

Some General Stylistic Changes in music around 1600

1. **Idiomatic writing**

instruments

Rise to prominence of soloists, including instrumental soloists, meant that composition less homogenous than polyphony was

Writing became more peculiar to instrumental medium

2. **The Affections**

Composers sought musical means to express or arouse the affections—then thought of as states of the soul—such as rage, excitement, grandeur, heroism, lofty contemplation, wonder, or mystic exaltation. They were not trying to express their personal feelings; rather, they wanted to represent the affections in a generic sense (abstract idea). In fact, they deliberately distanced themselves from feelings so they could endow them with a more objective reality.

The status of music rose as emphasis became more on emotional reality (as opposed to simply serving the aims of the text).

3. **Rhythm**

Baroque era saw inauguration of a modern idea of rhythm and phrase rhythm

Either very free or very measured (Renaissance polyphony represented even flow) often paired to provide contrast

Seventeenth century saw introduction of **measures** for the first time (mid century)

4. **The Basso Continuo/Continuo texture**

Renaissance musical texture typified by polyphony of independent voices

Early Baroque featured a firm bass and an independent, dominant treble, held together by unobtrusive harmony

new emphasis on bass; bass and treble the integral lines of a piece

Thus, these parts are sometimes all that is written out

Bass played on continuo instrument, usually chordal, reinforced by sustaining instrument (cello, gamba, bassoon)

Figures were added if chords were not common triads in root position.

Realization could vary a lot

Filling that resulted called “ripieno” or “stuffing”

5. **The New Counterpoint**

Counterpoint remained, but now the different melodic lines had to fit into the pattern of chords set up by the continuo.

Individual lines now subordinated to a succession of chords.

6. **Dissonance**

Dissonance now not so much an interval between two voices, but an individual tone that did not fit into triadic chord.

Dissonances now tolerated more easily

By middle of seventeenth century use of dissonance in triadic structure becoming codified

Chromaticism similarly defined by placement in tonal harmony

Used for expressive effects, but only in that context

7. **Major/minor tonalities; appearance of functional harmony**

Previously “harmony” governed by control of relationship between 2-note intervals (dyads)

What we think of as a triad appeared in fourteenth century
“a sound neither perfectly consonant nor dissonant.”

After 1450 increasingly frequent

After 1550 it's all over the place; also the sixth with the third (as opposed to root position triad)

1550-1600: codified theoretically by **Zarlino** in *Le istitutione harmoniche* (1558)

Composition increasingly organized around triad on a tonic pitch, supported by triads at dominant and subdominant, with other chords subordinated to these.

Rameau's later *Treatise on Harmony* (1722) codified this system of hierarchical harmony.