cautious when trying to view these traditions through a Western musical or aesthetic lens.

1. Music and dance: Linguistic scholars have been hard-pressed to find a single word that means “music” in many African languages. Music and bodily movement are usually considered part of a single whole, and sound cannot be separated from the cultural (and often religious) function of musical performances.
2. In many African cultures, music and dance are considered communal activities; the Western idea of sitting silently while a performance is taking place is an anathema to these traditions. Many musical techniques that are shared by African musics— particularly the idea of “**call and response**,” where a

soloist or group of performers will engage in short exchanges with other performers—seem to have arisen from this communal attitude toward music-making.

3. Oral traditions: Nearly all African traditions have been passed down orally, and their study by Western scholars has often involved the transcription of performances into Western musical notation, which often proves woefully inadequate for the job. The influx of Christian choral music, especially in the southern regions of Africa, has resulted in music somewhat more easily notatable, and some African musicians do now use the familiar five-line system to capture their art.
4. In many African traditions, rhythm—the way music moves through time—seems to be privileged over melody and harmony. Many African performances are highly polyphonic and made up of several layers of interlocking rhythmic ostinatos, which are combined to create an overall effect suitable for the religious or cultural ceremony for which the sounds are being produced.
5. Instruments: The variety of instruments found throughout Africa is astounding. Perhaps most impressive is the range of percussion instruments (both idiophones and membranophones) that are often combined with distinctive uses of the human voice. In listening to performances of African music, those of us immersed in the Western musical tradition may be initially drawn to the vocal line as the most important feature, yet it may just be one element of a larger, complex musical texture.

Call and Response and the Blues

An example of the African call-and-response style of singing can be found in the blues song by Bessie Smith “Lost Your Head Blues.” Bessie Smith is the “caller” who sings the verse and is followed by the cornet player who plays the “response.”

Video 17.2: Bessie Smith—Lost Your Head Blues



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://louis.pressbooks.pub/musicappreciation/?p=1323#oembed-2>

Morocco

From the description posted on YouTube: “Asmaâ Hamzaoui (27) is the leader of the group Bnat Timbouktou and one of the genre’s few—and youngest—female ambassadors. She inherited her passion from her father, the famous mâalem Rachid Hamzaoui. From a very young age, she learned to play the guembri, a sort of 3-string plucked lute, which she uses to accompany celebrations. Traditionally, women do not play during ceremonies and can only touch this instrument in private settings (which is particularly the case for the wife of a mâalem). Women performing in public is still a widespread taboo.”

Video 17.3: Music of the Gnawa: Asmâa Hamzoui & Bnat Timbouktou—La ilaha ila lah



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://louis.pressbooks.pub/musicappreciation/?p=1323#oembed-3>

Especially during the last century, however, scholars have tried to find ways to talk in general about Africa's rich traditions while always acknowledging the sometimes very subtle differences between countries and ethnic groups. Beyond the recognition that African musicians maintained a vibrant and very distinct art, it has also been noted that this music—especially that of West Africa, from where the majority of enslaved people were taken—has played a significant role in the black cultural Diaspora, with important implications for the music of Latin America, the Caribbean, and a variety of African American traditions. Thus, understanding a few concepts that are shared by much African music helps listeners appreciate not only the continent's music itself but also a host of related traditions. Fortunately, in today's digital age, recordings of music from virtually all corners of Africa—both traditional repertoires and styles influenced by Western popular music—are readily available.

The Sahara Desert, which takes up almost the entire northern third of the continent, is perhaps the most important dividing line that comes into play when discussing music in Africa. Countries that lie partly or entirely north of the Sahara (Egypt, Libya, Morocco, Tunisia, etc.) tend to share many qualities with music of the Middle East. The rainforests and grasslands of Sub-Saharan Africa (Ghana, Cameroon, Democratic Republic of Congo, Zambia, etc.) have produced very different traditions. In addition, distinctions are often made between Sub-Saharan musical traditions of Western, Eastern, Central, and Southern Africa.

Egypt

Video 17.4: Traditional Egyptian Lullaby (2016)



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Kenya

Video 17.5: Kenyan Traditional Music (East African); this video includes examples of Kenya music and dance.



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Video 17.6: Ayub Ogada demonstrates a Nyatiti (African instrument)



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Senegal

Adapted From Understanding Music: Past and Present, by N. Alan Clark and Thomas Heflin

Senegal is a country located on the far coast of West Africa. In Senegal, the traditional stretched skin drum is called the **djembe**. By way of contrast, modern Senegalese music shows an American influence; electric bass and guitar, drum set, flutes, etc. are often used.

Video 17.7: Senegal Day Djembe Show



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://louis.pressbooks.pub/musicappreciation/?p=1323#oembed-7>

Video 17.8: Takeifa—Afro Pop from Senegal / Fire



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Zimbabwe

The mbira is an integral part of the folk music of Zimbabwe. It is a common small keyboard-type instrument

that is played by the performers' thumbs. Its metal reeds are tuned to different pitches, and it is usually used to accompany vocalists.



Figure 17.1: Mbira
Dzavadzimu |
Photographer:
Alex Weeks |
Source: [Wikimedia
Commons](#) |
License: [CC BY-SA
3.0](#)

Video 17.9: Solo performance of Rwavasekuru by Zimbabwe's Queen of Mbira Music, Ambuya Stella Rambisai Chiweshe



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://louis.pressbooks.pub/musicappreciation/?p=1323#oembed-9>

European Folk Music

Adapted from *Understanding Music: Past and Present*, by N. Alan Clark and Thomas Heflin

Folk Music of France

Much of European folk music is largely built around song forms that are tied together by the lyrics of the songs. In the following example of folk music from France, you may notice that the scales and instruments sound a little like those of our modern American folk music (except for the language). The development and use of major and minor scales are what give our Western European music its distinctive sound.

