

## **AN INTRODUCTION TO 20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY MUSIC: PART 2**

### **MUSICAL PERIOD DEFINITIONS**

#### **INTRODUCTION TO MUSICAL PERIODS**

In regard to music, it is generally classified in several distinct eras, or periods. These periods start with that of the Middle Ages and progresses through to that of 20<sup>th</sup> Century Music. In Music History Textbooks, music of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century is not split (such as that of first & second half). The reasons for this:

1. Some composers are turning away from this musical style, including the concepts and respective applications, including that of music technology
2. Other composers are taking these concepts & respective applications and pushing forward, essentially trying to push the boundaries of this style even further

As a result, composers are divided. Each 20<sup>th</sup> Century composer will choose his/her own musical path. As a result, music in this period will vary widely between the different composers. Because this music varies so widely, I will not be able to cover it all. Instead, I will focus on a few selected concepts and their applications. “Extending the Definition of Music – 1” is a brief introduction to the following 4 documents for this intent and purpose.

In regard to the Definitions below, I have set it up as a chart format. On the left side is the Period name, the middle is the (rough) time period to which each occurs, and on the right side is the definition itself. I have included three footnotes for additional ease of understanding the dates that are given.

## DEFINITIONS

<b>MUSICAL PERIOD</b>	<b>DATES<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>DEFINITION</b>
Middle Ages	500-1400 <sup>2</sup>	This musical period generally starts with the fall of the Western Roman Empire and ends in the early fifteenth century. Music theory and notation practices were born, shaping Western music into norms which composers would then use.
Renaissance	1400-1600	Musical period which focused on humanism – connecting music with words to create an expressive goal
Baroque	1600-1760	Musical period that focused on the range of human emotions or affections
Classical/Classicism	1730-1820	Musical period which sought to emulate the ideals of the Classical antiquity and especially those of Classical Greece
Romantic/Romanticism	1780-1910	Musical period that focused on Romantic elements and Romantic expression, using lyricism to allow the music to sing
Impressionist/Impressionism	1890-1925	A musical period which started in France as a reaction, led by Claude Debussy, against the emotional exuberance and epic themes of German Romanticism shown by Richard Wagner
Neoclassicism	1900-Present	Returning to previous centuries and writing works that draw elements from these musical periods
Modernism	1890-1975	A period of music which started as a reaction to late 19 <sup>th</sup> Century Romanticism and was characterized by a desire for or belief in progress and a complete rejection of music of the common practice period
Post-Modernism	1930-Present	A reaction to modernism or a response to a deep-seated shift in societal attitude
Surrealism	1920-1950	A cultural movement that began in the early 1920's, in which its members regard their work as an expression of the philosophical movement. This movement spread across the globe and into every area, including fine arts, political thought and practice, philosophy and social theory.
Twentieth Century	1900-2000 <sup>3</sup>	Music which takes both Modernism and Post-Modernism a step further.

<sup>1</sup> The dates of these periods will often overlap. I have tried to give them as concise as I can, using Wikipedia as a main source, but also taking into account my own knowledge of music theory studies.

<sup>2</sup> There are actually 3 distinct parts of the Middle Ages period. I have not separated them for ease of understanding this chart.

<sup>3</sup> Although one could technically use the year 1900 as the start of the Twentieth Century music period, I would instead, use the start of World War 1 as it's true beginning. This being said, Bartok and Stravinsky, as well as other composers, wrote works between 1900-1914.