The Baroque era in music kicked off with the first-ever opera (then called 'dramma per musica') being performed in 1600. It was a work called "Dafne" by Jacopo Peri. The era wrapped up with the death of Baroque music master Johann Sebastian Bach in 1750.

Early on, what set Baroque apart from the Renaissance era was that it added a whole lot of emotion to music. They created a new style called accompanied monody, which was a break away from the complex polyphonic vocal music of the Renaissance. Instead of choirs and lots of singers, there was one soloist and an accompanying instrument. This is where the harpsichord, one of the key instruments of the Baroque era, started to shine (this is the older sibling of the piano, which was created later). The harpsichord was used to play the basso continuo, also known as the figured bass. Meanwhile, the singer would perform the vocal part, full of dramatic, emotion-packed singing and spoken word. This style was mainly used in early Baroque operas and was used by creators like the composers of the Florentine Camerata and Claudio Monteverdi.

As time went on, opera continued to evolve and became one of the most important types of music that used both voice and instruments (there were also other types, like cantatas, oratorios, and passions). But, for the first time in music history, instrumental music started to take center stage.

New types of music popped up, like instrumental concerts featuring a main solo instrument and an accompanying orchestra, the concerto grosso where two groups of instruments would have a musical dialogue, and the sonata, a genre for one (or sometimes two) solo instruments. Technology for making instruments got better, with workshops making violins, violas, lutes. High-born folks were learning to play instruments, dance suites were played by instrumental ensembles at courts, and there was a blossoming of virtuosity in playing. The Baroque period was definitely all about the instruments.

Another major development was the introduction of a new system of harmony - functional harmony. From then on, compositions didn't rely on the modal scale system known since ancient times, but on the major-minor system and variations of the two basic scales (major and minor) along with keys and degrees. This system was developed by music theorist and composer Jean-Philippe Rameau, and it was perfectly illustrated in practice by the most famous Baroque composer - Johann Sebastian Bach. Bach composed 'Das Wohltemperierte Klavier', which is a collection of pieces for each key, created for the harpsichord. This collection contains 48 preludes and fugues and is still a must-learn for any pianist today.

The most important composer of the Baroque era was the aforementioned Johann Sebastian Bach - one of the most significant musical creators of all time. He composed over a thousand pieces, and was a musical genius. He created loads of works for the harpsichord and organ, including the famous Toccata and Fugue in D minor, St. Matthew Passion, Mass in B minor, Brandenburg Concertos and many others.

Another big name from this era was George Frideric Handel, the composer of the oratorio 'Messiah' which has the famous 'Hallelujah' as one of its parts. There was also Antonio Vivaldi - a brilliant violinist, known for his 'Four Seasons' cycle.