

## Chapter 33: Changes in the Sixties and Seventies: Rock, Minimalism, and the Mixing of Art and Popular Music

### I. Introduction

- A. The turbulence of this period can be attributed to growing American involvement in the war in Vietnam and the movements for social equality among African Americans, women, gays, and lesbians.
- B. Boundaries between “high” and “low” genres of music blurred.

### II. The revolutionary sixties

- A. The sixties was a time of great turmoil in numerous sociocultural spheres: civil rights, women’s rights, the Vietnam War, and gay rights, to name a few.

### III. The music of youth: rock ‘n’ roll

- A. The youth audiences of the 1950s and 1960s became more interested in rock ‘n’ roll.

1. Rock ‘n’ roll was consciously aimed at widening the generation gap.
2. Focusing on the expanding consumerism of postwar America, music labels marketed their product specifically to youth.
3. DJ Alan Freed began playing recordings of R&B on white radio stations.
4. Elvis Presley was the most commercially successful rock ‘n’ roll performer.
5. A new music described as “folk” also emerged during the late 1940s.

#### B. The British invasion: the Beatles

1. A series of British bands were highly successful with the American market in the 1960s, and their music altered rock ‘n’ roll in several ways.
2. *Sgt. Pepper* (1967) marked a radically different approach to popular music, including the album art itself.

#### C. The influence of rock

1. During the 1960s, rock ‘n’ roll lost the “roll” in the title and became known as “rock.”
2. Woodstock (1969) became synonymous with counterculture.
3. Jazz and rock came together in the late 1960s; this was called jazz–rock fusion. Miles Davis was the leading figure.
4. Jazz and classical music combined in Third Stream.

### IV. The rise of minimalism

#### A. Minimalism is a style that arose around 1960. It is difficult to define.

1. Minimalism contains aspects of classical music but also has traces of popular music and world music.

#### B. La Monte Young

1. The cry for “Less is more!” arose in the arts, notably in the architecture of Mies van der Rohe and the paintings of Rothko.
2. Musically, the term minimalism said something about the process of composition, rather than the result.
3. La Monte Young is considered the founder of American minimalism.
4. Young’s String Trio combines minimalism with serialism.
5. Young placed restrictions on his music, particularly with regard to pitch.

C. Terry Riley's *In C*

1. Among Young's followers, Terry Riley first found a wider audience for minimalism.
2. He experimented with tape loops.
3. His *In C* has a small score but can last for hours.
4. Perhaps the most characteristic association with *In C*, the eighth-note pulse that continues throughout, was not Riley's idea but that of Steve Reich, who participated in the first performance of the work.

V. "Classical" minimalism: Steve Reich

- A. Reich received musical training in the mode that was typical for an elite Modernist, but his exposure to a wide variety of recordings helped move him in a different direction.
1. He was drawn to early music, but not that between Haydn and Wagner.
  2. Reich was drawn to percussion, including non-Western styles that became part of his idiom.
  3. His early works with tape loop (*It's Gonna Rain* and *Come Out*) are connected with political and social points of view.
  4. Both works also include what has become an identifying feature of Reich's music: phase shifting.
- B. Phase music
1. Reich discovered that live performers, if properly rehearsed, could achieve the sound previously reserved for tape.
  2. His piece *Drumming* (1971) works on several levels of shifting.

C. *Music for 18 Musicians*

1. One of Reich's most influential compositions is *Music for 18 Musicians*.
2. With this work, Reich felt he had come to a place where he was judge and audience of the work, not the public.
3. Reich's music began to appeal to a broad audience of professional musicians, popular music fans, and academics.

VI. Philip Glass

- A. Like Reich, Glass studied music in a "typical" progression from undergrad music major, master's at Juilliard, job as composer, Fulbright to study with Boulanger.
1. Reich and Glass collaborated early on, but they moved in different directions and became competitors.
  2. Because of his study of Indian music, Glass focused on "additive structures" rather than Reich's phase technique.
  3. In the 1970s, Glass was influenced by art-rock.
- B. *Einstein on the Beach*
1. In 1976, Glass's opera *Einstein on the Beach* premiered at the Met in New York.
  2. Glass had been working with theater and film for some time.
  3. *Einstein on the Beach* lasts five hours without interruption as it courses through four acts connected by musical "knee plays."
  4. The opera was described as surreal by some and compared to Thomson's *Four Saints*.

VII. The impact of minimalism

- A. The music of Reich and Glass demonstrated that there was no longer any need to draw the line between high and low genres of music.
  - 1. Minimalism was a great leveler, which was why the Modernists feared it so much.
  - 2. Minimalism was the first literate style to have come from the New World and to have influenced the Old.
- B. The spiritual minimalists
  - 1. The early minimalists had a spiritual component to their music, as did an important strain of European minimalism that stemmed from Central and Eastern Europe.
  - 2. The pioneer in this regard is Arvo Pärt, from Estonia.
  - 3. Initially his works overtly adapted the sounds of Medieval music, but these gradually became less glaring.
  - 4. Pärt also incorporates bells into his music, a response in part to the Russian Orthodox church's use of them.
  - 5. Each of the composers associated with radically reductive styles in the 1960s and 1970s (except Andriessen) in the text either began or found his way to religious belief. They each regarded the musical and spiritual quests as dual manifestations of a single impulse.
  - 6. Henryk Górecki's Third Symphony (1976) is similar to that of Pärt, but the composer was unaware of Western minimalism at that time.