Musical Modernity
From Classical Modernity up to the Second Modernity—Provisional Considerations

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One can, not least in aesthetic philosophy, judge the truth-content of philosophical theses by considering how far they help us to understand the questions they address. In art this means: understanding them in each concrete case. This applies to Harry Lehmann's theory "Avant-Garde Today,"[1] whose achievement lies in the convincing correlation of historical and systematic arguments. It functions both historically, as a sequence of steps within a model, and systematically, in terms of the basic model of art with its three basal components of work, medium and reflection; those components that enter a certain characteristic constellation in every historical phase. A fascinating aspect of this approach is its fidelity to the principle of the autopoiesis of art, which, as we know, has survived every declaration of its ending—from Hegel to postmodernism—and will therefore unquestionably continue to exist, and substantially so, in the future.

Lehmann's theory is also systematic in the sense that it claims to apply to all forms of art. And indeed: the term "second modernity," and hence the naming of a phase after postmodernity, has already appeared in theories of film, New Music and visual art— and not as a result of Lehmann's publication.[2] His phase model thus corresponds not only to the historical sequence of waves of modernization in art, but also to its discourse. At the same time, Lehmann would have no difficulty in admitting that the application of his conceptual figures and categories requires a twofold qualification: the phases of artistic modernization develop differently in all forms of art (but still in the specified sequence), and the question of what work, medium and reflection are is answered differently in each case. Thus factual criteria for postmodernity in architecture, for example, are much easier to specify than in music.

Of all art forms, music is the most difficult to grasp philosophically. However, I hold the view, after many years of dealing with Lehmann's art philosophy, that it also functions, *mutatis mutandis*, as applied to the art music of modernity—New Music. In tracing a brief history of musical modernization in the following, I am also drawing on earlier essays, some of which were written before I had become acquainted with Lehmann's philosophy.[3]

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[1] Harry Lehmann, "Avant-Garde Today. A Theoretical Model of Aesthetic Modernity," in Claus-Steffen Mahnkopf, ed., *Critical Composition Today* (= *New Music and Aesthetics in the 21st Century*, vol. 5) (Hofheim: Wolke, 2006).

[2] Oliver Fahle, *Bilder der Zweiten Moderne* (= *serie moderner film*, vol. 3) (Weimar, 2005); Peter Ruzicka, "Zweite Moderne und Musiktheater," in *Musik & Ästhetik* 30 (2004) (Ruzicka, who was artistic director of the Salzburger Festspiele at the time, chose "Second Modernity" as the New Music focus of the festival in 2005); Heinrich Klotz, *Kunst im 20. Jahrhundert. Moderne—Postmoderne—Zweite Moderne* (Munich, 1994).

[3] Claus-Steffen Mahnkopf, *Kritik der neuen Musik. Entwurf einer Musik des 21. Jahrhunderts* (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1998); "Neue Musik am Beginn der Zweiten Moderne," in *Merkur* 594/595 (1998); "Thesen zur Zweiten Moderne," in *Musik & Ästhetik* 36 (2005), now in Mahnkopf, *Die Humanität der Musik. Essays aus dem 21. Jahrhundert* (Hofheim: Wolke, 2007); "Theorie der musikalischen Postmoderne," in *Musik & Ästhetik* 46 (2008); "Second Modernity—An Attempted Assessment," in Claus-Steffen Mahnkopf

New Music should be understood not so much as a result of the Schönbergian "revolution" (atonality), but rather as a consequence of something that began with Beethoven: the compositional self-determination of the musical subject out of freedom. In his late works, the constructive rationality conjoined with this is subjected to an unprecedented process of reflection that scarcely spares any category of that which can be music, or of what music can be. This set off the process of musical modernization extending to serialism via the central stages of Wagner and atonality, and thus unleashed an unstoppable dynamic of escalation that meant both technical "progress" and artistic autonomy (and equally, albeit with some delay, social isolation). Post-war serialism, in its claims not only to total control over the material, but also to a seemingly ahistorical production of musical meaning from a tabula rasa, represented a sort of summit, needle's eye, crisis and turning point in one. The opportune moment (a new beginning after the collapse of World War II, lacking the competition of older generations) and the relative historical continuity (the legacy of the Second Viennese School) still guaranteed that "pre-stabilized harmony" among avant-gardists that was around 1970 shattered with vehemence in favor of "postmodernism." The countless achievements of the serial and post-serial phases (parametric thinking, pre-compositional control, immanentism, open form, "hybrid" playing techniques, electronics, timbre composition, musical theater, etc.) practically piled on top of one other; they constitute a substantial challenge for the future.