Video 17.10: French Folk Song—M'en Suis Allé Aux Noces (Breton Folk Song)



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://louis.pressbooks.pub/musicappreciation/?p=1323#oembed-10>

Celtic Music



Figure 17.2: Rapalje (Dutch Celtic folk band), 2015 | Photographer: Atamari | Source: [Wikimedia Commons](#) | License: [CC BY-SA 4.0](#)

The **Celts** refers to a diverse group of people who lived during the Iron Ages in what is now Great Britain and Western Europe. In addition to speaking Celtic languages, these people shared a common musical heritage, one that is still used by their descendants. Celtic music is often recognized by its instrumentation, which combines bagpipes, various stringed instruments, and drums. Celtic music also has a distinctive melodic style, with wide leaps that outline the harmonies of the song, creating a feeling of jubilation.

Video 17.11: Traditional Celtic Song—Fill-iù Oro Hù Ò & O Cò Bheir Mi Leam



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Video 17.11: “The Flags of Dublin,” performed by FourWinds

This video is a medley of three Irish tunes. The instruments from left to right are a bouzouki, Uilleann pipes, concertina, and bodhran.



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://louis.pressbooks.pub/musicappreciation/?p=1323#oembed-12>

Norway

Norway has a centuries-long history of vocal and instrumental music. Indeed, many of their folk ballads and songs date back to the Middle Ages; often, they describe the dramatic tales of historical figures from that period. The Norwegian folk music linked below is one such Norwegian ballad of the Middle Ages era. It uses European-sounding scales as well as several wind instruments.

Video 17.12: Heming og Gygri (Norwegian Middle Ages music)—Kalenda Maya



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://louis.pressbooks.pub/musicappreciation/?p=1323#oembed-13>



Figure 17.3:
Hardanger fiddle
made by Knut
Gunnarsson
Helland |
Photographer:
Frode Inge Helland
Figure 17.3a: Full
view | Source:
Wikimedia
Commons |
License: CC BY-SA
3.0
Figure 17.3b: Scroll
detail | Source:
Wikimedia
Commons |
License: CC BY-SA
3.0

Russia

Russian folk music uses what we would call the modern minor scale. Listen to how distinctive this Russian folk music sounds as its slow introduction gradually gives way to faster and faster verses, slows and speeds up again and again, until it reaches a very fast and exciting dance-like conclusion.

Video 17.13: Russian Folk Music—Kalinka



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://louis.pressbooks.pub/musicappreciation/?p=1323#oembed-14>



Figure 17.4: Tenor Balalaika | Author: Arent | Source: [Wikimedia Commons](#) | License: [CC BY-SA 3.0](#)

Balkan Peninsula (Southeastern Europe)

The region of Southeastern Europe that includes Hungary, Romania, Albania, Macedonia, Turkey, and several other countries is called the Balkans. This region has a rich musical heritage with many fast, exciting, dance-like songs using accordion and clarinet. Balkan music is unique in that it incorporates complex rhythms that we do not often hear in classical music.

Video 17.14: Balkan Traditional Music—Rozafa Folk, Albania



— One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://louis.pressbooks.pub/musicappreciation/?p=1323#oembed-15>



Figure 17.5: Gdulka/
Gadulka (Bulgarian
knee-violin with
bow) | Author:
Arent (based on
copyright claims) |
Source: [Wikimedia
Commons](#) |
License: [CC BY-SA
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Jewish Klezmer Music

Adapted from *Music: Its Language, History, and Culture*, by Douglas Cohen

Klezmer music is a term used to designate the Yiddish dance music of Ashkenazi Jews that dates back to

the Middle Ages when it developed in Eastern Europe before eventually migrating to the United States. The Yiddish term “klezmer” comes from two Hebrew words, *kleizemer*, which translates as “vessel of melody.”

Early Klezmer bands played for a variety of social occasions, including weddings, holiday celebrations, and rite of passage ceremonies throughout European Jewish communities. Up through the eighteenth century, fiddles, cellos, string basses, flutes, drums, and *tsimbls* (hammered dulcimers) were the primary instruments. By the early nineteenth century, the clarinet became the primary lead melodic instrument, and brass instruments, including the trumpet, trombone, and tuba were added to the ensembles. Repertoires were wide, including Yiddish melodies, Hassidim chants and dance tunes, non-Jewish dance forms such as the polka, light classical pieces, and salon dances such as the waltz.

Klezmer tunes are most often built around 8 or 16 bar, AB or ABC sections that are repeated with small variations. Melodic lines tend to be modal with complex ornamentations resulting from the generous use of trills, slurs, slides, and triplets. The clarinet is known for its particularly wild, shrill sounds (the dramatic clarinet glissando that opens George Gershwin’s “Rhapsody in Blue” is thought to be influenced by klezmer styling). Harmonic accompaniments are characteristically built around minor chords; often a piece will feature dramatic shifts between minor and major modalities. Most klezmer dance pieces have a strong rhythmic pulse stressing the downbeat of a 2/4 or 4/4 meter producing a bouncy feel. Occasionally irregular meters such as 3/8 or 9/8 are used. Klezmer tunes sometimes begin with a *taxim*, or free meter modal improvisation, usually played on the clarinet.

Social and political unrest in Russia, Poland, and other regions of Eastern Europe fostered the immigration of millions of Yiddish-speaking, Ashkenazi Jews to America in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, most of whom settled in New York City. Klezmer music became popular at Jewish-American weddings, holiday celebrations, and social club dances and by the 1920s was being recorded by Jewish musicians like virtuoso clarinetist Dave Tarras. Born in Ukraine into a family of musicians, Tarras immigrated to New York in 1922 and became the leading klezmer clarinetist of his generation. In the tradition of the old-world klezmer bands, early New York Jewish ensembles consisted of reeds, brass, and string instruments, often backed by accordion or piano and drum accompaniment. As Jewish musicians came under the influence of American tin pan alley and early jazz of the 1920s and 1930s, they created innovative hybrids like Yiddish swing and the popular Yiddish theater songs.

