

age shaped and conditioned by the expressive exuberance of opera, which itself recognized the expressive primacy of human emotions as no other musical genre had since the ancient world. It was also an age shaped by science, rational thinking, and common sense, a shared sensibility that would, in the second half of the eighteenth century, be focused on religious institutions and institutions of the state. This tilt toward humanism in Western society—which can be traced back to the shattering events of the fourteenth century and which gathered such tremendous steam during the Renaissance and Baroque era—will continue unabated into the art (and music) of the Enlightenment, the great social evolution that marks the second half of the eighteenth century. The music of the Enlightenment is referred to as that of the Classical era, which is the next stop in our story.

Enlightened Is as Enlightened Does

An Introduction to the Classical Era

The Classical era is understood as running from 1750 to 1827, from the death of Bach to the death of Beethoven. Even as period dates go, these are awful, and here's why.

While Johann Sebastian Bach's death in 1750 affords us a serviceable year to end the Baroque era, it's a fairly useless year with which to begin what we now call the Classical era. Those musical stylistic elements that we will soon enough define as being "Classical" reached their first real flower in Italy in the early 1730s. For at least twenty-five years, stylistically Baroque and stylistically Classical era music coexisted, like the Neanderthal and Cro-Magnon. In reality, it isn't until the 1760s that those stylistic elements we would identify as Baroque had become a thing of the past.

Concluding the Classical era in 1827 with Beethoven's death is absurd. Instead, we should end it in 1803, the year Beethoven composed the bulk of his Symphony no. 3 and, in so doing, rendered classicalism obsolete in one outrageous act!

But who asked me?

The evolution from the high Baroque to the Classical musical style was a mirror of an extraordinary social evolution that we, today, call the Enlightenment.

The Enlightenment, circa 1730 to 1780, was a period that saw the institutions of Europe—religious, political, social, educational, industrial, financial, and artistic—slowly but inexorably lower their

focus from the aristocracy and the high clergy to a new class of people then emerging from the bowels of the new European mercantilism and the beginning of the Industrial Revolution. For lack of a better name, we call this new and growing class the middle class, and the Enlightenment marked their initial entry into the mainstream of European society. A new brand of humanism, philosophical humanism, evolved, one that asserted that all people were important, not just representatives of the Church and the state.

Since the beginning of recorded time, European class structure and wealth had been based upon hereditary land ownership. But by the early eighteenth century, new patterns and methods of trade and manufacturing had contributed to creating a *nouveau* wealthy class whose wealth was based not on inherited real estate, but rather on accumulated cash.

This new middle and non-aristocratic upper class, by the sheer weight of their numbers, buying power, and growing political influence, began to assert terrific pressures on their respective societies to meet their needs and desires.

The *nouveau riche* wanted to be educated and consequently, it was during the Enlightenment that the concept of universal education first emerged. They wanted at least a modicum of political power and a greater degree of control over their own lives.

The new middle class also wanted an end to social and religious injustice. People in the middle and upper classes began to believe that an institution was "good" to the extent that it did the greatest good for the greatest number of people. The faith in reason that had inspired the scientific community during the seventeenth century was steered, in the mid- and late eighteenth century, toward the social sphere, with the result that social institutions and mechanisms were put under the scrutiny of common sense. The middle class wanted quality of life, comfort, and upward mobility.

From a purely social point of view, Enlightenment humanism was, perhaps, the most important of all the intellectual currents of the time. Enlightenment humanism stated that life on earth and the

quality of that life were as important as the afterlife promised by religion. Making the best out of an earthly life became a basic desire for the new middle class.

For the most part, the hereditary monarchies and aristocracies that still ruled Western Europe were grudgingly willing to oblige. In the 1760s, '70s, and '80s (up until the advent of the French Revolution), most such bigwigs were, to some degree or another, "enlightened": that is, concerned for the well-being of the "little people" to a degree unheard of in previous European history.

Cosmopolitanism

The ideal of international brotherhood as espoused by Enlightenment humanism was partly realized in a trend that we now refer to as cosmopolitanism. Cosmopolitanism saw national differences downplayed in favor of a vision of the common humanity of all people.