The florescence of New Music after the Second World War represents, from Luhmann's-point of view, the avant-garde,[4] while the term "classical modernity" refers to the period immediately preceding it, namely that of Schönberg and his school, of Stravinsky and Bartók, but also of American experimentalists such as Ives. All these composers were searching for new musical materials ("media"), but essentially retained the existing vocabulary of musical form (its syntax and grammar) and the corresponding semantics. When Boulez after WWII favored Webern and declared Schönberg dead, this marked a shift to a radicalized avant-garde that wanted to overcome the last traces of tradition—which also meant all binding notions of work, grammar, form and semantics—by abolishing them and replacing them with a new "logic." The work in the traditional sense was negated, so to speak once and for all.

There were, considered in terms of ideal types, two possible reactions to this negation. Either one accepted the no-longer-existence of the work, came to terms with this state of affairs and henceforth concentrated on anti-works, happenings, or concept art; or one strove, under new conditions, to create a previously unknown, hence genuinely "new" understanding of the work, even to create an "ideal" work on this foundation.

One particularity of music in comparison to visual art is the fact that the great majority of composers have decided to remain composers, to compose and thus legitimate their authorship. Radicalized non-works were more common in America (e.g., Cage) and rarer in Europe (e.g., certain phases of Dieter Schnebel's output). It may well

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et al. (eds.), *Facets of the Second Modernity* (= *New Music and Aesthetics in the 21st Century*, vol. 6) (Hofheim: Wolke, 2008).

[4] Lehmann's treatment of the term "avant-garde" thus clearly differs from that found in Peter Bürger's *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, trans. Michael Shaw (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984).

be that one consequence of the tremendous historical pressure of a nearly 1000-year Western, i.e., European, musical evolution is that composers are not willing to let go of their existence entirely. However, I would consider more important than this a specific factual reason why in music—as well as in literature and film—the work never truly disappeared. Because of the ephemerality of its sonic-acoustic medium, music is much more dependent, perhaps constitutively so, on a temporal enclosure than arts that work with visual, physical or language elements. The fact that music generally has a beginning and an end, thus being located temporally within these boundaries, and that it is defined by a particular ensemble of musicians and sound sources, make it difficult truly to negate the musical work. Strictly speaking, the non-work should not have any boundaries, only fluid transitions within an acoustic environment, and the sounding material(s) should be sufficiently dispersed to avoid the formation of any identity. The anti-work aesthetic should thus clarify its favored idea: silence must first of all be produced before it can be perceived as the "higher" form of music. It is not surprising, therefore, that even Cage, the originator of the most famous attack on the traditional work aesthetic, left behind works, in so far as his pieces have titles, an author and defined time frames, exist in writing and are performed, hence interpreted in the traditional sense (and are furthermore treated as works in terms of performance rights and copyright).

It seems to me that the idea of musical non-works—with a merely imaginary author, no fixed temporal boundaries, and variable sound sources—has established itself in the field of sound art, that is to say a new art form that has separated off from composed music and has, in the process of dissolution of genre boundaries, approached installation art, which developed independently out of visual art.

The musical avant-garde, generally speaking, has two faces, this condition following from the idea of negating the musical work (i.e., viewed as inherently traditional): on the one hand an anti-work aesthetic in the sense of acoustic sound art, and on the other hand the intensification of compositional—i.e., technically and conceptually crafted—rationality, expressed in highly personalized systems of compositional technique, musical material and the accompanying artistic philosophy.

But if the non-work was (almost) impossible for the compositional avant-garde, what made it an avant-garde? Essentially two aspects: firstly the attempt to develop a genuinely new kind of music, one that had not previously existed and could no longer be evaluated or understood through any traditional criteria, and secondly its participation in the idea of world change, in so far as this new kind of music was intended to herald a new culture of listening and enjoyment in humanity. In Nono's case, briefly put, this meant that a new society also needed a new music, and for Adorno it meant that a liberated humanity needed a "completely free" music.

Today we know that the revolutionary claims of the musical avant-garde were overblown; they were presumptuous and exaggerated. But sometimes claims have to be made so that they can fail authentically (or simply wait for the evolution of humanity to enable a judgment at a later point). Thus, in my view, the reason for the abandonment of the avant-garde and the proclamation of postmodernity lay not so much in the exhaustion of material mentioned so often in the 1970s, but rather in an unease about the fact that an increasingly exclusive music precisely does *not* reach the humanity whose musical taste was supposed to be revolutionized. Harry Lehmann has shown convincingly that

postmodernity too—contrary to its own proclamation—forms a part of the development of material.

