

The Foundations of Contemporary Composition

New Music and Aesthetics in the 21st Century

Published in Collaboration with the
Gesellschaft für Musik und Ästhetik

Volume 3

The Foundations of Contemporary Composition

Published in Collaboration with the
Akademie Schloß Solitude

Edited by Claus-Steffen Mahnkopf

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Foreword

From September 27 to 29, 2002, the *Gesellschaft für Musik und Ästhetik*, in collaboration with the Akademie Schloß Solitude and supported by the Ernst von Siemens Musikstiftung, organized an international and interdisciplinary symposium concerning the “Foundations of Contemporary Composition.” The goal of this symposium was to appraise, on a theoretical and artistic level, the foundations of contemporary composition, whereby by “contemporary” the recent past and direct present was understood. The following reasons were decisive in choosing this topic:

- a) the musicological research in the domain of new music is concentrated on the now historical period from ca. 1950 to 1970;
- b) writings about contemporary music since the 1980s have been increasingly lacking in serious reflection and theoretical perspective;
- c) a clearly perceptible transformation from a First to a “Second Modernity,” obscured by the postmodern phenomenon and now awaiting serious critical appraisal, should be supported, above all in view of its artistic and creative potentials; and
- d) finally, the increasing pluralization of the discourse of contemporary composition demands a dialogical confrontation of divergent approaches.

Composers and musicologists, along with one philosopher and one interpreter were invited in order to explore the terrain of contemporary composition in a systematic fashion. Four sections arose from these researches: the three main musical sections consider categories (progress, reflection, deconstruction, conceptuality), material and form (harmony, polyphony, spectralism), and technological aspects (algorithmic and electroacoustic composition, as well as sound composition); a fourth section is dedicated to interdisciplinary reflection and contemporary performance practice.

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Claus-Steffen Mahnkopf

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