

MUSC361: Music in Western Culture After 1900

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Unit 1

Understanding Modernism

- **Aesthetics:** What does modernism sound like?
 - Dissolution of tonality
 - Dissolution of rhythm/meter
 - Dissolution of traditional forms/genres
 - New (a)tonalities/rhythms/forms
- **Ideology:** What are modernism values or beliefs?
 - Art should be difficult, should challenge audience with something radical
 - Art should be new (new languages, constantly reinventing/evolving music, disrupting past musical conventions)
 - Art should respond to society (critical of current events e.g. wars, social movements).
- **Limits:** Do these examples fit into our definition of modernism
 - Modernism is an exclusionary discourse (narrow mindset e.g. jazz wasn't included in modernism)
 - * Often anti-popular music
 - * Often anti-“conservative” music (didn't like composers who focused on old style of music)
 - Modernism is a racialized and gendered discourse (usually focused on only white men)
- **Interdisciplinary:** aesthetics, ideology, and limits affect art in other fields (e.g. visual art). Also modernist arts are collaborating across disciplines (different fields influencing other fields)
 - Visual art focused on abstraction and criticizing society/modern issues
 - Modernism writing comments on society/modern issues
 - **Gesamtkunstwerk** – Collaboration across disciplines

Introduction to Arnold Schoenberg

- Personal crisis/psychological exploration: Gerstl affair/death
- Idea of Expressionism: modernist artistic movement in the early 20th century
 - Outer world mimics psychological turmoil
 - “Art belongs to the unconscious”
- Interdisciplinary (influenced by Stefan George's poetry and his symbolism/expressionism)
- Historical justification
- Vocal writing: Sprechstimme – speech-song
- Instrumentation: compact chamber ensemble – instead of Wagnerian orchestra
 - Each song rotates instruments
- Harmony: early (free) atonality – still experimenting with atonal music writing
 - Rising minor 3rd, descending major 3rd theme
 - passacaglia: repeated baseline
 - roots his modernism/atonality in history
 - * “Emancipation of dissonance”

Wassily Kandinsky

Thought that creation of art as an “internal necessity”. Focused on abstract art, specifically geometry. *Concerning the Spiritual in Art*

- Extremely disliked realism and materialism
- Thought the general audience is not smart enough to understand his art

Mahler

“A symphony must be like the world. It must embrace everything”

Common themes between symphonies

- Big philosophical themes – death, love, etc
- Maximalism – maximize every element of the symphonic orchestra (more instruments, longer symphonies, more movements)
- Eclecticism – referencing other works (music and literary)
- Programmatic – autobiographic/self-referential
- Post-Beethoven symphonies – split between
 - Wagner/Liszt: New German School: (*Gesamtkunstwerk*) music based on symphonic poems/dramas (program music)
 - Brahms: absolute/stand-alone music (instrumental/abstract symphonies)
 - Mahler: brings the 2 worlds above together, bringing operatic ideas into symphonies

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WW1 Affect on Schoenberg’s Music

- After WWI, artists reject expressionism, violence, nationalism. Instead *Neute Sachlichkeit* (New Objectivity) rises: turn away emotion and turns towards structure
- 19th century Nationalism explodes into violence
- Schoenberg goes 12-tone; he became exhausted from the expressionist style

Second Viennese School: Schoenberg, Berg, Webern

Society for Private Musical Performances (exclusive club – no booing or clapping, only neutral responses)

Nationalism

Johann Gottfried von Herder *Treatise on the Origin of Language*, describes a nation defined by language, beliefs, etc
Institutions

Wozzeck

Alban Berg’s reaction to WWI, representing the common soldier in WWI

Freud psychoanalysis exploration in art

Clip 1

- Musical jarring. Too much is going on in the world but ordinary person wants to just live his life

Clip 2

- Losing grasp of meaning of life (drunk).

Clip 3

- Gas mask on child

Quiz

What are the tenets of Neue Sachlichkeit

Discuss 2 hallmarks of Mahler's Cine-phonic Universe

Why did Schoenberg turn towards atonal music

Compare music

Unit 2

Rite of Spring (Stravinsky)

Moving to world of Stravinsky (Paris)

Rite of Spring was poorly received at its premier (audience expected a ballet). Main goal of the piece was to depict ancient cultures in Russia, and based on old folklore and folk songs

- “The Augurs of Spring”: 2 major chords (half step apart) played together to create clashing dissonance
 - Modernist dissonance and *polytonality*
 - Steady pulse but shifting accents (Modernist *rhythm*)
 - Large post-Wagner orchestra
 - Percussive strings (and entire orchestra)
 - Unusual use of winds and brass
- The Ballet
 - *Ballet Russes*: Ballet company from France that performed an interpretation of Russian works. Focused on Russian folklore
 - Look at slides for names of people that worked on *Rite of Spring* Ballet
 - *Rite of Spring* ballet goes against main teaching of ballet
 - * Weight rather than lightness (note that the dance moves themselves were extremely difficult)
 - * **Primitivism**: deliberate crude and modernist representation of ancient culture
 - * Ballet highlights that the music is a **ritual**, not a **story**
 - * Previous ballets were sexualized (provocative clothing), *Rite of Spring* isn't sexualized
 - * Important to note that this was a interdisciplinary work (dance and music). However, because of the loud protest in the premiere, the audience only saw the dance.