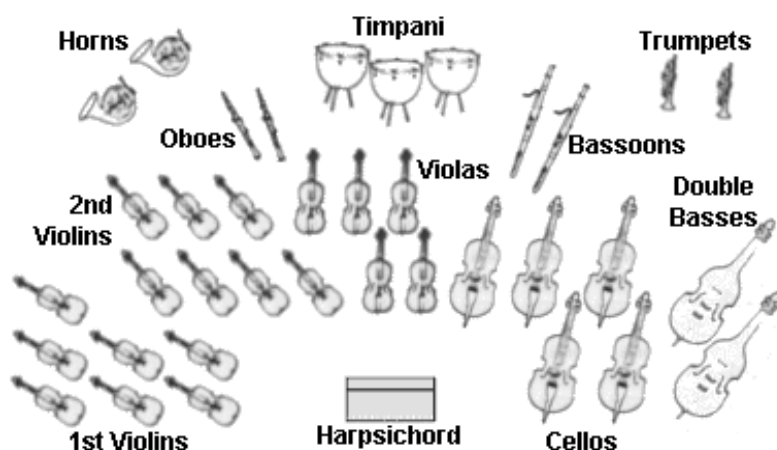


Learning about Baroque Music



Name _____

Form _____



The Baroque period (1600-1750) saw the orchestra beginning to take shape. It consisted of mainly strings with violins, violas and cellos replacing the older viols. Recorders were replaced with flutes and there were oboes and trumpets added for different pieces. The harpsichord accompanied the orchestra, “filling in the harmonies” and directing the orchestra since there was no “conductor” in Baroque times. The Harpsichord can be said to be the ‘characteristic sound of Baroque music’

– listen to an example of the solo Harpsichord now so that you can identify its characteristic and unique “plucking” timbre.

A bassoon or cello would play the basic bass line along with the harpsichord and this formed the **BASSO CONTINUO** or **CONTINUO**. An organ was also used for the *continuo* instead of the harpsichord, especially if the piece was being performed in a church. The continuo player played from a special type of notation called **FIGURED BASS**. This is shown below and consisted of numbers written below the bass line – a type of musical shorthand!



The continuo player would know what these numbers meant and would be able to play complete chords from this figured bass to “fill out the harmonies” of the orchestra. Sometimes Baroque instruments were temperamental and could go out of tune or strings could snap in a performance so the role continuo part in Baroque orchestral music was important to hold the group together. Listen to another example of Baroque Music now, focusing on the **CONTINUO** part.

Listen to a Baroque Orchestra playing a traditional piece of Baroque Music, looking at the diagram above and trying to identify the different instruments and Continuo part as you listen. Finally, look again at the diagram showing the layout of a Baroque orchestra at the top of this page and answer the following questions:
















1. Why is the harpsichord placed at the front?

2. What do they call the role of the harpsichord or organ in Baroque orchestral music? _____

3. Which “section” or “family” of instruments, were the majority of instruments in the Baroque orchestra from? _____
4. Which is the only percussion instrument used in the Baroque orchestra? _____
5. Listen to an extract from “Gavotte” from Orchestral Suite No.1 in C Major by J.S. Bach. The continuo part is being played by the harpsichord, cellos and double basses, but what other instruments can you hear in this Baroque orchestra? _____
-
6. Listen to an extract from “Minuet” from Handel’s Water Music and see how many instruments you can identify playing in this Baroque orchestra? _____
-

2. MELODIC DECORATION

The melody of much Baroque music was often richly and elaborately “decorated” with musical ornaments. Some of the most common ornaments used by Baroque performers, often adding ornaments during performance which weren’t given on the original score, are shown in the table on the right. Listen to an example of Baroque Instrumental Music focusing on how the melody line has been “decorated” by the performers. Baroque vocal music, as well as instrumental music was also richly decorated. Listen to another example of Baroque Vocal Music, again focusing on how the singer embellishes and decorates the melody line during the performance.

