

Two Centuries in One

Musical Romanticism and the
Twentieth Century

HERBERT PAULS



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Abstract

An outstanding feature of twentieth-century music has been the divergence of European “art” music into two general areas which do not overlap to the same extent that they do in previous centuries. That is, the performing repertoire is at odds, sometimes dramatically so, with a competing canon of works considered to be of greater importance from an evolutionary historical point of view. The practical result has been what one commentator recently called “two centuries in one.”

Few composers were considered more untimely than those who persisted in using the “old” tonal and romantic-sounding idioms. However, the best of them contributed many core works to the daily repertoire, and we have now arrived at the point where minor twentieth-century romantics are also proving to be of strong interest, particularly for discerning connoisseurs. Of comparable significance, the once-common progress narrative of musical evolution, which hindered the academic reception of twentieth-century romantic music for so long, has been almost completely abandoned today. We have also reached the point where some of the major romantic figures have been recast as modern or even modernist.

With the rise in academic respectability of areas like film and pop music, the use of “out-dated” tonal traditions in twentieth-century music can now be seen in a more positive light. If it is now safe to say that film music and other popular genres were, to use a linguistic analogy, “conversing” in the musical language of their time, one can also reasonably conclude that, at the most basic

level, the musical language of leading modern romantic composers of concert music also belonged to its time.

The term “romantic” has been controversial for over two centuries, and for twentieth-century music its application becomes problematic in the extreme. However, since the word was used so extensively in the modern era, both positively and negatively, I have chosen to embrace it and examine what it has meant to the classical music world after 1900. I have also offered a few thoughts on what romanticism’s unusually strong presence in the modern era may signify for future historians, not least in how they define the crucially important idea of modernism itself.

Acknowledgements

It is not possible to complete a doctoral dissertation without the help of others, not least the many colleagues and friends with whom I have enjoyed stimulating discussions relating to the different themes found in the book that follows. But above all, I would like to take this opportunity to thank my *Doktorvater*, Prof. Dr. Hartmut Möller for his unfailing encouragement and guidance over the last few years. I also wish to thank Robin Elliott, who was the first to oversee my ambition to tackle some of the difficult and often highly contentious issues of twentieth-century historiography during my Masters Degree, and at various points thereafter continued to encourage me to go further.

Going back earlier in life, my two main piano teachers have also proved to be a vital impetus in the long journey that culminated in this study of twentieth-century romanticism. First, I must remember Helen McMurphy, a small-town piano teacher in Northern Saskatchewan. Little did she realize what profound effect Harold C. Schonberg's *The Great Pianists* would have on her over-eager ten-year-old *Pathétique*-attempting pupil when he spied it on her shelf, begged to take it home, and proceeded to read it many times over. That book did much to fire my imagination, and it is not an exaggeration to say that it permanently shaped my musical outlook. It also has the distinction of being the earliest read book in my bibliography.

Within four years, Mrs. McMurphy was packing me off to to the nearest University professor 200 km away. And so, for the next nine years it was the British pianist Robin Harrison who continued to shape my musical outlook. Besides helping me master

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the complete Chopin Etudes and other standard literature, his love of the great early twentieth-century pianists, violinists, conductors and singers also resonated deeply with me. Especially impressive was his vast record collection, which I spent many hours examining. His musical knowledge in a wide variety of genres was truly formidable, and much of it came from his library, as he readily admitted. I remember him with much fondness, and sadness, as he was never able to see this book. Several years ago, I commented to him that I was trying to solve the problem of how to defend twentieth-century romanticism. He answered in a weary voice, Yes, somebody should do that, dear boy. I like to think that he would have approved of the final result.

Also to be mentioned here are Maureen DuWors and Walter Kreyszig, both of whom gave me crucial help at a critical time near the end of my undergrad years. I also want to thank my old Grade 8 industrial arts teacher, Mr. Sontheim, who kept in touch over the years and recently offered some practical support as this dissertation was nearing completion.

Last but not least, I would like to give a sincere and heartfelt thank you to my family, and above all my beloved wife, Elation, whose longsuffering and forbearance helped me through some difficult times. Without such a bedrock of support, this dissertation would never have been completed, let alone started.

Introduction

In 1995, historian Glenn Watkins took a moment to reflect on the nature of scholarly priorities in the field of twentieth-century music history writing. “In retrospect,” he observed,

it is inevitable that a limited number of works tend to stand out as emblematic of the more general crisis that seemed to suggest the final overthrow of the Romantic Age. No such event ever took place, of course, but the degree to which the Romantic Agony lingered on is seldom dwelt on in the writing of the history of twentieth-century music.¹

What follows, then, is an exploration of what Watkins called “lingering” romanticism. However (and leaving aside the “agony” caricature), we will revise his adjective slightly: We will begin with the observation that romanticism did not merely linger but actually continued to flourish in many quarters, often at the expense of radical new ways of composing which allegedly displaced it. Watkins calls his lingering stream “romantic,” and so will we. For some recent scholars who tend to see major early twentieth-century composers such as Richard Strauss and Jean Sibelius as “modern” rather than “romantic,” Watkins’ way of applying the term has now become somewhat old-fashioned and even problematic. But this too should be nothing new, for romanticism over the centuries has always been a much-contested and imprecise concept. Despite all of that, pondering the idea (in

¹ Glenn Watkins, *Soundings: Music in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Schirmer Books, 1995), 170.

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the sense that Watkins conceives it) can still be useful as a springboard for discussing a kind of modern-era music that advanced thinkers over the decades have tended to see as embarrassingly outmoded, and which has long been problematic for historians who have preferred to evaluate twentieth-century music according to what is still occasionally referred to as the “progressive” viewpoint.

For our purposes, the term “romanticism” will be used to represent the general sound world of an international stream of composition that was extraordinarily resilient and diverse – too diverse, perhaps, to be seen as a single stream. The immediate reaction from some readers will no doubt be: How can you call this or that twentieth-century composer romantic? Well, I can only reply that this is not the ultimate point of our argument. After all, how can we call Brahms a romantic today when he had actually represented the “classic” stream in the late nineteenth century?² Or better yet, how can we now call Mozart and Haydn “classics” when their contemporaries considered them to be romantics? More to the point, behind the seemingly perverse selection of vague basic terminology lies a larger problem that has not entirely gone away. Call them what you will, but there is no denying that “romantic” twentieth-century composers were long considered by many commentators to be the most stylistically out of place as far as the dominant currents of their era were concerned. That is a judgement we will directly challenge. As Watkins observed, romantic music was still being written in plentiful amounts in every decade of the twentieth century, and writers like him certainly seemed to know who the most romantic-sounding composers were.³ However, such figures tended to be absent from general historical accounts, as Watkins also confirmed.

² The fifth edition of Grove still follows the pattern where Bach, Mozart, Beethoven, Mendelssohn and Brahms are designated as classical, while Berlioz, Chopin, Schumann, Liszt and Wagner are romantic. See Nicholas Colmyn Gatty, “Romantic,” in *Grove’s Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, 5th ed. (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1954), 7:215.

³ This will be discussed further in chapters one and two.

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Arved Ashby began the preface to his 2004 book *The Pleasure of Modernist Music* with the frank admission that modernist music still had “popularity problems.”⁴ In a sense, one could say that the music of romantic composers in the modern era also experienced popularity problems as well. But the critical difference between the two factions (and “factions” is not too strong a word) was that the very public popularity of the romantics was a large part of the problem: Indeed, and to a degree unprecedented in music history, public popularity and commercial success after 1900 had now become major stumbling blocks that prevented many composers from being taken seriously in a deeper historical sense. Moreover, if lesser late-romantic composers could not match the immense popularity of major figures like Puccini, Rachmaninoff, and Strauss, that too could be cited as proof that they were out of touch with the spirit of their time. The romantics quite simply could not win. They were truly history’s losers.

My basic purpose, then, will be to directly tackle the general issue of twentieth-century romanticism in music, despite the enduring confusion in defining what romanticism really means. The arguments and illustrations that emerge in the following pages will be used to insist in the strongest possible terms that post-1900 romantic composers, and the stylistic features that still permeated their music, should be allowed to help define the era in which they actually flourished, even if this inevitably gives the twentieth century a much more romantic tinge than has hitherto been deemed acceptable in music historiography. We will go even further and state outright that anything less can only result in a historical caricature of the modern period in music history.

The following chapters are emphatically *not* intended to prove that radical modernism was of little import in the greater scheme of things: Film music, certainly, has proven otherwise, and has done much to give the most radical streams of composition a much-needed sense of social legitimacy (for which some present-

⁴ Arved Ashby, ed. *The Pleasure of Modernist Music*, (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2004), 1.

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day defenders of high modernism are increasingly grateful). Rather, what follows is a way of arguing that we need not be held hostage by what the great historian Richard Taruskin described as “the law of stylistic succession,” a concept that was entrenched in historical overviews throughout the twentieth century and more or less ensured that certain major composers, especially if writers thought they sounded too romantic, would be largely written out of historical accounts. My insistence on using the term romantic, then, is deliberately chosen as a way of highlighting a peculiarly twentieth-century problem. Hopefully, it will make a useful contribution toward seeing the post-1900 period in a manner that is able to properly acknowledge much music that is central to the repertoire but did not progress in the manner that some thinkers assumed was necessary. My goal, of course, can be seen as part of a much larger general project that scholars are now vigorously engaged in as they seek to move beyond the narrower parameters set by conventional historiography, which was traditionally built around the extreme dissonance of the atonal revolution – and to a certain extent around the dry and more moderately dissonant neoclassicism as well.

The strict application of the “law of stylistic succession” to music history has come under a great deal of scrutiny from musicologists in recent years. As Taruskin recalled in his new and epochal 4300-page *Oxford History of Western Music*, the formidable German philosopher Theodor Adorno had been an influential proponent of this law, and had helped to give it credibility in the battle over what was allowed to be deemed “modern.” In Adorno’s capacity as one of the most articulate defenders of dissonant modernism, he had played a powerful role in the intellectual movement that tried to force contemporary tonal-romantic styles, with their dependence on “old” harmonic and melodic features, into the historical margins. Some of Adorno’s greatest scorn was heaped on the hugely popular Sergei Rachmaninoff, who, along with Gershwin and Tchaikovsky, had (Adorno maintained) created “prototypes of the kind of hit

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melodies that simultaneously had the effect of making intransigent music lovers feel as though they were nonetheless on a higher cultural level.”⁵ Adorno had mercilessly lampooned Rachmaninoff via an admittedly slight early work, the famous Prelude in C sharp minor of 1892, written when the composer was a nineteen-year-old student. In what can only be described as a major case of critical overkill, Adorno even drew on the recent Freudian term “Nerokomplex” in order to describe Rachmaninoff’s much loved but ultimately modest little piece.⁶ The Prelude, said Adorno, was like a parody of the passacaglia form, and its handling of old technical conventions such as the familiar VI-V-I cadential formula were tired and worn out: “In this work, Rachmaninoff has completely emptied the late romantic idiom of all its content, and has thrown the resulting product onto the commercial market.”⁷

One of Adorno’s most fundamental convictions was that “worn-out” romantic-sounding idioms such as Rachmaninoff’s had sold out to the market place. However, that view has now dated considerably, as Taruskin makes clear in his 2005 *Oxford History* critique of Adorno’s basic position. Taruskin describes how Adorno had promulgated the idea that the course of romantic music had

turned from avenues of possibly sincere and spontaneous human expression to mercantile fetishes that manipulate listeners, rob them of emotional authenticity, and reduce them to automatons. Romantic styles, [Adorno] argued, once co-opted by the movies, could only produce the effects of movie music, drugging and paralyzing listeners with sensuous pleasure. Such a style was

⁵ Theodore Adorno, “Orpheus in der Unterwelt,” in *Gesammelte Schriften*, Vol. 19, *Musikalische Schriften VI: Zur praxis des Musiklebens* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1970-c1986), 552. (Prototypen von Schlager-melodien, bei denen man unentwegt sich gleichwohl als Standesperson fühlen soll.)

⁶ Theodore Adorno, “Musikalische Warenanalysen,” in *Gesammelte Schriften*, Vol. 16, *Musikalische Schriften I-III: Improvisationen* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1970-c1986), 285.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 286. (So hat Rachmaninoff in nachromantischem Verschleiß sie vollends von allem Inhalt...emanzipiert und als Ware auf den Markt geworfen.)

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obsolete as art, available only as entertainment, which for Adorno was socially regressive by definition. This was the strongest invective ever mustered on behalf of the ‘law of stylistic succession.’ But the joke turned out to be on Adorno since...the modernist styles he regarded as the most artistically viable – that is, those least amenable to commercial exploitation because least sensuously appealing to passive consumers – have long since been annexed by the movies as emotional illustrators, albeit for the opposite sorts of emotions.⁸

Taruskin’s comments were written in the context of his defense of Korngold, Rachmaninoff and Medtner, all of whom represented twentieth-century composition at its most romantically regressive. They had rarely been treated with respect in general historical accounts of twentieth-century music before Taruskin’s ground-breaking *Oxford History*.⁹

Much to Adorno’s consternation, lush sonorities, tunes and tonal harmonies such as were to be found in the music of composers like Korngold and Rachmaninoff had found new life in contemporary film scores. What was even more insulting, such openly romantic-sounding elements were freely mixed and matched with snippets of dissonant modernism as the dramatic need arose, devaluing the latter in the process. From film, it was but a hop and a skip to Broadway, light music and various other popular idioms, all of which freely made continued use of older romantic styles – except that for these genres romanticism was not merely the past, but was clearly still part of a living present. Certainly, the many artists operating in the most widely-circulating genres were up-to-date as far as the broader public was concerned, and were in no way seen as fossilized relics of the past. Should not the same be true of romantic twentieth-century composers in the “art” music tradition? Film music and other popular genres used to be snubbed by scholars, but are now routinely studied and

⁸ Richard Taruskin, *The Oxford History of Western Music*, Vol. 3, *The Early Twentieth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 559.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 549-561.

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analysed. In short, those areas are treated with proper respect by musicologists in general. So too should the concert music of composers like Rachmaninoff and Korngold.

Paradoxically, the literature on twentieth-century romanticism is both vast and non-existent. It is vast in the sense that romantic composers are routinely discussed and reviewed in more journalistic settings. Also, countless modernist writers (such as Watkins) have consistently described a broad range of post-1900 composers as romantics. But the literature is almost non-existent in the sense that, (as Watkins also indicated) few academic writers have tackled the issue directly and extensively. Few have tried to come to terms with the implications of the fact that many of the contemporary composers they were describing as romantic would simply not drop out of sight as far as the daily repertoire was concerned, no matter how much denigration was heaped upon them. Modernist-oriented music history textbook writers have often used the word romantic as a negative descriptor, mainly serving to emphasize the extent to which certain contemporary composers did not keep up with the times. In typical historical narratives, the matter of (outdated) romanticism would perhaps be mentioned briefly, only to be dropped abruptly, and the discussion would move on to more pressing historical concerns having to do with the growth of modernism. As can be expected, textbooks tend to be an accurate reflection of the state of research as a whole. In basic research, writers have long had plenty to say about modernism, the atonal revolution, neoclassicism, serialism, chance music, spectralism and what have you, but have had precious little to say about the continued historical viability of the musical stream we are calling romantic.

A look in Digital Dissertations Online (DDM) fails to turn up any extended treatments that directly consider the extent to which romanticism continued to flourish in the music of the twentieth century, and a DDM search on major romantic composers like Elgar and Rachmaninoff yields results in the single digits. In stark contrast, Schoenberg has almost two hundred

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listings. It should be pointed out that Richard Strauss does now attract many graduate students, with around two dozen dissertations currently in progress. However, the dominant trend in Strauss studies focuses on placing him and his late romantic contemporaries squarely in the context of early modernism. According to that widespread scholarly view, the late-romantic classification for composers like Strauss is “outmoded.” As we will see in chapter three, the “modernization” of Strauss and others is a worthy project, not least because one of its basic goals is to greatly expand the definition of modernism and thus strip the most radical early twentieth-century musical revolutions of their exclusive claims on what actually constituted true modernity in the music of that time.

In a sense, the Strauss project is my project as well, although I go a little further. Rather perversely, perhaps, one of my goals here is to encourage continued use of the term romantic in order to highlight the twentieth century’s many audible links to nineteenth-century musical styles and languages, and also to remind ourselves that we need not be embarrassed by the many obviously nineteenth-century-sounding stylistic features which continued to survive and even flourish in the early modern period and after. In other words, we are celebrating those composers who chose to pursue a much more gradual change in musical language and style, and are putting the radical early twentieth-century musical revolutions in the much larger perspective of our standard twentieth-century performing repertoire, which is undeniably still dominated by a preponderance of romantic-sounding works. We recognize that everyone has the right to listen to the music that pleases them, and reject the urge to intellectually belittle those who do not find pleasure in the most esoteric or “difficult” musical languages of the recent past. In particular, we would like to honour those early twentieth-century composers who had the courage to put the breaks on the excessively rapid rate of change in musical language for the simple reason that the standard repertoire would be much the poorer without them. The use of the word romantic,

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then, is a good way of clearly emphasizing the very substantial benefits of gradual change as the nineteenth century gave way to the twentieth.

The literature on romanticism, as the term applies to the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, is truly abundant, but useful academic commentary and extended treatment of twentieth-century romanticism tends to be focused mainly on romanticism's historical connection to the themes of alienation and innovation. Edward Kravitt's 1992 essay "Romanticism Today" describes and summarizes this situation.¹⁰ A more extended treatment along similarly "alienated" lines is to be found in Leonard B. Meyer's 1989 book *Style and Music*, which, as Meyer makes clear, intentionally focuses on the less obvious manifestations of romanticism in the modern period instead of its more obvious and audible connection to romanticism. The more obvious side of romanticism, Meyer states, can readily be found in the music of relatively conservative modern composers like Ralph Vaughan Williams and Sergei Prokofiev. Taruskin's *Oxford History* also deals extensively with the alienated side of romanticism, following it as it reached its full-blown state in the twentieth-century avant-garde. Formerly, textbook and overview writers dealing with the twentieth-century often tended to see the traditionally beautiful, melodic and tonal aspects of romanticism as something essentially alien to the spirit of the new and modern age. Writers then seized on these obviously romantic elements, using them as a stick with which to beat errant composers who refused to advance. Taruskin, however, turns the tables and frequently uses the word romantic to describe how innovation and alienation reached their most exacerbated or "ugly" form in the twentieth century, as we will see in chapter three. And it *is* undeniable that, like traditional melody and beautifully blended harmonies and textures, innovation and alienation are also aspects of a historically rooted definition of romanticism. The latter elements, therefore, are used to give

¹⁰ See bibliography for more details on this and other sources listed in this literature overview.

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emphasis to Taruskin's less than flattering portraying of certain aspects of radical modernism, an aesthetic movement that, following the example of Leonard B. Meyer, Taruskin occasionally describes as late-late romanticism.

But our discussion is not about romanticism-as-alienation. Rather, it is about a more positive kind of romanticism, and is a sincere attempt to formulate a series of arguments and illustrations that give us reasons to take traditionally romantic-sounding twentieth-century composers seriously as a stylistic stream in their own right. One of the few writers who has given us an extended book-length treatment of post-1900 romanticism in this sense is the American musicologist Walter Simmons. He has spent his life researching twentieth-century traditionalism, which he has classified into various sub-streams. His 2004 book, *Voices in the Wilderness: Six American Neo-Romantics*, is one of the first studies of its kind to attempt to come to grips with the topic of twentieth-century romanticism. In his book, Simmons provides a much needed framework and sets a valuable precedent for what I have undertaken here.

In their own way, various biographers and apologists for traditionally romantic-sounding twentieth-century composers write from a mindset that is similar to mine in that they all find themselves in a position of having to defend composers whom the academic establishment generally considered to be outdated, and therefore did not see fit to bother with. We will not attempt a comprehensive bibliography here, but will be content with a few examples that illustrate the point. Barrie Martyn's biographies and *New Grove* articles on Rachmaninoff and Medtner understand the issues surrounding the alleged untimeliness of the romantic idiom after 1900, as does Christoph Flamm in his *Der russische Komponist Nikolaj Metner: Studien und Materialien*. Lewis Foreman has published on a whole range of romantic twentieth-century British composers, above all Arnold Bax. Very significantly, Foreman is one of the main scholarly driving forces behind the thousands of compact discs that document what has

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come to be known as the English musical renaissance. His work is but one of many examples that illustrate the depth of research that now enhances recording projects devoted to romantic twentieth-century music. Christopher Palmer has priorities that are very similar to Foreman. In 1979, Palmer issued a call for resurrecting the music of Cyril Scott, whom he called one of “the ‘lost generation’ of English Romantics.”¹¹ Palmer has also written on George Dyson, Herbert Howells, film composers, and much else. Brendan Carroll has been instrumental in raising the issue of romantic traditionalism as it pertains to the crucial case of the once completely discredited Korngold, a composer who has enjoyed a substantial revival in the last forty years.

Tomi Mäkelä’s 2007 German-language biography of Sibelius, *Poesie in der Luft*, provides my dissertation with the phrase *Immer-noch-Romantiker*, referring to composers who still continued to write in the romantic style well after 1900. For Mäkelä, the twentieth-century *Romantiker* comprised a so-called “Third Way” that continued to flourish during the rise of atonality and neoclassicism. They included composers such as Sibelius, Ferruccio Busoni, Ronald Stevenson, and Samuel Barber. Of these, Stevenson should be further singled out here because he wrote a *History of Music* in 1971 that, despite its unique way of classifying traditionalist twentieth-century composers, bespeaks an attitude toward twentieth-century music that is not dissimilar to what will be found here. Stevenson classifies a broad range of romantic traditionalists as “national” composers, and adds that they comprise by far the largest twentieth-century stream. Stevenson also pointedly emphasizes that, in reality, the most radical side of modern music hardly found its way to the public at all.

Writers on historic pianism also tend, almost by definition, to defend at least some representatives of twentieth-century romanticism. A prime example is the *New York Times* critic Harold C. Schonberg, who (although he had little good to say about

¹¹ Christopher Palmer, “Cyril Scott: Centenary Reflections, *The Musical Times* 120 (September 1979): 738.

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modern music in general) defended the much-maligned Rachmaninoff in both *The Great Pianists* and *The Great Composers*. Schonberg is similar in outlook to the writer Abram Chasins, a late-romantic pianist and composer whose views on post-1900 music come to the fore in his classic survey *Speaking of Pianists* as well as the more gloomy 1971 book *Music at the Crossroads*. Jeremy Nicholas, who also reviews for *Gramophone* magazine, is a pioneering Godowsky scholar and a major authority on romantic pianism. Charles Barber has written the first biography of the great Liszt pupil Alexander Siloti (1863-1945), and Joseph Herder has done primary research on Zygmunt Stojowski (1870-1946).

Like Godowsky, both Siloti and Stojowski were among the vast number of composer-performers in the early modern generation to keep the romantic aesthetic alive, much to the frustration of radical modernists who felt publicly marginalized by them. Other performing composers of a similar romantic aesthetic were Emil von Sauer (1862-1942), Pablo Casals (1876-1973), Andrés Segovia (1893-1987), and Fritz Kreisler (1875-1962). Many recent performers have staked a large part of their careers on this kind of post-1900 late-romantic music literature, which in turn was marginalized *en masse* by conventional twentieth-century historiography. It was a marginalization that many latter-day romantics felt keenly, and it was therefore not surprising that Chasins referred to the music history textbook survey genre as “mythologies of music” rather than histories of music.¹²

Marc-André Hamelin has become known as a leading specialist in the works of composers like Godowsky, Rachmaninoff, Medtner, Busoni, Scriabin, Feinberg, Stevenson, Vladigerov, and Sorabji – exactly the kind of repertoire that concerns us here. Hamelin is also a composer in the same tradition (which he freely spices with many modernistic elements), and has

¹² Abram Chasins, *Music at the Crossroads* (London: Collier-Macmillan, 1972), 5.

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recently recorded and published his *Twelve Etudes* for piano.¹³ Robert Rimm, a scholar who researches golden-age romantic pianism, has written on the peculiar kind of musical unity shown by the composer-pianists that Hamelin advocates – an aspect that Sorabji/Busoni scholar Marc-André Roberge is also keenly aware of.¹⁴ Although many composers in this circle lived through the musical revolutions of the early twentieth century, the musical universe that they themselves inhabited was radically different from that occupied by modernist giants like Schoenberg and Stravinsky, who were the “twin peaks” of the early modern period according to traditional historiography. Rimm makes this difference clear when he uses the word romantic to describe the composer-pianists of the early modernist era, and observes that the period which ended with the deaths of Godowsky, Rachmaninoff, and Medtner (that is, shortly before the middle of the twentieth century) was “a very romantic time.”¹⁵ Rimm also comments in his

¹³ Hamelin himself also has a taste for some very ultra-modern streams, although he performs this literature comparatively rarely.

¹⁴ See Roberge’s article, “The Busoni Network and the Art of Creative Transcription,” *Canadian University Music Review* 11 (1991): 68-88. Roberge begins his article with the following words: “Recent research in the field of early twentieth-century music and musical life in Germany and Austria has shown that Schoenberg, Webern, and Berg were not active in a vacuum but part of a wider cultural context which included composers such as (to mention only two names) Alexander Zemlinsky and Franz Schreker, and that this group of composers had links with numerous artists and writers. It is now possible to see them in a much wider perspective or, in other words, as part of a network. This idea can also be applied to a number of fascinating figures of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries whose music, for a variety of reasons, has long been neglected: namely, Liszt, Alkan, Busoni, Godowsky, and Sorabji – all of them, except for Sorabji, keyboard giants. Their contribution has been progressively rediscovered (or even discovered) in the last twenty years or so, as is evident in the explosion in the field of literature and discography. An indication of the existence of links between these composers is that, in most cases, anyone who plays, writes about, or simply listens to the music of one of these composers has also a strong interest in the music of the others. This would probably not be the case if they were not part of one and the same ‘family’ of artists.”

¹⁵ Rimm made this comment in the course of interviews that he gave for a film about pianist Marc-André Hamelin, entitled *Its all about the music*, Hyperion

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book *Hamelin and the Eight* that our current early twenty-first century era, with its focus on reviving forgotten romantic music, represents “a backlash against frequently astringent mid-twentieth-century music.” Our time, says Rimm, “is highly receptive to the brand of musical romanticism put forth by *The Eight*.”¹⁶ Rimm’s training as a pianist, of course, has understandably played a role in the formation of his research interests. In that important sense, his musical background is similar to mine.

Harold C. Schonberg is also very useful to our discussion of twentieth-century romanticism for another reason: As the chief music critic for the *New York Times* during the 1960s and 70s, Schonberg was one of the major critical advocates of the late twentieth-century Romantic Revival that Rimm was indirectly referring to. The Romantic Revival was spearheaded in large part by the pianist and musicologist Frank Cooper and was given tremendous flair by pianist Raymond Lewenthal. Their tireless work helped to encourage an understanding of romanticism as seen through the eyes of the Romantic Revival. As we will see, their Romantic Revival work implied a kind of romanticism that was conceptually at odds with romanticism-as-alienation. The “alienation” view essentially sees nineteenth-century romanticism as culminating in dissonant modernism, whereas the Romantic Revival sees romanticism as simply encompassing a very broad range of older styles that were extended deep into the twentieth century by traditionalist composers like Korngold, Palmgren and Rachmaninoff, none of whom relinquished the tonality, melody and blended sonic surfaces that were passed on to them by the nineteenth-century. Cooper made a formal defense of his Romantic Revival in a 1979 book-length interview, written in conjunction with Jesse F. Knight, entitled *The Romantic Revival: Setting the Record Straight*.¹⁷ There, one of his major points was

68000, released in 2006, DVD.

¹⁶ Robert Rimm, *The Composer-Pianists: Hamelin and the Eight* (Portland, Oregon, Amadeus Press, 2002), 13.

¹⁷ We will refer to Frank Cooper’s ideas at various points in the pages that

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that the spirit of nineteenth-century musical romanticism was not an aesthetic movement that was merely confined to the nineteenth century itself. Rather, romanticism extended well into the twentieth century, and even to the present day. In order to highlight this fact, Cooper's Romantic Revival festivals resurrected (along side forgotten nineteenth century music by composers like Moscheles, Raff and Rubinstein) works such as an early unplayed version of Rachmaninoff's Fourth Concerto and a piano concerto by the romantic Finnish composer-pianist Selim Palmgren (1878-1951). Works and transcriptions by composer-pianists active between 1900 and 1950 also appeared, as did works from the 1930s by Korngold, a composer who in the 1960s and 70s was still being critically shunned as "more corn than gold," and was consequently avoided both in the concert hall and on recordings. Korngold's later restoration to the international repertoire is one of the great success stories of the Romantic Revival. His Violin Concerto has now become an obligatory work for the younger generation of top soloists, and operas such as *Die Tote Stadt* are staged frequently as well.

