The Baroque Era began in 1600 and ended with the death of Johann Sebastian Bach in 1750. The three distinct styles of this period were church music, theater music, and chamber music. Known for grandeur, large-scale productions, spectacular ideas and major contrasts, the music, art, and architecture of this time became very important to the wealthy nobility.

During the Baroque period, there were major developments in dramatic music — the oratorio, opera, cantata, and Passion music. The oratorio was a dramatic large-scale production dealing with a Biblical subject. It would have a narrator (soloist), chorus, and orchestra. Unlike opera, no costumes, scenery, or staging was used in an oratorio. The cantata, usually a shorter work limited to soloists, a small number of chorus members, and a small orchestral accompaniment, could be written on either sacred or secular subjects. Passion music specifically centered on the Christian Easter story. Baroque church music departed from the a cappella style of the Renaissance period. Many of the European Baroque church composers wrote their compositions in the local language of the country rather than Latin.

These important new styles created dramatic music. Dramatic music, especially in the form of operas, was first written in Florence, Italy. All forms of dramatic music — including oratorio, cantata, and Passion music — were soon found in Italy, which then spread throughout Europe. In the Roman operas, grand choruses were added. The recitative and aria were added in Venetian operas. The first public opera, "Teatro San Cassiano," was performed in Venice in 1637. In the city of Naples, the Italian overture was added to the opera as a beautiful opening for the production.

In his book, "Historie de la Musique" (1725), Le Cerf de la Vieville states "a perfect voice should be sonorous, extensive, sweet, neat, lively, and flexible." During this time, the vocal bass part came into its own as an important line with the soprano's melodic line. The tenor and alto parts were incidental to these two parts, therefore performed with less volume.

The keyboard of choice was the harpsichord rather than the piano, which later came into its own in the Classical Era. To substitute for the harpsichord, the composer or performer would use the portative organ or a large pipe organ.

The two major composers of the Baroque period were the German composers Johann Sebastian Bach (1685–1750) and George Frideric Handel (1685–1759). Bach was known for his church music and Handel was lauded for his operas and oratorios. In England, the major composer of choral music was Henry Purcell (1659–1695).

While instrumental music came to the forefront (rather than vocal music), there were many important choral composers who made a significant contribution. In Italy, Giovanni Gabrieli (ca.1553–1612) wrote sacred multipart compositions for choir, brass, and organ; Claudio Monteverdi (1567–1643) wrote madrigals and operas; Alessandro Scarlatti (1660–1725) wrote Neapolitan opera; and Antoni Vivaldi (1678–1741) wrote important sacred choral literature.
In France, both Jean Baptiste Lully (1632–1687) and Jean Philippe Rameau (1683–1764) wrote operas, the latter known as the major theorist of the period. Marc Antoine Charpentier (ca. 1645–1704) wrote both secular cantatas and sacred compositions.

The list of German Baroque composers is longer. Heinrich Schütz (1585–1672) was known for his cantatas, oratorios, and Passions; Michael Praetorius (1571–1621) wrote choral music in both the Renaissance and Baroque styles; Dietrich Buxtehude (ca. 1637–1707), like Johann Pachelbel (1653–1706), wrote church cantatas with organ accompaniment.

What Was Happening in America During the Baroque Era

In America, the Baroque Era was a time of colonization. The Jamestown Colony was founded in 1607. Henry Hudson explored the Hudson River in 1609. In 1621, Thomas Ravenscroft wrote the “Whole Booke of Psalms,” four-part compositions with texts from the Book of Psalms in the Bible. It is believed that the Puritans were singing the psalms in harmony with accompaniment during this time period. The Puritans were credited with the founding of Boston in 1630.

The “Bay Psalm Book” was first printed in 1640 in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Considering that this occurred only 33 years after the Jamestown Colony in Virginia was founded, it represents an excellent achievement.

Other facts of note are:

- In 1664, New Amsterdam, known as Manhattan Island, was renamed New York.
- Philadelphia was founded in 1682 by William Penn.
- The famous Salem witch trials began in 1692.
- Yale College was founded in 1701.

