

EXPERIMENTAL MUSIC OVERVIEW

Mr. Kanozik Guest Presentation for Art History Oct 16th 2014

Experimental music is a compositional tradition that arose in the mid-20th century, particularly in North America, of music composed in such a way that its outcome is unforeseeable. The American composer John Cage is seen as one of the more notable composers associated with this music. Include below are elements of experimental music with notable examples.

Before John Cage

- **Twelve-tone music** is a method of musical composition devised by Austrian composer Arnold Schoenberg (1874–1951). The technique is a means of ensuring that all 12 notes of the chromatic scale are sounded as often as one another in a piece of music while preventing the emphasis of any one note.
- **Extended techniques** are instrumental or vocal performance techniques that step outside (often far outside) conventional performance techniques
 - Cluster Chords found in Henry Cowell's (John Cage's instructor) "Tides of Manaunaun"
 - Other examples include multiphonics / flutter tonging / sprechstimme / other irregular ways of playing an instrument / etc.
- **Noise or "Organized Sound"** coined by Edgar Varese "the father of electronic music"
 - Edgar Varese "Poeme Electronique"
- **Graphic notation** is the representation of music through the use of visual symbols outside the realm of traditional music notation. Graphic notation evolved in the 1950s, and it is often used in combination with traditional music notation.
 - Cornelius Cardew "Treatise"

<http://www.blockmuseum.northwestern.edu/picturesofmusic/pages/anim.html>
- **Proportional Notation** Time represented spatially, rather than symbolically. Duration may be general or specific.
- **Prepared piano** is a piano that has had its sound altered by placing objects (preparations) between or on the strings or on the hammers or dampers. The idea of altering an instrument's timbre through the use of external objects has been applied to instruments other than the piano.

During John Cage's time

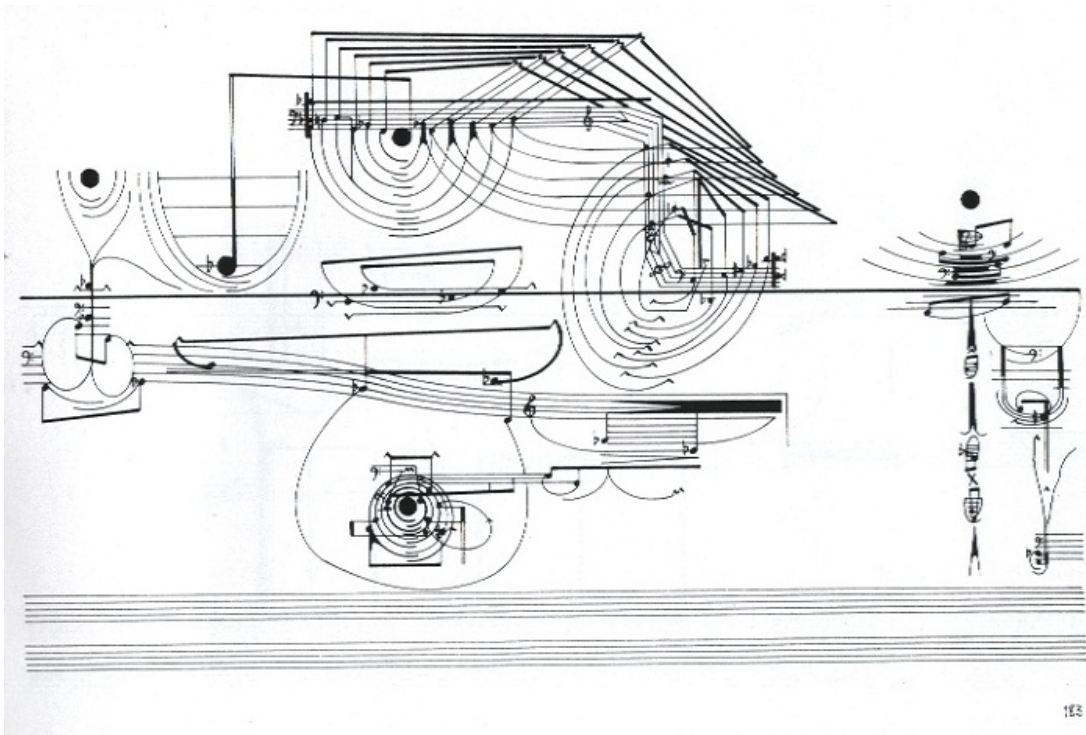
- **Computer music – Tape Music - Music Concrete - Elektronische Musik**
 - John Cage "Williams Mix"
 - Gyorgy Ligeti "Artikulation"
- **Indeterminate** The classic definition of indeterminacy derives from John Cage, according to which indeterminacy "refers to the ability of a piece to be performed in substantially different ways".
 - Morton Feldman "Intersections 2"
- **Free improvisation** or free music is improvised music without any rules beyond the taste or inclination of the musician(s) involved; in many cases the musicians make an active effort to avoid overt references to recognizable musical genres.

The term is somewhat paradoxical, since it can be considered both as a technique (employed by any musician who wishes to disregard rigid genres and forms) and as a recognizable genre in its own right.

- **Experimental Theater**
 - Maricio Kagel “Two-Man Orchestra”
- **Microtonal Music**
 - Harry Partch “Barstow”
- **Minimalism** 'Minimalist' music is based upon the repetition of slowly changing common chords in steady rhythms, often overlaid with a lyrical melody in long, arching phrases...[It] utilizes repetitive melodic patterns, consonant harmonies, motoric rhythms, and a deliberate striving for aural beauty.
 - Steve Reich’s “Piano Phase”
- **Sound Mass** minimizes the importance of individual pitches in preference for texture, timbre, and dynamics as primary shapers of gesture and impact.
 - Krzysztof Penderecki's “Threnody to the Victims of Hiroshima”

After John Cage’s time

- **Animated Notations**



Cardew