

HISTORY OF MUSIC

History of music covers the various musical practices from the past times till present times. Music is as old as man. Traces of musical practices exist as far as the early man. Music has gone through various stages throughout music history. Various cultures exhibit their own musical practices based on their cultural values, beliefs and traditions. History of music covers the various practices and stages music has gone through in various cultures. It involves various musical instruments and their various forms.

How music started

Sound is a part of nature. We hear sound all around us. Thunderstorm, sea waves, sound of the rain, sound of rushing wind, etc. are sounds we hear from our surrounding. Human beings also use sound to express himself through talking, laughing, shouting, crying etc. With time, human began to expand the use of the human voice from speech to imitation of animal sound and then to singing simple melodies. Human beings developed certain religious beliefs which introduced practices of worship into his life. He soon began to use music as part of his worship life. Archeological finding shown the drawings of early man's musical instruments in caves where he lived. Impressions showing dances and singing were also found. Evidence of ancient music making practices have been discovered in Africa, Asia, Europe, Australia and other continents. Notable among ancient musical traditions are that of places like China, Japan, India, Africa, Greece, Rome etc.

He came up with so many incantations and music that were close to speech. Hi melodies developed further as time went on. He also began to use music to express his feelings towards his fellow man. He expressed his sadness as well as happiness through music. During group work, music was very useful. They composed work songs that kept them energized. They also found out that music was a very useful element in communal events and celebrations.

As time went on, repertory of music for various events, moods and situations were developed. Man came to see music as an inseparable part of his existence. Various musical styles have been developed over the centuries.

Musical instruments were also invented as either solo instruments or to accompany music. Simple clappers, flutes, drums, stringed instruments etc. were made for music making.

Early forms of music

Egypt, the cradle of human civilization developed a lot of music styles used both as entertainment and the worship of deities. Other Africans practiced music that was highly rhythmic in nature. Their music was tied to the functions of cultural practices. Greece also developed an organized musical system. They had musical modes (Greek modes) upon which their music was based. They used lyres, harps and several simple instruments in carrying out their musical activities. Their modes were linked with their gods according to the emotions it evokes. Greek drama developed to a very high standard as well as the music used to accompany it. Music played a very vital role in the development of Greek drama. Rome conquered Greece and borrowed a lot of their cultures. Hence They also used modes and was influenced by ancient Greek drama. This led to forms such as opera later on. As time went on, the Romans and other Europeans devised simple ways of writing down musical sounds.

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. Claude Debussy (1862-1918)
2. Arnold Schoenberg (1874-1951)
3. Richard Strauss (1864-1949)
4. Jean Julius Sibelius (1865-1957)

Summary

Music is as old as man himself. It developed in the course of human civilization. \Starting from the Egyptians, Greeks, Romans, Africans and other parts of the world, music has evolved to the point that today, we have written music. History of European music is divided into Medieval, Renaissance, Baroque, Classical, Romantic and modern period. Each of these periods have notable composers who contributed immensely to its development.

Review Questions

1. Explain how music started
2. Give a brief account of the early forms of music
3. List and briefly explain the periods of music history
4. Give one composer from each period of music history