

Area of Study 2

Changing directions in western classical music from 1900

Introduction

- Since the Baroque period, harmony had been progressing and became more and more complex
- In the late Romantic period, composers such as Wagner, Bruckner and Strauss used more chromatic notes and dissonant chords

Impressionism

- In France, composers such as Debussy were part of a new way of thinking called impressionism
- This word first applied to a school of French painting
- It's chief representative was Claude Monet
- Impressionism tried to either give a glimpse/impression of something- not a concrete view
- Impressionism didn't seek to express deeply felt emotions, but it evoked a mood/atmosphere
- The tonality was not so defined and it did not have a definite 'key centre'

Expressionism

- Expressionism represented inner experience and was a rebellion against established order and accepted forms
 - Real objects in a distorted representation
 - Artists reflecting feelings about themselves and their surroundings
- Artists (notably Kandinsky and Munch) created vivid pictures, distorting colour and shape to express their innermost emotions
- In the same way, composers put intense emotional expression into their music
- Expressionist music avoided cadence, repetition, sequence and balanced phrases
- It had constantly changing textures, extremes of dynamics and used harmonic and melodic distortion and dissonance for effect

Serialism

- In the 1920s, Arnold Schönberg made up a completely different way of composing called serialism
- There are 3 main composers of serialism:
 - Arnold Schönberg
 - Alban Berg
 - Anton Webern
- Schönberg treated all 12 notes of the chromatic scale as equal to each other
- The basis of each composition is a row/series consisting of the 12 tones of the octave in an order which the composer chooses
- The tones of the series may be used successively (a melody) and simultaneously (as a harmony/counterpoint), in any octave and with any desired rhythm
- The row may not only be used in its 'prime' form, but in retrograde (backwards), inversion (upside down), and retrograde inversion (backwards and upside down)
- The notes may appear singly or in combination (chords), but they must appear in the correct order and no notes may be used again until all the others have been used once
- Notes can appear in any octave- this is part of the effect

Minimalism

- Minimalism became popular in the USA in the 1960s (after the experimental movement)
- It started out as a reaction against serialism
- Many minimalist composers wrote in the serialist style. However, they find that this method of composing didn't allow them to express themselves
- There are 3 main principles of minimalism
 - **Drone**- a sustained sound
 - **Phasing**- when 2 or more versions of a sound or musical motif are playing simultaneously but slightly out of synchronisation
 - **Repetition**- the restatement of a section
- The main composers of minimalism are:
 - Steve Reich

- Philip Glass
- Terry Riley
- La Monte Young