The ideal of cosmopolitanism also applied to the music of the late eighteenth century. In 1752, J. J. Quantz, the court composer and flute teacher to Frederick the Great of Prussia, opined that the ideal musical style of his enlightened time was a composite of the best features of all European nations, writing, "A music that is accepted and recognized as good not by one country only, but by many peoples must, provided it is based, as well, on reason and sound feeling, be beyond all dispute the best."

Enlightenment musical cosmopolitanism refers to a common international style, a style that will come to be known as the Classical style. As it turned out, this pan-European, cosmopolitan music was one that combined the melodic fluency of the Italians; the rigor, craft, and spiritual profundity of the Germans; and the instrumental techniques and technology of the French. It was a music also profoundly influenced by the "Every Person" spirit of the Enlightenment.

The Enlightenment doctrine that asserted that the institution that does the greatest good for the greatest number is good had as

its artistic analog that that music that is accessible and pleasing to the greatest number is good. (As contrasted with the relatively more complex musical surfaces and politically elite music of the Baroque.) In the end, a musical style evolved that resonated with the spirit of Enlightenment humanism and cosmopolitanism: an attractive, accessible, tuneful music that obscured the national origins of its composers.

MUSIC BOX

Something Else to Try at Home!

Play the first movement of any symphony by Joseph Haydn (1732–1809). (One hundred and four of Haydn's symphonies have survived, so you have a rather wide range to choose from.) Then listen to the first movement of a symphony by Jan Stamitz (1717–1757; fifty-eight of Stamitz's symphonies have survived) followed by the first movement of a symphony by Luigi Boccherini (1743–1805; twenty-one of Boccherini's symphonies have survived). Note that there is no "national signature" to any of this music. Its relative "quality" notwithstanding, the style, the sound, the expressive content is very much the same, despite the fact that Haydn was born and raised in Austria, Stamitz in Bohemia (the present-day Czech Republic), and Boccherini in Italy. Their countries of origin aside, these are three cosmopolitan composers writing in a single, pan-European style.

My Kind of Town, Vienna Is . . .

The Classical style reached its zenith in and around the great Habsburg capital of Vienna between roughly 1770 and 1800. In honor of the city, the mature Classical style is often referred to as the Viennese Classical style.

There are five reasons why Vienna became the locus of classicism.

First, Vienna stands at the crossroads of four very musical nations: Germany, Bohemia, Hungary, and Italy.

Second, Vienna stood smack-dab between the two dominant musical traditions of eighteenth-century Europe: the operatic vocal tradition of the Catholic south and the more instrumental, polyphonic tradition of the Protestant north.

Third, Emperor Joseph II of Austria, the most enlightened of all the Habsburg rulers, cultivated the musical arts big time, and thus presided over a golden age in Viennese music.

Fourth, as a capital city, Vienna was filled with rich and powerful people who had money and time to burn. Vienna also had a large and financially well off middle class: the bureaucrats who manned the government and municipality, and the merchants and contractors who served the needs of the city and its population. For the Viennese aristocratic and middle classes, then as now, music was *the* leisure time consumable. One would have to look long and hard (and likely in vain) to find a more music-friendly environment.

Which explains the fifth and final reason why Vienna was the capital of the Classical style: it became the adoptive home of a majority of the most important composers of the time, including Joseph Haydn, Wolfgang Mozart, and Ludwig van Beethoven.

Music to All Our Ears: The Doctrine of Accessibility

The new middle class wanted what the founding parental units of the United States called the "pursuit of happiness," what I like to refer to as "the pursuit of entertainment." The new middle class had something their grandparents never had: free time, leisure time.

For the new, Enlightenment era middle class, music became the indispensable leisure time consumable, their primary form of entertainment. The sort of music they chose to consume—the sort of music that resonated with the "every person" spirit of the time—was music in which melodic beauty and directness were of primary importance.

Both the new middle class and the Enlightened aristocracy came to reject the music of the high Baroque, which they considered to be unnecessarily complicated and elitist. The listening public of the Enlightenment preferred to consume music that emphasized vocal lyricism: accessible, homophonic music, which became a metaphor for the spirit of individuality abroad in contemporary society.