Before we come to postmodernity, however, it should be noted that the representatives of the avant-garde were naturally continuing their work. The phases of art's evolution are now shorter than the life spans of the relevant artists. If one goes back to the late 1990s, a point at which one could look back on some 25 years of postmodernity, one can discern four (or five) prominent directions.[5] Musical negativism—especially as with Lachenmann—concentrates on the details of instrumental sounds in their non-traditional mode in order for them to be experienced in an estranged form that consciously counteracts what is familiar, albeit without (as yet?) solving the problem of form with such "non-identical" material. Musical complexism[6]—beginning with Ferneyhough—cultivates the differentiation of musical discursivity in order to force the "Carceri d'Invenzione," Piranesi's "prisons of invention," upon the listener, but without providing any "free time" for the sounds to be themselves. Statistical-stochastic composition—invented by Xenakis—explores systematic compositional questions in order to set off mass effects of great, almost archetypal power, yet without being able to do justice to each musical element as an "individual." Finally, spectralism—Grisey was its leading exponent—pushes the harmonic language further in order to arrive at a binding, or at least workable situation of the sound space, though without developing an aesthetic that goes beyond a naïve "naturalism."

In the 1990s a "fifth" voice emerged, even though its modernity did not define itself in terms of any decidedly composition-technical problem. This music is without doubt authentically contemporary, however, despite being carried by a "nostalgic" poetics, i.e., one that expresses a form of homesickness, and perhaps not following the latest forms of musical progress—but without being regressive. Kurtág's music could be considered paradigmatic for what George Steiner refers to as "real presence." Kurtág developed far away from the New Music circus, in quiet, even shy and admirably scrupulous miniature compositions, and it is perhaps no coincidence that he went from an absolute "insider tip" to a contemporary "classic" almost overnight. I consider Kurtág's music *the* content-aesthetic challenge among the four main modern tendencies, precisely in the transition to the 21st century.

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Even postmodernity, for all its affirmative demeanor, works with negation. While classical modernity negated the medium ("atonality") and the avant-garde negated the work, postmodernity negates the truth. Whatever it does, one is told that it is not intended as it seems; evidently, postmodern art is obsessed with documenting the fact that it has abandoned the truth concept, which it sees as part of the tradition. One can describe this non-truth in different ways: irony, lie, trickery, falseness, hypocrisy, mockery—in all

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[5] Some have remained unnamed because they had already lost their leading exponents by that point; I am thinking especially of Feldman and Nono.

[6] Claus-Steffen Mahnkopf, "Complex Music: Attempt at a Definition," in Mahnkopf et al. (eds.), *Polyphony & Complexity* (= *New Music and Aesthetics in the 21st Century*, vol. 1) (Hofheim: Wolke, 2002).

cases, the exclusion of truth[7] remains the decisive criterion used to set oneself apart from the avant-garde. The negation of truth is, dialectically viewed, the precondition for the positing (as negation of the negation) of material, the extended medium.[8] The historical, semantic and cultural contexts are fundamentally unavailable because they are part of the hermeneutical horizon within which the artist constitutes him-/herself in the first place. If they are ignored because they *can* be ignored—an in this, postmodernity is innovative—then these contexts are no longer accountable to the principle of truth; they have, so to speak, unburdened themselves of it. And then those materials from areas that had for the avant-garde previously been taboo can be used at leisure ("anything goes"). Essentially all media and musical materials can be used, also those from historical music, foreign cultures, or pop music.

Postmodernity owes this inclusion of expanded, in fact completely unrestricted musical materials to the negation of artistic and expressive truth. While visual artists (Jeff Koons) or writers (Umberto Eco) have no difficulty in at least admitting this, composers with postmodern ideas and sentiments tend to deny that very fact—perhaps out of a guilty conscience, because the principle of non-truth is irreconcilable with the legacy of the great composers, which they so vehemently claim to be continuing. John Adams expresses this ambivalence in the following way: "Even though I hate the word postmodernism I am probably the most postmodern composer alive".[9]

Postmodern music can also take on different guises. In the main, one can distinguish five basic characteristics:

1. The postmodern musical work is hedonistic; it displays an enjoyment of its own combinatorial imagination with a certain frivolous air unique to music; its reception occurs in the mode of pleasure (e.g., Kagel, *Match*).
2. The postmodern musical work is narrative; it presents a musical narrative, not a composition of sounds or structures (e.g., Rihm, *Musik für drei Streicher*).
3. The postmodern musical work is formally heteronomous, i.e., the difficult problem of form is solved, this being achieved through a strong connection to previously existing and functioning forms (e.g., Ligeti, *Passacaglia ungherese*).
4. The postmodern musical work refers outside of itself; its material is taken from other music (e.g., Schnittke, Third String Quartet).