Ornament sign or symbol	Ornament Name	Written & Performed
	Trill	
	Upper Mordent	
	Lower Mordent	
	Appoggiatura	
	Acciaccatura	
	Turn	
 or 	Inverted Turn	

3. MAJOR AND MINOR TONALITY

During the Baroque period, **MAJOR** and **MINOR** tonalities replaced the old medieval and renaissance system of church **MODES** and became the accepted key systems that we still use today. Listen to two extracts of Baroque music – which extract is an example of Major Tonality and which extract is an example of Minor Tonality?

3. TERRACED DYNAMICS

Baroque music tends to remain at one dynamic level throughout an entire **MOVEMENT**. Shorter movements, using different dynamic levels and grouped together provided musical contrast. Where there are changes of dynamics, these tend to be between “loud” and “soft” as opposed to using “gradations”. Crescendos and Diminuendos don’t feature until later in musical history.

Listen to an example of Terraced Dynamics from the Baroque period noting how the music stays at one dynamic level throughout the extract with no Crescendos or Diminuendos. Next, give the Italian name and English meaning of the six Dynamic markings/symbols shown below which Baroque composers could choose from when composing a movement from a Concerto or other music.

pp

p

mp

mf

f

ff

5. IMITATION

IMITATION is a form of musical “question and answer”, often between different instruments and different melodic lines. It can be thought of as a form of “musical echo”. Listen to an example of imitation from Handel’s “Water Music” where the Horns echo the Trumpets, following the score below as you listen.



Dates

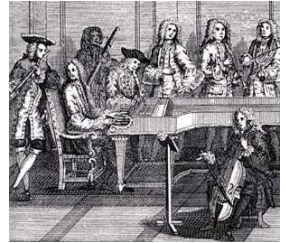
Composers



Features

Instruments

Learning about Baroque Music



TEACHER'S NOTES

Learning Objectives

Learn about the Baroque orchestra and instruments used during the Baroque period.

Learn about the Continuo and its role in the Baroque orchestra and Baroque music

Learn about some of the main features and characteristics of Baroque music

Resources:

Learning about Baroque Music (pages 1-3)

Learning about Baroque Music (audio illustrations of musical features and characteristics of Baroque Music)

This learning and listening activity demonstrates five of the key musical features and characteristics of Baroque Music:

- Instrumentation and The Baroque Orchestra
- Melodic Decoration
- Major and Minor Tonality
- Terraced Dynamics and
- Imitation

It is suggested that teachers work sequentially through the five musical features and characteristics, playing the recommended musical extracts (all contained on **Learning about Baroque Music**, separated by announcements) when indicated.

Begin by reading "The Baroque Orchestra" on page 1 and asking pupils to look at the diagram showing a typical Baroque orchestra. Begin with questions 1-4 which can be answered individually, via **Think-Pair-Share** or through class discussion.

1. *The harpsichord was placed at the front of the Baroque orchestra as the harpsichord player doubled up as the conductor - a kind of "multi-tasking" role. Play **Extract 1 from Learning about Baroque Music - Extract from "Sonata" from 'Suite in B flat Major' HWV 434 - Handel** - to demonstrate the sound of the solo Harpsichord to reinforce the following: *The Harpsichord is one of the key features in recognising Baroque music and it is important that you can identify its "tinkling" and "plucking" sound characteristic of Baroque music – it's one of the key features that will enable you to distinguish between Baroque music and music from other periods. Let's take this opportunity to hear the Harpsichord in action in a solo piece by Handel.**
2. *The name given to the role of the harpsichord or organ in Baroque orchestral music is the "continuo" or "basso continuo" which literally means "a continuous bass part". The continuo part was normally played or "doubled" by the cello or bassoon along with the harpsichord player who read from a type of music called "figured bass".*

3. *The majority of instruments in the Baroque orchestra were from the strings section.*
4. *The only percussion instrument used in the Baroque orchestra was the timpani or kettle drums.*

Move onto question 5 playing **Extract 2 from Learning about Baroque Music - Extract from “Gavotte” from ‘Orchestral Suite No.1 in C Major’ – J. S. Bach** and ask pupils to identify the other instruments playing other than the continuo part (played by the harpsichord, cellos and double basses)

