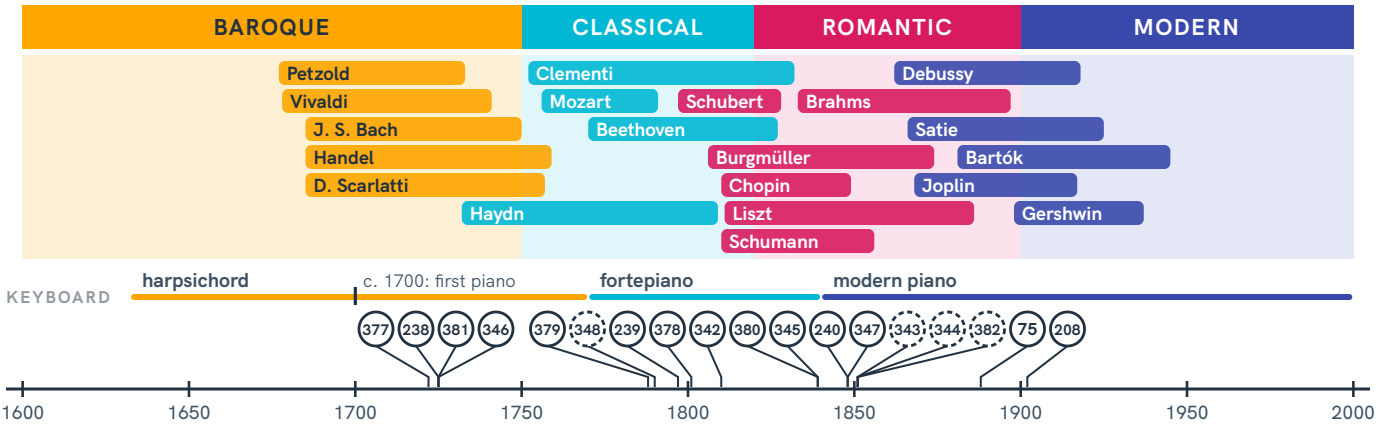
The Periods of Music History

The pieces you play were written across **four hundred years**, on very different instruments. Musicians group them into **periods**, each with its own sound. Knowing a piece's period tells you how to play it: how much pedal, how much freedom, how to shape a phrase.

FOUR HUNDRED YEARS ON ONE LINE



Bars show each composer's lifetime. **Numbered pins** = pieces in this library (handout numbers), placed at the year they were written (dashed: year uncertain). Period dates are approximate: styles change gradually, not on New Year's Day.

WHAT EACH PERIOD SOUNDS LIKE

Baroque

c. 1600–1750

Keyboard: **harpsichord** — strings plucked by quills, so touch cannot make it louder or softer; also organ and clavichord.

- **Counterpoint:** two or more independent melodies at once (polyphonic, Handout 356).
- **Steady, driving rhythm** and lots of ornaments (Handout 54).
- Loud and soft change **in blocks**, not by gradual crescendo.
- **Continuo:** chords played from a figured bass (Handout 388).

PLAY **Bach Prelude in C** 377 · **Minuet in G** 238 · **Minuet in G minor** 381 · **Musette in D** 346

Classical

c. 1750–1820

Keyboard: **fortepiano** — an early piano with leather-covered hammers, about five octaves.

- **One clear melody** over a simple accompaniment (homophonic, Handout 356), like the Alberti bass (Handout 41).
- **Balanced phrases** that ask and answer (Handout 232).
- Crescendos are possible now; forms like the **sonata**.

PLAY **Mozart K. 545** 379 · **Sonatina in G** 348 · **Clementi Sonatina** 239 · **Moonlight Sonata** 378 · **Für Elise** 342

Romantic

c. 1820–1900

Keyboard: **the piano grows up** — iron frames, more keys, a bigger, singing sound.

- **Big feelings**, long singing melodies, rich harmony.
- Lots of **pedal** (Handout 58) and **rubato** — flexible tempo.
- **Character pieces** with titles that tell a story.

PLAY **Chopin Prelude in A** 380 · **Chopin Prelude in E minor** 345 · **Schumann Wild Rider** 240 · **Schumann Happy Farmer** 347 · **Burgmüller Arabesque** 343 · **Burgmüller La Candeur** 344 · **Burgmüller Ballade** 382

Modern

c. 1900–today

Keyboard: the **88-key modern piano**, and later the digital piano.

- **Many styles at once:** Impressionism, ragtime and jazz, film music.
- New sounds: **modes** (Handout 237), pentatonic scales (73), bold dissonance.
- **Rhythm** takes center stage — syncopation and swing (69, 338).

PLAY **Satie Gymnopédie No. 1** 75 · **Joplin The Entertainer** 208

Ahead of its time: Satie wrote his Gymnopédies in 1888, in the middle of the Romantic years, but their calm, plain style points to the 1900s. Beethoven, too, starts Classical and ends Romantic.

Try it **Period detective:** listen to a recording of a piece you don't know. Is there more than one melody at once (Baroque)? A neat tune with tidy phrases (Classical)? Big emotions and lots of pedal (Romantic)? Jazz rhythms or unusual scales (Modern)? Guess the period, then check the composer's dates on the timeline.

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