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[7] We are not dealing here with the eminently complex question of how (or whether) one can conceive of truth within art, i.e., outside of science. It is sufficient in this context to note that postmodernity expressly discarded the truth-claims (Adorno's "state of the material" or the intention to change the world) of classical modernity and the avant-garde.

[8] Musical high-Modernity and the Avant-garde negate historically-defined material, which they replace in each case with a modern and innovative development representative of Adorno's "state of the material" (*Materialstand*). This negation is an exclusion of historical Material, which negation Postmodernity, in a second stage, negates.

[9] Interview with John Adams in Sandra Müller-Berg, *"Tonal harmony is like a natural force". Eine Studie über das Orchesterwerk "Harmonielehre" von John Adams* (= *sinefonia* 4) (Hofheim: Wolke, 2006), p. 224.

5. The postmodern musical work is ironic, and thus pushes artistic truth towards a distortion of the truth and shows that what is presented is not intended in the way it is presented (e.g., Thomas Adès, *Brahms*).[10]

It is thus clear that a single such characteristic is not sufficient to attain the status of postmodernity (unless the fourth mentioned above is applied to an extreme degree, such that a work consists *entirely* of outside references; though a work of music wholly intended as non-true can scarcely be modern, it could be avant-garde).

A postmodern musical work must, excepting the case of an extreme form of characteristic 4., have several of these basic characteristics; if it possesses all of them, one can speak of an integral postmodern work. One could just as well posit the following types of musical postmodernity:

1. *Poly-stylistic postmodernity*: here the dominant aspect is pluralism, and thus the availability of different historical periods.
2. *Ironic postmodernity*: the main intention is that of travesty, parody, irony and excess.
3. *Hybrid postmodernity*: crossover effects are intended, primarily with forms of music outside of European art music (e.g., pop music or "world music").
4. *Naïve postmodernity*: this does not react to the developments of modernity or the avant-garde because it does not, or does not want to, recognize them. Examples are neo-traditionalism and some minimalism.
5. *Bad postmodernity*: this would be an expression of formlessness, a proximity to trash, amateurism, and charlatanry.
6. *Epigonal postmodernity*: this would be a form of "New Music light"— not primarily poly-stylistic or ironic, but drawing on material from an earlier generation, especially atonal music (in contrast to the postmodern preference for tonal music in the 1970s).[11]

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[10] Commentary on the above:

1. The work must not simply be musical entertainment, but also, in the sense of double coding, address the connoisseur who takes pleasure in the play of possibilities. This clearly tends in the direction of mannerism.
2. Narration is not simply a postmodern criterion, but also one of second modernity.
3. Solving the problem of form is perhaps the most difficult task for the postmodern work, as it is impossible to mediate internally between references to external material and an autonomous form. The cleverest solution is therefore to use a pre-existing form in its entirety (down to the syntactical level). This, admittedly, also creates a certain resemblance to classicism.
4. Here the question is how much material refers outside the piece. A single quotation, as in Klaus Huber's *Senfkorn*, does not make a work postmodern.
5. One should distinguish between isolated uses of irony and a work with a completely ironic character.

[11] For a further discussion, see Claus-Steffen Mahnkopf, "Theorie der musikalischen Postmoderne" (footnote 3).

Second modernity, which sets itself apart from postmodernity, negates the negation of truth. It inherits the total complex of classical modernity/avant-garde/postmodernity, but under the condition that all achievements—new materials, critique of the work, plurality—are examined in terms of truth, or at least the capacity for truth. This is an immense challenge. It must deal in earnest with the claims to freedom and plurality made by postmodernity; and following on from avant-gardist intentions also becomes more earnest, as something that was simply experimental before would now be normative and political. (In this sense the avant-garde, which has meanwhile been postmodernized and appears as part of the culture of fun within the art system, would have to be de-postmodernized by second modernity.)[12]

Because second modernity is committed to the guiding principle of truth—and this self-commitment is much more serious than the emphatic truth claimed in classical modernity, because it is in a time of radical (postmodern) truth evasion—it can also produce convincing works once again. The works of second modernity are, once more, works that must be the way they are, or indeed: that are as they must be. And one can—one must—name reasons for this: technical, conceptual, and aesthetic reasons.

