CHAPTER11

CHAPTER 11: INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC IN THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

Chapter Outline

Prelude. (CHWM 216–17)

The Baroque era saw the cultivation of new instruments, new roles for instrumental music, new genres, and new styles, as well as more music written for instruments alone. Instrumental composers borrowed many elements from new vocal idioms. The two most prevalent types of instrumental music in the seventeenth century were music for ensembles and music for solo lute or keyboard. This was a golden age of instrument making and composition, for the church organ in Germany, for the harpsichord (clavecin) in France, and for string instruments in Italy.

1. **Types of Instrumental Music (CHWM 217)**There were several broad types of instrumental music in the Baroque era, including variations, [**abstract music**](http://www.wwnorton.com/college/music/concise-history-western-music4/ch/11/outline.aspx), and dance music.
   1. Variations include pieces that vary a given melody (variations or *partita*) or bass line (partita, *chaconne*, and *passacaglia*).
   2. Abstract types of music include: (1) pieces in an improvisatory style for solo keyboard or lute (*toccata*, fantasia, and prelude); (2) fugal works in continuous imitative counterpoint (ricercare, fantasia, *capriccio*, and*fugue*); (3) pieces with contrasting sections (canzona and *sonata*).
   3. Dances were composed as independent pieces or linked together in a *suite*.

Variations (CHWM 217–18) Composers wrote numerous pieces involving variations, sometimes called partite.

1. Chaconne and passacaglia   
   The chaconne and passacaglia consisted of variations over a ground bass, or repeated progression, usually in triple meter.

Abstract Instrumental Works (CHWM 218–22, NAWM 79–81)

1. ***Improvisatory Genres***
   1. Toccata   
      *Toccatas*and other improvisatory pieces were played on harpsichord or organ.
   2. Frescobaldi’s toccatas   
      The toccatas of *Girolamo Frescobaldi*(1583–1643) typically feature several brief sections, each focused on a different figure.  
      **Music: NAWM 79**  
      **Biography: Girolamo Frescobaldi**  
      Frescobaldi was one of the first composers to focus primarily on instrumental music. As organist at St. Peter’s, he composed keyboard works and had many wealthy and prestigious patrons. His music was known across France, Flanders, and Germany even after his death, and he influenced later composers, including J. S. and C. P. E. Bach.
   3. *Fiori musicali*  
      Frescobaldi used toccatas as service music in three organ masses that appear in a collection titled *Fiori musicali*(Musical [**Flowers**](http://www.wwnorton.com/college/music/concise-history-western-music4/ch/11/outline.aspx), 1635).
   4. Johann Jacob Froberger   
      *Johann Jacob Froberger* (1616–1667) studied with Frescobaldi and wrote toccatas that alternate improvisatory passages with sections in imitative counterpoint.
2. ***Continuous Genres***
   1. Riceracare and fugue  
      The seventeenth-century ricercare was a serious work for organ or harpsichord in which one *subject*was continuously developed in imitation. In the early seventeenth century, the term *fugue*described such pieces.**Music: NAWM 80**
   2. Fantasia  
      The keyboard fantasia was on a larger scale and had a more complex formal organization than the ricercare.
   3. English consort fantasias  
      The leading genre for viol consort in England was the imitative fantasia, or fancy, which could treat one or more subjects.
3. ***Sectional Genres***
   1. Sonata   
      In the seventeenth century, *sonata*came to refer to a work for one or two melody instruments with basso continuo. The solo writing was often idiomatic and imitated vocal style.
   2. Ensemble sonatas   
      In Venice, a sonata resembled a canzona, consisting of several sections based on different subjects.
   3. Biagio Marini   
      *Biagio Marini*(1594–1663) worked at St. Mark’s in Venice and held other posts in Italy and Germany. His solo violin sonatas resemble instrumental monody, with many idiomatic gestures. **Music: NAWM 81**

Music for Organ (CHWM 222–25, NAWM 92)

[**Organ music**](http://www.wwnorton.com/college/music/concise-history-western-music4/ch/11/outline.aspx) enjoyed a golden age in the Lutheran areas of Germany between about 1650 and 1750. *Dieterich Buxtehude*(ca.1637–1707) was one of the best-known Lutheran composers of the late seventeenth century.

1. Functions of organ music   
   Most Protestant organ music served as a prelude to a part of the liturgy.
2. Toccatas and preludes   
   Seventeenth-century toccatas were composed of a series of short sections in free style that alternated with longer ones in imitative counterpoint. **Music: NAWM 92**
3. Fugue   
   In the eighteenth century, fugal and nonfugal sections became separate movements, creating a toccata (or prelude) and fugue. A fugue opens with an*exposition,*in which the subject in the tonic is imitated by the *answer*in the dominant. The other voices alternate subject and answer. Some fugues have*episodes*.
4. Chorale compositions   
   Organ compositions based on chorales included *organ chorales, chorale variations*(also called *chorale partite*), and *chorale fantasias*.
5. Chorale prelude   
   Another type of chorale setting is the *chorale prelude,*in which an entire melody is presented just once in a readily recognizable form.

Music for Lute and Harpsichord (CHWM 225–30, NAWM 84–85)

During the seventeenth century, the *clavecin*(French for "harpsichord") displaced the lute as the main solo instrument, and *clavecinists,*such as *Elisabeth-Claude Jacquet de La Guerre*(1665–1729) and *Francois Couperin* (1668–1733, see Chapter 13), marketed their music collections to an amateur public.