Of profound significance for our discussion, many record companies in the late twentieth century began documenting the Romantic Revival for music lovers world-wide. This commercial trend has provided an invaluable service, in that it has enabled curious music lovers everywhere to get a much more thorough knowledge of nineteenth and twentieth-century music. The world of sound recordings also brings us to another source of literature that directly deals with the kind of romanticism that will be concerning us throughout this volume: I am speaking here of the many thousands of record reviews from over the past three or four decades that have been warmly receptive to the more traditional and romantic side of twentieth-century music. In stark contrast to music history textbooks, the recording industry has constructed a musical world where twentieth-century romanticism not only

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abounds, but finds the most welcome of homes. As experienced record collectors instinctively know, this segment of the classical recording world has grown in direct response to a highly-sophisticated connoisseur mindset that is usually (but not always) diametrically opposed to the critical mindset that gave birth to conventional modernist twentieth-century historiography. This will become clear in chapter two when we examine the musical tastes of those who choose the repertoire for six of the largest independent classical CD labels (Naxos/Marco Polo, Chandos, Hyperion, cpo, BIS and Albany). Needless to say, these labels owe their impressive economic growth to the fact that they have many like-minded customers.

Certainly, within the pages of magazines like *Gramophone* and *Fanfare*, there have always been critical and practical defenders for the most esoteric idioms as well. However, such advocacy has never been anywhere near as plentiful or unanimous as in textbook overviews (by Morgan, Watkins, Griffiths, Antokoletz, Machlis, Salzman, Simms, Deri, et. al.) of twentieth-century music. Among front-rank performing musicians, Maurizio Pollini and Pierre Boulez are good examples of those whose twentieth-century repertoires best reflect academic aesthetic priorities. One could perhaps say that Pollini is the Robert Morgan of the concert hall, but for every Pollini who plays Schoenberg to the exclusion of Rachmaninoff, there are a hundred pianists like Cliburn, Ashkenazy and Argerich who evidently see twentieth-century music the other way around. And for every critic like Arnold Whittall (an important music theorist who also specializes in reviewing radical modernism for *Gramophone* magazine), there are several *Gramophone* reviewers such as Robert Layton (Sibelius scholar), Jeremy Nicholas (Godowsky scholar), Bryce Morrison (piano professor), Michael Kennedy (Elgar and Vaughan Williams scholar) and Andrew Achenbach to handle the deluge of CDs containing the kind of twentieth-century music that is more directly applicable to the tastes of the majority of their readers.

Record review magazines not only reflect a general music

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world consisting of revivals of rare repertoire, but also a world of major twentieth-century composers who never were forgotten by the public. Here, Puccini, Elgar, Rachmaninoff and Sibelius are recognized as absolutely central figures, which, of course, is utterly unthinkable from the traditional academic perspective. Composers like Puccini are representative of the side of twentieth-century music which historically dominated the recording and concert world in much the same way that the more radical streams of modernism dominated history textbooks and musicological research. In certain respects, the long-term academic and music industry views of the twentieth century are so fundamentally contrary to one another that I have decided to reflect that fact in my main title, not only by using the word “romantic” but also by using Philadelphia Orchestra Marketing Director Edward Cambron’s phrase “two centuries in one.”

Chapter one will provide some historical and philosophical background that will help explain why the twentieth-century romantics were academically marginalized for so long. The so-called “progress narrative of musical evolution” is discussed, as are some examples of its eventual decline in academic influence. I have also assembled material that shows how, in the early twentieth century, the road to progress was not without pitfalls. The chief point here is that, in reality, most early twentieth-century composers were never very consistent in their loyalty to the “dissonant” revolution. Furthermore, a vast number of composers of the period hardly participated in that revolution at all: Rather, they deliberately fought against musical radicalism in a principled manner, and none fought harder than those (such as Howard Hanson, Joseph Marx, Nicholas Medtner and Hans Pfitzner) who were categorized by historians as completely unregenerated romantics. Record catalogue statistics are drawn from the comprehensively stocked mail-order firm Arkivmusic.com, which serves to provide an informal “real world” snapshot, as it were, of where the standard repertoire is at as of 2012. The current classical record catalogue evinces musical priorities that are very much at

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odds with the standard modernist-oriented history textbooks. This simple method of contrasting the two sides shows just how plentiful the twentieth-century romantic traditionalists were in general musical life, and the sheer extent to which some of its leading public figures were written out of textbooks. As there is no parallel in the extent to which the music of previous centuries is recorded and performed versus how deeply it is studied by historians, the question therefore can be phrased as follows: Why do we need two separate canons for composers born after 1850 – one for academics and the other for concert ticket and record buyers – when the two sides (musicologists and the daily music world) largely seem to agree on a single canon of great composers who were born before 1850. In other words, Mozart, Beethoven and Bach are of top priority in both research and performance whereas with Rachmaninoff (1873-1943) and Schoenberg (1874-1951), the two areas are completely and utterly out of sync with one another.

As a way of illustrating the plentiful nature of twentieth-century traditionalism, chapter two briefly outlines how writers of historical overviews often admitted that throughout the twentieth century, the public and the musical institutions they supported continued to reflect and uphold many musical values and preferences that stemmed directly from the romantic era. Despite acknowledgement of this basic fact, the same writers nevertheless proceeded to devote most of their attention to more radical developments. The bulk of chapter two is devoted to the Romantic Revival and its growing presence in late twentieth-century musical life. Far from being merely a revival of rare nineteenth-century music, I will also show how the musical values of the Romantic Revival are also at least somewhat applicable to the recovery of neglected traditionalist music composed in the modern era as well. During the course of the discussion, I will also point out that the Romantic Revival includes a very strong focus on the romantic virtuoso and salon-type repertoires which partially fell into critical disrepute with the onset of the modern era. Thus, the Revival's

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way of defining romanticism runs counter to a prevailing academic definition of romanticism which focuses on the growing fetish for originality and harmonic innovation, and the attendant alienation that resulted when those values were taken to their logical conclusion. Incidentally, our discussion of the Romantic Revival would be much more extensive were it not for the fact that there are other aspects of romanticism in the twentieth century that also require our attention.

Chapter three deals more thoroughly with some basic problems of defining romanticism in a twentieth-century context. One of the most important points in this chapter relates to how a large number of romantic-sounding composers from the Schoenberg era are now being re-categorized in scholarly circles as modern or even modernist composers. This is being accomplished partly as a means of academically rehabilitating them while at the same time getting rid of the problematic word “romantic,” with all its contradictions and negative connotations. But there is a twist here. The re-classification of romantic composers as modern(ist) is *not* being accomplished by downplaying the traditionally romantic-sounding sonic surfaces of the more traditional and conservative composers and thereby emphasizing whatever dissonances can be found (as, for example, Dahlhaus and others did with Strauss’s works dating from just before 1910). Rather, the re-classification is accomplished by redefining the basic idea of modernism itself, taking that notion far beyond the narrow confines that resulted from its close connection to extreme dissonance. Daniel Albright succinctly summed up the nature of the new scholarly conception of modernism when he suggested “a theory of modernism that might embrace both Schoenberg and Pfitzner.” Albright’s broad parameters are a far cry indeed from the old definition, which saw Pfitzner’s role in music history mainly as a composer and polemicist who stubbornly held on to traditional romantic values and was one of modernism’s most backward and implacable foes. Several other difficulties of defining romanticism are also explored in chapter three, including problems surrounding the notion of

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romanticism-as alienation. We will also deal briefly with the problem that commentators have had in classifying composers like Debussy, Prokofiev and Busoni, all of whom dipped into more modernistic tendencies from time to time but still retained many elements that were audibly romantic in tone.

Chapter four discusses the extent to which twentieth-century romantic traditionalists were considered to be *Ungleichzeitig*, or “untimely,” and I will outline strategies that writers commonly used in order to emphasize such untimeliness. The first method was to simply call the nineteenth century “romantic” and the twentieth century “modern,” which, of course, is one reason why I have deliberately framed this entire volume around the idea of romanticism in the twentieth century. Another related strategy was to structure twentieth-century music history around Schoenberg and Stravinsky, who were long seen as the invincible twin giants of early modernism, thus leaving very little room in the historical construction for properly acknowledging a contemporary romantic stream of composers like Puccini, Rachmaninoff and Sibelius. Following the framework of Sibelius scholar Tomi Mäkelä, we therefore argue for a “third way,” a third stream of *Immer-noch-Romantiker*, (composers who are still romantic). We will also discuss how the elimination of major late-romantic composers from the early twentieth century (and hence overviews of “modern music”) also resulted in them being dropped from *all* historical accounts in general, because they lived too late to be properly included in histories of nineteenth-century music and therefore languished in what Carl Dahlhaus called an “aesthetic no-man’s-land.”

Chapter five draws on colourful commentary by a few prominent figures in the romantic-versus-modernist culture wars of the twentieth century. The purpose here is to emphasize the fact that latter-day romantics were indeed intent on explicitly upholding the age-old importance of emotion and melody in music. In many cases, they upheld such traditional elements to roughly the same extent that many of their avant-garde opponents downplayed or

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denigrated them. I feel that this point has been partially forgotten in our day, when advocates of high modernism like Paul Griffiths are now seeing even the most ascetic modernist idioms as unprecedented outpourings of emotion – Ferneyhough is as romantic as Franck, as Griffiths puts it. And theorist Joseph Straus is now revising the traditional academic image of an emotionless Stravinsky and making claims for the presence of deeply expressive content in this famously dry-sounding composer, even in his late serial works. To complicate things still further, I will also point out that some alleged anti-romantics from the earlier part of the century, especially Webern, were in fact highly romantic in temperament. This expressive side of early twentieth-century radical modernism was obscured by the deliberately dry-sounding “white coat and stethoscope” (cf. William Bolcom) mid-century performance styles of Boulez and Craft.

In some ways, chapter six is possibly the most important of all. Here, I would like to develop the point that there did exist something approaching common-practice harmonic usage in the twentieth century. In large part, such usage derived directly from the late nineteenth century. Because late-romantic harmonic patterns still dominated twentieth-century popular idioms, such harmonies therefore also served to form a *de facto* common language that the larger musical public understood instinctively, even if certain advanced composers spurned this widely-circulating musical vocabulary in their more specialized and esoteric endeavours. We can therefore arrive at the logical conclusion that the most conservative twentieth-century “art” music composers – the so-called holdovers from the “romantic” nineteenth century – were indeed the ones who most faithfully mirrored the dominant musical language of their era. In this way, we can reject as over-reaching, utopian and impractical the frequently-encountered claim that only the more esoteric musical languages truly reflected the spirit of the twentieth century. To be sure, such rarefied languages added much new flavour to music in the post-1900 era. As film scores so clearly showed, even the most recondite idioms were

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capable of functioning rather well as illustrators of certain kinds of dramatic situations. But as the ubiquitous love scenes also demonstrated, and as the credits rolled, invariably awash in triumphantly resolved tertian harmonies, we were reminded time and again that the most specialized musical languages almost always still operated within a larger tonal and even romantic-sounding context, thus providing a model for how the two seemingly antithetical sides of the twentieth century could be seen as having a measure of unity after all.

As a general remark, we should make clear from the outset that the twentieth century period, as it is typically understood, normally includes composers who were born in the generation starting with Janáček (1854-1928), who is often called “the first twentieth century composer.” However, the fact that the first modernist pioneers are contemporaneous with a large number of late-romantic tonalists has allowed historians to freely classify composers as either nineteenth-century or twentieth-century according to style. Straddling the two centuries, this generation gradually began to flourish as the romantic generation of Wagner (1813-1883) and Brahms (1833-1897) passed on. The earliest-born figures in the first “twentieth century” generation remained productive as late as the third (Puccini and Busoni died in 1924, Janáček in 1928), the fourth, (Elgar and Holst died in 1934, Respighi in 1936), the fifth (Rachmaninoff died in 1943, Strauss in 1949), or even the sixth (Vaughan Williams died in 1958) decades of the twentieth century. Thus their years of composing came too late for them to be properly included in a typical historical overview devoted to the nineteenth century. Elgar wrote almost all of his important works between 1900 and 1920, and was in the midst of composing his eagerly awaited Third Symphony when he died in 1934. Puccini’s historic run of great operas began with *La Boheme* in 1895 and ended with *Turandot* in 1924. Rachmaninoff completed his final half-dozen masterpieces in the last 15 years of his life, ending with the *Symphonic Dances* of 1940 and the final revision of the Fourth Concerto in 1941. The tradition of

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specifically designating composers as “twentieth-century” even when they date as back as far as Janáček does indeed result in a very long twentieth century. But scholars often speak of a “long nineteenth century”¹⁸ as well, so a slightly longer twentieth century should not be too difficult a concept to grasp – especially if it helps solve the problem of Dahlhaus’s “no-man’s land,” that is, composers who apparently belonged to neither the nineteenth nor the twentieth centuries.

¹⁸ See for example Anthony Pople, “Styles and languages around the turn of the century,” in *The Cambridge History of Nineteenth-Century Music*, ed. Jim Samson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

Chapter One

Background to the Problem

One of the biggest challenges is the label ‘twentieth century’...people have ingrained in their souls a definition of what that means...it may come from the fact that culturally there is a divide in the century...it’s almost like there are two centuries in one. (Edward Cambron, marketing director and partron services director of the Philadelphia Orchestra, in a 1999 interview)

Historicism and evolutionary progress, twentieth-century style

As far as the general world of “classical” or “art” music is concerned, twentieth-century composers of a tonal-romantic inclination have long been among the most frequently-performed composers of their time. Despite this, they have always been among the worst casualties of a very powerful and influential philosophy of music history – one which has only recently been challenged effectively in academic circles. Contemplating the odd historical situation that latter-day romantic-sounding tonalists found themselves in can offer a great deal of

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insight into why our general approach to historically evaluating twentieth-century music has traditionally been, to borrow the words of Richard Taruskin, “fundamentally skewed.”¹ By way of example, Taruskin, in his monumental *Oxford History of Western Music*, ponders the strange case of Puccini (1858-1924), who is

usually barely mentioned in books like this...Since there is absolutely no chance of Puccini’s being dislodged from his place in the operatic repertoire, no matter how much critical invective is heaped upon him, and no matter how little attention he receives from general historians, it is clear that something else is at stake. The critical invective identifies him as one of the twentieth century’s emblematic figures.²

And what was the philosophy that wrecked havoc with Puccini’s critical reputation for so long? Taruskin identifies the culprit as historicism, a way of thinking which, as he puts it, views history as being “conceived in terms not only of events but also of goals.”³ One of the most important goals in the early modern period was for composers to advance the language of music in such a way that both they and their compositions would have a chance to become enshrined in the annals of history. Compositional techniques were sought out that would hopefully help them attain this goal, and composers who followed the proper rules of the game would, at the very least, be seen as contenders for the prize of immortality. If they were lucky, perhaps they could even achieve the ultimate status of being seen as, say, the Beethoven of their time. The historian John Caldwell was still defending the validity of such an approach at the end of the twentieth century and briefly summarized what it took to be a contender. He was speaking specifically of the British music scene but his remarks also encapsulated a philosophy of history that had

¹ Richard Taruskin, *The Oxford History of Western Music*, Vol. 3, *The Nineteenth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 665.

² *Ibid.*, 664

³ *Ibid.*, 665.

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long been applied on an international scale as well:

It certainly would not be difficult to draw up a list of a hundred serious British modernists born since 1930, most still happily alive. All but half a dozen or so firmly established figures (Goehr, Birtwistle, Davies, Maw and Harvey certainly among them) must be seen as still contending for the inevitably limited accolade of classic status...If it is true that the classics of literature are the writers who take pains to develop the language in order to cope with their semantic requirements, and that those who thereafter merely imitate them are of less account, then it follows that only those seen to be extending or refining the musical language, providing that this is necessary for their expressive purposes, are likely to achieve permanence.⁴

Certain goals were central to the now largely discredited progress narrative of musical evolution. At the bottom of it all was the desire for (to use Caldwell's words) "permanence," or "classic status." In order to attain this status, various compositional methods were devised, including ever more sophisticated harmonic novelties. By the time the twentieth century arrived, the nature of such novelties had moved well beyond what commentators sometimes called the "confines" or "limitations" of older tonal and melodic customs. Although such customs were still thriving in everyday usage wherever music was played and heard in the Western world, this simple fact was increasingly ignored as musical thinkers tried to create an intellectual framework that would explain the historical rationale behind the most recent advances in musical language. In the most extreme cases, the latest novelties were often justified by asserting the decline, or even death, of older tonal and melodic customs.

As the above remarks imply, in order for such a framework to become established, it had to be based on a sweeping denial of everyday musical reality: Nearly everyone, after all, still consumed

⁴ John Caldwell, *The Oxford History of English Music, Vol. 2, c. 1715 - present* (London: Oxford University Press, 1999), 490.

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tonal music and enjoyed melodies that were similar to what the romantic era had to offer. But those who positioned themselves at the forefront of musical evolution felt obligated to do battle with these deeply rooted traditions, which, they strongly believed, were only holding up musical evolution. Composers who indulged in the most radical advancements were thought to show great bravery and courage, in part because they dispensed with much of what the old romantic tradition had to offer, and in the process willingly sacrificed easy popularity in order to advance the cause of musical evolution. In music history classes we heard much talk of pioneers who sacrificed quick success for greater goals, suffering isolation and even ostracism in the process. In 1937, Schoenberg wrote an essay about life on the cutting edge of musical advancement and encapsulated his feelings in the following way: “I had to fight for every new work; I had been offended in the most outrageous manner by criticism; I had lost friends and I had completely lost any belief in the judgement of friends. And I stood alone against a world of enemies.”⁵ In modern parlance, one might say that Schoenberg was being a bit of a “drama queen,” but the problems he outlined were once considered by advanced composers to be very real, and the kind of contrary stance he took was indeed thought to be a necessary ingredient in maintaining one’s “contender” status.

For composers, the keen desire to reserve a place in music history had already been felt well before the advent of atonality around 1908-1910. For most observers, atonality was unquestionably the supreme compositional novelty of the early twentieth century, but long before it appeared, ways had already been found to connect the ultimate goal of permanence with the latest scientific discoveries. For many commentators schooled in late nineteenth-century Darwinian science in particular, the latest “art” music had developed out of a long and very gradual evolution

⁵ Arnold Schoenberg, “How one becomes lonely,” in *Style and Idea: Selected Writings of Arnold Schoenberg*, ed. Leonard Stein, trans. Leo Black, (London: Faber & Faber, 1975), 41

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that ultimately traced its roots back to the much less sophisticated, and even downright crude musical gestures of those whom European civilization once liked to call “savages.” The growth of music from such apparently primitive beginnings was codified in a scientific manner by leading thinkers like Herbert Spencer.⁶ At the turn of the century, the historian and composer Hubert Parry also wrote of what he termed the early stages of “primitive” music among “savages and semi-civilized races.”⁷ Following the latest scientific thought, Parry wrote in his once-popular textbook, *The Evolution of the Art of Music*, that “the Bushmen [were] at the lower end of the human scale, and the Javese, Siamese, Burmese, and Moors, about the middle.”⁸ (Appropriately enough, Parry’s historical overview was published as Volume 80 in *The International Scientific Series*, a series which also included important publications by Spencer himself). Parry also observed that although one may indeed belong to a more advanced race in the evolutionary sense (i. e. the Europeans), this was still no guarantee that comparably advanced music would always follow suit. Indeed, Parry noted that it had “even sometimes happened that races who have developed up to an advanced standard of intellectuality have not succeeded in systematizing more than a very limited range of sounds.”⁹

Parry’s opinions on race, coming as they did from a highly respected turn-of-the-century British intellectual, will perhaps make uncomfortable reading for us today but it is important to highlight the evolutionary views of this leading musical commentator in order to properly emphasize the powerful effect that the scientific philosophies of the time had on leading representatives of the great European musical tradition. Proceeding

⁶ See, for example, Herbert Spencer, “The Origin and Function of Music”, in *Illustrations of Universal Progress; A Series of Discussions* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1865), 210-238.

⁷ C. Hubert H. Parry, *The Evolution of the Art of Music*, 4th ed. (London: Kegan Paul, Trench Trübner & Co., Ltd., 1905), 92.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid, 7.

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further along his evolutionary line of reasoning, Parry went on to describe how the more advanced musical races also had their weaker, or less developed, streams of music, of which Italian opera was an example. He observed that within the European musical scene it was “operatic audiences [who] have always had the lowest standard of taste of any section of human beings calling themselves musical.”¹⁰ In Parry’s view, the most sophisticated aspect of Italian opera was its melody, but the mere presence of fine melody was not enough to mask the fact that Italian opera’s musical forms and orchestration were still on the crude side – or if we would like to put it in more neutral scientific terms, “less developed.”

Ironically, as a composer in a now rapidly-dating style that embraced aspects of Mendelssohn, Brahms and Liszt, Parry himself was becoming extremely vulnerable to the charge of representing a conservative, or “less developed” stream of composition by the first decade of the twentieth century. In comparison to Schoenberg and the futurists, certainly, he was soon to find himself among the less evolved, along with the Italian opera he was disparaging. In any case, his remarks on the low status of the operatic genre still served to demonstrate that Italian opera composers had to deal with prejudices that were widespread among many musical intellectuals. The historic tendency to denigrate Italian opera went back at least to Schumann’s infamous dismissal of Rossini and the beloved *bel canto* tradition. Perhaps the biggest practical difference between Parry and Schumann was that Parry had now merely added a veneer of scientific respectability to his musical prejudices (whereas Schumann had mainly operated under the guise of German national pride). But either way, the low ranking of Italian opera ran very deep in many musical circles throughout Europe. That general attitude, therefore, had already predated the scientifically-based evolutionary prejudices of the post-1910 avant-garde.

With the arrival of Schoenberg’s Vienna School, the

¹⁰ Ibid, 306.

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progress narrative of musical evolution to which Parry subscribed had itself evolved: It now read the history of music as a gradual increase in chromaticism which ultimately led to the grandiosely-conceived and all-embracing chromatic universe of atonality. Composers who lived beyond atonality's invention around 1910 could either obey this newly-added "mandate" and take the appropriate steps that would reserve their place in the historical narrative, or (like Taruskin's example of Puccini) they could ignore the mandate and pay the price of being written out of history. It is important to note here that the myth of increased chromaticism leading to atonality was largely a post-1910 Schoenbergian invention, as Ernst Roth (1896-1971) has usefully pointed out. Roth, who was formerly a child prodigy pianist as well as a trained musicologist, served for several decades as chairman of the music publishing giant Boosey and Hawkes, and was personally acquainted with many composers of his time. In his autobiography he recalled the musical climate of his youth:

When I made my first acquaintance with music, electric tramways were not the only astounding innovation: Richard Wagner too was the subject of violent debate. There were serious experts who insisted that Wagner had destroyed all musical form and that his 'endless' melody was a contradiction in itself because form was definite and a fundamental requirement of all melody. I seem to remember that the harmonic freedom of Wagner's music was much less debated. The 'Tristan sequence' certainly sounded strange but it was not yet accused, as it is today, of corrupting our whole tonal system.¹¹

Whatever the reasons for the alleged corruption of the tonal system, it remains a matter of history that musical composition did finally come to a critical point with atonality, which Schoenberg

¹¹ Ernst Roth, *The Business of Music: Reflections of a Music Publisher*, (London: Cassell, 1966). There is an electronic republication available at Music Web International: <http://www.musicweb-international.com/Roth/index.htm>. (accessed February 6, 2012).

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famously described as the “emancipation of the dissonance,” or, as he also put it, “air from another planet.”¹² The birth of atonality heralded the arrival of a putatively superior chromatic universe whose unlimited “freedom” contrasted with a time when music was simpler, and was still governed by the old “limitations” or “confines” of tonality (to use typical clichés that would eventually work their way into many music history textbooks later in the twentieth century). From a scientific point of view, the arrival of atonality was simply presented as more evidence that music, like the phylogenetic tree, grew ever richer and more complex over time. As William Wallace wrote in 1914, just after Schoenberg’s atonality was unveiled to the world,

The growth of Music as an organism is so definite that we can mark off each step as we ascend the scale, allotting this or that characteristic with some degree of certainty to its appropriate period, and classifying a composer or a school of composition as we would some form of animal or plant life. We should not hesitate till we reached the last, the present stage, in which the “proliferation” has taken place with such immense rapidity as to defy systematic analysis.¹³

Wallace expressed the belief that “It would be no feat for a composer to write another Orfeo today, with his faculty developed through the knowledge and experience of composers since Gluck; but practically every bar of a modern music student would have been a gigantic achievement had it been written in 1762.” Further, said Wallace, this state of affairs was “a sign of the art advancing towards maturity through one brain after another, each adding something that was beyond the imagination of the preceding

¹² This is the famous line in Schoenberg’s Second String Quartet, inserted at the point where the quartet (and Western Music as well) becomes freely atonal for the first time.

¹³ William Wallace, *The Musical Faculty* (London: MacMillan and Co., Ltd., 1914), 28.

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generation.”¹⁴ In the 1980s, Karlheinz Stockhausen was still demanding that musicians “serve musical evolution” in a similar sense to what Wallace had written seventy years earlier. As Stockhausen described it, New Music could “only mean music which is full of invention and discovery and which brings interpreters as well as listeners a good step further in their development, not just any ‘contemporary music’ full of clichés.”¹⁵

True to the intellectual spirit of the time in which he lived, Schoenberg attempted to cast his novel invention of atonality at least partly in the spirit and terminology of scientific advancement. Like Wallace, he partook of the evolutionary language that was then current, even to the point of drawing an analogy to the Darwinian concepts of ever-increasing complexity of life forms, and the survival of the fittest: “All progress, all development, leads from the simple to the complex, and the latest developments in music are the very ones to increase all those difficulties and obstacles against which anything new in music has always had to battle.”¹⁶ Further, Schoenberg insisted, tonality contained “the conditions that are leading to its annulment.” The tonal system was like biological life itself, in that “every living thing has within it that which changes, develops, and destroys it. Life and death are both equally present in the embryo.”¹⁷ As far as Schoenberg was concerned, tonality’s ultimate demise was as much as scientifically foretold. This all seemed very logical to many advanced thinkers, and for subsequent generations of believers these sorts of

¹⁴ Ibid., 26. It is important to point out here that many writers (like Cecil Gray) who questioned the efficacy of the Schoenberg revolution also spoke out against the fallacy of applying evolutionary theory to historical changes in musical style.

¹⁵ Karlheinz Stockhausen, “To the International Music Council.” *Perspectives of New Music* 24 (Autumn – Winter 1985): 43. We hardly need add here that for Stockhausen, the idea of “New Music” was not simply any new score that was hot off the press. Rather, it had become something essentially ageless, going well beyond considerations of chronology.

¹⁶ Joseph Auner, *A Schoenberg Reader: Documents of a Life*, (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2003), 43.

¹⁷ Ibid., 92.

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statements on the subsequent course of twentieth-century music almost assumed the status of scientific, if not gospel, truth. They also became inextricably woven into the fibre of almost all historical narratives.

Ideas such as the “demise of tonality” exerted a powerful influence on historians who attempted to decide which streams of music were more highly evolved and therefore worthy of historical discussion and, just as importantly, which streams were not. A classic example is provided in Robert Morgan’s widely used history textbook, *Twentieth-Century Music* (1991). There, the author observed that Rachmaninoff, for example, attempted to extend nineteenth-century tonal forms almost unchanged into the twentieth. Morgan therefore saw fit to give Rachmaninoff hardly more than a page in his textbook on modern music – and used (squandered might be a better word) that valuable space mainly for the purpose of describing how the composer “refus[ed] any concessions to the increasingly dominant new currents of musical thought.”¹⁸ In the same textbook, Schoenberg was given top priority, receiving almost thirty pages plus innumerable additional citations throughout the book. The fact that Rachmaninoff (1873-1943) was one of the top five repertoire composers of his time – while Schoenberg (1874-1951) could hardly crack the top twenty or thirty – carried no weight. Schoenberg made history while Rachmaninoff did not.

Table 2 (see later in this chapter) gives us a rough idea of how six writers in the late twentieth-century prioritized their overview coverage of the eighty most-represented composers (born between 1850 and 1915) in the record catalogue. Morgan himself was extremely conscious of the kind of historical message that was generated by the amount of space allocated to various composers: In a scholarly review article welcoming the publication of the 1980

¹⁸ Robert Morgan, *Twentieth-Century Music* (New York, London: Norton, 1991), 112. Morgan took this quotation from “The Composer as Interpreter: An interview with Norman Cameron,” *The Monthly Musical Record*, 44 (November 1934), 201.

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New Grove, he had extensively charted the rise and fall in the academic status of various twentieth-century composers simply by noting how many pages they had been given in 1980, and compared that coverage to the previous edition of *Grove* in 1954.¹⁹ Frank Howes, a historian of the early twentieth-century English musical renaissance, emphasized just how important relative space allocation was when one wanted to write a historical overview:

All histories imply some criticism, even if it is only the criticism of selection and exclusion, and critics, especially if they have been journalist critics, know that a rough-and-ready and by no means invalid criterion of quality is sheer quantity – length equals value.²⁰

Howes' criterion of space allowance was clearly taken to heart by Morgan and many other academic writers who, in chronicling the musical events of the twentieth century, sought to demote central repertoire composers like Sibelius, Strauss and Rachmaninoff, while elevating radical pioneers in their place.

The present-day decline of the “dissonance” paradigm

The amount of space that textbooks traditionally assigned to Rachmaninoff and Schoenberg was a prime example of how (to use Richard Taruskin's highly contentious phrase) myths became history.²¹ In his *Oxford History*, Taruskin has advanced one of the most powerful critiques ever mounted against the once all-embracing myth surrounding the coming of atonality. And along with him, a rapidly expanding groundswell of historians over the

¹⁹ Robert Morgan, “Music of the Twentieth Century: The New Grove – a review,” *The Musical Quarterly* 68 (April 1982): 262-270.

²⁰ Frank Howes, *The English Musical Renaissance* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1966), 11.

