Chapter 7

The Classical Era
1750 - 1800 A.D.
The Term, "Classical"

Having to do with qualities that endure
Appealing to a wide range of people
First music to remain in the concert repertoire long after it was first composed
The Classical Era: Background Information

18th century—a time of profound social and political change.
Louis XIV of France died in 1715. American War of Independence (1755-83)
French Revolution (1789-94)
Philosophical movement called “Enlightenment” colored the era.
The Enlightenment

Led by French philosophers, Voltaire and Rousseau who both died in 1778.
Attempts were made to apply principles of scientific objectivity to issues of social justice.
Also called “The Age of Reason.”
The Enlightenment

Favored human over divine.
Favored reason over religion.
Favored clarity over complexity.
Favored improved education, elimination of superstition and prejudice, and breakdown of rigid class structure.
Favored individual freedom and equality over class system.
Figures of the Enlightenment

Frederick the Great of Prussia
- Played the flute.
- Employed some of the most accomplished musicians of his day at his court.

Emperor Joseph II of Austria
- An amateur cellist
- A great patron of music and literature
- Held court in Vienna.
Vienna, Austria

Place where Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven lived and worked

By the end of the century, the musical center of Europe
Enlightenment Ideals

Reached their high point in Vienna in the 1780s and 1790s. Exerted an influence on many other parts of the world.

- England--thriving economy, rich cultural lie, middle class claiming free expression and leisure time
- New World--growing resentment of American colonists against English government led to Declaration of Independence (1776).
Enlightenment Ideals

Exerted an influence on many other parts of the world.

- France--Louis XV and Louis XVI succeeded Louis XIV.
  Corruption increased.
  Out of touch with people
  Ended with French Revolution in which Louis XVI was beheaded.
  “Liberty, Equality, Brotherhood!”
Enlightenment Ideals

Brotherhood

- Did not include women.
- New organizations—especially Free Masons

Cut across boundaries of class and profession.

Many kings, writers, composers, and politicians in Europe and America were Free Masons.
Women of the Enlightenment

Maria Theresa, ruler of Austria from 1740 to 1780

Catherine II (“Catherine the Great”) of Russia ruled from 1762 to 1796.

Novelist Jane Austen (*Pride and Prejudice* and *Emma*)
Women of the Enlightenment

Composer Anna Amalie, Duchess of Saxe-Weimar wrote German operas and chamber music, but it was never published.

Marie Lieszcinska (married to Louis XV) started a concert series in Vienna.

Julie Candeille was an opera singer, pianist, harpist, and composer.

- *Catherine*--a comic opera
- A piano concerto
The New Musical Public

Flourishing economy created a large, prosperous middle class that liked cultural diversions that had previously been reserved for the aristocracy. Public concerts became common in London, Paris, Vienna, Prague, and across Europe. Music publishing became big business—i.e., sheet music for amateur performers.
The New Musical Public

Social changes changed the status of performers and composers. They could make a living without the patronage of the aristocracy. Complex rhythms and counterpoint of Baroque music was no longer fashionable; the public wanted lighter, clearer, and more accessible music. New types of pieces (divertimento and comic opera) appealed to this new audience.
Classical Music: General Characteristics

Balance and proportion, clarity and accessibility—primary features of Classical Music
Easy on the ear
A reaction to the complexity of Baroque music
Usually just has a melody and an accompaniment, which is light and simple.
Classical Music: General Characteristics

Imitative counterpoint is used only rarely for special effects.

Melodies are pleasing and tuneful.

- Melodies are made up of two- or four-bar phrases; they have opening and closing phrases.

Harmony is simple, logical, and clear.

- Composers stayed close to the "home" key, only modulating to closely related keys and doing so in controlled ways.
Classical Music: General Characteristics

Basso continuo is gone, replaced by light accompaniment.
“Walking bass”--bass line moves mostly by step in even notes with regular rhythm.
“Alberti bass”--made up of a continuously moving pattern of short notes.

