

## Baroque Instrumental Forms

Instrumental music became much more organized and developed during the Baroque Era. This is the first time in music history that the orchestra is seen, and by the end of the Baroque Era instrumental music is not just as important as vocal music, it surpasses vocal music in significance.

Much of the instrumental music of the Baroque Era begins the practice of *dividing a longer work into smaller sections, called movements*. A movement is defined as an independent portion of a larger work; it is a complete musical idea that is a part of larger collection of complete ideas. It can stand on its own and has a beginning, middle, and end. (Think how paragraphs are used to make up a longer essay... this is how movements work.)

### INSTRUMENTAL FORMS OF THE BAROQUE ERA

#### 1. FUGUE

A polyphonic work that can be performed vocally or instrumentally, but is most often heard on the PIPE ORGAN during the Baroque era. Fugue consists of a **SUBJECT** (basic melody/theme, the main idea) and **countersubjects** that are added in contrast to the subject. Each “part” of the harmony is called a **voice** regardless of whether it is sung or played on an instrument. 4 voice fugues were the most common. Fugues are incredibly strict in rhythm, as every voice in the fugue has to line up perfectly with the others. Due to the strict nature of fugues, they were often preceded by a section that was more free in form and rhythm and allowed for improvisation: PRELUDE, TOCCATA, and FANTASIA. [Bach "Great" Fugue in g minor](#)  
[Bach Prelude and Fugue in c minor](#) [Bach Toccata and Fugue in d minor](#)

#### 2. OVERTURE

An instrumental introduction to a larger work, such as an opera, or an oratorio, or even another instrumental work (like a Suite). [Overture to Messiah \(Oratorio\)](#) [Overture to Agrippina \(Opera\)](#)

#### 3. BAROQUE SUITE

A series of movements based upon various types of popular dance music. Played by an orchestra, chamber ensemble or solo keyboard instrument. Although based upon dance music, suites were NEVER intended for dancing, but instead were intended simply to be listened to as concert music. Popular dance styles included: minuet, gigue, allemande, sarabande, bourree, courante, gavotte. [Bach Orchestral Suite #1](#)  
[Bach Cello Suite #1 \(Unaccompanied\)](#) [Bach French Suite #5 for Harpsichord](#)

#### 4. SONATA

A multi-movement work for **one solo instrument with keyboard accompaniment** (most commonly the harpsichord). [Handel Sonata for Flute](#) [Bach Sonata N. 1 for Violin and Harpsichord](#) [CPE Bach Oboe Sonata](#)

#### 5. CONCERTO

A work for **one solo instrument with orchestral accompaniment** in THREE MOVEMENTS that follow a tempo pattern of FAST-SLOW-FAST. [CPE Bach Concerto for Flute and Orchestra](#)  
[JS Bach Violin Concerto in a minor](#) [JS Bach Oboe Concerto](#)

#### 6. CONCERTO GROSSO

A work written for a small **group of solo instruments with orchestra** following a three movement plan with a tempo pattern of FAST-SLOW-FAST. It was a small orchestra consisting of 12-16 instruments. This ensemble is divided into 3 specific sections:

- Continuo – the harpsichord, which plays continuously (hence “continuo”) and fills in parts where needed while acting as the time keeper, keeping the ensemble together as a group.
- Ripieno – larger group of string instruments (6-10 violins, violas and cellos)