Interest in traditional Ashkenazi culture in general and klezmer music in particular waned during the Holocaust, World War II, and the early post-War years. The 1970s saw a revival of activity by a new generation of Jewish musicians bent on rediscovering the roots of their Ashkenazi ancestors. Not surprisingly, New York was the center of the action, and at the forefront of the revival was Brooklyn-born clarinet virtuoso Andy Statman (b. 1950). A protégé of Dave Tarras, Statman spent years mastering the traditional klezmer style and repertoire. His eclectic tastes have led him to incorporate elements of bluegrass, jazz, rock, Middle Eastern music, and Western classical music into his innovative sound. Today klezmer has become a true world music, blending the traditional Ashkenazi tunes of Eastern Europe with the sounds of modern classical, jazz, rock, soul, rap, and various North African and Mid-Eastern music.

Video 17.15: Original Klezmer Music, performed by Daniel Hoffman (klezmer fiddle), Gilad Ephrat (contrabass), Boris Martzinovsky (accordion), and Yair Salzman (drums). Composed by Daniel Hoffman, “it begins with an original doina, continues to Jewish Luck Wedding Hora, and then to a terkishe called Schnapps vas Gibn.”



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://louis.pressbooks.pub/musicappreciation/?p=1323#oembed-16>

Middle Eastern Music

Adopted from “[Middle Eastern Music](#),” Wikipedia, [CC BY-SA 3.0](#)

The various nations of the region include the Arabic-speaking countries of the Middle East, the Iranian traditions of Persia, the Jewish music of Israel and the diaspora, Armenian music, Kurdish music, Azeri Music, the varied traditions of Cypriot music, the music of Turkey, traditional Assyrian music, Coptic ritual music in Egypt as well as other genres of Egyptian music in general, and the Andalusian (Muslim Spain) music very much alive in the greater Middle East (North Africa); all maintain their own traditions. It is widely regarded that some Middle-Eastern musical styles have influenced Central Asia as well as Spain and the Balkans.

Throughout the region, religion has been a common factor in uniting peoples of different languages, cultures, and nations. The predominance of Islam allowed a great deal of Arabic and Byzantine influence to spread through the region rapidly from the 7th century onward. The Arabic scale is strongly melodic, based on various **maqamat** (sing. **maqam**) or modes (also known as **makam** in Turkish music). The early Arabs translated and developed Greek texts and works of music and mastered the musical theory of the music of ancient Greece. This is similar to the *dastgah* of Persian music. While this originates with classical music, the modal system has filtered down into folk, liturgical, and even popular music with influence from the West. Unlike much western music, Arabic music includes quarter tones halfway between notes, often through the use of stringed instruments (like the **oud**) or the human voice. Further distinguishing characteristics of Middle Eastern and North African music include very complex rhythmic structures, generally tense vocal tone, and a monophonic texture. Traditional Middle Eastern music does not use chords or harmony in the Western sense.

Often, more traditional Middle-Eastern music can last from one to three hours in length, building up to anxiously awaited and much applauded climaxes, or **tarab**, derived from the Arabic term, **tarraba**.

Instruments Used

Strings

Many instruments originate in the Middle East region. Most popular of the stringed instruments is the **oud**, a pear-shaped lute that traditionally had four strings, although current instruments have up to six courses consisting of one or two strings each. Legend has it that the oud was invented by Lamech, the sixth grandson of Adam. This is stated by Al-Farabi, and it is part of the Iraqi folklore relating to the instrument. Legend goes on to suggest that the first oud was inspired by the shape of his son's bleached skeleton.

Historically, the oldest pictorial record of the oud dates back to the Uruk period in Southern Mesopotamia over 5,000 years ago. It is on a cylinder seal currently housed at the British Museum and acquired by Dr. Dominique Collon, Editor of Iraq at the British Institute for the Study of Iraq. Used mostly in court music for royals and the rich, the harp also comes from ancient Egypt ca. 3,500 BC. The widespread use of the oud led to many variations on the instrument, including the **saz**, a Turkish long-necked lute that remains very popular in Turkey.

Another popular string instrument is the **qanoun**, developed by Farabi during the Abbasid era. Legend has it that Farabi played qanoun in court and alternately made people laugh, cry, or fall asleep. The qanoun developed out of string instruments described in inscriptions that date to the Assyrian period. It has about 26 triple-string courses, plucked with a piece of horn. The musician has the freedom to alter the pitch of individual courses from a quarter to a whole step by adjusting metal levers.

Middle Eastern music also makes use of the violin, which is European in origin. The violin was adopted into Middle Eastern music in the 19th century, and it is able to produce non-Western scales that include quarter-tones because it is fretless.

Percussion

Percussion instruments play a very important role in Middle Eastern music. The complex rhythms of this music are often played on many simple percussion instruments. The **riq** (a type of tambourine) and finger cymbals add a higher rhythmic line to rhythm laid down with sticks, clappers, and other drums.

An instrument native to Egypt, the **darbuka** (both “**tabla**” and “**darbuka**” are its names in Egyptian Arabic), is a drum made of ceramic clay with a goatskin head glued to the body. The darbuka is used primarily in Egypt, and it has its roots in ancient Egypt. It is also used in other countries in the Middle East.

Winds

The Armenian **duduk** is a very popular double-reeded, oboe-like instrument made out of apricot tree wood. The Moroccan oboe, also called the **rhaita**, has a double-reed mouthpiece that echoes sound down its long and narrow body. A similar instrument is called the **sorna**. Equivalent to the **mizmar** and **zurna**, it is used more

for festivals and loud celebrations. A Turkish influence comes from the **mey**, which has a large double reed. Bamboo reed pipes are the most common background to belly dancing and music from Egypt. Flutes are also a common woodwind instrument in ensembles. A kaval is a three-part flute that is blown in one end, whereas the **ney** is a long cane flute played by blowing across the sharp edge while pursing the lips.

