

Music History Outline

The Middle Ages

Noteworthy Aspects

The Middle Ages were times when secular music became very important to ordinary people. Various types of travelling performers sprang up whose purpose was to entertain. These include 'gleemen' in England, 'jongleurs' in France, 'gaukler' in Germany, 'troubadours' in southern France, 'trouveres' in northern France, and 'minnesingers' in later Germany.

The period between 1150 to 1200 is referred to as 'Ars Antiqua' (the Old Art), and the period between 1200 and 1300 is referred to as 'Ars Nova' (the New Art).

Music also became important as an accompaniment to dances, which include the 'stampita', 'danse royale', and rotta. Each of these required music in specific meters.

Major Forms

Secular Song - monophonic, not in Latin, metrical, sometimes accompanied

Conductus - secular polyphonic parodies of plainsong

Refrains - repeated sections of text and melody in a song

Organum - plainsong which is harmonized

Cantus Firmi - the tune that the first polyphonic writing was based on

Motet - usually 3 part polyphony with 3 different texts

Hocket - a rhythmic polyphonic composition making extensive use of rests

Canon - a round (like 'Row your Boat')

Rondeau - a composition with repeated refrain

Madrigal - Italian polyphonic composition in duple time with each stanza ending in triple time.

Composers

Guillaume de Machaut (1305-1377)

Phillipe de Vitry (1290-1361)

Francesco Landino (1325-1397)

Walter von der Vogelweide (1170-1230)

Neithardt von Reuenthal (1180-1240)

Instruments

Vielles - ancestor of the viol family

Lute - plucked pear shaped instrument with gut strings

Psaltery - like a zither

Recorder - end blown flutes

Shawm - double reed instrument

Organ - much like the large church organs today

Drums and Cymbals - various types

The Renaissance

Noteworthy Aspects

Political changes greatly influenced music. These included the Reformation, the Counter-Reformation, the rise of Humanism, Henry VIII's break from the Catholic Church, and the beginning of wealthy and powerful patrons.

Vocal polyphony was perfected, an independent instrumental style began, Protestant music became much more important, secular music became respectable, major and minor tonality began to replace modes, and four part harmony was used extensively.

The period also saw the arts being treated scientifically. Many books were written about the theory and practice of music, and musical notation became standardized. Musical instruments began to evolve in a scientific way.

Major Vocal Forms

Mass - during this period it became a standard form.

Motet - like the motet in the middle ages but with more emphasis on the top voice using a chordal texture.

Carol - many stanzas with the same music and a refrain called a 'burden'.

Chanson - like a carol but with more than one refrain, and using french secular text.

Chorales - polyphonic four part compositions with religious text developed because of the Reformation

Psalms - using texts from the Bible, translated into French, and sung in unison by a church congregation

Madrigal - became popular in England, and usually dealt with secular human emotion.

Major Instrumental Forms

Pavane & Gailliarde - slow dance in duple time followed by a fast dance in triple time using the same music.

Ronde & Saltarello - Italian equivalent of the above

Allemande - dance in duple time at a moderate tempo

Courante - dance in triple time faster than the allemande

Prelude - a composition which gave the impression of being improvised

Ricercare - a polyphonic composition based on the motet and usually played on the organ.

Theme & Variations - a theme that is modified at each repetition

Composers - Catholic Religious Music

Orlando di Lasso (1523-1594) France

Pierluigi da Palestrina (1525-1594) Italy

Cristobal Morales (1500-1553) Spain

Andrian Willaert (1490-1562) Venice

William Byrd (1543-1623) England

Ludwig Senfl (1564-1612) Germany

Composers - Secular & Lutheran Music

Sixtus Dietrich (1490-1548)

Clement Marot (1496-1544)

Claude Goudimel (1505-1572)

Orlando Gibbons (1583-1625)

Carlo Gesualdo (1560-1613)

Claudio Monteverdi (1567-1643)

Luis Milan (1500-1562)

Instruments

Viols - fretted instruments with six strings usually bowed.

Lute - fretted instruments with six doubled strings usually plucked.

