



The Contemporary Period

(1900 to present)

Composers of the Contemporary (or Modern) Period sought to break many of the rules used by previous composers. This period encompasses a wide range of styles.

Characteristics of the Contemporary period:

Contemporary music often uses more dissonance (clashing harmonies) and rhythmic complexity than previous style periods. Composers often mix elements from different musical styles to create a unique sound. As technology developed, many composers experimented with using electronic instruments to create music.

Popular Instruments:

Anything goes! Digital piano, electric guitar, and synthesized instruments all began to be used during this period.

Popular Styles of Music:

There are many categories of contemporary music to explore! Here are a few: impressionism, neo-classicism, jazz, serialism, electronic music, minimalism.

Famous Composers:

Claude Debussy, Maurice Ravel, Lili Boulanger, Bela Bartok, George Gershwin, Duke Ellington, William Grant Still, Arnold Schoenberg, Igor Stravinsky, Samuel Barber, Sergei Prokofiev, Aaron Copland, Florence Price, Philip Glass, Jennifer Higdon, Tan Dun, Chen Yi.

Famous Contemporary Pieces You Might Recognize:

“Clair de Lune” (Debussy)

“Rhapsody in Blue” (Gershwin)

“Hoe-down” from *Rodeo* (Copland)

“Adagio for Strings” (Barber)