Baroque 1600-1750

Why? TONALITY

TONALITY
-- the system of harmony using chords controlled by basslines that tend to progress to tonal centers that define major or minor keys

Key Musical Developments in the Baroque Era (1600-1750)

TONALITY
OPERA
INSTRUMENTS & ENSEMBLES
INSTRUMENTAL GENRES

Baroque

• “misshapen” – it's an art term; does it apply to music?
• Light, energy, motion, drama?

1600
THE MODERN WORLD — IN MUSIC, TOO

Parallels in Baroque art & music
AWESOME, OVERWHELMING
COMPLEX, ELABORATE ORNAMENTATION
ENERGY & MOTION? – MOTORIC RHYTHMS AND TONALITY
DRAMA? LITERALLY! OPERA → HOMOPHONIC TEXTURE; CONTRAST (WITHIN AFFECT)
Key Musical Developments in the Baroque Era

**Listening example**

**BACH**

**Christ lag in Todesbanden**

2nd MOVEMENT OF A CANTATA

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Key Musical Developments in the Baroque Era

**CANTATA**

MULTI-MOVEMENT WORK FOR VOICES & ORCHESTRA, USUALLY A MIX OF ARIAS, RECITATIVES, DUETS, AND CHORUSES.

TEXT USUALLY NARRATIVE

HISTORICALLY, THE FORM STARTS OUT SECULAR BUT EVENTUALLY BECOMES MORE ASSOCIATED WITH SACRED THEMES

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**Key Musical Developments in the Baroque Era**

**TONALITY** was the major Baroque development in music. Bach’s music, particularly in works such as *The Well-Tempered Clavier*, consolidated the development of tonality. Tonality serves as the basis for European and other music for the next 400 years.

Metaphor: tonality = gravitation in music (Newton, 1687)

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**How evil is opera?**

a French critic, late 1600s:

Opera is a bizarre affair made up of poetry and music, in which the poet and the musician, each equally obstructed by the other, give themselves no end of trouble to produce a wretched work.

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**How evil is opera?**

Opera was illegal in Rome various times from the late 1600s to the early 1700s.

an English critic, 1872:

Opera is to be regarded “musically, philosophically, and ethically, as an almost unmixed evil.”

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**Opéra**

– first opera in 1599

– first significant composer: Monteverdi

– heavy emphasis on recitative in early opera

– favors treble voices + a bass voice

– stories tend to be quite complex and based on Greek or Roman myths and history

– Baroque opera reaches a pinnacle in music of **Handel**, a German composer, trained in Italy, and who worked in England
"When I am laid in earth" (Dido’s Lament)

- an aria [vocal solo in an opera] from Henry Purcell’s opera *Dido & Aeneas* (1689)
- a passacaglia: the bass line repeats over and over; an example of the bass-oriented thinking of the new harmonic system of tonality
- text painting on the world “trouble” with a tritone, an interval carefully avoided in the Renaissance, but now part of the forward-striving energy that drives tonality

Note the brilliant ornamentation and virtuoso technique.

Myself I shall adore,
If I persist in gazing;
No object sure before
Was ever half so pleasing.

Even Handel’s best and very popular operas fell out of favor, and were never performed again until the 20th Century. Compare that to the case of Handel’s *Messiah* (an oratorio, an un-staged drama, similar to opera, usually on religious themes), which has been performed every year since its premiere in 1742.
Composer: HANDEL
Title: from THE MESSIAH
Genre: ORATORIO
Date: 1742 – the end (of Baroque) is near!
Stylistic quality: MONUMENTAL

Handel composed 42 operas and 30 oratorios

Oratorio

Sudden change in fashion in London; oratorios replace operas as favored entertainment
Oratorio – unstaged narrative work for voices, chorus & orchestra, usually on religious themes
More generally, a move to new, Classical, style in opera puts Handel on the operatic shelf for 200 years

Listening example

Winter, first movement, from The Four Seasons, a group of 4 violin concerti by Vivaldi
– a concerto is a multi-movement (usually fast-slow-fast) work that combines a soloist or group of soloists with a larger ensemble. Very few concerti have names associated with them – this one is unusual

Listening example

a slow movement (the second movement) from Spring from The Four Seasons, (1723) a violin concerto by Vivaldi
– think about opera and imagine a soprano singing this melody

Another listening example from The Messiah

– an aria [vocal solo]
– bass voice
– text painting?

Why do the nations so furiously rage together; why do the people imagine a vain thing?
The kings of the earth rise up, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord, and against his Anointed.
Listening example

Bach

Brandenburg Concerto No.2, 1st movement

**Compare levels** (think of the Velasquez *Las Meninas*):
- individual soloists (trumpet, violin, flute, oboe)
- the group of soloists
- the ensemble

**Other traits**: busy with ornament and motoric rhythm; major key

**Fugue**

Bach

Fugue in G minor
E Power Biggs, organ

**Fugue in the Baroque**

- not typical, but an extreme form of tonal counterpoint
- perhaps the point is to *try* to follow it and get overwhelmed, rather than actually follow and comprehend all of the tricks and wrinkles
- the original term for fugue was “ricecar,” from an Italian root meaning search

**Baroque melodic style**

“Melody is often perceived as a continuous expansion of an idea, without short, regular phrases”
Key Musical Developments in the Baroque Era (1600-1750)

- **TONALITY**
- **OPERA**
- **INSTRUMENTS & ENSEMBLES**
- **INSTRUMENTAL GENRES**
- **BACH, HANDEL, VIVALDI**

**Listening example**

- Listening examples from the Bach
  - *B minor Mass* (the Kyrie, Christe eleison, and Sanctus).
  - note the wonderful use of orchestral colors
  - the Sanctus concludes with a six-part fugue

- Bach's principal employer was the Lutheran church. However, the *B minor Mass* is not liturgically correct for either the Lutheran or Catholic services, so its exact purpose is a mystery. One could call it an oratorio that happens to use the Mass text.

**BACH**

- The Sanctus from the Bach
  - *B minor Mass*.
  - note the wonderful use of orchestral colors
  - the Sanctus concludes with a six-part fugue

**Violin, 1693**
Made by Antonio Stradivari (1644–1737) Cremona, Italy

**Transverse Flute, ca. 1760–90**
South Germany or Saxony
Hard-paste porcelain, gold-plated brass
Rembrandt
The Music Party
1626  Oil on wood

mixed consort