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Consonance and Dissonance

These two opposites give music the contrast it needs to imprint vibrant colors and hear throbbing stories into people's minds when they listen to music. If all music was just consonance, beautiful harmonies that never inflict only peace and comfortability in our minds, we would be strangled by boredom within our music. Dissonance, spine clenching accidentals and fear enhancing chords, brings us the contrast we want in our music. Replicates the imperfections that is life, and helps us to resonate intensely with music. The drama and riddle that dissonance provides when matched with consonance is what drives us to turn the page in the novel that a song with both can be.

Dissonance was once such a controversial sound in music it was related to wars and political outrages. Some people believed more dissonance could be found in music when the world was in more of a riot. Arnold Schoenberg was a composer and theorist who first conceptualized the idea that dissonance should not be restrained socially because it is a feared message.

“As the ear becomes acclimatized to a sonority within a particular context, the sonority will gradually become 'emancipated' from that context and seek a new one. The emancipation of the dominant-quality dissonances has followed this pattern, with the dominant seventh developing in status from a contrapuntal note in the sixteenth century to a quasi-consonant harmonic note in the early nineteenth. By the later nineteenth century the higher numbered dominant-quality dissonances had also achieved harmonic status, with resolution delayed or omitted completely. The greater autonomy of the dominant-quality dissonance contributed significantly to the weakening of traditional tonal function within a purely diatonic context.”

As explained, dissonance has been a growing part of musical culture. However the acceptance of it was slow. This goes to show how impactful music is socially and how aware people are of this especially authority figures. The “Emancipation of Dissonance” as Schoenberg put it, emphasised the idea that dissonance in music of course narrates the social and political stance of humanity but should be restrained because of that. Music has always been a storytelling tool and within stories conflict is an important aspect just as Dissonance is an important aspect alongside consonance.