

Music Appreciation

Unit 4

Chamber Music

Prince George's Community College
Professor R. Anatone

Pieces Covered this Unit

- Baroque – Bach, sonata in e minor for recorder
- Classical – Beethoven, ‘Archduke’ trio, mvt. 2 (Scherzo and Trio)
- 19th Century – Danzi, Wind Quintet
- 20th Century – George Crumb, *Ancient Voices of the Children*
- 20th Century – Messiaen, *Quartet for the End of Time*

Chamber Music

- In chamber music, every player is a **soloist**
 - Everyone plays their own part, and no one doubles anything
- Chamber music starts to become popular as its own type of music in the Baroque era
 - Vocal music is dominant in Medieval and Renaissance
- Traditionally, composers wrote for **families** of instruments
 - String quartet – 4 strings
 - Wind quintet – 5 winds
 - Wind octet – 8 winds
 - Piano Trio – 2 strings and a piano (technically a string)
- In the 20th century, composers combined instruments not traditionally combined as chamber music

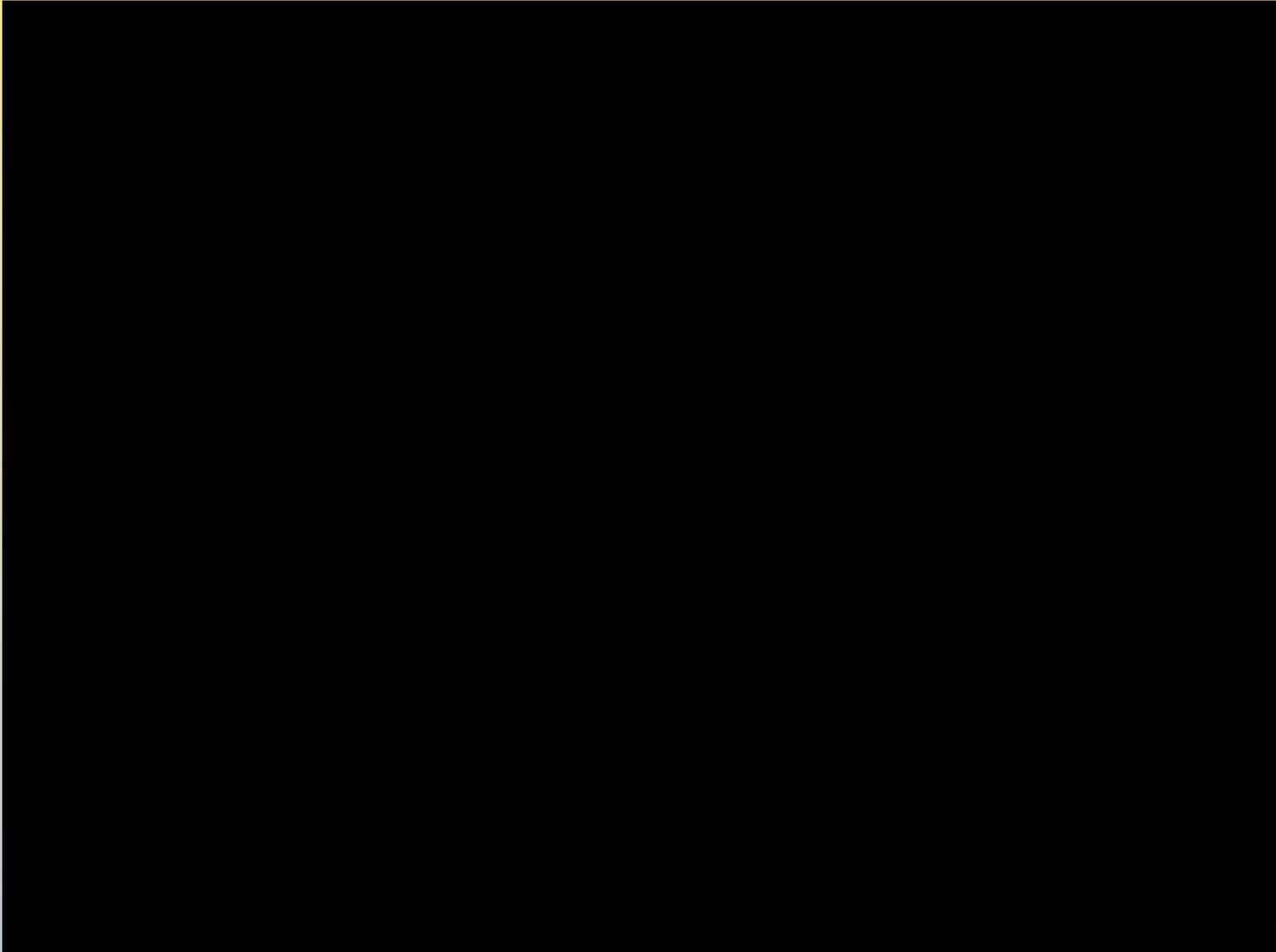
Baroque Chamber Music

- Baroque era (1600-1750)
 - Composers include JS Bach, Handel, Corelli, Vivaldi
- Smaller instrumental ensembles typically **always include the harpsichord**, unlike other time periods
 - The keyboard was a staple in chamber music
 - Often times, the keyboard player would only be given the left hand notes with indications as to what chords to play