The term "second modernity" refers, however provisionally, to what follows postmodernity—following both in the sense of temporal succession and in the sense of drawing aesthetic conclusions. To speak of a second modernity implies that one of postmodernity's main theses, namely that history had reached its end and postmodernism had overcome modernism once and for all, is false. In music, second modernity is an approach that breaks with fundamental aesthetic convictions of postmodernity. These are primarily the belief that a modern, new, innovative musical material is no longer possible and that therefore all manner of material, regardless of its historical, stylistic and functional context, is equally usable, and that for this reason a self-consistent style defined with reference to the present is not possible, and indeed not desirable.

One of the hallmarks of second modernity is the fact that it shares neither of these tenets. It is concerned with cohesive styles—i.e., styles that are coherent in terms of technique, material and semantics—using modern material, elements that have developed in recent times. Second modernity does not define itself purely negatively as a rejection of postmodernism, however, but also positively, by expressing solidarity with the tenets of classical modernism and the avant-garde. These are above all the belief in experimentation and innovation, and the conviction that construction, i.e., the technical validation of the musical discourse, is indispensable.

For second modernity is not simply the negational counter-movement to postmodernism and solidarity with high modernism; to the extent that it develops, it will bring forth new aesthetic characteristics which, one hopes, have a future. Second modernity means working on the project of a future that is open and which artists can aim for productively.

If one casts a glance at composers up to the age of about 50 today, one can observe a panorama of numerous and divergent positions that can be considered as

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[12] In his book *Die flüchtige Wahrheit der Kunst: Ästhetik nach Luhmann* [The Elusive Truth of Art: Aesthetics after Luhmann] (Munich: Wilhelm Fink, 2006), Harry Lehmann presents an aesthetics of truth that attempts to conceive of truth in art post-Adorno, and post-metaphysically.

belonging to second modernity. Providing an overview of these would only be possible for someone who subjected the work of such composers to precise examination with empathy and meticulousness. One would have to take into account those composers who are already considered part of second modernity—for example (in alphabetical order): Mark André, Richard Barrett, Pierluigi Billone, Chaya Czernowin, Sebastian Claren, Frank Cox, Liza Lim, Claus-Steffen Mahnkopf, Chris Mercer, Brice Pauset, Enno Poppe, Wolfram Schurig, Steven Kazuo Takasugi, Franck Yeznikian—and others who also deserve to be mentioned under the same heading. Anyone wishing to embark on such a study would have to take into account the individuality of each approach as a unique constellation of aesthetics, technique, material and semantics.

With a view of the overall situation, one can say that the aforementioned composers, for all their differences, are connected by a collection of characteristics—one could almost say: through a common catalogue of values.

1. They compose works, and do so in conjunction with a critical engagement with the work concept. "Work" means a constructed, through-composed entity with clear internal and external boundaries, not an experimental setup with uncertain results. The avant-garde's experience that the work is *also* problematic does not enter the form itself, but rather the resistant, dissonant expression of the music.

2. They construct their material as an autonomous material. The difference here between second and first modernity is that now the progress of material, material innovation, personal style-defining fixation on—and also reduction to—characteristic material aspects no longer stand in the foreground. It is taken for granted that the material is modern; but it can vary, depending on the work; Harry Lehmann would say: according to the work's *Gehalt*.[13] The aesthetic success of a work is not least dependent on an agreement between the chosen material (or materials) and the conception of the work, and it is the conception that governs the construction of the material. This ensures that the material is not—as in postmodernism—dealt with arbitrarily.

3. The composers of second modernity assume a critical stance towards contemporary culture, and are hence not motivated primarily by careerism. They are interested in the development of their personal style, their poetics and their life's work, not—or at least not primarily—in satisfying modish needs. As today's culture continues to be postmodern, and thus "plays the game of irony with pleasure" and is geared towards "entertainment," the art of second modernity stands in opposition to this in its emphasis on seriousness and artistic truth.

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[13]The following is an explanation of Harry Lehmann's conception of Gehalt:

> The German concept of "*Gehalt*" cannot be precisely translated into English. The *Gehalt* of an artwork is not the traditional pre-existent "content," but rather must be experienced and developed by the recipient through the process of interpretation. Whereas content (*Inhalt*) and form are only weakly mediated antithesis, such that the content can so to speak be poured into the form, the difference between *Gehalt* and form in a modern artwork is infinitely mediated. The *Gehalt* of the artwork is so to speak that "content" (*Inhalt*) which can first be experienced through the formal combinatoriality of the artwork and then must be interpreted to the world through words.

