Baroque Music: An Outline[1]

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Introduction

This paper is an exploration of Baroque music, and refers roughly to the period 1600 to 1750, or in musical terms from the first extant opera in 1600 to the death of J. S. Bach in 1750. The Baroque intellectual atmosphere is well caught in the following quotation:

> The era of Baroque music was an age of spectacular progress of knowledge. It was the age of the scientific discoveries of Galileo and Newton, the mathematical advances of Descartes, Newton and Leibniz, and the philosophical explorations of Descartes, Spinoza and Locke. There was a new and vibrant intellectual, artistic and social atmosphere which in so many ways signaled the birth of modern Europe.[2]

The word "vibrant" applied particularly to Baroque music. As Anderson has noted, "the same period saw the emergence of instrumental music, and the structures required to deliver a textless discourse".[3] These "structures" included most of the forms of serious music that we hear today: the cantata, concerto, sonata, oratorio and opera. Indeed, during the Baroque period structure or form became essential to all the arts including music, and may be seen as a reflection of the Cartesian rationality that also dominated the architecture, art, literature, horticulture, dress, and even cuisine of the period.

Descartes was influential in another direction as well: he had stated that "The object of music is a Sound. The end, to delight, and *move various Affections in us*" [italics added]. If music was to move various affections it had to communicate these to its audience, that is, it had to have the ability to express emotions such as desire, love, death,

1 This paper is based on lectures given by the authors in Hiroshima Shudo University, Japan, from May to July, 2012.

2 Thornburgh, Elaine (N.D.) *Baroque Music – Part One.* Downloaded.

3 Nicholas Anderson, *Baroque Music from Monteverdi to Handel.* London: Thames & Hudson, 1994, p. 7.

anger, sympathy, religious feeling, and so on. This idea may be extended, as follows: "A vital characteristic of a Baroque work of art is that, by various means, it demands the *emotional participation* of the listener or onlooker" [italics added].[4] The audience, in this thinking, now became emotional participators in a performance, rather than merely being moved by the music.

In addition to imposing form on music, the Baroque era saw new instruments replacing old-style ones: the oboe replaced the shawm at the court of Louis XlV shortly before 1660;[5] Cristofori's (1655–1731)pianoforte began to replace the harpsichord, spinet and virginal from around 1709 (the date when he devised the hammer action to replace the plucked string);[6] the violin was brought to perfection by Antonio Stradivari (1644–1737) and has changed little since then,[7] and so on. The organ, which had already had hundreds of years of development and is sometimes called the king of instruments, reached its peak with the Baroque organ, which was "usually fairly small, with two or three manuals [keyboards], a pedal organ and between 12 and 35 stops. The Baroque Organ is ideal for the performance of the organ works of J. S. Bach".[8] This style of organ relied on clear contrasts and on that account fell out of favor during the following Romantic period, only to be reinstated as the number one choice across Europe at the present time.

A further innovation during the Baroque era was the development of the basso continuo. The instruments involved were the viola da gamba, cello, contrabass, lute, and bassoon, plus the left hand parts of the organ and cembalo. The presence of the basso continuo allowed even the high-tone instruments such as the violin and flute freedom to improvise, while constantly relating to the lower part. This has been described by Anderson as follows:

> Whereas in the Renaissance the independent parts or voices were customarily of equal importance, the new style emphasised melody and bass, the latter acting as a foundation for additional melodic and harmonic material. The essence of Baroque texture is therefore to be found in the basso continuo, which implies the harmonies

4 Anderson, *op. cit.,* p. 9.
5 Baines, A. (Ed.), 1961. *Musical Instruments Through the Ages.* London: Penguin Books, p. 237.
6 Baines, *op. cit.,* p. 89.
7 Baines, *op. cit.,* p. 111.
8 G. Rowley (Ed.), *The Book of Music.* London: New Burlington Books, 1977, p. 103.

of all the parts, usually notated precisely by means of figures.[9]

During the Baroque period too, music itself moved from being an amusement of the aristocracy to being a public entertainment, that is, from the court to the theatre. However, the artist or musician still needed a patron, and this resulted in the fact that Baroque artists of all kinds – artists, architects, musicians, sculptors, and so on – served patrons such as kings, nobles, state or church. They were not independent professionals; rather, they were employed to create works of art to suit their patron's wishes. The supreme example of this was Louis XIV's Versailles, where the Royal Musicians were merely a few of the many craftsmen whose purpose was to enhance the glory and power of the sovereign. In the Baroque era these patrons were not only kings, but more democratic bodies as well:

> The chief patrons of the arts during the Baroque period were the Church, the nobility, and increasingly, later on, the municipality. Noble employment or sponsorship was the most widely practiced patronage at this time. Patronage dictated the composition and performance of music, and assured a composer of at least a respectful acknowledgement of his art by the public. A patron's status and surroundings played a vital part in determining the nature, size and purpose of a composition. Composers would normally carry out their duties either by commission or according to a composer's desire to dedicate a piece, or set of pieces, to his patron, or to someone from whom he desired to receive patronage.[10]

Patrons had many needs for music – weddings, anniversaries, funerals, Saints' days, and so on – which required composers to be masters of moods to celebrate, for example, happiness, sadness, military victories, love, youth and old age, and so on. Baroque music tried to give expression to these elements of human life, and to excite or console the listener accordingly. Purcell was a typical example: he wrote a huge number of odes, welcome songs, anthems, birthday songs and so on for Charles II's Chapel Royal in London. Bach wrote over 300 church cantatas for the Sunday services in Leipzig.

