'Baroque' probably comes from the Portuguese word, barocco, meaning an irregularly-shaped pearl or piece of jewellery. It was first used in connection with the highly ornamented style of architecture and art of the 17th century. Later on, musicians came to use the word 'Baroque' to describe the period of musical history from the birth of opera and oratorio to the death of J.S. Bach.

It was during the 17th century that the system of modes finally crumbled away. Composers had grown accustomed to sharpening a note here and flattening a note there, with the result that modes lost their individual characters and came to sound like two modes only - the Ionian and Aeolian. From these grew the major-minor key system upon which harmony was based for the next two centuries.
The 17th century also saw the invention of several new forms and designs, including opera, oratorio, fugue, the suite, sonata and concerto. The violin family replaced the viols. And the orchestra gradually started to take shape, with a strong section of strings as its foundation – though the other sections were as yet not standardised.

All these experiments and changes prepared the musical ground for the two giants of later Baroque music: Bach and Handel.

**The main characteristics of Baroque Music**

- At first, a switch to a lighter, **homophonic** texture: melody supported by simple chords; but **polyphonic** textures soon return.

- The **basso continuo**, or **figured bass**, becomes the foundation for most types of Baroque music – providing a purposeful bass-line, which causes the music to press steadily forward from beginning to end.

- One 'affection' or mood usually persists throughout an entire piece.

- Viols gradually replaced by the violin family; the string section becomes the basis of the Baroque orchestra, always the keyboard continuo (harpsichord or organ) filling out the harmonies above the figured bass and decorating the textures.
By the end of the 17th century, the system of modes is replaced by the major-minor key system.

Main forms used: **binary**, **ternary** (da capo aria), **rondo**, **variations** (including **ground bass**, **chaconne**, **passacaglia**), **ritornello**, **fugue**.


Often, an exuberance in the music: energetic rhythms drive the music forward; melodies were often spun out into long, flowing lines with many **ornaments** (such as **trills**); contrasts (especially in **concertos**) of instrumental timbres, of few instruments against many, and of loud against soft (‘**terraced dynamics**’, sometimes echo effects).
Spotify Baroque List

1. **Jordi Savall – Concerto I, en Fa Majeur, BWV 1046 - I. [Allegro]**
   *Concerto Grosso* featuring *concertino* of violins, oboes and French horns, with Basso Continuo and Strings - listen for *triplets* throughout on the horns.

   *Concerto Grosso* featuring *concertino* of violin, oboe, recorder and trumpet, with Basso Continuo and Strings - listen for trumpet *trill* at 1.16 followed by *sequence* with *imitation* between trumpet and oboe. Very typical of Baroque.

3. **Jordi Savall – Concerto IV, en Sol Majeur, BWV 1049 - I. Allegro**
   *Concerto Grosso* featuring *concertino* of recorders and violin, with Basso Continuo and Strings. 3 beats in a bar. Hemiola at 1.14.

4. **Jordi Savall – Concerto V, en Ré Majeur, BWV 1050 - I. Allegro**
   *Concerto Grosso* featuring *concertino* of violin and flute with Basso Continuo and Strings. Listen for *Suspensions* at 1.19.

5. **Nigel Kennedy – Concerto No. 1 in E major Op. 8 No. 1 RV 269, 'La primavera': I. Allegro**
   *Mordents* prominent at 1.30. Solo violin so *concerto*, not concerto grosso.

6. **Nigel Kennedy – Concerto No. 2 in G minor Op. 8 No. 2 RV 315, 'L'estate': III. Presto**
   *Double stopping* at 0.48.

7. **Nigel Kennedy – Concerto No. 3 in F major Op. 8 No. 3 RV 293, 'L'autumno': I. Allegro**
   *Arpeggios* at 0.58.

8. **Nigel Kennedy – Concerto No. 4 in F minor Op. 8 No. 4 RV 297, 'L'inverno': I. Allegro non molto**
   *Acciaccaturas* prominent at opening, pp – pianissimo at start.

9. **Nigel Kennedy – Concerto No. 4 in F minor Op. 8 No. 4 RV 297, 'L'inverno': II. Largo**
   Excellent example of *cadenza* at opening. 0.22 – *mordents*, *octave leaps* then *pizzicato* accompaniment.

10. **Pachelbel – Canon In D Major** - strict imitation so Canon, and *Ground Bass* accomp. No harpsichord or organ, so no Basso Continuo.

