

AESTHETIC ATTITUDES ASSOCIATED WITH MUSICAL POSTMODERNISM

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Abstract

Postmodernism is presented as a form of liberation from the rigors imposed by establishing high standards of quality, with the intention to provide a more accessible art form. The modernist current has contributed to a form of sealing the art around an elite group hardly letting art to be savored and understood by the public. With its innovative ideas on dismantling the rigorous barriers of elitist art, the postmodernism will threaten the preset aesthetic standards to constitute a better level of understanding of contemporary art which is dictated by taste and opinion.

Keywords: *musical postmodernism, aesthetic attitudes, music reception*

Introduction

A large period of time art has been modern term that has on one hand a stylistic orientation based largely on originality of language, and on the other hand a temporal connotation that take into account the totality of contemporary artistic productions. The two directions of the term brings obvious confusion that can sometimes interfere with the quality of the artwork because to be modern in terms of style include a validation of its artistic production and fitting of certain standards (aesthetic and stylistic) while the temporal aspect expresses just an artistic achievement that happens in the present time. However, for a while the modern term has been used without restriction, whereas art was "modern" as a style, and as a temporal period.

Contemporary or...

To designate works currently created but not belonging to the modern trend, the term *contemporary* has been used for a while. But it covers only the temporal aspect of the phenomenon without involving the stylistic factor. The need to specify stylistic guidelines has made occur the term postmodern with the intention of a clear distinction between the modern and aesthetic ideas that followed after it. This new orientation appeared not only in art but also in philosophy, sociology or religion, is developing on the basis of analogies to modern term for which the prefix "post" brings various connotations. The term generally designates a variety of stylistic concepts which include almost all the achievements arising after the modernist period, wherein the plurality of styles that belong to it indicate, in most cases, a common feature which is opposition to modernist ideas.

The postmodern thinking is often released by constraints on maintaining a high quality standard, motivated by the need for more accessible arts. It appeared and developed in a climate of taste and opinion. In postmodernism, art has been freed from the burden of philosophy, and the artists are free to make art in any way they want, with or without a specific purpose. This attitude leads to a great diversity, without determining a characteristic style in opposition to the whole thinking of the modern age. Artists now have at their disposal the whole legacy of art history to work with it.

Postmodern

Unlike modernism, the postmodernism does not deny anything in the history of art even the rigors of modernism, to which sometimes presents itself as a follower. It relies, for the most part, on the entire treasure offered by art history in which any hint, reference or citation is permitted. It marks a time of disorder in the information, characterized by complete freedom in which everything is permitted. In postmodernism, due to the large influx of information man can receive, analyze, and assimilate a multitude of current styles and genres with multiple references that are permitted without restriction. These are present simultaneously in time and space offering perhaps the most diverse stylistic palette that any period of art history had available.

The great diversity of current postmodern, favoring the emergence of a large number of definitions as contoured on arguments that certain notes are often subjective. Because of this lack of stylistic unity, it is presented as the most powerful characteristic element. Thus, postmodernism can be interpreted rather as a time frame that includes almost all the currents of the late twentieth century.

From artistic point of view, however, postmodernism appears as a reaction to the modernism. It marks a change of the cultural paradigm that is more permissive for cultural boundaries and limits of genres. Postmodernism brings together various elements to which modernism was quite reserved. He combines old music with the new one, or classical music with the popular. At the level of the means of expression, however, the postmodernism continue direction of modernism using the quote, collage or juxtapositions, to indicate postmodern attitudes favoring differences, discontinuity, irrational, against similarities, continuity, or rational. (Harvey, 1989)¹. Diversity changes the interest center now swinging between subject and object, between old and new, between traditions and avant-garde.

Postmodernism takes details from earlier works recycle techniques, ideologies and themes now seen in terms of a new aesthetics that contains a lot of styles. It will rise above the constraints of modernism releasing contemporary art justifying less demanding preferences of arts.

After an obvious criticism of modernity, the new aesthetics tries to rebuild its ways of expression. If the modernist models used for building a cultural universe

¹ *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* Edited by Stanley Sadie, executive editor John Tyrrell, published in twenty nine volumes in year 2001 / Reprinted with minor corrections 2002, vol. 20, pag. 214

proved to be faulty, then the solution of exit from the impasse could not be other than a reassessment of models from the past.

