

Aesthetic shifts from the avant-garde towards the 'second modernity': The swaddling of a new compositional thinking

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Abstract

Sliding on the time-axis, starting from the beginning of the 20th century, a plethora of terms was used to characterize the facets of music, like New, Avant-garde, Postmodern, Contemporary Music, to sample some. New Music was mainly applied to the music of the early 20th century, in particular the Second Viennese School, to indicate a radical rupture with concert tradition, entailing a break with the traditional audience by, if not braking, certainly thoroughly disturbing the foundation of the bond between music and the audience. Avant-garde was used for the radical, post-1945 tendencies of a modernist style in several genres of art music, whereas in the 1950s, the term avant-garde music was mostly associated with serial music. Postmodern music is mostly defined in opposition to modernist music; it favors eclecticism in musical form and musical genre, and often combines characteristics from different genres, or employs jump-cut sectionalization (such as blocks). Contemporary music is simply the name appointed to all musical production in a given present unburdened by a comparable effect of being so emphatically estranged. Seeing the process of music composition within all these views, the concept of newness becomes, undoubtedly, its common endeavor. If the compositional thinking wishes to remain new, it must not only be constantly creative and innovative, i.e., an embodiment of the living present, but it must furthermore renew the concept of the new itself; by this redefinition, it can extend the frame of its reference beyond the mere present. From a methodological point of view, this approach is embraced by the 'second modernity'. The latter breaks with fundamental aesthetic convictions of postmodernity (e.g., a modern, new, innovative musical material is no longer possible, thus, all manner of material is equally usable; hence, self-consistent style defined with reference to the present is not possible or desirable). 'Second modernity', however, is not simply the negational counter-movement to postmodernism and solidarity with high modernism, but brings forth new aesthetic characteristics, by introducing a project of a future that is open and which artists can aim for productively. By adopting the framework of the 'second modernity', this paper attempts to examine those aspects that could be used as aesthetic trajectories from avant-garde to nowadays, upon which new compositional means (like complex, deconstructive), with both functional and educational potentiality, could be deployed.

CV

Leontios J. Hadjileontiadis was born in Kastoria, Greece in 1966. He studied music theory and classical guitar obtaining Diplomas in Guitar Performance (1993-Prof. F. Bakses, Macedonian Conservatory, Thessaloniki (MCT), Greece) and in Composition (1997-Prof. Th. Antoniou, MCT), both with honors and 1st Prize. He also holds a Diploma in Electrical Engineering (1989, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki (AUTH), Greece), a PhD in Electrical and Computer Engineering (1997, AUTH) and a PhD in Music Composition (2004-Prof. David Blake, University of York, UK). He currently serves as an Associate Professor at the Dept. of Electrical & Computer Eng., AUTH, and since 1999 he teaches composition at the State Conservatory of Thessaloniki, Greece. Up to now, he has written 81 works and awarded 9 times. He has been a member of Greek Composers' Union (GCU) from 1993; since 2001, he is a Board Member of GCU and ISCM Greek Section. His research interests include the use of advance signal processing techniques (e.g., wavelets, fractals, fuzzy-logic, polyspectra, stochastic models) in music composition and in biomedical engineering.