WAA Music History Notes

These two documents are great brief summaries and have great suggestions for music for each period. The first contains simpler information and the second, more detail.

What is Classical Music?

Did you know that much of what people call "Classical Music" really isn't? Technically speaking, classical music only refers to musical compositions from a specific period in history. This may seem nit-picky and academic, but knowing the boundaries of classical music can make it easier to find music you like when perusing the classical music section of your favorite music store whether it is of the brick and mortar or click and mortar variety.

Here's a brief overview of the different periods of music that typically fall into what people refer to as classical music.

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Music in the Middle Ages (400-1400AD).

Music in the Middle Ages was primarily religious in nature, and chant-like. The technical term for this is monophonic, literally "single note". Monophonic music consists solely of the melody, with no accompaniment.

The most famous type of music from this era is the Gregorian Chant, named after Pope Gregory I (590-604). Gregorian chants are meditative and extremely relaxing.

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Renaissance music (1400-1600AD).

Polyphony, two or more musical voices, became more popular during this time. Music was often written for specific instruments for accompaniment, and to entertain nobility at ballroom dances. The recorder, an early precursor to the flute and piccolo, and the Lute, an ancestor to the modern guitar, were two of the most popular instruments of the day.

Baroque Music (and sometimes Rococo) (1600-1750AD).

The word "Baroque" means: extravagant or complex, especially ornamental. This was the age of wigs, decorative coats and lace. The music of the time reflects these trends.

Simplicity was replaced by complex harmonic textures. Counterpoint, the use of two or three melodies played at the same time, as well as frequent harmonic changes became prominent. Polyphony was further enhanced to what is known as "Imitative Polyphony," which was typically a melodic line that would be picked up and echoed in turn by each instrument in the orchestra. This is known as a "round" when used in vocal arrangements. The children's song Row, Row, Row Your Boat is often sung in a round.

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Dances continued to remain popular but new forms of music such as toccatas and fugues, suites, preludes, theme and variations also rose to prominence.

The new instrument on the scene was the keyboard. This era saw music written for such keyboard instruments as the harpsichord, clavichord and organ; all of which were ancestors to the modern day piano. Music was also written for oboe, flute, bassoon and various horns. Recorders became less favorable and violins, viola and cellos became popular.

There is a transition period between the end of the Baroque era and the beginning of the classical, called the Rococo period. This is mostly a matter of academic distinction, as much of the music is similar to the layperson.

The major musical form to emerge from this period was the concerto. Concertos were written in contrasting sections called movements, and usually featured a soloist. Perhaps the most famous example of a concerto from the baroque period is Antonio Vivaldi's Four Seasons.

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The Classical period (1750-1820AD).

It is during the Classical period that "the masses" really began to partake in the musical experience with more and more public concerts and performances. As the general populace began paying for concerts, the composers were free to write more of what they wanted, as long as it appealed to the public. They no longer had to write what the nobility wanted to hear.

The cornerstone of Classical music composition was balance. The gaudy, overly ornate style favored in the Baroque age fell out of favor in the Classical period. This new style was reflected in the titles of the pieces of the day. Compositions no longer used flowery titles like "The Four Seasons". Instead, compositions had more matter of fact titles like "Piano Concerto No. 9."

New musical forms of this period included minuets, rondos, symphonies and sonatas. Harmony continued to include polyphonic elements, though imitative polyphony had fallen out of favor. Harmony was predominantly a single-line melody with an accompaniment and the use of cadences (a particular series of chords that signals the end of a musical phrase) was introduced.

The major innovation in instrumentation was the invention of the pianoforte, which literally means "soft-loud". Previous versions of keyboard instruments were not pressure sensitive. For example, the sound produced by a harpsichord was the same whether you "tickled the ivories" or jumped up and down on them like Jerry Lee Lewis.

The style of Classical period compositions was also more dynamic, containing soft and loud passages in the same movement, than earlier periods.

The Romantic Period (1820-1900AD).

See all 6 photos

Where the Classical period was balanced and refined, the Romantic era is marked by expressive compositions. Poems were set to music and musical themes were used to tell stories.

Conventions regarding proper length, number of movements and instrumentation of a piece were abandoned in favor of more expressive and experimental aspects. This led to new forms like etudes, variations and character pieces.

Chromatic harmony, a scale with 12 notes, and diminished, dominant and sevenths became widely used. Rich textures and full chords were also popular. Rhythms became more complex and used syncopation. Melodies were songlike and much more expressive, often using varied phrase lengths, more dynamic volume and tempos.

The Piano gained importance and was the subject of much of the compositions of this period, including nocturnes, impromptus and etudes.

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20th Century Classical Music (1900-).

The 20th century saw the relaxation of strict rules of musical form continue. Often times, the only limit to 20th century classical music was the composer's own imagination.

Composers experimented with forms in which the structure and content are left to chance. One such composition is only the sound of the audience gathered to hear the performance of a piece, only to realize they are the performers and they're cough's, shuffles, etc.. is the "music".

The harmony of 20th century music is characterized by increased dissonance and use of chromatic, pentatonic and modal scales.

Instrumentation has continued to evolve. Pianos are still used, but so are synthesizers and electronic keyboards.

