

Music in world war one music essay



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Classical music is undisputedly a vast notion usually connected with the traditions of Western art, spiritual and also concert music, encompassing a large period from roughly 1000 to the present day. Classical music developed as a separate movement in the period between 1550 and 1900 especially at that time all the worked out theories were widely transformed into practice. The main goals of this paper are to write about the style of classical music during World War I, and the affect of the World War on classical music.

Evaluating the notion of classical music the first that comes to my mind is the names of the Classic Mohicans. It is truly impossible to imagine classical music without Beethoven's symphonies. His genius is confided in his symphonies and piano concerts, and in reality Beethoven's music represents a so-called catalogue for everyone who loves classics.

Beethoven personalized the stand that music was “ a direct outpouring of a composer's personality, his individual triumphs and tragedies.”

It should be noted that Joseph Haydn is often considered to be the “ father of classical music.” The works of the composer served as a strong base for the other classical works. His work during this era forms the basis of influence for others who wrote classical music. Surprisingly, but he was not as much popular as Beethoven or Mozart despite Haydn was a progenitor of the classical music. “ The Surprise symphony” is recognized one of the most prominent works in the world.

The development of the classical music in the prewar period is rather eloquent as there took place different styles and genres that had a serious impact on modern music.

Starting with the Baroque époque, it covers the period 1600-1750, declaration of moods and emotions appeared to be the central idea used in music. Feelings and emotions were imparted through tonality and strict melodic organization. The Middle Ages brought a reevaluation of goods in the minds of composers and merging into the clerical practice gave birth to new evaluation of musical objective and functions. Music was entirely the vassal of religion. According to Busoni (1957), we see that especially for the Church servants in the Middle Ages, music was recognized good only on condition that it “ would open the mind to Christian teachings and disposes the soul to holy thoughts.” Addressing to Baroque époque, most philosophers and musicians were captured by the idea that there was a cosmic relationship between mathematics – science – music.

We must express gratitude to Pythagoras’ discovery of the “ The Harmonic Series” or overtone series – numerical relationship between musical interval and string length. Resuming on the Baroque period it is worth to mention such outstanding musicians as Bach, Vivaldi especially remembered for The Four Seasons. His investment in the development of classical music refers to enriching the German classical music with contrapuntal technique. He generalized the achievements of musical art in the Baroque epoch.

The composers of Baroque music were alarmed by reproduction of human emotions (namely passions and devotion) and tried to convey it with the help

of music tonality. They wrote music that was close to imitate the emotions. And they succeeded in expressing the unique emotional mood through musical means.

The Enlightenment period brought its affection for “ natural law” and “ practical morality” over fantastic religion and metaphysics. This was a major shift towards music and arts connection. At that period of time music has its main purpose to inspire simplicity and elude the complication of contrapuntal devices.

Romanticism style in music was marked by suggestion, metaphor, ambiguity, allusion and symbol and as a consequence appeared instrumental music, which was escaped by the early Church. It could be noted that the discreet, flourishing world of instrumental music corresponds to the concealed non-substantial world. The credo of Schopenhauer, as the main representative of romantic epoch, concerning music was that “ the very image and incarnation of the innermost reality of the world, the immediate expression of the universal feelings and impulses of life in concrete, definite form.”

The tempo of life during the second decade of the 20-th century was becoming faster and faster. The technological progress expressed by the automobile and plane transportation was not striking news. Popular music went step by step with this speed development, forming new musical trends such as jazz and swing. Despite this fact, people were still very naïve and simple.