The New Vocally Conceived Melody

Play, back to back, the opening of the first movement of Bach's Brandenburg Concerto no. 5 and of Mozart's *Eine kleine Nachtmusik*. Bach's thematic melody is a brilliant example of high Baroque art: exuberant, complex, and filled with detail (notes, notes, and more notes). Mozart's thematic melody has just enough notes to create a virtually unforgettable melody, no more and no less.

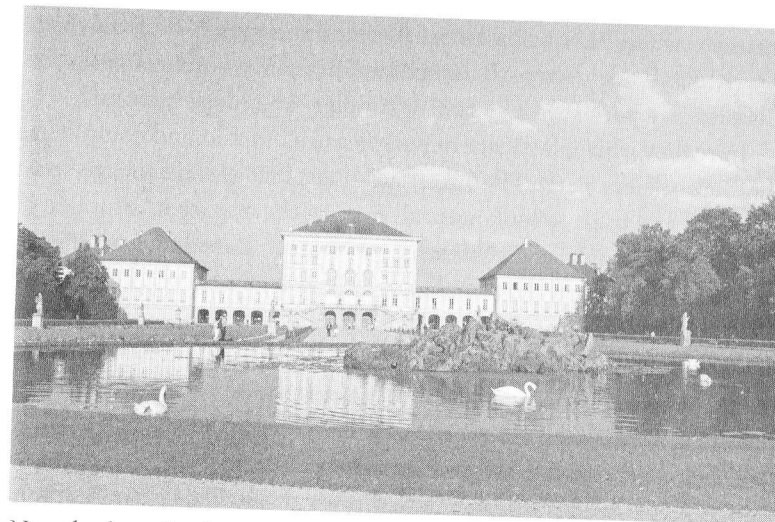
Next, do your best to *sing* each melody. Bach's theme is not particularly "singable"; its range is too great and it contains too many notes (too much information) to fall naturally in the voice. It is an *instrumentally conceived melody*. Mozart's thematic melody, on the other hand, is eminently singable. Despite the fact that it was written to be played by musical instruments, it is a *vocally conceived melody*. In an era when accessibility and expressive directness were considered aesthetic qualities, direct and engaging melodic surfaces were cultivated above everything else. The so-called doctrine of accessibility of the Enlightenment demanded a music that was vocal, tuneful, and thus accessible.

The opening theme of Mozart's *Eine kleine Nachtmusik* evoked in the previous Music Box is an example of what Jean-Jacques Rousseau—the Swiss-born hippie whose ideas so helped to shape the Enlightenment—would have called "natural" art. *Natural* became an Enlightenment buzzword; natural was good. Art that was perceived as being contrived and complex (such as Baroque music) was considered "unnatural": not good.

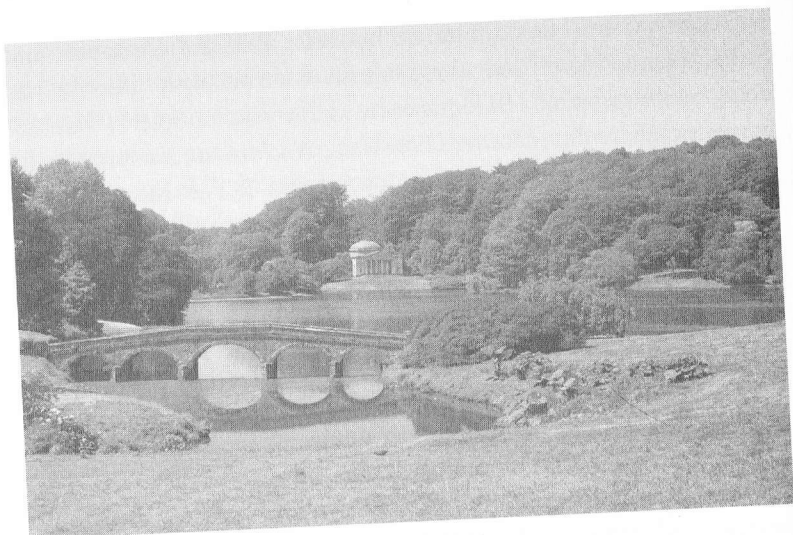
All too often, the difference between Baroque era music and Enlightenment (or Classical era) music is erroneously described as being "more complex" (Baroque era music) versus "simpler" (Classical era music). In reality, Mozart's *Eine kleine Nachtmusik* is not musically simpler than Bach's Brandenburg Concerto no. 5. That Mozart's piece appears simpler than Bach's is an illusion, a product of the two works' respective styles and aesthetic, not their musical content.