5. *Oboes, a bassoon, violins, violas.*

Then play **Extract 3 from Learning about Baroque Music - Extract from “Minuet” from ‘Water Music’ – Handel** - to illustrate the sound of the Baroque Orchestra asking pupils to listen and see if they can correctly identify any of the instruments being played:

6. *The continuo is made up of harpsichord, cellos and double basses. Other instruments are violins and violas.*

Move on to the concept of **MELODIC DECORATION** as another feature of Baroque Music. Play **Extract 4 from Learning about Baroque Music – “Badinerie” from French Suite No.2 by J. S. Bach** - to demonstrate how Baroque instrumentalists embellished and decorated melody lines. **Extract 5 from Learning about Baroque Music – “But who may abide the day of his coming” from ‘Messiah’ by Handel** illustrates that it wasn’t only instrumental music in the Baroque period, but also vocal lines, particular solo parts as from this Aria. Some teachers may want to go into closer details about the theory of the different musical ornaments at this point and discuss trills, mordents, turns etc. – a table of which is given on page 2 for reference.

Explain how major and minor tonalities replaced older medieval and Renaissance “church modes” and became the established key systems that we still use today. Ask pupils to aurally discriminate the difference between major and major and minor tonalities using **Extract 6 from Learning about Baroque Music – “And with his stripes we are healed” from ‘Messiah’ by Handel** as an example of minor tonality and **Extract 7 from Learning about Baroque Music – “Hallelujah” from ‘Messiah’ by Handel** as an example of major tonality. The following may aid class discussion:

The first extract was in the minor key whilst the second was in the major key – both pieces of music from Handel’s “Messiah”. You may also have noticed that the music of the first extract and towards the end of the second, the famous “Hallelujah” Chorus, seemed very “busy” with lots of different vocal lines twisting and interweaving with each other, but this “Polyphonic” texture is another important feature of Baroque music and was popular with composers of vocal and instrumental music in the Baroque period.

You also probably noticed that the “mood” of the first extract was generally quite sad and the dynamics soft and reflective whilst the mood of the second extract was joyful and uplifting with loud dynamics.

Move onto the concept of **TERRACED DYNAMICS** –

In Baroque music, there wasn’t much musical contrast. Once a piece had started, it kept the same mood throughout and dynamics were generally either “loud” or “soft” – no “gradually getting louder or softer” until later on in musical history! Baroque composers instead wrote a series of shorter pieces of music called

*“movements” – each with its own mood and dynamics. The musical name for this is **TERRACED DYNAMICS** – either “loud” or “soft” – nothing in between! Our next two extracts show terraced dynamics in action in two pieces from Handel’s “Music for the Royal Fireworks” Suite – a collection of contrasting shorter “movements” designed to be performed one after each other during an outdoor fireworks display.*

Play **Extract 8 from Learning about Baroque Music – “Minuet II” from ‘Music for the Royal Fireworks by Handel** to illustrate **TERRACED DYNAMICS**, first featuring an example of a continuously **LOUD** movement, followed by an example of a **SOFT** movement **Extract 9 from Learning about Baroque Music – “Minuet I” from ‘Music for the Royal Fireworks’ by Handel** and reinforce that dynamic contrast was mainly between movements and that Crescendos and Diminuendos didn’t appear until much later in musical history. (Teachers may like to spend a few moment revising some of the most common dynamic symbols, together with their Italian and English meanings – a short activity is given at the top of page 3)

Finally, play the extracts from **Extract 9 from Learning about Baroque Music – “Alla Hornpipe” from ‘Water Music’ - Handel** as pupils follow the score on page 3 to illustrate the use of **IMITATION** made up of question and answering phrases, a form of “musical echoing”. The two phrases are firstly illustrated, followed by a longer example. As pupils listen, encourage them to identify musical **IMITATION** as and when it occurs.

The table at the bottom of page 3 can be completed as a revision/consolidation activity where pupils can be asked to recall information regarding Dates, Composers, Features and Instruments relative to the Baroque period and Baroque music for subsequent revision and knowledge recall.