- Accompanying chords are broken up into separate notes played one after the other.
Genres of Classical Music

The main genres of this period were secular:

- Opera
- Symphony
- String quartet (occasionally string quintets)
- Sonata
Genres of Classical Music: Opera

Staged in the palaces of a few very wealthy aristocrats or in the public opera houses of big cities such as Prague, Paris, or Vienna.

Criticisms of Baroque opera:
- Mythological plots; not realistic
- Music too heavy and complex
- Staging too complicated
Genres of Classical Music: Opera

Criticisms of Baroque opera:

- Arias (in da capo form—ABA)
  Repeat of A section interrupted the flow of the story.
  Singers used ornamentation and embellishment to show off, drawing attention to themselves instead of to the plot.
Genres of Classical Music: Opera

New type of opera of the Classical Era: comic opera

- Featured simpler music, down-to-earth characters, and amusing plots.
- In Italy--known as *opera buffa*.
- In France--known as *opéra comique*.
- In Germany--known as *Singspiel*.
Genres of Classical Music: Opera

Comic opera

- German and French—dialogue spoken instead of set to music, but still contained arias.
- Most famous early Italian comic opera is *La Serva Padrona* (1733) by Pergolesi—about a servant girl who tricks her master into marrying her.
Genres of Classical Music: Symphony

Most important genre in the Classical Era

Dates from about 1730, but Mozart and Haydn took it to new levels of maturity.

Started as an overture--an introductory piece to Italian opera

- An instrumental introduction with three short movements (fast--slow--fast)
Genres of Classical Music: Symphony

In Italian, the word for an overture was *sinfonia*. Music was unrelated to the music of an opera. Soon these pieces attained an independent status and were played at concerts, rather than at the opera. Symphonies spread from Italy to Germany to England with no connection to opera.
Genres of Classical Music: Symphony

Most important early center of symphonic composition and performance was Mannheim, Germany.

- Large court supported the biggest orchestra in Europe.
- Concertmaster and conductor was Johann Stamitz (1717-1757).
- Composed > 60 symphonies which established the norm for the Classic symphony for the rest of the 18th century.
Genres of Classical Music: Symphony

Stamitz expanded the three movement work (fast-slow-fast) to a four movement structure (fast-slow-dance-fast). Pattern of movements was:

- First = fast and serious.
- Second = slow and lyrical.
- Third = graceful and moderate.
- Last = fast and lively.
Genres of Classical Music: Symphony

Stamitz established the basic structure of the Classical orchestra--three main sections: strings, woodwinds, and sometimes trumpets and drums.

String section:
- Two groups of violins (first and second)
- Violas
- Cellos
- Double basses
Genres of Classical Music: Symphony

Woodwinds
- Two flutes or two oboes
- Two horns (French horns) -- actually brass instruments

Bright, ceremonial symphonies used trumpets and timpani (kettle drums). Later the orchestra contained both flutes and oboes, along with bassoons; clarinets were also added.

Size of the string section varied depending on the financial circumstances of the sponsor.
Genres of Classical Music: String Quartet

Chamber music--designed to be played in smaller rooms instead of concert halls.

Includes duets, trios, quartets, and quintets.

String quartet = two violins, a viola, and a cello.

- Ideal balance between low and high instruments
Genres of Classical Music: String Quartet

First violinist plays principal melody while second violinist plays accompanying figures. Violist fills in the harmony, and cellist provides the bass. Instruments cover a wide range of pitches. Instruments are all strings, so they blend perfectly.
Genres of Classical Music: String Quartet

Movements followed the same pattern as for the symphony:

- First = fast and serious.
- Second = slow and lyrical.
- Third = graceful.
- Fourth = fast and lively.
Genres of Classical Music: Sonata

Could be written for keyboard alone or for another instrument plus keyboard.

After 1775, the favorite keyboard instrument became the piano.