Music of the Ottoman Empire

Adapted from *Resonances: Engaging Music in Its Cultural Context*, by Ester M. Morgan-Ellis

The Ottoman Empire was founded in 1299 by the Turkish tribal leader Osman I. In 1453, the Ottomans captured the Christian city of Constantinople, which had until that point been the capital of the Byzantine Empire. Renamed Istanbul, that city became the capital of the Ottoman Empire: a centralized seat from which the sultan (Arabic for “supreme authority”) could expand his reach. The Ottoman Empire achieved the height of its power in the late 16th century, at which point it extended from Central Europe across North Africa and well into the Middle East. The 19th century, however, saw the empire’s gradual decline as it ceded power and territory to its neighbors. Following the Great War (later renamed World War I), the empire was formally dissolved and ultimately replaced by the Republic of Turkey in 1923.

For several centuries, however, the Ottoman Empire mediated between European powers and the Far East. The Western border of the empire came very near Vienna, which was a major European political and cultural center in the 18th and 19th centuries. As a result, Ottoman music had a significant impact in Europe. The Ottoman military band tradition, in particular, can be identified as the precursor to Western marching bands, while composers like Mozart and Beethoven frequently referenced Ottoman instruments and styles in their music.

The Ottoman Empire certainly cultivated rich musical traditions. Here, we will examine the most elite of those traditions: **makam music**, which was performed for (and sometimes even created by) the sultan and members of his court. As in most great empires, the Ottoman rulers sought to manage cultural diversity, not eradicate it. As the empire absorbed citizens from three continents, it simultaneously assimilated their cultural traditions. Ottoman musical practices, therefore, reflected Byzantine, Armenian, Arabic, Persian, and even European influence.

The term **makam** is itself derived from the Arabic **maqam**, which describes a system of musical **modes**. In European music, modes are scales, the most prominent of which in use today are major and minor. A makam, however, is more than just a scale. To begin with, there are many more makams than there are European modes—between 60 and 120. They are difficult to count because makams are always coming and going. An individual makam might fall out of use, or a new one might be developed.

The number of makams is so high because each contains a great deal of information about how music associated with it is expected to sound. A makam determines not only pitches but characteristic melodic motifs, ascending and descending melodic patterns, phrase endings, and the specific tuning of individual notes. This last element can be particularly striking, for the Turkish system divides each whole step into nine possible

microtones (the European system divides it into only two). A note that is meant to be just slightly flat or slightly sharp, therefore, will sound out of tune to a Western ear, even though the performer has in fact placed it with perfect precision.

Makam music is performed using instruments that can be found across the Mediterranean region. These include the **oud** (a type of lute), the **kanun** (a plucked zither), the **ney** (an end-blown reed flute), and the **rebab** and **kemençe** (both bowed fiddles), although these last instruments have been almost completely replaced by the violin. Percussion instruments are also important, for they mark the rhythmic cycle, known as the **usul**. These instruments include the pair of pot-shaped **kudüm** drums, the **bendir** (a circular frame drum), and the **def**, which is related to the tambourine. In the performance of makam music, only one of each instrument is typically present, and their unique timbres are easy to discern in the texture.

Ottoman musicians organized their court performances into suites of individual pieces. Such a suite is known as a **fasıl**, and it might contain six or eight pieces, all in the same makam, totaling about thirty minutes of music. A traditional fasıl is full of variety: It contains different types of songs and several vocal and instrumental improvisations. Although most of the pieces feature a singer, the fasıl starts and ends with lengthy selections for the instrumental ensemble. The introductory **peşrev** is slow and stately, while the concluding **saz semâisi** contains passages in a lively dance tempo.

Samâi Shad Araban

We will consider a famous saz semaisi composed by Tanburi Cemil Bey (1843-1916). Cemil Bey was famous for his virtuosity as a performer. Although he began his training on the violin and kanun, he soon gained renown for his skill on the tanbur—a long-necked lute that developed in the Ottoman Empire—and kemençe. Cemil Bey lived late enough that he was able to leave behind recordings made on 78 rpm discs. These attest to his ability and continue to influence performers today, who still employ techniques that he developed and popularized.

In addition to revolutionizing performance techniques, Cemil Bey left behind a large number of compositions, many of which are among the most frequently performed in the Turkish classical tradition. Although Cemil Bey did not personally serve in the court of the sultan (the Ottoman Empire, after all, was well into its decline during his lifetime), he worked in the forms that had been developed for court entertainment. His “Samâi Shad Araban,” therefore, has the typical characteristics of a saz semâisi, and by examining it we will be able to understand how this type of composition has functioned for hundreds of years. We will also have an opportunity to hear the typical Turkish instruments and consider how they are used in performance.

Video 17.16: Samai Shad Araban, Ensemble Al-Ruzafa



■ One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://louis.pressbooks.pub/musicappreciation/?p=1323#oembed-17>

To begin with, we must consider the nature of composition in the Ottoman tradition. Like medieval Europeans (consider, for example, the Countess of Dia), Ottoman performers learned, composed, and taught music without the aid of notation. Although Ottoman music was notated as early as the 17th century, the purpose of notation has always been primarily to record compositions for future reference, and it is seldom used for teaching or performance. Even today, Turkish classical musicians rely on aural and oral processes—that is, listening, imitating, and correcting—to acquire techniques and repertoire.

A typical characteristic of music in oral traditions is variation. When a performer learns a tune by ear, they are likely to introduce minor alterations by accident. However, in the Ottoman tradition, variation is not only accepted but encouraged. The composer expects individual performers to interpret the melody in a way that reflects the characteristics of their instrument, their training, and their own personal preference. As a result, while a performance of “Samâi Shad Araban” is always recognizable, no two musicians will play exactly the same notes.

