

The baroque period essay

[Technology](#), [Development](#)



Considering how classical music continually evolves and changes from one era to another, compare and contrast the sacred and liturgical vocal music of the Renaissance and Baroque periods. Include in your essay discussion of representative composers and their musical works from the CD?

Introduction:

Classical music is certainly one of the finest art forms and has developed extensively over the years to such an extent that today it can be merged into several different styles accordingly. The development of music from the vocal works of the Renaissance to the fully fledged symphonies by Mahler is definitely an issue which needs to be addressed accordingly. The great composers of the Baroque age such as Bach and Handel changed the way we view music accordingly with the great suites and concertos as well as the development of opera and oratorio which was the latter's speciality (Kerman, Tomlinson, p 25).

We can also look at the periods with a different perspective as one also has to evaluate the signs of the times when listening to certain music. In the Renaissance period for example, the focus and emphasis is on the church music factor and composers such as Palestrina and Eckhardt invented new systems and techniques for voices which really rose to the greatest heights of polyphony.

The same goes for the Baroque and Classical periods while the Romantic composers continued making their name in various circles especially Schumann and Mendelssohn who were always at the top of their game although they lived relatively short lives.

Johann Sebastian Bach is perhaps the best representative of the baroque

composers who are focused on that particular period. His vast repertoire especially regarding the organ is still very much a reference point even today with large representations in organ sonatas, fugues and passacaglias which contain a visionary element which cannot always be specifically understood. The same goes for his massive cantatas and choral works such as the passions which bring the art of vocal and instrumental music to a pinnacle which has rarely been reached before (Wolff, p 80).

Georg Friedrich Handel is another massive figure of the baroque who was particularly strong where the oratorio was concerned. He wrote several works in this genre apart from also focusing on opera which was truly an important part of the genre in those days and here Handel really excelled on almost all fronts. Instrumental music was perhaps not a totally important part of his makeup but even here he was very much a master of anything he put his hand to. Organ concertos and other concerto works were also very much part of his makeup and the genre was expanded under his watch.

The Classical Period:

As music continued to develop accordingly so did composers' talents and musical capabilities. The next great composer of the classical period was Franz Josef Haydn who was prolific in almost every genre but particularly the symphony where he excelled producing no less than 104 of these works. He was also an excellent opera composer with several works to his name particularly 'Il Mondo della Luna' and others. However he is also remembered for his large numbers of string quartets and piano sonatas which make up a considerable part of his repertoire.

Haydn also composed oratorios and other choral works but on occasion the

number of his works pales into insignificance when compared to Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart. This greatest of all geniuses from Salzburg composed over 600 works including myriads of symphonies, operas and a host of instrumental music such as string quartets and piano sonatas. He is probably best known for his great symphonies particularly the last ones Nos 39, 40 and 41 which reach what can only be termed as the pinnacle of symphonic achievement.

In choral music, Mozart was particularly proficient too creating a number of masses which were pretty much top of the class in their heyday. He can also be compared to other composers such as Palestrina and Victoria for depth of meaning in musical terms. The contrapuntal music which permeates most of his works also harks back to Bach and his great cantatas which also form part and parcel of the canon which perhaps does indicate that there is a natural progression from the music of the past to that of the present.

Perhaps there is something which needs to be analysed in detail when one discusses Mozart's work in the sacred and liturgical genre. The principal reason is that Mozart was perhaps more closely aligned with the early Gregorian and modal chants than other contemporaries such as Stamitz and Albrechtsberger who were singularly less involved in sacred music than their predecessors.

Conclusion:

Sacred music has developed over the centuries from the very basic modal and Gregorian chant onwards to the more expansive and romantically charged works of the baroque and classical periods. Notwithstanding all this, one can see a clear pattern of music which has its own particular foibles and

styles which culminated in the great sacred works such as the Missa Solemnis by Beethoven and the great symphonies of Bruckner which although only for orchestra are imbued with romantic symbolism which makes them particularly intriguing on all counts.

Liturgical works are perhaps not always given their due importance but in this day and age, the comparison between the past and the present becomes even more intriguing and interesting. Finally one has to look at sacred music with an open ended perspective which focuses on life in general and when classical music is brought into the equation then surely we are faced with a beautiful concoction of melodies and art.

The natural progression from musical art pertaining to the Renaissance alongside the Baroque is one not to be taken lightly. The development from voices to instruments is also one of the aspects which perhaps is not always taken into account and from a capella, the style of music moved on to the full orchestra and choral works where the vast range of the orchestra could be used to excellent effect (Baron p 110).

The final work on the programme was the evergreen Symphony Nr 2 by Johannes Brahms, probably one of the most famous symphonic works in the repertoire. Tao Fan chose a swift tempo to start off the first movement very much reminiscent of the great Swiss conductor Ernest Ansermet whose recorded cycle on Decca Eloquence deserves pride of place. Fan went through the motions of the first movement with some alacrity and intensity focusing again on the importance of the woodwinds as the main point of thrust.

The slow second movement was also imbued with pensive pathos and great

sensitivity throughout and once again I was very much enthused by the wind playing which was top notch. Comparisons may be odious perhaps but on the whole, I felt that Fan contributed an excellent reading of this movement which conjured up memories of great conductors such as Otto Klemperer, Herbert von Karajan and Sir Thomas Beecham.

The Scherzo was also very well played indeed with the sprightly moments coming out very beautifully indeed. Moving on to the Finale, one perhaps hoped for some more drive and momentum accordingly but on the whole the work was concluded very successfully and without much problems with the orchestra accrediting itself quite excellently throughout.

I can say that I left the concert hall extremely exhilarated by the whole concert which was truly an eye opener to me in several respects. Principally it exposed two important works from my homeland which were given rather splendid interpretations and secondly there was the excellent performance of the Brahms symphony to round off the evening. This concert truly shows that art has no boundaries.

Works Cited:

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