 - They would need to improvise how the right hand would play those chords!
- Most common types of chamber music:
 - Trio **Sonatas**: 2 melodies (usually violins), 1 cello
 - Supported by **harpsichord**
 - Totaling 4 musicians
 - Instrumental **sonatas**: 1 soloist, 1 bass instrument, 1 harpsichord
 - Totaling 3 musicians, but the soloist is the main focus of our attention
 - Other designations like ‘church **sonatas**’ and ‘chamber sonatas’
 - Very technical, and not discussed in this unit
- Sonatas are purely instrumental pieces with several movements
 - “sonata” comes from the word “sonare,” which means “to sound” or “to play” (one’s instrument)
 - Many have between 3-5
 - Not a standardized amount of movements (unlike the Classical era)

The Harpsichord

- Invented (probably) in the late Middle Ages
- Prominent use throughout the Baroque era
 - Becomes the main keyboard instrument when accompanying small groups or large groups (along with the organ)
- Has a ‘tinny’ type of sound
 - Strings are plucked, not struck
 - Similar to plucking a guitar with a pick
- Does NOT have touch sensitivity
 - Regardless as to how hard you hit the key, you’ll get the same dynamics
- Some have 2 sets of keyboards (‘manuals’)
 - This allows for the ability to get loud and soft sounds

