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Twentieth Century Music: An Introduction

Music has been defined as the language soul. It is considered as the most important art form since the singer is directly expressing his or her emotions through the lyrics that he or she sings. The twentieth century brought many changes not only in the field of technology but also in the music industry due to the inventions such as electricity, compact disks, computers, synthesizers and amplifiers. As we move on to this paper, I will show you the humble beginnings of the twentieth century music. The earliest record of the twentieth century music came from the latter part of the Romantic period in Europe. Because the people by that time were looking for something unique, composers created various styles in order to make their music a one great masterpiece. Also, the trend of music during this period is focused mainly on the individualism, dreams and character. There are two styles that prevailed greatly during that time, the first is the Impressionism while the other is Expressionism. Impressionism to begin with is a painting technique which portrays an illusion of light and the creation of paintings with bright colors. One

famous composer incorporated this theme into his music and that is Claude Debussy. He is a

French composer noted for his playful and magical compositions. He used the principle of

Impressionism to create an aura of 'atmosphere' and refinement. His music tend to have a

delicacy to project a sound similar to the moonlight, waterfalls, fireworks and air. A rather hazy

and dream like tones which tends to 'impress' the hearers. This music also when heard paints a

vivid picture of the scene that is trying to project by this music. One such example are his two

works: The Engulfed Cathedral which he based on an old Breton legend of a cursed cathedral

buried deep into the ocean, and the Prelude to an Afternoon of a Faun. In contrast to this style is

the Expressionism. This is a psychological approach to music wherein singers and composers use

irregular beats and exaggerated tonal variations. Expressionist used irritating sounds and

distorted syncopation in order to produce music also for them to express what they truly feel.

Hence the name came from the word, 'express.' This music conveys anguish, sorrow and tension

suffering and horror. They believed that all people are irrational, rebellious and at the same time

coward. Mainly they get this idea since all parts of the world is in turmoil and everybody is

unstable of their feelings. So in order for them to release their tension, expressionists put their

emotions to the music they make. Arnold Schoenberg became known using this style and one

example of his great musical scores is, The Sick Moon from Pierrot Lunaire.

However during the years 1910 and 1911, two compositions were published and regarded

which literally means 'an old born to become new.' He combined themes of Impressionism and

Expressionism and balanced it in order to produce music that is haunting yet expressive. From the

early 1950's he formatted his works according to Bach's cantatas and Beethoven's classical works

along with the musicians from the Baroque and Early Romantic Period. In 1952, he changed his

emerged from the African-American communities. In New Orleans, the Jazz music was born due

in a place that is called the 'Congo Square' the place wherein the Black music was expressed. The

Jazz music uses a soft and mellow tones which had a saxophone accompaniment. Improvisation

or creating the music as it is being performed is the important element of Jazz. The known Jazz players are Buddy Bolden, Louis Armstrong who first used a trumpet and James Johnson.

Also by the year 1950's to the mid 1990's rock music prevailed the world. Rock n' Roll, a phrase

popularized by the DJ Allan Freed became the tagline of Elvis Presley who reigned as the King of Rock n' Roll. This style is no longer used for dancing but on the music as well. This style was highly influenced by British groups such as The Beatles who are considered as the most famous and successful band in the world. Their music alone sold over 1.3 million albums worldwide. Their first single, Love Me Do, was only a minor hit in the British Music Chart. However, in the year

1963, the group released their second single bearing the title Please, Please Me which has a

repetitive quality. Following that year, was the number two hit, From Me to You and She Loves

**You were released making it memorable with its refrain, “
Yeah, yeah, yeah.” As the time goes by,**

many different genres are created by various people depending on the age bracket they belong to.

**Older people tend to listen to the ‘ Oldies’ or the ‘ mellow
music’ while the new generation wants**

a much higher and upbeat rhythmic patterns of notes. The Pop and the Rock music which is

produced by the usage of electrical instruments became in demand on the teens. Other genres

including RnB and acoustic are made by combining the elements found in the old and rock, and

acapella musical varieties. Indeed, the 20th century didn’t only brought changes to the man’s

technology but also the way we prefer our music. It won’t be impossible if another musical creation

will emerge on this era wherein technology is everywhere and with the addition of social media

and the advancement of the internet the future of the music industry won’t be put into vain.

part of our humanity. All of us have a different musical genre that we listen to, other people prefer

mellow while some prefer the pop style and rock however these is not really important to consider.

Music, no matter how each of them differs from one another, it is made to express oneself to the

public, simply because it mirrors our emotions and the tone of voice in which

how the song is sung

adds up to the quality of expressing what we truly feel within.

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