

Classical Era **(1750 - 1820)**

The Classical period has been called the "Golden Age of Music" because it was at this time that the major forms of Classical music were fully developed. The classical era runs roughly from the 1750s into the early decades of the 1820s. This collection features both pieces originally written for piano, as well as transcriptions for piano. The main composers of this era are Bach, Beethoven, Cimarosa, Clementi, Diabelli, Haydn, Mozart and Turk.

In the classical era, no middle class home was complete without a piano. The piano was a new invention and gradually replaced the harpsichord. The harpsichord was unable to play at different volume levels and was therefore limited to be able to play the new classical music. The piano can play a wide range of volumes. It served as the home entertainment centre for families in the classical era. The ever increasing number of people who could play the piano led to a much wider and much more educated audience for music.

Almost all musicians were either employed by the church or royal families in the early ages of the classical era. This frustrated many composers because they were often forced to write pieces that their master wanted. By the end of the classical era, though, a musical democracy was forming. Since the middle classes had money to spend and since they were well educated and interested in new music, public concerts helped make it possible for musicians to make a living without the assistance of royalty or the church. Individuals with money often paid composers directly to write specific pieces for them, giving musicians a new source of income.

The capital of the classical era was Vienna. It was one of the largest cities in Europe and served as the political centre for a huge portion of the continent. People were constantly coming through the city, bringing with them ideas and knowledge from other cultures. The citizens of Vienna were very well educated and were an excellent audience for classical composers.

During the classical era the baroque style of music faded quite quickly. Although, composers did continue to write in other styles of baroque genres; including the solo sonata, solo concerto, and opera. In this new genre the string quartet and the symphony were born and used widely.

The string quartet is a type of chamber music that is played by two violins, a viola, and a cello. The symphony is composed for an orchestra that consists of a large number of strings, woodwinds, brass, and percussion instruments.

String quartets and symphonies, as well as sonatas and concertos are comprised of movements. A movement is an independent section within a larger work. There are usually three or four movements in a composition and each movement has a different tempo and character. Compared to the music of the baroque era, melodies from the

classical era are longer and have a much greater variety of rhythms. Baroque melodies tend to repeat the same rhythmic figures frequently.

Three new musical forms were developed in the classical period. Form in music refers to the structure of a piece. Almost all music can be broken down into sections that contain either new music or repeated music. These sections help us to classify sonata form, rondo form, and theme and variations form. These were all of which were standard in the classical era. The popularity of the piano sonata and the string quartet are to a large extent thanks to the middle class taste for art music to be played at home.

The fact that no composer ever published a concerto for a wind or brass instrument; given the ubiquity of wind, especially flute, concertos during this period, this should not remain unfilled for long. No concertos for strings other than violin appear as yet in the series; not just solo concertos for viola, cello, or double bass but one of the ever-present symphonies concertantes of the period that include viola and cello would make most desirable editions. This is hoped to be maintained by the balanced representation and outstanding quality that have motivated this series from its beginning.