

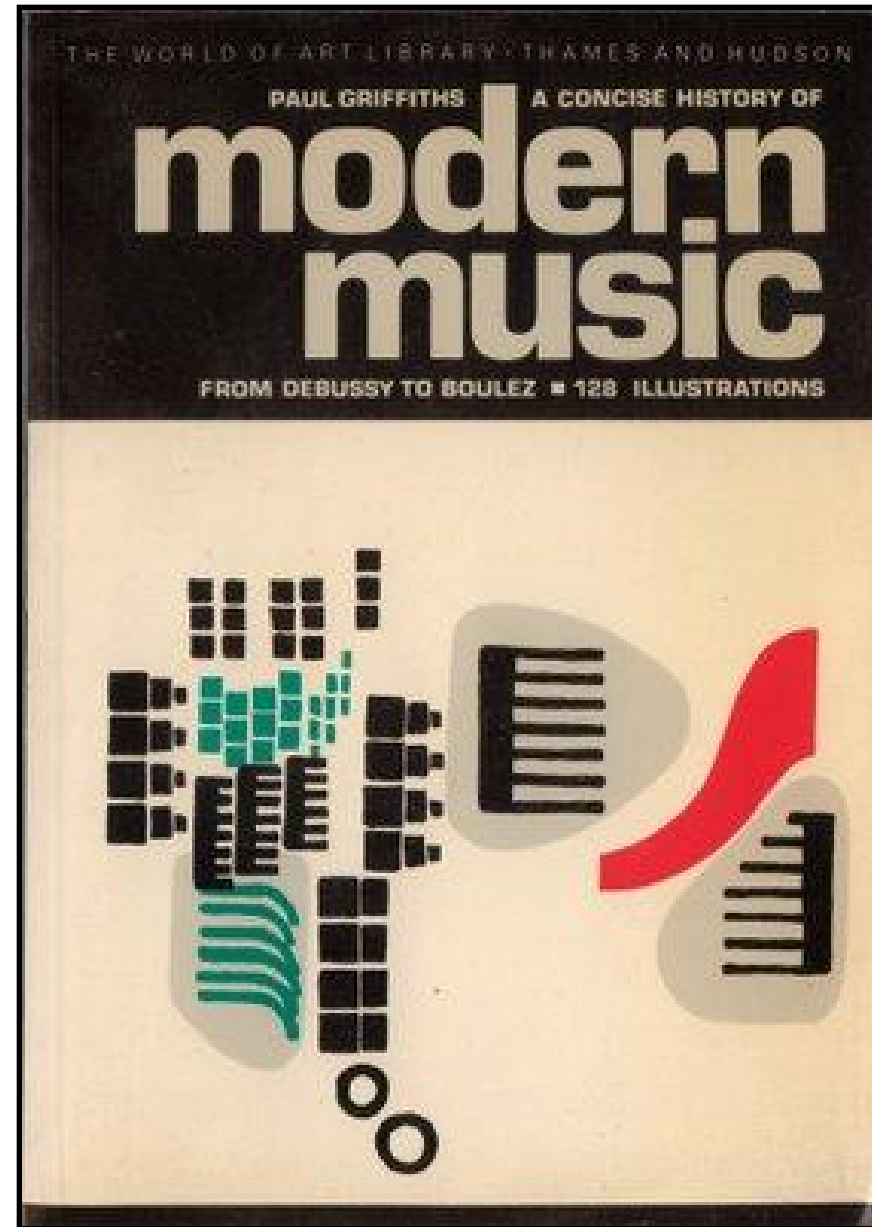
The Modern Period of Musical History

**The Modern Period
of Western Musical History
took place from approximately
1900 to 1960.**

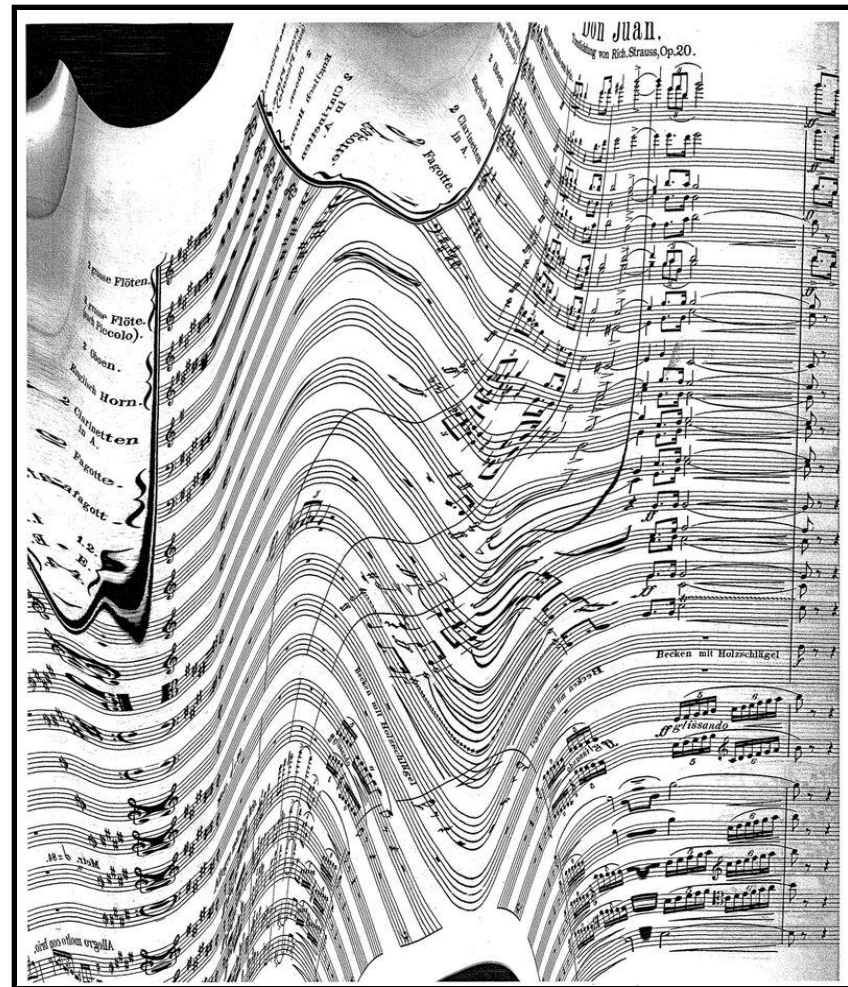
**Some music historians consider
the Modern Era to have ended in
approximately 1930, followed by the advent
of a “Post-Modern” era. Other historians
place this transition in the 1950s or 1960s.**

Like many aspects of modern culture, modern music has evolved in many different directions.

In general, the most common element among the various types of what can be called Modern Music is the element of experimentation.



The Modern Era
of music evolved
from the
**late Romantic and
Impressionist periods** as
a result of the
experimental efforts of
such composers as
**Claude Debussy, Maurice
Ravel and Richard
Strauss.**



This copy of the first page of the score of Richard Strauss' famous orchestral tone poem Don Juan, (1889) distorted by a printer malfunction, is regarded by some as a kind of modern art.

While some composers in the Modern era of music continued to use the traditional harmonies that were developed during the Romantic period, many other Modern composers experimented with new and unusual harmonies.

Some of these composers, such as the American composer **Aaron Copland, the French composer **Francis Poulenc**, the German composer **Paul Hindemith** and the Russian composer **Igor Stravinsky** developed their own unique **harmonic vocabularies** that make their music highly recognizable.**

Please listen to the musical examples on the upcoming slides.

American composer

Aaron Copland (1900-1990)

Aaron Copland was
known as the
“Dean of American Composers.”

Some of his orchestral works,
such as
“Variations On A Shaker Melody”
and “Fanfare For The Common
Man” are so well-known that
they have become part of
American culture.



Example: Lincoln Portrait (excerpt)

Musical Example 1

Aaron Copland: **Lincoln Portrait** (excerpt)

performed by the

Seattle Symphony Orchestra

Gerard Schwartz, conductor

James Earl Jones, narrator

[Click to Open Musical Example 1](#)

To open the video in a new window, press and hold the Shift Key when you click the above link. When you finish viewing, close the new window to return to the slide presentation.