Music from the 20th century and on is often characterized by being polyrhythmic (more than one rhythm), and having a strong sense of dissonance and a vague melody. This type of music tends to be atonal and unpredictable

**SUMMARY OF WESTERN CLASSICAL MUSIC HISTORY**
by Marlon Feld

The following is an outline of the history of Western classical music. Although "Western" and "classical" are inexact terms, they do name a reasonably coherent musical tradition that stretches from the Dark Ages to the present day. The descriptive texts will not delve deeply into matters of musical meaning or technique; the purpose of the outline is to give you a basic working familiarity with different periods and styles.

**Medieval History (Plainchant through Machaut)**

Western classical music history is traditionally understood as beginning with plainchant (also called "Gregorian" chant), the vocal religious practice of the Roman Catholic Church. Plainchant was transmitted by memory until the early 9th century, when the Holy Roman Emperor Charlemagne arranged for it to be notated, and for standardized plainchant books to be distributed to churches and monasteries across Europe. Limited in pitch range and monophonic (i.e., composed of a single melody with no accompaniment), plainchant was sung largely by monks, nuns, and clerics rather than by professional singers. Plainchant was sung in the Divine Offices, eight daily prayer services using Old Testament texts, and in the Mass, a midmorning celebration of the life and death of Jesus Christ. The Alleluia reproduced here was a chant of jubilation ("Alleluia" = "Hallelujah"), sung as part of the Mass.

LISTEN: Plainchant: [*Alleluia pascha* *nostrum*](http://www.columbia.edu/itc/music/bent/ramfiles/vt98/trackC02.ram) (before 800) [[Text](http://www.columbia.edu/itc/music/ito/history/plainchant_text.html)]

The earliest major repertory of Western secular (non-religious) music which has come down to us is that of the troubadors and trouveres, French poet-musicians of the Middle Ages who set their own poems to music. The majority of the resulting songs were about love, often the fictionalized, abstracted "courtly love" of a male character for a noblewoman above his social level. Because troubador songs were notated as simple rows of pitches without rhythm, the rhythms and instrumental accompaniments of modern performances are based on conjecture; images of troubadors in medieval manuscripts have offered hints as to what instruments were played. Bernart de Ventadorn (c. 1140- c. 1200) was one of the greatest of the troubadors. His "La douza votz," written in the now-extinct language Provencal, deals with the singer's rejection by the lady whom he has long served.

LISTEN: Bernart de Ventadorn, "[La douza votz](http://www.columbia.edu/itc/music/bent/ramfiles/vt98/trackC03.ram)" (The sweet voice) (late 12th c.) [[Text](http://www.columbia.edu/itc/music/ito/history/bernart_text.html)]

In the 10th and 11th centuries, composers began setting sacred texts polyphonically (i.e., with more than one melody at the same time). Leonin (c. 1135- c. 1200) wrote polyphonic settings of the texts sung on the most important occasions of the Christian year, such as Christmas and Easter. He did this by greatly slowing down an existing plainchant, and adding to it a new, more rapidly flowing musical line at a higher pitch. This technique was called organum; the slowed-down plainchant was called the tenor. Some sections of Leonin's polyphony were sped up and rhythmicized; later composers added the words of devotional poems to Leonin's notes. This example uses the *Alleluia pascha nostrum* plainchant as its tenor; it was sung as part of Easter services at the spectacular Gothic cathedral Notre Dame of Paris.

LISTEN: Leonin, Organum: [*Alleluia pascha nostrum*](http://www.columbia.edu/itc/music/bent/ramfiles/vt98/trackC04.ram) (late 12th c.) [[Text](http://www.columbia.edu/itc/music/ito/history/leonin_text.html)]

Evidence suggests that the compositions of Perotin (active c. 1200), like those of Leonin, were sung at Notre Dame of Paris. Many of Perotin's organa (pl. organum) included two or, as in this example, three active musical lines above the tenor. Perotin slowed down the tenor to an incredible degree--in this example, it takes the tenor four minutes to sing the two words "Viderunt omnes"! *Viderunt omnes* is a gradual, a joyful text sung in response to a New Testament reading during Mass It was sung on Christmas Day.

LISTEN: Perotin, Organum: [*Viderunt omnes*](http://kola.cc.columbia.edu:8080/ramgen/music/humanities/modules/mod1/mod1perotin.rm?start=0:00&end=4:00) (c. 1200) [first 4:00] [[Text](http://www.columbia.edu/itc/music/ito/history/perotin_text.html)]

In the 13th century, rhythmic passages of organum to which words had been added (such as the passage in the middle of the Leonin organum above) began to be treated as standalone musical works called motets (literally, "worded"). Soon, three-part motets appeared, with a different text sung in each voice. (Sometimes the texts were in different languages!) Composers came to use for tenors secular French songs as well as passages of plainchant. One such composer was Guillaume de Machaut (c. 1300-1377), who was not only a musician of great renown but also a poet whose stature approached that of Chaucer. The following motet is based on a secular tenor; each of its three voices sings a different French love poem.

LISTEN: Machaut, Motet: [*Trop plus/Biaute paree/Je ne suis*](http://www.columbia.edu/itc/music/bent/ramfiles/vt98/trackC07.ram) (c. 1350) [[Text](http://www.columbia.edu/itc/music/modules/mod7/machauttxt.html)]

**Renaissance History (Dufay through Praetorius)**

The tradition of the motet continued into the 15th century. Guillaume Dufay (c. 1400-1474), the most renowned composer of his time, composed grand motets for ceremonial occasions in early Renaissance Italy. *Nuper rosarum flores* commemorates the dedication of the cathedral Santa Maria del Fiore in Florence in 1436. Dufay owed his rich sound to harmonic techniques brought from England by his contemporary John Dunstable.

