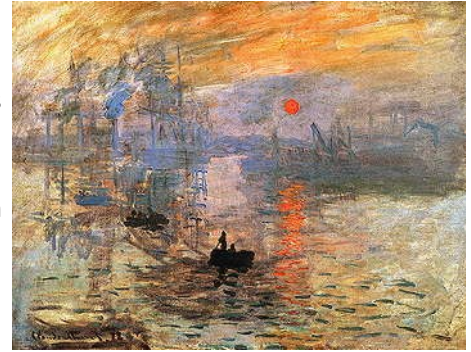


# Impressionism and Expressionism

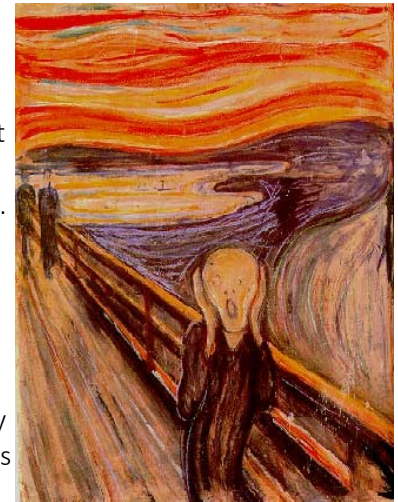
Impressionism and Expressionism are not only found in music but also in art. Impressionism in art had its start at around 1870 in France. The impressionistic art illustrates the world around us with a focus on colours and different shades. The word term impressionism comes from Claude Monet's work "Impression- a sunrise".

In contrast to impressionist painters, expressionist artist weren't so much concerned about truthful motives and nice forms. They more so wanted to share and pass on their feelings. In Expressionism it is more about what goes on in the human himself than in his environment. "The Scream" from Edvard Munch is a representable piece of art of the Expressionist era.



Like the Impressionist art the music from this period focuses on the colours rather than on the form. This means that impressionist composers didn't want to write in a special musical form as the Viennese Classic or the Romantic did. There for impressionist music isn't bound to any rules given by a musical form. More importantly they concentrated on the tone colour to convey the atmosphere and the mood of a specific moment. Often musical ideas aren't brought to an end and are mixed with others to create one timbre.

In impressionist music scales are used without any specific rules. A whole range of different types of scales are used like the chromatic, pentatonic, whole note scale or even modes. Bitonality or Polytonality aren't uncommonly used which shows once again that the timbre is more important than any rules implemented by other composers.



The melody is characterised by flowing, wavy and commuting movements. At the same time the melody is of a small range without any major leaps. Due to the use of many different scales the melody cannot be defined by major or minor. Impressionist melodies often seem oriental and a bit directionless because of the use of chromatic scales. The instrumentation used depends on the tone of colour which the composer aims to. The choice of the instruments is very differentiated and often minimalist. In contrast to the big Romantic orchestras impressionistic ones are much smaller and sometimes even include exotic instruments to create the special timbre.

Some important and well-known composers of the time are Debussy (*Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune*), Ravel, Jaques Ibert, Gabriel Pierné, Manuel de Falla, Isaac Albeniz,...

One of the most noticeable features of the Expressionist music is that it uses no scale and is there for atonal. Expressionism avoids the normal hierarchy of keys and chords and giving all of the 12 semitones equal importance. As a result the music is full with dissonance.

In contrast to Impressionism Expressionism makes full use of the whole pitch range. In instrumental music the different instrumental colours can be heard in their extremes of their register. An Expressionist melody is characterised by leaps and by the use of the whole register. The melody is felt as important as timbre. As in the Impressionist music the tone colour and the atmosphere is more important than rules. The harmonies and pitches are used for effects rather for their relation to each other. Another important feature is the extreme use of dynamics and a constant change of texture. An Expressionist piece can change from as quiet as possible to as loud as possible. The instruments used vary from piece to piece and depend on the effect aimed. In vocal music the "Sprechgesang" is commonly used. This Expressionist vocal technique is a in between signing and speaking and is used in Schönbergs "Pierrot lunaire".

Due to the fact that it is very difficult to write a piece without the framework of a key structure and the use of recognisable themes Expressionist pieces are quite short. To structure his composition Schönberg created the Serialism. This involves taking the twelve semitones and arrange them into a particular order in a row. This

row can now be retrograded or inverted to create an interesting timbre.

The most important composers were the ones from the 2<sup>nd</sup> Viennese school. These three composers were: Arnold Schönberg, Anton Webern and Alban Berg. Schönberg was the teacher of the other two composers.

Impressionism and Expressionism are both more concentrated on the right tone colour than to follow some rules. But Expressionist music is more dissonant and away from the traditional western music. Also it expresses deep emotions rather than moments as the Impressionist music. Not to forget that Expressionism uses no scale and key signature. Art and music are very close to each other concerning these two different styles. The composers convey the ideas of the artist into their own language.