Among all the artists and musicians there was considerable jostling for positions, and

9 Anderson, *op. cit.,* p. 15.
10 Anderson, *op. cit.,* p. 12.

we often read of such-and-such an artist moving to another patron who was paying better, or where the situation looked more promising. Bach, for example, changed positions five times between 1707 (Arnstadt) and 1722 (Leipzig). Those who pleased their patron were well rewarded; for example, when Lully died in 1687 he owned five houses in Paris and a "considerable fortune".

Monteverdi was the instigating figure of early Baroque music. At the other end of this period, Bach is usually regarded as the last Baroque composer, though Scarlatti, Handel and Haydn are also usually included. In this paper we shall begin with Monteverdi and Italian Baroque, followed by its spread to France and then Germany. The rise of the Oratorio is covered next, and then we shall look at England – particularly Handel – and finally the Czech lands.

1. Italian Baroque and the Origins of Opera

Italy was where the new Baroque thinking made its first appearance. Musically it was Claudio Monteverdi (1567–1643), born in Cremona, who proved to be the most significant of the Italian composers. In his early years he composed books of madrigals which established his reputation and earned him a patron: Duke Vincenzo of Mantua. In 1607 Monteverdi produced his first opera, *Orfeo,* in Mantua, followed in 1608 by *L'Arianna* and the ballet *Il ballo della ingrate.* In due course Monteverdi got tired of the Mantuan court, and the new Duke, Francesco Gonzaga, quickly got tired of him, dismissing him suddenly in 1612. This proved a blessing and the following year Monteverdi was appointed *Maestro di capella* at St. Mark's Basilica in Venice. This was a permanent job, that is, one not subject to change on account of the death of a ruler. The post also gave him great control over those under him, and he could hire and fire as he thought necessary.

The history of opera would not have been the same without Monteverdi. Before him there had been tentative operatic works, for example Rinuccini and Peri's *Euridice* (1600), which is often regarded as the first real opera. That opera had been composed for the marriage of Henry IV of France to Maria de' Medici and was first performed in Florence. It is mostly in recitative accompanied by simple chords on viols, lutes, and

harpsichord.[11] However, Monteverdi's *Orfeo* demonstrated musicianship far beyond Peri: "The result is that his *Orfeo* is far more interesting to the modern reader from a musical point of view and far more passionate and intense in its dramatic expression".[12]

Monteverdi was building on the already-published work of Emilio de' Cavalieri (c. 1550–1602), who was a member of the Camerate, a group of poets and composers who were busy formulating an aesthetic for opera:

> Let the singer have a beautiful voice with good intonation, well supported, and let him sing with expression, soft and loud, and without passagework; and in particular he should express the words well, so that they may be understood, and accompany them with gestures and movements, not only gestures of the hands but other gestures that are efficacious aids in moving the affections. The instruments should also be well played, and their numbers be more or less according to the place – theatre or hall – which to be proportionate to this recitation in music should not seat more than a thousand persons…
>
> And to give some idea of the instruments which have served in a similar situation for rehearsal, a double lyre, a clavicembalo, a chitarrone, or theorbo as they say, all together make a good effect: as do likewise a sweet-toned organ with chitarrone.… The Sinfonie and Ritornelli can be played with a great number of instruments; and one violin, which plays the soprano, will make a fine effect.[13]

The above quotation, written in 1600, touches on many Baroque points: the audience must understand the words; the singers' gestures should be moderate but planned; the number of instruments should be varied according to the size of the hall or theater, which should hold no more than 1,000 people; the organ and the violin are mentioned specifically even though the former was usually a church instrument, and the latter was far from reaching its full development; and finally, the violin is mentioned as a "soprano" instrument, showing the then-prevalent idea that instruments were extensions of the voice.

Opera soon established itself all over Italy, the most important early centers being Venice, Bologna, and Naples. By 1630 Rome was the center to which composers and

11 Streatfeild, R. A. *The Opera.* London: Routledge & Sons. 1896/1931.
12 Streatfeild, R. A., *op. cit.,* p. 6.
13 Anderson, *op. cit.,* p. 25.

performers came, Then in 1637 the Teatro San Cassiano reopened in Venice and Monteverdi again provided four new operas, only two of which have survived: *Il Ritorno d'Ulisse in patria* (1641) and *L'Incoronazione di Poppea* (1642).

Monteverdi also contributed to church music, especially with his well known Mass *In illo tempore*, and his music for Vespers for the Blessed Virgin Mary, *Vespro della Beata Vergine,* The Mass was in the older Renaissance polyphony style, but the Vespers was in a modern Baroque style. Both were published in 1610 and dedicated to Pope Paul V. Ironically, the Vespers became known in St. Mark's, Venice, where he became maestro di capella in 1613.

