

## CONTEMPORARY CLASSICAL MUSIC AT THE TURN OF THE CENTURY: STYLISTIC AND TECHNOLOGICAL DIVERSITY

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<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.15280765>

**Abstract.** *This article explores the development of compositional techniques in contemporary classical music from the late 20th to the early 21st century. It offers a concise overview and explanation of various stylistic trends that emerged during this period. The article highlights the pioneers and key figures behind these movements, emphasizing how modern composers responded to shifts in aesthetics, science, and society.*

**Keywords:** *First avant-garde, Second avant-garde, Expressionism, Serial technique, Serialism, Electronic music, Musique concrète, Aleatoric music, Minimalism, Sonorism, Ligeti's micropolyphony, Xenakis' stochastic compositions, Spectralism.*

## СОВРЕМЕННАЯ КЛАССИЧЕСКАЯ МУЗЫКА НА РУБЕЖЕ ВЕКОВ: СТИЛИСТИЧЕСКОЕ И ТЕХНОЛОГИЧЕСКОЕ РАЗНООБРАЗИЕ

**Аннотация.** *В этой статье рассматривается развитие композиционных приемов в современной классической музыке с конца 20-го по начало 21-го века. Она предлагает краткий обзор и объяснение различных стилистических тенденций, возникших в этот период. В статье освещаются пионеры и ключевые фигуры, стоящие за этими движениями, подчеркивая, как современные композиторы реагировали на сдвиги в эстетике, науке и обществе.*

**Ключевые слова:** *Первый авангард, Второй авангард, Экспрессионизм, Серийная техника, Сериализм, Электронная музыка, Musique concrète, Алеаторическая музыка, Минимализм, Соноризм, Микрополифония Лигети, Стохастические композиции Ксенакиса, Спектрализм.*

### Introduction

The closing decades of the 20th century witnessed a profound transformation in contemporary classical music. This period was defined by an extraordinary range of stylistic diversity, with no single dominant trend.

The emergence of new compositional approaches can be roughly grouped into three main categories:

1. Aesthetic and extramusical factors
2. Musical innovations
3. Scientific and technological influences

Artists and composers began to reflect life's complexities more directly in their work. No longer confined to expressing beauty alone, music became a medium for portraying all aspects of the human experience, including turmoil, aggression, and existential doubt—mirroring the impact of historical upheavals like the World Wars.

The tonal system began to exhaust its expressive potential: harmonic saturation, long thematic lines, and the emancipation of dissonance led to the decline of traditional tonality. At the same time, advances in technology and the invention of new electronic instruments expanded musical possibilities.

#### Key Movements and Techniques

##### 1. Expressionism (First Avant-Garde)

This style introduced atonality and dodecaphony (twelve-tone technique), which replaced tonal harmony with ordered sequences of pitches. Arnold Schoenberg was one of the pioneers of this method, though other composers were exploring similar ideas at the time. Valentin Silvestrov noted that the strict rules of dodecaphony offered a much-needed sense of order during an era of musical anarchy.

##### 2. Serialism (Second Avant-Garde)

Emerging in the 1940s through the Darmstadt Summer Courses, serialism extended the twelve-tone technique to parameters like dynamics, rhythm, and timbre. Leading figures included Pierre Boulez, Karlheinz Stockhausen, and Luigi Nono. Key types of serial composition include:

- Total serialization (applying serial rules to all musical parameters)
- Group composition (where one tone is replaced by a group of tones)
- Mass composition (statistical textures with indistinct pitch content)

##### 3. Electronic Music

In the 1960s and 70s, electronic music became a distinct genre thanks to krautrock pioneers such as Can, Tangerine Dream, and Kraftwerk. These artists used synthesizers and electronic processing to create new soundscapes.

#### 4. Musique Concrète

Developed by Pierre Schaeffer, Pierre Henry, and Edgard Varèse in the 1940s, this style used recorded environmental and mechanical sounds, manipulated using magnetic tape.

#### 5. Aleatoric Music

Popularized in the 1950s, aleatoric music (or chance music) allowed for random combinations of musical elements, affecting both form and content.

#### 6. Minimalism

In the 1960s and 70s, American composers like Steve Reich, Philip Glass, Terry Riley, and John Adams pioneered minimalism. This style is based on the repetition of short rhythmic or melodic patterns (known as “loops” or “patterns”).

#### 7. Sonorism (Sonoristics)

This technique emphasizes coloristic and textural sound qualities over traditional melody or harmony. Key figures include Witold Lutosławski, Krzysztof Penderecki, and Sofia Gubaidulina.

#### 8. Micropolyphony (György Ligeti)

Ligeti’s innovation involved tightly layered polyphonic lines moving at different speeds and rhythms, creating dense sonic textures that obscure individual voices. His piece *\*Atmosphères\** exemplifies this approach.

#### 9. Stochastic Music (Iannis Xenakis)

Combining mathematics and architecture, Xenakis created compositions based on probabilistic models and complex structures, a method he termed “stochastic composition.”

#### 10. Spectralism

Spectral music analyzes the acoustic properties of sound and uses this data to construct musical material. Notable spectralists include Gérard Grisey, Tristan Murail, Beat Furrer, and Kaija Saariaho.

#### 11. Instrumental Musique Concrète

German composer Helmut Lachenmann coined this term for works that reinterpret traditional instruments through extended techniques. He emphasized new ways of listening and understanding sound within a changed musical context.

#### Contemporary Directions

Composers today continue to work within these frameworks, often blending multiple approaches or developing personal styles.

Distortion in orchestral music or the merging of electronic and acoustic sounds is not uncommon. Contemporary classical music remains vital and evolving—regularly performed at institutions such as the State Conservatory of Uzbekistan and major opera houses.

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