

Impressionism

Name of the era :

Impressionism

Approximate timeframe of the era or style:

1870 -1920 (during the late 19th and early 20th centuries)

Historical background:

Impressionism is a late 19th century and early 20th century artistic movement that began as an association of Paris-based painters whose independent exhibitions brought them to prominence in the 1870s and 1880s.

The name of the impressionist movement is derived from the title of an 1872 painting by Claude Monet, *Impression, Sunrise*.

As with most artistic movements, the Impressionist movement was a reaction to the previous era of music, the Romantic era, in which the music of many composers is heavy and overly dramatic by comparison.

Musical Impressionism formed a transition from late-Romantic music to 20th century Modernist music.

How historical events influenced the characteristics of the music:

- perfecting photography made realistic paintings/portraits obsolete - painters painted subjectively, freely, not realistically - just like composers focused more on subjective impressions than form and strict rules of composition
- atmosphere becomes more important than emotion (like in romanticism)
- impressionist music was sometimes inspired by the literature of that era
- the influence of oriental music grew, due to increasing knowledge of Arabic, Indian, Chinese and Hindustani music
- later, there is some influence of the American jazz culture

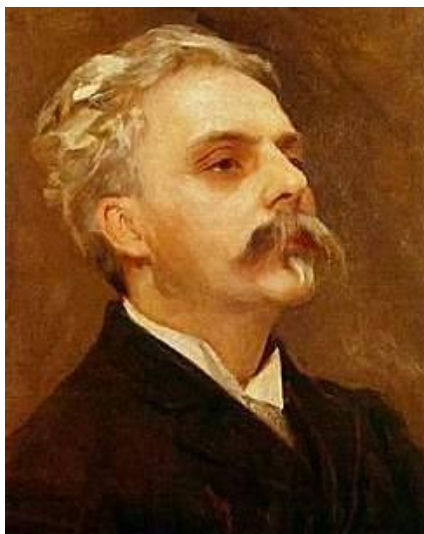
The most popular genres of the era:

- Orchestral music
- Chamber music
- Piano music
- Vocal music
- Opera
- ...

The sound of the era:

- The use of color/timbre, which can be achieved through orchestration, harmonic usage, texture, etc.
- New chord combinations
- Escaped Chords: These were harmonies which gave the impression of having "escaped" to another tonality.
- Ambiguous tonality
- Extended harmonies
- use of a lot of chromaticism
- Use of modes and exotic scales
- Parallel motions
- Extra-musicality
- Modal Influences (the medieval modes were attractive to composers who sought to escape the "tyranny" of the major/minor sound. Emphasized were primary intervals -- octaves, fourths, and fifths -- in parallel motion)
- Whole-Tone Scale
- Pentatonic Scale (five-notes)

Famous composers/performers/bands of this era + composition examples:



Gabriel Fauré (1845-1924) - French

- Pavane

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mpgyTl8yqbw>

- Requiem

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tmrQHRnT4Mw>



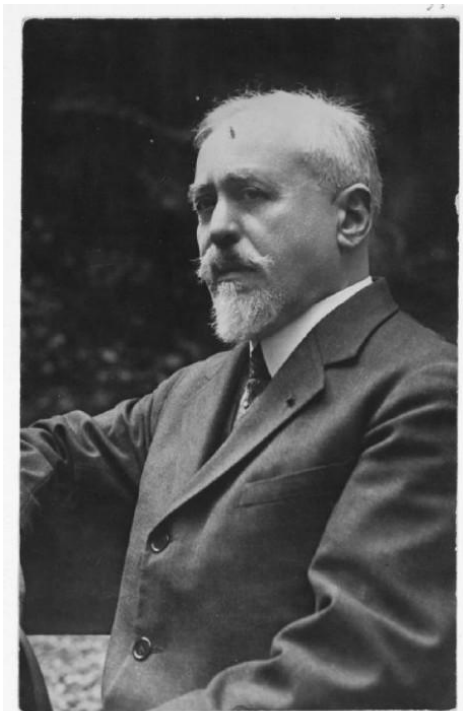
Claude Achille Debussy (1862-1918) – French