This attitude which considers the return to tradition was made, in view of musicologist Leo Samama (n.1951) sometimes completely - as is the case of neo-romanticism and minimalist music; sometimes gradually –by references to the music of previous periods, without neglecting the discoveries of modern times.²

The minimal music for example, has established itself as a manifestation of postmodernism through a functional quasi-tonal system approach and its anti-modern and pluralistic character. It resizes the level of perception taking the influences from pop music and sometimes making appeal to non-European musical cultures. From this tendency can easily get, due to a crisis of subjectivity, to the general concept called New Simplicity which offers "solutions by asserting some form of consciousness that have not Western European origin, or a subjectivity which arranges freely and spontaneously the compositional decisions, which not seeking any value in a theoretical court or historical-philosophical one, resulting in a direct accessibility."³

Neo-Romanticism, on the other hand, has been defined by German music critics as a feature of the postmodern current identified especially in some works with a strongly emotional character as those of Wolfgang Rihm. He tends to rediscover the means of expression of composers from the past with no intention of making their style contemporary, but simply to continue a tonal music style."⁴

On a somewhat similar direction also stands Daniel Bell (b. 1919) which belongs to *neoconservative* current. He believes that the postmodern culture, where general ethics is dissolved leaving space to hedonism as totally incompatible with the moral principles of a rational conduct of life.⁵ This change marks a shift in the course of societies from seeking the social welfare to search for individual hedonism. The man is not concerned with the general policy but only for personal interests or for a group withdrew from which it belongs. Led by the idea that such an attitude seems to have no other escape than a return to tradition, neoconservatives return to previous stages of modernity, to find some items that allow them to overcome the modernist crisis manifested especially in the reception and approach of art. That change of direction reflects sometimes even a return to spirituality and mysticism, as in the case of composer Arvo Pärt.

Another specific dimension of contemporary art is given by the abundance of technological aspects and their introduction into the art to achieve the similar representations of the real world. Jean François Lyotard (1924 - 1998) believes that this has led to increasing illusions of reality.⁶ In many cases, they overlap with the reality producing a general state of uncertainty. Thus, in his view, the main element of

² Valentina Sandu-Dediu, *Muzica nouă între modern și postmodern*, Editura Muzicală, București, 2004 p25

³ Valentina Sandu-Dediu, p. 29.

⁴ Valentina Sandu-Dediu, p.23

⁵ Marco Tulio Méndez Rios, *La Estética Posmoderna în Hipertextos nr. 7*, august/decembrie 2003.

⁶ Marco Tulio Méndez Rios

postmodern art is the eclecticism, hybridization, which he calls zero point of contemporary culture.

Reception

In modern period, the work of art stood far above the understanding of the audience. The need for a better perception was almost obligatory for the survival of art, and the transition to a better perception of art required a reassessment of the means of expression.

The reception takes many shapes for every individual depending on personal vision, or cultural identity. One characteristic of this is the message focusing on individuality. This is related to time, place, social position or other factors through which an individual builds his own views in a universe entirely personal. Thus, determining the cultural level of the public has become a problem that somehow changed the relationship between creator and audience. In some cases, this concern has become even a purpose of the artwork, such as Pauline Oliveros's works, for instance. She creates works that by their shape and articulation, seek to affect breathing and to bring the audience into a state of meditation of "deep listening", in which reception of music is like a ritual. Similar intentions often also occurred in New Age music.⁷

The possibility of addressing a wider audience varies greatly depending on the composer and even each work. The effect of music depends on the formation of a competent audience able to understand multiple references as irony or parody. Performing also plays an important role in the development of the artistic process. In music, for example, some works provide so much freedom to the performer that it seems that the boundaries between him and creator seems to have vanished. Building the references is made now by accepting certain rules to which equally contribute composer, performer and listener.

Conclusion

In conclusion, we can define musical postmodernism as "a total stylistic aspect that has not yet found the name" or "an attitude partially met in some creations of some composers".⁸ They indicate a rather aesthetic attitude around which can be associated different composers with different styles and different means of expression. The uneven characteristic feature of postmodern often prevents the labeling of all creation of a composer under a single feature, this trend manifesting itself more as intentions, attitudes or affects. All these differences between postmodern thinkers create tensions and lead to confrontations that result in increase existing confusion around current. Here the concepts are quite unclear and unitary consensus difficult to accomplish.

After the 1980s, some composers were reassessed the expressive potential of music returning to the more accessible traditional notions of music. In some cases the recovery was made is by resumptions of melody and harmony crystallized in sec. XVIII-

⁷ *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*

⁸ Valentina Sandu-Dediu, pag.23

XIX. Sometimes, the syntax and traditional forms are those reminding of stable standards from the past centuries. Finally, some work marks a return to the tonality and conventional discourse making a reconsideration of the consonance concept which is managing a new concept called by some musicologist tonal *postmodern reaction*. (Foster, 1987)⁹. Regardless of the means by which information is transmitted to the general public, we may extract some defining elements of postmodernism that Beatrice Ramaut-Chevassus considers to be specific to postmodernism. It aims to: putting in relation to various elements; recomposition a legacy through homage quotation, hybridization reliance on certain fixed semantic centers through allusions to an era, a style, or a particular work.¹⁰

Postmodernism as an artistic phenomenon, social and even philosophical lean toward open forms, playful interim, it is a discourse of irony and fragments, involving great culture and popular culture, science and art.

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⁹ *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, p. 214

¹⁰ Valentina Sandu-Dediu, *Alegeri, atitudini, afecte*, Editura Didactică și Pedagogică, București, 2010, p.220