From Harry Lehmann, "Avant-Garde Today. A Theoretical Model of Aesthetic Modernity," in Claus-Steffen Mahnkopf et al., eds., *Critical Composition Today* (= *New Music and Aesthetics in the 21st Century*, vol. 5) (Hofheim: Wolke, 2006), p. 31, footnote 28.

4. The composers of second modernity are aesthetically enlightened in their thinking and aware in their compositional technique. The former means that they work on the unsolved aporiai of postmodernism (but also classical modernism and the avant-garde) *as* problems, the latter that this occurs not only in terms of the own artistic philosophy, so to speak as a declaration of intent, but rather in the process of going through the rationality of the compositional act.

It is not difficult to tell from these four characteristics that not all younger composers—not even the majority—should automatically be considered part of second modernity. Second modernity is not simply a period, a temporal division, a particular generation, but rather a qualitative concept (leaving aside the fact that some composers do not view themselves as being involved with a second modernity, or at least avoid the discussion thereof). It should not be forgotten that postmodern, avant-garde, anti-modern and modern (in the sense of first modernity) attitudes will continue to exist, and do so independently of the age of those who display them.

It would seem indispensable to point out that second modernity is as multi-faceted and internally differentiated—as plural, one could say—as all art and all times have been. The different aesthetic emphases and characters, different cultural contexts and sensitivities naturally affect the approaches of the individual artists. One can thus distinguish between positivist and negativist, secular and religious, optimistic and resignatory, expressionist and impressionist, sound-oriented and discourse-oriented, constructivist and deconstructivist, holistic and dislocatory, centered and multi-perspectival, formalist and narrativist tendencies. Evidently, one finds a recurrence of the whole spectrum of expressive types that developed throughout modernity.

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As is so often the case, art theory was quickest off the mark: in 1994, Heinrich Klotz published a book with the tripartite chronological form whose temporal scheme naturally has a systematic core: *Moderne—Postmoderne—Zweite Moderne*.[14] Among other things, Klotz discovered a second modernity in architecture (the very same field in which the postmodernism debate in art had been carried out most vehemently, and probably also most convincingly), namely in deconstructivist architecture, represented by such figures as Daniel Libeskind, Zaha Hadid, Peter Eisenman, Frank O. Gehry, Rem Kohlhaas and Coop Himmelblau. Just as postmodernism in architecture imposed itself once an approach that had become sterile and formalistically cold (and therefore offered little potential for creative expansion; a prominent example would be Gropius) had reached a dead, a subsequent counter-movement arose with a new aesthetic breaking with postmodernism and seeking a direct relationship to aspects of classical modernism. As the parallels to music are not only numerous, but also strikingly evident,[15] it is certainly no futile undertaking to apply this tripartite scheme also to art music.[16]

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[14] Heinrich Klotz, *Kunst im 20. Jahrhundert: Moderne—Postmoderne—Zweite Moderne* (Munich, 1994).

[15] See Claus-Steffen Mahnkopf, "Architektur und neue Musik," in *Musik und Architektur*, ed. Christoph Metzger (Saarbrücken, 2003).

[16] This is reinforced by Josef Häusler's characterization of Ferneyhough as the "harbinger of a 'second modernity'" (*Spiegel der neuen Musik: Donaueschingen. Chronik—Tendenzen—Werkbesprechungen* [Kassel/Stuttgart: Bärenreiter, 1996], p. 354). See also Claus-Steffen Mahnkopf, "Neue Musik am Beginn der Zweiten Moderne," in *Merkur* 594/595 (1998); "Thesen zur Zweiten Moderne," in *Musik & Ästhetik* 36

We would argue that it is only meaningful to speak of second modernity if it is viewed as a reaction to, response to, or result of the postmodern situation. Second modernity in music is the attempt to approach the unsolved problems of postmodernity (including those necessarily unsolvable within a postmodern aesthetic) productively, seizing upon aesthetic principles from pre-postmodernity in different ways and thus opening the door to the future. Second modernity is thus neither a denial of postmodernity—which, surprisingly, is validated precisely from the perspective of second modernity—nor a neurotic defense reaction or willful ignorance. Second modernity can only be plausible, not least in our increasingly anti-artistic and anti-intellectual times, if it addresses issues of content with all its power.