Vihuela - originated in Spain, the predecessor to the guitar.

Recorders - end blown wind instruments in various sizes.

Shawn & Cromorn - double reed instruments.

Cornets - soft toned instruments made of wood.

Organ - progressed to include a pedal board.

Harpsichord - a keyboard which plucked strings, also know as a spinet or virginal.

Clavichord - a keyboard which struck strings.

Trumpet - usually used at ceremonial occasions, limited to the natural overtone series.

The Baroque

Noteworthy Aspects

In this period major and minor tonality completely replaced modality, and the system of tuning we use today, 'equal temperament' came into use. Tempo and dynamic markings were added to music, although dynamics were usually

terraced. (In steps). Melodic lines became long and varied, and harmonies became complex, using seventh chords without preparation.

Improvisation was incorporated into every musician's training, and was heard in performances. Many new forms arose, particularly for instrumental music. Thematic variation, sequence and modulation became important. The first small orchestras came into being, and music was written specifically for them. Opera became a major medium in this period, and the 'aria' as well as the 'recitative' became established forms. Composers became much more important than they had been in the past.

Major Forms

Opera - a theatrical work using singers and an orchestra, based on a text called a 'libretto'.

Aria - a song in an opera

Recitative - in an opera, speaking to each other with words set to music.

Overture - the instrumental introduction to an opera

Ballet - formal dancing complete in itself or as part of an opera.

Suite - a group of instrumental dance pieces meant to be listened to, and including one or more of forms such as Prelude, Allemande, Courante, Sarabande, Minuet, Bouree, Gavotte, and Gigue.

Concerto Grosso - a group of 2 or 3 solo instruments called a 'concertino' alternating with a larger group called a 'ripieno'.

Opera Buffa - less serious operas which originated as entertainment between the acts of serious operas. Also known in other countries as 'Opera Comique', 'Ballad Opera', 'Singspiel', and 'Zarzuela'.

Cantata - an opera without scenery or costumes

Oratorio - an opera without scenery or costumes, but making use of a narrator called a 'testo', and making more use of a chorus.

Passion Music - works based on the crucifixion of Christ.

Sonata - an extended instrumental work in 3 or 4 movements.

Tocatta - like the 'Prelude' or the 'Fantasia', a piece that gave the impression of being improvised.

Fugue - a polyphonic work based on the imitative treatment of a 'subject' with alternating 'statements' and 'episodes', sometimes employing a 'counter-subject'

Composers

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750)

Archangelo Corelli (1653-1713)

Girolamo Frescobaldi (1583-1643)

Jean-Baptiste Lully (1632-1687)

Dietrich Buxtehude (1637-1707)

Johann Pachelbel (1653-1706)

Henry Purcell (1659-1695)

Alessandro Scarlatti (1659-1725)

Francois Couperin (1668-1733)

Antonio Vivaldi (1669-1741)

Georg Phillip Telemann (1681-1767)

Jean Phillipe Rameau (1683-1764)

Claudio Monteverdi (1567-1643) (also Renaissance)

Instruments

Clavichord - a keyboard instrument where a metal wedge strikes the string

Harpsichord - a keyboard instrument where quills pluck the strings, the period's most prominent instrument

Piano - invented in 1709, but not used much in this period.

Organ - as before but with a much greater variety of tone.

Viols - gradually being replaced by the violin family

Violin - the violin family (violin, viola, cello and contrabass), became the dominant sound in ensemble music.

Lute - was gradually being replaced by the guitar.

Wind instruments - oboe, bassoon and flute, gradually replacing the recorders.

Brass Instruments - a variety of trumpets and horns, but used primarily in large ensembles.

Timpani - only percussion instrument in general use.

The Classical Era

Noteworthy Aspects

Phrases became clear with well defined cadences, and form became very structured. Polyphony gave way to homophony which used simple triadic chords, and rarely used seventh and ninth chords. Improvisation died out. The period was known as the 'Age of Reason' because of the rapid growth of scientific invention, as well as the new rational philosophies embodied in the literature of the day. Music became an end in itself, and no longer had to accompany other things, or describe literal elements.

