

Baroque Study Sheet (1600-1750) Praxis Workshop

❖ Key Social Points

- A time of turbulent change in politics, science, and the arts.
- Time of religious wars (Protestants vs. Catholics) and of exploring the New World
- Rise of the middle-class culture, with music making centered in the home, church, and at the universities (in a group called the *collegium musicum*); art portrayed scenes of bourgeois life.
- In the New World, music served religion through the singing of psalms, important to both Protestants and Catholics.

♣ Key Musical Characteristics, terms, composers, etc.

- Idiomatic music for instruments
- New style of music known as *monody* featuring solo song with instrumental accompaniment
- MONODY developed by a group of writers and musicians known as the *Florentine Camerata* in order to resurrect the musical-dramatic art of ancient Greece; this new vocal style focused on the text and its emotional power expressed in the Baroque *doctrine of affections*.
- Harmony was notated with *figured bass*, a shorthand that allowed the performer to supply chords through improvisation. The bass part, AKA *basso continuo*, was often played by two instruments (harpsichord and cello, for example)
- Early Baroque music moved more freely; later Baroque is characterized by a vigorous, regular rhythm and continuous melodic expansion.
- Women musicians figured among the professional singers and instrumentalists of the Baroque era.
- Major-minor tonality system is used by the end of the era eradicating the use of modes in most secular music
- Violin family replaces viol family
- Music for harpsichord and organ differentiated
- Fortepiano invented in early 1700s
- Wind instruments used for specific colors and rise of virtuoso teachers
- Use of terms to indicate tempo, dynamics, etc. to further emotional intent of music
- Sound ideal: emphasis on a firm bass and florid treble texture
- Strict counterpoint fits into overall harmonic scheme
- Inventions, symphonia, fugues
- Composers: Lully, Telemann, JS Bach, GF Handel, Vivaldi, Purcell, Rameau, Couperin, Schütz
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♣ Music genres

- Cantata: extended, multi-movement sacred work for chorus, soloists, and instrumentalists; based on a chorale tune; text is biblical and prose; Bach is the big Daddy in this genre; e.g. No. 80 *Ein feste Burg ist unser Gott*, (*A Might Fortress is Our God* is the basis of this composition)
- Oratorio: secular extended work for chorus, soloists and orchestra; role of chorus is large as a dramatic agent; usually biblical stories; most famous is *Messiah* by Handel. Sort of a concert opera (no costumes, staging, etc.)
- Opera: large scale staged sung dramas usually based on Greek or Roman stories; large role for soloists; recitatives were either “dry” (secco) or “accompanied” (accompagnato); arias were usually in Da Capo form (ABA’); in several acts with overtures
- Suites: orchestral and keyboard; based on dances (sarabande, courante, etc)
- Organ literature: partita, choral preludes; fugues; etc.
- Sonata and concerto grosso
- Fugue is the crowning compositional achievement and permeates all forms of music, particularly instrumental. Subject-countersubject; exposition, middle entries (episodes); closing section
- Harmonic relationships are tonic-dominant and modulations are to closely related keys