LISTEN: Dufay, Motet: [*Nuper rosarum flores*](http://www.columbia.edu/itc/music/perkins/ramfiles/tape2/ex08a.ram) (1436) [[Text](http://www.columbia.edu/itc/music/ito/history/dufay_text.html)]

The Renaissance's grandest, most highly valued works of vocal music were polyphonic settings of the Ordinary of the Mass. The Ordinary is composed of five texts--Kyrie, Gloria, Credo, Sanctus, and Agnus Dei (the first words of the texts)--that were included in every Mass, not only in Masses that celebrated special occasions. Each text was set as a separate movement. Often, each movement began with a similar melody, in which case the Mass was called "cyclic"; when that melody was taken from plainchant or from a secular song, the Mass was called a "parody Mass" ("parody" meant in the sense of imitation, but not humorously). The most famous mass of Josquin des Pres (1440-1521) was that parodying the plainchant beginning with the text "Pangue lingua." By Josquin's time, the slow-moving tenors of the Medieval era had been replaced by lower voices that moved as quickly as the higher voices; the vocal ranges specified for the various singers were equivalent to our soprano, alto, tenor, and bass.

LISTEN: Josquin, *Missa Pangue Lingua*, [Gloria](http://www.columbia.edu/itc/music/modules/mod9/ramfiles/mod9josquin.ram) (c. 1510)

From about 1530 to 1600, the pre-eminent form of secular vocal music in Europe was the madrigal. The madrigal typically set a poem in Italian (later, often in English) with an intense emotional cast. The setting was usually for four or five voices with no instrumental accompaniment, although instruments were probably added in performance at times. Jacques Arcadelt (c. 1500-1568) was a Frenchman, but wrote madrigals in the Italian city of Florence. The most famous example of his work is *Il bianco e dolce cigno*.

LISTEN: Arcadelt, [*Il bianco e dolce cigno*](http://kola.cc.columbia.edu:8080/ramgen/music/humanities/glossary/madrbsr/madrbarc.rm) (The White and Gentle Swan) (1539) [[Text](http://www.columbia.edu/itc/music/modules/mod7/arcadelttxt.html)]

Toward the end of the 16th century, madrigals became more tortuous harmonically and more aggressive in their use of musical devices to project the text's meaning and character. Luca Marenzio (1553-1599) was the most celebrated "madrigalist" of his day.

LISTEN: Marenzio, [*Solo e pensoso*](http://www.columbia.edu/itc/music/atkinson/ramfiles/tape2/ex09a.ram) (Alone and Pensive) (1599) [[Text](http://www.columbia.edu/itc/music/modules/mod7/marenziotxt.html)]

The instrumental music of the Renaissance largely fell into two categories: transcriptions of vocal music, and dance music. Different dance styles corresponded to different underlying musical rhythms (as with today's Latin dance music). The German Michael Praetorius (1571?-1621) composed a large set of dances entitled "Terpsichore," after the Greek Muse of dance. A group of brief "voltes" is reproduced here; the volte was a dance from Southwest France in which the woman leapt high in the air ("volte" = vault). Praetorius gave no indication of what instruments were to be used--his dances were played by whatever instruments were available. Here, the Early Music Consort of London switches between four different "consorts" of instruments, one per volte, before all four consorts play the end of the fourth volte together. A consort was a set of instruments similar in design and tone but varied in size and pitch.

LISTEN: Praetorius, [*Terpsichore*](http://www.columbia.edu/itc/music/reserves/cd509/ramfiles/track09.ram)[, Voltes](http://www.columbia.edu/itc/music/reserves/cd509/ramfiles/track02.ram) (1612)

**Baroque History (Peri through J. S. Bach)**

The Baroque era of Western classical music is usually defined as the period from 1600 to 1750. (These dates are, of course, rough; the Renaissance dances of Praetorius were written in 1612.) Two stylistic tendencies that partially define the Baroque were an increased interest in the solo voice and a rise in the status of instruments and instrumental music.

The first of these tendencies was born in Florence, among a group of musicians and philosophers called the Florentine Camerata ("camerata" = chamber, as in a "chamber of commerce"). The members of the Camerata sought to create a form of stage music comparable in expressive power to ancient Greek tragedy. They disparaged the polyphonic madrigal, creating instead a new form--the opera--in which soloists sang against an instrumental background. The earliest opera that has entirely survived is *L'Euridice*, by the Camerata member Jacopo Peri (1561-1633). *L'Euridice* presents the legend of Orpheus and Eurydice, altered so that Orpheus successfully retrieves Eurydice from the underworld in a happy ending.

LISTEN: Peri, *L'Euridice*, "[Nel pur ardor](http://www.columbia.edu/itc/music/modules/ramfiles/mod2/ex01.ram)" forward (1601) [[Text](http://www.columbia.edu/itc/music/modules/mod2/peri.html)]

The showpiece of opera came to be the aria, a self-contained, melodious passage that revealed the mood or attitude of the character singing it. The arias in a given opera were separated by recitative, a faster-moving, more speechlike form of singing. Henry Purcell (1659-1695) wrote *Dido and Aeneas* to be performed by the students at a girls' school.