The major composer of the mid-Baroque period was Antonio Vivaldi (1678–1741), known as the "Red Priest" on account of the color of his hair. Officially he was master of music in an orphanage for girls in Venice, where he taught the violin; unofficially he was a composer who wrote over 500 concertos for soloists and orchestra, as well as 46 operas and much chamber and church music. He established the three-movement form that became the standard concerto structure. His championing of the violin also elevated that instrument's position, because up to his time the main solo instruments had been the trumpet, the lute, and the harpsichord. His violin sonatas contained delicacy and ornamentation, and seemed to echo the human voice better than any trumpet could:

> Vivaldi's breakthrough was in showing how the violin could produce a solo concerto that built on the lyricism already achieved with other instruments and with the voice. Without this change, carried to its peak by the patient craftsmen of Cremona [where violins were being made], the sound of the early symphony orchestra… might never have come our way, and the very character of what we call classical music would have been different… Just as the piano would change social habits, as well as musicians' minds, in the 19th century, the arrival of the modern violin was nothing less than the invention of a sound. Composers were fascinated by it, and impelled to write for it.[14]

To his contemporaries Vivaldi was more important as a violinist than as a composer. His skill on that instrument was legendary. To the girls of the Pietà, the orphanage, he

14 James Naughtie, *The Making of Music,* London: John Murray, 2007, p. 57.

was the composer not only for the violin, but also for the horn, trumpet, lute and other instruments, which the girls learned to play expertly. To modern audiences he is the composer of the *Four Seasons,* which introduced the techniques of Bariolage and Brisè.

Giuseppe Scarlatti (1718 or 1723–1777) was a member of the famous Italian family of musicians, which included Alessandro and Domenico Scarlatti, the latter being his uncle. The date of Giuseppe's birth is unclear, but from 1739 he pursued the career of composer, traveling to the Italian cities of Rome, Florence, Pisa, and Venice, and also abroad to Spain in 1752 to hear one of his operas performed in Barcelona. For most of his life Giuseppe Scarlatti lived in Vienna (as many Italian musicians did), where he became friends with Gluck. He composed mainly *opera serie* and *opera buffe* (serious and comic operas). He had a light touch and the strength of his music lies in pleasing melodies, as in the start of *Dove e amore e gelosia* ("Where there is love, there is jealousy"), first performed in Český Krumlov Castle in 1768.

Italy was therefore the powerhouse of both opera and instrumental music throughout the Baroque period, and indeed it dominated European music into the 19th century. Naples and Palermo had training schools (or conservatoires), Venice had St. Mark's Basilica

Composer/Player	Famous for	Connected with	Patron
Monteverdi, C. (1567–1643)	All genres	Venice	St. Mark's, Venice
Vivaldi, A. (1678–1741)	Violin. Concertos and Operas	Venice	Ospidale della Pieta
Scarlatti, A. (1660–1725)	Operas, Cantatas	Naples	Queen Christina of Sweden
Scarlatti, D. (1685–1757)	Keyboard sonatas	Spain	Infanta Maria Barbara of Spain
Albinoni, T. (1671–1751)	Operas. Sonatas, Concertos	Venice	Duke of Mantua, Emperor Charles Vl
Corelli, A. (1653–1713)	Violin & Pedagogy	Rome	Various Cardinals & Church figures
Marcello, B. (1686–1739)	Psalms, Cantatas, Pedagogy	Brescia	Governor of Pula, Istria
Tartini, G. (1692–1770)	Concertos, Sonatas "Devil's Trill"	Padua (Professional violinist)	

Figure 1. Italy's Baroque Foundations

and the memory of Monteverdi, Mantua had a musically minded court, and Rome, of course, drew on international as well as local musical talent. Italy's composers and singers were rated highly, and many took themselves off to the main courts of Europe: for example Lully to France, and Domenico Scarlatti to Spain. Figure 1 shows a list of Italian composers and the areas for which they are best known.

As can be seen from the dates shown above, the period of Italy's musical greatness fell in the period from around 1680 to around 1740. If we add in Lully, who was born in Florence but became French, the list looks very impressive indeed.

2. Baroque in France

The French viewed Baroque in terms of the trio of dance, ballet, and opera, in roughly that order, as they developed out of each other in the period from 1661 (when Lully was appointed Director of State Music) to 1752 (the date of Rousseau's *Le Devin du Village*). As a generalization, we can say that dance, ballet and opera appealed more to French tastes than orchestral music, even though Lully himself contributed to the development of the overture in a significant way, and other composers created memorable works.

Lully (1632–1687) was born in Florence as Giovanni Battista Lulli, which easily became Jean-Baptiste Lully in French. He arrived in the court of Louis XIV (1638–1715) in 1646 initially as a talented dancer. He promoted the art of dancing, which captivated Louis, whose own abilities were excellent (as seen in the film *Le Roi Danse*). Dancing quickly became the fashion at the royal Court, and soon all over France. Since ballet was a development of dance, it in turn became popular. Lully and Louis XIV in fact danced together in *Ballet de la nuit* in 1653.[15]

After dance and ballet, interest at the royal Court shifted to opera, which offered even more opportunities for lavish theatrical and musical spectacles. Wonderful sets and costumes were seen, to impress not only the French aristocracy but foreign visitors and dignitaries as well. The opera *Pomone* ran for 146 performances in 1671, and the following year Lully was granted the "Privilege" to control the production of opera throughout France. Unfortunately, he often misused this privilege and his restrictions on works

15 Anderson, *op. cit.,* p. 61.

other than his own were regarded as autocratic.