- Claire de lune

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CvFH_6DNRCY

- Arabesque

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9Fle2CP8gR0>



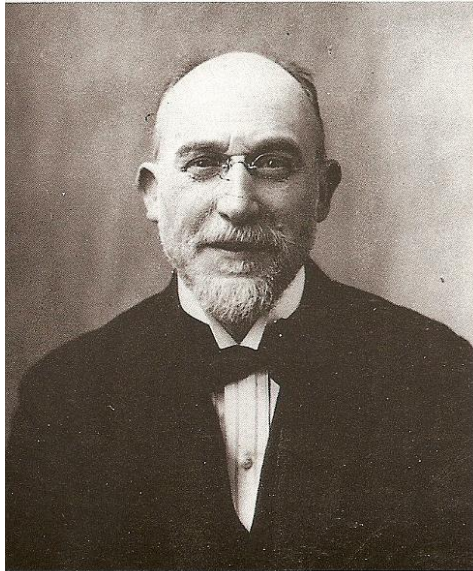
Paul Dukas (1865-1935) - French

- Der Zauberlehrling

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wneUNg_Ndbw

- Polyeucte

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TCo2nycKBD4>



Eric Satie (1866-1925) – French

- Gymnopédie no. 1

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S-Xm7s9eGxU>

- Gymnopédie no. 3

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iHEpuj96bCg>



Florent Schmitt (1870-1958) – French

- La tragédie de Salomé

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gmWpudUVkdY>

- Psaume XLVII

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=74qLWSI2XEg>



Maurice Ravel (1875-1937) – French

- Le tombeau de Couperin

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5t9-vY_GGf8

- La valse

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NRmavWyVLWw>

- Bolero

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q4wb11w0ZHQ>



Ottorino Respighi (1879-1936) – Italian

- Fontane di Roma

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cTvMKcTmjOY>

- Feste Romane

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C2EPHoMlqnk>



Manuel de Falla (1877-1946) – Spanish

- Danse Espagnole

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mUczcjinmWAK>

- Ritual fire dance

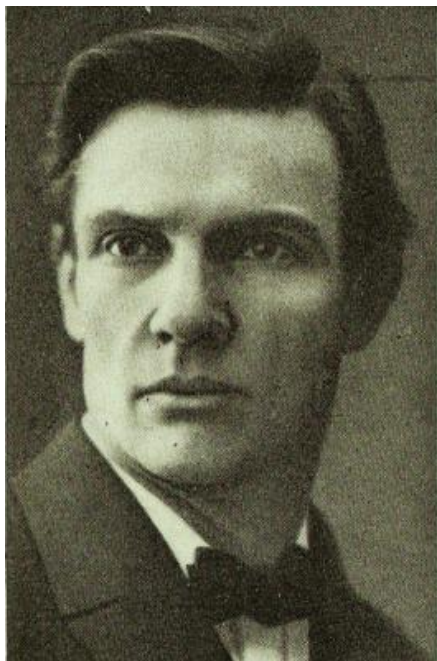
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y3ZEg_bCwO4



Joseph Jongen (1873-1953) – Belgian

- Impressions d'Ardenne

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bstwkw9ZDOo>



Flor Alpaerts (1876-1954) – Belgian

- Pallieter
- James Ensorsuite
- Lentesymfonie

Impressionism paintings :



Impression, Soleil Levant (1872) – Claude Monet (1840-1926) - French



De Sterrennacht (1889) – Vincent van Gogh (1853-1890) - Dutch

Other Famous artists: Manet, Degas, Renoir, Pissaro, Monet, Rodin, Seurat, Cezanne, Van Gogh, Gauguin, Homer.