



**PIONEER VALLEY  
SYMPHONY**

**Music  
Through  
The Ages**

**STUDENT WORKBOOK**

# Welcome to Music Through The Ages



**M**usic has been around as long as we have. In the beginning we are sure our ancestors clapped their hands, stomped their feet and made happy and joyful sounds when things were happy and joyful. And we are sure that when things weren't happy and joyful, the sounds they made were probably sad and slow. This little booklet will tell you how and why our ancestors have made those happy and sad sounds over the past thousand years. It is a very brief journey through music history. We will begin with the somber sounds of monks chanting prayers in quiet monasteries, go wandering with the troubadours while they sing of knights in armor and ladies in distress in the Middle Ages. Then we will see how all those shows like *The Lion King*, *Cats*, and *Beauty and the Beast* really had their beginnings in Italy during in the Renaissance. And, along the way, we'll meet some of the composers who made music CLASSICAL.



## MIDDLE AGES 800-1400 AD

We know a lot about what music was sung and played from the time Rome fell in 476 AD to the time Columbus sailed across the sea a thousand years later. Most of it is in manuscripts preserved in churches and tells us that music was then, as it still is today, a very important part of worship.

Medieval music for the church was mostly *a cappella*, (from the chapel) that means sung without accompaniment because instruments were not allowed. The words were always in

Latin and the melodies, called plainsong or Gregorian Chant, were sung in unison, just like we sing the National Anthem today. Around 1200 some adventurous musicians tried singing these plainsong melodies in parts—that is, one voice would start the tune on a high

note, another would join in, or “harmonize” on a lower one. This early kind of harmony was called “organum.” because it sounded very much like an organ—the only instrument that was permitted in churches in early times.

Most Medieval popular music wasn’t written down, so we can only guess what it really sounded like by looking at pictures of singers and instrumentalists that are found in manuscripts from the period. With the exception of the troubadours and minstrels who went from castle to castle singing songs about love and crusading, most of the singers shown in the pictures didn’t look like they were having a very good time! It seems as if singing



was a painful experience for them—wrinkled brows, pinched noses, squinty eyes. Were the words they were singing that unpleasant? We'll never know for sure. Those drawings do show that there were many instruments played during the Middle Ages: flutes, recorders, drums, bagpipes, trumpets, harps, lutes, guitars—all similar to the instruments we have today. Carvings and sculptures in many churches show those instruments being played by happy angels. But we are sure that the people in the towns were very happy as they made their joyful noises by tooting their flutes and banging their drums.



## RENAISSANCE 1400-1600

The Renaissance was full of changes for music and musicians. We begin to know who some of those composers and performers were.



Palestrina (1525-1594) was composer for St. Peter's Cathedral in Rome. He loved harmony, and used it in his compositions for the Cathedral choir. The choir performed *a cappella*, that is without accompaniment. At the same time in Venice, members of the Gabrieli

family were introducing brass instruments and organs into the services in St. Mark's Cathedral. They wrote music for grand





pageants celebrating special church feast days. These compositions were composed for huge choirs of voices and instruments.

All over Europe wealthy families began to hire musicians as a part of their household staff. These musicians were servants who lived with the cooks, and maids, and valets. It was their job to provide entertainment as well as music for the family chapel. One of the most important of

those household musicians was Claudio Monteverdi (1567-1643). He composed a musical setting of the classic myth of Orpheus going down to Hades to seek his beloved Eurydice. It is the first full-length opera we have. Early operas were musical plays based on the adventures of Greek and Roman gods and goddesses. Performed in beautiful costumes in front of fantastic scenery and stage machinery, they used many instruments and often included dancing and women singers! By the 1700s opera



was a very popular music form throughout Europe. Those entertainments were

the ancestors of today's Broadway musicals.



## BAROQUE 1600-1750

The word “Baroque” comes from a Portugese word meaning “imperfect pearl.” It was used to describe art, statues, buildings, and music that were flowery, complicated, and fancy.



Baroque art is full of busy designs, lots of curlicues, swirls, and ornaments. Baroque music is full of complicated, ornamented melodies that swirl around each other. This was a period in music history when musicians had jobs composing and performing very special kinds of music for the households of the rich and Noble all over Europe. The music was dramatic, flowery, and emotional, and reflected the spirit of the times. Courts in France, Germany, and England competed with each other by trying to build the biggest palace, have the biggest orchestra, and hire the best known composer. Music and entertainments had to reflect the glory and “bigness” of the court. And composers produced ballets, pageants, operas, and other extravagancies that did just that.