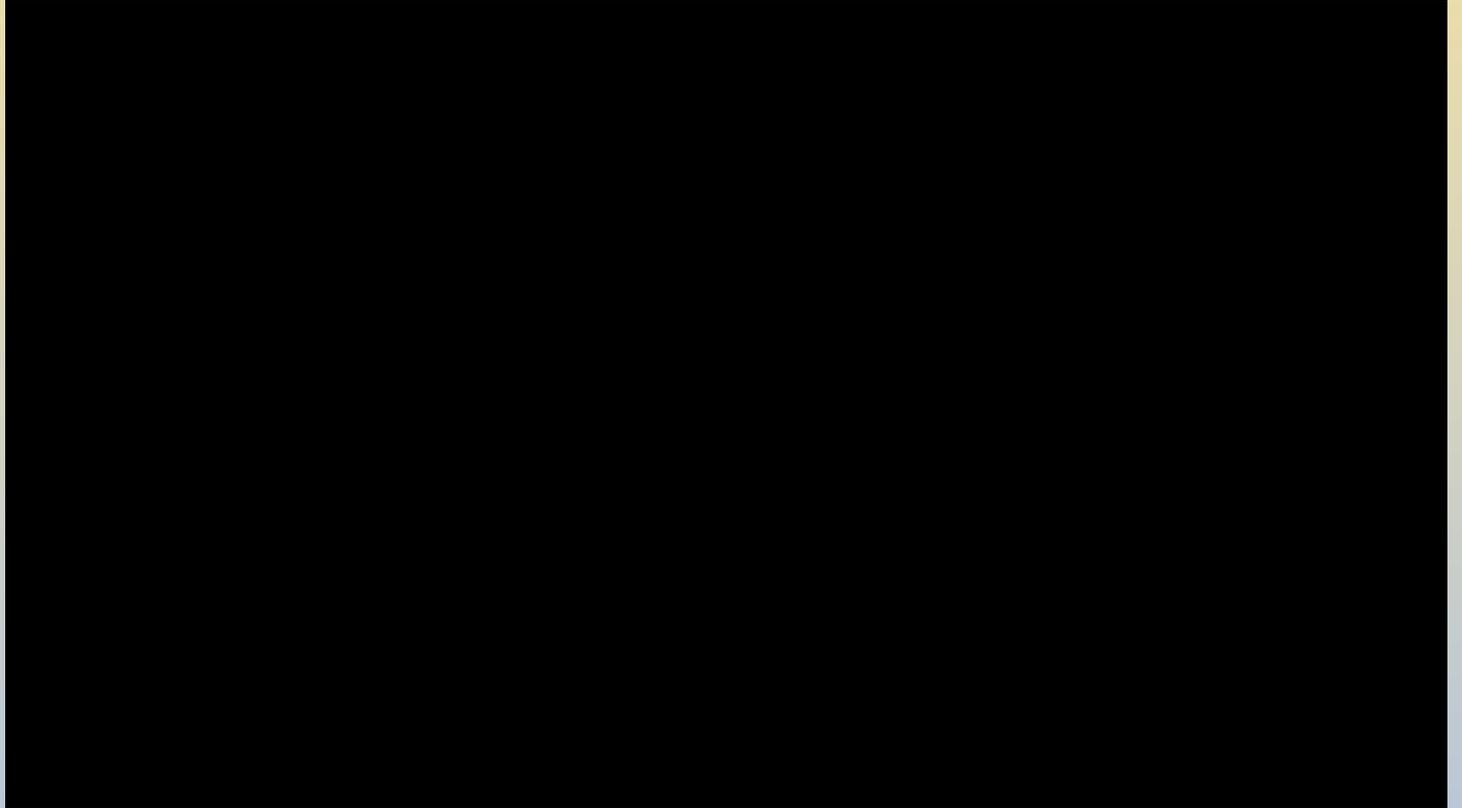




Elaine Comparone performs *Les Cyclopes*
on the harpsichord

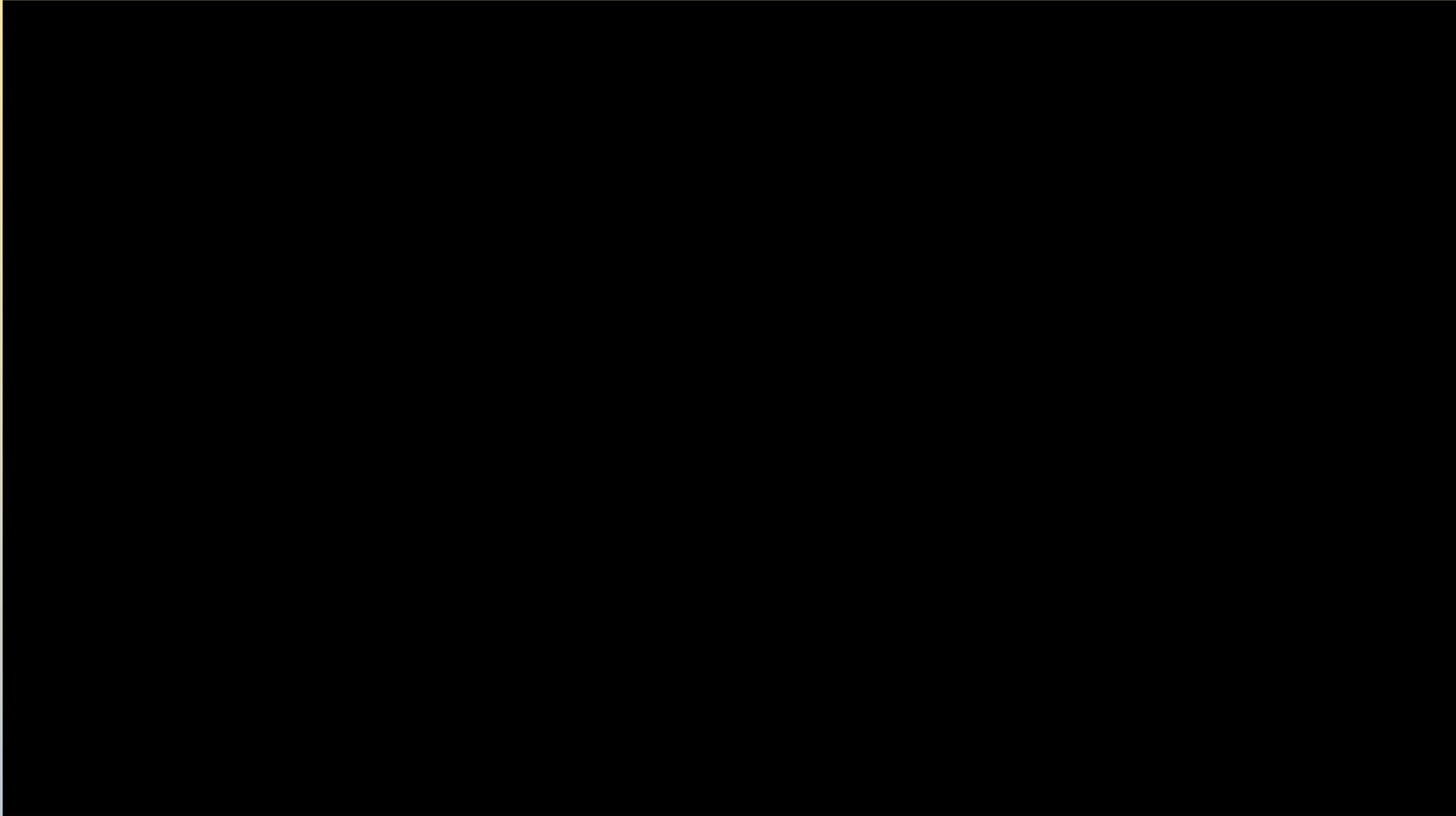
The Baroque Recorder

- Woodwind instrument
 - Similar to flute in that it has **no reeds**
 - Unlike the flute, air is blown directly through the instrument, instead of air being blown over an airhole
 - Still has an “airy” quality like the flute, but it sounds a bit different



- Arcangelo Corelli (1653-1713)
- Italian Baroque violinist, composer, and teacher
- Important in the development of instrumental music:
 - Instrumental sonata
 - Concerto
- These pieces contained several **movements**
 - Instrumental sonatas often contained 3-5
 - Concertos contained 3 movements
- Composed 48 trio sonatas, 12 violin sonatas, and 12 concerto grossi





Performance of Corelli's Trio Sonata in D minor.
Notice the 2 Violins (melody), cello (bass), and harpsichord.
Trio sonatas have **4 instruments!**

Johann Sebastian Bach

- Born in Germany
- Composed over 1000 works
 - A single ‘work’ may contain several *dozen* pieces for voice, instruments, or both, and may last *several hours long*
- Had many different jobs as a musician between age 18-38:
 - Church organist
 - Composed many organ works while there
 - Concertmaster in a Weimar court
 - Composed much orchestral music while there
 - Cantor at St. Thomas’ Church in Leipzig
 - Composed many of his cantatas
- Had 2 marriages (not simultaneously)
 - 20 children between the two of them
 - Several of them became well-known composers, themselves



- **Name of Piece:** Sonata in e minor for recorder
- **Movement:** 1
- **Form:** through composed (no set form. Instead, a single **motive** is developed freely)
- **Composer:** JS Bach
- **Genre:** recorder sonata
 - Sonatas are **purely instrumental pieces**
- **Time period:** Baroque
 - (if you hear harpsichord, it's probably the Baroque era. Also, if you hear recorder, it's probably Baroque!)
- **Other info:** 'fortspinnung' is a the term used to describe the development of a single motive in a free manner
 - The free and non-symmetrical form is common in Baroque music (as opposed to the Classical era which loves symmetry and balance)



