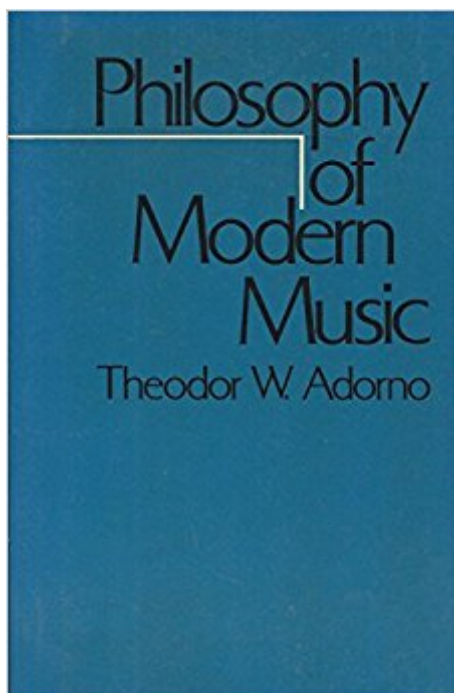


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Philosophy Of Modern Music (Philosophy Of Modern Music Ppr)



Synopsis

A landmark work from the founder of the Frankfurt School. A key work in the study of Adorno, of interest to students and general readers alike. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

"[Adorno's] interest in Schoenberg and Benjamin was combined in his best known and most influential book...which set out to do for contemporary music what Benjamin had done for seventeenth-century German tragedy." --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Text: English, German (translation)

The newer translation by Robert Hullot-Kentor is more comprehensible (to a non-German speaker) than this version. This was the only widely-available translation until recently.

Although out-of-print this is an event in the history of music comparable to primary musical works. It had to be Theodor Adorno a consummate intellect that created a new mode of contemplating contemporary art, music simply being the realm he knew more intimately, literature a close second.

His prolific student from the late Fifties, Jurgen Habermas once said of Adorno, that he created theory spontaneously, simply within the course of a discussion, adept at synthesizing his thoughts as he spoke. But Adorno's importance for contemporary expression was assured, in that Adorno brought the complexity of philosophic, social and political thought to music. Something hardly done prior, and is only now within the past ten years beginning to be realized. See numerous studies on Adorno and his approach to speaking about music. To read the "Philosophy of Modern Music" is to understand Adorno's departures for his thought is the most exposed. Written in short cursive, aphoristic-like paragraphs, almost approaching a sketch of a thought is to reveal a complexity, but one which engages his subject. The two polar opposites here are composers, Arnold Schoenberg (representing the progressive elements in music), and Igor Stravinsky (representing the backward-looking retrogressive elements). Adorno had considered the private artist working in seclusion as the highest form of rebellion, of subversion, for Adorno had contempt for the marketplace and how that magnetized and transformed art. Something of the market, in the late Forties was prevalent in jazz and film. Had Adorno lived into the age of computers and simulation, he would have seen to full extent how his thought has been realized in ever purified forms. Adorno thought Schoenberg's discovery of the 12-Tone dodecaphonic compositional method as a sign of progress. 12-Tone in a profound way was a synthesis, a conduit of the theoretical advancements of the history of music. It was both a beginning and an endpoint. But Schoenberg's method, although quite new and unfinished allowed for all the parameters of music to be defined and developed, "Total Organization of the Elements of Music" is one paragraph here or section, "Differentiation and Coarseness" yet another referring to thinking about sound, as a sculptor would of his/her materials, shaping them, giving them form and direction. Stravinsky contrarywise indulged in looking backward, at the folksongs of his native Russia for music materials to be manipulated and the projection of sound without its deep attenuation. A view that is subjective now in retrospect, for Stravinsky was a grand orchestrator and a craftsman. But in Stravinsky, in particular his early period of the marvelously powerful ballet music, sound is pulverized, and is forced into suppressed forms, usually a shifting alternating suite of pieces, refocusing our short attention spans as required and, all in the projection of an image, a screen for which the ballet takes place. But Adorno had taken issue with Stravinsky's subject matter as well as his technical means, a puppet in "Petrouska" one given over to a master without hope nor recourse. Likewise the "Rite of Spring" a virgin is simply sacrificed without recourse and we have the human image portraying the inevitability of natural forces, something Europe was about to experience first hand with the rise of fascism. These sections here are "Depersonalization" and "Fetishism of Means", explains Stravinsky's

creativity stepping backwards within himself. In "Modes of Listening" Adorno refers to the "Shock" value that pummels the listener and the degradation of hearing into a music you merely submit to, whereas in Schoenberg there is more a sense of give and take, of the music allowing contemplative time. Again to my mind this is all relative, for these features I find in both composers oeuvre. Still I find a conceptual power in Adorno, one that still nourishes today in the milieu of after-postmodernity.

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