²¹ Richard Taruskin, *The Oxford History of Western Music*, Vol 4, *The Early Twentieth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 353ff.

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past few years has also felt more and more emboldened to take a critical view of this venerable tale of progress. Indeed, many leading writers today dismiss the myth out of hand, and it can be readily stated that few topics in music historiography are a safer target for debunking now that we are well into the twenty-first century. Alex Ross's 2007 book *The Rest is Noise*, a prize-winning and best-selling history of twentieth-century music, is a case in point:

Histories of music since 1900 often take the form of a teleological tale, a goal-obsessed narrative full of great leaps forward and heroic battles with the philistine bourgeoisie. When the concept of progress assumes exaggerated importance, many works are struck from the historical record on the grounds that they have nothing new to say. These pieces often happen to be those that have found a broader public – the symphonies of Sibelius and Shostakovich, Copland's *Appalachian Spring*, Carl Orff's *Carmina burana*. Two distinct repertoires have formed, one intellectual and one popular. Here they are merged: no language is considered intrinsically more modern than any other.²²

When reading comments like those of Ross and Taruskin, it is important to remember that in the decades immediately following the Second World War, the act of criticizing the then-dominant philosophy of musical progress had not always been easy to engage in without academic repercussions. There was indeed a time when certain new and novel musical languages were assumed to have usurped other “less-advanced” musical languages (which also still happened to be in use), and we will have much more to say on this topic in chapter six. In the heyday of high modernism, the philosophy of musical progress was explicitly used to justify atonality's appearance on the world stage. Any criticism of atonality, therefore, floundered on a scientific level at the very least. And when aesthetic disputes got really ugly, such criticism

²² Alex Ross, *The Rest is Noise* (New York: Farrar, Strau and Gioux, 1907), viii.

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could even be interpreted on an *ad hominum* level as well. An attack on atonality (such as that advanced by Hindemith), wrote Peter Yates in 1967, was “by implication” also an attack on Schoenberg himself.²³

Thus it was to be expected that when advanced composers like Rochberg, Górecki and Penderecki abandoned the evolutionary roller-coaster in the 1970s and reverted back to tonality and romantic-sounding styles, they were met with stiff resistance at major avant-garde festivals. A notable example was the case of Górecki’s Third Symphony, a work that had first been performed in 1977 at the Royan International Festival of Contemporary Art. In his 2003 reception history of this unabashedly neoromantic symphony, Luke Howard described how there had been “a lot of negative reaction to the work from the hard-line avant-gardists at the premiere. Six Western European music journals reviewed the Royan festival that year, all of them German-language publications, and all denouncing the symphony.”²⁴ Similarly, strongly-formulated post-1945 critiques of atonality such as those put forth by Hindemith, Rochberg, Bernstein, Lerdahl/Jackendoff, and Thomson were likely to be received with open hostility in academic journals.²⁵ Today,

²³ Peter Yates, *Twentieth Century Music: Its Evolution from the End of the Harmonic Era into the Present Era of Sound* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1967), 146

²⁴ Luke B. Howard, “‘Laying the Foundation’: The Reception of Górecki’s Third Symphony, 1977-1992,” *Polish Music Journal* 6 (Winter 2003): http://www.usc.edu/dept/polish_music/PMJ/issue/6.2.03/Howard.html (accessed June 18, 2012).

²⁵ Some key writings that have articulated the ongoing resistance to atonality over the decades are: Paul Hindemith, *A Composer’s World: Horizons and Limitations. The Charles Eliot Norton Lectures, 1949-1950*. (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1952); George Rochberg, *The Aesthetics of Survival: A Composer’s View of Twentieth-Century Music* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1984); Leonard Bernstein, *The Unanswered Question: Six Talks at Harvard* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1976); Fred Lerdahl and Ray Jackendoff, *A Generative Theory of Tonal Music* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1983); William Thomson, *Schoenberg’s Error* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1991). Examples of academic reception include: Joseph Auner, review of

however, the climate has changed greatly, and such challenges to the older status quo have now become standard academic observations. As Leon Botstein, the current editor of *The Musical Quarterly*, has observed, such “sceptical reflection” is now the norm. Since the 1970s, Botstein adds further, “the claims of modernism – the ‘progressive’ art and music of the first half of the century” have increasingly come “under seige.”²⁶

A very clear example of this appears at the end of Brian Hyer’s “Tonality” article for the 2001 *New Grove*. (Hyer’s *New Grove* article has also been re-published in the recent *Cambridge History of Western Music Theory* – the Cambridge History series being one of the most prestigious projects in academic publishing.) Hyer’s strongly-worded critique of the extent to which the historic role of tonality was demoted in accounts of twentieth-century music also reflects the highly significant fact that many major editorial decisions in the important musicalogical publishing circles no longer bow to the old progressive view with the same frequency that they once did. It is well to recall here that the previous (1980) edition of *New Grove* had commissioned the pivotal article on tonality from Carl Dahlhaus, the greatest German musicologist of his generation. Dahlhaus’s well-known progressive views on twentieth-century music had guaranteed that the orthodox academic position, with its emphasis on the decline of tonality followed by the rise of atonalism, would be duly observed. In his 1980 article, Dahlhaus had dedicated the last page (a self-contained section that he appropriately entitled “the decline of tonal harmony”) to charting the final stages of tonality’s demise. He ended with some remarks on Schoenberg’s dodecaphony and the subsequent rise of serialism, where “tonal harmony vanish[ed]

Schoenberg’s Error, by William Thomson, in *Theory and Practice* 17 (1992): 119-130; Steven D. Block, “George Rochberg: Progressive or Master Forger?” *Perspectives of New Music* 21 (Autumn 1982-Summer 1983): 407-409.

²⁶ Leon Botstein, “Out of Hungary: Bartók, Modernism, and the Cultural Politics of Twentieth-Century Music,” in *Bartók and His World*, edited by Peter Laki (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), 4.

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altogether.”²⁷ In dramatic contrast, Hyer chose to end his more recent 2001 article with a strong critique of the progressive historical viewpoint favoured by Dahlhaus twenty years earlier. Among other points, Hyer observed that the framework used by Dahlhaus had resulted in the negative effect of allowing historians an excuse for eliminating vast tracts of twentieth-century music from standard historical accounts. As part of Hyer’s concluding remarks, he emphasized that the story of

the rise and fall of tonality is far from a neutral account of music history, but serves, rather, to situate atonal and twelve-tone music as the focus of musicological (if not cultural) attention. The fierce commitment of music historians and music theorists to ultramodernist narratives of evolution and progress buttresses the hegemonic position of a serialism long since on the wane. It allows its advocates to characterize composers who continue to pursue tonal idioms as regressive, but also to exclude popular music – which continues to embrace tonal materials – from music curricula: narratives of evolution and continuous development are conspicuous for their silences and elisions. The failure of these narratives to account for the continuous use and renewal of tonal resources in Bartók, Porter, Coltrane, and Britten (among numerous other composers) alongside the music of Schoenberg, Berg, and Webern (not to mention the arcane experimentalism of Babbitt, Boulez, and Stockhausen) is remarkable.²⁸

Another good example illustrating the extent to which recent editorial decisions have allowed skeptical reflection to shape the content of major musicological publications is Christopher Butler’s article on the all-important topic of early twentieth-century innovation for the *Cambridge History of Twentieth-Century Music*. Predictably enough, Butler’s article was badly

²⁷ Carl Dahlhaus, “Tonality,” in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, ed. Stanley Sadie (London: Macmillan, 1980), 19:55.

²⁸ Brian Hyer, “Tonality” in *The Cambridge History of Western Music Theory*, edited by Thomas Christensen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 750.

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savaged by Robert Morgan, and Morgan's reaction to Butler will be discussed further in chapter six.

Alan Walker, the premiere Liszt scholar of the last forty years (and a strong supporter of the kind of musical values that made the late twentieth-century Romantic Revival possible – see chapter two), is one of many who have expressed the changing academic attitude well. In his recent article advocating a revival of the music of Ernst von Dohnányi (1877-1960), Walker has outlined the philosophy that had once played a strong role in securing the temporary demise of Dohnányi's resolutely tonal and romantic music.²⁹ Although Walker's comments are not as forcefully worded as Hyer's, he has also consciously distanced himself from the old academic orthodoxy:

At the turn of the twentieth century something new and entirely unexpected began to happen to the language of music. The process was driven by a new attitude of self-awareness towards the history of music itself, and to the composer's place within it. Briefly, the notion was put about that the vocabulary of music had to develop, had to do ever-new things, in order to be worthwhile. The greatest premium was placed upon originality. Musical vocabulary, so we were told, was something that could actually wear out through repetition, and would lose its expressive power unless composers sought to renew it. We were introduced to such concepts as 'the rising norm of consonance.' What that meant was that since the dissonances of each generation were turned into consonances through sheer repetition, the next generation had to incorporate ever-increasing dissonances in order to get the same expressive power out of the language.³⁰

Walker further related how musicians and musicologists like himself were "urged to look at history" for examples from

²⁹ Dohnányi is now rapidly assuming a small but firm niche in today's international repertoire.

³⁰ Alan Walker, "Ernst von Dohnányi: A Tribute," in *Perspectives on Ernst von Dohnányi* (Lanham, Maryland: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 2005), 18.

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Palestrina onward that apparently proved the point.

But, as Walker's skeptical language implied, the problems with such a reading of history were many. Most obvious, perhaps, was the fact that as an intellectual framework, the orthodox way of interpreting the larger flow of music history did not have the power to explain how almost all twentieth-century music that continued to be consumed on a daily basis managed to remain clearly tonal. Nor could it explain how the best conservative music of many some-time radicals – Debussy, Hindemith, Bartók, Prokofiev, and even Schoenberg himself – tended to succeed much better (in comparison to the same composers' most radical works) as far as long-term reception was concerned. And besides focusing inordinately on key exhibits like the very chromatic prelude to *Tristan* (and ignoring the four minutes of pure E flat that made up the entire *Rheingold* prelude), such a "progressive" philosophy of history ended up artificially elevating certain early twentieth-century composers – those who believed and endorsed the progress myth most heartily – to a higher stature within the hotly-contested pantheon of Great Composers than their earned places in the general repertoire (their independent ability to generate ticket sales and revenue from recordings) ever warranted.

As a direct consequence, composers who were more skeptical of such "progress" and the (mis)use of scientific authority were reduced to near-zero status in historical accounts, no matter how frequently they were performed. However, the act of lowering a composer's historical status on the basis of current scientific thought turned out to be a double-edged sword. As Medtner pointed out in a 1935 book funded by Rachmaninoff, the application of scientific evolution to music history could just as easily go in the direction of degradation instead of improvement. "Evolution," wrote Medtner, "means both forward and backward, higher and lower, and finally (quite contrary to the opinion of those who identify it with progress...) it means both better and worse..."³¹

³¹ Nicholas Medtner, *The Music and the Fashion*, trans. Alfred J. Swann, (Haverford, Pennsylvania: Haverford College Bookstore, 1951), 106.

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Not surprisingly, few on the cutting edge listened to the opinions of ultra-regressive musicians like Medtner and Rachmaninoff, but it was precisely on the intellectual basis of what Medtner considered to be a highly questionable view of history that Schoenberg somehow managed – through sheer force of personality, and with an unprecedented lack of goodwill and love from the public – to become installed as one of the fulcrums of music history, thereby “hijacking”³² (Strauss scholar Morten Kristiansen does not consider that too strong a word) the crucial definition of early twentieth-century modernism by forcing the category to be defined too exclusively in terms of extreme dissonance. There was, in other words, an evolutionary harmonic progression from the *Tristan* prelude to Schoenberg’s *Three Pieces, Op. 11*, but there was no such progression from the *Rheingold* prelude to Ravel’s *Bolero* – or from *Tristan* to *Bolero* for that matter. Nor was there mention of a light-music line from, say, Mozart’s *Eine kleine Nachtmusik*, through Offenbach and Gottschalk, and on to Ketelbey and Coates in the 1920s and the popular works of Leroy Anderson and Malcolm Arnold after 1950. Selectivity was the order of the day, and any evidence for the persistence of elements like clearly triadic gestures throughout the time of transition from tonality to atonality somehow got lost in the shuffle as self-consciously cutting-edge composers jockeyed for position among the immortals.

In 1967, the Los Angeles critic Peter Yates wrote that “The most fundamental insight for the subsequent course of twentieth century music is what Arnold Schoenberg, who had it, called ‘the emancipation of the dissonance.’”³³ And it was thanks above all to Schoenberg’s emancipation of the dissonance that Adorno could write: “The musical discord...is the conspicuous identification

³² Morten Kristiansen, review of *Richard Strauss's Orchestral Music and the German Intellectual Tradition: the Philosophical Roots of Musical Modernism* by Charles Youmans, *Notes: Quarterly Journal of the Music Library Association* 63 (December 2006): 374.

³³ Yates, 30.

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mark of the musical *avantgarde*.³⁴ When accorded a dominant place in musical texture, unrelenting dissonance certainly did have an unusual ability to obfuscate and even obliterate clear tonal centres and the traditional long melodic line. Both of those musical features, traditional tonality and traditional conceptions of melody (both Adorno and Schoenberg found such melody primitive – see chapter five), were still indispensable in a vast amount of late romantic music that was being written both before and after the emancipation of the dissonance took place around 1908-1910.

Nonetheless, musical modernity (in the specific sense of emancipated dissonance) did become well-established in certain influential circles, so much so that the idea of the autonomous dissonance became one of the principle shaping forces in the production the kind of music that tried to be as modern as possible. This uniquely twentieth-century conception of the role of dissonance eventually developed a long tradition of its own, with supporters still in existence a century later. Thus, when a strongly modernist-oriented theorist like Arnold Whittall (writing in the early years of the twenty-first century) defines modernist music in the most succinct way possible in a journalistic setting, he can still begin by referring to the kind of music that “does not use tonality, and is fragmented in form and texture.”³⁵ Back in 1971, the vastly prolific commentator David Ewen, a writer of many books aimed at popularizing classical music, had also given a definition that was very similar. In the introduction of his *Composers of Tomorrow’s Music*, Ewen broadly defined modernist music as scattered melody and shapeless forms. Tonality was discarded, and significant refinements of the atonal principle included serialism and chance operations.³⁶

³⁴ Theodor W. Adorno, “What National Socialism has done to the Arts,” in *Essays on Music*, ed. Richard Leppert, Written by Adorno in English (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2002), 380.

³⁵ Arnold Whittall, review of *The Pleasures of Modernist Music*, edited by Arved Ashby, in *Gramophone* 82 (February, 2005), 95.

³⁶ David Ewen, *Composers of Tomorrow’s Music: A Non-technical Introduction to the Musical Avant-Garde Movement* (New York: Dodd,

Popularity and academic status: Two separate canons?

When evaluating historical periods and composers dating from the years before 1900, historians active throughout the twentieth century generally tried to find a way to build key historical turning points and historical tendencies around composers who remained central to the concert and recorded repertoire as it existed throughout the twentieth century. Despite a certain circularity in the reasoning, the lines of music history that became established in the public consciousness were simply the lines that emerged when the most-played composers were connected together, at least as far as pre-1900 eras were concerned. The composers who were the most thoroughly represented in post-1900 historical accounts of eighteenth and nineteenth-century music therefore tended to be the same figures who received the bulk of present-day performances and recordings, which is another way of saying that music history textbooks and classical record catalogues emphasized a similar canon of great composers. And we all know who those composers are. Table 1 lists the number of currently-available CDs for the most popular pre-1900 era composers, by period, in the comprehensive catalogue of Arkivmusic.com, an internationally distributed specialist firm that aims to stock every classical CD in print:³⁷

**Table 1: Listings of available CDs at Arkivmusic.com
for composers born before 1850**

Renaissance/Early Baroque:

Purcell 869	Byrd 454
Monteverdi 545	Dowland 379
Pachelbel 455	Praetorius 365

Mead, 1971), vi.

³⁷ Arkivmusic.com, data as of January 2012.

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Buxtehude 353	Gibbons 196
Palestrina 333	Scheidt 153
Frescobaldi 265	Marais 143
Des Prés 250	Lully 138
Schütz 237	Morley 137
Victoria 224	Dufay 127
Gabrieli 210	Sweelinck 123
Lassus 207	Allegri 120

Late Baroque:

Bach 6969	Corelli 323
Handel 2953	Couperin 315
Vivaldi 1968	Rameau 311
Telemann 835	Charpentier 231
Scarlatti 574	Tartini 180
Albinoni 403	

Classical:

Mozart 7262	Bach CPE 416
Beethoven 5593	Hummel 240
Haydn 2327	Pergolesi 218
Gluck 650	Sor 215
Boccherini 419	Bach JC 206

Romantic:

Brahms 3930	Bizet 1628
Schubert 3876	Saint Saens 1606
Verdi 3488	Donizetti 1431
Tchaikovsky 3356	Faure 1379
Schumann 2841	Gounod 1356
Mendelssohn 2669	Massenet 1246
Chopin 2483	Grieg 1245
Wagner 2369	Strauss, Johann Jr. 1032
Liszt 2193	Mussorgsky 903
Dvorak 1962	Rimsky Korsakov 901
Rossini 1836	Berlioz 888

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Franck 887	Meyerbeer 609
Bellini 859	Smetana 543
Weber 815	Giordano 536
Bruckner 787	Paganini 518
Offenbach 662	Ponchielli 451

As a methodology for determining greatness, the formula, “great composers equals most-played composers,” may seem a little too facile, like paint-by-numbers. It is certainly not immune from criticism on that count, but it is significant that nobody has yet devised a method that can fully displace it. If anyone today were to rate a Gluck far ahead of a Mozart or a Beethoven, they would be received with, at most, a certain amount of indulgence. Popularity was clearly foundational to the success of Haydn, Beethoven and Mozart – both in their time and after. Contrary to the myth of greatness not being recognized in its own time, Haydn, Beethoven and Mozart, for example, were the three most performed composers in Vienna in the two decades following 1790.³⁸ Which of course brings up one of the burning questions that surrounds popular romantic composers who flourished in the first half of the twentieth century: Why do we judge the post-1850 generation – that is, the first early twentieth-century generation of composers – according to completely different criteria? That is a question to ponder as we continue to explore the problem of romanticism in the twentieth century.

And eventually the criteria probably will not be any different. There will come a time when the twentieth century tonal/atonal culture wars are a thing of the past, and historical methodologies such as that of pitting twentieth-century traditionalists against radicals (at the expense of the traditionalists) will no longer provide a credible strategy for how we assess compositional greatness. To put it another way, the statistical

³⁸ See Tia DeNora, *Beethoven and the Construction of Genius: Musical Politics in Vienna, 1792-1803* (Berkeley, London: University of California Press, 1995), 31. DeNora drew on data supplied by Mary Sue Morrow’s *Concert Life in Haydn’s Vienna: Aspects of a Developing Musical and Social Institution* (New York: Pendragon Press, 1989).

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frequency of dissonant chords in works dating from after 1910 will no longer be seen as an essential parameter for entry into the canon. The only issue will be whether or not the music is able to command a significant audience in the twenty-first century and beyond. As the composer and theorist George Perle remarked in a 1991 university commencement address,

I suspect that the vitality and significance of contemporary musical culture will continue to be evaluated by posterity in the same way as we evaluate the vitality and significance of earlier musical cultures — by what it contributes to the permanent repertory of performers — in other words, by the best of what its composers will have achieved.³⁹

Perle clearly associates “the best” with the permanent repertoire, but his common-sense suggestion, coming as it does from a leading academic representative of twelve-tone music, has yet to be properly applied in his own circles to several of the most widely performed early twentieth-century composers.

Clearly, the more romantic-oriented composers from the early modern era, both major and minor, formed a very large group. In the 1930s, the British historian Cecil Gray noted that the early twentieth-century traditionalist group as a whole (as opposed to the neoclassicists and atonalists) comprised “the vast majority of creative musicians” during their era, and current musical explorations of the period, as reflected in the record catalogue, would seem to confirm Gray's observation. But Gray also pointed out that these composers had found themselves in a major historical predicament.⁴⁰ To varying degrees, all of the more

³⁹ George Perle, “New Music and the Intuitive Listener,” in *The Right Notes: Twenty-three Selected Essays by George Perle on Twentieth-Century Music* (Stuyvesant, NY: Pendragon Press, 1995), 299.

⁴⁰ Cecil Gray, *Predicaments, or, Music of the Future* (London: Oxford University Press, 1936; reprint, Freeport, NY: Books for Libraries Press, 1969), 20 (page citations are to the reprint edition). See longer quotation in chapter four.

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traditionalist and romantic-sounding figures, famous and not-so-famous, encountered virtually insurmountable problems defending the aesthetic and scientific legitimacy of their apparently outdated musical language. For obvious reasons the minor figures stood to lose even more in the historical sweepstakes than composers like Puccini, Rachmaninoff and Strauss, all of whom continued to be performed and recorded regularly. And it has only been in the last few years that many of the lesser figures have finally gotten a public hearing at all, thanks to what Finzi scholar Stephen Banfield called the “life line” of recordings.⁴¹ Indeed, recordings have done more than any other medium to feed the present-day passion for musical exploration on the part of classical music connoisseurs across the globe. This important cultural trend has far-reaching implications for twentieth-century music historiography, and will be discussed further in chapter two.

As Adorno and Whittall implied earlier, academically-certified entry into the musicological canon of Great Twentieth-Century Music was, to put it crudely, at least partly dependent on meeting a sufficient dissonance quota. In stark contrast, the widespread present-day connoisseur interest in the more romantic-sounding twentieth century composers such as those we have just cited is based on entirely different criteria. Many music lovers have taken music history into their own hands, so to speak, and have decided that their own process of musical discovery can be something other than an “Easter egg hunt” for the most “daring” (read: dissonant) twentieth century works.⁴² Indeed, as one peruses

⁴¹ Stephen Banfield, *Gerald Finzi, An English Composer* (London: Faber and Faber, 1997), 487.

⁴² For musical works from previous centuries, a related exercise is to go cherry-picking for dissonant and highly-chromatic chord progressions that “foreshadow” the coming of emancipated dissonance. I once had a music theory professor who largely constructed his 19th C Music analysis class around what one student in the class aptly called an “Easter Egg” hunt for half-diminished 7th chords (the so-called “Tristan” chord) in the works of various romantic composers. One of the last works on the course syllabus for that semester was the Berg Sonata. The implications were obvious. The Tristan chord had done its deed in driving tonality into the final throes of its

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the various record review magazines such as *Gramophone* and *Fanfare* from over the past few decades, it almost seems as though classical music connoisseurs of today – and the record labels that serve them – have been engaging in their own Easter egg hunt of sorts.

In a seemingly perverse twist on the old evolutionary methodology, the goal for many classical music lovers and record collectors in recent years has been to find what they consider to be the most beautiful, melodious and romantic-sounding composers who lived in the twentieth century. Such a basic philosophy provides the essential stimulus for record critic Robert Reilly's life-long exploration of twentieth-century traditionalists. As he explains in the preface of his 2002 book *Surprised by Beauty: A Listener's Guide to the Recovery of Modern Music*, "Much of what I have written is about modern music because it is the music of our time, and it is largely undiscovered territory. I have endeavoured to understand the nature of the crisis through which modern music passed and the sources of its recovery." Reilly goes on to describe how "many [composers] simply soldiered on, writing beautiful music as it has always been understood. For this, they suffered ridicule and neglect. I believe their rehabilitation will change the reputation of modern music."⁴³

The kind of twentieth-century music that Reilly has been

existence (although I am not convinced that the professor actually believed that). But the significant point is that he still chose to build his theory course around the increasingly discredited myth of tonal decline.

⁴³ Robert Reilly, *Surprised by Beauty: A Listener's Guide to the Recovery of Modern Music* (Washington, D. C.: Morley Books, 2002), 14-15. Reilly's book contains short essays exploring the music of Adams, Antheil (his later moderate works), Arnold, Barber, Argento, Duruflé, Elgar, Finzi, Ferber, Liebermann, Morton Gould, Harris, Holmboe, Janáček, Lajtha, Malipiero, Martin, Martinu, Mathias, Nielsen, Poulenc, Roussel, Rubbra, Saeverud, Schickele, Schmidt, Shostakovich, Sibelius, Tcherépnin, Tubin, Tveitt, Vainberg, Vasks, Einojohani Rautavaara, Vaughan Williams, and Villa-Lobos. Also included are revealing interviews that Reilly himself conducted with Diamond, Menotti, Rautavaara, Rütli, and Rochberg. Articles on Cage and Schoenberg are included in order to illustrate how, in Reilly's view, twentieth-century music went awry.

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exploring, reviewing, and advocating over the past couple of decades certainly has a very dedicated and passionate following in the highly specialized world of classical music connoisseurs. In direct response to this phenomenon, we will be emphasizing again and again that such explorations provide a significant financial driving force behind the recent resurgence of twentieth-century traditionalists like Korngold, Medtner, Bax and George Lloyd on compact disc. Lloyd, who was one of the most regressive of all, even became the musical cornerstone of Albany Records when that label was founded in 1987, as we will see in chapter two. Albany is now one of the six largest independent classical record labels in the world, and the story of its rapid growth is an apt reflection of how classical music connoisseurs have become cutting-edge explorers in their own right, hunting indefatigably for composers who did not, for a variety of (usually very principled) reasons, progress in the way that advanced thinkers insisted was necessary in order to become the heirs of the so-called Great Tradition.

As the last one hundred years have decisively shown, the general musical public that ratified Beethoven and Wagner, not to mention many of Schoenberg's own finest contemporaries, never really came around to Schoenberg's dissonant revolution itself, and this is very evident in today's recording and concert statistics. In 1944, Roger Sessions said of Schoenberg's works: "It goes without saying that performances have been very few, and their real impact limited."⁴⁴ Since Sessions made this comment, the situation has admittedly changed ever so slightly, but even today, very little advanced music, including that of Schoenberg himself, is performed with any real frequency despite decades of the most intense academic advocacy on its behalf.

Table 2 lists the number of commercially available CDs that contain works by eighty leading repertoire composers born between 1850 and 1915 – that is, those who were generally active throughout the Schoenberg era. As with Table 1, we are using

⁴⁴ Roger Sessions, *Roger Sessions on Music: Collected Essays*, ed. Edward T. Cone (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979), 365.

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record catalogue data from Arkivmusic.com, one of the most comprehensively stocked classical CD shops in the world. In order to clearly show just how different the daily practice of the classical music world is in comparison to the academic conception of twentieth-century music, we are contrasting the record catalogue presence with the amount of space that several major textbook writers have chosen to assign to each composer. In this catalogue, the reader will note that Schoenberg ranks at the 34th position among a broad range of his contemporaries, while Berg is at 46, and Webern is much further down at 74. Schoenberg's ranking, incidentally, would be much lower were it not for historically "unimportant" early tonal works like *Verklärte Nacht*, which Schoenberg scholars have traditionally tended to ignore in favour of the atonal works. Ironically, it is precisely these early works that allow Schoenberg to enjoy a fairly respectable position in the record catalogue, although his relatively modest ranking in relation to the top figures in no way corresponds to his august position in academic circles.⁴⁵

The record catalogue data, of course, reflects the tastes and preferences of the record-buying public, those who vote with their wallets. Is their historic judgement wrong? Even for those observers having only a cursory familiarity with some of the lesser-known names listed in Table 2, it will be apparent that much of the early twentieth-century music in the Arkivmusic.com catalogue is comprised of tonal and highly romantic-sounding composers of major and minor stature. Clearly, for today's music-lovers, academic notions like the "death of romanticism" and the "death of tonality" cannot be said to carry a lot of weight. As far as commentators in the philosophical tradition of Schoenberg and

⁴⁵ We have only analysed a sampling of the many music history textbooks and overviews that have been written over the last few decades. Some like Hodier have been even more adamant in eliminating the tonal traditionalists from the historical record. There is also the important general overview of Eggebrecht (*Musik im Abendland*) which we will discuss at the beginning of chapter three. In that 800-page book, Eggebrecht devoted a total of 73 pages (out of the 77 pages he reserved for the twentieth century) to atonality.