Another type of variation emerges due to the norms of Ottoman performance practice. A piece of music such as Clara Schumann’s Piano Trio in G minor, discussed at the end of this chapter, is intended for a specific assortment of instruments: one piano, one violin, and one cello. Schumann also used notation to indicate exactly what each performer is supposed to do. Compositions in the Ottoman tradition, however, can be realized using any permutation of the classical ensemble. “Samâi Shad Araban,” therefore, can be performed as a solo or by an ensemble. A typical performance will feature about six performers, with only one playing each of the instruments described above. However, a rendition by a smaller or larger ensemble is perfectly viable.

This flexibility is a characteristic of the heterophonic texture of Ottoman classical music, in which all pitched instruments play essentially the same melody. “Samâi Shad Araban,” for example, can be transcribed (written down using staff notation) as a single melodic line. However, no two instruments play exactly the same pitches. Sometimes the variations have to do with the technical limitations of the instrument: a rebab player, for example, can slide between pitches, while a kanun player cannot. Other variations have to do with training or personal preference, as described above. The result is a complex musical texture in which the listener can easily perceive a core melody, even as the performers constantly alter that melody with diverse shadings and ornaments.

We will hear all of this in our recording of “Samâi Shad Araban.” First, however, we must consider the typical characteristics of a saz semâisi. In terms of form, a saz semâisi always features a repeated melodic refrain (known as a teslim) that follows upon a series of disparate melodic passages (each of which is termed a hane, or

“house”). The form of “Samâi Shad Araban” can be summarized as A T B T C T D T, in which T (for teslim) is the refrain.

While each of the hane is melodically distinct, the D hane is markedly different from the others. To begin with, it contains a great deal of internal repetition—each of the first three melodic phrases is repeated at least once. Most striking, however, is that it is in a different meter. While the predominant usul (meter) of a saz semâisi consists of a cycle of ten beats in a moderate tempo, the usul of the D hane has six beats and is performed at a significantly faster tempo. As a result, the penultimate passage of “Samâi Shad Araban” is more energetic and exciting than those that preceded it. This makes the saz semâisi a good piece of music with which to conclude a suite, for it always comes to a rollicking finish.

The melodic instruments in our recording are the violin, ney, oud, and kanun. Because the timbre of each is so different, it is fairly easy to pick the various instruments out of the texture. In addition, each adds unique, improvised ornaments. The kanun player periodically contributes melodic flourishes and rhythmic elements that are not played by the other instruments, while the violin player emphasizes their ability to slide between pitches. The oud is foregrounded near the end of the performance, when it renders a solo version of the teslim before we hear it one last time from the entire ensemble.

The percussion accompaniment to “Samâi Shad Araban”—and, indeed, to any saz semâisi—is not specified by the composer. Instead, the performers use their knowledge of the usul and the melody to improvise an accompaniment that demarcates the rhythmic cycle while also reflecting the character of the melodic phrases. In this recording, we can clearly hear the jingling sounds of the def above the regular beats of the various drums.

Finally, a word about mode. The makam of “Samâi Shad Araban” is indicated by its title, which tells us the type of piece that this is—a saz semâisi—and its mode, Shad Araban. (This is similar to the European convention of naming a piece of music something like Symphony in E Minor.) The pitches of Shad Araban are not particularly similar to those of the major or minor scale. This makam features two intervals of an augmented second: a large interval that is not present in any European scale. It also contains a large number of half steps, the smallest European interval. As a result, melodies in Shad Araban move by intervals that seem alternately cramped and spacious.

Audio ex.: 17.1: Arabic Scale—Shad ‘Araban Arabic scale—Shad ‘Araban | Author: lubito | Source: Wikimedia Commons | License: CC BY-SA 3.0



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Asian Music

Adapted from *Music: Its Language, History, and Culture*, by Douglas Cohen

India

North Indian Classical Music (Hindustani sangita)

Music from the Indian subcontinent is one of the non-Western repertoires that has fascinated Western musicians and audiences in recent decades. Improvisation is central to the performance of North Indian classical music (Hindustani music) and is mastered only after years of study with a guru. The skeletal elements from which the improvisation springs are the **raga**, an ascending and descending pattern of melodic pitches, and the **tala**, the organization of rhythm within a recurring cycle of beats. Rather than the 12-semitone octave of Western classical music, Indian music divides the octave into 22 parts. Although only some of those 22 pitches are used in a particular raga, the complexity and subtlety of Indian melody are attributable in part to this relatively large vocabulary of pitch material. With respect to temporal organization, Indian music organizes spans of time into cycles of beats, somewhat comparable to the Western concept of meter. But whereas Western composers have worked predominantly in a framework of time spans divided into repeated cycles of two, three, or four beats, the time span of a tala is composed of units of variable length—for example, a 14-beat tala of four plus three plus four plus three beats. A tala may also be of enormous duration in comparison with a Western measure, which rarely exceeds a few seconds in length.

There are hundreds of talas and thousands of ragas. Each raga has specific extra-musical associations such as a color, mood, season, and time of day. These associations shape the performer's approach to and the audience's experience of an improvisation, which can last from a few minutes to several hours. Indian music also has an important spiritual dimension, and its history is intimately connected to religious beliefs and practices. As stated by the great sitarist Ravi Shankar, "We view music as a kind of spiritual discipline that raises one's inner being to divine peacefulness and bliss. The highest aim of our music is to reveal the essence of the universe it reflects....Through music, one can reach God."

The typical texture in Indian music consists of three functionally distinct parts: (1) a drone, the main pitches of the raga played as a background throughout a composition; (2) rhythmic improvisations performed on a pair of drums; and (3) melodic improvisations executed by a singer or on a melody instrument. One of the most common melody instruments is the sitar, a plucked string instrument with a long neck and a gourd at each end, six or seven plucked strings, and nine to thirteen others that resonate sympathetically. The melody instrument or voice is traditionally partnered by a pair of tablas, two hand drums tuned to the main tones of the pitch pattern upon which the sitar melody is based. The drone instrument is often a tambura, a plucked string instrument with four or five strings each tuned to one tone of the basic scale and plucked to produce a continuous, unvarying drone accompaniment.