It was only after these highly visual forms had been exhausted that orchestral music began to be heard, with highly ornamented chamber pieces being performed, often in the form of the Suite. Throughout his lifetime of service to Louis XIV, Lully exerted almost total control over what was heard and seen not only in the Court but in the whole of France. Among other things he enjoyed working with playwrights: for example, he cooperated with Molière on a production of *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme* in 1670.

Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme is a comedy-ballet, a play intermingled with music. This play satirizes attempts at social climbing, that is, the attempts of a middle-class person to enter the ranks of the aristocracy. It pokes fun at both the vulgar, pretentious middle classes, and the vain, snobbish aristocracy. In the original production, Moliere played the part of Monsieur Jourdain, the aspiring middle-class gentleman, clothed in bright colours and trimmed with feathers. Other parts were played by major actors of the time, and Lully himself even made an appearance in the final scenes. These final scenes bring in "Turkish" characters, as there was a fashion at the time for all things Turkish. Monsieur Jourdain's wife is quite the opposite of her husband, being quite down to earth and full of common sense. As a comedy it all ends happily, with colourful scenes and several marriages.

Others to whom the term Baroque might be applied were Francois Couperin (1668–1733), Jean-Phillippe Rameau (1683–1764), and Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712–1778). Rameau and Rousseau, as well as being composers (and in Rousseau's case much more) were important in that they also wrote about music, as well as being involved with it. However, they didn't like each other, and Rousseau's *Letter Upon the Subject of French Music* caused the supporters of Rameau and Lully to hang an effigy of Rousseau. What had annoyed his opponents was his saying that the French language was basically unmusical compared with Italian, as in his famous statement, "the French have no music, and never will have any".[16]

Rameau (1683–1764) began as a protégé of Lully, but soon began to deviate from Lully's thinking. Lully was obsessed with glorifying the king, an attitude which Rameau found *de trop* (too much) as the French say. Rameau began to talk of music as a science, in terms similar to the contemporary debates about the monarchy, individual

16 In C. Headington, *A History of Western Music,* London: Paladin, 1974, p.150.

liberty, and reason. In this thinking he was close to Rousseau, Voltaire and others. By the 1720s he had written his *Treatise on Harmony*, a large book in which he showed that harmony had its origins in nature, and this was followed by several other important publications. These books, and indeed the man himself, did not please everyone; but even those who disliked him and feared his comments had to admire his talent.

As a composer Rameau created much harpsichord music, cantatas and motets for the voice, and later in life turned to opera. His first opera, *Hippolyte et Aricie* was written and first performed in 1733. It was a profoundly original work with a wide emotional range. Many other operas followed throughout the 1730s, though several were accused of being "too learned", or "too difficult", and he was seen as writing about ideas not about people. One contemporary said of him: "His whole heart and soul were in his harpsichord; once he had closed it, there was no one there."

In addition, the more sedate contributions of Marc-Antoine Charpentier (1643–1704) are of considerable interest. He was born in Paris and had a Jesuit education. After visiting Italy for his musical education he returned to France and entered the service of Mademoiselle de Guise, the cousin of Louis XlV, who loved Italian sacred music. During his long career in her household he also collaborated with Molière, for example in *Le Malade Imaginaire* (1673).

Regarding patrons and the places in which opera took place, it is clear that the Palais Royal in Paris was provided by Louis XIV, Lully's patron from 1653 to his death in 1687. Later, a theatre was included as part of the new Versailles (c. 1682), and this immediately became the main venue for dramatic and musical entertainment. In turn, Louis XV became a patron of French art in all its forms, including music. He is said to have enjoyed Rousseau's *Le Devin du Village* to such an extent that he sang the opening aria all the next day, though very badly! Finally, we should note that the word "Baroque" has never been popular in France, possibly on account of this connection with the *ancien regime.*

3. Baroque in Germany

The religious divide that existed in Germany during the Baroque era was reflected in the musical styles prevalent there. The Catholic composers in the south took their inspiration from Rome, as might be expected; on the other hand, the Protestant composers in

the north, while aware of the power of Rome, also leant towards France, which had protected that area from Habsburg influence. Further, in the Lutheran north it was necessary to continue protecting the newly founded religion, with its particular emphasis on hymn singing, while at the same time being aware of developments in music within the older Catholic tradition. This complex politico-musical situation would eventually lead to the music of J. S. Bach (1685–1750), which drew on both sides of the divide.[17]

An example of the Lutheran side was Samuel Scheidt (1587–1654), who wrote much sacred vocal music based on Luther's German translation of the Bible. Perhaps less "Lutheran" but still in that tradition was Heinrich Schutz (1585–1672), often nominated the leading figure of seventeenth-century German music. Many of his texts were also taken from the Lutheran Bible, though two appeared in Latin: *Cantiones sacrae* (1625) and *Symphoniae sacrae* (1929). His massive output had major influences not only in Germany but in other European countries. Finally, a south German organist and composer who followed the Roman and Catholic musical tradition was Johann Erasmus Kindermann (1616–1655). He studied in Italy and then spent the rest of his life in his native Nuremberg. He is noted for his motets, cantatas and chorale settings, for example the *Harmonia organica* (1645).