- Capable of gradations of volume, which the harpsichord could not produce.
- Originally called “piano-forte” -- soft/loud.
Genres of Classical Music: Sonata

18th century pianos sounded very different from the large concert grand piano of today. They were softer, and lighter in the upper register while more muffled and less resonant in the bass. Keyboard sonatas often contain some of the most interesting music of the Classical era.
Conventions of Classical Music

Instruments used for particular types of works, number of movements, approximately length of each movement—all fixed by strict convention.

Some keys were far more common than others. Related to the tuning system and instruments of the time.
Conventions of Classical Music

Each key was linked with a certain mood or atmosphere. For example:
- D major = ceremonious and bright.
- F minor = strained and melancholy.

Most conventional aspect was form. Most important forms were:
- Sonata form
- Aria form
- Minuet and Trio form
- Rondo form
Forms of Classical Music: Sonata Form

Sonata Form--3 main sections

- **Exposition**--listener hears all materials/themes in this section; key moves from tonic to related key (dominant or relative minor).

- **Development**--themes are transposed, broken up, played with different instruments, and “developed” in many ways; rapid key changes occur often.

- **Recapitulation**--all main themes heard again in tonic key.
Forms of Classical Music: Sonata Form

An expansion of a rounded binary form

- First part of the binary form is exposition; it is repeated--AA.
- Development and Recapitulation create the second part of rounded binary form--BB (sometimes written as BA).

Exposition has at least 2 main themes in related keys; the themes are usually different in character (e.g., one might be fast, one slower).
Forms of Classical Music: Sonata Form

Development---modulates through various keys, and rarely stays in one key for any period of time.

Recapitulation---returns to tonic key and remains in that key as all themes of the exposition are heard again.

Coda---like a period on a sentence, is an ending section; stays in the tonic key; not really part of the basic sonata form.
Forms of Classical Music: Sonata Form

Used for most first movements of Classical instrumental music--symphonies, string quartets, and sonatas.

Used for most serious musical ideas because it is intellectually demanding.

See diagram on page 122.
Forms of Classical Music: Aria (ABA) Form

Often used as the second movement of symphonies, string quartets, and sonatas.

A = songlike, slow, and lyrical.
- Melody is in a key related to the key of the first movement.

B = in a new key and sometimes faster.

A = melody repeated in first key, often ornamented/embellished.
Forms of Classical Music: Minuet and Trio Form

Minuet and Trio Form--also called ternary form; a large ABA form
Often used as the third movements of symphonies, string quartets, and sonatas.

A = minuet in binary form.
- AABB--sometimes written as AABA (on the last part, when the A theme comes back in the tonic key, it’s called rounded binary form).
Forms of Classical Music: Minuet and Trio Form

B = trio—also in binary form.
- Ends with words “da capo,” which mean “play from the beginning.”
- Each section is heard twice—CCDD.

A = minuet is heard again; each section is usually played once—AB (but sometimes AABB).
Forms of Classical Music: Rondo Form

**Rondo** Form = ABACADACA
Commonly used as fourth movements of symphonies, string quartets, and sonatas.

A = main theme, which comes back again several times in the movement.
Forms of Classical Music: Rondo Form

B, C, and D may have themes of their own and depart from the main theme; may change textures, be in a different key, or alter dynamics.

The A theme always comes back in the original, tonic key.
Four Movement Structure

First = sonata in home (tonic) key.
Second = sonata or theme and variations or aria in subdominant, dominant, or relative minor key.
Third = minuet and trio in tonic key (trio is sometimes in different key).
Fourth = sonata or rondo in tonic key.
Another Classical Form: Theme and Variations

One or more themes is presented and then varied in some ways. Variation techniques can include:

- Change of mode (major to minor/minor to major)
- Change of key
- Change of timbre (i.e., instrumentation)
- Change of texture (homophony/polyphony)
- Change in tempo or meter
Classical Concertos: Structure of Movements

Only had three movements.