11. **William Christie – Purcell : Dido & Aeneas : Act 3 "When I am laid in earth" [Dido]**
    Aria from Opera featuring *ground bass*. *Soprano soloist.*

12. **Jordi Savall – The Fairy Queen - Act V - Chaconne (Dance For The Chinese Man And Woman)**

13. **La Petite Bande – Fantaisie: II. Chaconne**
Tracks 12 - 16 are chaconnes, originally a dance with 3 beats, now variations over a repeated chord sequence.

Johann Sebastian Bach - Passacaglia And Fugue In C Minor, BWV 582: I. Passacaglia  
Solo organ, like a ground bass but found in the middle or top of the texture.

Johann Sebastian Bach - Passacaglia And Fugue In C Minor, BWV 582: II. Fugue  
Passacaglia is used as subject to the fugue. Note Tierce de Picardie in last section 7.30 on.

Ralph Kirkpatrick - J.S. Bach: Das Wohltemperierte Klavier: Book 1, BWV 846-869 - Fugue in C minor BWV 847  
Exposition features Subject followed by Tonal answer and counter-subject at 8s, then episode at 13s, with stretto at 26s.

Ralph Kirkpatrick - J.S. Bach: Das Wohltemperierte Klavier: Book 1, BWV 846-869 - Fugue in C major BWV 846  
Exposition features Subject followed by Real answer and counter-subject at 7s, with stretto at 57s.

Ralph Kirkpatrick - J.S. Bach: Das Wohltemperierte Klavier: Book 1, BWV 846-869 - Fugue in D major BWV 850  
Exposition features Subject followed by Real answer and counter-subject at 3s, episode featuring sequence at 19s, with stretto at 39s.

Ralph Kirkpatrick - J.S. Bach: Das Wohltemperierte Klavier: Book 1, BWV 846-869 - Fugue in G major BWV 860  
Exposition features Subject followed by Real answer and counter-subject at 9s, episode featuring sequence at 32s.

Handel's Messiah - Chorus: And He Shall Purify the Sons of Levi  
Polyphonic, although not strict fugue, with sopranos followed by basses, then briefly altos and tenors. Excellent example of suspensions sung by altos at 38s. Stretto from 30s to 52s then Homophonic section.

Nikolaus Harnoncourt & Concentus Musicus Wien - Handel : Messiah HWV56 : Part 1 "Behold, a virgin shall conceive" [Mezzo-Soprano]  
Oratorio. Recitative with solo soprano and basso continuo accompaniment, featuring organ and cello.

Nikolaus Harnoncourt & Concentus musicus Wien - Chorus: Glory to God in the highest  
Oratorio. Octave leaps. Homophonic until 49s then stretto like polyphonic section.

National Symphony Orchestra - St. Mathew Passion - Have Mercy, Lord, On Me  
Solo violin and mezzo soprano voice. Minor key. Sequence at 41s.

Dame Janet Baker - Cantata No. 147, 'Herz und Mund und Tat und Leben' BWV147, Part II: Chorale: Jesus bleibet meine Freude (Jesu, joy of
man’s desiring) (choir) Oboe and strings melody, with homophonic S.A.T.B. - short oratorio.

28 Chanticleer - Purcell : The Bell Anthem, "Rejoice in the Lord alway" Z49 Anthem.
Trills and mordents on strings. Descending major scales. Homophonic voices at 2.54 accompanied by cello/organ basso continuo, then solo voices demonstrate imitation.

29 Choir of New College, Oxford - O Lord Rebuke Me Not Stretto like vocal entries. Note counter tenors, not altos at 31s. Anthem

30 Johann Sebastian Bach - Motets - Lobet Den Herrn, Alle Heiden Bwv 230
Unlike rennaisance motets, now accompanied.

31 Johann Sebastian Bach - Mass in B Minor - Kyrie elieson (Coro)
Also now accompanied by strings, oboes. Homophonic voices, then instrumental with sequences and suspensions from 1.39

32 Johann Sebastian Bach - Mass in B Minor - Sanctus (Coro)
Timpani used in larger choral works only. Melismas throughout.

33 Berliner Philharmoniker - J.S. Bach: Suite No.3 in D, BWV 1068 - 2. Air
Pizzicato bass line with octave leaps. Air is simple melody. (Or English Aria for voice.)