

# Tricks Composers Play

The main aim of the resource is to help students understand what “classical” music is all about, so they can come to enjoy playing it or listening to it. It focuses on five composers who were each representative of a different period or style. It helps students to recognise the techniques (“tricks”) these composers use, and how those “tricks” affect the sound and mood of the music.

**Baroque:** the style of J. S. BACH

**Classical:** the style of MOZART

**Early Romantic:** the style of BEETHOVEN

**Late Romantic:** the style of BRAHMS

**Modern:** the style of BARTÓK

**Appendix 1:** development of ideas in Bach’s Invention no. 1

**Appendix 2:** Brahms at the piano

The resource applies elements of music theory and style to music students can study or listen to.

*Usually, Mozart put most notes on top, as in his Sonata K576 below. The fast passage is easy to play on a fortepiano. Because of tricks like rests, two-note slurs, and staccato, it does not sound heavy.*



Any technical terms are explained in language that people of most ages will understand. For example, most students are confused about terms related to texture, so they are explained simply. (Examples are given.)

TEXTURE is how the notes are laid out.

It includes whether the music is in **lines** (contrapuntal) or **chords** (chordal).

Occasionally there are both lines and chords (an important tune accompanied by chords, with a less important tune played at the same time).

**Register** (high, middle or low) and **range** (wide or narrow) are part of texture.

Sometimes the texture includes what we call a **‘pedal’**, a note which is held or repeated. Usually it does not fit all the chords, so we hear unpleasant discords.

The texture may be **‘imitative’** – one part may echo another part.

The music is related the period in which it was written, the keyboard instrument it was written for, similar movements in art and literature, and even historical events (such as the two World Wars).

*Like most Austrians, Mozart and Haydn liked bright, high sounds – often mostly above middle C. Like most Germans, Beethoven liked deep sounds. He had bigger pianos on which he could produce those sounds. Here is the opening of his famous Moonlight Sonata. Where has he hidden the tune?*



*Beethoven wants the sustaining pedal used throughout the movement, so the notes will not be clear, but will create a mood or feeling – just as the English painter Turner created a mood in this mountain scene, in the same year,*

