

LECTURENOTES H ("EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY CLASSICISM")

1. Classical term vs. Classical Period

[Classical is used BOTH as an "umbrella/general" term (all non-commercial music) or for a specific period in art/music history.]

a. 1750 – 1800 (1825)

[1825 marks a more exact end of the Classical Period and the beginning of the Romantic Period which followed, but many Romantic tendencies were visible even at the beginning of the 19th Century.]

b. General Characteristics

i. Earlier Greek influences (as well as Renaissance)

[The Ancient Greeks developed ALL art forms which inspired and motivated artists in the Classical Period; consequently, Classical architecture closely resembles Greek structures, and balance and symmetry are clear ideals in all art forms.]

ii. Objective thought (Classical vs Romantic)

[Classical thought is centered on the beauty of formal construction itself and is intended to be expressive *by design* rather than expressive through *specific emotions, scenes, ideas, stories, etc.*]

1. Age of Reason and Enlightenment

[Much more emphasis was given to science and logic rather than church writings and teachings.]

iii. Scientific advances

[Intellectual strides were being made in virtually all areas of science.]

iv. Concert Halls

[Venues were now available in every major city; the "Patronage System" – commissions by the aristocracy -- provided a large impetus and support for the creation of art.]

c. Musical Characteristics

i. More homophonic, less polyphonic, lyrical melodies

ii. Larger orchestra, piano (instead of the inferior harpsichord), improved Instruments, added percussion

iii. Elimination of the Basso-Continuo accompaniment

[Because orchestras were larger and more emphasis was placed on homophonic texture and chord structures, the Basso Continuo acc. was not as necessary as it was in the Baroque Era.]

iv. Major/Minor scale system (equal tempered tuning)

[This was now the ONLY type of tuning used in the Western Hemisphere, as was the Major/Minor scale system; there was, however, and increased exploration of more chromatic music and styles.]

- v. **Concentration of formal structures**
 [This is **EXTREMELY** important in understanding music of the Classical Period.]
 - 1. **Symmetrical phrases, balance.**
 [Because of this, Classical Period music is much more accessible for the average listener.]
- vi. **Greater dynamics (gradual as opposed to terraced dynamics)**
 [Crescendos and Decrescendos were much more common, as were the use of accented notes, etc.]
- d. **Viennese School Composers**
 - i. **Joseph Haydn (1732-1809)**
 [Haydn had a younger brother who was also a composer (Michael Haydn); he was very successful financially.]
 - ii. **Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791)**
 [A pure genius from his boyhood, his father was also a composer (Leopold Mozart); ironically, this productive composer died completely broke.]
 - iii. **Ludwig Van Beethoven (1770 – 1827)**
 [He was the most daring of the Classical Period composers and went completely deaf in his later years.]
 - 1. **Three Periods**
 [He began composing in a traditional Classical style early on, then entered an “EXPANSION” phase (stretching all boundaries in his music), and finally composed **HIGHLY CHROMATIC** music at the end of his life.]
 - 2. **Transitional**
 [Beethoven was one of the composers who paved the way for the Romantic Period which followed.]
 - iv. **Franz Schubert (1727-1828)**
 [Like Beethoven, he was also a rather progressive composer.]
 - 1. **Transitional**
 [His music is often cited as the very beginnings of the Romantic Period.]
- e. **Patronage System**
 [As mentioned above, many artists often led comfortable lives supported by wealthy aristocracy.]

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2. Extended Forms

a. Forms clearly defined

[The Classical Period systemized formal structures, although composers often deviated from “cookie cutter” formulas.]

b. Sonata Four Movement Form

[This blueprint forms the backbone for MUCH music of the Classical Period.]

i. Allegro (Standard, Monothematic)

[In the standard form, two distinct themes were used; in the Monothematic form (typically a favorite of Haydn), only one theme is used but presented in two different tonal key areas; the Exposition was often repeated; the specific structure is indicated below:]

*EXPOSITION: Theme 1 – modulation/transition. – Theme 2 :|| DEVELOPMENT
|| RECAPITULATION: Theme 1 – transition (no modulation!) – Theme 2 – Coda*

ii. Andante

[Generally binary form, ternary form, or theme and variations, as popularized by Haydn.]

iii. Minuet (Scherzo)

[The minuet was always in a stately three-beat meter in ABA form; the B section is often called a TRIO section because it typically featured three instruments, or three instrumental sections of an orchestra. Later Classical pieces sometimes used a Scherzo instead of a Minuet, which was set in a very fast three-beat meter.]

iv. Rondo

[A Rondo was set at a fast tempo, usually in ABACA or ABACABA structure.]

3. Chamber Music

a. String Quartet

[This was a “pillar” of chamber music in the Classical Period, composed for Two Violins, Viola, and Cello; compositions for string quartet were usually in four movements as described above.]

4. Primary orchestral showpiece: Symphony

[A symphony is a type of piece for orchestra – the Classical replacement of the Baroque **Orchestral Suite**; rather than a collection of pieces, it typically closely followed the 4 movement design mentioned above.]

5. Publication Terminology (Opus, Kochel)

[These terms simply refer to a systematic ordering number according to the date of publications for various compositions since composers were quite prolific and composed so many pieces. Opus is a general Latin term for many compositions, Kochel was an historian who classified all of Mozart’s music specifically.]

