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Eastern Kentucky University

In the Mood- Choosing a Style

Honors Thesis

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By

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In the Mood- Choosing a Style

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The purpose of this thesis is to provide insight into music history, its musical eras' styles, and its composers. It explores both how each musical style evolved throughout time, as well as the mixing of individual styles. This project takes various melodies and reharmonizes them to sound as though they were written in the style of other distinct musical eras. It supplied an introduction to music and its role in societies, a history of musical eras and composers, and finally the process of creating arrangements for the chosen melodies. This creative project uniquely alters one's musical expectations by presenting known melodies in various styles that would not ordinarily be exhibited. In all aspects, it is an extremely informative project focused on reimagining music and choosing a style. The process of this creative thesis is detailed as follows: Study of music history, study of specific musical eras' composers, analyzation of example pieces and chosen melodies, and the improvisation and recording of performed reharmonized melodies.

Key Words: Baroque era, Classical era, 19th Century Romantic era, 20th Century era, Style, Keyboard, Creative Honors Thesis, and Project.

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Music, having been in existence in some way since prehistoric times, has always played an important role in humanity and its cultures. Throughout time, music has evolved and changed in both its instrumentation and in its style. The style of music has changed gradually, through various musical eras. Music styles evolved in their melodic ideas, harmonic support, rhythm, and textures. Melodies, the main themes of pieces of music, were supported by harmonies and countermelodies that accompanied underneath. Some of these harmonies were simple, others were complex. Rhythm also varied. In some musical styles, it was straightforward, while in others, it was syncopated and sometimes difficult. The texture of music was determined by all these ideas listed, and how they operated when put together. Each of these characteristics were distinctive and unique in the musical eras that are focused on in this thesis.

In this creative thesis entitled “In the Mood- Choosing a Style,” my goal was to take three melodies and arrange them for the keyboard to demonstrate the styles of other musical eras. Four classical music eras – Baroque 1600-1750, Classical 1750-1800, 19th Century Romantic, and 20th Century – were chosen to be represented in these

arrangements. Aspects of melody, harmony, rhythm, and texture were discussed and altered in these arrangements. The three melodies included a folk melody called “To the Sky” by Carl Strommen, a Big Band tune called “In the Mood” by Joe Garland and Glenn Miller, and a modern song called “If You Leave Me Now” by the band Chicago. Characteristics of the four musical eras were applied to these initial three melodies. After applying those characteristics to the melodies, I created recordings of the melodies as brief keyboard solos in the styles of each of the four eras. An important distinction I wanted to include was the difference between the label “Classical music” and the Classical era specifically. Classical music is a term that covers all four of the musical eras referenced in this project, while the Classical era itself is a specific time within the Classical music world. Musical eras convey varied musical ideas, but this project explored the mixing of those ideas.

The first era in my project is the Baroque era which dates from approximately 1600-1750, despite some overlap between eras. The Baroque era, compared to the Medieval and Renaissance eras that came before, began the melodic and harmonic organization of music in the way we know it today. Prior to this, music was organized in groupings of pitches called modes. In the Baroque era, composers gave preference to two of these modes which we know today as major and minor. These two gave the option of having major or minor keys in music.

Music in the Baroque time became more dramatic and put its focus on ornamentation and impressive details. A few key aspects of Baroque music are layers of musical lines through polyphony, decoration of notes through ornamentation and trills, one musical mood for the piece, a continuous bass line called a continuo, imitation, and

improvisatory sounding lines which are included in both vocal Baroque music and instrumental Baroque music. The keyboard instrument used at this time was called the harpsichord. It was an instrument with strings that were plucked by a hook-like mechanism called a plectrum whenever a key was played. This created a buzzy sound, without much option for dynamic contrast. As time went on, some harpsichords eventually had more than one keyboard manual on it, offering a loud keyboard, and a quiet keyboard for slight, if abrupt, dynamic contrast.

