

A BRIEF HISTORY OF  
MUSIC FROM  
BAROQUE TO  
MODERN

# Periods of Western Musical History

1. Medieval (476 A.D. to 1400 A.D.)
2. Renaissance (1400 to 1600 A.D.)
3. Baroque (1600 to 1750)
4. Classical (1750 to 1820)
5. Romantic (1820 to 1900)
6. Impressionist (1875 to 1925)
7. Modern (1900 to 1960)
8. “Post-Modern” (1960-present)  
(aka “Contemporary”)

# THE BAROQUE PERIOD

**CIRCA 1600-1750**

# The Baroque Period

The Baroque period saw the creation of common-practice tonality, an approach to writing music in which a song or piece is written in a particular key; this type of harmony has continued to be used extensively in Western classical and popular music.

# The Baroque Period

Baroque music is known for its over the top exaggerated emotion.

Vivaldi's *Four Seasons - Winter*

# THE CLASSICAL PERIOD

Circa 1750 to 1820

# Baroque vs. Classical Period Music

Despite the fact that the music of these two periods of musical history are characterized by distinct differences in musical style, there are still many similarities between music of the Baroque period and music of the Classical period. There is also considerable overlap between the two periods.

That said, some of the general differences between Baroque and Classical period music are detailed on the following slides.

# The Classical Period of Music

The Classical Period of Western music followed the Baroque period. Lasting a relatively short period of time, (70 years) the dates of the Classical period are approximately 1750 to 1820.

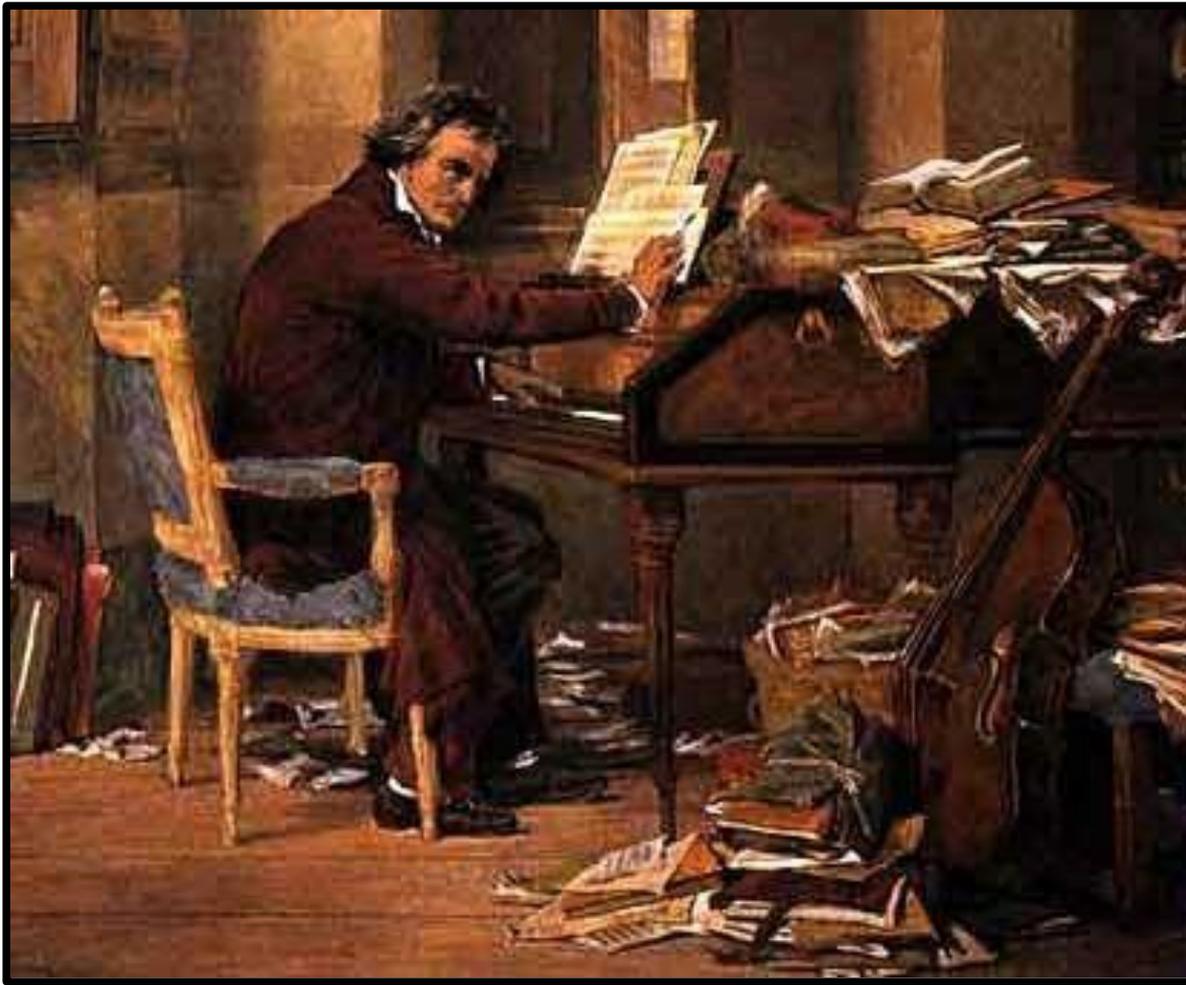
In contrast to the music of the Baroque period, much of the music of the Classical period is characterized by generally **simpler melodies and musical textures** (i.e. the number of distinct musical lines occurring simultaneously).

