

## **THE CLASSICAL PERIOD**

The Classical period spans roughly between 1750-1820, and was a time where significant changes in musical form and style occurred. Influenced by the civilised restraint of the new age of Enlightenment, the main principle of the day was the search for intellectual freedom. Music of the Classical period became an embodiment of Enlightenment ideals that were centred on the idea that ‘the reason of man could ultimately unlock every mystery, that civilisation was heading onward and upward and that extremes of emotion were undesirable’<sup>1</sup>. The enlightenment age brought about nationalism and humanitarian ideas while mysticism and superstition faded.

During this period, ‘taste’ became significant and the belief was that music was designed first and foremost to appeal to the listener and for the gratification of the sense of hearing, not a means for the composer to show off, as in the baroque period. The aim of the new musical style was to make the music more directly expressive and simpler for the audience to follow and the musicians concentrated on making the music clearer by making the top melodic line the main point of listening.

## **GENERAL MUSICAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE CLASSICAL PERIOD**

### **FORM:**

The classical period is generally characterised by a near-obsession with the clarification of formal structure as the modern sonata form emerged from the rounded binary form of Baroque. During this period, the evolution of the trio sonata into the string quartet; concerto grosso into symphony concertante; and emergence of symphony and modern solo concerto occurred, and both the symphony and concerto form expanded so that each movement became self-contained- a small self-sufficient unit.

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<sup>1</sup> The Encyclopaedia of Classical Music- general editor: Robert Ainsley

### **MELODIC STYLE:**

A new type of melody is developed and is often folk-like in its clarity and simplicity. This homophonic texture replaced the long lines and figuration styles of baroque polyphony. Elements of grand baroque style such as basso continuo were abandoned and inner parts were fully written out.

### **HOMOPHONIC STYLE:**

Homophonic style has decided preference over polyphony style due to the new importance of distinct thematic material. A special aspect of this characteristic is the Alberti Bass, a special type of broken-chord accompaniment

### **COUNTERPOINT:**

Counterpoint is still used especially in thematic development but is of secondary importance. Contrapuntal forms were generally abandoned although it was used sparingly and for specific purposes.

### **HARMONY:**

On the whole, there is less harmonic complexity and ingenuity in the classical period with no significant harmonic developments occurring until the time of Beethoven, although slow harmonic progression was among the most striking features that distinguished harmony after about 1730 from that of the Baroque era. Many passages in instrumental music consisted solely of principle triads. Seventh chords were used sparingly and ninth chords not at all whilst tonic-dominant harmony, IV-V-I harmonic progressions and classical cadential progression I<sup>ib</sup>-V-I were used frequently as the use of strong cadential progression frequently compensated for the use of chromatism in terms of tonality. The use of chromaticism for expressive effect was common. This was usually melodic chromaticism without affecting the underlying plain harmony. In its simplest form, it occurs in unaccented passing or auxiliary notes. Melodic chromaticism was used to compensate for the underlying harmonic plainness (especially in Mozart). Extensive modulations (equivalent to the use of dissonance by Baroque composers) were used to build longer arches of tension and release, and the borrowing of one or two chords from the tonic minor key or modulating to the tonic minor (major to minor shift was typical of Mozart and Schubert and only used in Vienna) were used.

### **PHRASEOLOGY:**

An aspect of formal clarity is the evident clarity of phraseology. On the whole, the phrases in classical music are shorter and more regular. Themes are made of very short fragments cast in 4 or 8 bar phrases and the repetition of short phrases became the characteristic of style gallant, as opposed to a long uninterrupted stream of music in the Baroque period. Classical melodies usually fall into even phrases, and were often organized into symmetrical 'question and answer' structure.

### **ORCHESTRATION:**

The basis of modern orchestration and instrumentation was established in the Classical period. Instrumental combinations became standardized. The flute and solo voice was used frequently, the roles of the harpsichord and string instruments were reversed and the piano, with its ability to produce gradations of dynamics, became the most important solo instrument for Classical composers.

### **DYNAMICS:**

Composers in this period paid considerable attention to effects of loud and soft and an enriched use of rhythm and silence was used. There was also the use of dynamic shading, of crescendo and diminuendo as opposed to the baroque use of contrasting levels (ripieno against concertino)

### **MOOD:**

Establishing a single emotional quality and maintaining it throughout a composition seemed constricting to the younger composers, and so the mood of music was changeable in the same piece, with different moods in close succession existing in Classical pieces. With the contrasting themes of the sonata form, this thematic dualism became an essential structural element in Classical music as opposed to the constant moods and the principle of the basic affection of Baroque music.

## **THE CLASSICAL CONCERTO**

The classical concerto is a three-movement form based upon the exchange of material between a solo instrument and the entire orchestral ensemble (tutti).

Because it is a modified version of the classical sonata-allegro form, the first movement of the classical concerto begins with an exposition consisting of 3 main parts:

- 1) Opening tutti- principle themes are introduced, ends in the tonic key
- 2) Entrance of the solo instrument followed by an exchange of material
- 3) Short tutti section to close the exposition.

The development is usually short and leads through various keys back to the tonic. The Recapitulation is basically a repetition of the exposition, only shorter, and with the second tutti section ending on a six-four chord (tonic chord with the fifth in the bass). The solo instrument then plays a cadenza- written by either the composer himself or the performer or someone else or was improvised by the performer, as was the case in most classical concertos. A brief tutti section, with or without the solo instrument to conclude the movement, then follows this cadenza.