The Classical era is the second musical era represented in this project, and dates from about 1750-1800 with overlap from the Baroque era and the century following the Classical era. During the Classical era, music continued to evolve in its melodies, phrasings, harmonies, and forms. In texture, the music found in this era is less complex than the dramatic, layered Baroque music. Instead, it is mostly homophonic with a clearer texture. It would generally have one melodic line, with straightforward accompaniment under it. Often, this accompaniment was a simple chord that was played note by note in an alternating order, called alberti bass. The musical focus for this time was simplicity and elegance, with simple harmonies and balanced phrases, and the use of contrasting moods to add variety. The keyboard instrument during the Classical era had developed into an instrument that had a light sound, but now included dynamic options to get loud or soft. This ability gave the instrument its names based on the music dynamic terms, forte, which meant loud, and piano, which meant soft. Thus, these keyboards were called “fortepiano” or “pianoforte.” The fortepiano or pianoforte had hammers that hit the strings when a note was played, instead of a plectrum that plucked the strings like in a harpsichord. These new keyboard instruments generally had a range of about four

octaves, so they were not very large, and took up little space, making them ideal for household use.

The third classical music era in my project is the Romantic era. This era was an incredibly broad time, filled with a multitude of unique styles, so my focus was on the Central European 19th Century Romantic music. This era was filled with a large amount of variety, experimentation, and an increase in chromatic ideas. 19th Century Romantic composers wanted to show greater emotion, expression, and feeling in their music. Due to this, creating a richer, and more lush sound were staples of this time. The keyboard instrument became a polished version of the pianoforte or fortepiano, and its name was shortened to simply “piano.” It became larger than the pianoforte or fortepiano to give a wider range with a rich tone. It achieved this in a few ways, one being the addition of more octaves which created the 88-keyed piano commonly seen still today. Another way that the piano achieved a richer tone was through its dynamic range which was broader with a mellower and more resonant tone. This was due to an iron frame that was placed inside the instrument around 1825 by an inventor by the name of Alpheus Babcock. Iron frames became standard in pianos after this and continues to be standard today. Other new additions to the piano were more pedals to achieve various effects like sustain or sostenuto on the instrument.

The fourth and final classical music era is the modern 20th Century era. This is the most recent musical era. Because it is incredibly recent, there is much more detail and documentation regarding this music style. The 20th Century opened the door to even more modernism, chromaticism, atonality, and experimentation. Virtually nothing was off limits. With an endless number of options for creation of sound, there became few rules

to be followed by composers. Wanting to break away from the restrictions of the past, composers experimented with various techniques including alternative playing methods, and atonal and whole tone harmonic techniques. This exploration of experimentation was very much like the 19th Century Romantic era, but the 20th Century evolved these ideas and took them to the next level, creating more individualism amongst composers. After the 19th Century, the piano remained essentially the same. The iron frame, multiple pedals, and 88-keyed keyboard was and has remained standard for every piano since that time.

To fully understand the styles of each era, it was important that I had a thorough knowledge of the composers from these four musical eras. Knowing details like where the composers were from, what instruments they studied, and what their overall lives were like assisted in helping me to better understand the composers and their musical choices. After researching and reading about the musical eras and composers from those eras, I realized that each composer had uniqueness and traits that made his or her own music recognizable and memorable. In choosing composers for this creative project, I wanted to choose staples of each musical era, ones that represented key traits of those eras. The four composers whose music I based my musical arrangements on are the following: Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750), Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791), Frédéric Chopin (1810-1849), and Béla Bartók (1881-1945).

Johann Sebastian Bach was a Baroque German composer who was born in 1685 and died in 1750. He came from a very musical family and was known as a singer, an organist, a harpsichordist, and an organ builder. His parents both died while he was relatively young, so he was primarily looked after by his older brother. During his life,

Bach made careers as a church and court musician, a composer, and a concertmaster. Despite composing numerous works for churches, orchestras, and harpsichords, it was not until after his death in 1750 that his music became more appreciated the way that it is today. In fact, it was not even until the 19th Century Romantic era that many of Bach's works were brought back to life and treasured.

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart was an Austrian Classical era composer who was born in 1756. Unlike Bach, Mozart rose to fame as a child prodigy and spent most of his career in Vienna as a keyboard performer and composer. He was the son of a famous violinist and composer, Leopold Mozart. Both W.A. Mozart and his sister Maria Anna were child prodigies in music, and their father took them on performing tours around Europe. Maria Anna, equally talented as a musician, also was a keyboard performer and a composer. Sadly, however, her father made her quit touring when she came of age to marry, and none of her own music survived. Some wonder if perhaps she destroyed the music herself, while others believe that some of it perhaps was attributed to W.A. Mozart, but none of these theories are confirmed. Mozart, meanwhile, continued to tour and compose before getting sick and dying very young at the age of 35 in 1791. Despite his tragically short life, Mozart still managed to compose a vast amount of music for various instruments, purposes, and places including churches, string ensembles, orchestras, operas, oratorios, and keyboards like the harpsichord and pianoforte.