Ensemble Flautino performs Bach's Sonata in E minor for flute
Notice that the flute is the main focus of the melody, while the cello provides bass notes, and the harpsichord provides chords.
This entire sonata contains 4 movements

Chamber Music in the Classical Era

- Classical Era (1750-1820)
 - Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven
- Most common chamber groups (notice they all have strings except the last)
 - String Quartet [new in the Classical era]
 - 2 violins, 1 viola, cello
 - 4 movements long (like the symphony)
 - String Quintets [new in the Classical era]
 - 2 violins, 2 violas, 1 cello
 - 4 movements (like the symphony)
 - Piano Trio [new in the Classical era]
 - 1 piano, 1 cello, 1 violin
 - Began with 2-3 movements
 - Developed over time into 4-movement structure
- Instrumental Sonata is still popular (from the Baroque period)
 - Solo player and piano (violin + piano, cello + piano, clarinet + piano, etc.)
 - Most contain 3 movements

Chamber Music in the Classical Era

- Other, less common, chamber groups
 - Wind and string combination:
 - String quartet + wind (clarinet, horn, etc.)
 - Pure wind instrumentation
 - A varied collection of wind musicians
 - Typically played at social and civic functions

String Quartet

- String instruments were seen as more ‘serious’ instruments
- String Quartet was modeled after Symphonic Structure:
 - 4 movements
 - I. Fast, in sonata form
 - II. Slow, in any form
 - III. Upbeat dance, in ABA form
 - IV. Light and Fast, in rondo form
- We looked at a string quartet in the unit on the Classical Era
 - Haydn, “Emperor” quartet, mvt. 2



The Piano Trio

- Piano Trios began as 2 or 3 movement genres
 - Grew out of the instrumental sonata genre of the Baroque period
- Piano was seen as ‘detrimental’ to the seriousness of strings
 - Beethoven helped develop this into a serious, 4 movement structure like the Quartet and Symphony



The Instrumental Sonata

- Chamber music for 1 soloist and piano
 - Comes out of the instrumental sonata tradition from the Baroque period
- Typically in 3 movements:
 - I. Fast, in sonata form
 - II. Slow, in any more
 - III. Fast, in rondo form
- At first, the piano was often used simply to ‘accompany’ the soloist
 - Over time, composers began writing more of a complicated and symbiotic dialogue between the pianist and soloist



Topher Ruggiero (piano) and Hilary Jansyek (flute) performing a flute sonata

- **Name of Piece:** ‘Archduke’ trio
- **Movement:** 2
- **Form:** Scherzo and Trio (ABA)
 - Scherzo is a fast dance

A	B	A
scherzo	trio	scherzo

- The trio is made of 2 separate ideas that are repeated 3 times
 - A slithering and sneaky melody
 - A grand waltz
- **Composer:** Beethoven
- **Genre:** piano trio
- **Time period:** Classical
- **Other info:** notice the symmetry and balance in the large form (ABA) and also within the phrasing

Ludwig van Beethoven
 Piano Trio in B-flat Major, Op. 97, “Archduke”
 I. Allegro moderato
 II. Scherzo. Allegro
 III. Andante Cantabile ma però con moto
 IV. Allegro moderato - Presto

Paul Huang, The Bob Christensen Chain in Violin
 Ani Aznavoorian, cello
 Gilles Vonsattel, piano



Gilles Vonsattel, Paul Huang & Ani Aznavoorian (Music Academy of the West, Santa Barbara, CA September 13, 2019)

Scherzo: 13:28
 Trio: 15:21 (slithering melody)
 16:25 (grand waltz)
 Scherzo: 17:42

Chamber Music in the Romantic Era

- Romantic Era: 19th century
- Common types of chamber music are still:
 - String quartet and quintet
 - Piano trio
 - Instrumental sonatas
- True to Romantic convention, these pieces are **longer and more complicated**, but are often in the same formal convention as one would expect