Common forms used for these:

- First movement = sonata form.
- Second movement = ABA form.
- Third movement = sonata or rondo form.
- Leaves out the minuet and trio (dance) movement.
The Early Classical Period

In contrast to the complex Baroque style, a new style emerged about 1730, called *galant* style ("fashionable" or "up-to-date").

Composers:

- C.P.E. Bach at court of Frederick the Great in Prussia
- Johann Stamitz in Mannheim, Germany
- Giovanni Battista Sammartini in Italy
The Early Classical Period

Composers rejected the dense contrapuntal style of the late Baroque period. Favoring music that was lighter in texture, easier to hear, and more varied.
The Early Classical Period

Early Classical music has much more variety than Late Baroque music.

- Frequent changes of texture, dynamics, and instrumentation are common.
- Phrases are shorter; phrases in the same section of a work may be quite different from one another.
Franz Joseph Haydn (1732-1809)

Born in a small village in Austria, one of 12 children. Surrounded by music and showed talent at an early age. At age 8, became a choirboy at St. Stephen’s Cathedral in Vienna. Learned to play harpsichord and violin. Made his living for 10 years in local orchestras.
Franz Joseph Haydn (1732-1809)

1761—hired as assistant music director to the household of Prince Paul Anton Esterházy.

- Prince Paul Anton had a small orchestra.
- Haydn was responsible for composing music on demand, rehearsing other musicians, and caring for instruments.
Franz Joseph Haydn (1732-1809)

When Prince Paul Anton died, his brother, Nikolaus, succeeded him. Prince Nikolaus built a large palace with two large music rooms and two small theaters for opera. 1766--hired as music director at the palace (called Esterháza)
Franz Joseph Haydn (1732-1809)

As music director at Esterháza, Haydn was responsible for directing all the music at the palace.

- Two operas and two big concerts were held each week.
- Extra concerts were arranged for special visitors.
- Music was performed at meals and in the prince’s rooms.
- Haydn composed much of this music himself.
Franz Joseph Haydn (1732-1809)

1970--Prince Nikolaus died and was succeeded by Prince Nikolaus II who disbanded the orchestra; Haydn moved back to Vienna.

Haydn traveled twice to London where he wrote his last 12 symphonies--called *London* Symphonies.

Later years, he wrote mostly string quartets and vocal music.
Haydn’s Music

Operas: full of beautiful, lyrical, inventive, and moving music.
Symphonies: range from ceremonious public works with trumpets and drums to compositions of great delicacy, charm, and even tragedy.
6 Masses for chorus and orchestra
  ◆ Noble and grand with a conservative choral style and brilliant orchestral writing
Haydn’s Music

String quartets explore an enormous range of expressions with brilliant writing for the 4 instruments.

- Early quartets—melody mostly in 1st violin.
- Later quartets—other instruments are more fully integrated.

2 great oratorios: *Creation* and *The Seasons*

- Pictorial writing throughout--clever musical descriptions of nature
Haydn’s Music: Minuet and Trio from Symphony #45

Orchestration: 2 oboes, 2 horns, violins I and II, viola, cello, double bass

Meter: 3/4

Tempo: Allegretto (“moderately fast”)

Key: F# Major
Haydn’s Music: Minuet and Trio from Symphony #45

Contrasts in dynamics

Homophony or thin counterpoint for quiet passages and thick polyphony for loud ones

Sudden key change to F# minor in the trio
Haydn’s Music: Minuet and Trio from Symphony #45

Obscure form (varies from typical):
- Cadences in wrong place
- Linking phrases across sections
- Syncopation
- Internal repetitions (repeats some of A section in the B section; called rounded binary form)
More About Haydn’s Music

Adhered to classical forms, but often included little idiosyncrasies:

- False recapitulations—pretending to start the recapitulation in the middle of the development section
- “Joke Quartets”—serious and emotionally expressive but with many witty moments
  - Cadences in the wrong places
  - Oddly shaped melodies
  - Unexpected rhythms
Fourth Movement from String Quartet, Op. 33, No. 2, in Eb Major