LISTEN Purcell, [*Dido and Aeneas*, Recitative and "Dido's Lament](http://kola.cc.columbia.edu:8080/ramgen/music/humanities/edwards/tape3/track03e.rm)" (1689) [[Text](http://www.columbia.edu/itc/music/modules/mod10/purcelltxt.html)]

The tradition of religious polyphonic vocal music continued in the Baroque era. Martin Luther, the author of the Reformation, was also a musician; in the 16th century, he collected hundreds of tunes to serve as devotional hymns for his new Protestant Church. In the 18th century, German composers created cantatas ("cantata"=sung), multi-movement works that elaborated on Luther's hymns. The cantatas of Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750) included both chorales and aria-like solos. The chorale "Wachet auf" is among Bach's most famous. Unlike the choral music of the Renaissance, "Wachet auf" included parts written for instruments.

LISTEN: J. S. Bach, "[Wachet auf, ruft uns die Stimme](http://www.columbia.edu/itc/music/perkins/ramfiles/tape3/ex02.ram)" (Wake up, the voice calls us!) (1731) [[Text](http://www.columbia.edu/itc/music/landies/tape2/wachet.html)]

The oratorio shared the cantata's form on a larger scale. While most (but not all) German cantatas were religious works written for the church, oratorios could be written on secular topics and performed in secular settings. The *Messiah*, by George Friedrich Handel (1685-1759), was performed in concert halls, but treated a sacred subject: the life of Jesus Christ, with devotional passages interspersed. (Some complained at the time that such a religious work was out of place in the concert hall.) Here is the chorus "All we like sheep have gone astray"--allegorically astray from the righteousness of Jesus and the New Testament God.

LISTEN: Handel, *Messiah*: "[All we like sheep have gone astray](http://www.columbia.edu/itc/music/reserves/cd3429/ramfiles/track17.ram)" (1741)

In their new focus on instrumental music, Baroque musicians valued no instrument more highly than the violin. They believed the violin's tone to have expressive powers akin to those of the voice. Violins were the melodic leaders of the trio sonata ("sonata"=sounded), which despite its name made use of four instruments: two violins, a cello (a much lower string instrument), and a harpsichord (a keyboard instrument within which strings are plucked). (The cello played the same music as did the harpsichordist's left hand; thus, there were really only three independent parts, hence "trio.") The trio sonata consisted of a few short movements, some fast, some slow. This movement by Domenico Gallo (active 18th c.) is fast, but not as fast as some.

LISTEN: Gallo, [Trio Sonata #1, first movement](http://kola.cc.columbia.edu:8080/ramgen/music/humanities/modules/mod8/mod8gallo1.rm) (early 18th century)

The concerto called for a larger group of instruments than did the trio sonata. In the concerto. a soloist or small group of soloists contrasted with a larger ensemble. (But even the larger ensemble was typically far smaller and more homogenous than today's symphony orchestra.) Concertos often alternated between passages showing off the soloist's technical prowess and passages showing off the weight of the full ensemble. The most famous of Baroque violin concertos today are those collected in the *Four Seasons* of Antonio Vivaldi (1678-1741). Reproduced here is the final movement of "Autumn," a movement representing the hunt.

LISTEN: Vivaldi, *Four Seasons*, ["Autumn," last movement](http://kola.cc.columbia.edu:8080/ramgen/music/humanities/cerar/ex04i.rm) (1725)

Keyboard instruments were also vehicles for virtuosic display. The toccata ("toccata"=touched, as in the keys) was a one-movement showcase of intricate melodic patterns and fast fingering. The name most closely associated with the toccata is that of Girolamo Frescobaldi (1583-1643).

LISTEN: Frescobaldi, [Toccata no.3](http://kola.cc.columbia.edu:8080/ramgen/itcmedia/feld/history/frescobaldi.rm) (16\_\_)

The fugue combined the virtuosity of the toccata with a more consistent, structured approach. This approached consisted of the repetition of the same melody (the "subject") in a number of polyphonic "voices," which voices then continued, re-introducing the subject at fairly regular intervals. Pre-eminent among fugues are the 48 in J. S. Bach's collection *The Well-Tempered Clavier.* ("Well-tempered" meant tuned well; "clavier" referred to any instrument with a keyboard, except a pipe organ.)

LISTEN: J. S. Bach, [*The Well-Tempered Clavier*, Book II, Fugue in E minor](http://kola.cc.columbia.edu:8080/ramgen/music/humanities/modules/mod9/mod9bachonharpsichord.rm) (1744)

**Classical History (Gluck through Beethoven)**

With regard to Western music, the latter half of the 18th Century is often called the "Classical" period; the music of this period is considered very different from that of the Baroque period. Yet the transition from Baroque to Classical was gradual. Three trends of the middle years of the 18th century were behind this transition.

The first trend was known as Reform Opera. A number of composers reacted against what they saw as the stilted conventions of Italian Baroque opera. They wanted to make Italian opera more natural, more directly expressive, with more focus on the dramatic narrative and less focus on providing solo singers with passages of elaborate, showy ornamentation. The most successful of these composers was Christoph Willibald Gluck (1714-1787). The topics of Reform opera were not new: Gluck's opera *Orfeo ed Euridice* retells the Orpheus legend, as did Monteverdi's famous *Orfeo* 150 years before. In the aria "Che fiero momento," Euridice sings of her trepidation at being led away by Orpheus from the calm of the underworld.

