

## Baroque Terms

**Allemande:** A German dance in moderate duple meter; one of the four standard movements of the German Baroque suite).

**Aria:** A lyrical type of singing with a steady beat, accompanied by orchestra; a songful monologue or duet in an opera or other dramatic vocal work. In the Baroque era, the most common aria designs were the "binary aria" (A B), and the da capo aria.

**Binary Form:** A form comprised of two distinctly opposing musical sections ("A" vs. "B").

**BWV:** The shorthand initials for first complete thematic catalogue of JS Bach's compositions (the *Bach-Werke-Verzeichnis*), in which his works are each given a number after being ordered by category (cantatas [first], chorale harmonizations [second], fugal works [third], harpsichord concertos [fourth], keyboard works [fifth], etc.), giving a date of composition wherever possible.

**Figured Bass:** A Baroque process of indicating the harmonic structure of a work as improvised from symbols and numbers below a melodic bass line. (See Chart of Basic Figured Bass Symbols)

**Chorale:** A simple, metrical Lutheran melody; these were used by Bach and others as the basis for contrapuntal variations, preludes, and cantata movements.

**Concertino:** In a concerto grosso, this is the term that identifies the *small group of soloists*.

**Counterpoint:** Combining two or more independent melodies to make an intricate polyphonic texture.

**Courante:** A slow homophonic French dance in triple meter; one of the four standard movements of the German Baroque suite.

**Da Capo Aria:** (da capo means "the head" in Italian) A design popular in Baroque opera, in the "A" and "B" contrasting sections of an aria are sung, and then the singer goes back to the very beginning ("the head") of the piece, but performs the return of "A" with improvised vocal ornaments to keep the drama moving forward. A - B - A (*ornamented*)

**Gigue:** A lively French/Irish dance in 12/8 meter; one of the four standard movements of the German Baroque suite.

**Homophonic Texture:** Polyphonic music with all the parts moving rhythmically together (chordal texture).

**Idiomatic Writing:** Music that is written for a specific instrument, taking advantage of that instrument's special capabilities.

**Ostinato:** (called a "ground bass" in England) A sort, repeating melodic pattern in the bass.

**Prima Pratica:** (the "first practice") In the early 1600s, this was the term used to describe the "old style" of late Renaissance vocal counterpoint with its carefully-controlled use of dissonance (represented by the music of Palestrina). This was contrasted with the "seconda pratica"--the new approach used by Monteverdi to allow dissonance to be used more freely to fully-express the meaning of the text.

**Program Music:** ("programmatic music") Instrumental music intended to tell a story, or give an impression of an image or specific idea.

**Recitative:** A speech-like manner of singing in a free rhythm

- *Recitativo secco* ("dry recitative") is a term that refers to speech-like singing accompanied sparsely by harpsichord.

- *Recitativo obbligato* is a section of recitative that includes brief yet dramatic moments of orchestral support.

**Ritornello Form:** ("Return") A Baroque formal design based on the dramatic alternation of two opposing entities: A "returning" big group ("Tutti") and a contrasting small one ("solo")--Tutti-Solo-Tutti-Solo-Tutti-Solo-Tutti, etc.

**Sarabande:** A slow Spanish dance in 2/2 meter; one of the four standard movements of the German Baroque suite.

**Seconda Pratica:** (the "second practice") In the early 1600s, this was the term used to describe the "new style" of early Baroque vocal writing that broke the old late Renaissance rules of carefully-controlled dissonance (the "Prima Pratica" represented by the music of Palestrina). Instead, Monteverdi as an advocate for the "seconda pratica" used dissonance in any way that could fully-express the meaning of the text.

**Suspension:** Harmonic tension created by rhythmically holding a note so it becomes a dissonance that hangs on (tied-over) instead of resolving downward at the correct time. (see example). Corelli was famous for his "chain suspensions" that feature a long series of successive suspensions (so as one suspension resolves, another begins in a different musical voice).

