Baroque and Classical Chamber Music
(Area of Study 2)

Baroque and classical music and similar but not the same. He is a rough guide to both types...

Baroque composers used major and minor scales

1. From about 1600 western composers started writing in major and minor keys.
2. Modulating (switching between related keys) turned out to be a good way of creating contrast in music.
3. Composers developed new structures for organising music, eg. Binary, ternary, rondo and variation forms.

Baroque has a recognisable sound

Baroque music's pretty easy to recognise. These are the main things to listen out for in the listening exam:
1. The dynamics change suddenly. Each bit is either loud or soft. You won't hear any gradual changes in volume - no crescendos or diminuendos. This is called terraced or stepped dynamics.
2. The melody's built up from short musical ideas (called motifs or motives), so you get a fair bit of repetition.
3. The harmonies are simple. The chords tend to be simple triads.
4. The melody's swarming with ornaments added to make it more interesting.
5. The texture's often contrapuntal.
6. Baroque instruments to listen out for our harpsichord, flute, recorder, oboe, bassoon, organ and strings. The harpsichord would play the basso continuo (continuous bass part).

Baroque turned into classical music

Classical music developed from Baroque, so it's similar but not the same.
1. Classical tunes are very balanced. They tend to have equal four-bar phrases, split into two-bar question and two-bar answer.
2. Classical music uses fewer ornaments.
3. Classical composers still wrote in binary, ternary, rondo and variation forms, but they also came up with a new structure called sonata form.
4. The dynamics are more subtle, using crescendos and diminuendos, not just changing suddenly.

Chamber music is typical of the classical period

1. Chamber music is music composed for small groups. It used to be performed in rooms in the richest people's houses. Limited space meant that chamber music was written for between two and eight musicians.
2. With so few people in chamber groups, you don't need a conductor. Instead, one of the players leads. The others watch and listen carefully, to make sure the timing, dynamics and interpretation are right.
3. Each part in the music is played by just one person.
4. Chamber music is written more often for some instrumental groups than others. These are the most popular types of chamber group:

String trio - violin, viola, shallow
String quartet - first violin, second violin, viola, cello
Piano trio - piano, violin, shallow (not 3 pianos)
Clarinet quintet - clarinet, first violin, second violin, viola, cello (not 5 clarinets)
Baroque and classical structure

On the next two pages of the structures are frequently used by Baroque and classical composers.

Music in binary form has two sections

1. Binary means something like ‘in two parts’ - there are two bits to a tune in binary form.
2. Binary form’s usually used for baroque dances, e.g. bourrée, minuet, gavotte, sarabande and gigue.
3. Each section is repeated. You play section A twice, then section B twice - so you end up with AABB.
4. Section B contrasts with section A - the two parts should sound different.
5. The contrast’s often made by modulating to related keys. Pieces in a minor key usually modulate to the relative major e.g. a minor to C major. Pieces in a major key usually modulate the dominant key (V), e.g. C major to G major.

Ternary form has three sections

1. Ternary means in three parts - there are three sections in music with ternary form. Often each section is repeated, so it goes AABBAA.
2. Section A ends in the home key, normally with a perfect cadence. This makes it sound like a complete piece in itself.
3. In section B the music modulates to a related key, like the dominant or relative minor, and then goes back to the main key before it ends.
4. When the music goes back to A for the last section can be exactly the same or varied a bit. If it is varied you call it A1 instead of A. A1 can be different but not so different that you can’t tell its a variation of A.

Rondo form can have any number of sections

1. Rondo means going round. A Rondo starts with a main idea in section A, moved into a new section, goes round again to A, moves into another new section, goes round again to A… as many times as you like. The new section always contrasts with section A.
2. Section A is known as the main theme or refrain. The contrasting sections are called episodes.
3. The main theme is always in the main key. Each episode tends to modulate to a related key for contrast.
4. Many classical sonatas have their last movement in rondo form.

