

## The Twentieth Century and Beyond

- I. Overall characteristics and trends in twentieth-century music
  - A. *Great diversity of styles and compositional techniques*
  - B. *Underlying harmonic structure on which eighteenth and nineteenth century music was based is challenged: some composers abandon organizational principles governing pitch relationships, others carry on tradition of tonal music, infusing tonal harmony with new sounds*
  - C. *Composers incorporate elements of popular music, jazz, folk music, world music, and music of the past into their compositions*
  - D. *Rhythm and tone color become critical in defining form*
    1. Rhythmic unpredictability, changing meters
    2. Wide range of tone colors, including expanded use of percussion and new instrumental techniques
  - E. *Technology influences musical composition and performance*

## II. Early twentieth century composers move away from functional harmony

### *A. Claude Debussy (1862–1918) develops Impressionism*

1. Avoidance of strong tonal direction, chords used for coloristic effects
2. Rhythms that obscure the beat
3. Pentatonic scale, whole tone scale, and church modes used to avoid major-minor feeling
4. Fleeting, often fragmentary, melodies

### *B. Igor Stravinsky (1882–1971)*

1. Early ballets: *The Firebird*, *Petrushka*, *The Rite of Spring* draw on elements of Russian folklore, *Rite* shocks audiences with its jolting rhythmic accents and clashing harmonies
2. Neoclassic works: return to quieter, more transparent sound, infused with new tonal language
  - a) Ballets: *Pulcinella*, *Apollon Musagètes*
  - b) Opera: *The Rake's Progress*
3. Later works incorporate twelve-tone technique: *Agon*, *Threni*

### *C. Béla Bartók (1881–1945) taps folk music for new tonal language*

1. Infuses tonal music with scales and rhythms borrowed from his native Hungary
2. Representative works: *Music for Strings, Percussion & Celesta*; *String Quartets No. 1–6*, *Mikrokosmos*

III. Twelve-tone technique offers new approach to tonal organization: every tone of chromatic scale is equal in importance

*A. Arnold Schoenberg (1874–1951) publishes first twelve-tone compositions 1923–1925 after intense period of experimentation and study*

1. Composer-created tone row replaces scale: all 12 tones of chromatic scale are present in row, each tone in row is treated equally
2. Representative works: *Suite for Piano, Op. 25, String Quartet No. 3, Variations for Orchestra, Moses and Aaron* (unfinished opera)

*B. Students of Schoenberg write major compositions based on tone rows*

1. Alban Berg (1885–1935) uses tone rows that often give impression of tonal harmony: *Violin Concerto, Wozzeck* (opera)
2. Anton Webern (1883–1945) writes sparse-sounding melodic lines with highly disciplined use of tone row: *String Trio, Op. 20, Variations for Orchestra, Op. 30*

*C. Serialism: principles of twelve-tone writing extended to all musical elements, e.g. rhythm, tone color, dynamics*

1. Olivier Messiaen (1908–1992): *Mode de valeurs et d'intensités*
2. Karlheinz Stockhausen (b. 1928): *Mantra*
3. Pierre Boulez (b. 1925): *Le Marteau sans Maître*

**IV. Composers use taped environmental sounds and electronically generated sounds, often combined with live performances**

*A. Edgar Varèse (1883–1965): Poème électronique*

*B. Stockhausen: Gesang der Jünglinge*

*C. Milton Babbitt (b. 1916): Philomel*

*D. Otto Leuning (1900–1996): Gargoyles for Violin and Synthesized Sound*

**V. Chance music, or aleatory music, allows performer to determine some or all elements of a composition**

*A. John Cage (1912–1992): Imaginary Landscape No. 4, 4'33"*

*B. Witold Lutoslawski (1913–1994): Preludes and Fugue*

**VI. Tonal music continues to be written throughout the twentieth century, incorporating newer compositional techniques**

*A. Ralph Vaughn Williams (1872–1958): Fantasia on a Theme of Thomas Tallis, The Lark Ascending*

*B. Benjamin Britten (1913–1976): Peter Grimes (opera), Serenade for Tenor, Horn, and Strings*

*C. Samuel Barber (1910–1981): Vanessa (opera), Knoxville, Summer, 1915*

*D. Ellen Taaffe Zwilich (b. 1939): Concerto Grosso 1985*

VII. Minimalist composers, influenced by music of Far East, incorporate short, repeated melody patterns over steady beat, rejecting more complex 20<sup>th</sup> century sounds

*A. Philip Glass (b. 1937): Einstein on the Beach (opera),  
Symphony No. 1 "Low"*

*B. John Adams (b. 1947): Nixon in China (opera), Lollapalooza*

## VIII. Developments in society and related arts

- A. Revolution (1917) overturns Russian czarist government*
- B. World War I (1914–1918) devastates Europe*
- C. World War II (1939–1945) devastates Europe and much of Asia; many European composers and musicologists emigrate to the United States*
- D. United States gains in world influence, Europe no longer center of cultural life*
- E. Huge technological and scientific advances change everyday life*
- F. Recording and film industry develop, affording employment for composers and performers, other composers gravitate to university teaching as chief means of support*
- G. Women gain greater presence in all aspects of professional life, including music: women composers and conductors become prominent*
- H. Visual arts move to non-representational mode, wide range of styles and experimentation throughout the century: Pablo Picasso, Georges Braque, Wassily Kandinsky, Andy Warhol, Helen Frankenthaler, Lee Krassner, Jackson Pollock*
- I. Novels, nonfiction, and poetry all flourish: T.S. Eliot, Toni Morrison, Norman Mailer, Truman Capote, Franz Kafka, Virginia Wolfe, George Orwell, Alexander Solzhenitsyn, Robert Lowell, Robert Frost, Langston Hughes*