

WITHOUT WORDS

The most obvious focus of this year's programmatic theme, 'words and music', is on the interplay between the spoken, written, or sung word — and music. However, there are many well-known classical works that use the voice without words or lyrics. For example *Bachianas Brasileiras* No. 5 by Villa-Lobos, *The Planets* by Holst, and *Daphnis et Chloe* by Ravel are a few. In addition, vocal music without words also comes in several other forms particularly in ethnic and world music. Music study often uses *Solfège* singing which assigns syllables to the musical scale instead of words. In 20th century music, *sprechstimme* is a vocal technique that is a combination of speaking and singing at the same time. A popular technique used in jazz and ragtime is scat singing — utilizing nonsensical words such as do-wop diddy. Improvisation with the voice has continued to influence music with the development of hip-hop, rap and beatboxing (using the voice to imitate percussion and rhythms.)

Another unique compositional category is called "songs without words," which comprises works that are written in song form but the voice part is taken by an instrument. Some of the most famous were written for piano by Mendelssohn.

When words leave off, music begins.

-- HEINRICH HEINE

POETRY

Poetry shares musical concepts such as rhythm, tempo and meter and an argument can be made that all musical text is poetic. As early troubadours in 11th century France created their own lyrics about love and chivalry, pop musicians today often compose their own texts to songs. Many composers have also used pre-existing poems. Franz Schubert's songs spanned the works of William Shakespeare, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, Heinrich Heine, Friedrich von Schiller and more. And for his *Das Lied von der Erde*, Gustav Mahler used a German text based on French translations of Chinese poetry!

While poetry has clear links to several musical forms, music has also influenced the literary form of poetry. For example, in the 1920s poets such as Ezra Pound, T.S. Eliot and e.e. cummings avoided conventional styles and wrote poems with jazz-like rhythms and improvisational styles. During the 1950s, musical accompaniment and improvisation often accompanied poetry readings. And in contemporary society, hip-hop and rap artists often set poetic lyrics to syncopated beats capturing the spontaneous, improvised nature of the jazz poem.

Poetry is the music of the soul, and, above all, of great and feeling souls.

FRANÇOIS-MARIE AROUET, better known as Voltaire

MUSIC AND DRAMA

While opera in its current form fully emerged at the beginning of the 17th century in Italy, the bond between music and text is evident back to ancient Greeks such as Sophocles, Euripides and others who employed the chorus as part of their dramas.

Opera and oratorios (musical dramas which are sung but not staged) flourished throughout Europe in the 18th and 19th centuries. Richard Wagner conceived the idea of *gesamtkunstwerk*— a synthesis of art and work, combined theater, spectacle, music, song, and even dance — and named this new art form "music drama."

Operetta is a genre of opera in which some of the libretto is spoken rather than sung. Developing out of the French opera comique around the middle of the 19th century, the subject matter for operettas tends to be "lighter" (comedy, topical satire, politics).

Although operetta has evolved into today's musical theater (or "Broadway") and movie musicals, and the lines of distinction sometimes blur, each form co-exists and continues to influence each other.

Music conveys moods and images. Even in opera, where plots deal with the structure of destiny, it's music, not words, that provides power.

MARCEL MARCEAU

SACRED MUSIC

From Gregorian Chants to the rock band U2's use of the Old Testament Psalm 40, religious themes have inspired a broad range of composers and performers. Virtually every religion has used music as part of its worship — to educate through the illumination of texts, to provide structure and focus, or to elevate worship to an aesthetic experience.

The musical and rhythmic recitation of words on a single pitch is the essence of chant. Eastern religions, including Buddhism and Hinduism, utilize rhythmically spoken prayers and mantras. The muezzin's call to prayer to the Muslim faithful is defined musically by Islamic culture, as the cantor's interpretation of The Book of Psalms is rooted in the tradition of Jewish worship.

In western classical music, the Mass is perhaps the most recognized of all sacred musical forms, along with the requiem and sacred cantata. Regardless of the composer, the text and order of the parts of the Mass always stay the same. Chants, anthems and hymns are at the core of Christian worship, as works to be sung or used as the basis for improvisational preludes or recessional.

As a result of the slave trade during the 18th and 19th centuries, influences from Africa found their way into the spiritual music of the Americas and Caribbean. Influencing the development of gospel, blues and country music, the spiritual form allows both the composer and the listener an opportunity to celebrate the power of life through music.

Music is a sublime art precisely because, unable to imitate reality, it rises above ordinary nature into an ideal world and with celestial harmony moves the earthly passions.

GIOACCHINO ROSSINI

PROGRAM MUSIC

Instrumental works specifically intended to evoke or convey a mood, tell a story or depict a scene are considered to be "program music." This is in contrast to "absolute music" — such as a fugue, concerto, sonata or symphonies. Although program music was most prevalent in the Romantic period of the mid 1800s, it can be found in essentially all periods. For example, Vivaldi's Baroque classic, The Four Seasons depicts the distinct seasons and weather conditions of Summer, Fall, Winter and Spring. Bird calls, country dances and a storm are featured in Beethoven's Pastorale Symphony No. 6. The Romantic Period abounded with programmatic music such as Berlioz's Symphonie Fantastique, Mussorgsky's Pictures at an Exhibition, Saint-Saëns' Carnival of the Animals, and Dukas' The Sorcerer's Apprentice.

The 20th century tone poems of Richard Strauss portray a variety of tales from the hero's life to a prankster's demise, or an alpine hike to domestic bliss. Arthur Honegger and Heitor Villa-Lobos may have come from different cultures but they leave no doubt as to what a train sounds like. Debussy's Preludes of the Impressionistic period actually suggested a title AFTER each piece, rather than before, to let your mind imagine your own images.

In 20th Century American Music, a recurring theme was the American West as illustrated by Grofe's Grand Canyon Suite and the ballets of Aaron Copland.

Today, some genres of popular music such as new age, jazz fusion and techno music are more likely to involve programmatic elements. Film scores and soundtracks are perhaps the most recognizable forms of programmatic music of this century. The rock group Rush's Jacob's Ladder with its clear influences from Smetana's Ma vlast ("My Homeland"), demonstrate that programmatic music continues to flourish.

The painter turns a poem into a painting; the musician sets a picture to music.

ROBERT SCHUMANN