The Wind Quintet

- Becomes established in the 19th century
 - Franz Danzi and Anton Reicha (late Classical/early Romantic) help establish this as a genre
- Usually contains 4 movements (like a symphony or quartet)
- Musicians:
 - 1 flute
 - 1 oboe
 - 1 clarinet
 - 1 bassoon
 - 1 French horn
- Unlike the string quartet, you can hear each individual instrument because they all sound different from each other

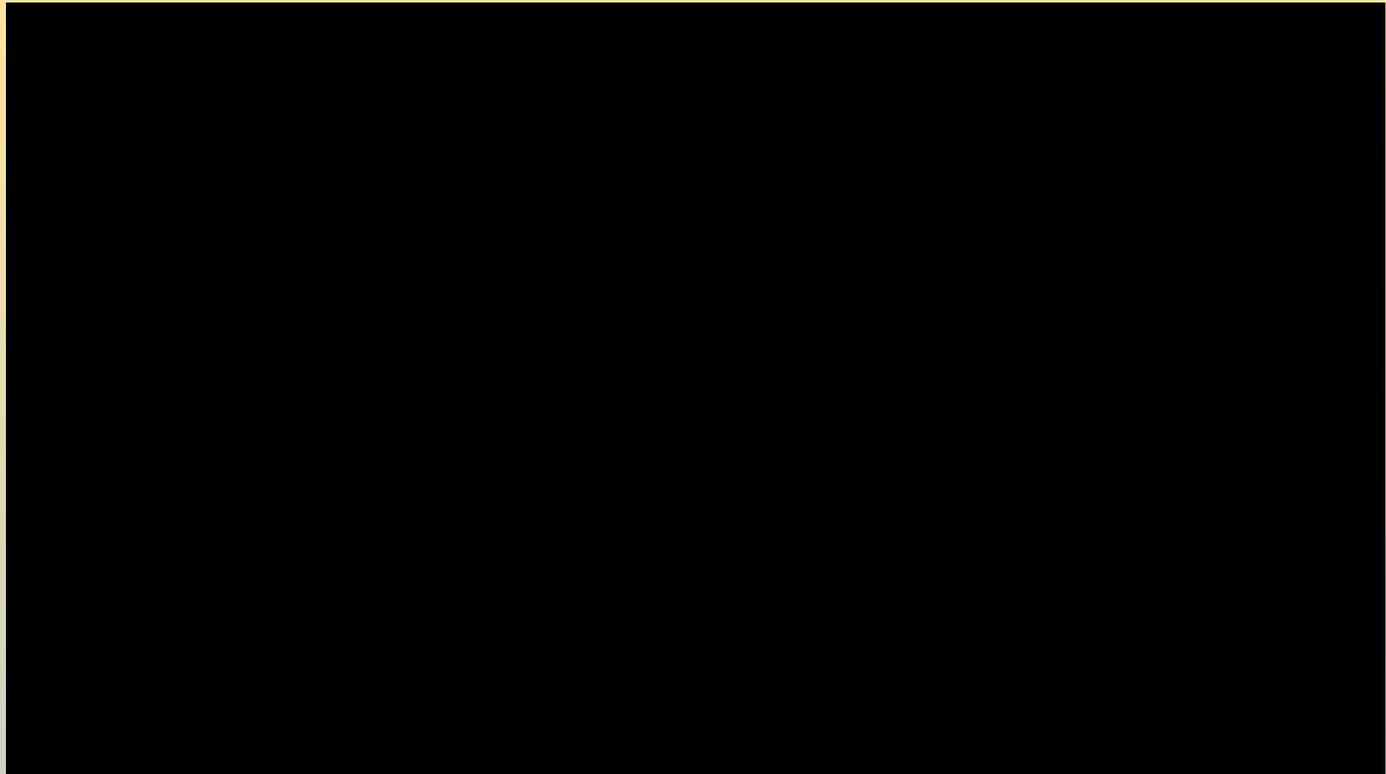


German composer Franz Danzi (1763-1826) helped establish the Wind Quintet as a serious genre

