

EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT
The Baroque Period

Music | National 5

The key features of the Baroque period are:

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Vocal

A **chorus** is another word for a choir. Most choruses are **SATB (Soprano, Alto, Tenor and Bass)** but you do get male voice choirs.

> Listen to Handel's 'And the Glory of the Lord' from The Messiah.

A **recitative** is where singers will 'half-speak/half-sing' to move the story along. The accompaniment strips back to minimum. Remember "recite" – to speak.

> Listen to Handel's 'Thou Fair Inhabitant of Nile' from Solomon.

An **aria** is a vocal solo from a larger work like an **opera** or **oratorio**, normally accompanied by an orchestra. It usually follows a recitative.

> Listen to Vivaldi's 'Liquore Ingrato' from Tito Manlio.

An **oratorio** is a large scale **sacred** work for solo singers, **chorus** and orchestra. It includes **recitatives, arias** and choruses.

> Listen to Handel's 'For Unto Us a Child is Born' from The Messiah.

An **opera** is a large scale play set to music and includes **recitatives, arias** and **chorus**. The story is acted out and performed with costume/set.

> Listen to Monteverdi's 'Dal mi Permesso' from L'Orfeo.

Texture

If the music is **homophonic**, you will hear many sounds moving at the same time.

> Listen the opening of Vivaldi's 'Spring' from The Four Seasons.

If the music is **polyphonic**, you will hear many sounds weaving in and out of each other.

> Listen to J.S. Bach's 'Fugue in G minor' (BKV 578).

Form

Binary form (AB) has two sections: A and then B. Each section is usually played twice. (AA : BB)

A **canon** is a form of a round (like Frère Jacques). The melody keeps re-entering at different parts, creating polyphony.

> Listen to Pachelbel's 'Canon in D' – the original one hit wonder.

Instruments

There were no pianos in the Baroque period. The **harpsichord** was the main keyboard instrument. It could not produce dynamics or sustain.

> Listen to Jean Rondeau play Scarlatti's 'Sonata in D minor K141'.

The **organ** is a keyboard instrument usually found in churches. It often has more than one keyboard (called a 'manual'), plus pedals played with the feet.

> Listen to J.S. Bach's 'Tocatta and Fugue in D minor'.

Recorders are wooden woodwind instruments. They are usually grouped together in a consort.

> Listen to Dowland's 'The Earle of Essex Galiard'.

The **Baroque orchestra** was considerably smaller than a modern orchestra. The **strings** were the most prominent section.

> Listen to Kuhnau's 'Magnificat in C major'.

Strings | Violin, viola, cello and double bass.

Woodwind | Flute, oboe and bassoon.

Brass | Trumpet and French horn.

Percussion | Timpani.

Keyboard | Harpsichord.

Ornaments



A **grace note** is a very short note played just before the main one.



A **trill** is a quick movement back and forth between two notes.

Everything else...

Modulation is when the music changes key. For example, from C major to G major.

Works written for the Christian church are **sacred**.

The lyrics will mention God, Biblical texts or words like 'Hallelujah', 'Gloria', 'Agnus Dei'.

> Listen to Handel's 'The Heavens are Telling' from The Creation.

Works not written for the church are **secular**.

> Listen to Battista's 'Sonata Terza'.

A **ground bass** is a bass line that repeats many times while the upper parts are varied.

> Listen to Monteverdi's 'Zefiro Torna'.

A **sequence** is a phrase repeated at a higher or lower pitch.

All of these listening clips are available on YouTube – just search for the composer and the piece name.