

OVERVIEW OF THE AESTHETIC AND TECHNICAL TRENDS IN THE 20th/21st CENTURIES

(All dates are approximate peak periods of a particular tendency. All previous tendencies may be manifested in individual composers at any given time. We focus on European music, where the tendencies emerged, but the same manifested in the US and Latin America through individual adopters. Composers cited wrote significant choral music.)

19th- century Romanticism ca. 1800-1880

The peak of the system of functional tonality and dialectic forms which consolidated around 1750 and gradually developed two polarizations by 1880

Expansion of functional chromaticism for expressive purposes and formal complexity (Wagner)

Development of instrumental color and textural diversity for sensorial excitement. Experiments in modality (Berlioz, Fauré, Satie)

Early 20th century before World War I

Ultimate expansion of functional tonality and beginnings of its breakdown

Late Romanticism

Gigantic forms, extreme chromaticism, blurring of tonality (Mahler, Strauss, early Schoenberg)

Impressionism

colored and parallel chords, timbral exploration, stratification; sensuousness and immersion, rather than narrative direction; blurring of functionality towards modality (Ravel, Debussy)

First Modernism/First Polarizations (end of WWI ca. 1918-1930)

Second Viennese school

Tonality breaks down; atonality; serialism sonata form and other academic forms (fugue, canons) are maintained

(Mature Schoenberg, Webern)

Post-Impressionism

non-functional harmony explored; new ways to organize tonal centers (extended tertian, axis systems) primitivism and musical nationalism; exploration of folk music stratified textures; beginning emphasis on rhythm and color; non-developmental discourse. (Stravinsky, Bartok, Villa-Lobos)

American Experimentalism

Non-Conventional approaches to Germanic techniques (Ives)

Attempts at synthesis, between the wars, ca. 1922-1945

and trials for an academic lingua franca (1)

Moderate Modernism

Alternatives to serialism through "constructivist" experimentations with tonality; axis systems; quartal systems (Hindemith, Bartok, Chávez)

Neo-Classicism

Review of pre-classical structures, non-developmental, non-emotional, archaisms, pan-diatonicism. (Stravinsky, Les Six, Villa-Lobos)

American Independentists

Invention of tonal, post-Impressionist *American*, and New York musical theater influences (Copland, Barber)

Second Modernism ca. 1945-1970

The Imperative of originality, Extreme Polarizations after World War II

Post-Serialism and Free Serialism

Academic lingua franca (2)
Adaptation of serial concepts to personal styles (Stravinsky, Dallapiccola, Ginastera)
Development of new languages based on nonwestern concepts (Messiaen)

Radical Modernism

Integral serialism and rational notation, ensembles, etc. Influence of electronic music experimentation with performance, (Stockhausen)

Independent Eclectics

Preserving tonality, preserving canonic structures, adopting experimental languages for rhetorical reasons while referring to national genres (Britten, Bernstein)

Third Modernism ca.1960-1980

The breakdown of canonic Western European musical parameters

Eastern European School

Timbral, "sound mass" language, texture and rhythm instead of melody/ harmony, graphic notations, controlled indeterminacy, continued influence of electronic music, (Ligeti, Penderecki, Lutoslawski)

Western Europe

Continued experimentation theatre, performance art, polystylism, revised ensembles (Stockhausen Berio, Schnittke, Kagel)

American Mavericks

Full indeterminacy, visual arts, Buddhism, performance art, non-narrative, "what is music?" (Cage, Feldman, Wolff, early experimental minimalists)

Post-Modernism ca. 1980-present

Is it a prolongation of Modernism or an anti-Modernist movement? Synthesis of diverse traditions, including popular, liturgical, and non-Western languages, in order to regain contact with audiences, and establish a sense of irony, an absence of hegemony, and an atomization of cultures.

Synthesis type 1

Rigor of post-serialism with examination of the deep past and Western or Eastern liturgies. Titntinnabuli, neo-medievalism (Pärt, Lavista)

Synthesis type II

Post-sound mass techniques, sound sensuousness, exploration of traditional genres in Anglican Lutheran and Orthodox liturgies (Macmillan, Sandstrom, Baltic countries)

Synthesis type III

American "maverick" techniques in combination with popular music, Eastern music, so-called "world music", minimalism polystylism, high/low. Dance, video and performance art influence. (Adams, Reich, Monk, Golijov, J.L. Adams, etc.)