As the Baroque period matured, the sharp religious divisions between north and south Germany began to disappear. This was due to the rise of the "Patron" and the generally non-religious nature of "court" music. In instrumental music the keyboard, particularly the organ, began to dominate. An example of this trend would be the organ and harpsichord composer Johann Jacob Froberger (1616–1667). In 1637 he was appointed court organist in Vienna, from where he traveled widely, finally becoming the leading keyboard composer of his period. New and different instruments also attracted the attention of composers, for example the violin. Heinrich Ignaz Franz von Biber (1644–1704) was a major exponent of violin music, being himself a celebrated virtuoso. Born in Bohemia, he moved easily between court and church, in 1670 becoming Kapellmeister in the Archbishop's Kapelle in Salzburg. His 16 Mystery (or Rosary) sonatas for solo violin (c. 1676) are still in the repertoire, as are his eight sonatas for solo violin and continuo (1681). All demand exceptional technical skill.

Another, and perhaps more important, instrument was the organ, which dominated

17 Anderson, *op. cit.,* p. 40.

German music from approximately 1650 to 1750. Anderson gives a long list of famous organists of this period.[18] These organists all exploited the potential of the excellent instruments being manufactured by northern German makers. The music most favored by such organists was the toccata and the organ chorale, both of which attracted Buxtehude. Buxtehude, it will be remembered was the organist at Lubeck whose fame was such that J. S. Bach walked the 400 km from Arnstadt in 1705 to study his technique. The idea of "variations" was very much in the air, and this was to be most fully exploited by Bach in his *Well-Tempered Clavier* of 1722 and 1742.

Bach's domestic career needs no repeating here as it is so well known: his legendary musical family tree, his various changes of post, his walk to see Buxtehude, his excessively large number of children, his mature years and death in Leipzig, and so on. His *Brandenburg Concertos* are in every music shop, as is the famous portrait by Haussmann. The fact that Bach probably never heard these famous concertos played is also well known. Whether he heard them or not, the concerto form was a significant part of Baroque music. The concerto, as has been written, "was to the late Baroque what the symphony was to the Classical era: the most popular and important genre of instrumental music".[19] Part of its popularity, stretching from Archangelo Corelli (1653–1713) through Tomaso Albinoni (1671–1751) and Antonio Vivaldi (1678–1741) to Bach (1685–1750), himself, lay in the two facts that it firstly allowed for virtuoso display, and secondly required more players. The latter point was important where ostentation and extravagance on the part of the patron were concerned.

Apart from instrumental music, of particular interest here is Bach's *St. John Passion* and his *St. Matthew Passion,* and the oratorio style which developed from them. "Passion" music meant settings to music of Christ's suffering during the "Holy Week" period leading up to his crucifixion. The Biblical sources were the gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, and these four versions were traditionally sung on "Palm Sunday" (Matthew), and on the Tuesday (Mark), Wednesday (Luke) and Friday (St. John) of Holy Week. The earliest known example is a *St. Matthew Passion* by an Englishman Richard Davy, about 1500, which was for four voices in polyphony. In Germany passions were of

18 Anderson, *op. cit.,* p. 193. The list includes Georg Bohm (1661–1733), Vincent Lubeck (1654–1740), Dietrich Buxtehude (c. 1637–1707), Nicholas Bruhns (1665–1697), Hohann Kukhau (1660–1722) and Johann Pachelbel (1653–1706), among others.

19 Malcolm Boyd, *Bach: The Brandenburg Concertos.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 1993, p. 1.

course initially for the Catholic church, but after the Reformation they were widely used by Lutheran composers. Texts from Luther's German *Bible* began to be used in addition to Latin ones. Luther's musical advisor Johann Walter (1496–1570) did settings for the *St. Matthew* and *St. John* passions, around 1550.

Bach's two Passions involved similar elements: (a) a narrative involving the Evangelist (tenor) and Christ (bass); (b) a lyrical part seen in the arias; (c) chorales and hymn tunes (the latter being known and sung by the congregation); and (d) the choruses, which like a Greek drama commented on the main action and indicated the importance of each part.[20]

Bach's first Passion was the *St. John Passion*, first heard on Good Friday, 1724 in Leipzig's Nicholaikirche. The work sets to music Chapters 18 and 19 of the *Gospel of John,* in Luther's translation. Bach made a number of borrowings for his libretto, and for his music includes several hymns, including one by Luther himself (important for his Lutheran congregation, who would have sung along). The action moves ahead through the recitatives of the tenor Evangelist, and is quite compact, involving only Peter's betrayal, the trial, and the crucifixion of Jesus.

