

A Comparison of Classical and Romantic Styles

	<i>Classical (c. 1750–1825)</i>	<i>Romantic (c. 1820–1900)</i>
Composers	Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, Schubert	Beethoven, Schubert, Fanny Mendelssohn Hensel, Felix Mendelssohn, Clara Schumann, Robert Schumann, Chopin, Liszt, Berlioz, Brahms, Tchaikovsky, Verdi, Wagner
Melody	Symmetrical melody in balanced phrases and cadences; tuneful; diatonic, with narrow leaps	Expansive, singing melodies; wide ranging; more varied, with chromatic inflections
Rhythm	Clear rhythmically, with regularly recurring accents; dance rhythms favored	Rhythmic diversity and elasticity; <i>tempo rubato</i>
Harmony	Diatonic harmony favored; tonic-dominant relationships expanded, became basis for large-scale forms	Increasing chromaticism; expanded concepts of tonality
Texture	Homophonic textures; horizontal perspective	Homophony, turning to increased polyphony in later years of era
Instrumental genres	Symphony, solo concerto, solo sonata, string quartet	Same large genres, adding one-movement symphonic poem; solo piano works
Vocal genres	Opera, Mass, solo song	Same vocal forms, adding works for solo voice and piano/orchestra
Form	Ternary form predominant; sonata-allegro form developed; absolute forms preferred	Expansion of forms and interest in continuous as well as miniature programmatic forms
Audience	Secular music predominant; aristocratic audience	Secular music predominant; middle-class audience
Dynamics	Continuously changing dynamics through <i>crescendo</i> and <i>decrescendo</i>	Widely ranging dynamics for expressive purposes
Timbre	Changing tone colors between sections of works	Continual change and blend of tone colors; experiments with new instruments and unusual ranges
Performing forces	String orchestra with woodwinds and some brass; 30-to-40-member orchestra; rise of piano to prominence	Introduction of new instruments (tuba, English horn, saxophone); much larger orchestras; piano predominant as solo instrument
Virtuosity	Improvisation largely limited to cadenzas in concertos	Increased virtuosity; composers specified more in scores
Expression	Emotional restraint and balance	Emotions, mood, atmosphere emphasized; interest in the bizarre and macabre

Source: Joseph Machlis and Kristine Forney, *The Enjoyment of Music*, 8th Edition, Shorter Version. W. W. Norton & Co., 1999.