French composer

Francis Poulenc (1899-1963)

Francis Poulenc is one of the best-known French composers of the Modern period. He is known for composing operas, choral music, piano music and chamber music, especially a number of sonatas for various string, woodwind and brass instruments with piano.



Example: Clarinet Sonata (excerpt) 3'05"

Musical Example 2

Francis Poulenc: **Clarinet Sonata**

3rd Movement, *Allegro con fuoco* (excerpt)

performed by

Michael Collins, clarinet

Julien Quentin, piano

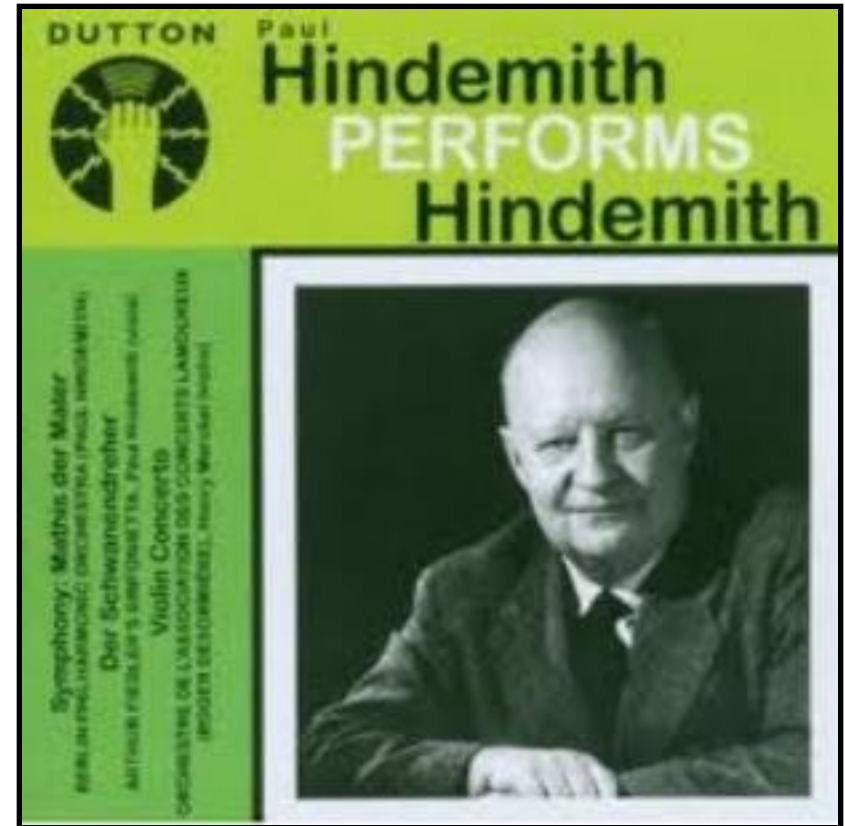
[Click to Open Musical Example 2](#)

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German composer

Paul Hindemith (1895-1963)

German-born composer Paul Hindemith is considered one of the most influential composers of the Modern period of musical history. He emigrated to the United States in 1940 to escape the Nazi regime. He composed orchestral music, operas and, like Poulenc, many sonatas for string, woodwind & brass instruments with piano.



Examples: Clarinet Sonata; Symphonic Metamorphoses

Musical Example 3

Pauk Hindemith: **Clarinet Sonata**

1st Movement, *Mäßig bewegt*

performed by

David Shifrin, clarinet

William Doppmann, piano

[Click to Open Musical Example 3](#)

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Russian composer

Igor Stravinsky (1882-1971)

Igor Stravinsky is widely considered the most influential composer of the Modern period. His score for the ballet *The Rite of Spring* is one of the greatest works for orchestra ever composed. It created a musical revolution in when it was first performed in Paris in 1913. In the nearly 100 years since then, it has gained in reputation as a work of tremendous significance in the history of music.



