

Influence of italian opera on instrumental music history essay

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For this assignment, I will be discussing the influence of Italian Opera on instrumental music in the mid-18th century.

Opera in Italy and the Italian language is an art from the Italian Opera. It was born in about the 1600's and still plays a very important role to this day. Famous composers in the Italian Opera included, Gluck, Handel and Mozart. Mozart's style is typical of the galant style, he worked extremely hard and finishing his compositions long before the dead line was due. As a child, he met J. C Bach and went to listen to the Mannheim orchestra and many others. That had inspired him to start composing himself and finally became a great composer of his time. He has made a great influence on other well-known composers, especially with Beethoven, who is 14 years, his junior. Quite a few composers have also played variations of his themes to pay tribute to the talented composer.

The first opera ever to be written was *Dafne* by Jacopo Peri (1561 – 1633). But by the end of the 17th century, a new opera genre, opera seria (serious opera) was born. Italy and Europe later only used the opera seria genre. Alessandro Scarlatti was a major influence to this genre. Pietro Metastasio (1698 – 1782) was a very successful librettist and he stayed positive and in power into the 19th century. He was a member of the Arcadian Academy (Italian literacy academy) and his stories were generally based on Greek or Latin myths. Opera seria consisted of 3 acts, where recitatives and arias were used quite often. The orchestra usually accompanies, except in overture, and the orchestral role started increasing. The *Da capo* aria form was famous in the 18th century. It's in ABA form and started with an opening ritornello, in A1 the tonic modulates to the dominant. A2 varies that of A1; B can be heard <https://assignbuster.com/influence-of-italian-opera-on-instrumental-music-history-essay/>

once with a contrasting key and finally returns back to A section where there's a fermata before the A and B section for the cadenza. Later, the abbreviated da capo was introduced. This is where they left out the opening ritornello and the arias were shortened, and da capo became dal segno. Some didn't even have the B section; it was left out entirely for it to be "abbreviated".

Johann Adolf Hasse (1699 – 1783) was known as the "master of opera seria". He married Faustina Bordoni (soprano). His 80 operas were mainly Metastasio's libretto and his famous aria was Digli chi'io son fedele from Hasse's Cleofide.

Opera buffa is another known comic genre that was born in Naples during the early 18th century, and Italy only began using this genre later after 1730. Opera seria and opera buffa had different characteristics:

Opera Seria

Opera Buffa

People of the upper class (Kings and queens)

They were ordinary people.

Emotional solos and series of arias

More ensemble pieces

Choicest roles went to sopranos (male or female)

Good parts for bass voice (male)

Serious stories

Humorous dialogue

Comic opera had different names in different countries: It was called opera buffa in Italy, Opéra comique in France, ballad opera in England and Singspiel in Germany. In France, opéra comique had popular tunes (vaudeuilles) included, and didn't have recitatives but spoken dialogue.

Serious plots were now used more frequently. In England, ballad opera was also in spoken dialogue, and included folksongs, dances, airs and arias.

Recitatives were no longer used. John Gay was a popular libretto in ballad opera. In Germany and Austria, Singspiel (singing play) was also in spoken dialogue; it also had a comic plot like most comic opera and was a musical number. Johann Adam Hiller (1728 – 1804) was a very well-known composer of Singspiel.

Opera was highly supported by the public as it developed new styles. It received a lot of encouragement to growth and development. Opera's began to be more expressive, serious and humorous emotions could be felt and experienced. Orchestra's started becoming more and more important.

Francesco Algarotti's Essay on the Opera (1755) inspired Gluck's reforms. Gluck was very successful with his ideas and he made a great impact on the history of opera. Gluck's first reform opera was Orfeo ed Euridice, which had simple harmonies and the orchestra played the main parts. Many famous composers were inspired by Gluck's reforms, with the likes of Mozart, Weber and Wagner. Mozart had composed many well-known operas that to this day,

it is played and appreciated. His most notable operas were: *Così fan tutte*, *The Marriage of Figaro*, and *Don Giovanni*.

Niccolò Jommelli (1714 – 1774) added more contrast to the woodwinds and horns and he worked in Stuttgart, he also made orchestra more important.

Tomaso Traetta (1727 – 1779) used Italian recitatives and arias; he worked in Parma and wanted to combine French and Italian operas.

Instrumental Music

Instrumental music started to rise and become independent. The works of concerto's and symphonies were more powerful in the orchestral music. Sonata form ("Exposition, Development and Recapitulation") reprises the opening idea and the tonic returns. Sonata form played an important role and is also known as the first movement form because the first movement of the sonata was works for symphonies or chamber works.

Instrumental music was written purely for entertainment and for one to enjoy them. The piano started to dominate but the harpsichord and clavichord didn't fade yet. Bartolomeo Cristofori (1655 – 1731) invented the piano in the 1700's. There are two types of pianos: the grand piano and square piano. During the 18th century, the pianos were called fortepianos. In the 18th century, binary form was expanded and called the "expanded binary form" ["First section (One Main Period: I – V :), Second section (First Main Period: V – on V), (Second Main Period I – I :)"]. In instrumental music, the most common form used was binary form. Soon after, the simple binary form; balanced binary form and rounded binary form started to get recognised.

Simple binary form [“: A (I – V): B (V – I):”] was still in two sections but both the sections were equal in length and the musical material was slightly different. Balanced binary form [“: A B (I – V): A B (V – I):”] was when the first section ends on the dominant and the tonic was played until the end of the second section. It resolves the harmonic tension by the tonic being repeated. Rounded binary form [“ A B (I – V): X A B (mod I – I)”] returns to the tonic in the second section and repeats the material that appeared in the first section. A “ strong sense of closure” is produced by the double return of opening key and material.

In chamber music, the basso continuo was still applicable and the keyboard parts were the major instrument. String ensembles were popular as well as string quartets, which consisted of two violins, a viola and a cello. Woodwind ensembles and instruments started coming in and the Clarinet was first introduced in 1710. Woodwind ensembles were more popular in France, and by the mid-century, oboes, clarinets, horns and bassoons were common. Flute players were mainly amateurs, and the orchestra was smaller than today. The strings played an important role but the basso continuo gradually faded and the woodwinds became more noticeable.

Symphonies originated in Italy, an Italian overture is known as Sinfonia. Sinfonia had 3 movements (Allegro, Short lyrical Andante and Finale was a Minuet or Gigue). Orchestras were very influential with regards to symphonies. Giovanni Battista Sammartini (1700 – 1775) wrote his first symphony in Milan, he is known as the “ most prominent composer” of symphonies. His symphony in F Major No. 32 was scored for “ 4 – part string

and harpsichord” and was based on “ Koch’s first movement form” each being repeated in half. Mannheim orchestra was best known for their discipline and technique with Johann Stamitz (1717 - 1757) as the leader of the orchestra. He was the first composer to use four movements that was consistent and also used major contrasts in the first section.

I have concluded that the influence on Italian opera on instrumental music seemed to have had a positive outcome. Newer styles, forms, and instruments became more dominant in instrumental music. The different composers played a bigger role in the influence because they experimented and achieved the different styles and forms. More instruments became recognised and thus leading to a new musical generation.