But by the end of the decade that simplicity and naivety was lost as the nation found itself engaged in the World War 1. Evaluating the level of popular music, it is pleasant to mark that popular music was in its “golden age”. That was a period when the best and the most fruitful ideas were put into practice. It may seem strange but World War 1 only supported its great creativity and vitality. Some people prove that namely music finally helped to win the war. The fact how music helped people to survive and to cope with horrors of war is of especially great importance. By May 1915, when a great number of American civilians lost their lives the war tension started to be strongly reflected in music. The first songs about war appeared to be quite romantic and full of antiwar feelings, “Don’t Take My Darling Boy Away” by Helen Clark & Joseph A. Phillips and some others “Fido Is A Hot Dog Now”, “Missouri Waltz”, “Rebecca Of Sunny-Brook Farm”, “St. Louis Blues”. Chas. K. Harris composed “When Angels Weep” in which the lyrics makes everyone to think that we are brothers and that it is necessary for us to pray for peace. During that time American nation was divided into two classes: those who supported neutrality and those who insisted on mutual assistance. By 1915, more songs about war appeared. Frank Hudson composed a song “I Didn’t Raise My Boy to Be A Soldier with his song, I Tried To Raise My Boy To Be A Hero” but still the music motives remained neutral.

By 1916, most Americans came out in support of war and infused Congress to declare the war.

The greatest hits were still “neutral” songs and brought some the greatest hits such as “Nola, What Do You Want To Make Those Eyes At Me For, Have A Heart (Jerome Kern) and Poor Butterfly.”

By the April 1917, when America finally declared the war, the nation was fully engaged in it as well. Fuld and Lichtenwanger (1966) stated that composers started to invent music primarily related to war and the role of America in it. The music industry was running at full blast and we can observe the notes of patriotism in these short musical messages. Leo. Feist was one publisher that focused a great deal of attention on the role of music in the war, even declared that “ Music Will Win the War”. The central idea of his article is “ A Nation that sings can never be beaten.” And definitely those words are reasonable.

During that time American songs started to widespread all over the world. Songs worked as a motive power of soldier’s spirit. According to Albright (2004), it became obvious that the only thing that had a chance to inspire soldiers for victory was a kind, catchy melody. Later, the musical direction shifted to the appeal of population to join in the war and to help its countrymen. Joseph W. Stern, a famous music publisher, usually printed slogans and patriotic ideas on covers, for instance “ Food will win the war, Don’t waste it!” Another Stern’s contribution was that he divided World war music into 6 categories, such as: ballad type, cheer-up type, stirring march type, comic type, appealing for support type, victory type. Whether music influenced the war outcome or not will remain a rhetoric question, but without any doubt the war had an enduring effect on music.

Right after the First World War and after the experienced gamut of the emotions, many composers came back to past centuries achievements in search of inspiration and composed their works implementing the outgoing elements (it concerns structure, melodic tonality and form) from that works.

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The new trend claimed of itself. The name of this trend was – neoclassicism. The main representatives of neoclassicism are Igor Stravinsky (famous for his “ Pulcinella and Symphony of Psalms”), Sergei Prokofiev (for “ Classical Symphony”), Ravel (for “ Le Tombeau de Couperin”) and Hindemith (for “ Mathis der Maler”).

Neoclassicism was a new formed 20-th century trend, running in the period between the two World Wars. Musicians mostly returned to aesthetic concepts associated with “ classicism”, namely order, balance, clarity, economy, and emotional restraint.

Neoclassicism can be called a reaction against emotional outbreaks and realized lack of form. The main point of neoclassical trend was oriented on rhythm, harmonic tonality and centrality on absolutist tendencies in music which worked as a complete antithesis to romanticism period.

By its thematic organization, neoclassical music works recalled the early classical music trends. Neoclassical music developed in two directions: German and French. The brightest representative of French neoclassicism was Igor Stravinsky. He is widely known for his ballet “ Pulcinella”.

Addressing to German neoclassicism, the outstanding role belongs to Paul Hindemith. This composer worked in the development of chamber music, orchestration and contrapuntal operas.

Neoclassicism was quite popular in America and found its supporters there. It was the school of Nadia Boulanger that proclaimed the ideas about music based on her understanding of Stravinsky’s music.

To crown it all together, classical music has overpassed great changes during the World War 1. There formed new trends in music such as patriotic, marching, victory and others which gave people the hope and support in the most challenging moments. The World War music left a remarkable imprint in the history of many nations.