The first singing instruction book in America, “The Grounds and Rules of Musick Explained” or “An Introduction to the Art of Singing by Note,” was written by Rev. Thomas Walter of Roxbury and published by Benjamin Franklin’s brother, James Franklin, in 1721. Previously, music was learned by rote and memorized. Also in 1721, John Tufts wrote and published the first American music textbook, “Introduction to the Singing of Psalm-Tunes.”

In 1723, churches in Boston felt that improving singing was very important. Therefore, the better singers began to sit together in groups. These groups became the first church choirs and were moved to a specific gallery in churches. In 1738, John Wesley founded the Methodist Church in America.

Robert Stevenson’s book, “Protestant Church Music in America,” was an important resource in American music in which he discussed the importance of the Moravian school of sacred composers in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania. The Moravian school of organ builders was considered the best in the New World and David Tannenberg was considered the best organ builder of the Baroque period in America. The Moravian composers used orchestral accompaniment for vocal and choral music in their worship service and established America’s oldest continuing instrumental ensemble, the Bethlehem Trombone Choir. The first American performances of Johann Sebastian Bach’s major choral works led to the creation of the Bethlehem Bach Festival.
Famous Composers of the Baroque Era

ITALY

The greatest opera composer was Alessandro Scarlatti (1660–1725) and he was from Naples. His best-known operas were “La Rosaura” (1690), “Teodora” (1693), “Tigrane” (1711) and “Griselda” (1721). He also wrote some 600 church cantatas, 150 oratorios, and numerous other sacred church compositions.

Claudio Monteverdi was born in 1567 in Cremona. His first of nine books of secular madrigals was produced in 1587 and his first opera, “Orfeo,” was performed in 1607 in Mantua. The subject matter is the same as the Florentine “Euridice” opera, but his was extended to five acts. In 1613, he became the conductor of Saint Mark’s Basilica in Venice. In 1632, he was ordained as a Catholic priest and died in Venice in 1643.

Giovanni Gabrieli

Giovanni Gabrieli (ca. 1553–1612) was a famous Italian organist and composer. Born in Venice, he studied with his uncle, Andrea Gabrieli, then traveled to Munich to study with the great Renaissance composer Orléans di Lasso. In 1584, he returned to Venice as temporary organist at St. Mark’s Basilica and was declared principal organist in 1585. His composition “Sacrae Symphoniae” (1597) impressed composers throughout Europe.

St. Mark’s Basilica was built in the shape of a cross with a balcony in each of the four sections of the building. Gabrieli perfected the concept of compositions that uses two to four or two, three or four of these sections, which were for choirs, organ, and instrumental ensembles.

One of Gabrieli’s famous compositions, “In Ecclesiis,” was written for 64 parts.

Antonio Vivaldi (1678–1741), nicknamed “the red-headed priest” because of his red hair color, was the son of one of the leading violinists of St. Mark’s Basilica and was educated as both a musician and a priest. In 1703, Vivaldi became ill and was excused from his priestly duties. From 1704 to 1740, Vivaldi was employed at the Conservatory of the Pietà in Venice as a conductor, composer, teacher, and general superintendent. Among his many compositions, which included 49 operas, numerous cantatas, oratorios, and motets, two of the most well-known are “The Four Seasons” and “Gloria.”

FRANCE

Italian-born composer Jean Baptiste Lully (1632–1687) developed a unique overture for French opera. The form of this overture was in three sections. The first section was slow with dotted rhythm, the second section was fast and lively, and the third section was like the first section. This same format was later used by Bach and Handel. In 1653, he was appointed court composer in Paris, France.
Jean-Philippe Rameau (1683–1764) was considered the finest French musician of the eighteenth century. At age 39, Rameau published the famous “Treatise of Harmony.” In later life, he began composing operas. The most famous were “Hippolyte et Aricie” (1733), “Les Indes galantes” (1735), “Castor et Pollux” (1737), and “Les Fêtes d’Hèbé ou les Talents lyriques” (1739).

Marc-Antoine Charpentier was born near Paris, France, ca. 1643. He traveled to Italy to study painting but met the composer Giacomo Carissimi and began studying music. Eventually, Charpentier was appointed maître de musique à la Sainte Chapelle in 1698, which is the highest musical post in France. He held this post until his death in 1704. Two of his major choral compositions were “Missa Assumpta est Maria” and “Messe de Minuit pour Noël.”