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Table 2: Number of available CDs for composers born between 1850 and 1915, compared with their coverage in major history textbooks

	CDs	Morgan 1991	Watkins 1995	Salzman1988	Antokoletz 1992	Simms 1986	Machlis 1979
		554 pp	728 pp	330 pp	546 pp	450 pp	694 pp
Debussy	2435	10 pp	42 pp	6 pp	9 pp	9 ½ pp	17pp
Puccini	2258	¼ pg	mentioned	1 ½ pp	mentioned	mentioned	mentioned
Ravel	2013	4 pp	37 ½ pp	2 ½ pp	2 pp	7 ½ pp	9 pp
Strauss	1918	6 ½ pp	13 pp	3 pp	1 pg	5 pp	9 pp
Rachmaninoff	1894	1 ¾ pp	mentioned	mentioned	mentioned	nothing	mentioned
Prokofiev	1545	5 1/3 pp	4 ½ pp	1 ½ pp	11 ½ pp	3 pp	10 pp
Shostakovich	1451	6 ¾ pp	4 ½ pp	1 ½ pp	8 pp	4 ½ pp	10 ½ pp
Mahler	1310	10 pp	19 pp	1 pg	mentioned	6 ½ pp	10 pp
Stravinsky	1137	25 ½ pp	64 pp	10 pp	32 ½ pp	23 pp	21 pp
Elgar	1100	1 pg	mentioned	mentioned	4 lines	mentioned	½ pp
Britten	939	6 pp	6 pp	1 ¼ pp	11 pp	5 ½ pp	13 ½ pp
Sibelius	947	2 ½ pp	nothing	½ pg	5 ½ pp	5 ½ pp	1 pg
Gershwin	921	3 lines	1 ½ pp	4 lines	mentioned	mentioned	6 pp
V Williams	915	4 ½ pp	3 ½ pp	½ pg	8 pp	3 pp	7 ½ pp
Bartók	875	15 pp	18 pp	4 pp	34 pp	12 pp	17 pp
Leoncavallo	732	mentioned	nothing	mentioned	nothing	nothing	nothing
Falla	721	3 pp	1 ½ pp	½ pg	5 ½ pp	3 ½ pp	2 pp
Mascagni	715	mentioned	nothing	mentioned	nothing	nothing	nothing
Poulenc	715	3 ½ pp	8 pp	1 pg	5 ½ pp	2 pp	5 pp
Villa Lobos	630	2 1/3 pp	mentioned	½ pg	9 pp	mentioned	2 pp
Copland	606	5 pp	9 pp	½ pg	7 ½ pp	5 ½ pp	13 pp
Albeniz	580	¼ pg	mentioned	mentioned	1 pg	mentioned	mentioned
Hindemith	555	8 ½ pp	13 pp	4 pp	8 pp	10 ½ pp	8 ½ pp
Giordano	543	mentioned	nothing	mentioned	nothing	nothing	nothing
Barber	540	mentioned	1 ½ pp	mentioned	mentioned	mentioned	1/3 pg
Granados	534	¼ pg	mentioned	mentioned	2 ½ pp	4 lines	mentioned
Satie	529	7 pp	12 pp	2 pp	3 ½ pp	3 pp	5 pp
Holst	503	3 pp	mentioned	mentioned	mentioned	¼ pg	mentioned
Janáček	489	2 ½ pp	nothing	1 pg	1 ½ pp	¼ pg	8 pp
Reger	483	1 ½ pp	mentioned	mentioned	mentioned	2 pp	mentioned
Scriabin	476	7 pp	3 ½ pp	1 pg	4 ½ pp	5 pp	1 pg
Lehár	460	nothing	nothing	nothing	nothing	nothing	nothing
Rodrigo	459	nothing	nothing	mentioned	6 lines	nothing	nothing
Schoenberg	450	29 pp	56 pp	10 ½ pp	29 pp	30 pp	26 pp
Kreisler	432	nothing	nothing	nothing	nothing	nothing	nothing
Messiaen	431	6 pp	10 pp	1 pg	2 pp	9 pp	6 pp
Walton	414	2 pp	1 pg	mentioned	mentioned	mentioned	2 pp
Respighi	405	5 lines	6 lines	¼ pg	nothing	nothing	½ pg
Glazunov	366	nothing	mentioned	nothing	mentioned	mentioned	mentioned
Martinů	360	nothing	nothing	mentioned	nothing	mentioned	½ pg
Khachaturian	358	nothing	nothing	mentioned	1 ½ pp	nothing	mentioned

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(Table 2, continued)

Ives	340	11 pp	8 ½ pp	3 ½ pp	10 pp	12 ½ pp	14 pp
Howells	338	nothing	nothing	nothing	nothing	nothing	nothing
Nielsen	337	½ pg	mentioned	mentioned	1 ½ pp	¼ pg	1/3 pg
Milhaud	320	2 pp	4 pp	1 ½ pp	5 ½ pp	3 pp	2 pp
Berg	314	13 ½ pp	42 ½ pp	3 ½ pp	25 pp	11 pp	11 ½ pp
Sousa	294	nothing	mentioned	nothing	nothing	nothing	nothing
Cage	279	7 pp	7 ½ pp	3 ½ pp	5 pp	11 pp	7 ½ pp
Kodaly	278	1 pg	mentioned	½ pg	4 pp	½ pg	2 pp
Ibert	272	nothing	nothing	mentioned	nothing	nothing	6 lines
Grainger	268	nothing	nothing	nothing	nothing	nothing	nothing
Korngold	263	nothing	nothing	nothing	nothing	nothing	nothing
Stanford	262	mentioned	nothing	nothing	mentioned	nothing	mentioned
Bloch	259	mentioned	nothing	½ pg	mentioned	nothing	3 pp
Turina	250	mentioned	nothing	mentioned	mentioned	nothing	nothing
Delius	248	½ pg	nothing	4 lines	mentioned	mentioned	2 ½ pp
Tarrega	238	nothing	nothing	nothing	nothing	nothing	nothing
Weill	237	6 pp	2 ½ pp	2 ½ pp	½ pg	mentioned	8 ½ pp
Vierne	226	nothing	nothing	nothing	nothing	nothing	nothing
Busoni	221	3 pp	mentioned	½ pg	mentioned	2 ½ pp	1 pg
Szymanowski	221	1 ½ pp	mentioned	nothing	2 pp	¼ pg	½ pg
Durufé	217	nothing	nothing	nothing	nothing	nothing	nothing
Dupré	215	nothing	mentioned	nothing	nothing	nothing	nothing
Orff	215	2 ½ pp	1 pg	¼ pg	½ pg	nothing	2 ¼ pp
Enescu	204	nothing	nothing	nothing	nothing	nothing	½ pg
Honegger	204	2 pp	½ pg	1 pg	5 pp	2 ½ pp	2 pp
Ponce	199	nothing	nothing	nothing	nothing	nothing	nothing
Bridge	199	mentioned	nothing	nothing	mentioned	nothing	mentioned
C-Tedesco	190	nothing	nothing	nothing	nothing	nothing	nothing
Ireland	190	nothing	nothing	nothing	nothing	nothing	nothing
Lutoslawski	176	1 ½ pp	4 ½ pp	6 lines	1 pg	1 pg	¼ pg
Moreno-Tórroba	168	nothing	nothing	nothing	nothing	nothing	nothing
Warlock	168	nothing	nothing	nothing	mentioned	nothing	mentioned
Webern	167	16 pp	14 ½ pp	4 ½ pp	9 ½ pp	6 pp	12 pp
Bax	162	mentioned	nothing	nothing	mentioned	nothing	nothing
Suk	156	nothing	nothing	mentioned	mentioned	nothing	nothing
Finzi	155	nothing	nothing	nothing	nothing	nothing	nothing
Françaix	151	nothing	nothing	mentioned	nothing	nothing	6 lines
Carter	150	5 pp	2 ½ pp	1 ¼ pp	5 ½ pp	9 pp	9 pp
Dohnányi	147	nothing	nothing	nothing	nothing	nothing	nothing

Adorno were concerned, the general audience was superficial in their musical appreciation: They wanted clearly tonal music and obvious melodies. They remained stuck in the (romantic) nineteenth century. Against all better musical judgement, they were inexplicably attracted to romanticism's late-arriving twentieth-century epigones. And, they showed little enthusiasm for the more

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radical music which was supposed to have superseded the kind of music of they so stoutly continued to defend.

To draw upon a second statistical example, Douglas Lee of Vanderbilt University has compiled a survey of the most frequently performed twentieth century orchestral concert repertoire in the United States during the years 1990-2000.⁴⁶ He mourns the fact that some key avant-garde figures are not present in his survey. Upon perusing the data in Lee's survey, we cannot fail to notice one really glaring omission: Schoenberg fails to make Lee's list at all. Not even the presumably popular orchestral version of *Verklärte Nacht* is present among the top several hundred most-performed orchestral works – this, despite Schoenberg having an inestimable advantage in that many of his finest contemporaries had already been excluded from Lee's statistical compilation on stylistic grounds: Among the excluded composers are such popular figures as Debussy, Strauss, Sibelius, Rachmaninoff, and Respighi – although for unexplained reasons Lee does include Nielsen, Vaughan Williams and Ravel. As a side note, Lee's evident difficulty in choosing his list of “legitimate” twentieth-century composers effectively demonstrates the hazards of arbitrarily deciding, via non-chronological methods, who is “in” and who is “out.” Or, in other words, which twentieth-century composers actually count as twentieth-century music.

Let us now consider a major example of twentieth-century programming by one of the world's top orchestras. As we will see, the list of composers was drawn up partly to make a historical point. For the 2000 concert season, the Philadelphia Orchestra decided to devote their entire season to twentieth century music. At first glance, this seemed to be a very daring move on the part of the orchestra, given the negative connotations of the label “twentieth-century music” among so many music lovers. The administrators of the orchestra, however, were acutely aware of the historical implications of their task – and its potential to challenge some

⁴⁶ See Douglas Lee, *Masterworks of 20th-Century Music: The Modern Repertory of the Symphony Orchestra* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2002).

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ingrained academic assumptions about the twentieth century which had long since percolated down to the broad mass of music lovers. Critic Peter Dobrin summed up the season's programming in the following manner:

But just how radical is the orchestra's season? Many of the composers from the orchestra's 1999-2000 season are Romantic throwbacks: Barber, Sibelius, Rachmaninoff, Vaughan Williams, Elgar. All continued to write lush, largely tonal music as the walls of tonality crumbled around them.⁴⁷

Table 3 gives a list of the works featured in the Philadelphia Orchestra's 1999-2000 main series.⁴⁸

Table 3: Philadelphia Orchestra programming for the 2000 Season. The focus is exclusively on music from the twentieth century.

Bach/arr. Stokowski "Ein' feste Burg ist unser Gott"	Bernstein Overture to <i>Candide</i>
"Sheep May Safely Graze"	Serenade (after Plato's Symposium)
"Wachet auf, ruft uns die Stimme"	Britten Four Sea Interludes and Passacaglia (Peter Grimes)
Toccatina and Fugue in D minor, BWV 565	Copland Suite, Appalachian Spring
Barber Knoxville: Summer of 1915	Symphony No. 3
Overture to <i>The School for Scandal</i>	Debussy <i>La Mer</i>
Violin Concerto	Dutilleul <i>Timbres, espace, mouvement, ou La Nuit étoilée</i>
Bartók Piano Concerto No. 3	Elgar Symphony No. 1 in A-flat major
Violin Concerto No. 2	Faure <i>Masques et bergamasques</i>
Concerto for Orchestra	Gorecki Symphony No. 3
Berg Violin Concerto	

⁴⁷ Peter Dobrin, "Phila. Orchestra Will Leave Old Masters Behind In Its 100th Season, Every Piece Will Be From The 20th Century," *The Philadelphia Inquirer* (February 18, 1999): http://articles.philly.com/1999-02-18/news/25503576_1_philadelphia-orchestra-joseph-h-kluger-20th-century-music/3 (accessed July 13, 2012).

⁴⁸ This list was briefly circulated by the Philadelphia Orchestra's administration but is no longer posted online. I have a copy in my possession. The list can be reconstructed by going to the orchestra's archives.

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- Gruber** Frankenstein!!
- Hannibal** One Heart Beating (Centennial Commission)
- Hindemith** Mathis der Maler
- Holst** The Planets
- Honegger** Symphony No. 3 (“Liturgical”)
- Ibert** Escales
- Ives** Second Orchestral Set
The Unanswered Question
- Janáček** Lachian Dances
- Kernis** Lament and Prayer, for violin and orchestra
- Knussen** The Way to Castle Yonder, Op. 21a
- Kodály** Suite from Hary Janos
- Liebermann** Flute Concerto
- Lutoslawski**Cello Concerto
- Mahler** Adagio, from Symphony No. 10
Das Lied von der Erde
Kindertotenlieder
Symphony No. 5
- Martinů** Symphony No. 4
- Mussorgsky/arr. Stokowski** A Night on Bald Mountain
- Nielsen** Symphony No. 4
- Poulenc** Concerto in D minor for Two Pianos
- Prokofiev** Piano Concerto No. 3
Symphony No. 5
Violin Concerto No. 1
- Rachmaninoff** Piano Concerto No. 2
Symphonic Dances
Symphony No. 2
- Rautavaara** Symphony No. 8 (Centennial Commission)
- Ravel** Bolero
Pavane pour une infante defunte
Piano Concerto for the Left Hand
Piano Concerto in G major
Valses nobles et sentimentales
- Respighi** Gli uccelli
- Saint-Saëns** Carnival of the Animals
- Schiekele** American Birthday Card
Bach Portrait
Eine kleine Nichtmusik
Uptown Hoedown
What Did You Do Today at Jeffrey’s House
- Schoenberg** Gurrelieder
- Schuman** Songs with piano
- Scriabin** The Poem of Ecstasy
- Shostakovich:** Festive Overture, Op. 96
Piano Concerto No. 1
Symphony No. 5
Symphony No. 14
Violin Concerto No. 1
- Sibelius** Symphony No. 7
The Swan of Tuonela
Violin Concerto
- Stenhammar** Piano Concerto No. 2
- Still** Symphony No. 1 (“Afro-American”)
- Strauss** Symphonia domestica, Op. 53
- Stravinsky** Chorale-variations on 'Von Himmel hoch'
Concerto in E-flat major (“Dumbarton Oaks”)
Le Sacre du printemps
Suite from L’Oiseau de feu (1919 version)
Suite from Pulcinella
- Takemitsu** Asterism, for piano and orchestra
riverrun, for piano and orchestra
- Tippett** The Rose Lake, a song without words
- Varèse** Arcana
- Varèse/Beaumont** Un Grand Sommeil noir
- Vaughan Williams** Fantasia on a Theme by Tallis
- Walton** Viola Concerto
- Webern** Im Sommerwind
- Weill** Suite from The Threepenny Opera

In defending the Philadelphia Orchestra’s choice of repertoire, Edward Cambron, marketing director of the orchestra, remarked in an interview with the American Music Center's Frank

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Oteri that “one of the biggest challenges is the label ‘twentieth century’ ...people have ingrained in their souls a definition of what that means...it may come from the fact that culturally there is a divide in the century...it’s almost like there are two centuries in one.” And as Simon Woods, the orchestra’s artistic administrator, further added in the same interview,

if you look at this from a historical perspective, there are two quite different strands going through the century. One strand...runs through Rachmaninoff, Sibelius, Copland, and Samuel Barber....the other strand...starts with Schoenberg and runs through Webern and Elliott Carter. One of the big problems is that I do think we have been brain-washed by the intellectual establishment to believe that somehow the Schoenberg-Carter strand is somehow culturally more valued than the other.⁴⁹

The various illustrations that I have just given, taken from the daily music world, serve as practical illustrations of a comment Whittall made in his 1999 overview of twentieth-century music. As far as the standard repertoire was concerned, admitted Whittall, “Schoenberg’s own early challenges, like the *Five Orchestral Pieces* and *Erwartung*, and those of other twentieth-century pioneers from Ives to Webern, have not managed a comparable degree of acceptance, still less elevation to the summit of the canon.”⁵⁰ Such ongoing “popularity problems” (cf. Ashby)⁵¹ are freely acknowledged by conservative and radical alike. Paul Griffiths, a dedicated life-long proponent of radical twentieth-century streams, now finds himself with no alternative but to concede (in the updated 2010 edition of his much-respected 1978 survey *Modern Music: A Concise History from Debussy to Boulez*)

⁴⁹ Simon Woods, Edward Cambron, et al., [interview with Frank Oteri, editor of NewMusicBox], “The Philadelphia Orchestra.” Sept. 1, 1999. <http://www.newmusicbox.org/articles/the-philadelphia-orchestra/> (accessed March 29, 2012).

⁵⁰ Arnold Whittall, *Musical Composition in the Twentieth Century* (London: Oxford University Press, 1999), 5.

⁵¹ See also note 4 in the introduction.

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that post-Schoenbergian modernism “remains unfinished.” Its principle objectives, Griffiths now realizes, have thus far failed to materialize: As Griffiths retrospectively outlined the problem, the artistic goals of high modernism had ultimately been twofold. That is, they were devoted to “maintaining music’s progress, and...*installing progressive music within the general repertory* [emphasis added].”⁵²

It cannot be emphasized too strongly here that many leading modernist figures were intent on, as Griffiths put it, “installing” their favoured music in the repertoire, even at the expense of contemporary music that was already established. Charles Wuorinen, for example, issued the following statement in 1988:

I would implement my notion of balanced programming which would reflect the following proportions: one quarter the standard repertory - Beethoven, Brahms and so on; one-quarter 20th-century classics – Schoenberg, Stravinsky, Hindemith, Bartók; one quarter present-day established composers – Babbitt, Boulez, Carter, Berio, Martino, Perle; and one quarter the new and untried. The last 80 or 90 years would get a hearing and the young would have a chance to be themselves.⁵³

It is clear from Wuorinen’s list that there was to be little (if any) room in his “balanced programming” reserved for post 1900 composers on the order of Sibelius, Elgar, Rachmaninoff, Barber and others of a similarly tonal-romantic orientation. And in a formal statement dating from 1984, Stockhausen similarly recommended that 50 percent of all concert programming should be devoted to New Music. He further explained that “in this context, ‘New Music’ [could] only mean music which is full of invention and discovery...not just any ‘contemporary music’ full of

⁵² Paul Griffiths, *Modern Music and After* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), xvii.

⁵³ Joan Peyser, “Wuorinen’s Bleak View of the Future,” *The New York Times* (Sunday, June 5, 1988).

clichés.”⁵⁴

There is also the example of Boulez the conductor, which is important because of his long career as a front rank conductor. Like Wuorinen and Stockhausen, he too had a highly exclusivist approach to twentieth century concert programming. During his professional association with William Glock, who was Controller of Music at the BBC from 1959 to 1972, the BBC programmed a great deal of radical fare, often to howls of exclusion from supporters of living composers like Malcolm Arnold and George Lloyd. Boulez also attempted to apply his modernist-oriented programming philosophy during his New York Philharmonic tenure in the 1970s. And even today, his twentieth-century conducting repertoire remains very limited. That is to say, Boulez has rarely if ever conducted any standard works (no matter how central to the repertoire) by Puccini, Rachmaninoff, Shostakovich, Respighi, Vaughan Williams, Elgar, Sibelius, Nielsen, Britten or Prokofiev. And Boulez not only avoids most of the standard twentieth-century repertoire, but also conspicuously avoids taking part in the countless revivals of minor twentieth-century composers of a more conservative stripe (as conductors like Neeme Järvi do). Although Boulez does program Mahler nowadays, this only began after Bernstein’s ground-breaking advocacy in the 1960s. In the 1950s Boulez and his Darmstadt colleagues had been deeply dismissive of Mahler and remained so until the Romantic Revival, which we will be discussing in chapter two, had made Mahler impossible to ignore any longer.

Like Wuorinen, Stockhausen, and Boulez, Schoenberg believed that the progressive philosophy of composing was poised to produce music for the future performing canon (not merely the musicological canon), and that he was “destined” to become part of the Great Tradition going back to Bach, Beethoven, Wagner and Brahms.⁵⁵ Today’s repertoire bears alarmingly scant evidence of

⁵⁴ Karlheinz Stockhausen, "To the International Council," *Perspectives of New Music* 24 (Autumn-Winter, 1984), 43.

⁵⁵ Schoenberg wrote: "I venture to credit myself with having written truly new

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that prediction. Instead, as we have seen in our earlier examples, those honours have largely gone to a diverse and multinational group of other composers in Schoenberg's generation including Debussy, Puccini, Strauss, Rachmaninoff, and Ravel (to mention only the five most-performed figures born after the 1850s). As Leon Botstein tersely observed in a 1999 editorial for *Musical Quarterly*, "The historical paradigm generated by Schoenberg and his followers about the progressive course of music and the end point of twentieth-century music turns out not to have been a convincing predictive hypothesis."⁵⁶

The recent publication of Arved Ashby's *The Pleasure of Modernist Music* demonstrates that some of today's most passionate defenders of the century-old modernist paradigm are clearly not ready to give up just yet – a clear indication that the tonal-atonal, romantic-modernist culture wars of the past decades still have some fight left in them today. During his brief stint as a reviewer for *Gramophone* magazine, Ashby attempted to keep the battle going in a more journalistic setting, taking advantage of the fact that classical music review magazines have a much broader non-scholarly readership than scholarly journals. Thus, in a review welcoming Andrew Ford's *Illegal Harmonies*, a recent modernist-oriented survey of twentieth-century music, Ashby warned *Gramophone* readers that certain (unnamed) writers were already working toward dismantling the academic status quo that he and Ford were still devoted to upholding:

Don't look now, but some people are trying to rewrite 20th-century music history. There is more revenge than redress to their changes, which rely more on implicit ad hominem attacks than convincing aesthetic arguments. The real wish is to demote the

music which, being based on tradition, is destined to become tradition." See "National Music," in *Style and Idea: Selected Writings of Arnold Schoenberg*, ed. Leonard Stein, trans. Leo Black, (London: Faber and Faber, 1975, rev. 1984), 174.

⁵⁶ Leon Botstein, "Rethinking the Twentieth Century," *Musical Quarterly* 83 (1999): 148.

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high modernists – sideline Schoenberg, marginalise Babbitt, and vilify Boulez.⁵⁷

Around the same time as Ashby wrote these words in 2002, a young composer and journalist named Matthias Kriesberg also came out fighting in another publication aimed at an even broader readership. For the *New York Times*, Kriesberg wrote:

It is tediously commonplace to proclaim that 12-tone music and its successor, the far more broadly conceived, powerful and elusive languages collectively defined as serialism, were dead ends – as if music might just as well have proceeded from Mahler through Rachmaninoff to Barber and Ellen Taaffe Zwilich without any of those troublesome deviations that lead otherwise reasonable people to see red.⁵⁸

But what made Kriesberg himself “see red” was in fact how the majority of observers, both public and professional, had privately been prioritizing the music of the twentieth century all along. Yale University’s John Halle immediately wrote a letter of response to Kriesberg’s article, reminding him that serialism was no longer in a sufficiently strong institutional position to continue making its claims of historical primacy at the expense of the true twentieth-century repertoire heavyweights:

Matthias Kriesberg’s articulate advocacy for the serialist tradition...is undercut by his failure to name a single work of this soon-to-be century-old practice that has the kind of secure place in the concert hall that its adherents were predicting. While the absence is revealing, however, it should not be overstated: that dodecaphonic works will occupy an important, but nonetheless indisputably peripheral, region around a center dominated by

⁵⁷ Arved Ashby, review of *Illegal Harmonies*, by Andrew Ford, in *Gramophone* 81 (Aug 2004): 101.

⁵⁸ Matthias Kriesberg, “The Musical God That Failed? Says Who?” *New York Times*, 16 April, 2000.

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nonserial – indeed, largely tonal – 20th-century works by Bartók, Stravinsky, Sibelius, Ravel, Rachmaninoff, Shostakovich, Prokofiev, Strauss and others only means that some serialists were great composers but lousy prophets.⁵⁹

Halle's response to Kriesberg – Halle usefully lists several key romantic twentieth-century composers in his letter – underlines how today's performers and music lovers have taken advantage of the opportunity to construct their own historical lineages, just as Schoenberg himself had once traced a historical line back from himself. Notably, he had formed his line of musical antecedents by using a selection of the most popular composers from previous generations: Of his immediate predecessors, he chose Brahms and Wagner, and continued the line back to Beethoven and Bach – an illustrious heritage indeed. As Taruskin observed in one of the most important segments of his massive *Oxford History*, (he provocatively entitled the section “How Myths Become History”) Schoenberg then proceeded to replay the same personal line in forward motion, now presenting it as the central line in the general history of music.⁶⁰ In doing so, the great atonalist implicitly placed himself on the same high level occupied by his predecessors, all of whom (incidentally) commanded a vast public – thereby inflating the importance of his personal musical journey. In this way, Schoenberg saw his mission as the fulfillment of the deepest currents of music history rather than simply as a personal odyssey.

As we have already described, the resultant myth found many believers and reached its fullest flowering with the post-1945 cold war generation of modernists.⁶¹ It subsequently weakened, as

⁵⁹ John Halle “Serialism; Not Prophets,” *New York Times*, 30 April, 2000.

⁶⁰ Taruskin, *The Early Twentieth Century*, 353ff.

⁶¹ My frequent use of the term “cold war” as a descriptive adjective for post-1945 modernism may require some explanation. Simply put, it is a direct acknowledgment of the cold war's direct financial impact on fostering mid and late-twentieth-century modernism. Indeed, there is a rapidly growing literature that attempts to come to grips with the massive decades-long CIA funding of the most radical post-war musical developments. See especially *Who Paid the Piper: The CIA and the Cultural Cold War* by the British

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the promise of progress proved to be a mirage and erstwhile atonal defenders turned into skeptics *en masse*. Today, as a result of the long-term shift away from atonality and serialism, many in the academic world are now feeling free to challenge, as never before, some long entrenched attitudes toward historical conceptions of twentieth-century music which arose as a result of that myth. We have already seen this in the comments of Taruskin, Ross, Hyer, Walker, and Botstein earlier in this chapter, and will see further examples from scholars such as Christopher Butler, Stephen Banfield, Bryan Gilliam, James Hepokoski, Daniel Albright, and Christopher Hailey later on.

It has become increasingly clear today that the Rachmaninoff-to-Barber strand mentioned by Simon Woods of the Philadelphia Orchestra is indeed central to how general audiences and record buyers have, consciously or unconsciously, insisted on seeing the twentieth century all along, even during the decades when their views went largely unheeded by those who wrote the

investigative journalist Francis Stonton Saunders (London: Granta Books, 1999).

Much research still needs to be done in this area. In volume five of his *Oxford History*, Taruskin clearly states that the most important theme in post-1945 avant-garde music was “the cold war and its as yet insufficiently acknowledged (not to say tendentiously minimized) impact on the arts.” Explaining more fully, Taruskin continued (in the 2009 preface to the reprinted edition of his original 2005 *Oxford History*): “The conditions that stimulated the rise of the postwar European avant-garde were largely created by the Office of Military Government, United States (OMGUS), the American occupying force that, for one particularly telling example, financed and at first administered the Darmstädter Ferienkurse, at which total serialism, European-style, was born – in far more direct response to Soviet arts policy than has ever been publicly admitted. Thereafter, it was the music of the American avant-garde, chiefly represented by John Cage and Morton Feldman, and enthusiastically propagated by lavishly subsidized West German radio stations (which, in the words of Björn Heile, ‘competed for prestige but not for resources’), that set the tone for European experimentation. (This unprecedented, much vaunted public support for avant-garde music lasted, of course, only – and exactly – as long as the cold war; it came to an abrupt end with German reunification.)” *The Oxford History of Western Music*, Vol. 5, *Music in the Late Twentieth Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), xix.

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history books. At the same time, recent defenders of the high modernist aesthetic (like Kriesberg and Ashby) also have a point. As Kriesberg implies, it perhaps is a little too safe and easy nowadays to criticize Schoenberg's kind of modernism for its apparent failure in the public arena. Perhaps, then, we can settle for Halle's middle-ground solution – which is to say that the Schoenberg revolution brought forth “great composers but lousy prophets.” However, in calling composers in the atonal tradition “lousy prophets,” we must also remind ourselves that hindsight is always clearer than foresight.

To the twenty-first century observer (and especially in the light of present-day public interest in re-discovered late-romantic rarities), it seems fairly banal to point out that Schoenberg would have had far greater long-term public success had he continued along the lines of his two big successes (*Verklärte Nacht* and *Gurrelieder*), instead of falling prey to what is now generally conceded to be a badly flawed evolutionary teleology – and even worse, applying that teleology in a way that was meant to justify his most esoteric ideas as the culmination of all of music history. Whatever our speculations, we must take the words of Schoenberg's critics, including outspoken and regressive contemporaries such as Nicholas Medtner, George Dyson, Daniel Mason and Hans Pfitzner, much more seriously when they express caution in regard to the most extreme revolutionary trends of their time. Indeed, we will be drawing on the words of these commentators (all are noted writers in addition to being late-romantic composers) as we progress. It is far too simplistic and inadequate to simply dismiss such critics as hopeless reactionaries who refused to participate in musical evolution.

Pace Ashby (see earlier), such criticism does not automatically assume that one is mounting attacks on an *ad hominum* level. We can, if we like, even hold Schoenberg to account for blatant artistic musical miscalculation. For example, he thought that with his new tone rows he was developing a more sophisticated kind of melody. Why did nobody want to whistle any

of those? Were they even *able* to? Did Schoenberg, despite his considerable intellectual acumen, fundamentally misunderstand the nature and value of melody in the historic sense? We will explore the question of melody further in chapter five. But in any case, we must concede that the proverbial mailman never did evolve to the point where he could finally whistle atonal melodies. We must give more than a half-hearted nod of agreement to the famous old one-liner uttered by Schoenberg himself, and fully recognize that in the twentieth century there really was much more music to be written in C major.

Compromising composers and dictators: Bumps in the road to emancipation

In his 1961 overview *Since Debussy*, André Hodier repeated an observation that had already become commonplace among commentators in the preceding decades. He wrote that

some of the greatest composers of our time completely reversed directions toward the end of their careers. The examples of Schönberg, and Stravinsky have taught us that even the noblest creator can lack insight to the point of implicitly repudiating his greatest achievements. And they are not isolated examples: Berg, Bartók, and Prokofiev were just as uncertain and inconsistent in their orientations. This is probably just another sign of the strange times in which we live.⁶²

In glancing back on the early decades of the last century, we can see in retrospect – with all the clarity of 20-20 hindsight – that the omens for Schoenberg's emancipation of the dissonance were less than promising, especially given the bold claim that it represented the true spirit of the age and, moreover, seemed to fit into an apparently fail-safe scientific paradigm. Many were dazzled and

⁶² André Hodier, *Since Debussy: A View of Contemporary Music*, trans. Noel Burch (New York: Grove Press, 1961), 210-211.

