

MUSIC · Y4–Y6

Musical History Timeline

Knowledge Organiser — Y4–Y6

The major musical periods

1

Medieval (500–1400)

Gregorian chant — monophonic (one voice). Church dominated music. Instruments: lute, recorder, vielle.

Example: Hildegard of Bingen

2

Renaissance (1400–1600)

Polyphony (multiple independent voices) develops. Music spreads beyond the church. Madrigals and motets.

Example: Palestrina, Monteverdi

3

Baroque (1600–1750)

Ornate, complex. Counterpoint and basso continuo. The concerto and opera develop.

Example: Bach, Handel, Vivaldi

4

Classical (1750–1820)

Clear, balanced structure. Symphony and string quartet develop. Emotional restraint.

Example: Haydn, Mozart, early Beethoven

5

Romantic (1820–1900)

Emotional expression, nationalism, and individualism. Large orchestras. Programme music.

Example: Beethoven, Brahms, Tchaikovsky, Dvorak



6

20th century (1900–present)

Fragmentation: jazz, blues, electronic, minimalism, atonality, world music influences.

Example: Debussy, Stravinsky, Britten, John Adams

Composers to know

One from each period

- BAROQUE: Johann Sebastian Bach (1685–1750) — German organist and composer. The Brandenburg Concertos.
- BAROQUE: George Frideric Handel (1685–1759) — German-British. Messiah (Hallelujah chorus).
- CLASSICAL: Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756–1791) — Austrian prodigy. 41 symphonies, 27 piano concertos.
- ROMANTIC: Ludwig van Beethoven (1770–1827) — German. Went deaf yet wrote his greatest symphonies (9th) deaf.
- ROMANTIC: Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky (1840–1893) — Russian. Swan Lake, The Nutcracker, 1812 Overture.
- BRITISH: Benjamin Britten (1913–1976) — The Young Person's Guide to the Orchestra — written to teach children about orchestral instruments.