In this context it is beneficial to outline one of the most productive theoretical approaches concerning aesthetic modernity conceived—unfortunately uncharacteristic in the present-day discourse of the modern arts—as extending into the present. Harry Lehmann reconstructs the history of modern art, which gained systemic autonomy in the Italian Renaissance, when the distinction was made between art and non-art and artistic beauty was discussed for the first time, as a history of progressive differentiation processed through its three fundamental components: work (the individual artistic product), medium (the "material" [in the case of music: sound, pitches, rhythms, temporal organization]), and reflection (semantics). In classical modernity, the work and the medium were separated—tonality was abandoned—and replaced by new media in each instance, while reflection remained tied to an underlying philosophy, creating the possibility of becoming the heir to Classicism. Whereas classical modernity negated the medium, the avant-garde negated the work, which it separated from reflection; it did this through non-works in order to bring reflection to a state of autonomy, which is particularly evident in concept art.

These stages form the parts of first modernity, which postmodernity rejected after it had seemingly led to the much-vaunted and oft-discussed end of art history. For if the medium is present as an everlasting problem and reflection is freed by the abolition of the work, this explains why certain composers became specialists for different areas of material—Cage for chance, Boulez for structure, Stockhausen for formula, Grisey for spectrum, Xenakis for stochastic processes, Scelsi for one-note music, Nono for sound and silence, Lachenmann for noises, Ferneyhough for parametric thinking—and music repeatedly broke out of the boundaries of its own self-identity time and again: from Fluxus, aleatoricism, musical theater to installations, crossover attempts, even private ontologies à la Stockhausen. Up until the dubious emancipation that came with postmodernity, first modernity therefore worked through a rigorous process of research into material, structure, form and concept, which, having arrived at a certain point, inevitably reached a phase of exhaustion.

There is a complementary relationship between aesthetic modernity and the avant-garde: while the former sought to explore and expand the immanent range of musical possibilities, the latter attempted to revolutionize the performative character, world-relation and social standing of music; its outside, so to speak. We know that the two

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(2005); "Die Zweite Moderne als kompositorische Praxis. Oder: Was mich mit Steven Kazuo Takasugi verbindet," in *Orientierungen: Wege im Pluralismus der Gegenwartsmusik*, ed. Jörn Peter Hiekel (Veröffentlichungen des Instituts für neue Musik und Musikerziehung Darmstadt, vol. 47) (Mainz: Schott, 2007).

cannot be reconciled; as long as the world's evolution does not alter its current directional logic, we must live with it. If postmodernism, in its mischievous, playful, Siegfried-like and untroubled, pragmatic and worldly, anti-metaphysical—but at times simply reactionary—nature had not appeared on the scene, one would have to ask oneself what would have become of modern art. At some point the material would have been fully explored, and those who sought to change the world would inevitably have despaired at the world. Innovation and rupture would have imploded. Remarkably, however, there is an autopoiesis of human creativity that develops cunning methods at certain times.

Postmodernism, according to Lehmann, rebels against the orientation towards negation, problems, and impossibility and breaks with these taboos; it negates the negation of the medium by making all media—all states of material, i.e., all historically and globally available musical styles—possible. It is concerned with these contingent possibilities "without problems." Work and medium are thus reunited, but as difference; for both can be chosen freely, as it were non-committally, without the internal mediation present in the metaphysical idea of classical modernism, for example the Second Viennese School. The historical achievement of postmodernity is hence that of breaking out of a modernity that had become orthodox—blind, stubborn and unproductive—and, Lehmann argues, the retrieval of the medium, this time even in its autonomy.

The extent of the breach becomes clear through a comparison with the two most important characteristics of first modernity: *reductionism* is the aesthetic program of basing an œuvre on a particular musical quality, usually the specialty of the respective composer. Though following through the logic of a particular sonic design enhances the recognizability of the works (and thus also their comprehensibility), it also restricts the internal complexity of a life's work. *Centrism* is related to this: insistence on a "strong thought" that aims for unity, self-identity, and inner systematicity.