Bach's *Matthew Passion* tells of a similar set of events, of course, but this time seen through the text of Chapters 26 and 27 of the *Gospel of St. Matthew.* Again Martin Luther's German translation of *St. Matthew* is used. However, this Passion is structured differently, being longer, with more of a story to tell, and more characters. The story is told by a tenor Evangelist in recitative. Soloists sing the words of various characters, for example, Jesus, Judas, Peter, two high priests, Pilate, Pilate's wife, witnesses and maids. The words of Jesus are given special treatment (and were written in red in the manuscript): they were called *Vox Christi* (voice of Christ) and were accompanied by the continuo and the entire string section using long sustained notes for special effect, a huge number of musicians, and music that is rated even more beautiful than that of the *John* Passion. The number of players and musicians required for this Passion was enormous: two choruses, two orchestras each with its own continuo organ, a group of soprano voices, and an ensemble of soloists. *St. Matthew* was probably performed for the first time on Good Friday 1727 in the Thomaskirche in Leipzig, where Bach was now Kantor.

20 Anderson, *op. cit.,* pp. 205–206.

4. The Baroque Oratorio

The oratorio (from Latin *oratio,* prayer) developed out of opera in Italy and many composers there worked in both genres. It was a religious performance in which, for example, there was a dialogue between Mary and Joseph, or between a Pilgrim and his Guide. In social terms it was a way of bringing the Bible to life by re-telling the simple stories: Jonah and the Whale, the Judgment of Solomon, and so on. One definition is as follows:

> …a setting of a sacred story for performance in a church or concert hall, rather than a theatre, for solo voices, chorus and orchestra, and though individual singers take dramatic roles, there is no stage action. A narrator sometimes links the events of the plot, and the chorus comments on the action, or indeed participates in it…[21]

The oratorio had a long history in Italy, from c. 1640, including Scarlatti and Vivaldi. It was originally, of course, a Catholic performance and sung in Latin, but after the Reformation it was also added to the Lutheran (Protestant) services which were increasingly sung in German. In Hamburg in the 1670s an opera house opened and some of the performances were really in the Oratorio/Passion tradition. A notable name in the early oratorio tradition was Giacomo Carissimi (1605–1674). Another contributor to the early oratorio style was Marc-Antoine Charpentier, mentioned earlier, who was Carissimi's best pupil, and who helped to spread the oratorio style in France.

Georg Philipp Telemann (1681–1767) has been called "the most prolific composer of the first half of the 18th century". He is also famous as the man who, in 1722, turned down the post of Kantor in St. Thomas's, Leipzig thereby allowing the *second* choice, J. S. Bach, to get the post. Telemann and Bach in fact had a close friendship and Bach made Telemann Godfather of his son Carl Philipp Emanuel. Another good friend of Telemann was Handel, whom he knew personally and with whom he had a long correspondence. From 1721 until his death there Telemann was Director of Music in Hamburg, a prosperous city in which he felt very comfortable. Hamburg was also a center of publishing,

21 Headington, *op. cit.*, p. 107.

and Telemann made good use of this fact by publishing cycles of his own music (e.g., *Musique de Table,* or "Banquet Music", 1733). In 1716 his first Passion-Oratorio had been performed when he was Kapellmeister at the Barfusserkirche, based on a text by B. H. Brockes. After a gap of nearly 40 years, and now living in Hamburg, he suddenly produced *Der Tod Jesu* ("The Death of Jesus", 1755), *Die Auferstehung und Himmelfahrt Jesu* ("The Resurrection and Ascension of Jesus", 1760), and *Der Tag des Gerichts* ("Judgment Day", 1762). The text of *Der Tod Jesu* was provided by a Berlin poet and academic, Carl Wilhelm Ramler (1725–1798), and it is of interest in that the dialogue and narration were reduced in favor of a more musical version (cf. Handel's *Messiah*) of the sufferings of Jesus.

Telemann was also acquainted with the talented violinist Johann Georg Pisendel (1687–1755), whom he met when Pisendel was *en route* to see Bach in Leipzig. Pisendel joined the *Collegium musicum* which Telemann had founded, and their friendship flourished. He was an acquaintance, too, of Vivaldi, whom he visited in Venice. His pupils included Franz Benda, Johann Graun and Dismas Zelenka, and his reputation is seen in the fact that violin concertos were dedicated to him by Albioni, Vivaldi and Telemann himself. J. S. Bach also composed three solo sonatas and three solo partitas, which Pisendel was the first to perform. In fact Pisendel was the greatest violinist of the Baroque era, spending most of his life in the Dresden Court Orchestra where he became Concert Master in 1728.

5. Baroque in England, the Czech Lands, and Elsewhere

Baroque music arrived in Spain, England, the Czech lands and elsewhere, as the Baroque style moved out of the three central musical cultures of Europe (Italy, France, and Germany). However, it remained an Italian-influenced form, as seen by the fact that Italian musicians took major positions in the courts and churches and palaces of 18th century Europe. They carried with them the Baroque preoccupation with contrast, emotions, passion, and so on, which were to be expressed in the forms of opera, passion, oratorio, sonata, concerto, and other genres. As Addison wrote in 1705, the opera *Arsinoe* was "the first Opera that gave us a Taste of Italian Musick".

