

Chapter Outline

Prelude. (CHWM 314)

Music in the early Classic period reflected a preference for naturalness and a desire for wide appeal. Writers distinguished between the learned style of contrapuntal writing and the more tuneful, homophonic galant style.

I. General Characteristics of the New Style (CHWM 314–16)

1. Melody

The focus on melody in the Classic period led to a musical syntax different from earlier styles.

2. Periodicity

The new styles were characterized by *periodicity*. A *period* is formed by two or more phrases ending in a cadence, and a composition was made up of two or more periods.

3. Musical rhetoric

Eighteenth-century theorists such as *Heinrich Christoph Koch* (1749–1816) frequently referred to music in rhetorical terms, believing that, like speech, it could move emotions and that a composition was like an oration. Koch showed how to assemble short units into phrases, phrases into periods, and periods into larger forms.

4. Harmony

In contrast to the continuous drive of Baroque harmony, the pace of harmonic change was slower in the new style.

5. Alberti bass

Composers compensated for a slower harmonic rhythm by animating the texture through rhythmic means, like the *Alberti bass* in keyboard music.

6. Form

By the late eighteenth century, composers differentiated musical material according to its function in the form, with each segment of music serving as a beginning, middle, or end of a phrase, period, section, or piece.

7. Emotional contrasts

Unlike seventeenth-century thinkers, psychologists in the eighteenth century believed that human feelings were constantly changing.

8. Form and content

Composers no longer sought to convey a single mood in a movement or section, but instead introduced emotional contrasts within sections or themes.

II. Opera Buffa (CHWM 316–21, NAWM 101 and 103)

Many characteristics of Classical music originated in the Italian opera of the first decades of the eighteenth century. An *opera buffa* was a full-length comic opera sung throughout, with a combination of serious and comic characters. Dialogue was set in rapid recitative with keyboard accompaniment. Arias used short, tuneful phrases, organized into periods and accompanied by simple harmonies.

1. Intermezzo

An *intermezzo* was a type of Italian comic opera that was performed in two or three segments between the acts of a serious opera or play.

2. *La serva padrona*

The best-known intermezzo is *La serva padrona* (The Maid as Mistress, 1733) by *Giovanni Battista Pergolesi* (1710–1736), who used rapid changes of melodic figuration and style to convey the shifting thoughts and moods of the characters. Comic opera grew in importance after 1760 and exercised an important influence on later music in its style, its preference for naturalness, and its use of national characteristics. **Music: NAWM 101**

In Context: Music and Social Custom in British Society

Amateur music-making was important in British society in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, especially for women, but relatively few in Britain pursued music as a career.

3. French opéra comique

Opéra comique was a kind of French light opera in which songs alternated with spoken dialogue. The songs were either existing popular tunes (vaudevilles) or newly composed airs (ariettes). Later in the century, opéra comique also dealt boldly with social issues.

4. English ballad opera

The *ballad opera* became popular with the success of *The Beggar's Opera* (1728). Ballad operas consisted of songs that set new words to borrowed tunes and parodied operatic conventions. **Music: NAWM 103**

5. German *Singspiel*

A *Singspiel* was an opera in German with spoken dialogue and lively musical numbers in styles native to Germany or influenced by Italian comic opera.

III. Opera seria (CHWM 321–24, NAWM 102)

Aria styles from comic opera were also used in *opera seria* (serious opera).

1. Metastasio

The Italian poet *Pietro Metastasio* (1698–1782), whose librettos were set hundreds of times, developed the standard form for opera seria. The three acts of an opera seria consist of alternating recitative (action) and aria (reflection) with a few duets or larger ensembles.

2. Reign of the singers

The main interest in opera lay in the arias, and in performing an opera, singers often changed arias or substituted arias from other operas. Often the embellishments that singers added did more to display their voices than to further the drama.

3. New features of da capo arias

The da capo aria form evolved over time, as composers introduced a greater variety of moods, short melodic units, and formal ideas from the sonata and concerto.

A Closer Look: The Da Capo Aria and the Abbreviated Da Capo

The standard aria form was the da capo aria, a basic ABA scheme. Its harmonic plan and formal methods are similar to Classical instrumental works. For some arias, composers shortened the standard form.

In Context: An Eighteenth-Century Diva, Faustina Bordoni

Faustina Bordoni (1700–1781) was one of the great singer-actresses of her time, performing all over Europe.

4. Hasse

Johann Adolf Hasse (1699–1783), music director at the Saxon court in Dresden, was the leading composer of opera seria at midcentury. His vocal style follows the natural rhythms and inflections of the text. **Music: NAWM 102**

IV. Opera Reform (CHWM 324–27, NAWM 104)

Some composers sought to reform opera to make it more flexible, expressive, varied, and "natural." Two of the most important figures in opera reform were *Niccolò Jommelli* (1714–1774) and *Tommaso Traetta* (1727–1779), who combined French and Italian traits to create a cosmopolitan type of opera.

1. Gluck

Christoph Willibald Gluck (1714–1787), working with librettist *Raniero de Calzabigi* (1714–1795), reformed opera by making music serve the poetry and advance the plot, while synthesizing French and Italian opera styles.

In Performance: Vocal Embellishment

Singers were expected to embellish the written vocal line, in order both to enhance the aria's expression and to display their vocal prowess.

2. Gluck's *Orfeo*

In Gluck's *Orfeo*, recitatives, arias, and choruses intermingle in large unified scenes. **Music: NAWM 104.**

3. Gluck's other operas

Gluck brought his new style to Paris and composed several successful French operas, including *Iphigénie en Aulide* (Iphigenia in Aulis, 1774), *Armide* (1777), and *Iphigénie en Tauride* (Iphigenia in Tauris, 1779).

4. Influence

Gluck's operas became models for many others, especially in Paris.

A Closer Look: The Rivalry between French and Italian Opera

The *querelle des bouffons* was a debate between French intellectuals about French and Italian opera. Jean-Jacques Rousseau praised Italian opera, especially its emphasis on "natural" melody.

V. The New World (CHWM 327-29, NAWM 105)

The earliest surviving American music is church music, and church musicians drew on their respective national styles.

1. Puritans

New England Puritans used metrical psalms in worship. In the eighteenth century, singing schools trained amateurs to sing psalms and anthems and created a demand for new music.

2. William Billings

William Billings (1746–1800) was the most prominent composer of sacred music in New England, writing in a variety of genres, including hymns, anthems, and *fuging tunes*. He wrote in a style best suited to his needs, remaining independent from the normal rules of counterpoint. **Music: NAWM 105**

3. Moravians

German-speaking Protestants, known as Moravians, were familiar with European trends, embellished their church services with arias and motets, and collected libraries of secular and sacred music.

Postlude (CHWM 330)

The new musical idioms of the mid- to late-eighteenth century had their sources in vocal music. These new styles in turn had a tremendous impact on instrumental music.