**Treatise:** In music, this is a formal written document that studies some aspect of music theory and/or performance practice.

**Treatise on Harmony:** This 1722 writing by the French composer-theorist Jean-Philippe Rameau revolutionized a new era in music theory when it c melody is derived from harmony, and that the natural law is for harmony to be controlled by its fundamental bass (establishing modern triads and chord inversions).

**Tutti:** ("All" in Italian) In a concerto, this term in the score tells everyone to play together.

## Baroque Genres

**Cantata:** A short, unstaged multi-movement Lutheran liturgical sacred work for solo singers, chorus and small orchestra (5-9 movements performed during a Lutheran church service).

**Concerto:** A 3-movement work that pits a soloist vs. orchestra. The two different types in the Baroque are

- *Solo Concerto*: a 3-movement work for a one solo instrument vs. orchestra [Fast 1st movement; Slow 2nd movement, Very Fast 3rd movement]

- *Concerto Grosso*: a 3-movement work based on the opposition of a small group of soloists (concertino) vs. an orchestra. [Fast 1st movement; Slow 2nd movement, Very Fast 3rd movement]

**Fugue:** A complex contrapuntal manipulation of a musical "subject".

**Madrigal:** In the early Baroque, Italian composers such as Carlo Gesualdo and Claudio Monteverdi wrote intense madrigals that explored daring harmonies, rhythms, and textures. Some of Monteverdi's later madrigal even used basso continuo accompaniment.

**Mass:** The approximately 25 prayers that lead to and follow the taking of communion. There are two types of mass prayers: The "Ordinary" (5 everyday prayers--Kyrie, Gloria, Credo, Sanctus, Agnus Dei) and The "Proper" (20 prayers that are appropriate only for a certain day, such as Easter or Christmas, according to the liturgical calendar of saints and holy days). A "musical Mass" often refers to a musical setting of just the Mass Ordinary.

**Monody:** A musical texture with an ornate melody for one singer, supported by a free/sparse instrumental accompaniment.

**Motet:** A sacred polyphonic choral setting usually with a Latin text, sometimes in imitative counterpoint. In the Baroque, Henrich Schütz also wrote motets in German.

**Opera:** Invented by Italians in the early Baroque, this is a large-scale fully-staged dramatic theatrical work involving solo singers, chorus, and orchestra. Throughout the Baroque, various types of opera developed, such as

- **Early opera:** In the early 1600s, Monteverdi used monody to give his operatic solo singers great expressive freedom to depict the emotion and meaning of the text.

- **Opera seria:** By the mid-1600s, in Italy, composers such as Alessandro Scarlatti developed this type of serious Italian opera in three acts, sung all the way through, based on dramatic alternating scenes of recitative and aria. In the late Baroque, opera seria was brought to its greatest heights in the works of George Frederic Handel.

- **English serious opera:** In the later 1600s, composers in England such as Henry Purcell wrote a few serious 3-acts operas sung in English (including *Dido and Aeneas*).

- **French opera:** In the early 1700s, composers in France such as Jean-Philippe Rameau developed a new kind of French serious opera called "Tragédie lyrique" (such as *Castor et Pollux*).

- **Ballad Opera:** In the 1720s, John Gay in England introduced this new kind of English comic opera with common characters speaking English street dialect and singing short, catchy popular songs (such as *in The Beggar's Opera*). This simpler, more direct style of theater began the transition to the Classic era.

**Oratorio:** A large-scale religious work performed by solo singers, chorus, and orchestra without staging, scenery or costumes.

**Ordre:** A type of keyboard suite developed by Francois Couperin in the 1700s, with many short individualized movements ("ordre") that had picturesque programmatic titles.

**Organ Music:** In the Baroque, a wide variety of music was written for the organ, including preludes, toccatas, fugues, etc.

