

# CLASSICAL

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(1730-1830)

Despite the fact that there is a wide range of style characteristics of the Classical period, there are several traits which seem to dominate most of the music during this era. They are: balance, simplicity, elegance, formal craftsmanship, proportion and objective expression. Melody lines became more "natural" and simpler, and at the same time composers would often strive for great contrast of moods within one movement or piece.

## Keyboard Instruments

The *fortepiano* (literally, "loud-soft") supplanted the harpsichord and clavichord in the Classical period mainly because it was capable of greater dynamic and musical gradations that were lacking in both the earlier instruments. The *fortepiano* was a much smaller, more delicate instrument than the pianos of today and was made with a mainly wooden frame, thin strings and small, leather-covered hammers which produced a tone that was bright, clear, delicate and somewhat thin.

## Classical Performance Style

Classical composers believed that attention to small details was the key to successful musical expression. Be sure to carefully examine all markings such as slurs, articulation, dynamics, phrasing and ornamentation, which help to create feeling and mood in this style. Classical music often features a singing melody over a

broken chord accompaniment (*Alberti Bass*), and it is important to voice the melody over the accompaniment in order to create a beautiful balance. Listen carefully to the phrasing in this style period, as sensitive and musical phrasing will help to convey a smooth, flowing line in the music.

## Musical Form

The very important Classical sonata idea was developed during this period. It employed a contrasting range of different emotions in one piece. A *sonatina* is a short sonata in one, two or three movements. The name *sonata* was originally used for any piece of a "sounding" nature (*sonare* means "to sound"), as contrasted with the *cantata* (*cantare* means "to sing"). Generally speaking, most sonatinas consist of three movements in the order of fast-slow-fast. Sonatinas form an important part of a well-balanced diet for young performers, and from them, students learn the organization and effect of musical form.

## Classical Composers

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770–1827)  
Muzio Clementi (1752–1832)  
Franz Joseph Haydn (1732–1809)  
Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756–1791)  
Franz Schubert (1797–1828)

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