

20th and 21st Century

At the end of the Romantic period, composers pushed the boundaries of musical development so far that they eventually “broke” and a common harmonic language no longer existed. Harmonies became more dissonant as **chromaticism** was used to a greater degree. **Impressionist** composers prioritized color and texture. Others invented their own rules of counterpoint and harmony, such as **serialism**. Others, the **neoclassicists**, turned to music from the past for inspiration. Many composers broke away from traditional major and minor scales and used other scales, such as the **whole-tone scale** and **octatonic scale**.

Key Terms

| | | |
|------------------|--|------------------------|
| Impressionism | Serialism | Postmodern Music |
| Expressionism | Musique Concrete | Minimalism |
| Aleatory Music | Primitivism | Neoclassicism |
| Experimentalism | Electronic Music | Spectralism |
| Futurism | Jazz –Influenced Classical Composition | Chromatism |
| Microtonal Music | Intuitive Music | Nonmetric Music |
| Modernism | Atonality | Poly-metric Music |
| Polytonal | Graphic Notation | Multi-metric Music |
| Bitonal | Neo-modal settings | Second Viennese School |

Characteristics

Melody

Melody in music has generally remained traditional throughout the Modern era, but there have been exceptions as some extreme forms of melody have occurred.

- use of unconventional scales
- scales from old church used in a neo-modal setting
- until the twentieth century melody was the most important element in any work of music. Now, its importance is greatly diminished in music having great emphasis on harmony and rhythm, and virtually non-existent in some forms of electronic music with non-tonal sound.

Rhythm

- **New Time Signatures** - Refers to odd time signatures, such as 5/8 and 7/8, are found in modern music.
- **Asymmetrical Grouping** - This is a grouping of notes within a measure to yield new rhythmic effects.
- **Non-metric Music** - For non-metric flexibility, composers omit the bar line, this is limited to solo media.
- **Poly-metric Music** - This is music in which two or more meters are used simultaneously.
- **Multimetric Music** - In this type of music frequent changes of time signature occur almost every measure.

- **Displaced Bar Line** - This is a technique to make the barline seem as if it is misplaced or shifted. To do this, accents are put in recurring patterns to counter the normal accents in the measure.

Harmony

- dissonant harmony
- atonal music
- unpleasant to the ear
- harmony is often unusual or strange
- sometimes it incorporates modality and tonality
- bi-tonal (simultaneous use of two different keys)
- polytonal (simultaneous use of more than two different keys)
- shifting or fluctuating tonalities

Texture

- homophonic textures are present but to a lesser degree and with less importance.
- contrapuntal forms from the Baroque, such as the canon and fugue

Form

- traditional and non-traditional structures

Instruments

- instruments involving magnetic tape, computers, synthesizers, multimedia, and other electro-acoustic, electro-magnetic and electronic devices and techniques.

Music Notation

In the contemporary classical music of the 20th and 21st century, traditional music notation has continued to develop, with the introduction of graphical notation by some modern composers and the use, since the 1980s, of computer-based score writer programs for notating music.

- traditional music notation
- graphic notation
- computer-based scores
- space time notation (abandons symbolic indication of note values and replaces it by the spacing of note heads horizontally on the staff, accompanied by an instruction such as "1 inch = 1 second.")

Compositional Techniques

Modern Classical Music

Music of the 20th century provides a fascinating look at how art responds to local and global events. The variety of musical styles and trends in the 20th century attests to overwhelming influence of technology in a global society.

Notable Composers:

1881 - 1945 Béla Bartók
 1891-1953 Sergei Prokofiev
 1913–1976 Benjamin Britten
 1900 - 1990 Aaron Copland
 1903–1978 Chachaturjan, Aram
 1908–1992 Olivier Messiaen
 1906–1975 Dmitri Shostakovich
 1925 - 2016 Pierre Boulez

Impressionism

Impressionism, in music, a style initiated by French composer **Claude Debussy** at the end of the 19th century. The term, which is somewhat vague in reference to music, was introduced by analogy with contemporaneous French painting; it was disliked by Debussy himself. Elements often termed impressionistic include static harmony, emphasis on instrumental timbres that creates a shimmering interplay of “colours,” melodies that lack directed motion, surface ornamentation that obscures or substitutes for melody, and an avoidance of traditional musical form. The other composer most often associated with Impressionism is **Maurice Ravel**.

