

# Terms for Late Baroque Period

## Chapters 9-11

1. Baroque: a term agreed upon early this century by music historians to describe music produced from 1600-1750; borrowed from the visual arts originally had a negative connotation
2. absolutism: political historians refer to this same period as the “Age of Absolutism” a time when leaders had absolute power to rule the “divine right of kings” these rulers were known for their unheard of splendor and opulence as well as, at times their ruthlessness. Louis XIV is a good example of this type of ruler.
3. Age of Science: students who study the history of ideas refer to this period as the age of science, in this period the scientific method was championed and many new technological and philosophical advancements ensued. The microscope, the telescope, and calculus are a few of the technological advancements from this period. Philosophical thinkers began to challenge absolute rule and they began to encourage rational thinking and universal education. Many in the sciences believed all the mysteries were soon to be revealed, this was a very heady time.
4. theatricality: absolute rulers loved to regale themselves with much pomp and circumstance. The idea suggests some of the extravagance and exaggeration associated with this period. Opera was invented in 1600 and this was the great age of theater around Europe, this was the age of Shakespeare.
5. church: one of the three places a composer could find work in this period. These musicians were expected to play the organ and write music for services and lead the musical life of the town.
6. the court: another place where a musician could find employment during this period. Under the patronage system, basically a musician was thought of as a servant to the monarch (or ruler). They were expected to write music for special occasions, music for balls, music for diplomacy (tunes in honor of a visiting dignitary and etc.) Many concertos and sonatas were the choice of these secular musicians.
7. the opera house: many opera houses were attached to courts but many others were maintained by entrepreneurs in major cities. Composers in this setting were expected to write music that showcased the vocalist’s abilities. These composers had to deal with the changing fads in society and the over blown egos of the first “big stars”
8. harmonic rhythm: the idea that baroque music tends to change chords frequently.
9. continuo: (basso continuo) a written bass part that is linked to a series of chords not completely written out. These harmonies were expected to be “filled in” using the common practice of the day, by the *continuo section* which usually consisted of harpsichord and cello (sometimes organ, lute, viola da gamba or any harmonic instrument of the period). Composers used a musical shorthand called the “figured bass” to let musicians know what harmonies they wanted performed.

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10. the “affects”: composers did not try to mirror feelings of their own but tried to convey rationalized emotional states that stemmed from the scientifically oriented psychology of the day. Some went as far as listing thousands of these emotional states and then writing specific musical examples of how to bring these about in the listener.

11. Concerto and Concerto Grosso: becomes the most important orchestral genre of the late baroque. Comes from the Latin *concertare* “to contend”. The contention (or contest) in a concerto derives mainly from the interplay between solo instruments and ensemble. The typical Baroque concerto is in three movements, fast-slow-fast. The term *concerto* indicates one soloist, while the terms *concerto grosso* indicates a small group of soloists pitted against the orchestra. Many times the first and third movements employ *ritornello form*.

12. movement: **Problem:** you are an early Baroque composer. Your patron loves music written for instruments-can’t get enough of it. Therefore, you want to create significant, substantial pieces without voices, but the only instrumental works you know are short and dancelike. *What do you do?* Two solutions: one was to develop and expand musical forms-based on the principals of repetition, contrast, variation, return, and imitation-that could sustain over longer and longer periods of time. This was the complex solution the simpler and earlier solution was to take several short, contrasting works and string them together to create an instrumental composition of substantial length.

13. ritornello form: from the Italian *ritorno*-to return home. Ritornello is a systematic expression of the principles of contrast and return. The theme is stated by the whole orchestra, then a solo section of a contrasting nature ensues, followed by the return of the ritornello theme with the whole orchestra etc.

14. variation form (ground bass): is based on the systematic use of the principle of variation, with its continuous juxtaposition of repetition and contrast. When listening to a ground bass form, our attention is so drawn to the constantly changing upper voices that we are often unaware of the shaping effect of the repeating ground bass theme. Deliberate attention to both the ground bass and the variable upper voices is necessary to grasp this form aurally.

15. cadenza: an improvisatory solo passage within a larger work

16. the Fugue: the fugue is the single most significant and representative musical *procedure* to emerge from the Baroque period, it epitomizes the Baroque genius for systematic organization, symmetry, and polyphonic manipulation. Although, the fugue must be considered a form, it does not contain predictable sections with repeats, returns, and variations found in other forms. The fugue is not a fixed form a flexible polyphonic procedure.

a. fugue subject: simply put the fugue is a composition built on one single theme known as the fugue subject. This subject is then treated with imitative polyphony.

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- b. exposition: the first section of a fugue where each voice takes a turn announcing the subject in imitation until all the voices have joined in.
- c. countersubject: a distinctive contrapuntal line that regularly accompanies the principal subject
- d. episodes: provide contrast to subject entries—they are modulatory passages built on motivic materials drawn from the subject (and countersubject).
- e. stretto: a musical device where one subject entry is overlapped by another entry
- f. inversion: one of a bevy of compositional devices at the hands of the baroque composer. This one is when the actual intervals of the notes are flipped upside down, like holding a mirror up to the melody.