LISTEN: Gluck, [*Orfeo ed Euridice*](http://www.columbia.edu/itc/music/bent/text/trackB05.html)[, excerpt from Act 3, Scene 1](http://www.columbia.edu/itc/music/bent/ramfiles/vt98/trackB05.ram) (1762) [[Text](http://www.columbia.edu/itc/music/bent/text/trackB05.html)]

The second trend was a change in the style of solo keyboard music. Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach (1714-1788), a son of the (now) more famous J.S. Bach, preferred not the harpsichord but the clavichord and the fortepiano, instruments that could play louder or softer depending on the force with which their keys were struck. Bach's keyboard music uses this dynamic variability to appropriate some of the character of 18th-century Italian vocal music. Bach's slow movements, such as the one reproduced here, exemplified the *empfindsam* ("full of feeling") style, which was believed to express restrained passion and melancholy.

LISTEN: C.P.E. Bach, [Sonata in B Minor, second movement](http://kola.cc.columbia.edu:8080/ramgen/music/humanities/sisman/v3125/tape1/bach/cd1/ex08.rm) (c. 1760)

The third trend was the introduction of the symphony, a multi-movement work for orchestra. Early symphonies, such as those of Giovanni Battista Sammartini (1701-1775), were modeled on the overtures (introductory instrumental pieces) of Baroque Italian opera.

LISTEN: Sammartini, [Symphony in G Major, first movement](http://kola.cc.columbia.edu:8080/ramgen/music/humanities/sisman/v3125/tape1/sammartini/ex01.rm?end=00:04:17) (c. 1750)

Over time, the symphony gained in prestige; longer symphonies were written, for larger orchestras. (Yet the late 18th-century orchestra still numbered about 30 players, in contrast to the 70 or more players in modern orchestras.) Franz Joseph Haydn (1732-1809) wrote 104 symphonies during his long career; many of these were written for the private orchestra of Prince Nicholas Esterhazy. The following symphony was written near the end of Haydn's career, for the popular audience in London.

LISTEN: Haydn, [Symphony No. 100 in G Major, first movement](http://kola.cc.columbia.edu:8080/ramgen/music/humanities/edwards/tape4/track04.rm) (1794)

Haydn also wrote many examples of the string quartet, another genre born in the late 18th century. "String quartet" names a certain combination of instruments--two violins, viola, cello--and also names any work written for this combination. Unlike the chamber music of the Baroque, the string quartet lacks a basso continuo. Haydn's string quartets typically included four movements, of which the last was often buoyant and rapid.

LISTEN: Haydn, [String Quartet Op. 33, No. 2, last movement](http://kola.cc.columbia.edu:8080/ramgen/music/humanities/modules/mod5/mod5haydn.rm) (1781)

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791) toured Europe as a child prodigy; upon reaching adulthood, he settled in Vienna. Although Vienna was in German-speaking territory, Viennese opera was dominated by Italian style, as was the opera of much of Europe. The Italian operas that Mozart wrote in Vienna were in the traditional Italian *buffa* (comic) style, yet they went beyond *buffa* comedy to engage social and moral issues. Although *Don Giovanni* is normatively an *opera buffa*, the title character is not comedic; Don Juan, as he is most often known to us, womanizes with a singular ferocity and a disregard for the social class of his victims. In the following excerpt, the Don's *buffa* servant Leporello reads from a book listing the Don's thousands of past romantic conquests.

LISTEN: Mozart, [*Don Giovanni*, excerpt from Act 1](http://www.columbia.edu/itc/music/reserves/cd4157/ramfiles/track11.ram) (1787) [[Text](http://www.columbia.edu/itc/music/reserves/cd4157/text/act01_02.html#track11)]

The piano concerto movement reproduced here reflects both Mozart's orchestral style and his style of writing for the piano, an instrument quickly gaining in popularity at the expense of the harpsichord. The concerti of the Classical period were usually for single soloists, as opposed to groups of soloists as in *concerti grossi*; the orchestra used was comparable to that used in the Classical symphony.

LISTEN: Mozart, [Piano Concerto in A Major K. 414, last movement](http://kola.cc.columbia.edu:8080/ramgen/music/humanities/bradley/tape5/ex01c.rm) (1782)

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827) studied with Haydn and other Classical composers as a young man; he found commercial success in late 18th-century Vienna, as had Haydn and Mozart. Yet Beethoven was considered a proto-Romantic by his 19th-century successors. Beethoven's image as a scowling, disheveled eccentric is largely undeserved, but it is true that Beethoven fought deafness throughout much of his life, and that some of his music seemed awkward and violent to those who first heard it. The first movement of Beethoven's Symphony No. 5 is built on the sonata-form model, but its famous opening and its protracted coda (ending) were novel features.

LISTEN: Beethoven, [Symphony No. 5 in C Minor, first movement](http://www.columbia.edu/itc/music/modules/mod4/ramfiles/mod4beethoven.ram) (1808)

Beethoven composed string quartets throughout his life. Those written near the end of his life, such as the one reproduced here, grew farther and farther from the norms of Classical style. Some scholars divide Beethoven's career, rather artificially, into three periods; the Symphony No. 5 belongs to the second of these periods, and the String Quartet op. 131 to the third. (The first period includes works that are considered to be closest to the Viennese Classical style of Mozart and Haydn.)