Notable Composers

1862 - 1918 Claude Debussy
 1875 - 1937 Maurice Ravel

Expressionism

Expressionism, a stylistic tendency in music, which crested around the time of World War I, and gave voice to the anxieties, inner terrors, and cynicism of human life in the 20th century through emotionally intense, musically complex, and carefully structured works. Conventional techniques were distorted, and “pretty” harmonies were avoided in favour of dissonant, complex ones used with great power. The music is often atonal or distorts traditional tonality. Polyphony is often dense, and melody in the traditional sense is often unrecognizable. Much like impressionism, expressionism is a term that was first used in connection with painting.

Notable Composers

1874 - 1951 Arnold Schönberg
 1883 - 1945 Anton Webern
 1885 - 1935 Alban Berg

Aleatory

Aleatoric music (also aleatory music or chance music; from the Latin word *alea*, meaning "dice") is music in which some element of the composition is left to chance, and/or some primary element of a composed work's realization is left to the determination of its performer(s)

Experimentalism

In the early part of the 20th century, Charles Ives integrated American and European traditions as well as vernacular and church styles, while using innovative techniques in his rhythm,

harmony, and form. His technique included the use of polytonality, polyrhythm, tone clusters, aleatoric elements, and quarter tones. Edgard Varèse wrote highly dissonant pieces that utilized unusual sonorities and futuristic, scientific sounding names. He pioneered the use of new instruments and electronic resources

Notable Composers

1874 – 1954 Charles Ives

1883 – 1965 Edgard Varèse

Futurism

Futurism is an artistic and social movement that originated in Italy in the early 20th century. It emphasized and glorified themes associated with contemporary concepts of the future, including speed, technology, youth and violence, and objects such as the car, the airplane and the industrial city. It was largely an Italian phenomenon, though there were parallel movements in Russia, England and elsewhere. The Futurists practiced in every medium of art, including painting, sculpture, ceramics, graphic design, industrial design, interior design, theatre, film, fashion, textiles, literature, music, architecture and even gastronomy.

Notable Composers

1883 – 1947 Luigi Russolo

Serialism

(The Second Viennese School)

The 12-tone method of composition was created by Arnold Schoenberg during the span from 1920 to 1923. It soon became the leading way to compose atonal music. The idea behind atonality was to do away with the tonal system that had governed virtually all music up to that point. The notes in a tonal piece were organized such that every note was heard in terms of its relation to the key of the piece. In order to write an atonal piece of music, you would have to do it in such a way that no pitch could be heard as the key center of the piece. No tone can be repeated until all eleven others have also been heard. This way, the tones are now interpreted in terms of their relation to each other, and not to any one key tone. This technique makes it impossible for any tone to gain more importance than another. Setting tones to a series of numbers was only the beginning. Serialism later adapted the practice to determine not only the tones, but every other musical aspect as well.

Notable Composers

1874 - 1951 Arnold Schönberg

1883-1945 Anton von Webern

1885 - 1935 Alban Berg

Musique Concrete

Musique concrète (French for "concrete music") is a form of electroacoustic music that utilises acousmatic sound as a compositional resource. The compositional material is not restricted to the inclusion of sounds derived from musical instruments or voices, nor to elements

traditionally thought of as "musical" (melody, harmony, rhythm, metre and so on). The theoretical underpinnings of the aesthetic were developed by Pierre Schaeffer, beginning in the early 1940s.

Notable Composers

1910 – 1995 Pierre Schaeffer

Primitivism

American Primitivism, also known as American Primitive Guitar, is the music genre started by John Fahey in the late 1950s. Fahey composed and recorded avant-garde/neo-classical compositions using traditional country blues fingerpicking techniques, which had previously been used primarily to accompany vocals.

Notable Composers

1882 - 1971 Igor Stravinsky

Electronic Music

Between 1975 and 1990, a shift in the paradigm of computer technology had taken place, making electronic music systems affordable and widely accessible. The personal computer had become an essential component of the electronic musician's equipment, entirely superseding analog synthesizers and fulfilling the traditional functions of the computer in music for composition and scoring, synthesis and sound processing, control over external synthesizers and other performance equipment, and the sampling of audio input.

