

The Classical Period

Key Points

- The Classical era (1750–1825) is characterized by order, objectivity, and harmonious proportion. This is reflected in the art and architecture of the time, modeled on ancient Greek and Roman styles.
- The American Revolution (1775–83) and the French Revolution (1789–99) profoundly changed political systems and social order.
- The era saw significant advances in science and ideas, and the Industrial Revolution made mass production possible.
- German writers like Goethe and Schiller expressed the emerging romantic view of the world.
- Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, Schubert—all members of the Viennese school—composed in large-scale forms (symphony, concerto, sonata).
- Classical music is characterized by a singable, lyrical melody; diatonic harmony; regular rhythms and meters; homophonic texture; and frequent use of folk elements.
- Music-making revolved around the court, with composers (especially Haydn) employed under the patronage system. Women also held court positions as musicians and teachers.