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seduced not only by the hope of progress but also by the promise of absolute freedom – whether in a strictly musical sense or in political terms. Many were also dazzled by Schoenberg’s own considerable intellectual force.

But, at the same time, all was not well. The fatal weakness, of course, was that the general music world showed little or no intention of financially supporting the kind of musical evolution that had presumably culminated in atonality. This contrasted greatly with the extent to which the general musical public had once supported Monteverdi, Beethoven and Wagner. As a general principle for all music to aspire to, atonality was clearly unworkable. To begin with, it had little use in church music, teaching pieces, salon-like sheet music for sale, Broadway, pop tunes, love music in films, band music, piano concertos for virtuosos to take on tour, and so on. Most early twentieth-century composers, major and minor, recognized that reality and instinctively dug in their heels. Such deeply-rooted resistance, of course, frustrated generations of progressive musicians from Schoenberg to Stockhausen.

Here the oft-repeated seventeenth-century parallel with Monteverdi and his contemporaries – composers who came up with a *seconda prattica* that actually did produce tunes that the public could whistle (and which may have had something to do with the fact that opera enjoyed continuous and widespread public acceptance) – was notably inadequate. For our more recent twentieth-century age, it is highly indicative that many composers, including the most important trend-setters from the early decades after 1900, did not maintain consistent sympathy with some of the most radical advances of their own time. These composers sampled what Ford called “illegal harmonies”⁶³ only to abandon the front lines of progress. Their evident unease aptly reflected the

⁶³ Andrew Ford, *Illegal Harmonies: Music in the 20th Century* (Sydney: Hale & Iremonger, 1997). See especially chapter 1 where Ford contrasts the “illegal harmonies” of John Cage with the “legal harmonies” found in harmony textbooks.

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confusion that was running rampant in the early twentieth century musical scene. It was a time when, as Paul Henry Lang (perhaps the greatest American historian before Taruskin) perceptively remarked, a normal development was very hard for a composer to maintain. Lang observed how the avant-garde's "submission to materialism and technicalism, and a resultant hunger for sensation and bluff, created an atmosphere in which philosophical and aesthetic judgments were vacillating and a normal and purposeful development of artistic individuality was made exceedingly difficult."⁶⁴

Thus, the early twentieth century witnessed much fitful dabbling in modernist techniques due to what Lang aptly termed the "vacillating" aesthetic judgements of composers. This is a phenomenon which we will now briefly bring to the center of our discussion. The arbitrary and erratic "on and off" attitude on the part of the international composing community toward new developments is very significant for our overall theme of romantic music in the twentieth century because the shaky and unpredictable composing environment that partly resulted from such stylistic uncertainty was one of the outstanding characteristics of the early twentieth-century music scene. Inconsistency of purpose in composing was instrumental in generating a very unstable cultural background against which consistent romantics like Strauss, Bax, Rachmaninoff and Medtner tried to stay true to their artistic principles.

Not least, the "on and off" attitudes toward the most advanced techniques also brought to light a critical (if not fatal) weakness in the progress narrative, which is another way of saying that there were a few too many blips in the evolutionary path. These blips led to much frustration on the part of the most passionately devoted progressives – a frustration that was reflected in Hodier's comment at the beginning of this section. Like many others, Hodier was clearly nonplussed by the fact that some

⁶⁴ Paul Henry Lang, *Music in Western Civilization* (New York: Norton, 1941), 1025.

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composers had briefly contributed to musical evolution only to back away from the front lines, thus thwarting the course of nature. As his words showed, modernist composers who retreated to a mellower tonal idiom were not always well-received by their more consistently radical colleagues.

Schoenberg blasted Krenek with pages of vitriol when the latter, after having written atonal string quartets and symphonies, had suddenly embarked on a tonal, neoromantic phase between about 1925 and 1930.⁶⁵ And Bartók was famously dismissed by Leibowitz as a “compromiser” for abandoning the highly dissonant idiom found in works from the early 1920s like the First Violin Sonata.⁶⁶ As befit an emancipated musician, Leibowitz took as his starting point Schoenberg’s chromatic universe and its autonomous or “emancipated” conception of dissonance. To over-simplify a little, any compositions that were not dissonant enough – and therefore departed from the Vienna School’s new criteria for musical greatness – were open to being attacked as compromises. The general idea of the compromising composer was eventually adopted on a broad scale. Peter Yates, for example, applied a theory of compromise to a wide range of early twentieth-century composers with a relatively conservative reputation (including Sibelius, Falla, Vaughan Williams, Bloch, and Nielson) in his 1967 survey of twentieth century music, carefully showing how compromise “weakened” the musical outputs of each composer, ultimately preventing them from achieving true greatness.⁶⁷

But the principle of compromise can be seen from another angle as well. David Cooper, in his 1996 Cambridge handbook on Bartók’s Concerto for Orchestra, neatly turns the tables on Leibowitz by suggesting that the real compromise in Bartók’s life

⁶⁵ See Schoenberg’s over-the-top polemic against Krenek in Auner, 194-196.

⁶⁶ René Leibowitz, “Bèla Bartók, ou la possibilité du compromis dans la musique contemporaine,” *Les Temps modernes* 3/25 (October 1947), 705-34. “Béla Bartók, or the Possibility of Compromise in Contemporary Music,” *Transitions Forty-Eight* 3 (1948), 92-123. Adorno compared works like the 1939 Violin Concerto to late Brahms.

⁶⁷ Yates, see especially chapter 20.

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was when, in the 1920s, the great Hungarian composer temporarily capitulated to the pressure of the atonally-oriented progress narrative of musical evolution, thereby producing borderline-atonal sonatas and quartets.⁶⁸ As Cooper reasonably implies, compromise can just as easily occur when a composer resists his own natural stylistic inclinations and succumbs to avant-garde pressure (or, as Medtner put it, “fashion”). Following one’s true musical inclination, as Bartók chose to do, may lead to musical roads other than those dictated by an artificially constructed (and perhaps dubious) evolutionary reading of history.

When Cooper’s book on Bartók was first published, such a theory of compromise constituted a fresh perspective in musicology, as Amanda Bayley pointed out.⁶⁹ We can also add that Cooper’s idea has a great deal of potential for how we view the troubled twentieth century as a whole, and we will suggest here that it is possible to read the entire twentieth century in the light of Cooper’s re-definition of the concept of compromise. Taking this new line of reasoning a little further, the most unreconstructed romantics (like Rachmaninoff, Dohnanyi, Bowen, Lloyd and Medtner) would now take their place among the *least* compromising composers of their time rather than the most compromising. Their understanding of harmonic language, and their conception of melody, after all, conformed rather closely to the demands of the vast majority of classical music lovers – those who still insisted on supporting the kind of new music that was shaped at least in part by the “old” common practice harmony and tonality (we will explore this further in chapter six). Also, their ways of using harmony and melody were not far removed from the harmonic language and melodic styles of film and popular idioms. This, of course, had an eighteenth-century parallel as well, in that the works Haydn and Mozart wrote for aristocrats shared a

⁶⁸ Cooper, David, *Bartók: Concerto for Orchestra* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996, reprinted 2004), 83-84.

⁶⁹ Amanda Bayley, review of *Bartók: Concerto for Orchestra*, by David Cooper, in *Music & Letters* 78 (August 1997): 460.

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common harmonic language with all the popular operas, divertimentos and serenades of the time. In these vital respects, therefore, the most romantic post-1900 composers did not compromise their muse by giving in to what Paul Henry Lang earlier called “sensation and bluff.” In other words, they somehow managed to pull off the feat of achieving “a normal and purposeful development” during a time when, as Lang pointed out, such a goal had been rendered extremely difficult.

Medtner developed a method of illustrating his up-side-down theory of compromise. In direct opposition to Leibowitz’s fully chromatic universe, Medtner took as his starting point the pure triad, thus proceeding from a point of consonance rather than a point of extreme dissonance, and went on to devote several pages of his 1935 book *Muse and the Fashion* to describing his position. Under the heading “compromises of style,” Medtner wrote: “‘Modernistic’ music has as its foundation the sum total of the compromises of all the styles of past music.”⁷⁰ Directly challenging what he saw as the flagrant misuse of the Tristan chord as a historical justification for later progressive music, Medtner pointed out that many of Wagner’s strongest musical effects were not at all dependent on extreme chromaticism. Rather, Wagner’s chromaticism, or lack of it, depended entirely on dramatic need. This was a point that Parry had also insisted on back in the 1890s, well before the invention of atonality.⁷¹ As both Parry and Medtner observed, many of Wagner’s most memorable ideas were actually very consonant and triadic in outline. Medtner cited Wagner’s own words, which the latter had written upon penning the closing pages

⁷⁰ Nicholas Medtner, *The Muse and the Fashion*, trans. Alfred J. Swan. (Haverford, Pa.: Haverford College Bookstore, 1951), 72.

⁷¹ See especially Parry’s description (dating from just before the atonal revolution) of Wagner’s diatonicism, pages 324-326 *The Evolution of the Art of Music*. “When he [Wagner] wants to express something very straightforward and direct, like the character of Siegfried, he uses the most simple diatonic figures; but when he wants to express something specially mysterious, he literally takes advantage of the fact that human creatures understand modern music through their feeling for tonality, to obtain a weird and supernatural effect by making it almost unrecognisable.” 325.

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of *Tristan*: “O, what a marvel, such a triad! I feel as if everything disappeared against it; when it sounds again, it is, as if after all the madness and anger and fruitless search, Brahma returned to himself...”⁷²

From an evolutionary avant-garde perspective, nothing could possibly have seemed more reactionary, not to mention unscientific, than Medtner’s apparently inverted view of compromise. But times change. Today, with the progress narrative now in complete disarray within musicology, Medtner’s ideas should no longer seem any more ludicrous than the cold war ideas of Leibowitz and others who had once proceeded from the putatively scientific basis of autonomous dissonance – and on that basis had prematurely dismissed a vast trove of tonal and romantic music that was destined to become part of the standard repertoire in the later twentieth century and beyond.

Admittedly, even in relation to compositional moderates like Alfredo Casella in the 1920s and 1930s, Medtner was as conservative as could be, and took a certain pride in that fact. However, one can still find numerous examples of more advanced composers from Medtner’s time who also showed that at least some of his basic reservations were widely acknowledged across the stylistic spectrum. We can begin by observing that very few of the some-time radicals actually wished to match the consistent radicalism of the really extreme pioneers such as Webern or Varèse, neither of whom ever returned to tonality. Seen from the vantage point of the tonal and romantic side of twentieth-century music that music-loving connoisseurs now value so highly, such caution or vacillation may have been well-placed. Consistency, at least in the Webernian sense, did not prove to be of long-term advantage in getting one’s music on the stage before the public, or putting bread on the table for one’s family.

Webern himself, once a leading role model for the post-1945 cold war avant-garde, was destined to contribute very little to

⁷² Wagner, quoted by Medtner, 108.

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the daily musical life of the later twentieth century and beyond, as we can see from his exceptionally weak presence in the record catalogue today. And unlike Schoenberg, Webern had few if any tonal works on the level of the former's *Verklärte Nacht*, *Gurrelieder* or the brilliant orchestration of Brahms' Piano Quartet in G minor to act as a "consolation prize," and thus help bolster a weak presence in the record catalogue and the concert hall. As a direct result, Webern still ranks very low in the repertoire today. As far as the musical public is concerned, he remains the most shadowy figure in the Viennese trinity. In the comprehensive arkivmusic.com catalogue (which aims to stock every classical CD in print), Webern now has less representation on CD than approximately 75 of his composing contemporaries (Table 2 in this chapter lists the top eighty composers born between 1850 and 1915). Varèse, another exceptionally consistent modernist who never returned to clearly tonal textures and traditional melody, is in even worse shape: He ranks at about 140 in the same record catalogue.

Hans Stuckenschmidt commented that Strauss's retreat from *Elektra* (1909) to *Rosenkavalier* (1911) represented the first example of what would become a long tradition of composers taking a regressive stance in the twentieth century.⁷³ Or, as Robert Morgan memorably summed up Strauss's career in his 1991 university textbook, the great German composer spent the last forty years of his life composing in a "time warp."⁷⁴ After Strauss's retreat, there arose a long stream of composers who followed suit in a similar manner. Max Reger (1873-1916) became more clearly diatonic in the last five years of his life. Sibelius did not venture beyond the bleak harmonic austerities found in his Fourth Symphony (1911) – which, in any case, were intended as a critique of the latest radical trends rather than as an affirmation. Instead, Sibelius became more expansive and diatonic in his Fifth

⁷³ Hans Heinz Stuckenschmidt, *Twentieth Century Music*, trans. R. Deveson (London: World University Library, 1969), 111-112

⁷⁴ See our discussion of Morgan's textbook in chapter four.

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Symphony, not to mention the fact that he kept on composing all kinds of occasional works and salon-like pieces.

In the 1930s and 1940s, even Schoenberg often gave in to what he himself described as a deeply rooted “longing” to return to his former tonal late-romantic idiom (ironically, he succumbed to this longing just after having castigated Krenek and Eisler for going in much the same direction).⁷⁵ There were many others as well. Prokofiev, besides allowing his always-present lyrical side to have an ever-increasing presence in his music, chose not to exploit further the dissonant intensity of his second and third symphonies from the 1920s. Instead, he dedicated himself to writing many expansive and openly melodic works like the popular ballets *Romeo and Juliet* and *Cinderella*, as well as the Fifth Symphony and the Second Violin Concerto. Although Prokofiev’s later stylistic departures did indeed fit in with Soviet musical policy, it is much too facile to maintain that Prokofiev wrote more melodically simply because he was “encouraged” to do so by the Soviet regime. And despite his later stylistic approachability, he too was ultimately denounced like every other major Soviet composer in the infamous Moscow conference of 1948.⁷⁶

Prokofiev wrote his most experimental music in the 1920s while he was in exile, at precisely the time when the Soviet scene as a whole was also at its most radical. Those were the giddy years of artistic freedom that accompanied the Bolshevik revolution. In the period from 1917 to 1929, the Soviet avant-garde was as vigorous as anywhere in the world, but here too, one could find many composers who abandoned radicalism well before Stalin infamously began clamping down on music in 1929. By that time, as Peter Deane Roberts has pointed out, the ultra-radical Soviet

⁷⁵ Arnold Schoenberg, “On Revient Toujours [One always returns],” in *Style and Idea: Selected Writings of Arnold Schoenberg*, ed. Leonard Stein, trans. Leo Black (London: Faber & Faber, 1975), 109.

⁷⁶ For a direct account of the 1948 Zhdanov purges, in which Shostokovich, Prokofiev, Khachaturian, Miaskovsky and many others were brutally denounced and publicly humiliated, see Alexander Werth, *Musical Uproar in Moscow* (London: Turnstile Press, 1949).

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avant-garde had already largely run out of steam.⁷⁷ A prime example was Arthur Lourié, whose ultra-radical musical stance had originally enjoyed the support of Lenin and his culture minister Lunacharsky. Lourié then abruptly forsook his ways, left the Russian avant-garde in disgust, and moved to France where he wrote articles inveighing against what he saw as the spiritual emptiness of materialistically-oriented modernism.⁷⁸ Shostakovich rarely if ever returned to the dense and impenetrable textures of his Second Symphony and First Piano Sonata, neither of which, in any case, had much success. More successful were the bright and tonal First Piano Concerto of 1933 and the Cello Sonata of 1934, both of which were written well before Stalin's major crackdown on Shostakovich's *Lady Macbeth* in 1936. All three works had immediately taken their place in the repertoire.

Throughout the early modern era, a vast number of composers maintained, at the very least, somewhat tonal and romantic-sounding idioms regardless of whether they lived in free countries or in totalitarian regimes under brutal dictators who interfered directly with the arts. In this crucial respect, politics ultimately made little difference. It is indicative that many of the more advanced German and Russian composers became more melody-oriented and less dissonant *after* they had fled to free countries like Britain and the United States. In other words, few took advantage of new-found political freedom to ramp up their dissonance quota.⁷⁹ One thinks of Ernst Toch, Arthur Lourié, Egon

⁷⁷ Peter Deane Roberts, *Modernism in Russian Piano Music, Vol. 1*. (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1993), 124.

⁷⁸ See Arthur Lourié and S. W. Pring, "The Crisis of Form," *Music & Letters* 14 (April 1933): 95-103. Another good demonstration of Lourié's later views can be found in "Musings on Music," *The Musical Quarterly* 27 (April 1941): 235-242.

⁷⁹ An exception was Krenek, whose prolific tonal and neoromantic – neoromantic was Krenek's own description – period in Europe after 1925 was followed by a return to atonality with the 1933 opera *Karl V*. Krenek's return to atonality also coincided with his subsequent move to the United States. See John Stewart, *Ernst Krenek: The Man and his Music* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991).

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Wellesz, Paul Hindemith, and even Schoenberg. Nor did any of the most consistently romantic composers take advantage of new-found political freedom by composing in, say, a more atonal manner. Here one can mention numerous fleeing *émigrés* who followed the towering example of Rachmaninoff: Alexander Gretchaninov, Nicholas Medtner, Sergei Bortkiewicz, Hans Gál, Erich Wolfgang Korngold, and Mario Castelnuovo-Tedesco. Notably, the latter two became major figures in Hollywood, and from that thoroughly-discredited stronghold of “cheap” romantic film scores exerted untold influence on later twentieth-century film music.

A very important tenant in the mythology of modernism has been that dictators artificially upheld old tonal and romantic idioms in composition and performance. At the same time, they were said to have held up true musical evolution by stunting the growth of twentieth-century radicalism. That is, they encouraged (by brute force if necessary) the *Ungleichzeitig* or “non-contemporaneous” persistence of worn-out romantic idioms. As the careers of many composers show, this “dictator” theory does have some merit. However, it also has deep flaws. In the 2003 *The Cambridge Companion to the Orchestra*, Carter and Levi remarked that it was “somewhat ironic that the conservative policies towards repertory upheld by repressive regimes such as Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union have also been replicated in many orchestral programmes in democratic countries.”⁸⁰ But one could argue that there was really no irony at all: Tonal/romantic styles were still being supported by the musical public in both free and autocratically controlled countries alike. Moreover, the harmonic language of conservative composers most closely matched the language of popular music in both free and autocratic settings. This fact alone should help shed light on why a very common idea in twentieth century historiography – that dictators like Stalin, Hitler and Mussolini

⁸⁰ Tim Carter and Erik Levi, “The history of the orchestra,” in *The Cambridge Companion to the Orchestra*, ed Colin Lawson (Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 18.

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destroyed radical musical trends – is considerably less than half the truth. Such a view failed to recognize that radical departures in composition could often betray an alarmingly self-destructive streak as well, in that some composers deliberately spurned the public’s musical tastes to an unprecedented degree. Not surprisingly, ticket, sheet music, and record sales were adjusted accordingly.

Taruskin usefully pointed out that the Nazis did indeed have officially tolerated twelve-tone composers, a fact that was almost never included in historical surveys of twentieth-century music before his groundbreaking *Oxford History*. Partly as a result of this revelation, Taruskin was forced to conclude that “the idea of ‘Nazi esthetics’ [was] entirely incoherent both as theory and as practice.⁸¹ Soviet policy was not much more consistent. Indeed, it is much closer to the truth to say that dictators tended to interfere with everyone across the aesthetic spectrum, often without rhyme or reason. If there was any reason at all, it was to keep the top composers (whoever they were at any given time) politically in line. In Soviet life, the crackdowns therefore had an alarmingly arbitrary element to them, and artists could never be sure where they stood. For example, a number of Prokofiev works were banned following the infamous 1948 Zhdanov crackdown, but the official list of banned works, with some of Prokofiev’s harmless potboilers on Soviet themes mixed in, made little aesthetic sense from any perspective, modernist or otherwise.⁸²

⁸¹ Taruskin, *The Early Twentieth Century*, 754.

⁸² Dorothea Redepenning explains further: “The list of banned works...is arbitrarily drawn up with deliberate intent: only in this way could music directors and programme planners be so thoroughly alarmed that they would not venture to include any works by Prokofiev in the repertory at all.” See “Sergey Prokofiev,” in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, 2nd ed. (London: MacMillan, 2001), 20:416

Solzhenitsyn gave an penetrating account of how such psychological torture worked in the Soviet system. Above all, he emphasized its arbitrariness, and made clear that it was designed to keep the citizenry off balance. The natural reaction to the midnight knock on the door was usually: What have I done to deserve this? But there was no reason, and the victim searched for one in

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It is no surprise to find that many composers in the free world – those working outside the sphere of dictators – also sharply backed away from extreme radicalism. This parallel trend was acknowledged by Paul Griffiths, who was a particularly passionate defender of the twentieth-century musical avant-garde in its many guises. Commenting on Prokofiev’s transformation from “brittle Neoclassicism...to a full-hearted return to Romanticism,” Griffiths wrote:

It would be wrong to attribute the Soviets’ softening of Neoclassicism entirely to political intervention, for the tendency was general. Copland and Harris, for instance, were leading the way towards a Romantic American nationalism, expressed most notably in the former’s ballet *Appalachian Spring* (1944) and the latter’s Third Symphony (1937).⁸³

Curiously enough, Griffiths did not explore the deeper implications of this return to romanticism. Another example of the free-world move from extremism to populism in the 1930s was George Antheil, who retreated from his 1920s fascination with hammering dissonances and airplane propellers and proceeded to compose a cycle of six very traditional-sounding symphonies. Stylistically, those works roughly paralleled the moderate populist-romantic contemporary idioms found in the middle symphonies of Shostakovich, Copland’s Third (which, as Whittall has remarked, almost “out-Soviets” Shostakovich himself)⁸⁴ and the symphonies of Roy Harris and David Diamond. Like many other on/off modernists, Antheil also contributed to the golden age of film music and even found time to compose and record a set of

vain. As Solzhenitsyn observed, that was the whole point in a state which divided its citizens under a rule of terror. See the author’s unforgettable description of how arrests worked under the Soviet system, in *The Gulag Archipelago, 1918-1956* (New York: Harper & Row, 1973), 3-23.

⁸³ See *A Concise History of Avant-Garde Music from Debussy to Boulez* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), 80-81.

⁸⁴ Whittall, *Musical Composition in the Twentieth Century*, 158.

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Valentine waltzes for piano.

Henry Cowell, too, abandoned his once-shocking tone clusters (besides many short pieces in the “tone cluster” genre, there is also an interesting large-scale “tone-cluster” piano concerto from 1928) for a cycle of around 20 comparatively ordinary and diatonic-sounding symphonies and a long series of Hymn and Fuguing Tunes. Cowell’s 1952 Violin Sonata written for Szigeti (and immediately recorded by him in the same year) was about as tuneful and tonal as any popular music from the same decade. The same went for the Fourth and Fifth Symphonies, which were also recorded in the 1950s.⁸⁵ Leo Ornstein, in the 1910s, initially produced much music of unprecedented density, dissonance and fury, culminating in works like the manic *Suicide in an Airplane* and the 1917 Violin Sonata Op 31. However, by the early 1920s, Ornstein had more or less completely abandoned the front lines of musical radicalism. André Jolivet was another. This French composer had first heard Schoenberg’s music in the 1920s, and subsequently went on to study with Varèse. Both Schoenberg and Varèse turned out to be formative influences, and Jolivet duly began his career as an atonalist. However, in the 1930s he backed away from his radical mentors and, together with Messaien, became part of a neoromantic movement in France that strove for greater warmth and accessibility, thus earning Boulez’s eternal enmity.

Partly out of social concern, Kurt Weill’s works from the later 1920s (like *Mahagonny*) had already begun pulling away from the esoteric expressionism of his youth. In his final two decades, Weill “sold out” completely by writing several Broadway musicals in the United States. The American-born Marc Blitzstein was originally a Schoenberg pupil but moved into music theater

⁸⁵ The Violin Sonata released by Columbia in 1955 on ML 4841. In the same decade, the Fourth Symphony was recorded by Howard Hanson for Mercury (MG 40005), and the Fifth Symphony was recorded by Dean Dixon and the Wiener Symphoniker for the American Recording Society label, ARS 2 (1951).

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and populism in the 1930s due to his devout communist belief that music should be relevant to the masses. In doing so, Blitzstein was representative of composers from a wide variety of national settings: Mikis Theodorakis in Greece, Hans Eisler in Germany, and Alan Bush and Christopher Darnton in England were similarly motivated to use more moderate compositional styles and techniques in part because of their deep communist convictions. Colin McPhee abandoned the dry and brittle idiom of his 1928 Piano Concerto and went off to Java where he became immersed in the dulcet tones of the gamelan. Ernst Toch started out as a brilliant compositional prodigy in a romantic style and went on to become a leading avant-gardist in 1920s Germany. He later regained some of his previous tonal directness and lyricism after emigrating to America. Another Schoenberg pupil, Egon Wellesz, abandoned the atonality of his works before the 1930s and for about two decades wrote music that included a reasonably tonal and romantic-sounding piano concerto from 1939 and four tonally expansive, almost Brucknerian symphonies. In the 1950s, Wellesz returned to a more expressionist and atonal idiom for the rest of his nine symphonies. However, his older way of using atonality had now been superceded by newer techniques. His re-entry into the modernist fold was clearly too little and too late for the young turks of Darmstadt, who had now moved on to total serialism, aleatoric techniques, pointilism and moment forms.

Othmar Schoeck temporarily cultivated a more advanced idiom in the 1920s, a phase which reached its highest point with works like the Bass Clarinet Sonata, Op. 41 (1927-28). He had desperately desired to be performed by the Schoenberg-Dent International Society for Contemporary Music (ISCM), but that organization persisted in rejecting his works. Frustrated with the new music scene, he therefore returned to his old lush and tonal idiom (albeit now stiffened somewhat with a sprinkling of modernist elements), which he thenceforth maintained up until his death in 1957. Ottorino Respighi also briefly wrote in a more modernistic manner in the years from 1917 to 1919 (the most

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extreme point is perhaps represented by the 15-minute orchestral work, *Ballata delle gnomidi* from 1919) when Casella's organization for modern music, the Società Italiana di Musica Moderna, was giving its first concerts in Italy. However, the popular composer of *Pines of Rome* rapidly broke with Casella's hard-edged modernism for aesthetic reasons. The Italian futurist Francesco Pratella, who had originally composed in a Mascagni-like idiom, abruptly changed his romantic musical style and wrote his famous futurist manifesto in 1910. But within a handful of years, Pratella had returned to writing in a more traditional style again, well before Mussolini was to consolidate his grip on power in the mid 1920s.

In Britain, William Walton forsook the dissonant expressionistic idiom of his very early, Berg-like D minor string quartet. Arthur Bliss, too, was at his most radical early in life, as was Lord Berners. The Danish genius Rued Langgaard, a very principled romantic composer who thought that romantic music was the music of paradise, had a brief and very modernistic phase that was represented by the *Insectarium* of 1917 (a work still occasionally encountered in New Music concerts). The German organist Sigfrid Karg-Elert, already an experienced composer, decided in mid-career to destroy about 20 works. As he described it, he "began again in C major, and prayed to the muse of melody."⁸⁶ Even the beloved Joaquín Rodrigo started out by writing some dissonant and bitonal piano pieces in the 1920s but abandoned that path and instead gave the world some very memorable music, including the two most famous guitar concertos of the twentieth century. The composer and scholar Robert Simpson wrote four atonal symphonies at the beginning of his career but destroyed them and went on to affirm his own personal view of tonality in 11 symphonies and 15 string quartets. Throughout his scholarly career, Simpson remained an outspoken advocate of twentieth century tonal traditionalism and made a

⁸⁶ Quoted in Frank Conley, "Sigfrid Karg-Elert," in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, 2nd ed. (London: Macmillan, 2001), 13:377.

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point of defending unfashionable early twentieth-century tonalists like Nielsen and Reger in the post-1945 era. The scholarly journal of the Robert Simpson Society is appropriately (and provocatively, considering the generation Simpson belonged to) named *Tonic*. We will hear again from Simpson later.

All of the above examples (and many more could still be added) clearly confirm the observation that composers in general had pulled away from the extremism of the 1910s and 20s in an effort to reach out to their public once again. Paul Hindemith represented one of the biggest symbolic about-faces of the early twentieth century. After having been one of the best and brightest of the radical German faction in the 1920s along with Toch and others, Hindemith went on to forsake that path. With publications like *A Composer's World* (the famous 1949-50 Norton Lectures), he became one of the post-war avant-garde's most powerful and articulate opponents. He composed many works in the manner of the Symphony in E flat and the expansive *Mathis der Maler* symphony (*Mathis* is still one of his most-performed works) and a long series of fine sonatas for a wide variety of instruments. Significantly, the series included instruments (like the English horn, tuba and double bass) with almost no solo repertoire. Not surprisingly, they are still much appreciated by instrumentalists everywhere. In 1948, Hindemith famously revised the great song-cycle *Das Marienleben* in order to greatly clarify its underlying tonal basis. In 1955, he was the recipient of the Sibelius prize and upheld that beleaguered composer, whom René Leibowitz in the same decade was declaring to be “the worst composer in the world.”⁸⁷ On that occasion, Hindemith made the following observations:

We see nowadays, how musical creation has frequently degenerated into an esoteric art of tone-juggling, in which experiment and sensation seem to be the all-important factors, and

⁸⁷ René Leibowitz, “Sibelius, le plus mauvais compositeur du monde [Sibelius, the worst composer in the world],” (Liège: Éditions Dynamo, 1955).