In England the restoration of the monarchy in 1660 brought about the true start of Baroque music there. Previously there had been lute-songs (e.g., from John Dowland),

and Masques (e.g., from Ben Jonson & Alfonso Ferrabosco), which were expensive entertainments for the Court. During the Commonwealth years, 1649–1660, such extravagant amusements were mostly abandoned or suppressed because they conflicted with the new thinking as propounded by Cromwell's side. However, in 1660 the "restored" king, Charles ll, set up a large Chapel Royal complete with a band of 24 strings (where "strings" included all four instruments of the violin family), similar to those he had seen in Louis XlV's chapel in Versailles. Suddenly music flourished, choristers were recruited (including Henry Purcell and John Blow), and foreign musicians arrived, including the Italians Louis Grabu and Giovanni Battista. Foreign music was imported and even published in England. The writer Roger North wrote:

> During the first years of Charles ll all musick affected by the beau-mond run into the French way: and the rather, because at that time the master of the Court musick in France, whose name was Babtista [Lully] (an Itallian frenchifyed), had influenced the French style by infusing a great portion of the Italian harmony into it, whereby the Ayre was exceedingly improved.[22]

(a) Henry Purcell

One person who benefited from this Italian influence was Henry Purcell (1659–1695). He was a musical prodigy from the beginning of this life. He began composing songs from age eight, and after singing in the Chapel Royal as a choirboy, became an Assistant at Westminster Abbey and in 1679 was appointed Organist there. His major compositions began from about 1676 with anthems and songs, but he contributed to every genre of his time. His anthems, still a major feature of English Anglican worship, are characterized by what has been called "vocal exuberance" as in his *My beloved spake* and *My heart is inditing.*

Purcell was also involved with dramatists and poets, as we see in the music for *The Fairy Queen* (1692), a "semi-opera" adapted from Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream.* Another semi-opera was *Dioclesian* also called *The Prophetess* (1690). In dedicating this work to the Duke of Somerset, Purcell wrote what might be regarded as a summary of the position of music in England at that time:

22 In Anderson, *op. cit.,* p. 128.

> Musick is yet but in its Nonage; a forward Child, which gives hope of what it may be hereafter in England, when the Masters of it shall find more Encouragement. 'Tis now learning Italian, which is its best Master, and a little of the French Air to give it somewhat more of Gayety and Fashion. Thus, being further from the Sun we are of later Growth than our Neighbour Countries, and must be content to shake off our Barbarity by degrees.[23]

The image of the "Barbarity" of English music at that time is indicative of how exalted all things Italian were in the eyes of the other European countries.

Purcell's opera, *Dido and Aeneas* was first performed at Priest's School for Young Ladies, Chelsea, in 1688 or 1689. It recounts the love story of Dido, Queen of Carthage, and the Trojan hero Aeneas. The story, as told in Book lV of Virgil's *Aeneid,* is that Dido, the daughter of the King of Tyre, was Queen of Carthage (nowadays a suburb of Tunis, Tunisia). She fell in love with the Trojan Aeneas when he was shipwrecked on the North African coast. After a brief love affair Aeneas and Dido must part, as he has to fulfill his grand destiny. She sings her famous *When I am laid in earth* ("Dido's Lament"). He departs and she dies, leaving us to contemplate one of the great love affairs of the ancient world.

Purcell was also required to provide music for all special royal occasions, such as birthdays, weddings, and also St. Cecilia's Day – the patron saint of music. His ode *Hail, bright Cecilia* of 1692 is regarded as the finest, but also memorable are his *Come ye sons of art away* (1694) and the *Funeral Music for Queen Mary* (1695).

(*b*) *George Frideric Handel* (*1685–1759*)

The most distinguished and best known name in Baroque music in England is, of course, Handel. Handel came to England in 1710 after short careers in both his homeland, Germany, and in Italy, where he imbibed the Italian spirit of opera and produced several of his own (e.g., *Agrippina,* Venice, 1709–10). In England, he soon realized, there were excellent opportunities for a musician, particularly one with a German background and Italian training. As Anderson remarks:

23 In Anderson, *op. cit.,* p. 137.

> Throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Italian culture was a prerequisite for an artist's education: Italy was the home, not only of the principal vocal forms of the Baroque period – the opera, oratorio and cantata – but also of the instrumental forms, sinfonia, sonata and concerto.[24]

The arrival in 1714 of the Elector of Hanover (his erstwhile employer) as the new King George 1 of England turned out well for Handel, as he now had a fellow countryman and old acquaintance on the throne. He was soon appointed music master to the royal children.

