The main characteristics of Classical Music

- Lighter, cleaner texture than Baroque, less complicated; mainly homophonic - melody above chordal accompaniment (but counterpoint by no means forgotten).

- An emphasis on grace and beauty of melody and form, proportion and balance, moderation and control; polished and elegant in character with expressiveness and formal structure held in perfect balance.

- More variety and contrast within a piece: of keys, tunes, rhythms and dynamics (now using crescendo and sforzando); frequent changes of mood and timbre.

- Melodies tend to be shorter than those of Baroque, with clear-cut phrases and clearly marked cadences.

- Orchestra increases in size and range; harpsichord continuo falls out of use; woodwind becomes a self-contained section.

- Harpsichord replaced by the piano: early piano music thinnish in texture, often with 'Alberti bass' accompaniment (Haydn and Mozart) but later becoming richer, more sonorous and powerful (Beethoven).

- Importance given to instrumental music - main kinds: sonata, trio, string quartet, symphony, concerto, serenade, and divertimento.
Sonata form the most important design – used to build up the first movement of most large-scale works, but also other movements, and single pieces (such as overtures).

Munich Chamber Orchestra - Viola Concerto In D Major, Op. 1: I. Allegro Stamitz
Solo viola accompanied by orchestra. Simple harmony, small orchestra. Soloist enters at 2.18 with much double stopping. Cadenza at 8.12.

Haydn - Symphony No. 94 In G "Surprise"
Major broken chord, then dominant 7th. Big dynamic range, leading to surprise. Full string section, no soloist. No clarinets yet. Switches to minor at 2.18. Descending scales and sequence at 2.43. Theme and variation form.

City Of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra - The Creation Hob.XXI/2 (English edition by Nicholas Temperley), Part I: 5. And God said, Let the water (Raphael)
Oratorio - recitative then aria next track.

David Thomas - The Creation Hob.XXI/2 (English edition by Nicholas Temperley), Part I: 6. Rolling in foaming billows (Raphael)

String quartet of 2 violins, viola and cello. Yes, that national anthem. Theme and variation again.

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart - Piano Sonata #16 in C Major, K 545 - 1. Allegro
Solo piano Chamber music. Alberti bass, scales, broken chords, trills and arpeggios. Purest classical example.

Heaven's Own Musical Ensemble - Serenade #13 In G, K 525, "Eine Kleine Nachtmusik" - 1. Allegro
Sonata form. Exposition - Major broken chord, then dominant 7th. Ornaments, scales, etc.
Repeat at 1.51. Development section at 3.42, unexpected modulation, then sequence of modulations, leading to trill and recapitulation at 4.21, with coda of perfect cadences at 6.04.

Kveta Novotná – Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart: Rondo alla Turka, Klaviersonate Nr. 11 A-Dur KV 331, 300i
Simple piano piece. Lots of repetition. Major at 0.37. Technical right hand, simple accomp. at 0.48.

Martin Fröst – Clarinet Quintet In A Major, K. 581: I. Allegro
Clarinet and string quartet. Sonata form. Exposition - solo clarinet sequences from 39s, imitated by cello at 52s. Minor section at 1.42. Repeat at 2.42. Development at 5.21. Arpeggios pass down through strings, then through different chords on clarinet. Much imitation. Recapitulation at 6.35. Coda at 12.44.

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart - Symphony No. 40 In G Minor, K. 550: I. Molto Allegro
Small orchestra. Sonata form. Change to major at 0.30. Repeat at 1.54. You find development and recapitulation.

Radovan Vlatkovic – Horn Concerto No. 4 in E flat K495: III. Rondo - Allegro vivace
Theme A keeps returning with contrasting episodes, at 1.08 then at 2.02, and at 3.03, typical of Simple Rondo form.  
Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart – Marriage Of Figaro: Overture. The Great example of Mozart’s writing. Opera overture.  
Petra Lang, Nikolaus Harnoncourt & Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra – Mozart : Le nozze di Figaro : Act 2 "Voi, che sapete che cosa è amor" [Cherubino] Soprano aria - clarinet til 0.12 then oboe then flute, pizzicato accomp. Woodwind often in unison or imitating with voice.  
Nikolaus Harnoncourt – Mozart : Requiem in D minor K626 : I Requiem Notice basson then clarinet on melody, before brass and timps. at 0.34. Choir enters polyphonically at 40s. Mass for dead, hence darker mood, but lighter again at 1.15.  
Beethoven – Symphony No. 5 In C Minor Part 1 Notice solo oboe at recapitulation at 4.30 - rule breaker moving to romanticism. Coda at 6.22, chorded and adenced to death.  
Ludwig van Beethoven – String Quartet No. 13 In B Flat Major, Op. 130: I. Adagio Ma Non Troppo - Allegro Chromatic unison opening. Sudden change of mood at 1.11, then back at 1.24, mood swings throughout. Chamber music becoming more sophisticated.  

‘Classical’ and ‘classic’ both come from the Latin word classicus, meaning a citizen (and, later on, a writer) of the highest class. And so we have come to use these words in connection with anything we consider to be top class, first rate, of lasting value. We count the plays of Shakespeare or the novels of Charles Dickens among the ‘classics’ of literature; and we describe the style of ancient Greece and Rome as ‘classical’ - meaning a style which places an importance on grace and simplicity, beauty of line and shape, balance and proportion, order and control.

As far as music is concerned, the word ‘classical’; may be used in two different ways. People sometimes speak in a very general
way of 'classical music' when they think of all music as being divided into two very broad categories: 'classical' and 'pop'. To a musician, though, 'Classical' with a capital 'C' has a special, very much more precise, meaning. It refers specifically to music composed between 1750 and 1810 - a fairly brief period which includes the music of Haydn and Mozart, and the earlier compositions of Beethoven.

These two dates, 1750 and 1810, should not be applied too strictly however. Baroque style did not make an abrupt change to Classical style. There were signs of change as far back as the 1730's and so Classical style, in fact, began to grow up within the last years of the Baroque period. The Baroque trio sonata began to give way to the Classical sonata; and the Italian overture, found in many Baroque operas, grew into the Classical symphony. While Bach continued to compose in the mainly contrapuntal style of the late Baroque, his sons - though they held great respect for their father's music - favoured a lighter, more homophonic style in their own compositions.

As for a date fixing the close of the Classical period, some might suggest 1827 (the year of the death of Beethoven) while others would offer a much earlier date - for instance, 1800.