Comparing two images can help us grasp this stylistic and aesthetic difference. The first is an image of the Nymphenburg Castle and gardens, located outside of Munich. Typical of Baroque design, the garden sees nature ordered and controlled by the hand of the landscape architect. There's a tremendous amount of stuff: plants, hedges, flower gardens, fountains, paths, and so forth, yet everything is carefully trimmed, potted, and symmetrically arrayed. Visual exuberance and symmetrical control, typical of Baroque era design.

Our second image is of a Classical era garden at Stourhead Estate in Wiltshire, England, constructed during the Enlightenment,



Nymphenburg Castle Hemera/Thinkstock



Stourhead Park iStockphoto/Thinkstock

between 1741 and '80. We see a placid lake with an arched footbridge at one end. Beyond the lake is a neoclassic building of great elegance nestled among the trees. Trees, shrubs, and plants grow in profusion, through which curving paths gently wend their way. "Pastoral calm" is written all over this park. Compared to the Baroque era park, this Classical era park seems so much "simpler" and more "natural."

In reality, this Classical era park is as calculated and complex as the Baroque era park. The lake, buildings, bridge, and foliage were designed and built to look natural. Just so, the apparent "simplicity" of Mozart's *Eine kleine Nachtmusik* is a product of its design aesthetic. In truth, there's nothing simple about it. But like the park at Stourhead House, the complexities of Mozart's *Eine kleine Nachtmusik* lie out of plain sight, below the musical surface. These design "complexities" have to do with such things as phrase structure, accompanimental textures, harmonic motion, thematic contrast, motivic development, and the differentiation of thematic music from transitional music. Bach's Brandenburg Concerto no. 5, like the Baroque garden, wears its complexity on the surface. The riot of information

that is the essence of Baroque design demanded to be seen in all its profuse detail, shaped and controlled by the hand of the artist.

The role and function of music in society came to be viewed quite differently during the Enlightenment relative to the Baroque era. Music came to be perceived as a decorative art, rather than as a spiritual and intellectual pursuit, an assertion supported by none other than Charles Burney, the greatest writer on music of the age. In 1779, Burney described music as being a condiment—mayonnaise, perhaps—for the ears. "Music is an innocent luxury, unnecessary to our existence but a great improvement and gratification of the sense of 'hearing.'"

Idle speculation. What if Mozart's and Bach's birth years were reversed, and Mozart had been born in 1685 and Bach in 1756? Would Bach have composed a piece like the Brandenburg Concerto no. 5 in the 1780s? Would Mozart have composed *Eine kleine Nachtmusik* in the 1720s? No, they would not have. The greater cultural environment creates the sound, the "style" of a given era's music. Bach and Mozart would still have been great composers, but the expressive content and syntax of their music would have mirrored their world and experience, and thus would have been completely different had they been born at different times.

Classicism and Cadence

The Enlightenment's impact on musical style was profound. The melodically ornate and intellectually complex music of the high Baroque was rejected as being out of touch with the spirit of the time, and a new, more melodically and expressively flexible musical style evolved, one that resonated with the new spirit of individualism that lay at the heart of Enlightenment doctrine. It was a musical style that celebrated melodic beauty and clarity above all else. This musical style eventually became known as the Classical style because, like "classical art"—ancient Greek art—this music celebrated: one,

clarity and beauty of line (melody); two, balance and purity of form (clear phrase structures and carefully wrought musical forms); and, three, expressive restraint and good taste (purity of conception and expression).

The increased emphasis on lyric melody characteristic of Classical era music placed a new degree of emphasis on the beginnings and endings of those melodies. Such beginnings and endings are recognized as such because they are marked by cadences, musical punctuation marks. A cadence is a harmonic or melodic formula that occurs at the end of a phrase, section, or movement, a formula that conveys a momentary or permanent sense of conclusion.

This is not to say that there are no cadences in the music of the Baroque era; of course there are. But rhythmic continuity—meaning a rock-steady beat and almost constant forward motion—was a basic stylistic element of most Baroque era music, particularly instrumental music, and that rhythmic continuity tends to steamroll cadences, which in such a rhythmic environment pass by in the blink of an eye.

