

Grade 7

Western Music

History of Music

There are 4 main periods in the History of Music.

- 1) Baroque period (1600 - 1750)
- 2) Classical period (1750 - 1820)
- 3) Romantic period (1820 - 1900)
- 4) Modern period (1900 onwards)

Baroque period.

* Characteristics.

- 1) More than one melody being played at once (polyphonic)
- 2) Dynamic marks of expression were not given prominence.
- 3) Much repetition.
- 4) Use of ornamental passages.
- 5) Bigger sound.

* Texture of Music - Polyphonic

* Instruments used - Harpsichord, Clavichord, Virginal, Spinnet, Church organ, Violin.

* Composers -

- 1) J. S. Bach.
- 2) G. F. Handel.
- 3) D. Scarlatti
- 4) A. Vivaldi

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685 - 1750) came from a long line of musicians. His father, grandfather and great grandfather were all church organists or town musicians in Germany.

J. S. Bach passed on this musical heritage to his children. He was father to twenty children of whom nine survived and four became well-known composers.

Born in Germany, J. S. Bach had his first musical training from his father at nine years, shortly thereafter he lost both his parents. He supported himself by singing in the church choir and playing the organ and the violin.

At nineteen, he became the church organist, and later was appointed as the court organist and court conductor to Prince Leopold of Cüthen and then the director of music of St. Thomas' Church.

Bach wrote music in every known form of his day except opera. During the 1740s his eyesight failed, yet he continued to compose, conduct and teach music. His music includes pieces for orchestra, for small groups, for solo organ, harpsichord, clavichord, violin and cello.

Among his large repertoire of music are

- i 48 Preludes and Fugues (Prelude and Fugue No. 1)
- ii Anna Magdalena Note Book (Minuet in G)
- iii Choral works - St. John and St. Mathew Passions
- iv 6 Brandenburg Concertos (Concerto No. 3)
- v Christmas Oratorio
- vi Prelude No. 1 and 3

George Frederic Handel (1685 – 1759)

A master of Italian opera and English oratorio, Handel was born in Germany one month before Bach. He was not from a musical family. His father wanted him to study law, and not music. By the time he was nine, his musical talent was so outstanding that his father permitted him to study music with the local organist. By the age of eleven he was composing music as well as giving organ lessons.

At twenty, one of his operas was successfully produced. He stayed in Italy for 3 years writing Italian operas.

All his life Handel travelled much and settled in England under the patronage of King George 1 and Queen Anne. In England he was brought into popularity and wealth.

By 1753 Handel was still conducting and giving organ concerts though he was almost blind. When he died in 1759 around 3000 mourners attended his funeral in Westminster Abbey. Among his large number of works are

Oratorio - Messiah (Hallelujah Chorus)

Orchestral Works - (Water music)

- Fire works music

Operas - Rinaldo, Almira

Harpsichord music- (Variations on Harmonious Blacksmith)

Students to be familiar with the works in brackets