**Suite:** A collection of dances performed by a solo keyboard instrument or orchestra. In the Baroque, the German keyboard suite had four standard movements:

- Allemande (a German imitative dance in moderate duple meter)
- Courante (a slow homophonic French dance in triple meter)
- Sarabande (a slow Spanish dance in two)
- Gigue (a lively French/Irish dance in 12/8 meter)

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**Toccata:** (derived from the word "toccare" in Italian, which means "to touch") A spectacular type of virtuoso keyboard writing in which the player is required "to touch" many keys on the keyboard in rapid succession.

**Trio Sonata:** A multi-movement chamber work with *three musical lines (parts)* performed by *four instruments*--two violins and basso continuo (harpsichord and cello).

## Important Baroque Instruments

**Basso continuo:** The instrumental backup ensemble of the Baroque; usually comprised of a keyboard instrument (harpsichord or organ) and a melodic bass instrument (viola da gamba or cello).

**Harpsichord:** A keyboard instrument that produces its sound by a system of levered keys with quill ends that pluck the string when pressed the key is pressed.

**Viola da Gamba:** A bowed instrument held between the legs, having 6 or 7 gut strings and movable gut frets. A member of the family of viols that pre-dated the modern violin family.

**Violin Family:** Invented in the mid-1600s in Italy, the violin family (featuring the violin, viola, cello and double bass) became a fixture in the modern orchestra, and a favorite for many kinds of solo and chamber music.

## Baroque Composers and Theorists (in chronological order)

### Early-Baroque Composers

**Carlo Gesualdo** (1566-1613): This late Renaissance/early Baroque madrigalist developed an intensely-chromatic and mannered style following his involvement in the murder of his wife and her lover. *Moro, lasso al mio duolo* [madrigal] 1611

**Claudio Monteverdi** (c1567-1643): This Italian was a transitional figure who began composing in the late Renaissance style and then became the most influential composer of the early Baroque. His most important works are early Baroque operas (such as *L'Orfeo*, 1607), experimental madrigals, and Catholic sacred music. His daring use of dissonance to express the meaning of the text is called the "seconda pratica".

**Heinrich Schütz** (1585-1672): A German composer and organist known primarily for his sacred music set to German texts. He studied with Monteverdi in Venice and brought the "seconda pratica" style to Germany. *Die mit Tränen säen* [German motet] c1620

### Mid- Baroque Composers

**Alessandro Scarlatti** (1660-1725): This Italian was the leading opera composer of the mid-Baroque; known for his beautiful vocal writing and "da capo" arias. *La Griselda* [opera seria] 1721

**Arcangelo Corelli** (c1653-1713): This Italian was the first Western composer to write only instrumental music. He is known for his trio sonatas and concertos written for the violin family. *Trio Sonata in D major*, Op.3 No. 2 [trio sonata] 1689

**Henry Purcell** (c1659-1695): The leading English composer of the mid-Baroque, noted for his stage works, choral music, songs, and keyboard music. *Dido and Aeneas* [English opera seria] 1689

**François Couperin** (1668-1733): A French composer, harpsichordist and organist, known for his four volumes of harpsichord music that were grouped as ordre (non-traditional suites), and his treatise *The Art of Harpsichord Playing* (1716), which has suggestions for fingerings, touch and ornamentation. *Vingt-cinquieme ordre* [keyboard suite] c1730

### **Late Baroque Composers**

**Antonio Vivaldi** (1678-1741): This Catholic priest (who taught music at a girls' orphanage) was the greatest violinist of the Baroque era. He wrote over 500 concertos and 50 operas. *The Four Seasons* [solo concerto] 1723

**Johann Sebastian Bach** (1685-1750): This German composer and Lutheran organist was the greatest master of Baroque counterpoint, and one of the most important composers in music history. He is known for a wide variety of instrumental and vocal works, especially his cantatas, concertos, and keyboard music. *Tocatta and Fugue* [organ music] c1707; *Brandenburg Concerto No. 5* [concerto grosso] 1721-22; *French Suite No. 5* [keyboard suite] 1720; *Cantata No. 140* [cantata] 1731