Conversely, the music of the Classical era tends to be rhythmically discontinuous, as its tune-dominated music allowed for cadential flourishes and extensions, and thus for a movement to *breathe*—to start and stop—in a way that Baroque instrumental music rarely does.

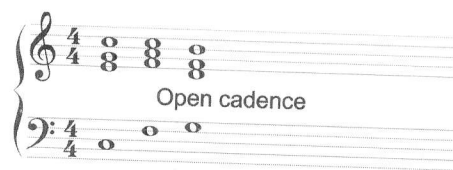
The Classical era cultivation of cadence and the impact of cadential cultivation on the musical forms of the Classical era require that we identify and discuss the four principal types of cadences: open (or half) cadences, closed (or authentic/standard) cadences, false (or deceptive) cadences, and plagal (or amen) cadences.

Open or Half Cadence

In any given key, there is a chord that creates tremendous dissonance—tremendous tension—and thus needs to resolve. That chord is the

one built atop the fifth pitch (or “fifth degree”) of any major or minor collection (or “scale”). If we’re in the key of C major, the pitch C is the home pitch, or “tonic” (the word *tonic* should be thought of as a contraction of the phrase *tonal center*). The fifth pitch of a C major collection is G. In the key of C major, then, the pitch G is called the dominant pitch, and the chord built atop that G is called the dominant chord: the “chord of tension.”

An open, or half, cadence is one that stops on this tension-producing chord, the dominant chord. An open cadence creates dissonance, which, properly defined, means a state of irresolution. (A word of encouragement, dear reader: as with all of the notational examples in this book, the following examples of cadences want to be seen and heard. If you cannot play them on an available keyboard yourself, find somebody who can play them for you. These are formulaic chord progressions with which you are already familiar: the average listener already knows what these cadences sound like. What we want to do now is give names to these harmonic progressions and, in doing so, make ourselves consciously aware of their musical function. It’s the same way we learned our native language: first by “ear” (by speaking it), then by recognizing it in notated form (reading it), and finally by learning the rules of grammar (becoming conscious of function and structure).

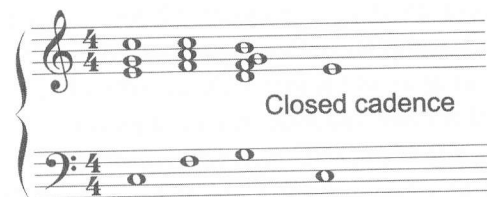


An open (or half) cadence like the one above is the musical equivalent of a comma. Like a comma, an open cadence demands that a musical sentence continue in search of a period: in search of resolution.

Closed, Authentic, or Standard Cadence

A closed (or authentic or standard) cadence is one that resolves from the dominant chord to the tonic chord, and in so doing, creates resolution and thus rest.

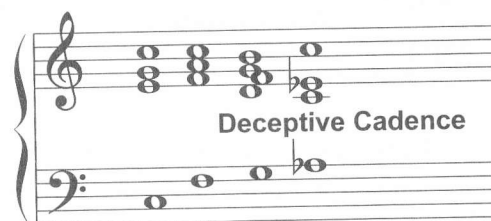
That sense of rest might be temporary if we're in the middle of a movement or permanent if we are at the very end of a movement.



A closed (or authentic or standard) cadence is the musical equivalent of a period.

Deceptive or False Cadence

A deceptive, or false, cadence is one in which the dominant chord resolves, but not to the tonic. As such, deceptive cadences are used to prolong phrases by avoiding the tonic, and are the musical equivalent of a colon or a semicolon.



Plagal or Amen Cadence

A plagal, or amen, cadence is one that sees the chord built on the fourth degree of a major or minor collection (called the subdominant chord) resolve to the tonic. The plagal cadence is often referred to as an amen cadence because it is the harmonic progression that underpins the word *amen* in the great majority of Protestant church hymns.



A plagal cadence is not a substitute for a closed, open, or deceptive cadence. Rather, it will typically follow a closed cadence at the very end of a passage as a sort of add-on, one that reinforces the tonic harmony at the end of that phrase or passage.

We'll return to the use of cadences in the next chapter, where we'll explore their expanded role in the musical forms of the Classical era.