

How music changed in the 20th century music essay



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The Romantic Period (1800-1910) saw music evolve from the formats, genres and musical ideas established in preceding periods such and went further in expressing different forms of art with music. However, the 20th century saw the rise of great composers such as Arnold Schoenberg, Charles Ives and Igor Stravinsky whose contributions to the world of music brought dynamic changes. In the twentieth century music was no longer constrained to opera-houses, clubs, and concerts and this freedom brought experimentation with new styles of music that went against the conventional music practices.

Discussed below are the contributions of the aforementioned composers and their influence on 20th century music.

Arnold Schoenberg

Schoenberg, an Austrian born composer is widely celebrated for the developments that he brought into the musical arena. His music from his early years was filled with rich harmonies that evolved from the innovative style of Richard Wagner's operas. He is also credited with extending the works of Brahms. By 1913, Schoenberg was exploring a new musical <https://assignbuster.com/how-music-changed-in-the-20th-century-music-essay/>

language. This had started in 1908, with his string quartet whose first two movements were written in a complex tonal style -the central organizing principle of western music in that period. However, with the third and fourth movements Schoenberg bid goodbye the world of tonality. As such, he pioneered an innovation in atonality which became the most polemical characteristic of twentieth century art music. In the 1920s, he developed the twelve tone technique (dodecaphony) which is a widely influential compositional method of manipulating an ordered series of all twelve notes in the chromatic scale. He also coined the term “ developing variation” and was the first composer to discover new ways of developing motifs without resorting to tonality. With this discovery, he worked at enabling the texture of his music become simpler and much clearer. The twelve-tone technique in effect provided control over the melodic and harmonic aspects of a composition. Schoenberg’s dodecaphony eventually became one of the integral and polemical issues among European and American musicians until late twentieth century. To date, composers have been extending his legacy in increasingly radical directions.

Charles Ives

Ives, one of the first American composers of international renown combined the American church music with European art music and was among the first composers to engage in a systematic program of experimental music with musical techniques like polytonality, polyrhythm, and tone clusters among others. He was an accomplished pianist and many of his publications had piano parts that were similar to modern movements in Europe, including bitonality and pantonality. He is best known for his orchestral music and he

composed two string quartets and other works of chamber music. Ives' music possessed a number of unique features. He applied unconventional approaches to rhythm and harmony away from the salon styles of the nineteenth century that were dependent on European models. He wanted a music that reflected his view of America: rugged, individualistic, and unafraid to experiment. His music contains a mixture of hard-hedged dissonance and quotations from his favorite hymn tunes. Ives' compositional career came to an end in 1918 when he succumbed to health complications. Over the duration of time that he had been actively composing, he managed to create a body of work that was unique and ahead of his time. His works were not celebrated as much during his early days but later on in his life his music began to be taken seriously. In 1947, he received the Pulitzer Prize for his Third Symphony and since then, his works became an integral part of the classical repertoire and he has been recognized for being a fine composer.

Igor Stravinsky

This Russian-born composer, pianist and conductor is widely acclaimed as one of the most important and influential composers of 20th century music.

Stravinsky's compositional career was notable for its stylistic diversity.

Unlike Arnold Schoenberg who abandoned the world of tonality, he sought to retain tonality by advancing it to its very limits. Stravinsky first achieved international renown with three ballets: The Firebird, Petrushka and The Rite of Spring. The Rite was based upon harsh dissonance, motor rhythms and ambiguous harmonies that drove tonality to its brink. It transformed the way in which subsequent composers thought about rhythmic structure, and was responsible for his enduring reputation as a musical revolutionary, extending

the boundaries of musical design. After this Russian phase, Stravinsky joined the Orthodox Church in 1926 and turned to neoclassicism. During this period, his works made use of traditional music forms (concerto grosso, fugue, and symphony) and were all striking in their austerity and experimental tonality. For this neoclassical style, he abandoned the large orchestras required by the ballets and only used wind instruments, the piano and choral and chamber works. In 1952, Stravinsky began using serial compositional styles, including dodecaphony, the twelve-tone technique originally designed by Schoenberg.

Stravinsky earned the title of one of music's truly epochal innovators because of his technical innovations and the 'changing face' of his compositional style while still maintaining identity. He drew his inspiration from different cultures, languages and literatures therefore his influence on composers to date is considerable. Apart from his distinctive use of rhythm, he continued to compose pieces which elaborated on individual pieces by earlier composers. He was also a wonderful conductor of his own and other people's music and led hundreds of concerts worldwide.

In different ways, Igor Stravinsky rewrote music history. His brilliant, demanding orchestral scores carved the path for the superstar conductor. Years later, his works continue to play a dominant role in the programming of symphony orchestras, ballet companies and increasingly, major opera houses.

Conclusion

Each of the composers discussed above have in their own way greatly influenced the musical circles. Their works and innovation continue to inspire new talent and form the basis of research and expansion of the breath of knowledge as pertains to composition