Frédéric Chopin was a 19th Century Romantic composer born in Poland in 1810. His father was French, and his mother was Polish. His father taught the French language, and his mother was an amateur musician who became Chopin's first official music teacher. She fostered in Chopin a great love for music and ensured that he had the best

musical education. His parents enrolled him in the Warsaw Conservatory of Music where he studied music theory, musical harmony, and composition. After spending the beginning of his life in Poland, learning as much about music as he could there, Chopin quickly became composing. Wanting to expand his musical knowledge and experience, his parents sent him to Vienna, where he studied and later made his debut as a piano performer. Following the Polish revolution against Russian power, Chopin traveled to Paris, France where he became very popular as a composer and piano teacher. Between Vienna, and Paris, Chopin met and became known among established musicians including Franz Liszt, Felix Mendelssohn, and Hector Berlioz. Chopin is best known for his great number of solo pieces for piano and piano concerti. France was where Chopin officially settled down and lived for the rest of his life, but he still longed for his home in Poland, so his nationalistic ties show through his music. It was in France that he died in 1849, at the young age of 39.

The 20th Century had a variety of composers who all tried to experiment differently with composing for piano. Due to this expansive time, my composer of choice to represent this century was Béla Bartók. He was a Hungarian composer born in 1881. He first studied piano with his mother before moving on to study with other teachers. His composition career began at a young age. He began composing at nine years old and had his first piano performance debut at the age of eleven. Along with being a composer, he was also a performing pianist, a teacher, and an ethnomusicologist. His ethnomusicology background caused his own composition style to evolve over time as he took interest in other cultures' music through studying other composers' music and different nationalities' styles. Bartók combined elements of folk songs and Hungarian, Romanian,

Slovak, Bulgarian, German, and French styles of music. He found commonalities in all styles and expanded upon them. He used different forms and ideas of counterpoint from Baroque and Classical music, with chromaticism from Romantic and modern music. By combining so many other styles, he created his own new, unique style. Some of his music includes works for piano, orchestra, string quartets, stage presentations, operas, folk songs, and a cantata. During his life, Bartók became a concert pianist and traveled to perform. As the Nazis began to take over Germany in the late 1930s, Bartók decided to officially immigrate to New York in the United States of America in 1940. In his later years, Bartók suffered from leukemia. His sickness prevented him from composing, teaching, or performing much more. Sadly, it was there in New York where he died just five years later in 1945 from complications of his leukemia.

The piece I chose as an example excerpt of the Baroque musical era is Johann Sebastian Bach's "Prelude No. 1" from his collection *Well-Tempered Clavier, Book 2*. This piece provided examples of common Baroque traits like ornamentation, improvisatory melodic lines, and multiple lines acting independently. The Classical example excerpt is Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's "Piano Sonata in C Major, No. 16 'Sonata semplice', K. 545." This piece provided examples of organized phrases, simplistic sounds, and the alberti bass accompaniment figure. The 19th Century Romantic music example excerpt is Frédéric Chopin's "Prelude in E minor, Op. 28, No 4." This example piece provided insight into extended harmonies, chromaticism, and the moody and lush tone throughout. Lastly, the 20th Century example excerpt piece is "Peasant Song" from Béla Bartók's "10 Easy Pieces, Sz. 39." This piece gave the example of an alternate tonality called the whole tone scale. This scale creates an open and unsettled

sound. It was important to me to make these example excerpts sound as accurate as possible. Because of this, I used different keyboard settings on the electric piano on which I recorded each one of these excerpts.

The three melodies that I arranged are a folk song called “To the Sky” by Carl Strommen, a Big Band tune called “In the Mood” by Joe Garland and Glenn Miller, and a modern song called “If You Leave Me Now” by the band Chicago. The folk song, “To the Sky” is a traditional folk song adapted from a Southern folk song called “Prospect,” a melody which has been set to multiple texts and musical arrangements. The Big Band tune called “In the Mood” is a classic jazz staple. It was written by Joe Garland and was based on a preexisting melody. Joe Garland’s version premiered as the tune known now in 1938 and was later recorded by Glenn Miller to whom it is often credited. The third and most modern song, “If You Leave Me Now,” was written and sung by Chicago’s bass player, Peter Cetera. The song was released as a single by the ‘70s and ‘80s band in 1976.