Usually in some sort of enlarged song form, a first rondo or a variation form, the second movement of the classical concerto is less virtuosic and more ornamental than the first movement. The cadenza is rarely used in the andante movement.

For a finale, the third and last movement is in a fast tempo, and, like the last movement of the classical symphony, it is usually some sort of rondo form. A short cadenza is occasionally used.

## Horn Concerto No. 3 in E Flat- Mozart (K. 447)

**Tempo:** Allegro. No tempo changes

**Time Signature:** Common time

**Rhythm:** Mostly crotchets and quavers

**Structure:** Sonata form

**Instruments:** B Flat Clarinet, Bassoon, E Flat Horn, Violins, Viola, Cello, Double Bass

**Tone Colour:** Happy & light, shown by the soft music, slurs and light sound of the horn

**Dynamics:** Mostly played soft

**Stylistic Features:** Trills, cadenza, Alberti bass, homophonic, tremolo, triplet

Exposition (bars 1-82) Development (bars 82-111) Recapitulation (bars 111-183)

- Starts off with the 1<sup>st</sup> theme played by Violin I and accompanied by the strings
- 2<sup>nd</sup> theme starts at the end of bar 9 also by Violin I accompanied by the strings
- A codetta starts in bar 19 and leads into the soloist exposition in bar 29. Violin II plays an Alberti bass in bars 20-24, and syncopation in the entire orchestra (minus horn) in bar 28.
- At bar 36-51 is a bridge passage, which modulates into the dominant, B flat shown by the natural placed on the A in bar 46
- 2<sup>nd</sup> subject starts in bar 51 first by violin I and then repeated by the horn in bar 55
- Modulates into D minor in bar 60 shown by a natural sign in front of the A and E
- Codetta begins at bar 70 until development starts at 82.
- Development starts in a remote key, D Flat major shown by a D flat and G flat.
- Theme in bars 85-92
- Travels through various modulations in the sequence-like bars from 97-111.
- Recap: 1st theme in tonic by violin in bars 111-120. Taken up by horn in 121.
- Bridge passage from bars 132-139
- 2<sup>nd</sup> subject starts 139 by violins. Horn plays this in bar 143.
- Chromaticism in bars 151-152
- Cadenza in bar 171
- Coda from 172-end
- Movement ends in a cadential 6/4 chord.

## **Piano Concerto No. 3 in C Minor, First Movement- Beethoven (Op. 37)**

Duration: 16:58

Tempo: Allegro con brio. No tempo changes

Time: Cut common time

Rhythm: Mostly crotchets, quavers and semiquavers.

Tone Colour: Fierce, Powerful and energetic, shown by many staccatos and sforzando.

Dynamics: Many crescendo and diminuendo, mainly loud- even fortissimo and sforzando

Stylistic Features: a lot of trills, grace notes, Alberti bass, cadenza, homophonic, use of rhythm and sonata form

Instrumentation: Flute, Oboe, Clarinet in B Flat, Bassoon, Horn in E Flat, Trumpet, Timpani, Piano, Violins, Violas, Cello and Double Bass.

Exposition (1-249) Development (244-308) Recapitulation (309-443)

- Strings play 1<sup>st</sup> theme in unison. Oboe, bassoon and horn then imitate melody moved up a tone, i.e. a sequence.
- Starts in C minor and alternating between E Flat major and C minor from bar 9.
- 2<sup>nd</sup> subject at bar 50-74, played by violin and clarinet with the rest of the orchestra accompanying. Mainly in the relative major, E Flat Major
- Climax/codetta starts at bar 74 with an elaboration of the opening theme played by bassoon then taken up by strings in 77 and then orchestra with harmony
- Finishes with a round of the first theme starting at bar 104 played by wind instruments then strings finishing at 111, ending in a perfect cadence.
- 2<sup>nd</sup> exposition starts in bar 111 with the piano playing solo scale passages in C minor into soloists 1<sup>st</sup> subject. Strings join from 122 onwards.
- Question and answer dialogue from bar 131 between strings, horn and piano. Rest of the wind instruments join in at 138. Modulates through various keys
- 2<sup>nd</sup> subject starts at 114 in E Flat major with strings accompanying.
- Tutti comes in at 171, imitating the piano
- From 199, strings accompany with the tonic-dominant theme in bar 3 until 216
- Finishes the exposition with a codetta played by the tutti at 227.
- Development starts in D Major, dominated by scale passages and triplets

- Canonic imitation at bars 267-271
- Bars 291-309, there are various small modulations to bring the piece to C minor
- Recapitulation starts at 309 with the tutti playing the first theme in unison
- 317-325 Question and answer effect using the rhythm of bar 3.
- Use of alberti bass in bars 326-329
- 2<sup>nd</sup> subject in C Major in 340 with piano, winds take over theme until 355
- Bars 358-366 in G Major
- 374 in C major
- Piano plays a cadenza at bar 416 ending with a trill to signal the entrance the rest of the orchestra.
- Timpani joins in tapping at 403, playing C and G-tonic dominant.
- Coda starts at 417 with all instruments playing besides winds and brass.
- Whole movement ends with a scale passage in the piano accompanied by the tutti ending with the entire orchestra on C.

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