

INTRODUCTION TO IMPRESSIONIST MUSIC

WHAT IS MUSICAL IMPRESSIONISM?

Impressionist movement in music was a movement in European classical music, which roughly spanned between the late 19th century to the middle of the 20th century. Musical impressionism focuses on a suggestion and an atmosphere rather than a strong emotion or the depiction of a story. Impressionism occurred as a reaction to Romantic music. Impressionism is usually connected to the term sensualism.

ELEMENTS OF IMPRESSIONIST MUSIC

Impressionist music tended to make more use of dissonance, uncommon scales such as the whole-tone scale, shorter forms were favoured, and long, uncommon chords. Timbre was also used in regards to texture and the feeling of ambiguity and uncertainty. Instrumental changes were also noted, not only in the exploration of interesting timbres of each individual instrument, but also the use of rarely applied registers and the differences in instruments used in orchestration. Titles used also help listeners to trigger of a wide range of emotions connected to the music.

USE OF DYNAMICS

The use of dynamics provided emotions and expressions that were not previously known in prior periods. It strongly influenced the shaping of new sound effects. Dynamics were used in unusual ways, such as the variety of hues of piano (p, pp, ppp, etc.), leading to sensual experiences.