

The Classical Era 1750-1820

FORMS

Mastery of form is most important in establishing greatness during this period. Emotion is important but it must be controlled within the established form. (Remember the coloring book analogy.) Simplicity and clarity of form were of utmost importance, and composers took an intellectual approach to composition instead of a purely emotional approach.

VOCAL FORMS

OPERA

A great deal of opera music was written during the Classical era, but not much changed in terms of appearance or style. The leading composer of opera during this time was Christoph Gluck. However, very few Classical operas are performed regularly today. The exception would be the operas of Mozart, which are considered to be the greatest of the time period (and some of the greatest of all time).



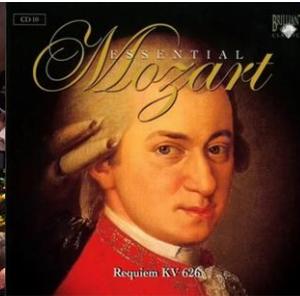
[Queen of the Night Aria](#)



[Figaro Sull'aria](#)

REQUIEM

The Latin text of a funeral mass set to music for vocal soloists, chorus, and orchestra. Requiems stress arias and chorus with very little, or no recitative. [Dies Irae](#)



INSTRUMENTAL FORMS

OVERTURE – Instrumental music played to introduce an opera. It is basically unchanged from the baroque overture. [Overture to Don Giovanni](#)



SONATA - Solo instrument plus keyboard accompaniment or for solo piano. Sonatas are now composed following a FOUR movement plan. Sonata form now provides the foundation for not only sonatas, but also for string quartets and symphonies. [Mozart Sonata for piano and Violin](#) [Mozart piano sonata in a minor](#)

- I. FAST
- II. SLOW
- III. DANCE (minuet)
- IV. FAST



Many three movement sonatas also exist in this time period.

STRING QUARTET - the most popular type of chamber ensemble. Follows SONATA form.

- 1st violin
- 2nd violin
- viola
- cello

Other chamber music ensembles existed in various combinations, such as piano trios, wind quintets, etc. but were not nearly as popular as the string quartet. [2 Haydn Quartets](#) [Mozart String Quartet in d minor](#)

A musical score for Ludwig van Beethoven's 'Allegro con brio' for string quartet. The score is in 3/4 time and features four staves for violin I, violin II, viola, and cello. To the right of the score is a photograph of the Jerusalem String Quartet performing. The quartet consists of four men in black suits, each playing a string instrument. The photograph is credited to Keith Saunders.

CONCERTO - Solo instrument plus orchestra accompaniment, much like the Baroque concerto. Still follows a three movement plan: fast-slow-fast tempo pattern. The only significant change to concerto form is the addition of a CADENZA. [Haydn Trumpet Concerto \(Cadenza at 5:20\)](#) [Mozart Oboe Concerto \(Cadenza at 6:25\)](#)

- Cadenza – an improvised, unaccompanied portion for the soloist to show of technical skill. A solo within a solo.



SYMPHONY - A lengthy composition written for full orchestra, composed in sonata form. The most popular orchestral form of the Classical era and even today considered to be the greatest compositional achievement for any composer.



[Haydn Symphony #104 "London"](#)

[Mozart Symphony #41 "Jupiter"](#)

[Beethoven Symphony #3 - "Eroica"](#)