

## **EXPLANATION 3.7: ORCHESTRAL MUSIC IN THE BAROQUE ERA**

### **3.7.1. THE BAROQUE ORQUESTRA**

In the Baroque era orchestras were not very large as they can be today with dozens of musicians. The orchestra of King Louis XIII had 24 violins and that of Louis XIV was joined by 21 other string instruments. The orchestras depended a lot on the number of musicians available at the time. The more or less fixed orchestra ensemble was made of strings (violins, violas, cellos, double basses), winds (2 flutes, 2 oboes, 1 bassoon and 1 horn, sometimes 2), trumpets and timbales (occasionally both), harpsichord and organ (they made the continuo, either one of them or the other). Sometimes several types of oboes (oboe d'amore, oboe da caccia) were used, and finally, lutes, theorbas, mandolins, and recorders.

The three typical characteristics of the Baroque orchestra are:

- Strings: they were the firm base on which the other instruments already mentioned joined in.
- Continuo: it was played by the harpsichord or organ. The instrumentist had to form chords throughout the work over the bass line. It worked as a filler and to ornament textures.
- Contrasts: they were especially fortes and pianos, but also contrasts of timbres by having brilliant sounds (trumpets and oboes) against a bottom of strings and continuo.

### **3.7.2. CONCERTATO STYLE**

The word "concertato" comes from the Italian "concertare", meaning: reaching an agreement. Thus, the instruments had to come together in a harmonious "ensemble" (group of instruments). In the initial Baroque period there arose a style of playing where the instruments mixed with the voices, and not only did they double the voices (doubling a voice is to play the same notes on an instrument), but they also had individual parts. This was very much used in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Thus, there are concertato madrigals, where the instruments joined in with the voices, sacred concerts (sacred vocal works with instruments), instrumental concerto (a work for various instruments) etc. The idea was to mix instruments and human voices.

### **3.7.3. THE BAROQUE CONCERTO: CONCERTO GROSSO AND SOLO CONCERTO**

There could be two forms of concerto: concerto grosso and solo concerto. The word "grosso" was given to the most numerous group of musicians in the orchestra, as there were two groups of musicians who alternated creating contrasts: the small group, called concertino (small concert) and the larger group, called concerto grosso (large concert). This large group ended up with the name "ripieno" (filling). Concerto grosso is the name that was given to the musical form in which concertino and ripieno alternate. The concertino is a small group of soloists and the ripieno is the bulk of the orchestra, mostly the strings, which works as a filling.

The solo concerto is similar in structure to the concerto grosso but substitutes the concertino for a soloist. In this type of concerto there is, therefore, no concertino, but only one soloist. The works for solo concerto are composed for a solo instrument that often plays passages of great difficulty and where the orchestra (ripieno) is opposed with more sound weight.

### COMPREHENSION TEXT QUESTIONS 3.7

1. **How many instruments did the orchestra of the King of France Louis XIII have?**
2. **On what did the number of instruments of a Baroque orchestra depend?**
3. **How many flutes, oboes and horns did a Baroque orchestra have?**
4. **Name two types of Baroque oboe.**
5. **What instruments formed the basis of the Baroque orchestra?**
6. **What was the name of the instrument that formed chords on a bass line?**
7. **What orchestral contrasts were there?**
8. **What is to “double” a voice?**
9. **What is a sacred work with instruments called?**
10. **What is the main difference between the two groups of instruments of a concerto grosso?**
11. **What name does the small group of instruments of a concerto grosso receive?**
12. **How is a concerto grosso different from a solo concerto?**