**Georg Frideric Handel** (1685-1759): This cosmopolitan late-Baroque composer worked in Germany, Italy, and England, and then merged German counterpoint with elements of Italian opera. Known for his keyboard suites, orchestral music, Italian operas and oratorios (in English). *Messiah* [oratorio] 1741

**Jean-Philippe Rameau** (1683-1764): This late-Baroque French composer also established the premises of tonal harmony in his theoretical treatises (*Treatise on Harmony*, 1722). He is also known for his operas and keyboard music. *Castor et Pollux* [tragedie lyrique] 1737

### **Transition to the Classic Era**

**John Gay** (1685-1732): This English poet and entrepreneur is best-known for organizing the theatrical structure and popular songs used in the famous operate *Beggar's Opera* (1728), with musical arrangements added by Johann Pepusch.

	1600	1650	1700	1720	1750	Classic era	
Late Renaissance	1600	1650	1700	1720	1750		
England	<p><b>DOWLAND</b> <i>Flow My Tears</i> lute ayre [secular]</p>	<p><b>PURCELL</b> <i>Dido and Aeneas</i> English serious opera (<u>Recitativo secco</u> + <u>Binary aria</u>) [secular]</p>	<p><b>COUPERIN</b> <i>Vingt-cinquieme ordre</i> keyboard suite (ordre) [secular]</p>	<p><b>RAMEAU</b> <i>Castor et Pollux</i> Tragedie lyrique [secular]</p>	<p><b>HANDEL</b> <i>Messiah</i> [sacred] oratorio</p>	<p>Transition to early Classic</p> <p>simple, direct style starts with "Ballad opera" in England <b>GAY (Pepusch)</b> <i>The Beggar's Opera</i> (1729) ballad opera [secular]</p>	
France							
Italy	<p><b>PALESTRINA</b> <i>Pope Marcellus Mass</i> [sacred] Mass "prima pratica"</p>	<p><b>GESUALDO</b> <i>Moro, lasso</i> madrigal [secular]</p> <p><b>MONTEVERDI</b> <i>L'Orfeo</i> early opera [secular] "monody" "seconda pratica"</p>	<p><b>A. SCARLATTI</b> <i>La Griselda ("Mi nivedi")</i> opera seria [secular] "da capo aria"</p> <p><b>CORELLI</b> <i>Sonata Op. 3, No. 2</i> trio sonata</p>	<p><b>VIVALDI</b> "Spring" from <i>The Four Seasons</i> solo concerto [secular]</p>	<p><b>HANDEL</b> <i>Giulio Cesare</i> opera seria [secular]</p>		
Germany		<p><b>SCHUTZ</b> studied with Monteverdi [sacred] <i>Die mit tranen saen</i> motet (in German)</p>	<p><b>JS BACH</b> <i>French Suite No. 5</i> suite [secular] (Allemande)</p>	<p><b>JS BACH</b> <i>Toccatla and Fugue in D minor</i> organ music (toccatla, fugue)</p>	<p><b>JS BACH</b> <i>Brandenburg Concerto No. 5</i> [secular] concerto grosso— small solo group ["concertino"] vs. full group ["tutti"]</p> <p><b>JS BACH</b> <i>Cantata No. 140</i> cantata [sacred] (features a "chorale" tune in long notes)</p>		
THEORISTS TREATISES TERMS		<p><b>Basso continuo</b> "backup" instruments: <u>Harpsichord</u> and <u>Viola da gamba</u></p> <p><b>Figured Bass</b></p>	<p><b>Recitativo</b> (<u>Recitativo secco</u>) (<u>Recitativo obbligato</u>)</p> <p><b>Aria</b> (<u>Binary aria</u>) (<u>Da capo aria</u>)</p>	<p>Late Baroque German = rise in imitative echoing, number of "voices" instrumental &amp; vocal counterpoint</p> <p><b>Treatise on Harmony</b> (French treatise by RAMEAU in 1722)</p>			

click on a name, title, term for more info or to view a YouTube clip of the work

"High Baroque"

Classic era