A raga performance traditionally opens with the *alap*, a rhapsodic, rhythmically free introductory section in which the melody instrument is accompanied only by the drone. Microtonal ornaments and slides from tone to tone are typical elements of a melodic improvisation. The entrance of the drums marks the second phase of the performance in which a short composed melodic phrase, the *gat*, recurs between longer sections of improvisation. Ever more rapid notes moving through extreme melodic registers in conjunction with an increasingly accelerated interchange of ideas between melody and drums produce a gradual intensification as the performance progresses to its conclusion.

Video 17.17: Ravi Shankar—Raga Mala, from “Ravi Shankar—Tenth Decade in Concert,” 2012



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://louis.pressbooks.pub/musicappreciation/?p=1323#oembed-18>

Music of India and Its Instruments Used in Rock Music

By Bonnie Le

Rock music groups such as the Beatles and the Rolling Stones were 1960s British rock groups who were fascinated by Hinduism. In 1968, the Beatles traveled to India to take part in a transcendental meditation training course. Their interest in Hinduism led to the group incorporating the Indian sitar instrument into some of their music. The **Indian sitar** has two sets of strings, the strings which are played and a set of strings called the sympathetic strings which resonate “in sympathy” with the played strings creating a droning effect. An example of the Beatles’ use of the sitar can be found in their song “Norwegian Wood,” where the droning strings are very distinct.

Video 17.18: The Beatles—Norwegian Wood (2001 Stereo Remaster)



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://louis.pressbooks.pub/musicappreciation/?p=1323#oembed-19>

Guitarist Brian Jones of the Rolling Stones often experimented in the use of Eastern instruments, particularly the Indian sitar, to add texture and complexity to their music. Jones was familiar with the instrument after studying under Harihar Rao, a disciple of Ravi Shankar. Their song “Paint It Black” uses the Indian sitar to add an element of mystery to the work. In the video below you can see Brian Jones playing the sitar around 35 seconds into the video.

Video 17.19: Rolling Stones Paint It Black HD



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South Indian Classical Music (Karnataka sangita)

South Indian classical music (Karnatic or Carnatic music) evolved from ancient Hindu traditions and is relatively free of the Arabic and Islamic influences that contribute to Hindustani music. Karnatic music is primarily vocal and the texts devotional in nature (often in Sanskrit). The instrumental music consists largely of performances of vocal compositions with a melody instrument replacing the voice and staying within a limited vocal range. It is important to note that the vocal style is so advanced that it seems almost instrumental in nature. One could say in Karnatic music that vocal and instrumental styles merge into one. Works in this tradition are normally composed, as opposed to the improvised Hindustani tradition, with new compositions being written every day. Four Karnatic composers of great importance are Purandara Dasa (1494–1564), Shayama Shastri (1762–1827), Tyagaraja (ca. 1767–1848), and Muttusvami Dikshitar (1775–1835).

Karnatic music uses the same system of raga (scale) and tala (meter) as found in the north, but the systems for classifying raga and tala are more highly developed and consistent thanks to a long period of growth with a minimum of influence from the outside.

Just as Hindustani instrumental music often follows the formal outline of an alap (slow meditative section exploring the raga), followed by a gat (faster section with percussion accompaniment), many Karnatic compositions are in the form Pallavi (Opening Section), Anupallavi (Middle Section), and Charanam (Concluding Section) with an abbreviated pallavi serving as a refrain between subsequent sections and concluding the piece. Towards the end of the composition, an improvised section, called the svara kalpana, is often inserted where the vocalist expands on the pitches in the raga while singing with “sa re ga ma” syllables instead of the text. This improvised singing may alternate with a melody instrument, such as a violin, imitating the singer.

Two Western instruments have become a standard part of Karnatic music, the aforementioned violin for melodic use and the hand-pumped harmonium for playing the sustained drone pitches. A present-day concert ensemble might include a lead vocalist, a violin, a mridangam (a two-headed drum functioning as the tabla does in Hindustani music), a ghatam (a large mud pot reinforcing the tala), and one or two tambura (large string instruments performing the drone pitches).

Video 17.20: Carnatic Vocal, Sanjay Subrahmanyam, “Raga Nattakurinji”





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Something to Think About

Rock music groups such as the Beatles and the Rolling Stones incorporated Eastern musical instruments into their music to give their songs an added element of texture and complexity.

Can you think of any other popular music groups that have experimented with instruments from other countries to enhance their music?

China

The People's Republic of China occupies a vast land area and is the world's most populous nation. It is also one of the earliest centers of civilization, as evidenced by religious and philosophical texts, novels and poetry, scientific literature, and musical instruments that survive from the early dynastic era (beginning in 1122 BC). In the sixth century BC, Confucius wrote about the value of music to man in achieving the goals of living in harmony with nature and maintaining a well-regulated society. Although Chinese systems of notation can be dated back to the fourth century BC, most Chinese music has been passed on orally.

Video 17.21: Traditional Chinese Music: "Fisherman's Song at Dusk," performed on a Chinese guzheng (Chinese zither), 2013



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Peking Opera

Over the course of China's long history, different districts evolved distinctive linguistic dialects and cultural practices, including those associated with music. One tradition that is common throughout China is that all theater is musical, and all regions maintain companies of singers and instrumentalists for theatrical performances. Peking Opera is the form of Chinese musical drama best known in the West and has enjoyed great popularity both at court and among common people in China. The stories, of which there are over 1,000, deal mainly with social and romantic relationships and military exploits. Staging is without sets and props, and until the 1920s, all roles were sung by men and boys.