## Baroque vs. Classical Period Music

In the **mid-1700s**, a new, more expressive instrument, the **piano**, gradually replaced the [harpsichord](#). A great deal of music was written for the solo piano during the Classical period, which paved the way for the phenomenon of the "**piano virtuoso**" to develop.



Painting of young Mozart by  
**Saverio dalla Rosa** (1745-1821)



*Painting of  
Ludwig van  
Beethoven  
composing at  
the piano*

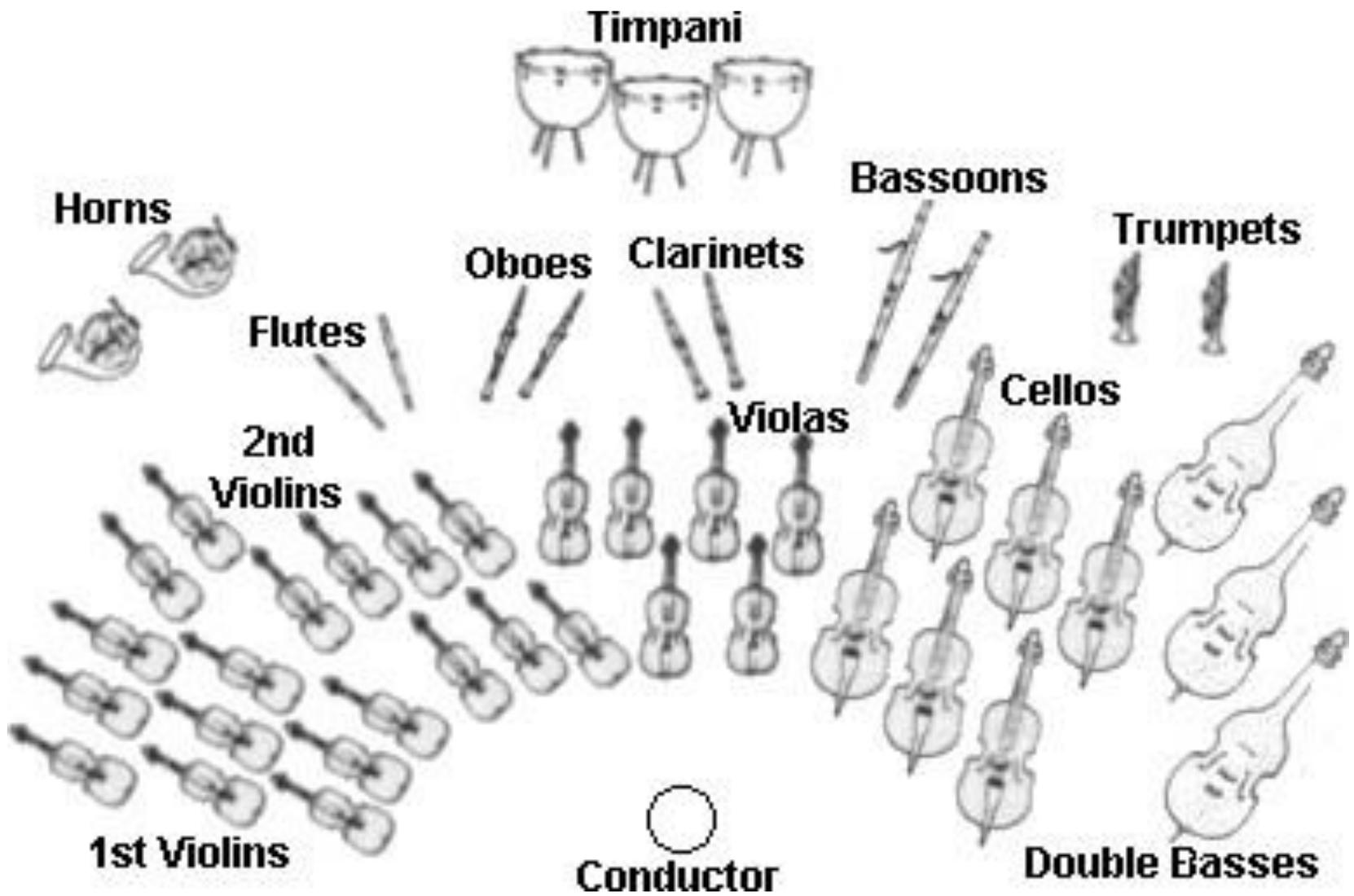
During the Classical period, composers began using the piano as their primary tool to aid them in composing music.

