

## **Music History Cover Sheet**

Distance learning packet

Concert Choir, Women's Ensemble, A Cappella Choir, Chamber Singers,  
Concert Band, Symphonic Band, Jazz Bands, Music Theory & Technology

Student Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Student Class: \_\_\_\_\_

Student Teacher: \_\_\_\_\_

### **Directions:**

Read each music history unit packet and highlight important information. At the end of each music history unit there are questions to answer and complete. Please complete those questions on a separate piece of paper and attach it to this cover sheet.

# Baroque Period

1600–1750

After completing this lesson, you will be able to:

- Discuss some of the major changes that took place in Europe during the Baroque period.
- Describe the most important characteristics of Baroque music.
- Identify at least three musical forms that developed during the Baroque period.
- Discuss the most important characteristics of Baroque choral music.

The balance and restraint of the Renaissance period were followed by an era in which all the arts, including music, became more emotional, dramatic, and decorative: the Baroque period.

## Changes During the Baroque Period

The explorations and developments undertaken during the Renaissance period continued and expanded during the Baroque period. European navigators, explorers, traders, and settlers traveled to other parts of the world, and the first colonies were established in the Americas. Science and mathematics also expanded; scholars used new instruments and new insights to develop specialized fields of study.

The paintings, sculpture, and architecture of the Baroque period reflect society's interests in flamboyance and dramatic detail. Many were created as displays of the wealth and splendor of European emperors, kings, and other power aristocrats. Elaborate palaces, surrounded by vast formal gardens and decorated with large-scale and dramatic paintings and sculpture, typified the artistic intentions of the Baroque period. Baroque painters, including Caravaggio, Rubens, Rembrandt, and Velazquez, brought dramatic new effects to their works. The sculptors of the period, especially Bernini and Borromini, created pieces with a new sense of movement. Drama and emotional effects—and eventually flamboyance—were emphasized in the visual artworks of the Baroque period.

## Baroque Music

Like the visual artworks of the time, Baroque music was characterized by complex details and new emotional content. Many works were composed with a strong sense of movement and a highly ornamental melody. One important musical feature developed during this period was the **continuo**, a continually moving bass line. Another was the use of improvisation; musicians often improvised additional melodic ornamentations during performances.

Instrumental music gained in importance during the Baroque period. Two major instrumental forms developed. The **concerto grosso** is a composition for a small chamber orchestra consisting of several movements and featuring a bass line and an elaborate melody. The Baroque concerto grosso

### COMPOSERS

Claudio Monteverdi (1567–1643)  
Arcangelo Corelli (1643–1713)  
Henry Purcell (1659–1695)  
Antonio Vivaldi (1678–1741)  
Johann Sebastian Bach (1685–1750)  
George Frideric Handel (1685–1759)  
Giovanni Battista Pergolesi (1710–1736)

### ARTISTS

El Greco (1541–1614)  
Michelangelo da Caravaggio  
(c. 1565–1609)  
Peter Paul Rubens (1577–1640)  
Frans Hals (1580–1666)  
Artemisia Gentileschi (1593–1653)  
Gianlorenzo Bernini (1598–1680)  
Francesco Borromini (1599–1667)  
Rembrandt van Rijn (1606–1669)  
Judith Leyster (1609–1660)  
Bartolomé Esteban Murillo (1617–1682)

### AUTHORS

John Donne (c. 1573–1631)  
René Descartes (1596–1650)  
John Milton (1608–1674)  
Molière (1622–1673)

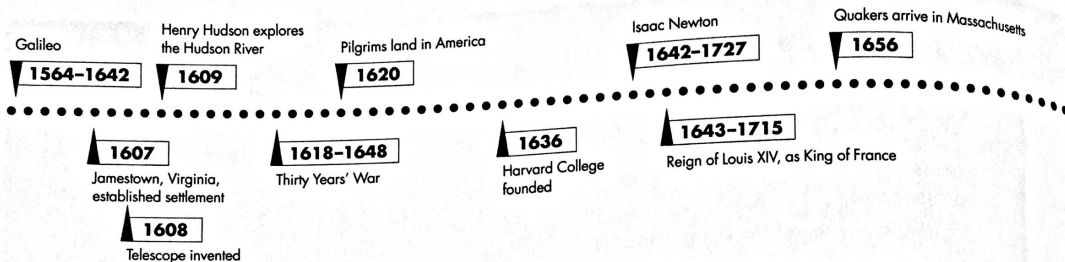
### CHORAL MUSIC TERMS

cantata  
chorale  
concerto grosso  
continuo  
opera  
oratorio  
recitative  
suite  
terraced dynamics



▲ In *The Return of the Prodigal Son*, Bartolomé Esteban Murillo (1617–1682) expresses the attitude of the Catholic church during the Counter-Reformation, hoping to welcome back the followers of Martin Luther (1483–1546). To the contrary, a significant body of religious music was created to serve the new form of worship in the Protestant churches.

1667–70. *The Return of the Prodigal Son*. (Detail.) Bartolomé Esteban Murillo. Oil on canvas. 236.3 x 261.0 cm (93 x 102 3/4"). National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C. Gift of the Avalon Foundation.



features interplay between a small group of soloists and the larger group of players. The contrast between the small and large groups, between the soft and loud sounds, is one of the key features of Baroque music.