LISTEN: Beethoven, [String Quartet op. 131 in C# Minor, first movement](http://www.columbia.edu/itc/music/reserves/cd501/ramfiles/track01.ram) (1826)

Much of the music of the 19th century has been called "Romantic" music, so that Romanticism in Western music is considered the sequel to Classicism. What is certain is that many early 19th-century composers were influenced by the literary Romantics, such as Johann Wolfgang von Goethe. Poems by Goethe and other German-speaking authors were set to music, to be performed by solo singer and piano; these brief settings were known as *Lieder* (literally, "songs"; but distinguished from the less weighty *Gesangen*). Robert Schumann (1810-1856) was renowned for his *Lieder*. "Kennst du das Land?" sets a passage from Goethe's epic *Wilhelm Meister*, in which a young woman begs her "protector," the title character, to let her return to her home.

**Romantic History (Schumann through Mahler)**

LISTEN: Schumann, "[Kennst du das Land?](http://kola.cc.columbia.edu:8080/ramgen/music/humanities/modules/mod10/mod10schumann.rm)" (Do you know the place?) (1849) [[Text](http://www.columbia.edu/itc/music/modules/mod10/schuberttxt.html)]

The Romantic era was the heyday of the programmatic orchestral work. A program, in the musical sense, is a narrative that is to be presented, or at least suggested, by a purely instrumental composition. The French composer Hector Berlioz (1803-1869) subtitled his *Symphonie fantastique* "Episode in the Life of an Artist"; at the symphony's performance, he distributed a program that detailed the travails of an artist suffering unrequited love. (It was an open secret that the artist was a fictionalized version of Berlioz himself, struck with love for with the actress Harriet Smithson.) The movement reproduced here, the fourth of five, is meant to depict the artist's drug-induced vision of being marched to the gallows to be hung.

LISTEN: Berlioz, [*Symphonie fantastique* (Fantasy Symphony), fourth movement](http://kola.cc.columbia.edu:8080/ramgen/music/humanities/cd467/track04.rm) (1830)

The 19th century was also the heyday of the piano "miniature," short in length yet often emotionally charged. Fryderyk Chopin (1810-1849) was born in Poland, but lived in Paris for most of his working life. He composed solo piano music almost exclusively. Chopin's piano pieces did not carry poetic titles, as did those of some contemporaries; instead, he assigned them to different types (etude, ballade, mazurka--the last a Polish dance). The "Preludes" were not introductory to other musical works, despite their names; they were standalone pieces that did not fit into Chopin's other categories. Chopin's 24 preludes are often played as a set.

LISTEN: Chopin, [Prelude in E Minor](http://kola.cc.columbia.edu:8080/ramgen/music/humanities/edwards/tape6/track01.rm) (1839)

The operas of Giusuppe Verdi (1813-1901) dominated Italian music from the 1840's through the 1880's. Like many composers of the middle and late 19th century, Verdi was an ardent nationalist, believing that music written by Italians should exemplify a particularly Italian style. This style was based on a type of singing called *bel canto* ("beautifully sung"), which involved continuous, flowing melodies, emphasis on vowels, and long, high climaxes at dramatic points. Verdi also made heavy use of onstage choruses, often creating scenes in which the singing of soloists and of the chorus overlapped. Verdi's recitative passages were accompanied by full orchestra, making them more continuous with arias than were 18th-century recitatives, which were accompanied by harpsichord. In this scene from *La Traviata*, the spurned Alfredo accuses his ex-lover Violetta of infidelity, infidelity Violetta resorted to so as to protect Alfredo's family name. (It's a long story!)

LISTEN: Verdi, [*La Traviata* (The Woman Led Astray), excerpt from Act II](http://www.columbia.edu/itc/music/modules/mod6/verdi.ram) (1853) [[Text](http://www.columbia.edu/itc/music/modules/mod6/mod6text2.html)]

Like Verdi, Richard Wagner (1813-1883) dominated the opera scene of his country--in Wagner's case, Germany. Also like Verdi, Wagner was a fervid nationalist; he believed that German opera should be free of Italian and French influence, to the point of excluding self-contained arias entirely. In Wagner's ideal German opera, music, poetry, action, staging, and even set design were perfectly fused in the service of a single dramatic idea, as expressed through a story from Teutonic legend. (Wagner's term for the product of such a fusion was *Gesamtkunstwerk*-- "total art work.") Wagner intended the orchestra to play as great a role as the sung words in furthering the operatic narrative. To this end, he assigned the orchestra *Leitmotiven* ("leading motives"), brief melodic fragments which were associated with characters, objects, or ideas presented onstage. In this scene from *Tristan und Isolde*, the title characters drink a magic potion that creates undying (and forbidden) love between them. In the long passage without any singing, the potion takes effect as the orchestra presents the "Love-Death" *Leitmotiv*, which was introduced in a Prelude before the opera's action began.

LISTEN: Wagner, [*Tristan und Isolde*, excerpt from Act I, Scene 5](http://kola.cc.columbia.edu:8080/ramgen/music/humanities/lodato/v2025/tape4/ex15.rm) (1859)

In contrast to Wagner, who wrote operas almost exclusively, Johannes Brahms (1833-1897) wrote no operas at all. Many Germans considered Brahms to be Beethoven's first worthy successor in the field of instrumental music. The last movement of Brahms's Symphony No. 3 is reproduced here.