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the question how a composer should satisfy his listeners is grossly neglected. Now, a prize of the kind of the present one will by its very nature only be given to musicians who have outgrown experiments for experiment's sake and sensations for sensation's sake...⁸⁸

Hindemith was to the cold war avant-garde in the post-1945 “zero-hour” era what George Rochberg would later become to the American avant-garde of the 1970s. Both composers had initially been among the leading radicals of their respective generations. Both had also achieved long and brilliant academic careers. And both were later treated with the full measure of extra disapproval, even hatred, that is specially reserved for apostates who were too articulate and influential in turning others away from what they considered to be harmful radicalism.

Karol Szymanowski is yet another in our large and diverse group of “back-tracking” composers who became concerned about their receding public in the 1920s and 30s. This troubling phenomenon, Szymanowski came to believe, was very closely related to Schoenberg's emancipation of the dissonance. As a result, Szymanowski clarified his hyper-intense and ultra-chromatic idiom in the 1920s and 1930s and in the process became more critical of his radical Austrian colleague. Before Schoenberg, Szymanowski wrote, dissonance had been “used to express psychological conflicts, as ‘colour’, as ‘mood’; they never existed as a formal absolute value in their own right.” Schoenberg, he said,

crossed the rubicon, separating himself forever from his past...He did this with a sense of complete responsibility for his actions and in full consciousness of the significance of his decision...We should be completely mindful of the gravity and the consequences

⁸⁸ Paul Hindemith, “Ansprache zur Entgegennahme des Sibelius-Preises,” in *Aufsätze, Vorträge, Reden*, ed. Giselher Schubert (Zürich and Mainz: Atlantis Musikbuch-Verlag, 1994), 291-292. Hindemith wrote his response in English.

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of that step.⁸⁹

John Foulds in England was another one-time radical who harboured serious reservations about the Schoenbergian revolution. To a greater degree than most, Foulds was one of the most daring innovators at the turn of the century, as was Percy Grainger, who even claimed to have invented atonality before Schoenberg, such “patent office” claims being very important to many composers at that time.⁹⁰ Foulds was already using quarter-tones in the 1890s, long before Alois Haba, and polytonality before Darius Milhaud. Unlike Szymanowski, Foulds was able to accept atonality, at least occasionally, although such acceptance did not philosophically hinder Foulds from simultaneously using a sumptuous and expansive romantic idiom for major works like his long-forgotten two-hour masterpiece, the 1924 *World Requiem*, which has recently been performed and recorded (for Chandos) by the musicologist and conductor Leon Botstein.⁹¹ Foulds’ approach to composing, like Busoni’s, was to use radical modernist techniques only when he really felt he needed them. However, Foulds could not accept what he felt were the emotionally crippling limitations of serialism, or dodecaphony.⁹² Honegger, incidentally, later agreed with Foulds on this latter point and spoke out strongly against serialism in his autobiography. True to his word, Honegger’s music shows the use of atonality as an occasional expressive device,

⁸⁹ Karol Szymanowski, *Szymanowski on Music: Selected Writings of Karol Szymanowski*, trans. and ed. A. Wightman (London: Toccata Press, 1999), 222.

⁹⁰ In his letters to Ronald Stevenson in the 1950s, Grainger was still insisting that he had anticipated both the atonalism of Schoenberg and the irregular rhythms of Stravinsky’s *Rite of Spring*. See *Comrades in Art: The Correspondence of Ronald Stevenson and Percy Grainger, 1957-61*, ed. Teresa Balough (Toccata Press, 2010).

⁹¹ We can finally hear this vast work for ourselves thanks to Leon Botstein’s acclaimed revival in London, which has now been released by Chandos. Botstein is also noted for advocating many other neglected twentieth-century romantic works by composers such as Joseph Marx, Richard Strauss (the late operas), and Hans Pfitzner.

⁹² John Foulds, *Music Today: Its Heritage from the Past, and its Legacy to the Future* (London: Ivor Nicholson and Watson, Limited, 1934), 252-253.

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while rejecting twelve-tone techniques.⁹³

Others echoed the cautionary stance of Szymanowski and Foulds. Two of the best examples are Claude Debussy and Ferruccio Busoni. They are frequently cited, correctly, for their towering influence on the most radical streams of twentieth-century modernism, but their unhappiness with some of the actual developments that transpired well within their lifetimes is understandably less dwelt upon in modernist-oriented musicological literature. Debussy and Busoni are credited with having developed many original ideas that were adopted by later composers. However, both composers were scarcely fifty years old before seeing even newer ideas proliferate among slightly younger members of their own generation. Debussy seems not to have left us with a direct account of his opinion of the slightly younger Schoenberg, but we have it on the authority of the well-connected and highly cosmopolitan Casella (who was a life-long Schoenberg supporter and led the Italian chapter of the ISCM) that the great French Impressionist was “interested in all contemporary music, particularly that of Stravinsky up to and including Petrouchka. He had no sympathy for *The Rite of Spring* and cordially detested Schoenberg.”⁹⁴

Busoni, as much as anyone in his era, advocated a new sense of freedom in musical language which certainly sounded radical at the time.⁹⁵ Infrequently cited, however, is his reaction to those whose music he, together with Schoenberg and Stravinsky, in no small measure helped to shape. Writing in an undated article near the end of his life (he was only 58 when he died in 1924), Busoni was profoundly disturbed.

Everywhere, not least in Germany, similar symptoms of revolution

⁹³ Arthur Honegger, *I am a Composer*, trans. Wilson O. Clough (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1966), 117-118.

⁹⁴ Alfredo Casella, *Music in My Time* trans. S. Norton (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1955), 118.

⁹⁵ Ferruccio Busoni, *Sketch of a New Esthetic of Music* (New York: G. Schirmer, Inc., 1911).

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appear in musical endeavours...evidently the outbreak of this present-day movement is a post-war expression: in the sense of being transferred, new conditions bring about new manifestations, in art they call forth new expression and the supposed prerogative of the individual to proclaim it. The principle of one single individual is pushed forward; many even renounce this and hammer on the principle of freedom of opinion; the idea of establishing those of their predecessors is simply scorned. The older men, who appear to be liberal and open-minded, are in search of a seeming juvenescence in it, which they agree with and follow and which gives them the illusion that they are at the head of the movement. The youth of the demonstrators and the irregularity of their productions seem to be the outstanding features of the movement; gift and ability are only a secondary consideration...⁹⁶

Speaking of atonal expressionism, Busoni added prophetically (in a comment that could not have been aimed at anyone but Schoenberg himself):

From it we have got some possibilities which we add gratefully to our useful means and of which we shall make use from time to time. There is a kernel of truth in each of the big movements. The error lies in emphasizing this fact, for then one thinks and acts in an exclusive, exaggeratedly intolerant and ridiculous way.⁹⁷

Busoni is one of the most complex personages in the history of music and it is entirely in keeping with his character that, despite his enduring reputation as a fountainhead of twentieth-century radical modernism, he also plays a vital role in radical modernism's exact aesthetic opposite, the late twentieth century Romantic Revival.⁹⁸ In Busoni's time, and in the decades that

⁹⁶ Ferruccio Busoni, "What is happening at the present time," in *The Essence of Music and Other Papers*, trans. Rosamond Ley (New York: Dover, 1957), 41-42.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 42.

⁹⁸ Busoni's massive Piano Concerto, Op. 39 and Bach transcriptions benefited

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followed, the romantic and modernist streams were highly antagonistic. Indeed, aesthetically speaking, they could not have been further apart.

Casella was the main driving force behind the Italian wing of the International Society for Contemporary Music in the 1920s and 30s. In that capacity, certainly, he was not one to be accused of pandering to public taste. Ironically, he had begun his own career as a composer of big symphonies of Mahlerian length that were stylistically parallel to Respighi's early *Sinfonia Drammatica*. Upon encountering Schoenberg's latest music, Casella then suddenly plunged into a very dissonant period between 1913 and 1920. Following that brief phase, he retreated just as abruptly and began to compose in what he would later call his neoclassic/romantic style. By his Third Symphony of 1939, he had largely returned once again to a late romantic idiom, now harmonically updated a little.⁹⁹ Nevertheless, he continued to praise, defend and perform Schoenberg in Italy throughout the 1930s while the fascist government was in power. It needs to be stated here that Casella's activities had Mussolini's general approval. The latter even took sides with Casella against Respighi's virulently anti-modernist manifesto of 1931, which called for a return to nineteenth-century romantic values.¹⁰⁰ And

greatly from the Romantic Revival. In addition to reviving neglected nineteenth-century composers, the Romantic Revival was also open to resurrecting (according to the theoretical framework articulated by Frank Cooper) the "regressive" side of twentieth century music, including original works and transcriptions by early twentieth-century composer pianists such as Busoni, Godowsky, Friedman, Sauer, Medtner and others. One of Palmgren's piano concertos and a longer, unperformed 1928 version of Rachmaninoff's Fourth Concerto were played by Gunnar Johansen in the 1970s at Cooper's Festival of Neglected Romantic Music at Butler University. Cooper also programmed works by Korngold in order to make the point that the romantic stream was still flourishing deep in the twentieth century. The Romantic Revival will be discussed further in chapter two.

⁹⁹ All three symphonies of Casella have now been recorded by both Naxos and Chandos, as part of larger recorded surveys of Casella's music that both labels are currently engaged in.

¹⁰⁰ See the extended quotation from Respighi's manifesto in chapter five.

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yet, Casella too was finally moved to take note of the dangers of certain radical developments. In his 1938 autobiography, he wrote:

There have been too many experiments of all kinds in the last thirty years; they have infinitely enriched the sonorous possibilities of the art, but they have alienated the public and created a lack of contact between it and the artist, which must be overcome at the earliest possible time.¹⁰¹

Also in 1938, Bartók reiterated Casella's portrait of misdirected compositional efforts. Pleading for a return to simplicity, he added,

The reason why we have in the last twenty-five years attained the greatest confusion from the creative point of view is that very few composers concentrated their efforts toward this goal, and also because musical creation has relied too much on the unique value of the most unexpected and sometimes least appropriate means of expression to convey the inventive idea. That is what the Snobs called 'inventive Genius.'¹⁰²

It is important here to note that the essence of what Bartók and Casella were saying was fundamentally not all that different from a statement that Medtner also made in the mid-1930s. Although Medtner's tolerance level for unremitting dissonance was admittedly much lower than Casella's or Bartók's, he too pointed out the confusion, as he put it, the "running to and fro."

All those 'isms' – devil's tails that have grown on our conceptions of art – are nothing but preconceived problems. The 'progressive' art of our times, having lost its real centre of gravity, has begun to rotate around all sorts of problems. But this new, arbitrary, centre can never be solid, and thus we are constantly running to and fro.¹⁰³

¹⁰¹ Casella, 234.

¹⁰² Bela Bartók, *Bela Bartók Essays* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1976, 1992), 516.

¹⁰³ Medtner, 128-129.

Progress and the permanent revolution

Not everyone felt that returning to a more tonal-romantic kind of musical expression (as represented by the late works of Bartók and Casella) was the answer to the problems of early twentieth-century modern music reception. Even less (for some) was the answer to be found in a return to the really lush kind of romanticism found in Medtner's own music. For Elliott Carter in 1940, this led to a real dilemma. As Carter saw it, a composer now had to decide between (a), simply repeating himself or (b), being original and losing his audience. Using Sibelius as an example, Carter noted that there were currently a great many public performances of the Finnish composer's music, and remarked that "few important contemporaries have been so easy on their audiences." However, in admitting that Sibelius's (old) romantic way of composing new music still found a ready audience, Carter also could not help but observe that the more advanced composers did not have it so easy. "Performances of contemporary ballets and operas, or frequent repetitions of the same work, which might help the public to understand the more varied output of other composers, have not occurred." Thus, Carter came to what he thought was the only inevitable conclusion:

One kind of new music does not always lead to comprehension of another; usually each is a new attack on a new problem of expression. So, if a composer doesn't compose the same piece, over and over again under different titles, and thus train his audience to get the point, he will have a hard time being understood...if he has something new to say and insists on saying it, he will develop faster than his audience; he will leave his public and then his public will leave him. One contemporary composer after another has suffered that fate.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰⁴ Elliott Carter, "The New York Season Opens, 1939," in *The Writings of Elliott Carter: An American composer Looks at Modern Music*, ed. Else Stone and Kurt Stone (Bloomington and London: Indiana University Press, 1977), 64-65.

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Carter was faced with a real Hobson's Choice, or so he thought. However, it is also possible that his problem was ultimately of a different nature. In reality, his predicament may well have been the consequence of harbouring a too-uncritical attitude toward to the progressive view of history which we described at the beginning of this chapter. As Carter's "dilemma" showed, such a philosophy was already wrecking havoc on the careers of composers everywhere, causing them to forsake the blessing of an ever-hopeful, long-suffering and expectant musical public – and ultimately inducing composers to exchange that blessing for a mess of modernist pottage.

It was true that antipathy to new works and trends had occurred from time to time throughout history, but composers like Carter had now evidently reached the point where they were perhaps a little too willing to deliberately generate some of that antipathy on purpose, just for future's sake. Carter's historical reasoning was not as solid as he thought. Indeed, we can look at musical reception over the past few centuries in the opposite way. We can observe all of the instances in which the new was eagerly embraced and the old was simply thrown away in the process. Before the year 1800, few music lovers even wanted music that was more than 25 years old. And throughout the nineteenth century, publishers, performers and composers grew wealthy on the latest music. It was left to the twentieth century to turn the antipathy-toward-the-new principle into an overworked caricature whose features bore only a passing resemblance to the ups and downs of musical reception in previous centuries. In the formation of such a caricature, quoting and shaming those who resisted musical advancement in past centuries, throwing their own ridiculous-sounding words back at them, therefore became a staple ingredient in upholding the mythology of twentieth-century radical modernism.

Carter was clearly implying that if one resisted the most radical advancements, one would pay nothing less than the price of obsolescence for one's own music. Because he and others sincerely

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believed that musical conservatism was ultimately a sure ticket to obsolescence, they were willing to pay the price of immediate rejection, which they quite naturally assumed would be temporary, assuming of course that they already had the stuff of greatness in their own musical makeup. As Carter put it in 1946, “we composers think our desire to write durable music a far-sighted one, though to our performing and publishing friends it often seems very stubborn of us...” At same time Carter believed in the strong likelihood that posthumous humiliation would be visited upon those who resorted to writing “easy music”:

Some of us like to think, perhaps naively, that we could turn out the kind of work that would be immediately successful at once if we wanted to. But many of us feel that a little of this goes a long way. Sometimes what we think is our best work catches on with the public, to our own surprise and delight, though in a way this is disturbing too. We have all seen the public go wrong so often in matters of serious music. We think of all those works, now a part of our repertory, that were complete failures when they were first played. That thought makes us suspicious...you can see what I mean when I say that everything is a problem to a composer.¹⁰⁵

Around 1950, Carter, now approaching his mid-forties, suddenly matured and abandoned his populist idiom for a more advanced style that became famous for its almost impenetrable complexity. He had already spent the first part of his career composing in the Copland-Harris vein, though without their comparable public success (even today, most of the works Carter wrote before he was forty are rarely if ever encountered). After graduating from populism around 1950, Carter now rapidly grew in avant-garde prestige and acquired many followers in those circles. Among his most passionate admirers was the brilliant pianist and scholar Charles Rosen, who became one of Carter’s

¹⁰⁵ Elliott Carter, “The Composer’s Viewpoint (1946),” in *Elliott Carter: Collected Essays and Lectures, 1937-1995*, ed. Jonathan Bernhard (Rochester, N. Y.: University of Rochester Press, 1997), 3-4.

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most loyal defenders. To the end of the twentieth century and beyond, Rosen promulgated the great modernist master's philosophy of permanence: "Experience teaches us that it is unlikely that much of the easy music of our time promoted by the enemies of modernism will survive into the future,"¹⁰⁶ warned Rosen, echoing Carter's words from half a century earlier. At another point, Rosen wrote that "The music which has endured for centuries...was rarely easy at first. With few exceptions it met in the beginning with some incomprehension and even resentment."¹⁰⁷

For these observations, Rosen had the apparently solid support of some research collated in Nicholas Slonimsky's entertaining and much-quoted *Lexicon of Musical Invective*. Slonimsky's genuinely humorous book recorded much adverse reception (much of it originally uttered "off the cuff") of new works from over the centuries, with a special emphasis on works that went on to become established in the standard performing repertoire.¹⁰⁸ But Rosen, so astute and brilliant in other ways, did not reckon with another possibility: Now that we are well into the twenty-first century, and are better able to see the twentieth century itself as "the past," there is every reason to believe that a new lexicon of musical invective, one that will focus on durable romantic and traditionalist twentieth century music – music that survived in the face of decades of powerful critical disparagement from Carter's own composing fraternity – will eventually be published as well. A twenty-first-century *Lexicon of Musical Invective* will inevitably show the degree to which the twentieth-century avant-garde sought to reject a vast amount of contemporary music that did not conform to the progress narrative of musical evolution but nonetheless ended up in the standard

¹⁰⁶ Charles Rosen, *Critical Entertainments: Music Old and New*. (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2000), 294.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 6.

¹⁰⁸ See Slonimsky's *Lexicon of Musical Invective* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2000, originally pub. 1953).

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repertoire. There will be no shortage of material to draw on.

With the passing of the twentieth century, it is becoming very apparent that, perhaps for the first time, those who exercised caution toward new developments, especially the kind created in the wake of Schoenberg's atonal and twelve-tone departures, had a valid point. Certainly, many of the cautious composers we have cited in this chapter (Debussy, Szymanowski, Busoni, Bartók) are by no means resolutely rear-guard figures like Nicholas Medtner. It is one thing for a commentator to suffer future embarrassment for having criticized a work that will eventually become a programming staple in concert halls everywhere. That was the strength and beauty of Slonimsky's book. But very different effect is generated when we read criticism of composers, works, and musical trends that never did properly become established in the repertoire. In those cases one understandably tends to be a little less sympathetic.

Certainly, as Yale's John Halle pointed out earlier in this chapter, it cannot be denied that very little music representative of the more extreme elements of atonal modernism has entered the regular repertoire since Schoenberg published his first atonal experiments, the Three Piano Pieces Op 11. At their first performance in 1910, the composer presented them as a complete break with the past. In other words, the Op 11 pieces represented a revolutionary new departure from the tonal and heavily-Wagnerian late-romantic idiom that Schoenberg had been using over the previous decade. The composer emphasized this point very clearly in his program note for that concert: "But now that I have set out along this path once and for all, I am conscious of having broken through every restriction of a bygone aesthetic."¹⁰⁹

Taruskin, Anthony Pople, Joseph Auner and many others have pointed out that Schoenberg was initially slow in realizing the professional advantages of portraying his atonal break as something that was more akin to gradual evolution rather than

¹⁰⁹ Auner, 78.

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outright revolution. Indeed, Schoenberg in later years expended considerable effort in modifying his original “rebel” stance. He now claimed that his music was in fact deeply rooted in tradition. Indeed, he found it expedient to distance himself from the revolutionary rhetoric of that original 1910 program annotation, instead preferring (for publicity purposes) to emphasize what he called the smooth evolutionary nature of his music development. But in Schoenberg’s case, to speak of abrupt revolution or smooth evolution was ultimately a matter of semantics. Either way, his advance into a dissonant chromatic universe largely failed to connect with the broader public, except, perhaps, as a colouristic device used by composers of film music, much to the elderly Elliott Carter’s eternal chagrin at the end of the twentieth century, as we will see in chapter six. Most humbling of all, Schoenberg’s music failed to carve anything close to a place of primacy in the concert hall pantheon along side leading composers from Bach to Shostakovich, a position that the inventor of atonality so desperately desired. Music historians are now in the situation of having to come to grips with the implications of this reality.

Reservations toward the most radical advances of the early twentieth century have not completely gone away as far as the musical public is concerned. This in itself is something new in the history of music. Atonality, a direct product of evolutionary and progressive philosophy, is now a century old, and something of its initial rejection is still reflected in the kind of twentieth century music that concert goers and record connoisseurs generally prefer, as the Philadelphia Orchestra’s repertoire for their 2000 season showed earlier – and which in turn was merely a reflection and confirmation of general record catalogue trends. On the other hand, many romantics who were still active during the time of the atonal revolution continue to enjoy a considerable presence today. In the next chapter we will further discuss the presence of this so-called conservative stream, which for better or worse has so often been labelled “romantic.”

Chapter Two

Persistent Romanticism and the Romantic Revival

“It is a fallacy common to administrators in the music business – record companies, symphony orchestras, concert societies – that the public yearns for listener-friendly music.”¹ (Charles Rosen, commenting on the apparent success of composers like Samuel Barber and Malcolm Arnold).

Regressive romanticism after the dissonant revolution

In chapter one we discussed the once-dominant “progress narrative of musical evolution” and how that idea shaped the outlook of modern-era composers and commentators alike. We also observed that some of the most radical compositional techniques that were developed after 1900 had an inconsistent reception at best, even among many of the most advanced

¹ Charles Rosen, *Critical Entertainments: Music Old and New* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2000), 311.

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composers. It is now my intention to more fully describe romanticism's presence in the twentieth century. We will find that this presence is partly reflected in the success of the so-called Romantic Revival, which has been responsible for rescuing from oblivion many forgotten nineteenth-century composers as well as rarely encountered works by more important composers. Even more importantly, such a revival has extended to romantic composers who reached deep into the twentieth century and were previously written off because of their failure to evolve musically. Intentionally or not, the Romantic Revival, has served to emphasize the natural stylistic, harmonic and melodic continuity that linked the two centuries, despite the fact that such obvious links were sometimes downplayed by advanced commentators and composers.

For better or worse, we are using the word “romantic” to describe a certain stream of twentieth-century composers. It is an imperfect and notoriously imprecise label that we will gradually attempt to define as we proceed (see especially chapter three). For now, the term’s general association with “regressive,” or “conservative,” or “backward-looking” composers will be sufficient to set the stage. The romantics included composers as diverse in style and national milieu as Puccini and Respighi in Italy, Elgar and Vaughan Williams in England, Sibelius in Finland, Rachmaninoff in Russia, (and the harmonically extended romanticism of Prokofiev, Shostakovich, and Khachaturian in the later Soviet Union), Granados and Turina in Spain, and Strauss and Korngold in the Austro-German world. Their presence in the twentieth century constituted a very broad phenomenon in general musical life, and German scholars sometimes refer to their persistence in the repertoire, in the face of critical marginalization, as the *Gleichzeitigkeit des Ungleichzeitigkeiten* (or, the contemporaneousness of the non-contemporaneous). We will explore this paradox more thoroughly in chapter four.

Looking back, it should have been no real surprise that nearly all widely-consumed twentieth-century music of the

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“serious” variety owed a direct debt to the kind of common practice harmonies that had once been so prevalent in nineteenth-century music. In reality, this was because musical language in the wider social sense actually continued to evolve and change at a rate roughly parallel to the very gradual changes in spoken language, as we will see more clearly in chapter six. In sum, the “dissonant” revolution hardly touched the kinds of music that the general public heard, played and sang on a daily basis. Rightly or wrongly, dissonant modernism’s overall reputation among the public was more as an occasional (and perhaps irritating) addition to the concert menu. Or, on a more positive note, highly dissonant sonorities and textures were often encountered as colouristic devices that had been incorporated, for special dramatic purposes, into otherwise ultra-romantic-sounding film scores, of which the default musical idiom was more or less defined by the no-holds-barred romanticism of composers like Korngold and Rachmaninoff (unlike the former, the latter refused to write film music but both had an indelible influence on the general idiom of countless later film composers). Film music represented an entirely new genre in the history of music, and truly came of age after the late 1920s when the “talkies” were invented. In this very important sense, Rachmaninoff and Korngold were fundamentally important to the basic sound of twentieth-century music if we interpret this time period in a broader anthropological or social sense rather than in the traditional academic sense of it being primarily an era dominated by “dissonant” music.

The fact that hundreds, even thousands, of minor composers – whether (to take more or less random examples) Deems Taylor (1885-1966) in New York, Harl MacDonald (1899-1955) in Philadelphia, Pablo Casals (1876-1973) in Catalonia, Selim Palmgren (1878-1951) in Finland or Alessandro Longo (1864-1945) and his son Achilli (1900-1954) in Italy – still somehow sounded quite romantic was also no surprise. How could it have been any different, due to those composers’ close chronological proximity to the so-called Romantic Era, and the fact

that neither they nor many of their composing colleagues saw the necessity or wisdom of a dramatic and revolutionary tonal break with the past? They were an extremely heterogeneous lot, as the above names show, and were represented in locations as far-flung as Australia (where the father of classical composition was the prolific Alfred Hill, 1869-1960) and Japan (Hisatada Otaka, 1911-1951, or the slightly more updated Prokofiev-like romanticism of Hisato Ohzawa, 1907-1953)² in addition to North America and all the European and Slavic countries. There was the composer-pianist Pancho Vladigerov (1899-1978) who taught the international virtuoso pianist Alexis Weissenberg. Vladigerov was the father of Bulgarian classical music in the Western tradition, and wrote five romantic piano concertos, orchestral works and much else. Eduard Tubin (1905-1982) and Heino Eller (1887-1970) were leading figures in Estonia. Johan Halvorsen (1864-1945), Eyvind Alnæs (1872-1932), and Geirr Tveitt (1908-1981) were important in Norway. Wilhelm Stenhammar (1871-1927), Kurt Atterberg (1887-1974) and Wilhelm Peterson-Berger (1867-1942) were active in Sweden. Joaquín Turina (1882-1949) and Joaquín Rodrigo (1901-1999) were prominent in Spain.

Most of the leading performing musicians one could name also saw no need to renounce the musical styles of the nineteenth-century. Included in this illustrious company were figures like Arturo Toscanini, Wilhelm Furtwängler, Sir Thomas Beecham, Pablo Casals, Fritz Kreisler, Jascha Heifetz, Andrés Segovia, Vladimir Horowitz, Arthur Rubinstein, Benjamino Gigli, and John McCormack. Even those few performers who did show a measure of curiosity concerning recent modernist experiments rarely felt the need to snub the traditionalists. Some popular performers like Walter Gieseking, Leopold Stokowski, and Dimitri Mitropoulos, for example, occasionally championed Schoenberg but it is

² Many of Hill's symphonies and string quartets can now be heard on Marco Polo/Naxos. Otaka wrote a lovely flute concerto that was played by Rampal. Ohzawa has two Naxos discs showing him to be a populist blend somewhat along the lines of Antheil, Gershwin, Ravel, and Prokofiev.

important to point out that they nevertheless remained even stronger advocates of recently-composed romantic music by living composers.³ In the most fundamental anthropological sense, then, continuing the tradition of romantic music was still very important for early twentieth-century performers and their audiences. When performers did play twentieth-century music, therefore, it generally tended to be of the *ungleichzeitig* (non-contemporaneous) variety.

Latter-day romantics often commiserated with each other, but in some notable instances did not form a common cause. In 1961, looking back on his earlier years, the American critic and composer Virgil Thomson called his own clearly diatonic music “neoromantic” with full knowledge of what such a description meant in the Stravinsky-Schoenberg context of the 1920s and 1930s:

³ Dmitri Mitropolous (1896-1960) was a dedicated advocate of Krenek’s twelve-tone works, and a 1949 recording survives of Mitropoulos conducting Krenek’s atonal Third Piano Concerto from the keyboard (re-released on compact disc, AS disk 512). However, as Krenek’s biographer John Stewart notes, Mitropoulos himself “had composed during the twenties and had an intellectual interest in the twelve-tone technique. But despite his curiosity about this ‘scientific music,’ as he often referred to it, it was not music close to his heart; what he really liked was the music of Rachmaninoff.” See *Ernst Krenek: The Man and his Music* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 246.

Like Mitropoulos, Walter Giesekeing (1895-1956) sometimes played the most dissonant modernist scores as well (there exists a piano roll of Giesekeing performing Schoenberg’s Three Pieces, Op 11, listed at the Arnold Schoenberg Website). At the same time, however, Giesekeing was also a major exponent of the big romantic contemporary concertos of Joseph Marx, Hans Pfitzner and Rachmaninoff. In the last decade of Giesekeing’s life, the twentieth-century portion of his repertoire was mostly devoted to Debussy and Ravel.

As for Leopold Stokowski, he was perhaps the most omnivorous of all when it came to twentieth-century music. He often programmed the most radical works, and fearlessly broadcast the Schoenberg Piano Concerto with the NBC Orchestra in 1942 against Toscanini’s wishes. But Stokowski especially thrived in the large symphonic works of living romantic contemporaries like Gliere, Khachaturian, Mahler, Rachmaninoff, and the local Philadelphia composer Harl MacDonald. Last, but certainly not least, we can also mention Stokowski’s own ultra-romantic orchestral transcriptions of Bach.

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A smallish branch of the neoclassical and Impressionist group is sometimes called, or used to be, neo-Romantic, though the term is embarrassing because of its earlier association with such heirs of real Romanticism as Sibelius and Rachmaninoff. I mention this group because I am one of its founding fathers, along with Henri Sauguet. We seem to have started it in Paris about 1926...It was our scandal, in an objective time, to have reopened the old Romantic vein and to have restored, in so far as our work was successful at all, private feelings to their former place among the legitimate themes of art.⁴

Despite attempting to reopen a place for human expression in an objective and neoclassical time, Thomson was nevertheless still able to write that Sibelius was “vulgar, self-indulgent, and provincial beyond all description.”⁵ That much quoted comment was an uncanny pre-echo of Leibowitz’s infamous Sibelius-bashing exercise in the 1950s.⁶ In the same paragraph, Thompson also wrote that Sibelius’s “populace-pleasing power is not unlike the power of a Hollywood class-A picture.”⁷ In the historical context of the mid-century, linking current romantic music styles to film music was one of the most devastating (and effective) ways of discrediting contemporary composers that critics could muster.