The Rite of Spring (beginning)

Musical Example 4 (ballet)

Igor Stravinsky: **The Rite of Spring** (excerpt)

performed by the

Orchestra of the National Theatre Prague

Allan Lewis, conductor

Robert Joffrey, choreographer

Vaslav Nijinski, choreographer

[Click to Open Musical Example 4](#)

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A small group of composers in the first half of the 20th century developed an entirely new system of melody and harmony that was based on mathematical and logical relationships among the 12 tones of the chromatic scale.

This school of composition, centered in Vienna is called “12 Tone” composition technique or “Serialism.”

Serialism & Atonality

In music, Serialism is a 20th-century technique of composition that uses mathematical values instead of traditional music theory to create melody and harmony. The result is a kind of music that is not in a particular key (or “**tonality**”) and this is known as “**atonality.**”

Serialism began primarily with the Austrian composer **Arnold Schönberg** and his contemporaries, **Anton Webern** and **Alban Berg**.

Serialism & Atonality

Because music composed using Serial technique is so different sounding than practically any other kind of music that came before, it never developed a large audience other than very highly educated musicians.

Most people who listen to Serial music for the first time find it harsh, dissonant and generally unpleasant as compared with the work of more accessible composers of the Modern period such as Aaron Copland. As a result, very few composers continued to use the Serial technique beyond the 1950s.

Still, Serialism is an important trend in Modern music and is worth listening to and knowing about.

Serialism & Atonality

Arnold Schönberg (Austrian; 1874-1951)

Arnold Schönberg is known as the founder of Serialism in music. Please watch this short video about Schönberg and his music.



**Here are two of Schönberg's disciples
who became famous composers:**



Anton Webern

Austrian; 1883-1944



Alban Berg

Austrian; 1885-1935

Serialism & Atonality

Please watch the following short, amusing video on Serialism (2'03")

Then, on the following slide, listen to a performance by the great American jazz pianist **Bill Evans** (1929-1980) in which Evans performs a work of his own composition entitled **“T.T.T.”** (“Twelve Tone Tune”) from 1971. In this piece, Evans used 12-tone serial technique to create a work that is highly accessible to most listeners.

Musical Example 5

Humorous Video on Serialism

Anton Webern: **Variations for Piano** (excerpt)
performed by
Glenn Gould, conductor

Click to Open Musical Example 5

To open the video in a new window, press and hold the Shift Key when you click the above link. When you finish viewing, close the new window to return to the slide presentation.

Musical Example 6

Bill Evans: **Twelve Tone Tune**

performed by

Bill Evans, pianist

Click to Open Musical Example 6

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Other Trends In Modern Music

- **Expressionism (includes Serialism)**
- **Neo-Classicism (“neo” means “new”)**
- **Neo-Romanticism**
- **Neo-Baroque**

Other Trends In Modern Music

Expressionism

Expressionism was developed as an avant-garde style before the First World War. The style extended to a wide range of the arts, including painting, literature, theatre, dance, film, architecture and music.

One of the primary aims of Expressionist music was to express emotional anguish.

Other Trends In Modern Music

Expressionism

Example (next slide):

Arnold Schönberg
Second String Quartet (excerpt)
“I feel the air of other planets...”
(with soprano solo)

Musical Example 7

Schoenberg: String Quartet No. 2
4th Movement: "Entrückung"

performed by
LaSalle String Quartet
with
Margaret Price, soprano

[Click to Open Musical Example 7](#)

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Other Trends In Modern Music

Neo-Classicism

Neoclassicism in music was a 20th-century trend, particularly current in the period between the two World Wars, in which composers sought to return to aesthetic precepts associated with the broadly defined concept of “classicism,” namely: order, balance, clarity, economy and emotional restraint.

Other Trends In Modern Music

Neo-Classicism

Neoclassicism was a reaction against the unrestrained emotionalism and perceived formlessness of late Romanticism, as well as a "call to order" after the musical experiments of the first two decades of the 20th century.

Example: Sergei Prokofieff

“Classical” Symphony – 4th movement

Musical Example 8

Sergei Prokofiev: Symphony No. 1 in D
("Classical Symphony") **Finale: *Molto Vivace***

performed by the

The Chamber Orchestra of Belgium

Benjamin Haemhouts, conductor

[Click to Open Musical Example 8](#)

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