

EXPLANATION 3.6: INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC DURING THE BAROQUE PERIOD

3.6.1. INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC IN THE RENAISSANCE AND IN THE BAROQUE ERA

During the Renaissance the function of the instruments was to accompany singing but during the Baroque period instrumental music evolved considerably from this function. The Renaissance is, par excellence, the era of vocal music (Renaissance polyphony). However, in the Baroque period, instruments became independent from the voice and music was also being composed for solo instruments. This had been also done in the Renaissance period but in the Baroque it became really a major aspect. Such was the case, that concerts were written to be played for a soloist and an orchestra, or important pieces for solo instruments with no orchestra, like the harpsichord, organ, violin, cello, flute, lute, etc.

3.6.2. INSTRUMENTS DURING THE BAROQUE PERIOD

In this period instrumentists were already very qualified to play because they had technically very much improved with respect to the Renaissance. Also instruments had done a leap in quality with regard to the Renaissance thanks to famous luthiers (instrument makers) who created high quality rubbed string instruments (which today are unique pieces of high purchasing value) like Stradivarius and Guarneri, or Ruckers for harpsichords. Church organs experienced major improvements by expanding their pipes and their registers (activated with the white buttons on the sides of the keyboard) so as to have more sounds available. Also, plucked instruments like harpsichords with double manuals (one upper and one lower keyboard) or lutes, were important as accompaniment instruments, doing thorough bass or as soloists. The function of instruments was not only to accompany voices, as was in the Renaissance, but to replace them. During the Baroque era there were more awareness of timbre (quality of sound by which an instrument is recognized), combination of timbres (orchestration) and textures (counterpoint, imitation, homophony, etc).

3.6.3. INSTRUMENTAL THEORY AND MUSIC PRACTISE

There were musicians who analyzed music in depth. They elaborated theories on different musical aspects such as: tuning of instruments, tonality, harmony, chords, counterpoint, the art of playing instruments, and so on. Instrumental practice was greatly favored and developed.

3.6.4. IMPORTANT MUSIC FORMS

Some important instrumental music forms can be classified according to two periods:

Until 1650 there were numerous styles:

1. Works in continuous and discontinuous imitative style:
 - Continuous: fugue, fantasy, fancy, capriccio, ricercar, etc.
 - Discontinuous, that is, in sections: canzona and sonata.
2. Works in which a melody is given and transformed or varied:
 - partita, passacaglia, chaconne, choral partita, and choral prelude.
3. Works composed from court dances. If there are several dances, one after another, it is called a "suite" to the whole set of dances.
4. Works in improvisative style. They were for keyboard or lute generally: toccata, fantasy, prelude.

After 1650 music played is characterized by being for groups or for keyboards.

- Music for ensemble (groups): sonata (sonata da chiesa), suite (sonata da camera); concerto and symphony.
- Music for keyboards: toccata (prelude, fantasy); variations; passacaglia and chaconne; suite and sonata (after 1700); arrangements of liturgical music and Lutheran choirs.

READING COMPREHENSION TEXT QUESTIONS 3.6

1. **What role did the instruments have during the Renaissance?**
2. **What instrument characterised the Renaissance period?**
3. **Explain the independence of instruments during the Baroque period.**
4. **What kind of works were written for instruments during the Baroque period?**
5. **Name two string luthiers from the Baroque period.**
6. **How did the baroque organs improve?**
7. **What were baroque musicians aware of in relation to instruments?**
8. **Name four aspects on which theoretical treatises were written.**
9. **Name three continuous imitative works that begin with "F".**
10. **Name a music form made in sections.**
11. **What is a suite and a fantasy?**
12. **How is the music grouped after 1650?**
13. **What two types of sonata arise after 1700?**