ENGLAND

Born in 1659 in Westminster, Henry Purcell was considered the greatest English composer of opera. His father was a singer in the court of King Charles II and Henry started his musical career as a chorister in the Chapel Royal. He wrote the famous “Dido and Aeneas” around 1689, an opera written for a girl’s boarding school in Chelsea. Other important operas were “Dioclesian” (1690), “King Arthur” (1691), “The Fairy Queen” (1692), “The Indian Queen” (1695), and “The Tempest” (1695). In 1669, he became organist at Westminster Abbey, and during his six-year tenure there wrote only sacred music. Purcell held numerous posts in London including the appointment as organist of the Chapel Royal. He wrote such important works as “Orpheus Britannicus,” a collection of songs, and “Te Deum and Jubilate.” Purcell died in 1695 leaving his wife Frances and three of his remaining six children. He was buried beside the organ in Westminster Abbey in London, England.

DENMARK

One of the principal Lutheran composers of the Baroque period was Dietrich Buxtehude (ca. 1637–1707). Born in Oldesloe, Denmark, one of his claims to fame was that a young Johann Sebastian Bach walked 250 miles to hear Buxtehude play the organ. Dietrich helped develop the choral cantata that Bach later perfected. Buxtehude received his major organ position at Marienkirke in Lubeck, Germany, by marrying the former organist’s daughter. Therefore, when he was ready to retire, Buxtehude established the prerequisite that anyone taking his job must marry his daughter! Unfortunately, his daughter was very unattractive and numerous organists turned down this prestigious organ position because they refused to marry her. Following his death, the church continued this rule and the next organist married Buxtehude’s daughter!
GERMANY

Heinrich Schütz

Heinrich Schütz (1585–1672) was considered the greatest German Lutheran composer of the middle seventeenth century. He attended university to study law, but was sent to Venice to study with composer Giovanni Gabrieli from 1609 to 1612. Schütz’s first opera was “Daphne” (1627), which has unfortunately been lost. He spent the major part of his life as organist and composer at Frauenkirche, a Lutheran church in Dresden, Germany. Fortunately, over 500 of his compositions have been located. Two of his major works were “Psalms of David,” and “The Seven Last Words on the Cross.” He died at 87 from a stroke and buried in the Frauenkirche.


Michael Praetorius (1571–1621) was the youngest son of a Lutheran pastor in Creuzburg, Germany. His last name was Latinized from the original German name, Schütz. He was a prolific composer who wrote sixteen volumes of “Musae Sionae,” a series of over one thousand chorales and songs for the Lutheran church. He served as an organist and Kapellmeister. Praetorius was buried in a vault under the organ in St. Mary’s Church in Wolfenbuttel, Germany.

Son of a wine merchant, Johann Pachelbel was born in Nuremberg, Germany, in 1653. Pachelbel’s first music teacher was Henrich Schwemmer. His first organ position was at St. Lorenz, occurring at the same time he entered the University of Altdord. Pachelbel was known as an outstanding organist and composer of over one hundred vocal and choral works. He died in 1706 at the age of 52.

Johann Sebastian (J.S.) Bach was born on March 21, 1685, the same year as George Frideric Handel (1685), in Eisenach, Germany. Bach spent his entire life within a forty-mile radius of his birth home. He fathered twenty children from his two consecutive wives and the Bach family lived in central Germany for six generations from 1580 to 1845. This family produced many good, and some exceptional, musicians.

Johann received his earliest musical training from his father, who was a town musician in Eisenach. After his father’s death, he studied with his older brother, Johann Christoph, an organist.

J.S. Bach composed in all of the musical forms popular during the Baroque period except opera.

