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Independent Study & Mentorship

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Traditional Practices in Modern Times

Research Assessment #4

Date: October 13, 2017

Subject: The usage of music theory in modern music

Works Cited:

Hein, Ethan. "How Can Traditional Music Theory Mesh With Modern Pop Music?" Slate

Magazine, Quora, 17 Feb. 2014,

www.slate.com/blogs/quora/2014/02/17/teaching_music_theory_how_can_modern_music_mix_with_traditional_theory.html.

Assessment:

When studying music theory, often classical music is used to demonstrate different theory concepts. It is very rare to see a music theory analysis based on the mainstream music of today because so little of music theory is used create such songs, a contrary to my original ideas of music theory in modern music. However, the mechanics of music theory still remain. If a specific chord progression sounds good, it may be due to a music theory concept that those specific chords go well together. Although music theory may not take an important role in the informal composition of modern music, music theory continues to be an important tradition of

deciphering how to make specific melodies and what sounds and notes would go well with those melodies. The implementation of music theory in modern music will be assessed.

According to the article, music theory practices no longer are effective to musicians of today's music. This fact was particularly surprising to me because from my own experiences and my interviews with professionals, music theory is an enormous part of creating music. However, I believe context is important. Transcribing music onto paper will definitely require knowledge in music theory in order to properly transcribe the music for it to be universally understood. The music of today take a rather freeform approach to its rhythms and notes. In such cases, traditional music theory may not be as effective of a practice. Although I understand the reasoning behind the article's author's opinion, it does not change my own attitude toward the importance of music theory in modern music. Music theory is the core of composition and is essential to the process of songwriting as a whole. Nonetheless, the article does discuss examples of music theory concepts taking place in modern music, especially in the genre of rock.

Rather than looking at modern music from a standpoint of analyzing the music theory behind the song, it is more effective to analyze the song from an ethnomusicology view.

Ethnomusicology is a scientific study of music using data, experimentation and analysis of patterns to find characteristics of music and why they may sound pleasant to the ear. It is different to look at music from a different point of view than music theory, but the practicality of it seems credible as there is often a science to how a specific song can charm the masses. The article discusses the rock genre from the view of ethnomusicology and the patterns discovered were techniques that could be implemented into my own music if I choose to tackle to rock genre in my album.

In a research paper conducted by Trevor de Clercq and David Temperley, the different harmonic patterns and some of the most common chords were discovered. The research even presented the ideas of certain harmonic patterns or chord progressions to be more preferable than others. The ethnomusicology behind rock music was interesting to read upon and it demonstrates that there are certain patterns in all types of music that give way to the commonality of a genre. By discovering these commonalities, musicians can incorporate such ideas with their own original compositions.

In such ways this aides me to conduct my own music theory investigation in various genres. Once discovering these trends, it would allow me to utilize these in my own compositions in the future. Although using these patterns from specific genres could be seen as unoriginal, these patterns could be used to mix different genres. For example, from my own knowledge, a rather small genre called moombahton is a mix of the patterns found in different genres as it consists of the reggaeton beat found traditionally in Hispanic music and utilizes trap snares and a loud bass found in the trap music genre. With such tools, it brings to question whether new genres coming to trend would be a possibility like how historically, the blues genre appeared from the many influences of rock music. This demonstrates the interconnections of genres.

In the end, music theory plays a theme in finding the different patterns in music. With the utilization of the studies of ethnomusicology, a musician could potentially be able to create a quality song using science, an odd combination of subjects.