

Musical Material Today

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Translations from German: Wieland Hoban



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Foreword

Time and again, New Music—i.e., music since the start of the 20th century—has been described as a great process entailing the expansion of musical material. At times, the protagonists themselves have made this their expressed aim. Although the progress of material has always also been criticized, it can conversely be said that it has proved irrefutable over long periods. It has existed. When the avant-garde entered a phase of exhaustion at the start of the 1970s and postmodernism came to the fore, the exponents of the younger generation believed that material progress would no longer play a significant part. People were—seemingly—no longer interested in exploring new sonic possibilities. Instead, they drew on the past, especially tonal music, with the intention of re-evoking it—sometimes with irony, sometimes with pathos. The negatory taboos of the avant-garde were declared invalid. Instead, everything was permitted in accordance with an unlimited notion of freedom.

The historical irony of this development is that it expanded material yet again, for now three new areas previously excluded by the avant-garde became available: the art music of the past, popular music (of the present) and ethnic music (of the world's peoples). Thus postmodernism too resulted, *volens volens*, in material progress. Today there is once more talk of this process coming to a halt, even though it is impossible to assess the scope of the new medial possibilities connected to the “digital revolution.” The recurring claim that material progress has come to an end can be taken as a sure sign that it is in full swing.

Now that postmodernism has itself been “exhausted,” and thus become historical, it is time to ask how composers today approach these new forms of material and integrate them into their musical work. This volume, the eighth in our book series, concerns itself not so much with the immanent logic of the works discussed as with deliberate references to elements outside them. Twelve composers from Germany, Austria, Great Britain, the USA, and Canada present their work.

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The Editors

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