Rondo Form: ABABACABADA
Coda
Meter: 6/8

This quartet has a “false ending.”
- Haydn seems to end and then keeps going several times.
Leopold Mozart

Wolfgang’s father—a performer, composer, author, and music theorist
1756—published a treatise called “Essay on a Fundamental Violin Method”

- Partly as an aid for teaching the violin
- Partly as a discussion of musical performance and analysis
- One of the most important contributions to music theory in the mid-18th century
Leopold Mozart

Compositions included: Masses, symphonies, divertimenti, partitas, serenades, and a wide variety of chamber music.

Music involves nature--sounds such as bugles, bagpipes, hunting horn, hurdy-gurdy, and dulcimer are heard. Also present are dog noises, human cries, pistol shots, and whistles.

After 1762, Leopold focused on his son’s career to the neglect of his own.
Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791)

Born to a musical family in 1756.

- Father was a violinist and composer who was deputy music director at the court of the Prince-Archbishop of Salzburg in Austria.
- Sister was also a talented musician.
Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791)

Started composing at age 6 and was playing the harpsichord brilliantly.

For next 10 years, father toured with him all over Europe, showing him off to noblemen, princes, and the Empress of Austria, Maria Theresa.

Principal teacher was his father, Leopold.
Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791)

Wherever he went, he picked up the musical style of the region and its prominent local composers. By age 8, some of his music was already published. By age 10, he was writing symphonies. As a young adult, he had difficulty finding a job because he was “overqualified.”
Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791)

He took a job as a junior music director for the Prince-Archbishop of Salzburg, and even though he was eventually promoted, he was dissatisfied. Finally, he earned his living freelance by giving piano lessons. Mozart was a very prolific composer who only lived 35 years.
Mozart’s Music

A remarkable combination of the accessible and the profound, appealing to amateurs and experts alike

Wrote more than 800 compositions.

Pieces explore the great themes of human existence: life and death, love, tragedy, romance, despair, and hope.
Mozart’s Music

Wrote all the main genres of classical music: operas, symphonies, string quartets, and sonatas.

Uses the same basic conventions as other music of the time, but at times he flouted those conventions.

- Uses classical forms.
- Uses the same instrumentation as other composers.
Mozart’s Music

41 Symphonies including #41, called “Jupiter”
A Requiem Mass
21 solo concertos for the piano
Solo concertos for other instruments including violin, flute, oboe, clarinet, bassoon, and French horn
Mozart’s Music

Famous Operas:
- *The Marriage of Figaro* (1786)
- *Don Giovanni* (1787)
- *The Magic Flute* (1791)

Dozens of sonatas, both for solo piano and for combinations of instruments including piano, strings, and winds.

Many string quartets and several string quintets (with an extra viola)
Mozart: First Movement from Symphony No. 40 in G Minor, K. 550

Orchestration: flute, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 2 horns, and strings

Tempo: Allegro molto ("very fast")

Form: sonata

Key: G minor

Meter: 2/2
Mozart: First Movement from Symphony No. 40 in G Minor, K. 550

Written with No. 39 and No. 41 in a space of 8 weeks.
One of his greatest symphonic achievements
Perfectly balanced and controlled with a wealth of harmonic and instrumental color
Uses formal structure brilliantly.
Contains a “false recapitulation.”
Fundamentals of Classical Music: Summary

Music is more accessible than Baroque music with shorter, symmetrical phrases, simpler harmonies, and easier-to-sing tunes.

No basso continuo.

Texture is more transparent; homophony is more common than polyphony.
Fundamentals of Classical Music: Summary

Principal genres = opera, symphony, and chamber music (string quartets and sonatas).
Solo concerto (especially for piano) also popular
New genres = piano concerto, comic opera, and string quartet.
Music is ruled by conventions (number of movements, forms, keys, and harmony).