Postmodernity's gain in material autonomy (using Lehmann's terminology) is, however, with regard to the work, not autonomy, because the material is heteronomous, and thus heteronomous in relation to the form and the semantics. This is precisely the situation that second modernity does not accept. The fact that postmodernity accepts foreign material, which can at best only be combined ironically or playfully, has grave consequences for the construction of the work. It remains meta-music, a piece of art rather than a genuine artwork. Its semantics is superficial, essentially taking its conceptual approach from the avant-garde: one needs to know that the musical styles exhibited are not what is "really" meant, but that they are actually saying something different. A music that is comprehensible on its own terms is impossible. And thus a music that says something genuinely new is also impossible. Postmodernism, for all its joy in trying things out, is not especially productive. This is one reason why it only flourished for such a short time—in stark contrast to its own declarations, in which it heralded an era of New Testament proportions.

For a range of very different reasons, a certain resistance to musical postmodernism developed. In the 1980s, a movement that had not previously existed emerged: complex composition, New Complexity, complexism—all names that seek to formulate the new quality. Ferneyhough, despite coming from the time before postmodernity, may have played a mediating part here, having abandoned reductionist thinking at the start of the 1980s (consider the compositional modes of Nono, Feldman

and the gradually aging Lachenmann at the same time) in favor of a multi-perspectival style—albeit retaining the aspect of centrism in the form of "personal style."

Though complexism is probably not the only manifestation of second modernity, it can be used to illustrate its essential attributes. As far as the material is concerned, a progressive conception of material has a decisive role once again: microtonality, complex rhythms, nested formal constructions, poly-works, live electronics, computer-assisted composition, the whole spectrum of pitch and noise, hybrid playing techniques. As for the style, its aim is an autonomous, personal language that is cohesive within itself rather than combining foreign styles as collages. As far as its artistic self-image is concerned, it aims for a music that is relevant to our times, that has a character of its own and does not follow audience taste, which is by nature conservative. Second modernity is thus anti-careerist, oppositional and autonomous.

It is almost a defining characteristic of second modernity that one recognizes it by the compositional techniques it employs—or by the fact that it rehabilitates compositional technique per se. For it returns to the question (necessarily) avoided by postmodernism, namely how musical form can result from a material that must first be produced for this formal genesis—or, to put it differently: how material and form can be connected *internally*, not simply meta-linguistically. That was and still is the great question of modern music as a whole, which took the loss of metaphysical givens upon itself because it had no other choice, and because it is precisely in this work that it sees a possibility of creating truly new music (not merely writing second-hand music).

In Harry Lehmann's theoretical model, this means that the work, negated by the avant-garde, is now reinstated (as material was in the case of postmodernity). Second modernity negates the negation of the work. Its striving to create works again is an expression of precisely that technical aim: that material and form should form a cohesive unity once more, that is to say be adapted to each other. The work is no more and no less than a form-fulfilling, autonomous application of material in musical time according to work-specific conceptions.

Second modernity does not, however, constitute a regression to a state before the negation of the work; it does not seek to forget what happened. But it also knows that the non-work cannot simply be glorified for all eternity; this non-work ages and is taken for granted as part of music (like everything else), but this takes away the very sting intended by the avant-garde. What, then, is so special about second modernity that it can claim to offer genuine innovation, not simply a perfected version of the "classical" construction ideal? Second modernity strives to create multi-perspectival, i.e., non-reductionistic works (which has been almost impossible *at a modern standard* since the Second World War) and cultivates the ideal of integral styles. But it has learned from classical modernity, the avant-garde, and—amazing as it may seem—also from postmodernity. The three dimensions of differentiation examined by Lehmann—work, medium, and reflection—no longer form a unity, as Schönberg in particular had hoped, but rather exist in a differential, one might say deconstructive relationship with one another. Each area can gain partial dominance depending on emphasis, intention, tradition, and taste. Admittedly—and this is what sets it fundamentally apart from postmodernity—these differences must be substantial. That is to say, they must be constructive and constructed;

differences that can give technical account for themselves. Second modernity is thus not simply a second version of something already known.[17]

Translation: Wieland Hoban

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[17] Once one has adopted the perspective of second modernity (and thus emancipated oneself both from first modernity and postmodernity), new epistemological possibilities arise: firstly, one can ask whether earlier figures perhaps anticipated certain characteristics of second modernity. Thus Nono, who at times seemed to have taken on postmodern traits, could be viewed as a forerunner of second modernity. Secondly, overcoming postmodernity's absurd philosophy of history enables us to see that every way of thinking about art is deeply historical, and that for every question raised here one must take into account when it is asked and within which historical horizon the person presuming to answer it is located. I would therefore argue for a radical return to an internally historic thinking. This is decisive for second modernity's own self-enlightenment; as it is still in the process of becoming, it makes a considerable difference whether it is formulated in 2000, 2005 or 2010.