

Characteristics of the Musical Eras

	Melody	Harmony	Rhythm
Baroque	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Derived or "spun out" from a single motive • Often ornamented 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uses mostly major or minor modes • Functional tonality established • Few clear-cut internal cadences • Quick harmonic rhythm • Use of the Picardy third 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Homogeneous rhythms built from motivic units • Use of hemiola in triple meter • Symmetrical meters • Rhythm may identify movement more than melodic intervals
Classical	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Primarily stepwise motion and songlike • Based on symmetry and contrast rather than "spun out" • Incorporates vocal style 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Major and minor • Expansion of functional tonality through the use of more non-diatonic chords • Clear-cut cadences at the ends of phrases, usually every 4 measures • Modulation primarily to closely related keys • Preference for simple harmonic structure (I-IV-V) often embellished with Alberti bass, scales, etc. • Slower harmonic rhythm than in Baroque music. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More rhythmic contrast within one piece or movement than previously • Rhythm serves the melody • Symmetrical Meters
Romantic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expansive melodic phrases; wider leaps and longer gestures than in previous eras 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greater use of chromatic and non-diatonic chords leading to breakdown of functional tonality at the end of the era • Cadences are often obscure • Modulations to remote keys 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More variety of meters and rhythms • More flexibility in basic beat allowed
Impressionistic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Narrow range • Primarily stepwise • Less important than the musical impressions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tonality established through pedal points or repetition of tonic rather than through cadential harmonic progressions • Use of parallel chords • Chords often derived from whole tone scale (augmented triad) or modes other than major and minor (Oriental or Renaissance church modes) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Less metric regularity • Layered rhythms borrowed from far-Eastern countries
Contemporary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Large leaps involving a wide range • Melodies use dissonant or very small intervals • Sometimes based on folk music of non-Western cultures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use of diatonic chords in non-functional ways (Pandiatonicism) • Tone clusters, Polytonality, Atonality • 12 tone rows, serial music • Non-tertian harmonies; Chords built in 2nds (Secundal Harmony), 4ths (Quartal Harmony or 5ths (Quintal Harmony) • Synthetic Scales • Jazz and Blues Scales & Chords 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meters changing frequently within a piece • Asymmetrical meters and rhythms, i.e. $\begin{matrix} 2 & 3 & 3 \\ 8+ & 8+ & 8 \end{matrix}$

	Form	Sound
Baroque	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Binary form in dances (often grouped in suites) and in single movement sonatas • Preludes and Fugues, Inventions, Variations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contrapuntal, polyphonic texture • Performer discretion regarding articulation, mood, ornamentation • Doctrine of "affection"; each piece or movement has a single mood or character • Intricate and subtle dynamics within each phrase • Clever, original and tasteful ornamentation • Keyboard Instruments commonly used include the harpsichord, organ, and clavichord.
Classical	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of multi-movement forms of sonata, concerto, and symphony • Structure in multiples of 4, i.e. 4 measure phrase, 8 measure periods • Development of sonata-allegro form • Continued use of binary and variation forms 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Homophonic texture • More direction as to appropriate articulation, mood, ornamentation, and dynamics • Dynamic contrasts emphasized • Contrasts of character within a piece or movement • Form more important than emotions • Elegance, grace and polish highly valued • Piano becomes the primary keyboard instrument
Romantic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greater diversity in length and type of forms • Character pieces in ABA form common 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Homophonic texture, often thick • Expansive, shaped, singing phrases • Great dynamic range with large dynamic shapes more common than sudden dynamic changes • Great display of virtuosity • Form subservient to emotions; more passionate, less restrained emotional impulses • Interest in nature and things mystical • Striving for a national style • Program music, other narrative, based on folk legends, poetry and descriptive literature • Descriptive titles • Uses full resources of the modern piano
Impressionistic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use of repeated motives and phrases 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Layered textures • Use of new sounds using the entire range of the piano • Interest in nature, poetry and painting • Creation of mood prized more than clarity • Exploration of the range of quietest, subtlest dynamics • Under-emphasis; quietest moment might be the climax • Descriptive titles
Contemporary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use of baroque and classical forms (neo-Baroque, neo-Classical) • Great diversity of formal structures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Directions to performers very specific • Aleatoric or "chance" music gives new freedom to performers to be a part of the creative process • New notational systems • Use of special effects to create new kinds of sounds • Contrapuntal, polyphonic textures regain favor • Melodic and rhythmic structures derived from authentic folk music • Eclectic – use of a great variety of compositional techniques • Continual striving for originality and individuality • Piano is used more as a percussive instrument