

HISTORY OF WESTERN MUSIC

Written music is one of the greatest gift Europe gave mankind. The use of staff to write music developed in Europe. Western music history has been divided into periods as shown below:

1. Medieval period (800-1400)
2. Renaissance period (1400-1600)
3. Baroque period (1600-1750)
4. Classical period (1750-1820)
5. Romantic period (1820-1900)
6. Modern period (1900 till date)

Medieval period (800-1400)

This period is characterized by simple human music making for the purpose of socialization, rituals, and self-expression. Many of the music of this period was unwritten. Music tied to traditions were very common. Church music began to gain ground as well. Music making became more organized. Several persons began to developed patterns, methods and approaches to creating good music.

Renaissance period (1400-1600)

This period witnessed the rise of church music. Composers such as Giovanni Da Palestrina was one of the greatest composers of this period. Polyphony, staff notation, and instruments were developed during this period. This period laid the foundation for several future musical advancements.

Composers prominent in this period were:

1. Giovanni Da Palestrina (1525-1594)
2. William Byrd (1543-1623)

Baroque period (1600-1750)

The music of this period further developed the creativity of the Renaissance period. Tonality, homophony, chamber music, musical instruments, opera and oratorio was firmly established as basic features of this period. In 1741, George Frederick Handel composed *Messiah*, an Oratorio in 24 days.

Composers prominent in this period were:

1. George Frederick Handel (1685-1759)
2. Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750)
3. Antonio Vivaldi (1676-1741)

Classical period (1750-1820)

During this period, the symphony orchestra, sonata, sonata form and concerto were standardized. Instrumental music was prominent. Piano was invented during this period in 1709 by Bartholomeo Cristofori. The world greatest prodigy who lived in this period was Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart.

Composers prominent in this period were:

1. Franz Joseph Haydn (1732-1809)
2. Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791)
3. Ludwig Van Beethoven (1770-1828)

Romantic period (1820-1900)

Art songs, piano music and chromatic manipulations were major features of this period. Composers began to move away from strict adherence to tonality. Composers prominent in this period were:

1. Frederick Chopin (1810-1849)
2. Johannes Brahms (1833-1897)
3. Felix Mendelssohn (1809-1847)
4. Robert Schumann (1810-1856)
5. Richard Wagner (1813-1883)

Modern period (1900 till date)

Features of this period include impressionism, atonality, polytonality, expressionism, bitonality, twelve-tone serialism etc. Composers prominent in this period were:

1. Arnold Schoenberg (1874-1951)
2. Richard Strauss (1864-1949)
3. Jean Julius Sibelius (1865-1957)