# The Orchestra Is Standardized in the Classical Period

The idea of an **orchestra** as a musical ensemble was **first established** during the **Baroque Period**, but not yet standardized.

During the **Classical Period**, the size of the orchestra increased and by the end of the Classical period, the instruments of the orchestra **became standardized** as:

**2 flutes, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons,  
2 French horns, 2 trumpets, timpani & strings.**



Seating plan for a standard Classical period symphony orchestra

Music in the Classical period was written to appeal to the **emerging middle class audience**, whereas Baroque music was typically intended for the **aristocracy or the church**.

Opera was still popular in the Classical period, but the **subjects** of the operas began to change.

In the Classical period, fewer operas were written about mythological characters, as they were in the Baroque period, and more operas were written about **the lives of ordinary people** (such as in Mozart's **The Marriage of Figaro.**)

However, some Classical period operas were still written about kings.

The style of music changed in the Classical period to become generally simpler in a number of ways.

- The complex style of **polyphonic music (music with many melodies simultaneously)** that was prevalent in the late Baroque period was replaced in the Classical period.

- Music that emphasizes **single melodies with an underlying accompaniment.** The concepts of proportion and balance as applied to the phrasing and musical structure became very important during the Classical period.

# Monophonic vs. Polyphonic

- MUSICAL TEXTURE

- Polyphonic

- more than 1 melodic line combined to make COUNTERPOINT

- Imitation = *Row Row Row Your boat ...*

- as a Round is **strict imitation.**

- *Imitation is not always strict*



# Examples of Classical Period Music

## **Piano Sonata**

Mozart: Sonata in C Major for Piano, K. 545  
1<sup>st</sup> Movement

## **Symphony**

Mozart: Symphony No. 41 in C Major (The “Jupiter” Symphony)

## **String Quartet**

Haydn: String Quartet, Opus 77, No. 1 – First Movement

*The*  
*Romantic Period*

**Circa 1820 - 1900**

**Romanticism** (also known as the **Romantic Era** or the "**Romantic Period**") was an **artistic, literary and intellectual movement** that originated in the **second half of the 18th century** in Europe, and gained strength in reaction to the **Industrial Revolution**. In part, it was a revolt against aristocratic social and political norms of the **Age of Enlightenment** and a reaction against the scientific rationalization of nature. Romanticism was embodied most strongly in the **visual arts, music and literature**.

# Characteristics of Romantic Period Music

1. **Individuality of musical style** with emphasis on self-expression

2. Development of **new harmonies**, including **chromatic harmonies** - harmonies that use all the keys of the piano keyboard - the black keys and the white keys - together.

