

Music Appreciation

Later Vocal Music

Dr. Richard Anatone
Professor of Music Theory
Prince George's Community College

Pieces covered this unit

- Baroque – Bach, Cantata no. 147
- Romantic – Schubert, “Der Erlkoinig”
- 20th century – Merideth Monk, “Little Breath”

The Baroque Era

- 1600-1750 (1750 is the death of JS Bach)
- From the word ‘barroco’
 - Portuguese word that refers to the irregular shape of a pearl
 - Refers to the irregular shape, ornamentation of musical phrases and form
- Marks the beginning of the “common practice era”
 - This is where music, historically, begins to sound more like what we’re used to today
- While polyphony was still a widespread technique like the previous eras, **homophony** becomes a popular texture
 - Using a single melody with subordinate accompaniment
 - Allows for a single soloist to really stand out and be given all the attention
- Lots of vocal music is now *accompanied* by some type of instrument or group of instruments

Baroque Era (cont'd)

- Baroque music contains many **ornamentations**
 - Flairs to provide the music with extra interest
 - Also seen in Baroque art and architecture
- Instrumental music is becoming more popular than it was in the Renaissance, but vocal music is still supreme
- Main genres of vocal music in the Baroque period:
 - Opera
 - Oratorio
 - Cantata (this unit)

JS 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



The Cantata

- From the Latin word *cantare*, which means ‘to sing’
- A collection of music for soloists, choir, and orchestra
 - Number of individual vocal ‘movements,’
 - **Aria:** very lyrical melody for a few soloists
 - Contains many **melismas**
 - Many notes sung for a single syllable of text
 - Usually a rich, lush orchestral accompaniment
 - **Recitative:** more syllabic music for a soloist
 - Usually a sparse orchestral accompaniment
 - **Chorus/chorale**
 - Music for the entire choir and orchestra
- Orchestra is typically made up of strings, a harpsichord/organ, and some winds and/or brass instruments
 - Strings and keyboard are the *main importance* of the orchestra
 - The harpsichord/organ is characteristic to Baroque orchestra
 - Not used in later time periods!!

Bach, Cantata BWV 147

- Contains 10 individual movements, lasting about 30 minutes
- One of his many ‘sacred’ cantatas
 - Originally would be sung **during church service**
- Contains arias, recitatives, and chorales
- **Name of Piece:** ‘Jesu, Joy of Man’s Desiring’
- **Genre:** Chorale
- **Composer:** JS Bach
- **Larger work:** Cantata BWV 147
- **Texture:** Homophonic (mostly)

1. *Andante*

2. *Allegretto*

Start at 27:48 for chorale

Baroque Style

- **Instruments:** more ‘modern’ sounding instruments
 - Strings: violin, viola, cello, bass
 - Keyboard: organ, harpsichord
 - Winds and brass: used, but not as often
- **Texture:** still polyphonic, but a lot of focus on **homophony**
 - Allows for a single soloist to stand out and be accompanied by others
- **Harmonies:** more ‘modern’ sounding chord progressions
- **Rhythm:** ‘motor’ rhythm
 - Keeps going and going, as if someone winds up a motor, and lets it run until it eventually dies down
- **Melodies:** highly ornamented, irregular phrasing
- **Phrasing:** cadences are present, but the music doesn’t often come to a complete ‘stop’ after them – the music just keeps on going

Romantic Era Vocal Music

- 19th Century movement
 - ‘free from structural or narrative conventions’
- Artists were interested in new ways of being original
 - Composers explore **musical extremes**
 - Dynamics are louder and softer than ever before
 - Orchestras are bigger than before: new instruments, and more of them!
 - Wrote music that was **incredibly difficult**
 - Increased interest in **program music**
 - Increased interest in subject matter that was dark and eerie
- The piano becomes the staple in middle-class homes for entertainment
 - ‘A piano in every home’