Every church had its own organist-choir director-composer who was required to produce new music for every Sunday service. Each week he was expected to compose a cantata based on the text from the Bible, copy the parts, train the singers, and rehearse the instrumentalists. He also had to teach Latin and mathematics in the school next to the church. Antonio Vivaldi (1678-1741), Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750), and George Frederic Handel (1685-1759) are



**HANDEL**

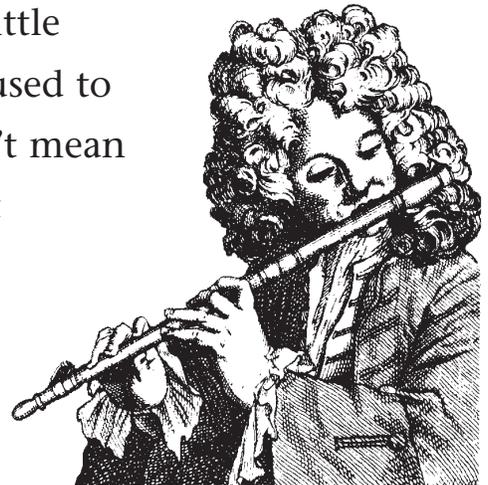


**BACH**

composers of this period who created thousands of pieces of music for voices and instruments. New types of compositions—concertos, sonatas, cantatas, operas, oratorios—for many different combinations of instrument players and singers all became important musical forms during the Baroque period. Vivaldi, Bach and Handel were the composers who perfected these forms.

## **CLASSICAL STYLE 1750-1800**

All the music we are covering in this little booklet is called “classical.” That term is used to distinguish it from “popular.” That doesn’t mean that classical music isn’t popular (it is!). It means that when you go to your music store to get the latest CD or top of the ten best whatever, you won’t find Beethoven in the same bin with the Beatles, although both are classic and both are popular! Yes, it’s confusing.



Classical Style, with a capital C, refers to the music that was written directly after the Baroque period. People grew tired of all the ornaments and complicated melodies and rhythms of the Baroque period. During the Classical period, composers were trying out a new, cleaner sound. There were songlike melodies and beautiful harmonies to match. Franz Josef Haydn (1732-1809), Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791), and Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827) are the most



**HAYDN**

famous composers of the Classical period. Their sonatas, symphonies, quartets and operas are the best examples of what that age thought about what music should be. Symphonies, sonatas and string quartets were based on simple short themes, very different from the complicated melodies of the Baroque. It had to be logical, sensible, and easily understandable. This was the Age of Reason, after all!

Haydn is called the “father of the symphony” because his hundreds of pieces in this form became the model for all other composers writing after him. Mozart learned a great deal from Haydn. In his short life, Mozart wrote symphonies, concertos, sonatas, string quartets, and operas that are played and loved by musicians all over the world. Another pupil of Haydn’s was Beethoven. He too learned how to write a symphony and string quartets from “Papa Haydn ” but as he developed his own special ideas about what music should sound like, he set the stage for the Romantic period where music’s most important role was to express feeling and emotions.



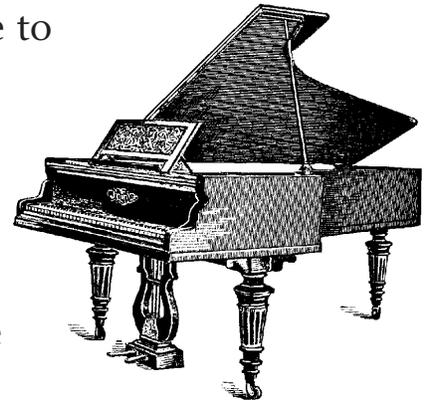
**MOZART**

## **ROMANTIC 1800-1900**

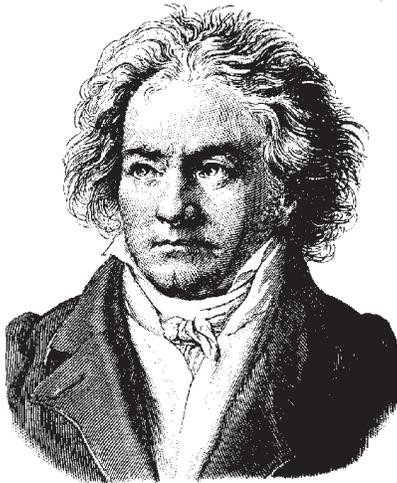
The Classical style required composers to follow rules. If the first theme in your piece is fast and happy, then the second one should be slow and sad. If you’re writing a sonata, you can make variations on

both those themes, but you'd better be sure to end that first movement by repeating those two themes just as they were in the beginning.

