Baroque characteristics (1600-1750)

The continuo (or basso continuo) part was usually played on the **harpsichord** or **organ**. The instruments were used in the harmonies and for holding the ensemble together. The bass line was often played by the **cello or bassoon.**
The Baroque orchestra was relatively small (a small orchestra is known as a chamber orchestra). The orchestra was still evolving during the Baroque period. At first there were no set instruments, but as the 17th century progressed, the orchestra began to take shape.

Baroque orchestra instruments usually included:

- Mainly strings - violins, violas, cellos and double basses
- woodwind - recorders or wooden flutes, oboes and bassoon
- brass - sometimes trumpets and/or horns (without valves)
- timpani
- Basso continuo - harpsichord or organ

Musical characteristics of Baroque music

- the use of **harpsichord basso continuo** provides foundation, providing a strong, purposeful bass that causes the music to press forward throughout.
- Modes now replaced by **major-minor keys – diatonic harmonies**
- **long flowing melodic lines** often using **ornamentation** (decorative notes such as trills and turns)
- Lots of **polyphonic/ contrapuntal textures** contrasting with homophonic passages
- Contrast between loud and soft created by **contrasting solo and ensemble**
- **Terraced dynamics** - sudden changes in the volume level, sometimes creating an echo effect
- Use of **ground bass, pedal** and sometimes **walking bass**

Main **composers:** **Bach** **Handel** **Vivaldi**

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Classical characteristics(1750-1820)

Classical Orchestra

•**strings** - violin, viola, cello, double bass, and sometimes guitar
•**woodwind** - recorder or wooden flute, oboe, bassoon and clarinet
•**brass** - trumpet, horns (with valves by the end of the period)
•**percussion** - timpani (kettledrums) and sometimes triangle, hand cymbals and bass drum
•**keyboard** - fortepiano/piano
Classical orchestras were bigger in size and as instrument building improved so did the range of dynamics in the performance. The harpsichord was replaced with the fortepiano, the precursor to today's modern piano.

Musical characteristics of Classical music

- Lighter, clearer textures than Baroque – mainly homophonic (melody with accompaniment) but still polyphonic textures in places
- Clear cut, balanced phrases with shorter, elegant melodies
- Harmonies are still diatonic but with increasing colourful chromatic chords as period progresses
- More variety and contrast within a piece – frequent changes of mood and timbre
- **Graded dynamics** – use of crescendo and sforzando
- Harpsichord disappears and replaced by piano (solo and chamber music as well as piano concerto)
- Instrumental music becomes more dominant though still vocal music forms
- Concerto grosso disappears – only **solo concerto**, often featuring a **cadenza**, where the soloist can show off their skill
- Rise of the **symphony** and string quartet

Composers: Mozart Haydn Beethoven

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Romantic characteristics (1820-1900)

Romantic Orchestra

During the romantic period, the orchestra had become a great force due to its increasing size including the following:

- **strings** - larger string section
- **woodwind** - flutes and piccolo, oboes and clarinets, bassoon and double bassoons
- **brass** - trumpets, trombones and French horns (tuba added later in the period)
- **percussion** - full percussion section
- **keyboard** - piano

- Some Romantic orchestra (e.g. Wagner, Mahler) were huge with hugely dominating brass sections, benefitting from the development of the valve system

Musical characteristics of Romantic music

- Large orchestras – prominent brass and percussion
- Use of rubato
- Adventurous harmonies and modulations, including intense chromaticism and discords
- Intense, lyrical and emotional melodies
- Rich variety of styles of piece, ranging from short solo piano pieces and songs to huge symphonies
- Rise of Nationalistic music
- Greater technical virtuosity – especially from pianists and violinists

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20th Century characteristics

Musical characteristics of 20th Century music

- Melodies are often **fragmented, dissonant and experimental**. Depending on the form or style used, melodies could be based on scales from non-Western countries, chromatic scales, twelve-tone rows, or microtonal scales. Wide leaps in melody, glissandi, angular melodies
- Harmony is often **experimental and dissonant**. Note **clusters.** Instead of all harmony being based on the interval of a third, harmony is sometimes based on seconds, fourths and fifths (respectively,. **Atonality**, meaning an absence of tonality, is present in music such as twelve-tone compositions. **Extended chords**
- Use of **whole tone scale** (*Impressionist* music)
- Complex, individual rhythms are used, and new rhythms and meters are common such as **polyrhythms. Irregular meters and time changes. Syncopation, ostinato**
- Performing groups during this era include chamber orchestras; instrumental ensembles; orchestras; choral groups; computer generated instruments (including synthesizers); and mixed media (taped sounds with traditional instruments).
- **Huge variety of timbres/ tone colours** – expansion of percussion section, instruments played at extremes of register, muted brass effects, new effects from strings (e.g., *tapping on body of instrument with heel of bow, col legno etc)*
- Musical forms from previous musical periods are used, often in experimental ways

Minimalism – Started in early 1970s. This music uses simple, repetitive melodies and rhythms (**ostinato)** that are gradually extended by adding more layers of music until a complex structure develops

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What Musical Period?

Choose from: Baroque Classical Romantic 20th Century

and give 2 reasons for choice

	Musical Period	Reason 1	Reason 2
1			
2			
3			
4			
5			
6			
7			
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12			

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