Another important new instrumental form was the **suite**, *a set of musical movements, usually inspired by dances, of contrasting tempos and styles*. Suites were written for solo instruments, for small instrumental groups, and for complete orchestras.

One of the most characteristic developments of the Baroque period was the **opera**, *a combination of singing, instrumental music, dancing, and drama that tells a story*. Claudio Monteverdi composed *Orfeo*, the first important opera, in 1607. The most famous English composer of the period, Henry Purcell, wrote the opera *Dido and Aeneas* in 1689.



In replacing symmetry and balance with the ornate and intricate, Balthazar Neumann, in the Nave of Vierzehnheiligen Pilgrim Church, expressed the distinction between Renaissance and Baroque style in both art and music. Complexity and ornamentation are prevalent characteristics of music in the Baroque period, in contrast to the calm, smooth style of the Renaissance.

1743-72. The Nave of Vierzehnheiligen Pilgrim Church. Balthazar Neumann. Vierzehnheiligen Pilgrim Church, near Bamberg, West Germany.

Although the Baroque period is noted for its rise in the importance of instrumental music, there were also significant developments in vocal music. The **cantata** was a *collection of compositions with instrumental accompaniment consisting of several movements based on related secular or sacred text segments*. The fact that this form could be composed either as a sacred or as a secular work was, in itself, an innovation. The **chorale** was a hymn tune, generally composed for Protestant worship services with German texts. Chorales were intended to be easy to sing and to remember so that all members of a church congregation could join in.

The third major vocal development was closely related to opera, but without the acting, costumes, and scenery. The **oratorio** was a *composition for solo voices, chorus, and orchestra that was an extended dramatic work on a literary or religious theme presented without theatrical action*. An oratorio was typically performed by a small chorus, an orchestra, and four solo voices. Though most oratorios recount religious stories, they were not intended to be part of a religious service.

Johann Sebastian Bach

1685–1750

First American newspaper  
established, *Boston News Letter*

1704

Handel comes to England

1710

1682

1685–1759

LaSalle explores  
the Mississippi

George Frideric Handel

1687

Publication of Newton's *Mathematical Principles*

1706–1790

Benjamin Franklin

## Characteristics of Choral Music During the Baroque Period

Like all forms of Baroque music, the choral works of the period were more dramatic and emotional than the vocal music of the Renaissance. The developments of the period can be considered in terms of the meter and stress, tempo, dynamics, texture, and expressive aspects of Baroque choral music.

The Baroque period saw the introduction of metered music; music was organized and notated in regular groups of beats. The accents within these groups came at regular intervals. Typically, weak beats led into stronger beats, and short notes led into longer notes in choral works of the time. The **recitative**, a vocal line in an oratorio or a cantata (or opera) that imitates the rhythm of speech, moved the focus to textual declamation.

The tempo of Baroque choral music was generally moderate. A steady, unflagging rhythm is considered a major characteristic in choral works of the time. In many works, the tempo is held back slightly as one melodic phrase concludes and before the next section begins. Such variations and pauses were often used to heighten the emotional quality of a work. By the end of the seventeenth century, the Italian words used to indicate tempo at the beginning of a piece (*largo*, *allegro*, and *presto*, for example) had come into general use.

Within the dynamics of choral music, extremes were generally avoided during the Baroque period. **Terraced dynamics**—a rather abrupt alteration between loud and soft—were most common; crescendo and decrescendo were not frequently used. Instrumentation became more important in choral works; rather than simply doubling the voices, instruments began to “accompany” the singers.

## Check Your Understanding

### Recall

1. How were the visual artworks of the Baroque period different from those of the Renaissance period?
2. How did Baroque musicians use improvisation?
3. What is a suite?
4. What is a cantata? On what kinds of text were Baroque cantatas based?
5. What is an oratorio? How is it similar to and different from an opera?
6. What kind of tempo did most Baroque choral works have?

### Thinking It Through

1. Based on what you have read and what you have heard, which do you prefer—Renaissance choral music or Baroque choral music? Why?
2. Choose any form of popular music you enjoy listening to. Explain the similarities and differences between that music and the choral music of the Baroque Period.





## Listening to . . .

### Baroque Music

#### CHORAL SELECTION

#### **Bach — *Cantata No. 140, Fourth Movement, Chorale***

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685–1750) was a German composer and organist, the youngest son of a town musician. He wrote music of all genres including vocal, instrumental, and keyboard/organ. He wrote over 200 church cantatas, one of the most famous being *Cantata No. 140* (1731). In the fourth movement, “Zion hort die Wachter singen,” Bach utilizes a chorale as the “cantus firmus,” using a free ritornello to separate the phrases of the chorale melody.

#### INSTRUMENTAL SELECTION

#### **Vivaldi — *La Primavera, First Movement***

Antonio Vivaldi (1678–1741) was an Italian composer. He is best known as the master of concertos, having written over 500, half of them for solo violin and orchestra. His most well-known work is *The Four Seasons*. It is a set of four solo concertos for violin, string orchestra, and basso continuo. As programmatic music, each portrays one of the seasons of the year, corresponding with sonnets that preface each concerto.