LISTEN: Brahms, [Symphony No. 3, last movement](http://kola.cc.columbia.edu:8080/ramgen/itcmedia/feld/history/brahms.rm) (1883)

As the 19th century ended, composers combined the symphony and the *Lied* to form the symphonic *Lied*, for solo vocalist and orchestra. The Austrian conductor Gustav Mahler (1860-1911) wrote numerous sets of symphonic *Lieder*, as well as nine symphonies (which themselves included symphonic *Lieder* as some of their movements). Reproduced here is Mahler's "St. Antony's Sermon to the Fishes," a setting of a text from the folk-poetry anthology *Das Knaben Wunderhorn* (The Youth's Magic Horn).

LISTEN: Mahler, "[Des Antoninus von Padua Fischpredigt](http://kola.cc.columbia.edu:8080/ramgen/music/humanities/modules/mod8/mod8fishpredigt.rm)" (St. Anthony's Sermon to the Fishes) (1893) [[Text](http://www.columbia.edu/itc/music/modules/mod8/mahlertxt.html)]

**Early 20th-C. History (Debussy through Copland)**

Many 20th-century composers turned away from harmonic methods that had been used in music for the past 150 years. The Frenchman Claude Debussy (1862-1918) rejected the rules of 19th-century harmony as they were taught in the Paris Conservatoire, instead infusing his practice with harmonic techniques from East Asia and Russia. Debussy's association with French painters of his time has led some people to label him and his music "Impressionist." Debussy did share with the Impressionist painters a propensity for depicting nature; the orchestral piece reproduced here, one of three "nocturnes," is entitled "Clouds." (Debussy's "nocturnes" are not related to Chopin's use of the term.) With Debussy, we enter the "Modern" era of Western art music, an era which presumably continues to the present day.

LISTEN: Debussy, [*Trois Nocturnes*, "Nuages"](http://www.columbia.edu/itc/music/reserves/cd355/ramfiles/track01.ram) (Clouds) (1899)

Igor Stravinsky (1882-1971) also wrote music that did not use the harmonic methods of the 19th century. Stravinsky incorporated the folk music of his native Russia into his early compositions, while using harmonic techniques that were radically modern at the time. The subject of Stravinsky's ballet *Le Sacre du Printemps* ("The Rite of Spring"), a pagan ritual of human sacrifice, was meant to recall "primitive" culture. The excerpt here accompanied one of the ballet's many depictions of ritual dances preceding a final virgin sacrifice.

LISTEN: Stravinsky, [*Le Sacre du Printemps* (The Rite of Spring), "Danse des adolescentes"](http://www.columbia.edu/itc/music/reserves/cd365/ramfiles/track08.ram) (Dance of the Adolescent Girls) (1913)

The American Charles Ives (1874-1954) was yet another composer to react negatively to the strictures of prior musical practice. Ives blended, overlaid, and contrasted snippets of music from all walks of American life: the country church, the dance hall, and the military base. Military music is most evident in "Putnam's Camp, Redding, Connecticut," a musical representation of the Revolutionary army marching at the winter quarters of General Israel Putnam. The tunes "Yankee Doodle" and "The British Grenadiers" are woven into the music, as is John Philip Sousa's march "Semper Fidelis."

LISTEN: Ives, [*Three Places in New England*, "Putnam's Camp, Redding, Connecticut"](http://www.columbia.edu/itc/music/kramer/ramfiles/tape3/clip07.ram) (1904)

Bela Bartok (1881-1945) was not only a composer and a pianist, but also an ethnomusicologist: he used a gramophone to record thousands of folk tunes in his native Hungary and in surrounding countries. Bartok's music ranged from explicit settings of these folk tunes to abstract works which bore a more subtle folk influence. The fourth movement of Bartok's String Quartet #4 probably falls into the latter category. The movement is set entirely in *pizzicato*--the two violins, viola, and cello are plucked rather than bowed.

LISTEN: Bartok, String [Quartet #4, fourth movement](http://www.columbia.edu/itc/music/reserves/cd2293/ramfiles/track07.ram) (1928)

The music of the Austrian Arnold Schoenberg (1874-1951) grew farther and farther from 19th-century harmonic models, until he was writing music that has been called "atonal," meaning that, in a certain technical respect, no note in it is more central than any other. (Almost no music from Gregorian times through the 19th century had been atonal.) In the 1920's, Schoenberg introduced the "twelve-tone system," a new technique for organizing music without the need for a central note. Schoenberg's *Pierrot Lunaire*, setting poems of Albert Giraud, dates from before his twelve-tone period. The poems transport Pierrot, the stock character of the Italian *commedia del'arte*, into alien, psychologically charged situations. *Pierrot Lunaire* uses a technique called *Sprechstimme* ("speech-sound"); it is not quite spoken, not quite sung.

LISTEN: Schoenberg, *Pierrot Lunaire*, #8 "[Die Nacht](http://kola.cc.columbia.edu:8080/ramgen/music/humanities/modules/mod2/mod2schoenberg1.rm)" (The Night), #12 "[Galgenlied](http://kola.cc.columbia.edu:8080/ramgen/music/humanities/modules/mod2/mod2schoenberg2.rm)" (Gallows Song), #13 "[Enthauptung](http://kola.cc.columbia.edu:8080/ramgen/music/humanities/modules/mod2/mod2schoenberg3.rm)" (Beheading) (1912) [[Text](http://www.columbia.edu/itc/music/modules/mod2/mod2schoen.html)]

The best-known work of Alban Berg (1885-1935), a student of Schoenberg, is the Expressionist opera *Wozzeck*. Expressionism, associated with painters and composers in Germany and Austria between the world wars, took as its subject matter the irrational unconscious, inner conflict, and alienation from the conventions of society. The title character of *Wozzeck* is an impoverished, deranged soldier, who discovers an affair between his lover Marie and the more impressive Drum Major. In the scene reproduced here, Wozzeck finds himself in a crowded bar after having cut Marie's throat; near the end of the scene, the crowd discovers blood stains on Wozzeck's arm, inspiring him to flee.