Der Erlkönig

- **Composer:** Franz Schubert in 1815
- **Genre:** German Lied
 - Lied is a German art song
- **Form:** verse form
- **Poetic Text:** from a **ballad** written by German poet Johann Wolfgang Goethe in the 1780s
 - **Ballad:** poem that tells a story
- **Time Period:** Romantic
- **Many text-musical relationships:** see 3 slides from here
- Written for piano and 1 singer
- Radically different than the type of music that came before it
 - Liberal use of dissonance, creepy subject matter



Der Erlkönig (cont'd)

- About a boy riding with his father in the woods on horseback
- The 'Erlkonig' (shadowy demon-like creature) who tries to lure the child to the land of the dead
- Child cries out to the father, but the father doesn't see anything
- After a few attempts to lure the child to no avail, the Erlkönig uses force





German Text

Translation

Erlkönig:	"Willst, feiner Knabe, du mit mir gehn? Meine Töchter sollen dich warten schön; Meine Töchter führen den nächtlichen Reihn, Und wiegen und tanzen und singen dich ein." –	"Do you, fine boy, want to go with me? My daughters shall wait on you finely; My daughters lead the nightly dance, And rock and dance and sing to bring you in." –
Son:	Mein Vater, mein Vater, und siehst du nicht dort Erlkönigs Töchter am düstern Ort? –	My father, my father, and don't you see there The Elf-king's daughters in the gloomy place? –
Father:	Mein Sohn, mein Sohn, ich seh' es genau: Es scheinen die alten Weiden so grau. –	My son, my son, I see it clearly: There shimmer the old willows so grey. –
Erlkönig:	"Ich liebe dich, mich reizt deine schöne Gestalt; Und bist du nicht willig, so brauch' ich Gewalt." –	"I love you, your beautiful form excites me; And if you're not willing, then I will use force." –
Son:	Mein Vater, mein Vater, jetzt faßt er mich an! Erlkönig hat mir ein Leids getan! –	My father, my father, he's touching me now! The Elf-king has done me harm! –
Narrator:	Dem Vater grauset's; er reitet geschwind, Er hält in Armen das ächzende Kind, Erreicht den Hof mit Mühe und Not; In seinen Armen das Kind war tot.	It horrifies the father; he swiftly rides on, He holds the moaning child in his arms, Reaches the farm with great difficulty; In his arms, the child was dead.



Text-Music Relationship in *Der Erlkönig*

- Piano accompaniment imitates the horse galloping
- Father's responses to child gets more stern
 - First response is comforting at 1:24
 - Last response is more stern and annoyed at 2:50
- Erlkonig is playful the first 2 attempts at luring the child
 - Last attempt is dissonant, ugly, and singer lashes out
- Child screams "My Father!" 3 times
 - Each time, it's up 1 pitch than previous time
 - Child getting more and more fearful
 - 1:54, 2:34, and lastly at 3:18

Romantic Style

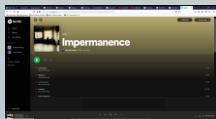
- **Melodies:** more lyrical and longer phrases than in the Classical era
- **Harmonies:** more uses of dissonance and chromatic pitches
- **Instruments:** piano replaces the harpsichord and organ
- **Subject matter:** more innovative, creative, and original than previous eras

Vocal Music in the 20th Century

- Latter half of 20th century, composers experiment with **radically new ways of composing music**
 - Many fall in the ‘Avant garde’ or ‘experimentalist’ style (or ‘post-modernist’)
 - Use their instruments or voices in non-traditional ways
 - Embrace dissonance over consonance
 - Employ **extended techniques**
 - New ways of singing/playing that aren’t normally taught

Meredith Monk

- Born in New York City in 1942
- Known for her performance pieces and extended vocal techniques
 - Uses the voice in non-traditional ways
 - Often uses nonsense syllables to make music
 - Often uses **minimalist** techniques
 - Gradual change, and highly repetitive
 - Are written in a much freer form than previous eras



“Little Breath” for 4 voices (2008)



Songs from the Hill (1979)