The piano became very important during this period, primarily due to advances in its construction. The orchestra also became a prime medium for composers of the day. During this period composers became well known public figures.

Major Forms

Sonata Form - consisting of 4 movements, usually
1. allegro, 2. adagio, 3. menuetto, 4. finale.

The 1st movement usually follows this order;

Exposition, Development, Recapitulation, Coda.

The 2nd movement is slow and lyrical.

The 3rd movement is usually in a Minuet - Trio - Da Capo form.

The 4th movement is either like the 1st movement, or in rondo form.

Concerto - a work where a solo performer alternates with the orchestra,
similar to the sonata form but without the 3rd movement, and adds a second
exposition in the 1st movement.

Divertimento - lighter and less sophisticated informal works usually
designed for outdoor performances.

String Quartet - two violins, viola and cello and usually written in sonata
form.

Chamber Music - small combinations of instruments sometimes including the
piano.

Solo Sonata - usually written for the piano.

Composers

Karl Phillippe Emanuel Bach (1714-1788)

Cristoph Willibald Gluck (1714-1787)

Franz Joseph Haydn (1732-1809)

Luigi Boccherini (1742-1805)

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791)

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827) (also Romantic)

Instruments

Symphony Orchestra and sub-groups consisting of;

- flutes, oboes, clarinets, and bassoons usually in pairs
- trumpets, horns and timpani also in pairs
- violins, violas, cellos and contra-basses

Piano - now capable of a much louder sound

Guitar - very much like the guitar we know today

The Romantic Era

Noteworthy Aspects

The Romantic Era was a time of individualism as well as nationalism. People
yearned for the mysterious and supernatural, but were also caught up in the

industrial revolution. Composers finally became independent and did not rely on patronage. Music was either written for a large concert hall, or a small intimate room. Excess in length of work and size of orchestra became common, and the virtuoso performer became central to music. Composers were both very individual in style, at the same time borrowing from folk melodies of their home country.

Homophonic composition was still predominant, but harmony became very complex, sometimes being very tonally ambiguous. Chromaticism was used extensively, along with the free use of seventh and ninth chords. Melodies became very expressive and lyrical, while form became unstructured.

Major Forms

Character Pieces - short pieces which emphasized a mood and had titles such as arabesque, ballade, nocturne, rhapsody etc.

Etude - a study to develop an aspect of the instrument, but designed to be performed as a virtuoso piece.

Dances - including waltz, ländler, mazurka, polka, polonaise.

Sonata - the piano sonata became popular but only had one movement

Concerto - usually for violin or piano, and a vehicle for displaying the performer's virtuosity

Symphony - various works with different structures, only similar in that they were written for an orchestra.

Symphonic Poem - a one movement work based on a literary work

Symphonic Suite - usually multi-movement pieces based on a fantasy, not following any common form.

Composers

Niccolo Paganini (1782-1840)

Carl Maria Von Weber (1786-1826)

Gioacchino Rossini (1792-1868)

Franz Peter Schubert (1797-1828)

Felix Mendelssohn (1809-1847)

Frederic Chopin (1810-1849)

Robert Schumann (1810-1856)

Franz Liszt (1811-1886)

Richard Wagner (1813-1883)

Guiseppe Verdi (1813-1901)

Jacques Offenbach (1819-1880)

Georges Bizet (1838-1875)

Modest Mussorgsky (1839-1881)

Peter Tchaikowsky (1840-1893)

Antonin Dvorak (1841-1904)

Giacomo Puccini (1858-1924)

Gustav Mahler (1860-1911)

Instruments

Orchestra:

It became extremely large and changes included; more than two of each of the woodwinds were used. Bass clarinet, piccolo, contra-bassoon and english horn were added. Trumpets, trombones, horns and tubas were added and now had valves. Percussion became much more varied and included xylophone, gongs, triangle, harp, castanets and chimes. The string section was enlarged.

Piano - became the king of all instruments.

Guitar - serious composers began writing for guitar, and it was sometimes used in an orchestral pieces.