Bach’s first three professional positions were as the organist in the towns of Arnstadt, Mühlhausen, and Weimar. Next, he moved to Cothen where he was hired to write music for court entertainment. His last job was in Leipzig where he was responsible for all music at the churches of St. Nicholas and St. Thomas. During this time, he wrote numerous cantatas and other church music. Some of the famous cantatas were “Christ lag in Todes Banden” (No. 4), “Ich will den Kreuzstab” (No. 56), a solo cantata, “Ein feste Burg” (No. 80), and “Jesus der du meine Seele...”
(No. 78).” Some of his outstanding secular cantatas included “The Wedding Cantata,” “The Peasant Cantata,” and “The Coffee Cantata.” Other important large-scale works include “The Christmas Oratorio,” “Magnificat,” and the great “Mass in B-minor.” J.S. Bach’s last compositions were the “St. John Passion” and “St. Matthew Passion,” and were first performed in Leipzig in 1724. Bach seemed unhappy with the two compositions, because he wrote many revisions.

With the death of Johann Sebastian Bach, the Baroque period ended in 1750. His compositions were not internationally known at the time of his death and amazingly, many of his works that we enjoy so much today were not performed until approximately one hundred years after his death. Today, J. S. Bach is considered the last of the great German Lutheran composers.

GREATEST COMPOSER OF ORATORIOS

George Frideric Handel was born on February 23, 1685, in Halle, Saxony. Unlike the Bach family, there were no other musicians in the Handel family. As a young man, George pleaded with his father for music lessons so his father grudgingly sent him to Friedrich Wilhelm Zachow. As a result, Handel became an outstanding organist and harpsichordist and also studied violin and oboe. In 1702, he graduated from the University in Halle but, unlike Bach, he never married.

Handel’s first music position was as the organist in the cathedral in Halle. He then moved to the cathedral in Hamburg, filling the same position. From 1706 to 1710, he was in Italy where he worked for many of the leading nobility. During this time, he created music in four categories—the secular cantata, Catholic sacred music, oratorios, and opera. At the age of 25, he moved to Hanover, Germany, where he became the Director of the Electoral Court of Hanover. Two years later, his employer, Elector of Hanover, was named King George I of England. For thirty-five years of his life, his principal job was to write operas, which today are not as popular as his oratorios. Interestingly, these famous oratorios were not in the job description given him by King George.

Handel is known as the greatest composer of the oratorio during the entire Baroque period. In 1726, Handel became a naturalized British citizen and moved from his birthplace in Germany to numerous other German cities as well as to Italy and England. People spoke of him as belonging to the English school, German by birth, and Italian by training.

Both Bach and Handel were blind at the end of their lives.

Handel’s works that have lasted throughout the centuries are his twenty-six oratorios and are his contribution to Anglican Church music. A few of these were “Acis and Galatea” (1720); “Esther” (1720/1732); “Alexander’s Feast” (1736); “Saul” (1729); “Israel in Egypt” (1738); “Messiah” (1741); “Semele” (1709); “Judas Maccabeus” (1747); and “Jephtha” (1751). A partial list of Handel operas included “Rinaldo” (1711); “Giulio Césare” (1724); “Tamerlano” (1724); “Rodelinda” (1725); “Orlando” (1733); and “Serse” (1738).

Handel also wrote momentous compositions for national occasions. Some of these included the four “Chandos Anthems” (1720), four anthems for the coronation of George II (1727), the “Funeral Anthem” for the funeral of Queen Caroline (1737), and the “Te Deum” for the military victory at Dettingen. Unlike Bach, Handel’s compositions were known internationally when he died on April 14, 1759, in London, England. His last composition was “The Triumph of Time and Truth.” Today, Handel’s only sacred oratorio, “Messiah,” is featured in many Christmas performances. He was buried in Westminster Abbey in London, England.

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Chronology of the Baroque Era
(1600-1665)

1600 The Baroque Era begins.
1601 Shakespeare writes Hamlet.
1602 Galileo Galilei discovers the law of gravity.
1604 Shakespeare writes Othello.
1605 Pope Paul V is crowned.
1606 Shakespeare writes Macbeth.
1607 Monteverdi’s first opera, “Orfeo,” is performed.
1610 Louis XIII is crowned King of France.
1611 The King James version of the Bible is published.
1621 Pope Gregory XV is crowned.
1625 Charles I is crowned King of England.
1637 Dietrich Buxtehude is born in Oldesloe, Denmark.
1643 Louis XIV is crowned King of France.
1643 Marc-Antoine Charpentier is born near Paris, France.
1653 Jean-Baptiste Lully is appointed court composer in Paris.
1653 Oliver Cromwell dissolves the English Parliament.
1659 Henry Purcell is born in Westminster, England.
1660 Alessandro Scarlatti is born in Italy.
1665 Heinrich Schütz writes the “St. John Passion.”
Chronology of the Baroque Era

