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Stravinsky and Neoclassicism

After the First World War, much of the nationalistic tendencies that were widespread among composers and greatly inspired Romantic music were shattered and the musical world was left to find a new music. Igor Stravinsky responded to this massive change by shifting his musical style completely and writing his pieces that are now known to be part of the Neoclassical era. Stravinsky's pieces of this time throw out the expressive and experimental aspects of Romanticism and borrow from the traditions of the Baroque and Classical eras. Burkholder explains that Stravinsky's *Symphony of Psalms* combines the orchestra with a chorus that sings texts from a Latin Bible, calling back the old tradition of the Church. He avoids using instruments that he deems too expressive, like the violin, to create a sound palette with emphasis on what he calls objectivity. Among other Baroque features, Stravinsky often makes use of ostinatos, a trademark of his that is shown in pieces like *Rite of Spring* before Neoclassicism. To modify the old traditions of the eighteenth century, he makes use of abnormal chord structures, new scales, and neotonicity. The first chord of the first movement is an E minor chord with unusual spacing between the notes, making it one of the most recognizable chords in music. He uses the octatonic scale, creating dissonances that would not be present in Classical or Baroque music. The E minor triad frequently appears elsewhere in the piece and is established as the tonal center. This assertion of tonality is neotonicity, which is one of Stravinsky's many ways of altering Classical and Baroque ideas to create a piece exemplary of Neoclassicism.