LISTEN: Berg, [*Wozzeck*, Act 3, Scene 3](http://www.columbia.edu/itc/music/reserves/cd575/ramfiles/track13.ram) (1923) [[Text](http://www.columbia.edu/itc/music/modules/mod6/mod6text5.html#3)]

Like Ives, Aaron Copland (1900-1990) drew on American folk music. Copland's ballet *Rodeo* depicts life among cowboys in the Old West. The melody of the final "Hoe-Down" is borrowed from traditional American fiddling.

LISTEN: Copland, [*Rodeo*, "Hoe-Down"](http://kola.cc.columbia.edu:8080/ramgen/itcmedia/feld/history/copland.rm) (1942)

**Late 20th-C. History (Shostakovich through Harbison)**

The Soviet Union under Joseph Stalin was hostile toward "modernist" music, i.e., music that broke too radically with 19th-century style and harmonic technique. The Party preferred aggrandizement of itself and of the Russian people by means of music that was relatively simple and triumphant. Shostakovich's own tastes ran to the satirical and ironic as often as to the victorious. Upon the occasion of victory over the Nazis in 1945, the prominent Russian composer Dmitri Shostakovich (1906-1975) presented his Symphony No. 9. Although the harmonic techniques of the symphony were only moderately removed from 19th-century techniques, Soviet authorities were displeased at the acid sarcasm they heard beneath the first movement's jubilant surface.

LISTEN: Shostakovich, [Symphony No. 9 in Eb Major, first movement](http://kola.cc.columbia.edu:8080/ramgen/itcmedia/feld/history/shostakovich.rm) (1945)

The most prominent French composer of the mid-20th century was Olivier Messiaen (1908-1992). Messiaen's music was motivated by his personal brand of Catholic mysticism; the sounds of bird calls and the techniques of Indian classical music also influenced him. Messiaen wrote the *Quatuor pour la fin du temps* while he was imprisoned in a German POW camp during World War II. The title of the first movement, "Liturgy of Crystal," typifies Messiaen's combination of religious themes and vivid imagery.

LISTEN: Messiaen, [*Quatuor pour la fin du temps* (Quartet for the End of Time), "Liturgie de cristal"](http://www.columbia.edu/itc/music/reserves/cd259/ramfiles/track01.ram) (1941)

Music history has always been characterized by the search for ways to make new kinds of sound--by constructing new instruments, by finding new ways of playing old instruments, by finding new ways for performers to work together. The search for new kinds of sound became particularly intense in the mid-to-late 20th century. In *Atmospheres*, written by György Ligeti (b. 1923), the string instruments combine to form a sound intended to be different from the sound of earlier string ensemble music.

LISTEN: Ligeti, [*Atmospheres*](http://kola.cc.columbia.edu:8080/ramgen/music/humanities/cerar/ex17.rm?start=0:00&end=4:00) (1961)

The use of early music synthesizers and the physical manipulation of magnetic tape prefigured today's use of digital sampling by many composers. Karlheinz Stockhausen (b. 1928) used a traditional song of religious praise as his raw material in this early example.

LISTEN: Stockhausen, [*Gesang der Junglige*](http://kola.cc.columbia.edu:8080/ramgen/music/humanities/burford/summer2000/tape4/ex05.rm?end=00:04:00) (Song of the Youths) (1956) [first 4:00]

Atonal music using Schoenberg's twelve-tone system never acquired a large popular audience, but it has continued to be used throughout the 20th century. More than anyone else, Milton Babbitt (b. 1916) fueled the stereotype of the university-supported American composer: a cloistered figure writing complex, mathematically controlled twelve-tone music for a narrow audience. Yet Babbitt has often said that the goal of his computations is musical beauty, not abstract cerebration.

LISTEN: Babbitt, [*Playing for Time*](http://kola.cc.columbia.edu:8080/ramgen/itcmedia/feld/history/babbitt.rm) (1979)

The term "Minimalist" has been applied to late 20th-century musical works which repeat relatively simple patterns at great length. Steve Reich (b. 1936) is one of the most prominent Minimalists. His *Piano Phase* features a piano playing a short pattern of notes repeatedly; at the same time, a recording of the pianist plays back at a speed slightly slower than the original, so that the pianist gradually falls "out of phase" with her own recording. (The work can also be performed by two pianists, or by two recordings.)

LISTEN: Reich, [*Piano Phase*](http://kola.cc.columbia.edu:8080/ramgen/music/humanities/modules/mod1/mod1reich.rm?end=00:04:00) (1967) [first 4:00]

Not all late 20th-century American music is atonal, minimalist, or based on electronic sounds. The Oboe Concerto of John Harbison (b. 1938) is a more recent composition than any of the works reproduced above, yet it is considered to be relatively traditional in terms of melody, harmony, rhythm, and the use of standard acoustic instruments.

LISTEN: Harbison, [*Oboe Concerto*, third movement](http://kola.cc.columbia.edu:8080/ramgen/itcmedia/feld/history/harbison.rm) (1991)