(1666-1750)

1666 Heinrich Schütz writes the “St. Matthew Passion.”
1678 Antonio Vivaldi is born in Venice, Italy.
1683 Jean-Philippe Rameau is born in France.
1685 James II is crowned King of England.
1685 J.S. Bach is born in Eisenach, Germany.
1685 G.F. Handel is born in Halle, Saxony.
1689 Henry Purcell writes his opera “Dido and Aeneas.”
1689 William III and Mary are crowned King and Queen of England.
1704 Handel writes the “St. John Passion.”
1704 Bach writes his first cantata.
1709 The first pianoforte (later shortened to piano) is built.
1714 George I is crowned King of England.
1715 Louis the XV is crowned King of France.
1724 Bach writes the “St. John Passion.”
1727 Handel writes the “Coronation Anthems.”
1727 George II is crowned King of England.
1729 Bach writes the “St. Matthew Passion.”
1738 Bach publishes “Mass in B-minor.”
1738 Handel writes “Saul,” “Israel in Egypt,” and “Serse.”
1738 The Methodist Church is founded by John Wesley.
1743 Handel writes “Samson.”
1746 Handel writes “Judas Maccabaeus.”
1750 The death of Johann Sebastian Bach ends the Baroque Era.

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STUDY QUIZ #5
Baroque Era
Chronology

Place an (X) in front of the statement that occurred the earliest in history.

1. ________ The Baroque Era began.
    ________ Louis XIII was crowned King of France.

2. ________ The pilgrims arrived near Cape Cod on the ship, the Mayflower.
    ________ Louis XIV was crowned King of France.

3. ________ Louis XV was crowned King of France.
    ________ The Jamestown Colony was founded.

4. ________ The first Bach cantata was written.
    ________ Henry Purcell wrote his opera, "Dido and Aeneas."

5. ________ Bach wrote the "St. John Passion."
    ________ Monteverdi wrote "Orfeo."

6. ________ Marc-Antoine Charpentier was born near Paris, France.
    ________ J.S. Bach was born in Eisenach, Germany.

7. ________ G.F. Handel was born in Halle, Saxony.
    ________ Henry Purcell was born in Westminster, England.

8. ________ The first pianoforte was built.
    ________ The Methodist Church was founded by John Wesley.

9. ________ Bach published the "Mass in B-minor."
    ________ Handel wrote the "St. John Passion."
STUDY QUIZ #7
Baroque Era

J.S. Bach
Fill in the Blanks

1. Johann Sebastian Bach was born on March 21, 1685, which is the same year that ________ was born.

2. J.S. Bach was the father of ________ children.

3. J.S. Bach received his earliest training from his ________ who was a town musician in Eisenach.

4. J.S. Bach composed in all of the musical forms popular during the Baroque Era except ________.

5. Bach's first three professional positions were as the organist in the towns of ________, ________, and ________.

6. Bach did not write church music in the fourth city in which he worked, ________, because he was hired to write just music for court entertainment.

7. Bach’s last job was in the city of ________ where he was responsible for all music at the churches of St. Nicholas and St. Thomas.

8. Composers ________ and ________ were blind at the end of their lives.

9. With the death of J.S. Bach, the Baroque Era ended in ________.
1. George Frideric Handel was born in 1685, in Halle, Saxony, the same year as _____________________________.

2. Handel's first music teacher was _________________________________.

3. In ______________________, Handel became a naturalized British citizen.

4. G.F. Handel was known as the greatest composer of the _____________________________.
   During the Baroque period.

5. Handel was employed by the Elector of Hanover, who was named _________________________.

6. Handel wrote many outstanding and important oratorios. List three of his most important ones:
   __________________________________________
   __________________________________________
   __________________________________________

7. Handel's last composition was _________________________________.

STUDY QUIZ #9
Baroque Era
Match the Composition to the Composer

From the list of compositions below, place the corresponding letter next to the name of its composer.