- **Name of Piece:** Quintet in g minor
- **Movement:** 4
- **Form:** Rondo
- **Composer:** Danzi
- **Genre:** wind quintet
- **Time period:** Early Romantic

(published in 1821)

- **Other info:** This is fast and light rondo. Notice how you can hear each instrument distinctly because only 1 of each instrument is in the ensemble



Ensemble Ouranos performs Franz Danzi's Wind Quintet op. 56, no. 2 in g minor, movement 4 at the 2019 Carl Nielsen Internation Chamber Music Competition

Rondo Form in this movement

A	B	A	B	A
aba	cd	aba	c'd'	a

Chamber Music in the 20th Century

- 20th century sees a new interest in combining instruments in ways that weren't done before due to variety of reasons:
 - Interest in being new
 - Economic issues
 - Bad economies mean composers can only hire whoever they can find
 - Victim of circumstance
 - You have to write for who's available
- Music is much more dissonant and timbrally different than previous eras

Olivier Messiaen

- French composer (1908-1992)
- Known for his complex style of writing:
 - Radically dissonant sounds
 - Approach to harmony regards **color** without any semblance of 'traditional' harmonic function
 - Very tricky and non-traditional rhythms
 - Interested in **bird calls**
 - Transcribed actual bird songs
 - Put them in his music
 - Wrote a collection of 13 pieces for piano called 'Catalogue of the Birds' which contains piano transcriptions of bird songs
- Drafted into the French army during World War II
 - Captured, and sent to a Nazi prison camp in May 1940
 - While there, he wrote a piece for piano, cello, violin, clarinet
 - 'Quartet for the End of Time'
 - refers to the Armageddon initiated by WWII

