I. Baroque Beginnings

- “Baroque”: origin of the usage is not clear, but it is the French form of “barroco,” a Portuguese term for an irregularly shaped pearl.
- Jean-Jacques Rousseau, in his 1768 music dictionary: “Baroque music is that in which harmony is confused, charged with modulations and dissonances, in which the melody is harsh and little natural, intonation difficult, and the movement constrained.”
- Baroque Period (c. 1600 to 1750)
  - Council of Trent (1545-1563) and changes in musical technology
  - Baroque is characterized by an emphasis on drama and heightened emotions, achieved both boldly and with attention to detail, intricacy, ornamentation.
  - Composers experimented with different methods to play on those emotions, or affectations, from the late 16th to the late 17th centuries.
    - Monteverdi was one of the first to describe what he termed the old (“prima pratica”) and new (“seconda pratica”) styles of composing.
  - Experimentations in harmony and meter, no longer controlled by set rules
    - Producing new musical forms, including opera and symphony
    - “Recitative”: words control music, music without meter
  - By 1680, spontaneous or experimental effects were giving way again to standardized usage.
- But do we hear the emotions that those of the Baroque period would have?

II. Madrigals, Cantatas, Operas, Oratorios

- Sacred and Profane
  - Catholic or Counter Reformation rejected polyphony, but Palestrina managed to preserve it
  - Oratorio: a compromise between the increasingly popular secular opera and restrictions on music performed in church
    - Johann Sebastian Bach (1685 - 1750)
    - George Frideric Handel (1685 - 1759)
  - Opera: a dramatic outgrowth of the madrigal
    - Claudio Monteverdi (c. 1567 - 1643)
      - Italian court musician and composer, originally a writer of madrigals, who developed the 16th century style of monody (single line of vocal melody with instrumental accompaniment) into the first widely popular opera, and one still performed today: L’Orfeo (1607; note classical, not religious, subject)
- Terms:
  - Madrigal: two or more voices with a secular text, eventually merged into cantata
  - Opera: dramatic exposition of secular text. Opera seria: dramatic. Opera buffa: comic
  - Oratorio: non-dramatic performance of religious text
  - Cantata: shorter than an opera or oratorio, and not to be acted, but otherwise similar to them

III. Rise of Instrumental Music

- Development of counterpoint instead of harmonic chords as basis of melody (continuation of Renaissance music) – especially “imitative counterpoint”
- Development of purely instrumental forms, including symphony and quartet
- Development of concerts paid for by the audience, instead of by a patron or the church
- Major composers: Johann Pachelbel (1653-1706), Antonio Vivaldi (1678 - 1741), Bach, and Handel

Playlist