Baroque composers wrote fugues, canons and rounds

1. Fugues, canons and rounds are very similar (canons and rounds are pretty much the same thing).
2. They are all based on two or more parts that repeat the same tune. Each part starts before the previous part’s finished.
3. In a fugue, the theme is developed - eg. one part may start playing the theme, then the second part will come in before it’s finished, but playing the theme a bit higher or lower.
Variations are pieces which start with one pattern or tune, and then change it in different ways. There are two main structures for variation. They’re called Theme and variations and ground bass.

**Theme and Variation for varies the melody**

1. **In Theme and Variation form**, the theme’s usually a memorable tune.
2. The theme is played **first**. There’s a short pause before the first variation’s played, then another pause before the next variation. Each variation is a self-contained piece of music. There can be as many or as few variations as the composer wants.
3. Each variation should be recognisable version of the main theme, but different from all the others.

![Diagram of Theme and Variation form](image)

You can vary a tune in loads of simple ways:

**Start off with a basic theme...**

![Add notes to make the tune more complex](image)

**Remove notes to simplify the tune**

![Change the metre - say, from 2 beats in a bar to 3](image)

**Add a counter melody - an extra melody over the top of the theme. When there are two or more independent parts playing like this, it’s known as counterpoint**

You can of course change the tempo, the key, change some of the chords, add a different type of accompaniment etc...

**Ground Bass form varies ideas over a fixed bass part**

Ground Bass is a continuous set of variations – there are no pauses. The main theme - called the ground - is a bass line which repeats throughout the piece. Varying melodies and harmonies which become gradually more complex are played over the ground. There are two types of Baroque dance that are in ground bass form - the chaconne and the passacaglia. They’re quite slow and stately. Pachelbel’s canon is a good example of a canon over a ground bass.
Baroque and classical Melody Patterns

These are some of the more sophisticated ways baroque and classical composers developed their melodies. Look out for them in your listening exam, and try to use some in your compositions.

Melodic Inversion - turning the tune upside down

1. Melodic inversion makes a melody sound very different, but not totally different.
2. You keep the same intervals between the notes, but they’re go in the opposite direction, eg. down instead of up, and up instead of down. Basically you turn the tune on its head.

The first melody goes up an major third from C to E, then up a minor third to G.

In the inversion the melody goes down a major third to A♭, then down a minor third to F.

Retrograde - playing the tune backwards

Playing the notes in reverse order is called retrograde.

If you switch the notes so they’re in reverse order and inverted, you get retrograde inversion.

Sequencing - repeat a pattern, vary the pitch

1. Repeat the pattern of a phrase but start on a different note, higher or lower. This is called a sequence.
2. Rising sequences go up in pitch. Falling sequences go down.

Ostinato - keep one pattern the same, change the rest

1. This is called an ostinato. One pattern is played over and over again.
2. The rest of the piece changes around it.
3. The ostinato doesn’t have to be in the bass line - it can be in the melody or the chord pattern. It can also last for more than one bar.
Another way of livening up a melody that was very popular with the baroque composers was adding in ornaments. Ornaments are fiddly little notes that stand out a bit from the main tune.

A trill is lots of tine quick notes

1. In baroque music the trill usually starts one note above the written notes and then goes quickly back and forth between the written notes and the note you started on.
2. In classical music the trill usually starts on the written notes and goes up to the note above.
3. The second-last note is usually the one below the written note.
4. A sharp, flat or natural sign above the trill symbol tells you if the note to trill to is a sharp, flat or natural.

Here's how you play a trill in Classical Music. The trill lasts the same length of time as the written note.

Appoggiaturas clash with the chord

1. An appoggiatura clashes with the accompanying chord.
2. It's written as a little note, and takes half the value of the following note.
3. The note before it is usually quite a jump away.
4. The note after the appoggiatura is always just above or below. It's called the resolution. The resolution has to be from the accompanying chord.
5. Appoggiaturas usually fall on a strong beat, so the resolution note falls on a weaker beat. Appoggiatura is also called Grace notes. Another type of grace note is the acciaccatura, which looks a bit like an Appoggiatura but has a line through it. Acciaccaturas are played very quickly.

Passing notes link the note before and after

1. A passing note links the note before and after it. The notes before and after have to belong to the accompanying chord.
2. They're usually put on weak beats. When they are on the strong beat they're called accented passing notes.