**FPA140**

**Research Paper**

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This research paper will discuss two pieces of music after the year 1900 that I have listened to in this course. The first piece of music that I will analyze is the one that appeals to me – Igor Stravinsky’s L’Histoire du soldat. The second piece of music that I will discuss is the one that relatively does not appeal to me in my personal opinion – György Ligeti’s Nouvelles, which is also a great piece of music. In the following sections of the paper, I will analyze these two compositions in detail and discuss the reasons for my personal opinion regarding the two compositions.

**Igor Stravinsky (1882-1971): L’Histoire du soldat (1918).**

Among the compositions that I have listened to, my favourite composition is L’Histoire du soldat that is composed by Igor Stravinsky in 1918. Igor Fedorovitch Stravinsky, a Western music modernist, is a Russian composer, pianist and conductor who composed a number of theatre music and ballet music. L’Histoire du soldat is composed in Switzerland, it is a theatre music with a story created based on Russian folktales “The Runaway Soldier and the Devil” (Porter, n.d.). This stage is premiered in Lausanne in Switzerland in September 28, 1918, and it is well-reputed. I like this composition for the following three reasons.

First, because of the effect of Stravinsky’s teacher – Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov, Stravinsky’s composition contains components of impressionism. I personally like composition which shows impressionism because it sounds lively and rich in content. Seven instruments are used in the composition. The layer is thick in this composition. The combination of instruments in L’Histoire du soldat contrasts well, and the contrast shows an irony characteristic. Stravinsky chooses a set of instruments with high pitch to contrast with a set of instruments with low pitch. For example, the use of the violin and the double bass, the contrast of clarinet and bassoon and the combination of cornet and trombone. The arrangement of the instruments in the composition really appeals to me. Because of the contrast, the timbre and texture of all the instruments used in the composition are clear and transparent, there is a strong sense of rhythm, and a clear hierarchy of layer is shown in this piece of music. I was brought into the scene of this theatre music, and a lively and interesting stage effect is created. In addition to the instruments’ playing, L’Histoire du soldat contains monologue of the soldier. The addition of the monologue add color to the composition. In the recording of the composition, the language used is French. Although I do not understand the meaning of the monologue, but I could feel the atmosphere and emotions revealed in it. I have listened the English version of this composition in YouTube. That version sounds not as accord as the French version. The addition of the monologue is lively and natural. It does not feel deliberate. Instead, it feels really accordant with the whole composition.

In addition, the composition contains a strong sense of rhythm. (Stravinsky: L’Histoire du soldat, 2015)This is because Stravinsky combines and recomposes many famous dance music in this composition, such as Spanish Tango, March and Waltz dance music, the gypsy melodies, Lutheran chorus melodies, etc. I feel L’Histoire du soldat weird when I first listened to this composition. However, after listening to it for several times, the rhythm and melody attracts me. Personally, the rhythm of the composition really appeals to me. It is strong and short, which reveals the air of a military man. With respect of tonality, this is a tonal composition. Different with atonal music that does not depict images when I listen to it, atonal music is lively, sensual and attractive to audience.

Finally, same with many boys, I have a “soldier dream” since I was a child. I wish I could be a soldier and protect my country. Therefore, I was very excited when I heard this composition for the first time. The composition contains the sound of soldier, army and war, which is very attractive to me. After some online research, I found the composition describing a story of a soldier – a trade between a soldier and an evil, which is very imaginative. The composition illustrates the story well, and I feel different listening to it after knowing the background information of this composition.

This is my favourite composition. I like how the instruments are combined and cooperated in the composition and what the composition describes as a story. Texture is rich and colorful. The composition creates a mocking atmosphere, which is very distinctive in style. Overall, this is a contagious composition with rich and lively texture and rhythm.

**György Ligeti (1923-2005): [Nouvelles Aventures](https://login.proxy.lib.sfu.ca/login?qurl=https://search.alexanderstreet.com/view/work/182042" \o "" \t ") (1965).**

The composition that does not appeal to me is György Ligeti’s Nouvelles Aventures in 1965. György Ligeti, a Hungarian composer, is one of the most famous Avant-grade composers. He developed “block music” technique in his composition “Atmospheres” in 1961. This marks a progress in modern music techniques. In terms of this composition, Ligeti uses a number of innovative musical forms, and he devotes the emotions to this piece of music as we could feel through listening to it. This is a composition that worth listening. However, from my personal perspective of musical compositions, I do not like this composition because of the following two reasons.

First, the composition contains sound of speaking, singing and chorus. In this 12-minute composition, the main performers are singers, supplemented by the flute, the trumpet, the piano, the cello and the timpani. The chorus is the main components of the composition. In my opinion, extensive use of chorus can not highlight the timbre of the instruments. Using the instruments as accompany does not express the different timbres of each instruments, which makes the composition less melodic, makes the texture chaotic, and makes the form not varying and single. If the structure of houses is a metaphor for the structure of the composition, then this composition is an uncompleted and distorted building. Compared with the combination of instruments used in this composition, I enjoy listening to the sound produced by different instruments. For example, in L’Histoire du soldat, the use of instruments makes the composition lively, and the form of the composition is clear, varying and complete. In addition, Nouvelles Aventures is atonal. It does not contain melody or regular rhythm. In this composition, weird sounds are created. For example, at around 4’20’’ of the composition, a sound of tearing newspaper is produced; at around 10’50’’ of the composition, a sound of breaking glass is produced. In my perspective, these sounds discord with other sounds in the composition, and I do not understand why these sounds are used in it. Overall, the composition does not appeal to be because of its texture, form and atonality.

Second, due to the chaotic and terrifying sound. I feel really uncomfortable after listening to the composition. The sound of the composition mainly includes singer’s shout, yowl, cry and other weird sounds such as people’s speaking in a very low volume and the breath sounds of dogs. It sounds like mimicking devils’ emotion – sometimes angry, sometimes happy, sometimes sad, but overall thrilling to me. The composition sounds stressful and creates a terrifying atmosphere. Listening to this composition is a torment to me. I personally do not like this composition because I do not understand the meaning of composing this piece of music. Nouvelles Aventures is a chamber music. The composer innovates and challenges music by incorporating sound and tone of speaking in the compositions.

Both Igor Stravinsky and György Ligeti are great composers in the twentieth century, and both compositions worth listening. Each composer has their different compositional style. From my detailed analysis for this research paper, I understand these two compositions better, including the background of the compositions, the background of the composers and the emotions that the composers have when writing these pieces of music. There are good and bad components in each of these two composition. Relatively, I like Igor Stravinsky’s compositional style better. The rhythm, form, a sense of varying layer all attracts me, and the composition express the emotions of the composition to me.

# References

Porter, A. (n.d.). *Stravinsky - L’Histoire du Soldat*. Retrieved from The Boston Conservatory: https://www.bostonconservatory.edu/percdb/stravinsky-l%E2%80%99histoire-du-soldat

*Stravinsky: L’Histoire du soldat*. (2015, January ). Retrieved from San Feancisco Symphony: https://www.sfsymphony.org/Watch-Listen-Learn/Read-Program-Notes/Program-Notes/STRAVINSKY-L%E2%80%99HISTOIRE-DU-SOLDAT.aspx