

WEEKLY ENGLISH PRACTICE

A MUSICAL CENTURY part 2 1910s: Jazz and World War I

The 1910s were a transformative time for music, especially with the birth of **jazz**. Emerging from New Orleans, jazz was a **fusion** of African-American musical traditions, such as **blues** and **ragtime**, with European harmonic structures.



Jazz was unique because of its emphasis on **improvisation**, which allowed musicians to experiment and play off each other during performances. Early jazz legends like Louis Armstrong and King Oliver shaped this new, exciting genre. As jazz spread beyond New Orleans, it became a symbol of freedom and expression for many musicians and listeners.

At the same time, classical music continued to evolve, with composers like Igor Stravinsky breaking away from traditional forms. Stravinsky's ballet, "The Rite of Spring," shocked audiences when it premiered in 1913. The piece used unusual rhythms and

dissonant sounds, which were quite different from the elegance of previous classical music. This work reflected the growing desire for experimentation in the arts.

The outbreak of World War I in 1914 had a profound impact on music. **Patriotic** songs became popular, as they boosted the **morale** of both soldiers and **civilians**. In the United States and Europe, songs like "Over There" captured the spirit of national pride and unity. On the battlefield, music provided comfort to soldiers and was often played during breaks in fighting. In classical music, the war's horror inspired more **somber**, reflective compositions. Many composers created pieces that conveyed the grief and devastation brought by the conflict.

At the end of the decade, with the war over, music began to reflect a sense of hope and renewal. Jazz continued to grow in popularity, especially in northern cities like Chicago and New York, and set the stage for the cultural explosion of the 1920s.



Adapted from the internet

by ECP coach
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Word list

1. **Jazz**: a type of music that originated in the African-American communities, known for improvisation and strong rhythms.
2. **Improvisation**: creating music on the spot, without following a written composition.
3. **Patriotic**: expressing pride in one's country.
4. **Dissonant**: in music, having notes that clash rather than blend harmoniously.
5. **Somber**: serious and dark in tone or feeling.
6. **Morale**: the confidence and enthusiasm of a group of people, often during a difficult time.
7. **Fusion**: combining two or more styles into something new.
8. **Civilians**: people who are not part of the military.

Let's chat about that!

1. What elements of jazz made it different from earlier musical styles?
2. How did World War I affect music and musicians?
3. What was the significance of Stravinsky's "The Rite of Spring"?
4. How did jazz contribute to the idea of freedom and improvisation in music?
5. In what ways did patriotic songs shape people's experiences of the war?



Igor Stravinsky

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