

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791)

Born in Salzburg, Austria. A child prodigy, started writing music before he was 5, he performed at court as a six-year-old with his father and sister, composed symphonies, concertos, religious works and operas by thirteen, and mastered all musical forms by young adulthood. He broke with his patron at twenty-five and spent the remaining ten years of his life struggling for financial security.

Mozart is preeminent among composers for his wealth of elegant melodies. Also known for colorful orchestration and dramatic content. Wrote lots of social music, the most famous of which is *Eine Kleine Nachtmusik* (1787). He was one of the first composers to write for clarinet, a new instrument in his day, wrote numerous string quartets and quintets, solo piano works, 27 piano concertos, and wrote approximately 50 symphonies, elevating the symphony to the most significant abstract form of the era.

Opera was most central to Mozart's work. He wrote in three dramatic styles:

Opera buffa – Italian comic opera (*Figaro*, *Giovanni*)
Opera seria – Italian serious opera (*Idomeneo*)
Singspiel – lighter German opera (*The Magic Flute*)

Eine Kleine Nachtmusik

A serenade for string quartet plus bass or chamber orchestra, meaning "A Little Night Music."

Serenade – shorter, less serious than a symphony or concerto.

First movement: first theme "rocket theme" ascends quickly to its peak then turns downward at the same rate. Second theme with its downward curve of its opening measure presents a graceful contrast. An insistent closing theme rounds out the exposition. Short

development section than recapitulation echoes the exposition but expands closing theme into a vigorous coda.

Third Movement – Regular four-bar phrases set in binary form. Prime example of classical sonata-rondo finale; bright and jovial.

Classical Symphony

One of the principal forms of the Classical era. Rooted in Italian operative overture: 3 sections (fast/slow/fast).

First played to introduce an opera. Turned into three separate movements and with added effects and eventually 4 movements.

Eventual 4-movement structure:

- I) fast
- II) slow
- III) moderate dance
- IV) fast

Several techniques became standard in the symphony, including rocket themes (quick, aggressively rhythmic rising theme from low to high register) and steamroller effects (drawn-out crescendos).

Heart of Classical orchestra (30-40 instruments) was strings, assisted by winds, brass and timpani. Mozart/Haydn symphonic works were still for the salon rather than concert hall. Interchange of ideas between instruments became like witty conversations. Symphonies are examples of absolute (i.e. non-vocal) music.

Classical orchestra brought effects from opera to absolute music, including:

- Abrupt alternations of soft and loud
- Sudden accents, Dramatic pauses
- Use of tremolo and pizzicato

Movements of the Classical Symphony

First Movement - Allegro in sonata-allegro form, sometimes preceded by a slow introduction. Sonata-allegro form is based on the opposition of two keys, made clear by the contrast between two themes (Mozart). Haydn often made his sonata-allegro sections monothematic (same theme, two different keys).

Second Movement – slow, often ABA. Largo, Adagio or Andante, not in the tonic key, woodwinds often emphasized. Lyrical, not as much development as first movement.

Third Movement – minuet and trio in triple meter (3/4), ABA, in the tonic key. Moderate tempo, gentle, flowing melody also prominent winds.

Fourth Movement – vivacious Allegro molto or Presto in rondo or sonata-allegro form. Faster and lighter than the first movement. Finale often features themes with folk/dance character, especially Haydn.

Joseph Haydn (1732-1809)

Not born to a musical family. Sang in St Stephens Choir in Vienna as a boy. Moved to Vienna as an adult; taught, accompanied, and composed, eventually securing patronage. Famous throughout Europe as the premier musicians of his time.

He helped perfect late 18th century instrumental music. Expanded orchestra size through greater emphasis on brass, clarinets and percussion.

String Quartets were a major part of Haydn's output. Symphonies were the other major part. Both were the spiritual birthplace of Beethoven's style.

Symphony no.94 (surprise)

Originally performed by 40-person orchestra. Called Surprise because of the sudden fortissimo crashing chord in the slow movement, intended to startle a dozing audience.

First Movement - slow reflective intro, forceful vivace assai (very fast) in sonata-allegro form.

Second Movement – theme and four variations. Theme is based on twinkle twinkle... The 4 variations are great examples of Haydn's structural sophistication.

Third Movement – minuet form, but much faster than the usual third movements.

Fourth Movement – energetic Allegro in sonata-allegro form. As with all of the movements, an example of innocent appealing melodies with a masterful treatment of forms.

The Marriage of Figaro

Figaro was the most successful piece of Mozart's career. Lorenzo da Ponte, the librettist (author), collaborated with Mozart on ...*Figaro*, *Don Giovanni*, and *Così fan tutte*

Figaro was revolutionary in that it satirized the upper classes by allowing a servant – Figaro – to outwit the count, his master.

Instead of stereotyped characters of opera buffa, he created real human beings who come alive through his music.

Count – ladies man

Countess – noble in her suffering

Her maid, Susanna – resourceful in averting counts' advances

Figaro – equally resourceful

Cherubino – irresistible in his youthful ardor for Susanna

Cherubino played by a lady mezzo-soprano.

Cherubino Aria – professes his love for Susanna

Recitative – rapid-fire talky singing to move the narrative along

Change of textures similar to Broadway move from spoken dialogue to song.

Trio of Susanna, the Count and Basilio (gossipy music master) fine example of Mozart's ability to match the demands of a dramatic situation with absolute musical forms.

After this Figaro arrives and announces that the Count has changed tradition and abolished the "right of the first night," the feudal lord's right to deflower every young woman in his domain. Figaro then announces his marriage to Susanna, and foils the Count advances.

In the end, the Count reconciles with his wife and Figaro marries Susanna, and Cherubino grows up by serving as a captain in the Counts' regiment