To arrange these melodies, I first had to research and read extensively about music history, composers, instruments, and traits of different musical eras. Having a strong understanding of what makes a composer and what makes an era, helped supplement this project. Along with reading and delving into the lives of composers and their respective eras, listening to pieces from the four musical eras proved to be beneficial in having an ear for the characteristics of these styles. After doing quite a bit of reading and listening, it took many practice sessions of experimenting at the keyboard myself, to fully get the musical eras’ traits into my hands and have them make sense in my mind.

Once I felt like I had a solid understanding of these composers and their eras, I learned how to play each excerpt of the music eras' example pieces, then I recorded them. In these recordings, I used different keyboard settings to change the tone of what I played to fit the styles of the excerpts' eras best. For Bach's "Prelude No. 1," I used a setting called Harpsichord to match the keyboard instrument sound of the Baroque era. For Mozart's "Piano Sonata in C Major, No. 16 'Sonata semplice', K. 545," I used a setting called Studio Grand 2 which matched the light sound of the pianoforte or fortepiano of the Classical era. For Chopin's "Prelude in E minor, Op. 28, No 4," I used a full, resonant setting called Mellow Grand that matched the tone of pianos in the 19th Century Romantic era. Since there was no real change in pianos after the 19th Century Romantic era, when I recorded Bartók's "10 Easy Pieces, Sz. 39," for the 20th Century, I kept the keyboard setting at Mellow Grand.

The next step after recording the musical eras' example excerpts was to record the original chosen melody examples. For all three of the melody excerpts— "To the Sky," "In the Mood," and "If You Leave Me Now"— I used the standard Mellow Grand setting I used to represent the pianos of and beyond the 19th Century Romantic era. Following this, the next step in the actual arranging process was to analyze the harmonic chords of both the example piece and of the melody piece. This was to compare and determine what potentially needed altering to sound most authentic in the given musical style. In some cases, the accompanying chords themselves needed no altering. In other cases, like the 20th Century examples, the unique harmonic techniques caused both the chords and the melody to require changing. These changes for the 20th Century specifically required using what is called the whole tone scale. This is a scale that, from an intervallic

perspective, has only whole tones from one note to the next. For the melodies, which were certainly not composed with the whole tone scale, this meant that the intervals in the melodic line had to be shifted to fit the scale. This created, at times, almost unrecognizable melodies that could sound strange and jarring to a listener.

After I had analyzed the melodies and the example excerpts, found commonalities, and settled on what needed to be different, I felt prepared for the third step, which was to play the melodies with the new accompanying figures and harmonizations. This was a long and difficult process as it required general improvisation skills combined with the knowledge of the restrictions of the eras I was emulating. With practice, however, it eventually became clear what I wanted to show in the final arrangements. After making sure that all the excerpts sounded stylistically accurate and authentic, the next course of action was to record them. To achieve the goal of creating and recording a total of twelve arrangements, I created recording days and times for myself. I organized these sessions into groups. I grouped all the Baroque recordings into one session, all the Classical recordings into another, the 19th Century recordings into a third session, and the 20th Century recordings into one final session. Giving myself these goals also allowed for extra time to rerecord, cut, and edit any recordings that may have needed it. The very last step of this creative thesis was to compile all the video recordings, combine them with music history, background on musical eras' characteristics, history of composers from these musical eras, then finally, present the final product.

This creative thesis project is unlike other musical interpretations of many classical music pieces as it breaks the expectations and predictability of various musical

styles. The creation of these arrangements shows that we do not have to be limited to just one style of music for any given piece. This thesis has proved to be a unique and innovative project that has presented known melodies in new ways, some which work well to the modern listener's ear, and some that sound a little different. Many songs are rewritten or rearranged to fit different purposes, but few are arranged as a presentation of different eras. This project uniquely presented altered musical expectations by presenting known melodies in various styles. In all aspects, it was certainly an informative project in reimagining music and choosing a style.

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