In certain cases such negative judgements may simply have been uttered for reasons of national pride. English, Scandinavian, and Russian twentieth-century romantic composers did not easily gain entry into the Great Tradition, which in any case was partly an invention of German musicologists who followed the intellectual tradition of historians like Franz Brendel (1811-1868) and Hugo Riemann (1849-1919).⁸ England, for example, was infamously

⁴ Richard Kostelanetz, ed., *Virgil Thomson: A Reader. Selected Writings, 1924-1984*, (New York: Routledge, 2002), 163.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 48.

⁶ René Leibowitz, “Sibelius, le plus mauvais compositeur du monde [Sibelius, the worst composer in the world],” (Liège: Éditions Dynamo, 1955).

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ Franz Brendel and Hugo Riemann were highly influential and prolific writers whose historical overviews were widely studied. See Brendel’s

branded “das Land ohne Musik” by Oscar Schmitz.⁹ Thus, it was not uncommon for someone like the brilliant British writer Donald Francis Tovey to also be a stout defender of a primarily German canon of Great Composers, even while the English music renaissance led by Elgar, Delius, Holst, and Vaughan Williams was flourishing around him.

Dating back at least to Schumann’s rejection of Rossini, the entire Italian opera tradition (including Verdi and – especially – Puccini) had a difficult time gaining entry into the pantheon, as we saw in chapter one. So did Russian music, including Tchaikovsky, despite the fact that he has easily held his position as Russia’s most-performed composer for the past 150 years. Tchaikovsky’s nearest Russian-born challenger remains Rachmaninoff, who has fared even worse at the hands of historians.¹⁰ Strauss famously referred to the music of Rachmaninoff as “gefühlvolle Jauche”¹¹ (Although Mahler, on the other hand, showed exceedingly high respect toward Rachmaninoff in 1910 when the two performed the new Third Concerto in New York). At root, Strauss’s comment may well have been coloured by long-standing German/Slavic disputes which also had political overtones. In any case, Strauss, as Schoenberg pointed out, was at heart a German nationalist who

Geschichte der Musik in Italien, Deutschland und Frankreich von den ersten christlichen Zeiten bis auf die Gegenwart (Leipzig: Heinrich Matthes, 1852), of which the eighth edition appeared in 1906. See also Riemann’s *Geschichte der Musik seit Beethoven* (Berlin and Stuttgart: W. Spemann, 1901). Riemann’s massive *Lexicon* went through twelve editions between 1882 and 1975.

⁹ This was the title of a book by Oscar Schmitz, *Das Land ohne Musik: englische Gesellschaftsprobleme* (Munich: G. Müller, 1904). The book rapidly went through several subsequent editions as well, with the fourth edition appearing in 1914.

¹⁰ There is a good discussion of Tchaikovsky’s academic reception in Richard Taruskin’s essay, “Chaikovsky and the Human: A Centennial Essay,” in *Defining Russia Musically: Historical and Hermeneutical Essays* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), 239-307.

¹¹ A loose translation would be “emotional manure.” Quoted in Maria Biesold, *Sergej Rachmaninoff, 1873-1943: Zwischen Moskau und New York. Eine Künstlerbiographie* (Weinheim, Berlin: Quadriga, 1991), 414.

believed (as Schoenberg himself most emphatically did) in the inherent superiority of the German musical tradition.¹² On the flip side of Russian-German nationalist tensions, Tchaikovsky in the late nineteenth-century also despised the music of Brahms, although at the same time both he and Brahms represented what was then seen as the conservative element in the fight against the progressive Wagner. Rachmaninoff and Strauss also had a unity of sorts in that they were both very popular with their public. Furthermore, both were considered by the later avant-garde to be among the most conservative and romantic contingent in twentieth-century composition.

Twentieth-century romanticism in an academic context

As two of the most famous representatives of late romanticism in the generation leading up to 1950, Strauss and Rachmaninoff were by any objective measurement among the musical powerhouses of their time. As two of the top five repertoire composers of the twentieth century, they not only had an unassailable presence in the daily concert life from their earliest years onward, but were also clearly superior in many basic facets of sheer musical ability to pioneers like Schoenberg, Ives, Varèse and Stravinsky. Strauss was an astonishing compositional prodigy with a facility comparable to that of Mendelssohn and Saint Saens. He was justly admired for his sensitivity to the human voice,

¹² Schoenberg, in one of his more unvarnished moments, wrote in 1914: “My friends know it, I have often said to them, I never had any use for *all* foreign music. It always seemed to me stale, empty, disgusting, cloying, false, and awkward. Without exception. Now I know who the French, English, Russians, Belgians, Americans, and Serbians are: barbarians! For a long time this music has been a declaration of war on Germany...Now we shall send these mediocre purveyors of kitsch back into slavery, and they shall learn to honor the German spirit and to worship the German God.” see Joseph Auner, *A Schoenberg Reader: Documents of a Life* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2003), 126.

orchestral wizardry and dazzling dramatic genius, and composed what are still considered to be some of the finest German art songs, tone poems, and operas of his era. He was also one of the best German conductors of his generation, and to top it off was a more-than-able pianist in his youth.

Rachmaninoff, for his part, was generally regarded as being among the very greatest Russian conductors of his generation, as Prokofiev (no close friend) and others confirmed.¹³ Rachmaninoff was also universally admired (even by those who denigrated his music) as a pianist literally without peer. His score reading and memorization abilities measured up to the greatest in history, and it was partly because of this facility that he was able to master a large performing repertoire seemingly overnight after fleeing the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution and embarking on an international career as a pianist at the astonishingly late age of 45. As the awe-struck Percy Grainger later remarked, Rachmaninoff was now able to pose as a specialist in piano performance, which had previously been a side line during his Russian years when he had dominated the musical scene as a composer and opera conductor.¹⁴

Rachmaninoff's position in the daily music business has always stood in the greatest possible contrast to his treatment by the academic world. Indeed, his case is very similar to Puccini in this regard. Considering his truly immense public stature today, it is of no small interest to our topic of romanticism in the twentieth century that Rachmaninoff has long numbered among the most academically maligned of all major twentieth-century composers.

¹³ See *Sergey Prokofiev Diaries, 1907-1914: Prodigious Youth*, trans. Anthony Phillips (London: Faber and Faber, 2006), 725. This is an especially significant observation on the part of Prokofiev, who was in awe of Rachmaninoff's general stature even though the two compatriots had an uneasy relationship due to Rachmaninoff's disapproval of Prokofiev's more radical moments. Prokofiev also had the highest praise for important Rachmaninoff works like *The Bells*, even though he felt that Rachmaninoff's general attitude toward composition was not very progressive.

¹⁴ Percy Grainger, "The specialist and the All-Round Man (1943)," in *Grainger on Music*, ed. Malcolm Gillies and Bruce Clunies Ross (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 314.

His still-uncertain stature in mainstream musicology is an accurate litmus test of the status of romantically-oriented music in the cold climate of Modernism during his time and after. Despite his mastery of craft, memorable musical qualities, and preternatural abilities as a pianist and conductor, he has not been considered fit to define his generation in any way. Although he was merely the tip of a much larger romantic iceberg in contemporary music, he somehow ended up being seen as a stylistic anomaly in his era. The composer who “drove a car for thirty years, enjoyed speedboats, had a distinctly 1930s house built for himself, met Walt Disney, lived among movie stars in Beverley Hills, and died two years before the dropping of the first atomic bomb,” supposedly did not belong to the twentieth century.¹⁵

Even worse, his compositional craft was called into question. The now-infamous and much-quoted article in the 1954 *Grove's Dictionary* called him “highly gifted, but also severely limited.” It spoke of his “monotonous textures,” and “artificial and gushing tunes.” We are also told that he had less individuality than Taneyev. And, finally: “The enormous popular success some few of Rakhmaninov’s works had in his lifetime is not likely to last, and musicians never regarded it with much favour.”¹⁶ Harold C. Schonberg bluntly called this article “one of the most outrageously snobbish and even stupid statements ever to be found in a work that is supposed to be an objective reference.”¹⁷

The 1954 *Grove* was part of a long tradition of dismissal. In 1940, Paul Henry Lang had voiced the opinion, already common in many circles, that Rachmaninoff’s music would not survive.¹⁸ But

¹⁵ The illustration is Barrie Martyn’s. See *Rachmaninoff: Composer, Pianist, Conductor* (Aldershot, Hants: Scolar Press, 1990), 12.

¹⁶ Eric Blom, “Sergei Rakhmaninov,” in *Groves Dictionary of Music and Musicians, fifth ed.*, vol. 7, ed. Eric Blom (New York: St. Martins Press, 1954), 27.

¹⁷ Harold C. Schonberg, *The Lives of the Great Composers, third ed.* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1997), 529-520.

¹⁸ Paul Henry Lang wrote: “Scriabin and Rachmaninoff were still entirely under [Chopin’s] spell,” and “were not able to derive from Chopin’s heritage more than ephemeral compositions, dated at the time of their creation.” See

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few writers matched the invective of Paul Rosenfeld, whose chapter on Rachmaninoff in his 1920 book *Musical Portraits* must rank among the most gratuitous and drastic put-downs of any major composer past or present.¹⁹ Although Rosenfeld began his article in a promising manner, by claiming that he found Rachmaninoff to be an accomplished and charming workman, he lost no time in adding that the composer's very best works lacked distinction and vitality. The article rapidly went downhill from that point onward:

The style is strangely soft and unrefreshing. Emotion is communicated, no doubt. But it is emotion of a second or even third order. Nor is the music of M. Rachmaninoff ever quite completely new-minted. Has it a melodic line quite properly its own? One doubts it. Many of the melodies of M. Rachmaninoff have a Mendelssohnian cast, for all their Russian sheen. Others are of the sort of sweet spiritless silken tune generally characteristic of the Russian salon school. Nor can one discover in this music a distinctly original sense of either rhythm or harmony or tone color...In all the music of M. Rachmaninoff there is something strangely twice-told. From it there flows the sadness distilled by all things that are a little useless...he writes concerti of the old type. He writes pieces full of the old astounding musical dislocation. Phrases of an apparent intensity and lyricism are negated by frivolous and tinkling passagework. Take away the sound and fury signifying nothing from the third concerto, and what is left? There was a day, perhaps, when such work served. But another has succeeded it. And so M. Rachmaninoff comes amongst us like a very charming and amiable ghost.²⁰

Rosenfeld managed to fill about seven pages with vitriol similar to the above, and if nothing else, his comments will eventually become part of a new *Lexicon of Musical Invective* that will be

Music in Western Civilization (New York: Norton, 1941), 814-815.

¹⁹ Paul Rosenfeld, *Musical Portraits: Interpretations of Twenty Modern Composers*, (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1920), 169-176.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 171-174.

compiled in order to demonstrate how twentieth-century commentators wrote off composers who were later destined to become central in the daily life of the classical music world.²¹

Not surprisingly, historical surveys covering the twentieth-century period have generally portrayed Rachmaninoff in a manner that is nothing short of abysmal, as Table 2 in chapter one showed. Indeed, their coverage of this composer (or, more precisely, their lack of coverage) could now be said to constitute one of modern musicology's major lapses in historical judgement. Mark Morris, the author of a popular guide on twentieth-century composers, rightly observed in 1994 that Rachmaninoff's treatment was "shabby."²² A cursory look through textbook overviews certainly bears this out. In 1961, Joseph Machlis stated outright that Rachmaninoff did not belong in a text on twentieth-century music.²³ In the second edition from 1979, Machlis dropped this statement and its accompanying negative paragraph, and now mentioned the composer only three times in passing, as a part of various lists.²⁴ In 1992, Antokoletz likewise mentioned Rachmaninoff only in passing.²⁵ In 1994, Paul Griffiths referred to him once in the final chapter of his avant-garde survey, as an "unregenerated romantic."²⁶ Watkins (1995) mentioned his name only when he was referring to twentieth-century romantic

²¹ The full title of Nicholas Slonimsky's memorable book is *Lexicon of Musical Invective: Critical Assaults on Composers Since Beethoven's Time* (New York: Norton, 1953).

²² Mark Morris, *A Guide to 20th-Century Composers* (London: Methuen, 1996), 326.

²³ Joseph Machlis, *Introduction to Contemporary Music*, 1st ed. (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1961), 108.

²⁴ Joseph Machlis, *Introduction to Contemporary Music*, 2nd ed. (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1979), 213, 221, 228.

²⁵ Elliott Antokoletz, *Twentieth Century Music* (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1992), 100, 302, 303.

²⁶ Paul Griffiths, *Modern Music: A Concise History*, rev. ed. (London: Thames and Hudson, 1994), 191. In the 1978 edition of this book, Griffiths did not mention Rachmaninoff at all, even as a foil to modernist trends. See *A Concise History of Avant-Garde Music* (New York and Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1978).

composers in passing. Peter Hansen (1978) did not list Rachmaninoff in the index of his survey at all,²⁷ and neither did Bryan Simms (1986).²⁸ Eric Salzman (1988) gave the composer one sentence.²⁹ These standard surveys of twentieth-century music confirm the bizarre state of affairs in which a fully equipped composer who was active until the 1940s, and has been central to the international repertoire since the 1890s, “has had hardly any critical appraisal at all.”³⁰ It is rather like dropping Schubert or Mendelssohn from a nineteenth-century survey. For students learning about the most important music (and musical issues) of the twentieth century, it is an omission of equal proportions. Scholars who ignored Rachmaninoff’s truly immense role in twentieth-century music did a grave injustice to their profession.

William Austin, considering that his overview came out in 1966 during the heyday of cold war modernism, surprisingly did somewhat better than the writers mentioned earlier. Devoting more than two pages to Rachmaninoff (Schoenberg was given fifty), Austin had praise for the solo piano works, the songs, and *Vespers*. The larger instrumental works were found to be structurally weak, whatever that meant (Austin did not elaborate).³¹ But commendably, Austin resisted the temptation to mingle his praise with cynicism, unlike Arnold Whittall in 1999. Allowing Rachmaninoff half a page, Whittall combined nearly every favourable comment with a negative one. Thus, we read that “the popular indestructibility” of the Second Concerto, the *Paganini Rhapsody*, and many shorter piano works “may have more to do

²⁷ Peter S. Hansen, *An Introduction to Twentieth Century Music*, 4th ed. (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1978).

²⁸ Bryan Simms, *Music of the Twentieth Century: Style and Structure* (New York: Schirmer Books, 1986).

²⁹ Eric Salzman, *Twentieth-century Music: An Introduction*, 3rd ed. (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1988). A fourth edition from 2002 does nothing to rectify Salzman’s view.

³⁰ Harold C. Schonberg, *The Lives of the Great Composers*, 3rd ed. (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1997).

³¹ William Austin, *Music in the Twentieth Century* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1966), 68-69.

with the short-term memorability of tuneful melody than anything else, but such factors are complemented by the structural strengths as well as the emotional power” of the Second Symphony, Third Concerto, and *Symphonic Dances*. Revealing his personal, techno-essentialist attitude towards twentieth-century romanticism in general, Whittall concluded that Rachmaninoff’s music was “both utterly personal and also entirely persuasive in its revitalization of traditional essences – an achievement that makes the failure of so many other attempts to repeat the trick the more obvious.”³² Deep down, Whittall seemed to question the sincerity of the composer’s idiom in general (why else would he have referred to it as some sort of trick?) but one would be hard pressed to find a more inappropriate image of this very sincere composer.

More respectful than Whittall was Robert Morgan in 1991. Morgan began his coverage by stating that around 1900, Russian music “enjoyed special prominence in Western musical composition,” and further, that Scriabin and Rachmaninoff were the country’s most important figures. This sounds like a promising beginning to what could be a chapter or two of solid coverage for these two composers, especially considering the overall prominence of Russian music in the twentieth century standard repertoire. Morgan, however, went on to devote only two pages to Rachmaninoff. The composer’s only failing seemed to be that he

³² Arnold Whittall, *Musical Composition in the Twentieth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 37. Since the 1970s Whittall has also been one of *Gramophone* magazine’s main reviewers of the high modernist literature. Except for his reviews of Britten, he rarely crosses paths with the conservative side of the twentieth century (that part of the repertoire is handled by more sympathetic Gramophone reviewers including Layton, Nicholas, and Achenbach). Thus it is pertinent here to mention a very rare case where Whittall did meet Rachmaninoff in the pages of *Gramophone*. The item under review was a large CD box devoted to Hans Rosbaud, a conductor known for his modernist sympathies (and hence given to Whittall for review). Whittall called the inclusion of the Second Concerto “the most expendable” item in the Rosbaud box, and tried to praise the performance by saying that “even this brings out the work’s genuine strengths, never over-indulging the tear-jerking histrionics.” see review of Hans Rosbaud, *Gramophone* (Nov 2004): 66.

“never abandoned the tonal and formal conventions of nineteenth-century music and thus remained throughout his life outside the main currents of twentieth-century musical developments.” This, ultimately, was why Morgan did not give the composer more space. But, as Morgan admitted, “the antimodernist sentiments of composers like him have been a *persistent and important factor in modern musical life* [my italics].”³³

Although Morgan declined to explore the implications of such anti-modernist persistence, the general tone of this particular comment may nonetheless have signalled a slight thaw in his basic attitude toward latter-day romantic composers, especially when we note that only a decade earlier (in a review essay discussing the 1980 *New Grove* coverage of twentieth century composers), Morgan had been much more dismissive of Rachmaninoff. In that article, he had made an uncharacteristically sarcastic comment on Rachmaninoff’s dramatically increased 1980 *New Grove* coverage (which Morgan compared to the infamous 1954 *Grove’s Dictionary* article), stating that Rachmaninoff was a composer “whom the New Romanticism (or whatever it is) has apparently taught us to love once again.”³⁴

Like Morgan, David Brown also gave Rachmaninoff two pages in a 1973 overview on twentieth-century music. Brown, also a great Tchaikovsky scholar, spoke of Rachmaninoff’s “nostalgia, which is both the most appealing and the most repelling side of his music.”³⁵ Brown found the concertos uneven, with the *Second Concerto* “full of high-pressure cantilena.”³⁶ Almost perversely, he felt that the best of Rachmaninoff (who is universally regarded as one of the greatest pianists in history) is found in works “in which the piano is absent.” This contrasts with Morgan, who found that

³³ Robert Morgan, *Twentieth-Century Music* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1991), 112.

³⁴ Robert Morgan, “The New Grove: A Review,” *The Musical Quarterly* 68 (April 1982), 262-270.

³⁵ David Brown, “Russia.” In *Music in the Modern Age*, ed. F. Sternfeld (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1973), 26.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 26.

“much of the life of his music resides in the virtuoso keyboard writing.”³⁷ Brown rightly singled out the *First Symphony*, *Isle of the Dead*, and *The Bells* for praise, but the many songs, and epochal choral contributions like the *Vespers*, were not mentioned. He tried to be objective in his summary: “[Rachmaninoff’s] essentially soft-centered lyricism may not be the stuff of which really great music is made, but at its best it is far from despicable.” Perhaps believing that he was rescuing the composer from his detractors, Brown concluded, “It is a pity that in our hard-bitten, cynical age his very real gifts as a composer are still underestimated.”³⁸ The question that Brown leaves unanswered is, if he truly believes Rachmaninoff is undervalued, why does he continue the trend of marginalizing the composer, and damning him with phrases like “far from despicable”?

In response to Brown and others, one might add that in today’s world of musical performance and recordings, the songs are considered by many connoisseurs to be among the finest of all Russian art songs. *Vespers* is considered by musicians in the choral field to be a peak of Russian Orthodox music, and an unquestioned monument in twentieth-century *a cappella* choral literature in general. The *Cello Sonata* is a firm part of the standard cello repertoire, despite an extremely difficult role for the piano. Most of the orchestral works are standard fare. The concertos need no defence. Even the comparatively unsuccessful *First* and *Fourth Concertos* are recorded almost as frequently as Prokofiev’s Third or the two Ravel Concertos. The solo piano works, despite their difficulty, are uncommonly well laid out for the instrument, as befits Rachmaninoff’s stature as one of the major pianists in history. Few pianists in the world (Pollini is one) can resist this imposing body of work. Regarding Rachmaninoff’s keyboard output, David Burge has said,

As time gives perspective to his accomplishments, it is

³⁷ Morgan, *Twentieth-Century Music*, 112.

³⁸ Brown, 28.

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possible to see that the best of his work exhibits not only compositional craft of a high order but also an emotional message that is becoming increasingly meaningful. And the challenge to the pianist's resources remains incomparable.³⁹

As Harold C. Schoenberg remarked, "What more does a composer have to do to prove himself?"⁴⁰

Burge is one of many academic writers who are finally treating Rachmaninoff with the respect that is normally accorded all central figures in the repertoire, regardless of the personal musical preferences of individual commentators. Even better, this new respect for Rachmaninoff's towering achievements in music history has finally been acknowledged in the seventh (2006) edition of Grout's famous fifty-year-old textbook. The seventh edition was extensively rewritten under the supervision of J. Peter Burkholder. In common with many other scholars today, Burkholder clearly recognizes that one can apply the idea of innovation to twentieth-century music in a much broader sense than musicology had traditionally allowed. Indeed, innovation nowadays extends well beyond the high modernist criteria of harmonic novelties, dissonant combinations and fragmented forms. In one of the most positive textbook paragraphs ever accorded the great Russian master, we can now read that

Rachmaninov is renowned for his passionate, melodious idiom. Some have dismissed his music as old-fashioned, but like other composers in the first modern generation, he sought a way to

³⁹ David Burge, *Twentieth-Century Piano Music* (New York: Schirmer Books, 1990), 60.

⁴⁰ Harold C. Schonberg, *The Lives of the Great Composers, third ed.* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1997), 520. It is timely here to repeat Roger Sessions' wise words, written in 1978 (surely not intended as a defense of Rachmaninoff): "In my view it is an all too common error of our times to invoke a facile historicism as a valid basis for both musical effort and musical judgement. One should never forget that it is music, and music alone, that determines musical history." See *Roger Sessions on Music*, ed. E. T. Cone (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979), 360.

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appeal to listeners enamored of the classics by offering something new and individual yet steeped in tradition. Rather than introduce innovations in harmony, as did Strauss, Debussy, and Scriabin – which would have violated both his temperament and the demands of the audience for touring virtuosos – he focused on other elements of the romantic tradition, creating melodies and textures that sound both fresh and familiar. As in the best popular music, or long-standing traditions such as Italian opera, Rachmaninoff made his mark not by stark departures from convention but by doing the conventional in a way no one had done before... Such qualities were not enough for those who demanded innovation in harmony, but Rachmaninoff's music ultimately won a place in the permanent repertoire most of his contemporaries would have envied.⁴¹

It is truly a sign of a new era in scholarship when a central university textbook finally allows Rachmaninoff to be “timely” or *gleichzeitig* rather than “untimely” or *ungleichzeitig*.

As we have already mentioned, composers like Strauss and Rachmaninoff were merely the tip of a very large late-romantic iceberg. That iceberg may have been almost completely occluded in advanced circles but it most certainly still carried immense weight in public life, and even Schoenberg's titanic advancements in musical language could not budge it. In retrospect, romanticism's apparent non-existence in the twentieth century was due more to wishful thinking than actual fact – rather like the two-year old child who thinks he is hiding when he covers his eyes with his hands. The paradox, then, is this: On the one hand, the most obvious manifestations of traditional nineteenth-century romanticism – which meant, above all, the deliberate and conscious preservation of several centuries worth of accumulated tonal elements and directly-spun melodic archetypes covering the full range of moods – were treated by advanced musicians as though they no longer existed, and were repeatedly pronounced dead with assurance and finality.

⁴¹ J. Peter Burkholder, Donald Jay Grout, and Claude V. Palisca, *A History of Western Music*, 7th ed. (New York and London: Norton, 2006), 791.

And yet at the same time, the “old” musical trappings of the nineteenth-century and earlier somehow seemed to go on lurking in every corner of the new century. In 1999, Botstein somewhat cryptically spoke of “the much-discussed strange twentieth-century career of the nineteenth-century traditions of music making, particularly those of concert music composition and re-creative concert performance.”⁴² Botstein’s observation referred to a musical fact of life that historical overviews usually mentioned in passing, only to rapidly move on and drop the topic from the discussion. “Notions of what music is and what it ought to do,” said Salzman (also somewhat cryptically) in 1987, “reached their full development between 1700 and 1900 and have been bequeathed to us surprisingly intact.”⁴³ Regarding the general “art” music scene in the United States, Carol Oja, in her *Making Music Modern* (2000), ever-so-briefly made reference to an American stream of romantic composition that, as she put it, “meandered” its way through the entire century. Writing from a resolutely modernist bias, Oja observed that romantic composers (she mentioned a somewhat random list of names which included Jacobi, Dello Joio, Starer and Ward) “have consistently seemed unperturbed as a parade of modernist fashions has passed them by.”⁴⁴

“The twilight of romanticism has been long and eventful, nor is it over yet,” wrote Arnold Whittall at the end of his *Romantic Music*, a 1987 survey of the nineteenth-century scene.⁴⁵ But, as Whittall also added somewhat ominously, “the most consistently romantic twentieth-century composers have usually been the most conservative.”⁴⁶ There was, of course, a familiar subtext here in the use of the word “conservative.” For Whittall, it

⁴² Leon Botstein, “Rethinking the Twentieth Century,” *The Musical Quarterly* 83 (Summer 1999): 146.

⁴³ Salzman, 2.

⁴⁴ Carol Oja, *Making Music Modern* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 167.

⁴⁵ Arnold Whittall, *Romantic Music* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1987), 184.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 183.

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was decidedly not a compliment. And sure enough, it was the same conservative twentieth-century composers mentioned at the end of his nineteenth-century overview who were denied adequate coverage in his twentieth-century overview. Paul Griffiths, who had a slightly better excuse in that his 1978 overview of modern music was explicitly intended to cover only the more radical streams, also did not feel obligated to make more than a brief note of the same romantic phenomenon:

William Walton (b. 1902) and Samuel Barber have found it possible to perpetuate late romanticism into the century's last quarter. Indeed, it is one of the unusual features of music since 1900 that many composers have chosen to take a 'conservative' stance, working with materials and methods which might have seemed exhausted and outmoded by the current of advance in technique and sensibility.⁴⁷

However, Bryan Simms, in his supposedly more general twentieth-century survey (1987), devoted no more space to romantic streams than had the specifically avant-garde survey of Griffiths. Simms merely paused occasionally to observe its presence. For example, he noted at one point that "several composers" like Strauss and Pfitzner represented an unbroken tradition of romantic composition until the 1940s.⁴⁸ (Simms could have easily written "several dozen," or even "several hundred" instead of merely "several"). Elsewhere, Simms took another brief moment to hint at the existence of a very large romantic stream when he made the following comment about the English musical scene:

The conservatively classical language popular there during the interwar period was an uninterrupted continuation of the romantic

⁴⁷ Paul Griffiths, *A Concise History of Modern Music from Debussy to Boulez* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1978), 23.

⁴⁸ Bryan Simms, *Music of the Twentieth Century: Style and Structure* (New York: Schirmer Books, 1986), 141-142, 429.

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tradition brought into the twentieth century by composers such as Edward Elgar and Frederick Delius. Their musical idiom was carried on by William Walton, Gustav Holst, and Ralph Vaughan Williams, none of whom placed primary emphasis on innovation or stylistic experiment.⁴⁹

Simms further added that “The classic-romantic tradition of English music was carried to its greatest heights in the twentieth century by Benjamin Britten,” whose music “grew from the same soil as that of Vaughan Williams.”⁵⁰

Unlike Whittall, Salzman, Griffiths, Simms and Griffiths, Glenn Watkins’ 1995 survey *Soundings* took the time to devote several pages to weighing the implications of the twentieth century romanticism issue more fully. Like Simms and others, Watkins also listed a broad range of contemporary composers whom, he felt, represented the most logical continuation of the romantic ethos, and his list of names will serve to give us a good indication of the stylistic range of twentieth-century romantic traditionalists. While describing the 1970s New Romanticism of Rochberg, Penderecki and others, Watkins observed that “It would be well to recall once again, however, the healthy strain of romanticism that had flourished everywhere and in virtually every decade of the twentieth century.”⁵¹ By way of illustration, he listed the violin concertos of Sergei Prokofiev, Dmitri Shostakovitch, Gian-Carlo Menotti, and William Walton, a stylistically diverse and multi-national group of composers. Elsewhere, during a discussion of expressionism, Watkins further enriched his list of romantic composers by noting that Howard Hanson’s *Symphony No. 2*, Samuel Barber’s *Adagio* for strings, Sergei Rachmaninoff’s *Symphonic Dances*, and Richard Strauss’s *Four Last Songs*, “all staples of the concert hall – were written at a time, in the fourth and fifth decades of the century, when post-romanticism was

⁴⁹ Ibid., 297

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Glenn Watkins, *Soundings: Music in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Schirmer Books, 1995), 650.

supposedly long since dead.”⁵² In another comment that reiterated his main point, Watkins described how

Lingering romantic values continued to play a vital role in such substantial composers outside the avant-garde as Vaughan-Williams, Barber, Prokofiev, Bloch, Britten, Shostakovich, and Rachmaninov... Unfashionable as it may seem through their example the New Romanticism of the 1970s and 1980s was undoubtedly more readily accomplished. That the reintroduction of Zemlinsky’s works...into the concert repertoire not only followed the Mahler revival in the 1950s and 1960s but coincided with the rising fashion in the 1970s of the music of Alban Berg, the most Romantic of the Viennese trinity, is already a matter of history.⁵³

Ending with a word of admonition to his academic textbook-writing colleagues, Watkins then “caution[ed] writers of such histories to take the measure of their story from a broader range than the narrow edge of the avant-garde.”⁵⁴

It is clear from the composers mentioned above that Watkins, like Simms, associated twentieth-century romanticism with a very wide stylistic range of composers. For him, the main criteria seemed to be that they still used tonality and the long melodic line, and, especially, were outstanding symbols of avant-garde resistance. In a word, they were seen as conservatives. These features – conservatism, tonality, the long melodic line, and resistance to the avant-garde – are of the utmost importance to keep in mind as we gradually formulate our definition of romanticism in the twentieth century.