Notable features of Peking Opera are its repertory of subtle and highly stylized physical movements and gestures and a tight, nasal vocal timbre. The singers are accompanied by an orchestra consisting of strings, winds, and percussion, which, in the Chinese system, are classified according to the materials from which they are made—metal, stone, earth/clay, skin, silk, wood, gourd, and bamboo. Among China's important instruments are the *erhu* and *ching-hu*, both bowed strings; the *cheng* and *ch'in*, plucked strings; the lute-like *pipa*; the *ti-tzu*, a transverse flute made of bamboo; the double-reed *so-na*; and a wide array of gongs, chimes, bells, drums, cymbals, and clappers. The “conductor” of a Peking Opera orchestra is one of the percussionists, who sets the beat for the ensemble.

Video 17.22: Classic Peking Opera “Drunken Concubine” from Mid-Autumn Festival, 2020



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The music of Peking Opera exemplifies three characteristic features: (1) **pentatonic scale**, in which the octave is divided into five steps, producing a scale whose intervallic distances approximate the whole step and step-and-a-half of the Western system; (2) **monophonic texture**, one melody performed by both singer and instrumentalists, although in different octaves; and (3) **heterophony**, a performance practice whereby the players spontaneously and simultaneously introduce variants of the melody, sometimes producing brief moments of improvised polyphony.

That these features are also found in the music of Japan and Korea is indicative of China's contact with other cultures of Asia, sometimes through military conquest. China also maintained naval and overland caravan routes for trading with Eastern Europe, the Middle East, Southeast Asia, the Indian subcontinent, and the countries along the Adriatic and Mediterranean. A nineteenth-century German geographer dubbed this network the Silk Road. European influence on Chinese music was especially strong during the Republic of China period, 1912-1949, when Chinese musicians went to Europe to study, Western-style orchestras were

established, Western notation was adopted, and Western harmonies were added to traditional Chinese folk music.

Following the establishment in 1949 of the People's Republic of China under Chairman Mao Zedong, the role of music was to promote the ideology of China's Communist Party. The spheres of musical activity were particularly restricted during the Cultural Revolution, 1966- 1976, when China entered an isolationist period. The evils of capitalism and the bourgeois and decadent values of Western culture were denounced, and intellectuals and members of professional classes were sent to the country to be "re-educated." Since the 1980s, the revival of traditional Chinese musical practices and repertoires and renewed contact between the musicians of China and the rest of the world are important manifestations of the modern phenomenon of globalization and cross-cultural exchange.

Japan

Adapted from *Understanding Music: Past and Present*, by N. Alan Clark and Thomas Heflin

Like Indian music, Japanese music is also performed in small groups and uses pentatonic scales, but that is where the similarities end. Japanese folk music is not improvised. Rather, it is composed and is almost always built around lyrics that are either borrowed from poetry or composed for the specific song. The music is made up of regular rhythms, but there is no intentional harmony as in Western music. Japanese musicians pride themselves on memorizing each composition and then performing it exactly the same way every time. Three common instruments include a large thirteen-string instrument called a **koto**, a three-stringed instrument called a **shamisen** (or samisen), and an end-blown flute called a **shakuhachi**.

Listen for the koto and the shakuhachi in the traditional Japanese selection below.

Video 17.23: Tsuki no shizuku (played on koto and shakuhachi), Kunpu-Note



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://louis.pressbooks.pub/musicappreciation/?p=1323#oembed-24>

Indonesia

Adapted from *Music: Its Language, History, and Culture*, by Douglas Cohen

The Republic of Indonesia consists of a string of about 6,000 islands, including Java, Sumatra, New Guinea, and Bali, which lie between the Indian and Pacific Oceans. The main instrumental ensemble of Indonesia is the **gamelan**, a percussion ensemble of up to 80 musicians that accompanies ceremonial plays, religious rituals, community events, and dancing in Indonesia. All gamelan traditions are rooted in Hindu-Buddhism, and gamelan performance is deeply connected with rituals. Gamelan instruments can be made

of wood and bamboo, but the ensemble's distinctive sound derives from the preponderance of instruments made of bronze—large tuned gongs, kettles of various sizes, and bars of different lengths in a xylophone-like arrangement. The instruments are themselves charged with charismatic power and are often intricately carved and brilliantly painted with figures and designs that replicate elements of the universe. In Bali, gamelans belong to village communities, and in Java also to families and the state.



Figure 17.6:
“Gamelan or native
orchestra,”
cropped from Java,
Sumatra, and the
other Islands of
the Dutch East
Indies, 1911 (p. 127).
| Author: Antoine
Cabaton | Source:
[Internet Archive](#) |
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Each gamelan composition is based on one fixed and unique melody—in Java, *balungan*, and in Bali, *pokok*. There are thousands of these melodies, which have been passed on mainly through oral transmission. The melodic material is derived from numerous ways of dividing the octave into five or seven pitches, thereby producing a variety of scales. In the course of a performance, the performers execute highly complex variations, with the tempo of the ensemble controlled by drummers playing interlocking rhythmic patterns. The resulting layers of related melodies, which coincide at points punctuated by the sound of huge gongs, mirror the overlapping and interweaving of cosmological forces.

Video 17.24: Instruments of the Javanese Gamelan, 2012. This video displays several types of gamelan “as played by Permai Gamelan, Melbourne, Australia. The instruments are played together, then by themselves: Gambang, Bonang Barung, Bonang Penerus, Gender, Kendhang, Slenthem, Kenong, Saron Demung, Saron Sanga, Saron Barung, Saron Penerus, Kempul & Gong.”