3. Development of "**program music**" – **music that depicts a story or scene**

4. Development of "**nationalism**" in music, such as French music, Spanish music, Hungarian music, Czech, music, etc., incorporating native folk music

5. Greater **variety of mood, atmosphere and tone color**

6. **Expanded orchestra size** for many new compositions, including **large brass sections, expanded woodwind sections** and the addition of new instruments, such as English horn, bass clarinet, contrabassoon and **added percussion.**

7. Development of a **wider range of musical dynamics** - (volume) - from very soft ("pianissimo") to very loud ("fortissimo") often encompassing soaring musical high points

**8. Greater flexibility of tempo**, (musical speed) incorporating the increased use of accelerandos (speeding up) and ritardandos (slowing down), as well as extensive use of rubato (the bending and stretching of tempo/rhythm).

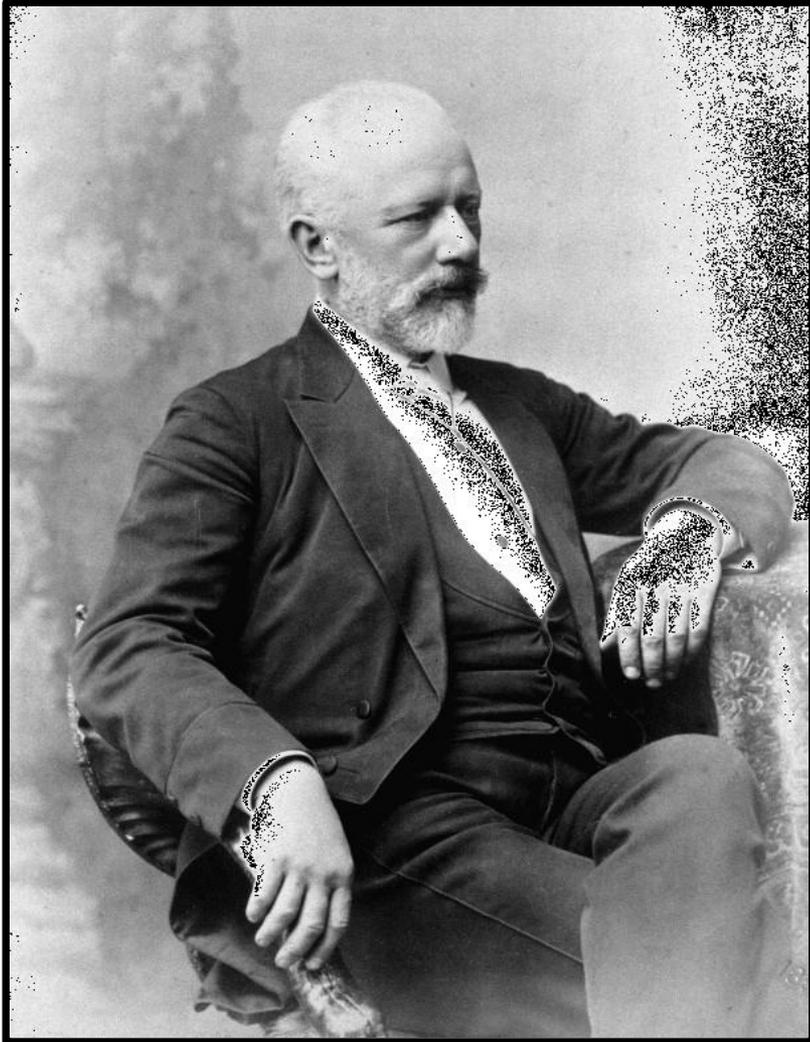
# Composers of the Romantic Period

## **Ludwig van Beethoven**

His [3<sup>rd</sup> Symphony](#)  
was the very first  
composition of the  
Romantic Period



# Composers of the Romantic Period



## **Peter Illych Tchaikovsky**

Russian; 1840-1893

6 Symphonies,  
Ballets, Concertos,  
Other Orchestral Works,  
Operas

Tchaikovsky is also  
considered to be one of the  
most important composers of  
the Romantic period.

[Symphony No. 4 - Finale](#)

# In a Nutshell

## Classical

- Monophony
- Consistent rhythms
- Simple melodies
- Reason/thought
- Restraint
- Emphasis on structure

## Romantic

- Polyphony
- Varied rhythms
- Complex melodies
- Emotional
- Excess
- Lack of structure allows for a more emotional experience