Notable Composers

1910 – 2002 Oskar Sala

1912 - 1992 John Cage

1928 - 2007 Karl Heinz Stockhausen

1931 – 2008 Mauricio Kagel

Jazz-Influenced Classical Composition

A number of composers combined elements of Jazz with classical compositional styles.

Notable Composers

1868–1917 Joplin Scott

1898 - 1937 George Gershwin

1900 - 1990 Aaron Copland

1918 - 1990 Leonard Bernstein

1900-1950 Kurt Weill

1875 - 1937 Maurice Ravel

Postmodern Music

Postmodern music is not a distinct musical style, but rather refers to music of the postmodern era. Postmodernists question the tight definitions and categories of academic disciplines, which they regard simply as the remnants of modernity.

Minimalism

The main concept behind minimalist composition is the use of a small (or "minimal") amount of musical material. Composers take these musical patterns and repeat them over and over and over and over. They vary these patterns over long stretches of time, often so that the listener cannot readily perceive the changes. For that reason, minimalist music is often said to have a trance-like or hypnotic effect. The minimalist style has also spread into pop music, most notably into "techno" music, where there is a need for dance music that lasts for hours at a time.

Notable Composers

1936 – Steve Reich

1937 - Philip Glass

1947 – John Adams

Neo Classicism

As its name implies, Neo-Classicism was a kind of "new classicism". It combined musical elements from the Classical Period with the newer trends that were emerging early in the twentieth century. These classical elements included tonal centers, clarity of form, and melodic shape.

Notable Composers

1882 - 1971 Igor Stravinsky

1895 - 1963 Paul Hindemith

1891- 1953 Sergei Prokofiev

1883 – 1965 Edgard Varèse

Spectralism

Spectralism is a musical composition practice where compositional decisions are often informed by the analysis of sound spectra.

Notable Composers

1958 - Magnus Lindberg

Chromatism

In the first decade of the 20th century, largely as a result of extreme chromaticism, atonality, or the complete absence of tonality, occurred in the music of a few composers.

Notable Composers

1881 - 1945 Béla Bartók

1872–1915 Alexander Skrjabin

1862 - 1918 Claude Debussy

1882 - 1971 Igor Stravinsky

1895 - 1963 Paul Hindemith

1883 – 1965 Edgar Varèse

Microtonal Music

Microtonal Music is also based on a harmonic concept. In microtonal music, however, the octave has been divided into more than the usual 12 notes, which means that some of the notes, the so-called microtones, sound slightly sharp or flat when compared with the tones of a normal Western scale.

Notable Composers

1928 - 2007 Karl Heinz Stockhausen

Modernism

Many of the key figures of the high modern movement are alive, or only recently deceased, and there is also still an extremely active core of composers, performers, and listeners who continue to advance the ideas and forms of modernism.

Notable Composers

1883 – 1965 Edgar Varèse

1912 - 1992 John Cage

Intuitive Music

Intuitive music is a form of musical improvisation based on instant creation in which fixed principles or rules may or may not have been given. It is a type of process music where instead of a traditional music score, verbal or graphic instructions and ideas are provided to the performers. Intuitive music may appear to be synonymous with free improvisation or with improvised playing within open composition forms, but the collectively intuitive aspect, the emancipation from known music genres and the meditative dimension are especially emphasized by Stockhausen.

Notable Composers

1928 - 2007 Karl Heinz Stockhausen

Atonality

Atonality in its broadest sense describes music that lacks a tonal center, or key. Atonality in this sense usually describes compositions written from about 1908 to the present day where a hierarchy of pitches focusing on a single, central tone is not used, and the notes of the chromatic scale function independently of one another. More narrowly, the term describes music that does not conform to the system of tonal hierarchies that characterized classical European music between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries. 'atonal' generally means only that the piece is in the Western tradition and is not 'tonal'.

Notable Composers

1874 - 1951 Arnold Schönberg

1883 - 1945 Anton Webern

1885 - 1935 Alban Berg