In London Handel at first worked with opera, composing and conducting Italian-style opera (*Rinaldo,* 1711, *Amadigi,* 1715, *Radamisto,* 1720, *Lotario,* 1729, *Giulio Cesare in Egitto,* 1724, *Partenope,* 1729, etc.). These had varying success, with *Rinaldo* as the most revived, in part because of the power of the castrato Nicolini. His later *Giulio Cesare* also made use of a castrato, this time Senesino. Handel persisted with this genre, and some of his works were a great success (e.g., *Atalanta,* 1736, *Serse,* 1738, which contains his famous *Largo*). Part of Handel's success was due to his use of castrati in many of his operas. He employed the famous Senesino (Francesco Bernardi, 1686–1758) in a number of leading roles (in *Giulio Cesare, Orlando, Rodelinda,* and later in the oratorios *Esther, Deborah,* and *Acis and Galatea*). Senesino and other castrati such as Farinelli and Tenducci were immensely popular at the time, earning large salaries and being immensely popular with the crowds, especially with the women. Audiences were particularly fascinated by the melismatic qualities that could be generated by castrati. Even today people continue to be interested in their unique lives, and a recent spate of books has appeared about them.[25]

However, at around this time there was a decline in the popularity of opera, and London's two opera houses – the King's Theatre, or Opera of the Nobility, and Covent Garden – both closed in 1737. Handel's interest shifted to Oratorio, a new genre he thought likely to be popular in England. Oratorio was to be performed as a concert, often in concert halls, but also in theatres, and even the rooms of taverns. The elements of his oratorios were the overture, recitative, aria, and the chorus., and the subjects were

24 Anderson, *op. cit.,* p. 142.

25 See, for example, Helen Berry, *The Castrato and his Wife,* 2011, and Patrick Barbier, *The World of the Castrati,* 1998.

taken from the mostly from the Old Testament. His *Saul* (1738), *Israel in Egypt* (1739), and *Messiah* (1742, Dublin) took Oratorio to new levels. The story of the *Messiah's* first performance in Neale's New Musick Hall near Christ Church Cathedral in Dublin is probably well known: women were forbidden to wear "hoops", and men were not allowed to wear swords, so as to get more people into the hall, and so on. The proceeds of this huge event went not to Handel, but to three local charities.

The *Messiah* is perhaps the greatest example of a Baroque oratorio that we have. Unlike Bach's Passions which were derived from one source or another (e.g., St. John's Gospel), Handel's *Messiah* is a compilation from the Authorized Version of the Bible made by Charles Jennens (1700–1773). Jennens called the words his "Scripture Collection", and these words inspired Handel in the late summer of 1741 to write the *Messiah*. After an opening *Sinfony* in the style of a French Overture, we hear about the Messiah's coming and the Virgin Birth, as predicted by the Old Testament prophets. Then comes the announcement to the shepherds of Christ's birth – this part taken from St. Luke's Gospel. Then comes his Passion, his death and Resurrection and Ascension, the first spreading of the story throughout the world, and the great statement of God's glory in the "Hallelujah" chorus. As a piece of music the *Messiah* has never left the repertoire, and stands supreme in Handel's remarkable life.

Regarding instrumental music, the influence of Corelli on Handel is evident, for example in his concerto grosso and in his sonatas. Italian melodies combined with an English graciousness to produce a pleasing expression. This is in contrast to the influence that Vivaldi's violin technique of *bariolage* and *brisures* had on Bach, which produced a deeper effect.

(*c*) *Baroque Music in the Czech Lands*

The Baroque period in Czech music started later than elsewhere (c. 1620) and ended earlier (c. 1740). Progress in this area was slow because of the 30-years war, which lasted from 1618 until 1648. Nevertheless, during that time a number of prominent composers emerged, many of whom had a teacher-pupil relationship: first came Bohuslav Černohorský (1684–1742) who was called the "father of Bohemian music," and founder of the Czech organ school. His pupil Josef Seger (1716–1782) followed him, with compositions that were admired by J. S. Bach, particularly his fugues for piano and organ. In turn Seger's pupil Josef Mysliveček (1737–1781) became the most prominent Czech com-

poser of his generation, being admired by Mozart for his oratorio *Abramo ed Isacco*. However, Mysliveček did not do his composing in Bohemia but in Italy, which attracted many Czech musicians and composers who found difficulty in making a living at home. Another important name was František Václav Míča (1694–1744), who had pioneered the sonata form and brought it to the Mannheim School.[26]

Baroque opera in the Czech lands was located in Český Krumlov Castle, in which the Baroque Theatre flourished from 1682. Český Krumlov Castle was the home of the Schwarzenberg family, who all loved music and supported it. One of the teachers in their employment was Guiseppe Scarlatti.

6. Conclusion

The Baroque era remains one of the most fascinating periods of serious music. From it we have inherited the major forms current today, the sonata, concerto, the opera and the oratorio, the major instruments, the connection between music and emotion, as well as something intangible that James Naughtie calls "musicianship":

> The careful musicianship of the Baroque period attains something close to perfection: the new instruments, the techniques that had been polished during the seventeenth century, the confidence in blending tunes into complicated figures, the easy fusion of choir and solo voice. Above all, you hear the understanding of how expressing the greatest emotion is also a matter of the subtlest technical skill.[27]

The musicianship of the Baroque era was the springboard which allowed the subsequent Classical era to achieve its full splendor, and so on into the nationalistic and occasionally controversial nineteenth century. The Baroque era, which had started in Italy spread, perhaps somewhat slowly, as in the case of Russia, to almost all the corners of Europe, and thus gave serious music a solid foundation on which to build.

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26 Some of this material appeared first in Minori Nakaune and Malcolm Benson, "An Outline of English and Czech Music", *Studies in the Humanities and Sciences*, Vol. 51 (1), Hiroshima Shudo University, 2010, p. 50.

27 Naughtie, *op. cit.,* p. 110.