

# *Western music*

## **Medieval music**

Musical notation began and so did the birth of polyphony. Traced back to the social and religious developments of the middle Ages. Most important musicians were priests (History of Music). The plainchant, often referred to as the Gregorian chant, was monophonic and it was the official music of the Roman Catholic church for over 1,000 years as it was set to sacred texts. It remains as the most spiritually moving and profound music in Western culture. It was first performed in unison, as the notes are of the same length, or played in the Key of C. It was a time of heavy church influence, as the use and creation of music was regulated by church. Troubadours, Trouveres and Minstrels were poets and musicians that influenced medieval music.

## **Renaissance music**

The Renaissance was a time of rebirth in learning, science, and the arts throughout Europe (IPL2). It took shape largely in the development of vocal polyphony. Music began to demonstrate a greater sense of key and harmony. This era was a golden age in British music, by the genius of Thomas Tallis and William Byrd (Sinfini). Vocal polyphony has developed greatly as well, along with many other developments in Renaissance music, such as thought, literature and visual art (NYU). One of the most important changes would be the intellectual movement called "humanism". The Romans and Greeks discovered and believed that music was an effective and powerful tool of communication and can manipulate the moods of its listeners. Composers started to be more aware of music's potential power.

## Claudio Monteverdi

Master of motets and madrigals, he created the first great Italian operas.



## Josquin des Prez

He is a crucial figure in development of Renaissance polyphony.



## William Byrd

William Byrd is a master of English Renaissance music. He wrote virginal and organ music that elevated the English keyboard style.



## Baroque music

Baroque music derives more so from the social and cultural context of the world for which it was written. Contrast was used as a dramatic element - an important ingredient in the drama of a baroque composition, as in the differences between loud and soft, solo and ensemble. Composers became more precise about instrumentation. It became increasingly popular over the last 50 years. Vocal music, instrumental music is musical forms that defined the baroque era and the forms identified with baroque music are cantata, concerto, sonata, oratorio and opera.

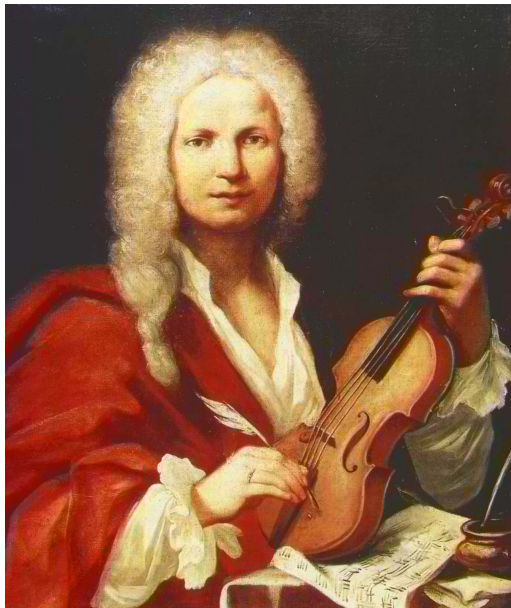
## Corelli

Exercised a wide influence on his contemporaries and on the succeeding generation of composers.



## Vivaldi

Recognized as one of the greatest Baroque composers, his influence during his lifetime was widespread across Europe. His best known work is a series of violin concertos known as the Four Seasons.



## Classical music

The classical era is defined by the dramatic concept of “sonata form”. The orchestra becomes an ensemble of string, woodwind, brass and percussion instruments and it also increased in size. Not only does classical music have a lighter and clearer texture than Baroque music, it is also less complex. It emphasizes light elegance in contrast of the Baroque’s dignified seriousness. Melodies also tend to be shorter. Instrumental music was very important – the main kinds being sonata, trio, string quartet, symphony, concerto, serenade and divertimento.

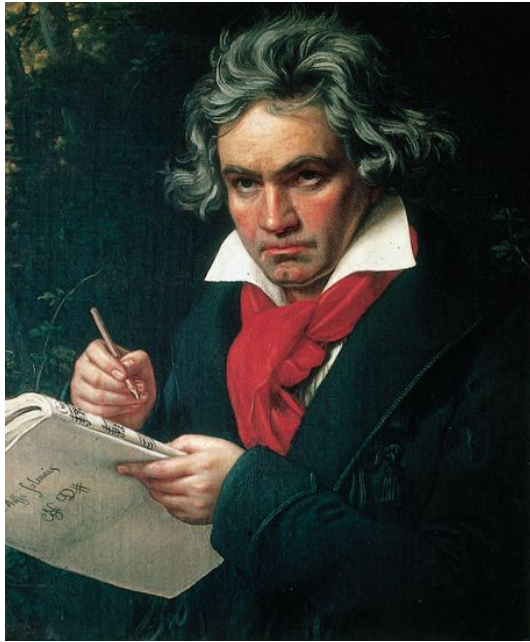
### Amadeus Wolfgang Mozart

He created a string of operas, concertos, symphonies and sonatas that helped define the classical era. He is then widely recognized as one of the greatest composers in the history of Western music (Britannica).



## Ludwig Van Beethoven

He was a deaf German composer and remains one of the most famous and influential of all composers.



## Romantic music

Fantasy and imagination replaced the Classical values of restraint (Sinfini). The expression of emotion was the main focus of all arts of the “Romantic” movement. The age of Romanticism turned the world of music inside out. A significant feature of the poetry of the time is the new role of individual thought and personal project. The emphasis on ‘feeling’ was found in most of the Romantic definitions of poetry. Composers focused solely on the expression of intense feelings in their music.

## Robert Schumann

He is a German composer who is an influential music critic; he also left the study of law to pursue a career as a virtuoso pianist.



## Contemporary music

Contemporary music is based on originality, therefore contemporary artists attempted to “disobey” the laws of music that has been followed for many years. It reflected the influences of art and literature in a mechanistic age. Musical experiments are with electronic music. There is new spirituality as lots of today’s music is varied and colorful. A strong feature of contemporary music is the “crossover” – which is music that has a strong classical feel to it but draws its inspiration from non-classical music idioms (Sinfini). The characteristics of contemporary music are fewer lyrical melodies, dissonant harmonies, complex rhythms, percussiveness, greater use of woodwind, brass and percussion instruments, synthetic and electronic sounds (Mostlywind).

## The Beatles

They are regarded as the greatest and influential act of the rock era. They remain popular until today.



## Michael Jackson

His contributions to music and dance, along with publicized personal life, made him a global figure in popular culture for over four decades.





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