A. “Dido and Aeneas”
B. “Euridice”
C. “Gloria”
D. “Hippolyte et Aricie”
E. “In Ecclesiis”
F. “La Rosaura”
G. “Mass in B-minor”
H. “Messe de Minuit pour Noël”
I. “Messiah”
J. “Musae Sionae”
K. “The Seven Last Words on the Cross”

1. _____ Bach
2. _____ Charpentier
3. _____ Gabrieli
4. _____ Handel
5. _____ Monteverdi
6. _____ Praetorius
7. _____ Purcell
8. _____ Rameau
9. _____ Scarlatti
10. _____ Schütz
11. _____ Vivaldi
UNIT EXAM - Page 1

Baroque Era

Fill in the Blanks

1. The Jamestown Colony was founded in __________ year.

2. The __________________________ was the first book printed in America.

3. In 1721, John Tufts wrote and published the first American music textbook, __________________________.

4. In 1738, __________________________ founded the Methodist Church in America.

5. “Dido and Aeneas” was composed by __________________________ in 1689.

6. “Gloria” was composed by __________________________.

7. “In Ecclesiis” was composed by __________________________ for St. Mark’s in Venice, Italy.

8. “The Seven Last Words on the Cross” was composed by __________________________.

9. “Judas Maccabaeus” was composed by __________________________ in 1746.

   The keyboard of choice during the Baroque was the __________________________ rather than the piano, which came into its own in the Classical Era.
Baroque Era

Match the Composition to the Composer

From the list of compositions below, place the corresponding letter next to the name of its composer. Each composer may be used for one or more compositions.

COMPOSITIONS
1. _____ “Ein feste Burg (No. 80)”
2. _____ “Chandos Anthems”
3. _____ “The Coffee Cantata”
4. _____ “Dido and Aeneas”
5. _____ “Gloria”
6. _____ “In Ecclesiis”
7. _____ “Israel in Egypt”
8. _____ “La Rosaura”
9. _____ “Mass in B-minor”
10. _____ “Messe de Minuit pour Noël”
11. _____ “Messiah”
12. _____ “Musae Sionae”
13. _____ “Orfeo”
14. _____ “The Seven Last Words on the Cross”
15. _____ “Symphoniae Sacrae”

COMPOSERS
A. Bach
B. Charpentier
C. Gabrieli
D. Handel
E. Monteverdi
F. Praetorius
G. Purcell
H. Scarlatti
I. Schütz
J. Vivaldi
UNIT EXAM - Page 3

Baroque Era

Match the Composer to His Country of Origin

From the list of composers below, place the corresponding letter next to the name of the composer. There may be more than one composer for a country.

COMPOSERS

1. ____ Alessandro Scarlatti
2. ____ Antonio Vivaldi
3. ____ Claudio Monteverdi
4. ____ Dietrich Buxtehude
5. ____ George Frideric Handel
6. ____ Giovanni Gabrieli
7. ____ Henry Purcell
8. ____ Heinrich Schütz
9. ____ Jean Baptiste Lully
10. ____ Jean Philippe Rameau
11. ____ Johann Pachelbel
12. ____ Johann Sebastian Bach
13. ____ Marc-Antoine Charpentier
14. ____ Michael Praetorius

COUNTRIES OF ORIGIN

A. Denmark
B. England
C. France
D. Germany
E. Italy
1. George Frideric Handel was employed by the Elector of Hanover, who became _____________________________.

2. Handel was born in 1685, in Halle, Saxony, the same year as _____________________________.

3. Johann Sebastian Bach was the father of ____________________________ children.

4. George Frideric Handel's first music teacher was _____________________________.

5. Johann Sebastian Bach received his earliest training from his ____________________________, who was a town musician in Eisenach.

6. George Frideric Handel is known as the greatest composer of the _____________________________.

7. Johann Sebastian Bach composed in all of the musical forms popular during the Baroque Era except _____________________________.

8. George Frideric Handel was buried in ____________________________ Abbey in London, England.

9. Bach's last job was in the city, ____________________________, where he was responsible for all music at the churches of St. Nicholas and St. Thomas.

10. With the death of ____________________________, the Baroque Era ended in 1750.