**The fugue in summation:** *The systematic treatment of the subject and the unrelenting energy of polyphonic presentation are typical of Baroque compositional thoroughness and rhythmic regularity. In its thorough examination of a single musical thought from many different perspectives, the fugue is the most rigorous and “scientific” of all the Baroque forms. As such, the fugue became the true test of a late composer’s skill.*

17. the baroque dance suite: one of the first multi-movement instrumental genres. Composers combined several short dances, almost inconsequential by themselves into a significant large scale instrumental work. This is the continuation of the stylization of dances that began during the Renaissance. Stylized dances are compositions based on dance rhythms but intended by this period more for listening than dancing. Collections of these dances were called “suites” or “partitas” etc. Suites scored for the orchestra were called “orchestral suites”. Greater length and contrast was achieved by pairing like dances, as in the Gavotte and Trio. These dances differ from other baroque instrumental music in their clearly defined, steady rhythms, their simpler, often homophonic texture, and their simpler forms (binary), based on the principals of repetition and contrast.

18. binary form: common form used by Baroque composers especially in the dance suite genre. Based on contrast without a return.

19. trio: a dance in binary form often coupled to another dance (i.e.. the Gavotte or Minuet etc.) to create a longer dance movement and an over all ABA form.

20. French overture: developed by Lully for Louis XIV as he walked into a great hall, employs a slow tempo with double dotted rhythms to emulate the kings gate. Heavy accents, sweeping scales and other features give this music a pompous, majestic gravity that is recognizable. The form is often tertiary where the B section can be a fugal.

21. overture: in the Baroque opera setting music played to set the tone of the ensuing opera and to let the audience know that the opera is set to begin.

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22. opera seria: serious opera. This style was in vogue and championed by the Italians. It was known for its intense emotions, larger-than-life characters, virtuoso singers, dancers, and extravagant set design, it was the quintessential Baroque spectacle. Frequently, the main characters were heroes and divinities of ancient Greece, Rome or they lauded the “great patron” who owned the opera house. Plots drew on dramatic, often tragic tales from classical history and mythology. Later the *deus ex machina* was added to help with a happy ending. Many parallels with today’s spectacles.

23. libretto, librettist: the author of an opera.

24. recitative: a heightened form of emotional speech, reserved primarily for action and dialogue. (to move the plot forward)

a. secco recitative: “dry”, when the accompaniment was kept to a minimum. Usually the accompaniment consisted of the harpsichord by itself, organ by itself or the continuo section. This helped the singer to interpret the dialogue or action as spontaneously as possible.

b. accompanied recitative: a recitative with orchestral accompaniment. Usually reserved for a few climactic situations during the course of an opera.

25. aria: portion of an opera that is much more song-like. Is a set piece for a solo singer that has much more musical elaboration and coherence than a passage of recitative. In arias the soloist steps out of the action to express and reflect on his or her emotions. Used as vehicles to display virtuosity and were the most popular portion of the opera.

26. da capo aria: standard form used in Baroque Italian Opera, meaning “from the head”. At the return of the A section the singer was expected to improvise and “show off” their vocal abilities and even insert a cadenza.

### Comparison and Contrast between Aria and Recitative

<u>Recitative</u>	<u>Aria</u>
free, speechlike rhythms	clear beat and meter
pitches follow natural patterns	pitches fall into melodic and patterns
phrases of declamation	
continuo accompaniment	orchestral accompaniment
prose text	poetic text, phrases often repeated
advances the action (movement, dialogue)	reflects on the action
free, spontaneous interaction	soliloquy, expresses single emotion

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29. Castrato: male vocalists especially in Italy during this period who sang the soprano and alto (female) parts. These were young boys with exceptional voices who were often times unwillingly submitted to castration to retain their vocal registers. This mutilation created exceptional vocalists, so much so that modern singers can only dream of obtaining the level of virtuosity that the castrato enjoyed. Especially Carlo Broschi (Farinelli).

30. oratorio: In 1649 the English Parliament (Oliver Cromwell and the Round Heads) sentences Charles I to death. Cromwell brings a stern Puritan rule to England until 1660. This foreshadows English conservatism. Although the English loved the Italian operatic genre they wanted nothing to do with what many considered the extreme excesses associated with this genre. In 1737 The British Licensing Act required that all plays and operas be subject to Lord Chamberlain (Protestant reform) for censorship. Chamberlain outlawed all opera. Chamberlain also created guidelines that any performance must follow. Two of these were, music and action could not be combined into the same performance and all types of entertainment had to be based on biblical text. Handel single-handedly brings about the genre of Oratorio as a replacement for opera.

Although Baroque sacred music takes many forms, two broad generalizations can be made:

1. Almost all Baroque sacred music includes a choir.
2. Baroque sacred music borrows heavily from Baroque operatic technique and procedures.

### ***Checklist for the Oratorio***

1. An extended work for choir, solo voices, and orchestra.
2. Based on a dramatic story drawn from scripture.
3. Performed without action, costumes, or sets.
4. *Not* part of any church service.
5. Written for both Catholic and Protestant audiences.

### **Important Names:**

Antonio Vivaldi (1678-1741)

*Composed many concertos. String music was his strong point.*

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750)

*The greatest master of Baroque music especially known for his use of counterpoint.*

George Frideric Handel (1685-1759)

*London opera composer (later turned to the oratorio when opera was outlawed). A very successful promoter.*

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