Beethoven followed those rules in his early compositions, but as he grew older he broke those rules more than he followed them. Even today, music lovers are still trying to come to some agreement about what Beethoven was trying to do in his last quartets and sonatas. His bold adventures into reshaping the



sounds of music established the Romantic period in music history. It was a time where composers could express their emotions and ideas about non-musical things without worrying about breaking rules. The piano became the most popular instrument and composers turned out hundreds of pieces called Nocturnes, Fantasies, Romances,



**BEETHOVEN**

Reveries. Love of country, love of nature, love of man, all came to be expressed in songs and symphonies. The composer and his music came to stand for freedom. This music was for everyone, not just the rich!

This period produced composers whose names and compositions represent the Romantic movement: Franz Schubert (1797-1828), Felix Mendelssohn (1809-1847),



**MENDELSSOHN**



**CHOPIN**

Frederick Chopin (1810-1849), Robert Schumann (1810-1856), Franz Liszt (1811-1886), Richard Wagner (1813-1883), Giuseppe Verdi (1813-1901), Johannes Brahms (1833-1897), Gustav Mahler (1860), Richard Strauss (1864-1949). Each of them brought to the story of classical music his own personal interpretation of what music should be. Peter Tschaikovsky (1840-1893), Antonin Dvorak (1841-1904) Edvard Grieg (1843-1907), and Jan Sibelius (1865-1957) were a few of the many composers who used folk tunes to capture and celebrate the special spirit of their own countries. Each created compositions that contributed to our understanding and appreciation for the variety and richness of the happy and sad sounds of music.

## **THE 20TH CENTURY AND MODERN MUSIC**

Have you seen *Fantasia*? It's the Disney movie that interprets classical music through images of coffins bouncing down stairs, Mickey Mouse playing Sorcerer's Apprentice, hippos, elephants, ostriches and crocodiles doing ballet; centaurs, fauns, satyrs and nymphs.

The music in the part of the film that shows the beginnings of life and the final destruction of the dinosaurs, is *The Rite of Spring*, by Igor Stravinsky. It was written in 1913 and caused a riot at its first performance. "What were those sounds coming from the orchestra?" "That can't be a bassoon! A bassoon shouldn't or couldn't



sound like that!!” “What’s the rhythm?” “Are they in tune? “Terrible! Stop!!” These words described the reactions of audience at that first performance. These words can also describe the reactions to a lot of the music that has been composed in the past century. Stravinsky (1882-1971), Bela Bartok (1881-1945), Arnold Schoenberg, (1874-1951) are three major composers of the first half of the 20th century whose bold musical ideas threatened the sense and sensibilities of the musical establishment. This was a time of rule-breaking. Our familiar scale—do re mi fa so la ti do—was replaced by lots of unfamiliar combinations of tones. It was alarming! It was exciting!

The past hundred years have seen many changes in all the arts. Music has probably gone through the most dramatic changes of all. Experiments and discoveries in the science of sound and electronics have enabled many of today’s composers to create symphonies, concertos, operas, and other musical compositions without ever leaving their electronic keyboards, or needing instrumentalists and singers to perform their work. The same is true for the listener. In the Middle Ages it was mainly monks in church who heard music. In the Baroque period classical music was performed for only the wealthiest of people. In the Romantic period everyone could go to a concert hall to hear music. During the twentieth century, great performances of could be heard at home on the radio or phonograph. Today, we can download music from the Internet. There’s never been a better time to learn to love “Music Through the Ages!”



## A Note to Parents:

The Pioneer Valley Symphony is dedicated to introducing children to live symphonic music. We invite your family to attend our season concerts. Tickets for children are always \$5.00. For a concert schedule please visit our website at [www.pvso.org](http://www.pvso.org) or call the PVS office at 773-3664 to request a brochure.

We look forward to seeing you at the symphony!

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