1. Agréments   
   Lutenists systematically developed the use of *agréments,*ornaments that became a fundamental element of French music.
2. Style brisé   
   The lute style, often called *style brisé*(broken style), was imitated by harpsichord composers and became an idiomatic part of French harpsichord style.
   1. ***Dance Music***
      1. Lute dances   
         Stylized dances formed the core of the lute and keyboard repertory.
      2. Binary form   
         Most seventeenth-century dances were in *binary form,*a form used for dances and other instrumental genres over the next two centuries.

**Biography: Elisabeth-Claude Jacquet de La Guerre**Jacquet de La Guerre was recognized by her contemporaries as one of the greatest talents of her time. As a child prodigy, she performed at King Louis XIV’s court from the age of five. Best known for her harpsichord pieces and cantatas, she was the first French woman to write a ballet and an opera.

1. Denis Gaultier   
   Typical of the style brisé and *Denis Gaultier*’s (1603–1672) own personal style is his courante *La Coquette virtuose*(The Virtuous Coquette) from *La Rhétorique des dieux*(The Rhetoric of the Gods, ca. 1650). **Music: NAWM 84**
2. Suites   
   French composers grouped dances into *suites.*Typically, a suite began with a prelude, often an *unmeasured prelude,*and continued with dances like the*allemande, courante, sarabande, gigue*, *gavotte,*and *minuet.***Music: NAWM 85**

Ensemble Music (CHWM 231–40, NAWM 91)

Italian composers continued to dominate instrumental chamber music during the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, as they did operas and cantatas.

1. ***Chamber Music: The Sonata***  
   After 1630, the terms sonata and sinfonia were used more and more to designate independent instrumental compositions.
   1. Development of the sonata  
      By the later seventeenth century, the sonata became a multimovement work with contrasts between movements. By about 1660, two main types of sonata had emerged: the *sonata da camera*(or *chamber sonata*), a suite of stylized dances often opening with a prelude, and the *sonata da chiesa*(or*church sonata*), containing mostly abstract movements.
   2. Trio sonatas   
      A *trio sonata*is played by two treble instruments with basso continuo.
   3. Solo and ensemble sonatas  
      Solo sonatas gained in popularity after 1700. Ensemble sonatas featured up to eight instrumental parts with continuo.
2. ***Arcangelo Corelli’s Sonatas***  
   *Arcangelo Corelli*(1653–1713) composed only instrumental music, and his works served as models for later composers.

**In Context: The Violin Workshop of Antonio Stradivari**  
Violin makers in Cremona, Italy, developed their art to a level that has never been surpassed. *Antonio Stradivari*(ca. 1644–1737) was the most prominent member of his renowned family of instrument makers, and today’s leading string players use his instruments. Scientists have been unable to determine what makes these instruments sound superior to others.

* 1. Trio sonatas   
     In his trio sonatas, Corelli treated the two violins alike, focusing on lyricism rather than virtuosity. Typical traits of Corelli’s style include a *walking bass,*chains of suspensions, sequences, and a dialogue between the violins.**Music: NAWM 91**
  2. Church sonatas   
     Corelli’s church sonatas most often include four movements in the pattern slow-fast-slow-fast. They usually consist of a majestic first movement, a fugue, a slow duet in triple meter, and a fast dance.

**Biography: Arcangelo Corelli**   
Corelli studied violin and composition in Bologna. By 1675, he was living in Rome and enjoying the support of rich patrons. He raised performance standards, and his teaching was the foundation of most eighteenth-century schools of violin playing. He composed only instrumental works, and they made him famous across Europe.

* 1. Chamber sonatas   
     Corelli’s chamber sonatas typically begin with a prelude and include two or three dance movements.
  2. Solo sonatas   
     Corelli’s violin sonatas use the same format as his trio sonatas but demand more virtuosity.
  3. Thematic organization   
     In Corelli’s sonatas, movements are based on a single subject stated at the outset and then expanded through sequences, variations, and modulations.
  4. Tonal organization   
     Corelli’s music is tonal, and he used suspensions and sequences to achieve the sense of forward harmonic motion on which tonality depends.

**In Performance: Baroque Ornamentation**  
Ornaments originated in improvisation and were intended to make a performance more expressive. A number of treatises were published in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries to help performers make interpretive decisions. Sometimes, composers published instructions for decoding their symbols. Skilled performers were expected to add even more extensive embellishments when none were indicated. Many treatises, including *The Art of Playing on the Violin*(1751) by *Francesco Geminiani*(1687–1762), have been reprinted for modern performers.

* 1. Influence and reputation   
     Corelli’s sonatas served as models that composers followed for the next half century, and his compositions have become classics.
  2. Music for orchestra   
     In the late seventeenth century, musicians began to distinguish between chamber music, for one player on a part, and orchestral music, for more than one player on a part.

**In Context: Queen Christina of Sweden and Her Circle**  
*Queen Christina of Sweden*(1626–1689) abdicated her throne, settled in Rome in 1655, and became a patron of intellectual life and the arts. Corelli dedicated his first publication to her and later served her as a musician.

* 1. Ensemble music in Germany   
     The ensemble sonata and the instrumental suite were popular in Germany, where musical traditions frequently became part of everyday life. Many cities employed *Stadtpfeifer*(townpipers) and had a *collegium musicum,*a group of amateurs who performed for their own pleasure.