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Chapter Summary

In this chapter, we explored a wide range of musical cultures outside of North America and the Western concert music tradition, including music from Africa, Europe, and Asia. Despite the remarkable diversity of sounds and styles presented in the chapter, our training in music fundamentals (pitch, scales, rhythm, form, tone color, etc.) allows us to observe and describe characteristic musical features of these different cultures. For example, knowing about scales allows us to distinguish the pentatonic scale featured in Peking Opera from the twenty-two-note “chromatic scale” heard in North Indian classical music or the modern minor scale frequently heard in Russian folk music. Listening to the North African oud, or Japanese shakuhachi, or Balinese gamelan, one can marvel at the extraordinary array of tone colors in music across the world while also recognizing the affinities these instruments share with string, wind, and percussion instruments that may be more familiar to us. As always, when encountering unfamiliar music and cultural practices, however, it is important to be cautious of viewing them through a Western musical or aesthetic lens.

As we also observed, many musics around the world rely on performer improvisation as an essential feature of the music, and much of this music is passed on through an oral tradition. As the example of the Klezmer tradition reveals, however, musical cultures are always transforming through globalization and musical exchange such that what we regard as “culture” or “tradition” is never truly fixed.

Something to Think About

Many musical artists in the global traditions we’ve studied in this chapter are highly successful recording artists (even if they don’t always appear on the American pop charts). Using the links below, research a famous and popular “world music” artist or performing group and read a little bit about them. Find one of their songs on YouTube and listen to it. Introduce your artist to the class and share a YouTube link to the song you heard. Tell us a little bit about your artist and describe the song using your music fundamentals vocabulary. What do you like about the music? How is the music similar to and different from some of the other music you listen to?

The following links provide a few good sources to get started:

- [World Music on last.fm](https://www.worldmusiccentral.org/)
(There are many pages at the bottom of the link above, so be sure to click around a bit.)
- [The Guardian: 50 Essential CDs From Around the World](https://www.theguardian.com/music/2015/jun/15/50-essential-cds-from-around-the-world)

Test Your Understanding



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<https://louis.pressbooks.pub/musicappreciation/?p=1323#h5p-22>

APPENDIX A

Music Resources

Chapter 1 How Music Makes Sense

audio examples provided by *Sound Reasoning*

Chapter 2 How Music Is Created

audio examples provided *Understanding Music* by N. Alan Clark, Thomas Heflin, and Elizabeth Kramer

Music before 1600 CE

Bingen: “Ave Generosa”

Jeremy Summerly; Oxford Camerata

© 2007 Experience Music Disc 3

Mauchaut: “Agnes Dei” from *Messa de Notre Dame*

Jeremy Summerly; Oxford Camerata

© 2009 Naxos

Dia: “A Chantar”

Vocal Music (Medieval)—Walther Von Der Vogelweide—Oswald Von Wolkenstein—Codax (Songs of Women in the Middle Ages)

© 2008 Christophorus

Josquin: “Ave Maria” (“Hail, Mary”)

La Chapelle Royale; Philippe Herreweghe, director

© 1986 harmonia hundi s.a.

Courtesy of harmonia mundi usa

Farmer: “Fair Phyllis”

Quink Vocal Ensemble

© 1993 TELARC

Courtesy of Concord Music Group

Dowland: “Flow My Tears”

Paul Bowman, countertenor; David Miller, lute

©1989 Hyperion Records Ltd.

Courtesy of Hyperion Records Ltd.

Praetorius: Three Dances from Terpsichore

Ensemble Bourrasque; Bertil Farmlof, conductor

©1998 HNH International Ltd.

Courtesy of Naxos of America

APPENDIX B: CHECKLIST FOR ACCESSIBILITY

This title has been reviewed to meet these accessibility practices:

Organizing Content

- Content is organized under headings and subheadings.
- Headings and subheadings are used sequentially (e.g., Heading 1, Heading 2).

Images

- Images that convey information include alternative text (alt text) descriptions of the image's content or function.
- Graphs, charts, and maps also include contextual or supporting details in the text surrounding the image.
- Images do not rely on color to convey information.
- Images that are purely decorative do not have alt text descriptions. (Descriptive text is unnecessary if the image doesn't convey contextual content information).

Links

- The link text describes the destination of the link and does not use generic text such as "click here" or "read more."
- If a link will open or download a file (like a PDF or Excel file), a textual reference is included in the link information (e.g., [PDF]).
- Links do not open in new windows or tabs.
- If a link must open in a new window or tab, a textual reference is included in the link information (e.g., [NewTab]).
- For citations and references, the title of the resource is hyperlinked, and the full URL is not hyperlinked.

Tables

- Tables are used to structure information and not for layout.
- Tables include row and column headers.
- Row and column headers have the correct scope assigned.
- Tables include a caption.
- Tables avoid merged or split cells.
- Tables have adequate cell padding.

Multimedia

- All audio content includes a transcript. The transcript includes all speech content and relevant descriptions of non-speech audio and speaker names/headings where necessary.
- Videos have captions of all speech content and relevant non-speech content that has been edited by a human for accuracy.
- All videos with contextual visuals (graphs, charts, etc.) are described audibly in the video.

Formulas

- Equations written in plain text use proper symbols (i.e., $-$, \times , \div).¹
- For complex equations, one of the following is true:
 - They were written using LaTeX and are rendered with MathJax (Pressbooks).
 - They were written using Microsoft Word's equation editor.
 - They are presented as images with alternative text descriptions.
- Written equations are properly interpreted by text-to-speech tools.²

1. For example, a hyphen (-) may look like a minus sign ($-$), but it will not be read out correctly by text-to-speech tools.

2. Written equations should prioritize semantic markup over visual markup so text-to-speech tools will read out an equation in a way that makes sense to auditory learners. This applies to both equations written in LaTeX and equations written in Microsoft Word's equation editor.

Font Size

- Font size is 12 point or higher for body text in Word and PDF documents.
- Font size is 9 point for footnotes or endnotes in Word and PDF documents.
- Font size can be enlarged by 200 percent in webbook or ebook formats without needing to scroll side to side.

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REFERENCES

Brandt, Anthony. *[Sound Reasoning](#)*, OpenStax CNX. Sep 17, 2019. [CC BY 3.0](#).

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