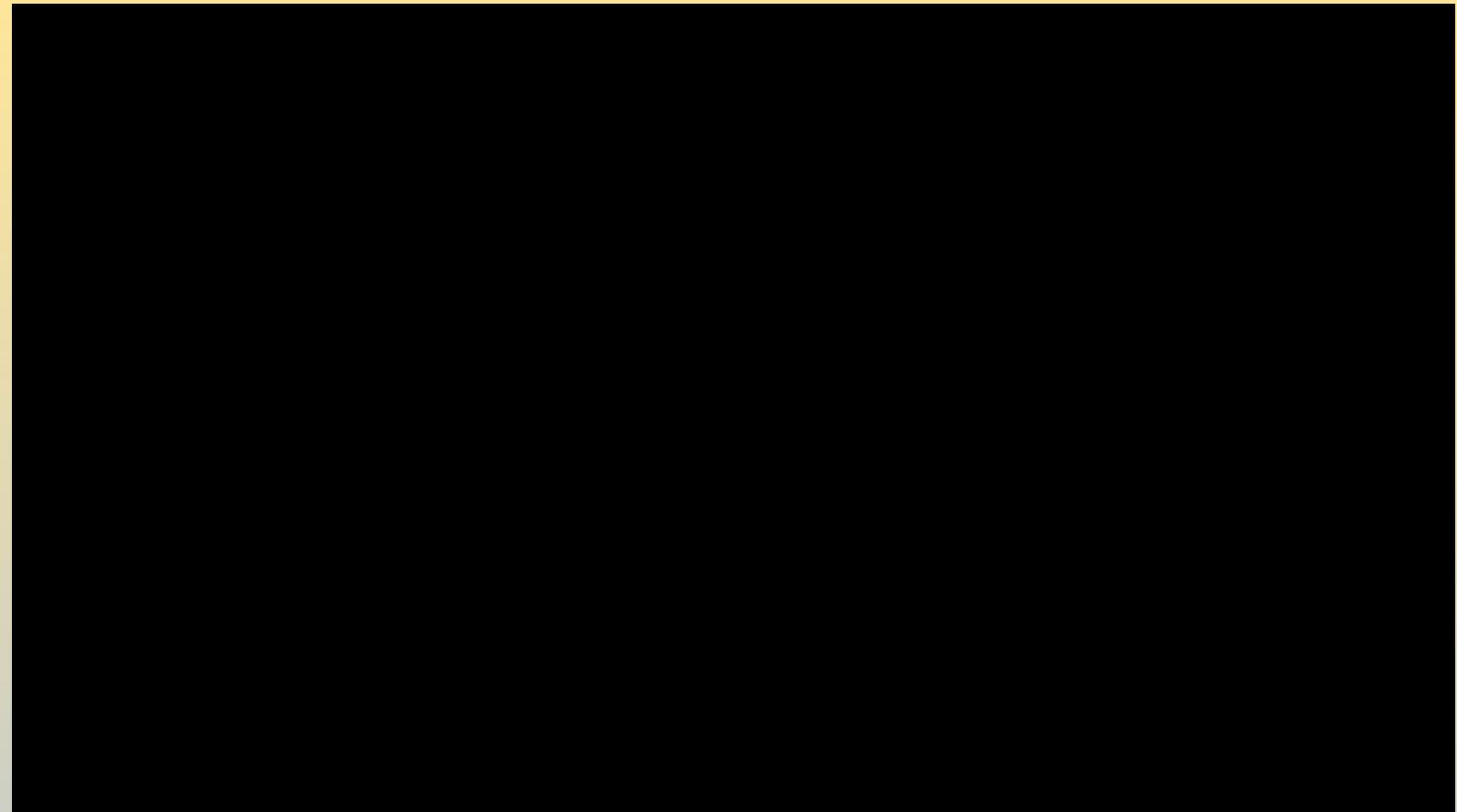


The Stalag was buried in snow. We were 30,000 prisoners (French for the most part, with a few Poles and Belgians). The four musicians played on broken instruments ... the keys on my upright piano remained lowered when depressed ... it's on this piano, with my three fellow musicians, dressed in the oddest way ... completely tattered, and wooden clogs large enough for the blood to circulate despite the snow underfoot ... that I played my quartet ... the most diverse classes of society were mingled: farmers, factory workers, intellectuals, professional servicemen, doctors and priests.

-Messiaen, recalling the premiere

*This account has been challenged by many, including the musicians who premiered the work.
Only a few hundred could fit in the concert hall
The cello actually had all strings in tact (but was still beaten up)

- **Name of Piece:** Liturgy of Crystal from *Quartet for the End of time*
- **Form:** through-composed
- **Composer:** Messiaen
- **Genre:** chamber ensemble
- **Time period:** World War II
- **Artistic movement:** modernist
- **Other info:** Written while Messiaen was imprisoned during WWII. Performed for prisoners and prison guards at the German prison camp on broken instruments in a freezing hall.
- **Other info:** the clarinet plays transcriptions of bird calls throughout this movement



The Composer's own notes for this movement:

Between three and four in the morning, the awakening of birds: a solo blackbird or nightingale improvises, surrounded by a shimmer of sound, by a halo of trills lost very high in the trees. Transpose this onto a religious plane and you have the harmonious silence of Heaven.

George Crumb and the Avant-garde

- American composer (born in 1929)
- Known for his unique approaches to Avant-garde:
 - Notation and scores are often visual works of art
 - Often needs explanation before the score and in the music to explain what he means
 - Uses **extended techniques**
 - Playing the instrument in non-traditional ways
 - Uses nonsensical syllables for the voice
- Known most for his vocal, chamber, and solo piano music
- Also wrote several orchestral pieces



- **Name of Piece:** ‘Dance of the Sacred Life Cycle’ from *Ancient Voices of the Children*
 - Starts at 10min
- **Form:** through-composed
- **Composer:** George Crumb
- **Genre:** mixed ensemble
 - Soprano, boy soprano, oboe mandolin, harp, amplified piano, toy piano, and percussion
 - All players use ‘extended techniques’
 - Creates sounds that invoke the Ancient atmosphere
- **Time period:** 1970s
- **Artistic movement:** avant-garde
- **Text:** fragments taken from poetry by Garcia Lorca