The observations from historical overviews that I have just cited show the extent to which overview writers (even when, like Watkins, they admitted that something was perhaps wrong with the traditional academic textbook picture) were content to give little

⁵² *Ibid.*, 170.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 356.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 356.

more than lip-service to the indisputable fact that many in the twentieth-century had remained loyal to nineteenth-century musical traits. Such academic resistance to the continued presence of “outmoded” romanticism had its beginning in the early years of the twentieth century, and Dahlhaus observed that the phrase “bad Nineteenth Century” was already commonly used as “a jingoistic catchphrase...among avant-gardists around 1920.”⁵⁵ But despite such abuse, the great majority of music lovers and performing musicians were not yet prepared to jettison the sonic surfaces of the nineteenth-century so quickly.

Hence romanticism’s stubborn persistence. Indeed, the basic musical language of the twentieth-century romantics continued to tap into very deep cultural roots. The musical idioms that continued to be consumed and used at the grassroots level on a daily basis throughout the twentieth century were almost inconceivable without the triadic, tonal, and melodic basis that had always been so central to what we still commonly think of as romantic music. This basis directly traced its roots – largely without ironic distancing techniques or recourse to dialectic theory – to immediate forebears in the nineteenth-century. As the nineteenth-century gave way to the twentieth, this long-standing tonal foundation continued to foster a vast body of music, both “serious” and “popular,” that evidenced the same kind of gradual evolution in musical materials that one would normally see in any spoken language.⁵⁶

Throughout the twentieth century, there existed a vast and tonal pedagogical literature, replete with common-practice harmonies and melodies in the commonly understood sense of the terms. There were the ubiquitous Sunday morning church services with an unbroken tonal tradition of hymnody and liturgical music stretching back centuries. Indeed, the liturgical setting is as good a

⁵⁵ Carl Dahlhaus, *Nineteenth Century Music* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), 390.

⁵⁶ See especially our discussion, in chapter six, of Stephen Banfield’s article on bourgeois tonality before 1940.

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place as any to illustrate the gradual evolution of harmony in standard composers from Bach through to the popular John Rutter in our time. There were also the many grass-roots choral societies who loved the kind of twentieth-century music represented by Elgar, Howells and Rutter. Howells, who died as late as 1982, contributed more than anyone else to defining the distinctive sound of twentieth-century Anglican church music – a type of literature that has always been central to the international world of choral music.

Classical radio programming over the decades also chronically avoided the most advanced musical terrain. In the year 2000, Milton Babbitt wrote a short article for the American Music Center that addressed this issue from the most unrepentant of avant garde perspectives. The article gives us Babbitt's reaction to what was already a long-standing tradition of classical music broadcasting:

I turn on the radio every morning and every night. But more often than not, I turn it off and put on a CD because in all the many years of listening to some half-dozen public stations, I have not heard a note of the most influential music of the twentieth century. Mainly what I hear are the complete works of Arnold Bax, or Delius, or Gerald Finzi. For example, I have never heard the piano concerti of Stravinsky, Schoenberg, Sessions and Carter. Instead they play Sir Hamilton Harty and Herbert Howells... and the announcers tell us how important and beautiful their music is! These announcers even suppress the names of contemporary composers when they broadcast live concerts. I have documentation of this... It's an outrageous situation...It pains me to think of the view of twentieth-century music and even nineteenth-century music that you get on these self-righteous public stations. It makes me very angry, I confess.⁵⁷

⁵⁷ Milton Babbitt responds to the question, "When do you listen to the radio and what do you listen to?" (NewMusicBox, May 1, 2000). We are fortunate to have this brief and informal NewMusicBox web article because Babbitt never mentioned such composers in his more formal academic writing. <http://www.newmusicbox.org/articles/When-do-you-listen-to-the-radio-and->

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Babbitt's list of composers usefully illustrates how late twentieth-century classical radio broadcasters, when they wanted to explore lesser known repertoire, found plenty that was of interest simply by surveying the music of the most romantic-sounding twentieth-century composers. The music that made Babbitt "very angry" was drawn principally from the most tonal and romantic streams of twentieth-century musical composition. This music has enjoyed phenomenal growth among connoisseurs in the past several decades, and composers like Bax, a self-described "brazen romantic,"⁵⁸ have virtually defined the aesthetic approach of many independent record labels when it comes to deciding what streams of post-1900 music they will devote the bulk of their energies to recording.

For most of his life, Bax (1883-1953) was certainly redolent of the worst kind of latter-day romantic excess in the eyes of the avant-garde. He was representative of the kind of twentieth-century music that Babbitt's own textbook and monograph-writing colleagues were taking such pains to exclude from the university curriculum. It is therefore understandable that Babbitt found the musical content of connoisseur-driven classical radio badly distorted from a historical point of view – to the point where he momentarily lost his professional decorum and lashed out in frustration. After all, he and his colleagues had been working exceedingly hard for decades to write off these composers on evolutionary and stylistic grounds, only to have their prescriptive and carefully-planned historical framework of twentieth-century music effortlessly overturned by a groundswell of music lovers who had developed formidably sophisticated tastes forged by years and even decades of exploration in musical regions that were considered *terra incognita* in history textbooks.

"I am well aware," said Eric Salzman in the preface to his twentieth-century overview, "that Schmitt, Schreker, Ghedini,

what-do-you-listen-to-Milton-Babbitt/ (accessed April 3, 2012).

⁵⁸ Lewis Foreman, ed., *Farewell My Youth and Other Writings by Arnold Bax*, (Aldershot, Hants: Scolar Press, 1992), 168.

Grainger and Gliere, Weiner and Weinberger, Alfven, Zemlinsky, and a host of greater and lesser lights do not appear.”⁵⁹ In giving his reasons for avoiding what he described as a “long list of also-rans,” Salzman ended up naming a broad assortment of composers whom dedicated record collectors and regular readers of record review magazines were already intimately familiar with, thanks to the recording industry’s “life line” (cf. Banfield) connecting unfashionable composer with unfashionable public.⁶⁰ Although Salzman’s “also-rans” rarely appeared in historical overviews, they were beginning to make their presence felt in the rapidly-growing record catalogues of Chandos, Hyperion, BIS, cpo and Naxos, at the same time that Salzman was seeing his twenty-year-old textbook through its third edition (1988). The also-rans may not have been introduced to music students via academically certified historical accounts, but they were rapidly becoming well-known to connoisseurs and readers of record review journals worldwide. On a personal note, these same record review journals were where I also first learned about the “other side” of twentieth-century music. I became a regular reader of magazines like *Gramophone*, *American Record Guide*, and *Fanfare* in the mid-1980s.

By the late twentieth century, what Watkins called “lingering” nineteenth-century trappings⁶¹ were also enjoying a resurgence in contemporary composition. Many composers like the former serialist George Rochberg now made a public and professional point of “returning” to tonality and romantic sounding idioms. In reality, however, they were adopting a musical attitude that an even larger number of consistent traditionalists like Samuel Barber and William Walton had been following all along. The ample presence of romantic-sounding tonalists in the 1950s and 1960s is easily demonstrated via today’s record catalogue, despite Simm’s protestations that 1970s neoromanticism was reviving a

⁵⁹ Salzman, x.

⁶⁰ Stephen Banfield, *Gerald Finzi: An English Composer* (London: Faber and Faber, 1997), 487.

⁶¹ See page one of the present volume.

long-gone romanticism that had finally faded away in the 1940s with the deaths of Strauss and Pfitzner. The real truth of the matter was that (along with Barber and Walton) many composers like Gian Carlo Menotti (1911-2007), Mario Castelnuovo-Tedesco (1895-1968), Ernest Bloch (1880-1959), Ned Rorem (1923-), Leonard Bernstein (1918-1990), Malcolm Arnold (1921-2006), Nino Rota (1911-1979) and George Lloyd (1913-1998) had made a point of never leaving the tonal fold during the post-1945 heyday of serialism and chance music. Glenn Watkins summed up this everyday reality when he wrote that

the sense of [the neoromantic] revival for most audiences of the 1970s was of necessity weak because their musical culture had supported such values right along...The revival was strongest and most discernible among composers who had spent much of the preceding decade in different waters and for whom such a mode of expression constituted a turn.⁶²

Simms, then, did not properly acknowledge Watkins' point, although some others did at least make passing mention of a continuous stream mid-twentieth-century romantics. But death or no death, a widespread neoromantic and neotonal wave did sweep through avant-garde circles in both Europe and North America. Headed by such notable international figures as Rochberg, Rautavaara, Pärt, Gorecki, and Penderecki, it created untold controversy and bitterness within orthodox avant-garde ranks. The "neo" or "new" romanticism also earned some passing comments in the major historical surveys, which did much to establish neoromanticism as a late twentieth-century historical category.⁶³

Varèse scholar Jonathan Bernhard is one of the most hostile among those writers who were less than enthusiastic about the late-twentieth-century neoromantic movement. In what can only be

⁶² Watkins, 650.

⁶³ See Watkins, 645-651; Simms, 428-430; Morgan, 481-483; Salzman, 207-209; Machlis, 2nd ed., 420.

described as a glaring case of editorial misjudgement on the part of the publishers, Bernhard was commissioned to write a chapter on tonal composition in the United States from 1960 to the present for the 1998 *Cambridge History of American Music*. Under the general heading “New and Newer Romanticism,” Bernhard described how most of the contemporary composers presently being played by American orchestras followed the example of Rochberg, Rorem and Bernstein. The majority, said Bernhard, were “identifiable, in different ways and to greater or lesser degrees, as ‘Romantics.’”⁶⁴

Post-1960 composers belonging to Bernhard’s romantic category included Corigliano, Tower, Zwilich, Albert, Danielpour, Paulus, Larsen, Daugherty, Kernis, and Rouse. Bernhard ended his discussion of recent American tonal-romantic composers with some forcefully articulated comments that usefully encapsulated the drastic extent to which many academic writers had historically despised the presence of a romantic stream of art music in the twentieth century:

We have, it seems, returned to the era of Bernstein and Koussevitzky, when conservatively minded conductors control our major orchestras and, if they play American music at all, show interest mainly in resuscitating ‘forgotten’ old (tonal) masters, or in latching onto the latest trend, or in arguing their case that modernism was an aberration and that the true American music is and always was tonal. But if those who do not remember history are condemned to repeat it, nevertheless one can say that neotonicity the second time around is different from the first; the second wave of modernism in between has vastly expanded the

⁶⁴ Jonathan Bernard, “Tonal traditions in art music since 1960,” in *Cambridge History of American Music*, ed. David Nicholls (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 559. Many of the younger neoromantic composers named by Bernhard also populate the top ten lists of the most-performed American orchestral works. See *Orchestra Repertoire Reports* from the years 2000 to 2009, which have been published on the internet by the League of American Orchestras, <http://www.americanorchestras.org/knowledge-research-innovation/knowledge-center/surveys-reports-and-data/orchestra-repertoire-reports.html> (accessed Oct 25, 2012).

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resources available to a composer working in any idiom, even under the restrictions usually considered to operate if that idiom is tonal – and even though many composers now writing tonal music, especially the young, prefer as a matter of public relations not to acknowledge what they have learned from modernism. It is difficult to make reliable predictions on the basis of developments that are so recent, but one could hope that, in all respects that matter, the expression ‘return to tonality’ is a misnomer, that composers, audiences, performers, and critics will eventually tire of the dwelling on the past and other retrogressive aspects of this movement, and that the progressive elements that shine forth in some of its better products will win out in the twenty-first century.⁶⁵

Bernhard’s feeling of powerlessness in the face of the rise of (neo) romanticism in North America was understandable. He was, after all, attempting to fight an aesthetic movement that had almost incalculable historic depth and momentum. In 2005, Taruskin called the late twentieth-century neoromantic movement a “vast middle ground,” which was inhabited by former avant gardists of all kinds – although we should add here that not all of those composers were comfortable with being labelled romantics.⁶⁶ But whatever we want to call such composers, there is no denying that (as Taruskin pointed out) many of the newly minted “romantics” named by Bernhard had formerly been radical composers. The best of them had been lauded and highly esteemed by their modernist colleagues, as many overview writers also pointed out. Their mass exodus from the front lines of the cold war avant-garde caused irreparable damage to the old progress narrative of musical evolution.

⁶⁵ Jonathan Bernard, “Tonal traditions in art music since 1960,” in *Cambridge History of American Music*, ed. David Nicholls (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 566.

⁶⁶ Richard Taruskin, *The Oxford History of Western Music*, Vol. 5, *The Late Twentieth Century* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 516.

The Romantic Revival in the late twentieth century

Along with the rise of Rochberg's neoromanticism, a parallel historical development also gathered steam, and it is equally vital to our general discussion of Romanticism in the Twentieth Century. In the 1960s, a young pianist and scholar named Frank Cooper developed a passion for rare romantic music. He acted on his passion in a practical way, and became one of the leading theoreticians and organizers of a very non-academic grassroots musical movement widely-known in late twentieth-century music journalism as the Romantic Revival. Cooper saw his musical mission as essentially complementary to the reformed neoromanticism of Rochberg and others.⁶⁷ What Cooper did after the 1960s was tap into a growing realization among the public, as well as the new generation of scholars, that there existed a veritable treasure trove of rare and forgotten romantic-sounding composers who were crying out for re-discovery.

These composers included figures who, in many cases, had lived up until the mid twentieth-century and even more recently. Among their ranks were an entire late-romantic generation of composer-pianists such as Leopold Godowsky, Nicholas Medtner, Emil von Sauer, Ernst von Dohnányi, and Ignaz Friedman. They were led by Rachmaninoff, who, in retrospect, has towered over them all. The later romantics had done little or nothing to advance the course of music history after about 1910, and had consequently been thrown into a vast historical hinterland by Babbitt and his history-writing colleagues. They were part of what Dahlhaus termed the "debris of the past,"⁶⁸ and were casualties in the mad race to achieve ever-more sophisticated harmonic and structural innovations. However, something else gradually became clear to music lovers who cared to explore the music of these apparently

⁶⁷ Jesse F. Knight. *The Romantic Revival – Setting the Record Straight: A Conversation with Frank Cooper*. Walkerton, Ind.: Lion Enterprises, 1979.

⁶⁸ Carl Dahlhaus, "Neo-Romanticism," in *19th-Century Music* 3 (November, 1979), 100.

“regressive” composers a little more closely: Like those in the progressive stream, they too had tried to forge an authentic musical style that conformed to their image of what contemporary music should be like.

A few important early twentieth-century romantics like Rachmaninoff, Sibelius and Strauss had never actually seen their public popularity decline to any appreciable degree.⁶⁹ Indeed, it is safe to say that the public profile of all three composers steadily rose over the course of the twentieth century, and we have now reached the point where we are scrounging for juvenilia and fragments, just as we do for Mozart and Beethoven. We can see a good example of this in BIS’s complete Sibelius Edition, which has advanced Sibelius scholarship to an incalculable extent. But slightly less famous twentieth-century romantics were not so fortunate. After their deaths, composers like Korngold, Medtner, Bax and Dohnányi all slipped off the musical radar almost completely, although their revival is occurring at a rapid rate today. Many others could be mentioned as well. There is, for example, a vast corpus of Scandinavian romantic music (Stenhammar, Atterberg, Alfvén) from the twentieth century being explored at present.

This renaissance is especially noticeable in the record catalogue, a factor that was already beginning to wield its influence in the early years of the twentieth century. In a negative

⁶⁹ Even in the case of Sibelius, he was well-represented on recordings and in concert even during his lowest point in the 1950s and 1960s. Almost every violinist played the Violin Concerto in D minor, and many leading conductors strongly advocated the Symphonies, including Bernstein, Ormandy, Barbirolli, and von Karajan. The alleged mid-century decline in Sibelius’ popularity was more a case of wishful thinking than reality. This was also true of Rachmaninoff and Strauss, and the fact remained that over the decades, more and more works by the leading twentieth-century romantic composers took their place in the daily repertoire. Now, even a once-rarely played work like Strauss’s hour-long *Alpine Symphony* (64 listings at Arkivmusic.com) far surpasses the orchestral version of Schoenberg’s greatest hit (*Verklärte Nacht*, which has 48 listings). Indeed, the *Alpine Symphony* now comes very close to *Don Quixote* (77) and *Ein Heldenleben* (89) in frequency of recording.

sense, the textbook writer and Bartók scholar Elliott Antokoletz blamed the recording industry as one of the major reasons for the demise of the first major avant-garde revolution of the 1910s and 1920s:

Through the new media, an average listener could select music that was easily understood and appreciated. This contributed to the eclipse of esoteric contemporary styles during the 1930s by more conservative musical idioms. As a result, many composers attempted to combine modern musical features with traditional forms and textures in order to reconcile the divergent tendencies and bring contemporary sonorities to the general public.⁷⁰

From a more positive angle, Gerald Finzi biographer Stephen Banfield wrote of how, “With the arrival of the mono and then the stereo LP from the late 1950s onwards, recordings were beginning to act as a lifeline between unfashionable composer and unfashionable public.”⁷¹ One of the first record labels to be exclusively devoted to this historic trend was Lyrita, founded in 1959. Lyrita embarked on a mission to record a host of recent British traditionalists. Looking back half a century later, critic Rob Barnett, editor of the British Music Society Newsletter, called Lyrita “the standard-bearer for the return of a generation of British lyricists and romantics.”⁷² Among the fledgling label’s recordings were works by Gustav Holst (1874-1934), Arnold Bax (1883-1953), John Ireland (1879-1962), E. J. Moeran (1894-1950), Gerald Finzi, (1901-1956), Alan Rawsthorne (1905-1971), William

⁷⁰ Elliott Antokoletz, *Twentieth Century Music* (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1992), 242.

⁷¹ Stephen Banfield, *Gerald Finzi: An English Composer* (London: Faber and Faber, 1997), 487.

⁷² Rob Barnett made the comment while reviewing one of Lyrita’s rare 1960s forays into more modernist repertoire. See review of Elisabeth Lutyens, *Quincunx*, etc., BBC Symphony Orchestra with various soloists and conductors, Lyrita SRCD.265, in *MusicWeb International* (April 2008): http://www.musicweb-international.com/classrev/2008/Apr08/Lutyens_Quincunx_SRCD265.htm (accessed June 12, 2012).

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Alwyn (1905-1985), George Lloyd (1913-1998), and Malcolm Arnold (1921-2006). One of Lyrita's first projects was a recording of the now-elderly pianist York Bowen (1884-1961), who was featured in his own works. In 1963, Roger Fiske in *Gramophone* magazine greeted this recording with remarks that offer some insight into the nature of the aesthetic climate at that time:

York Bowen (1884-1961) is remembered with affection by English musicians, including many past students of the Royal Academy of Music. His output as a composer was prodigious, and embraced almost every form of instrumental music, yet he found time as well to become a professional pianist and a good violinist and horn player. This record is dated 1960, at which time York Bowen was 76, and it is sad that its appearance was delayed until after his death....

What can one say today of his music? All of it is well written, and much is good of its kind, in fact so good as to raise tricky aesthetic problems. Some of the Op. 102 Preludes have as much quality as Rachmaninov's, which indeed they here and there resemble in style. Why then are Rachmaninov's still played and liked, while Bowen's remain virtually unknown? The answer, surely, is that they were written too late. To succeed, music must appear when its style still seems fresh, and it will then gain a place in people's affections that will withstand the inevitable change of fashion. But if it appears when its style has lost novelty appeal, people won't be bothered with it however good it is, even though they continue to enjoy music of similar quality that they have known for years. The Third Programme has dug up a number of composers from the distant past who suffered a similar fate in their own day, and it could well be that in the distant future, when York Bowen's music is too old to be old-fashioned, someone will hold it up for admiration and condemn 1963 for not liking it better.⁷³

In the context of the British musical scene after 1945,

⁷³ Roger Fiske, review of *Bowen: Piano Works*, York Bowen, piano, Lyrita Q RCS17 (LP), *Gramophone* (August 1963): 50.

Banfield also related how composers like Vaughan Williams, Finzi and even the beloved Elgar had been “nationally sidelined in the harshly modernistic and international climate of the 1960s led from the top by William Glock at the BBC.”⁷⁴ Despite the strength and influence of the avant-garde, the move to record unfashionable traditionalist composers gathered steam, going from strength to strength. Indeed, recorded revivals over the next few decades were to prove so successful that in 2007, the Elgar/Vaughan Williams scholar Michael Kennedy (on the occasion of the 150th anniversary of Elgar’s birth) was able to look back on a very good fifty years of romantic resurgence – a resurgence that labels like Lyrita had done so much to help foster:

Perhaps as a reaction to the well orchestrated avant-garde campaign in the 1960s and 1970s to persuade us all that salvation lay with serialism and the new wave of Boulez, Stockhausen and others, a number of romantic and post-romantic composers whose names had not been mentioned (except in derision) in many university music departments for decades came storming back into public favour, supported by long-playing recordings and, later, compact discs - Mahler (he had a foot in both camps), Bruckner, Strauss, Rachmaninoff, Puccini, Sibelius and Elgar.⁷⁵

The dramatic increase in recordings of latter-day romantic-sounding composers, as described by Banfield and Kennedy, has been especially significant in the late twentieth century because, as Whittall observed in 1999, the musical climate of our time is “dominated as much by the collecting instincts of CD buyers as the preferences of concertgoers – perhaps more.”⁷⁶ The importance of the long-term trend toward a musical culture where connoisseurs

⁷⁴ Stephen Banfield, *Gerald Finzi: An English Composer* (London: Faber and Faber, 1997), 486-487.

⁷⁵ Michael Kennedy, “Elgar’s magic formula,” *The Telegraph* (May 12, 2007): <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/music/classicalmusic/3665085/Elgars-magic-formula.html> (accessed June 12, 2012).

⁷⁶ Whittall, *Musical Composition in the Twentieth Century*, 349.

would glean most of their knowledge from recordings cannot be over-estimated: For avant-gardist and Romantic Revivalist alike, recordings had long been one of the most significant means of advocating composers. Back in the late 1950s, Milton Babbitt had also regarded the presence of comprehensive recording projects as a sure sign of a contemporary composer's rise in stature. To this end, Babbitt proudly noticed how Anton Webern's output,

which during the composer's lifetime was regarded (to the very limited extent that it was regarded at all) as the ultimate in hermetic, specialized, and idiosyncratic composition; today, some dozen years after the composer's death, his complete works have been recorded by a major record company.⁷⁷

Whittall (1999) named several composers of conservative inclination who had already seen large symphonic cycles recorded (Malcolm Arnold, Havergal Brian, Alan Hovhaness, Eduard Tubin, Vagn Holmboe, Robert Simpson). As Whittall implied, such cycles (and a great many others could be added)⁷⁸ have become sought-

⁷⁷ Milton Babbitt, "Who cares if you listen," reprinted in *Contemporary Composers on Contemporary Music*, ed. E. Schwartz and B. Childs (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1967), 250.

⁷⁸ A few of the more traditionalist twentieth-century symphonic cycles that are now readily available on CD can be mentioned here: Lajtha, Moyzes, Tournemire, Melartin, Halvorsen, Ropartz, Enescu, Miaskovsky, Vainberg, Glière, Gretchaninov, Petterson-Berger, Atterberg, Alfven, Alwyn, Bax, Creston, Casella, Hanson, Hill, Ivanovs, Lloyd, Martinu, Rangström, Röntgen, Schmidt, Villa Lobos, Weingartner, Weigl, and Ward. One of the most unusual is Rued Langgaard's cycle of sixteen symphonies. Langgaard, a self-described romantic who died in 1952, was, partly for personal reasons, always seen as an outsider in his native Denmark. An organist and improviser of genius (on the level of Marcel Dupré), he was also a compositional prodigy, and had an entire concert of his works performed by the Berlin Philharmonic when he was only nineteen. He developed into a religious mystic who believed that the ideal music of Paradise would be romantic. Today, following decades of total neglect in his homeland, about half of his over 400 works have now been recorded by Danacord, the leading Danish label. The Langgaard scholar Bendt Viinholt Nielsen has also published a 560-page catalogue of the works and is the writer and editor of the scholarly Langgaard Website. See <http://www.langgaard.dk/indexe.htm>.

after items in the CD catalogue. Whittall also commented on how early twentieth-century opera was currently being reassessed. In acknowledging the contributions of Pfitzner, Shreker, Korngold, Zemlinsky, and Siegfried Wagner (romantics all), Whittall now made the extremely important academic admission that “the picture, sustainable during the century’s middle years, of Richard Strauss as the sole exponent of a dying tradition, resisting the atonal threats of Berg (*Wozzeck*) and Schoenberg (*Moses und Aron*), has been significantly revised.”⁷⁹ Later, in another telling admission, Whittall also wrote that

the partial rehabilitation of Schreker, Zemlinsky and Korngold since 1970 was part of a wider enthusiasm for the kind of uninhibited late romanticism that could be regarded as representing heroic resistance to the grim astringencies of progressive expressionism, rather than a timid failure to transcend them.⁸⁰

Whittall’s words are especially valuable because they come from a strongly modernist-oriented commentator who, in addition to his scholarly work, has been a regular *Gramophone* record reviewer since the 1970s. Whittall had long been an articulate voice in the musicological tradition that viewed the 1950’s to the 70s as the heyday of serialism and chance music. In that general view of music history, the immediate post-war decades were considered to have been followed by a resurgence of more accessible tonal idioms, as represented by the neoromanticism of Rochberg and the minimalism of Glass and Reich. The immediate post-war decades were also a time when the Princeton and Darmstadt branches of atonal/serial high modernism were locked in mortal combat as to who represented the more “scientific”

See also *Rued Langgaard’s Compositions: an Annotated Catalogue of Works* (Odense Universitetsforlag, 1991).

⁷⁹ Arnold Whittall, *Musical Composition in the Twentieth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 72

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 74.

method of composition.⁸¹

It was an era when the high modernist movement (unbeknowst to them, they were aided by massive infusions of covert CIA money) still seemed to believe in the eventual possibility of widespread public attention and acceptance outside of the hibernal cloisters of specialist avant garde venues like Princeton, Darmstadt and Dartington. Goddard Lieberson, for example, was a composer of modernist inclinations, as well as being one of the most powerful figures in the North American recording industry. Lieberson became vice president of Columbia Records in 1949 and president in 1956. His rise in the recording business coincided with the advent of LP technology, and he took advantage of the exploding classical LP market to instigate an ambitious program of support for the musical avant-garde as well as milder forms of modernism. During the 1950s, the scholarly journal *Musical Quarterly* reviewed many of these recordings, a high point of which (as Babbitt mentioned earlier) was the first complete Webern cycle on four mono LPs. As a side note, Lieberson was also directly responsible for Columbia's vast and illustrious recorded legacies of Bernstein, Ormandy, Serkin, Francescatti, Stern, Gould, and Boulez. Clearly, from the industry perspective, New Music was in exceptionally fine company, and the future seemed promising indeed.

In 2004, Richard Toop, a musicologist and former student of Stockhausen, looked back on those halcyon times and outlined the growing recording catalogue devoted to the mid-century wave of modernism. He capped off his *Cambridge History* survey of that scene with the following words: "Definitive official sanction was provided in 1969 by Deutsche Grammophon's decision to issue a six-disc set entitled *Avant-Garde*, which had three successors in

⁸¹ The American journal *Perspectives of New Music* saw it as part of their mission to debunk what they considered to be the pseudo-science being propagated by the rival German New Music journal *Die Reihe*. See John Backus' article "Die Reihe – A Scientific Evaluation," *Perspectives of New Music* 1 (Autumn, 1962).

subsequent years; by this stage, those with ears to hear had plenty to listen to.”⁸² Toop also drew attention to the fact that Cage was being released by the specialist firm Folkways, the premiere of his “notorious” *Concert for Piano and Orchestra* was available on LP, and RCA Records was issuing Berio, Boulez, Brown, Penderecki, Pousseur, and Stockhausen, among others. An experimental composer, David Behrman, was chief producer for Odyssey, Columbia’s budget line. As Toop implied, these were unusually good omens for High Modernism.

But something else was about to occur at the major record labels as well. Record companies had also taken note of a musician who was of a completely opposite aesthetic persuasion. He was as fanatical about furthering his own musical agenda as Stockhausen, Wuorinen and Boulez were about implementing theirs. However, this person was involved in a type of musical archaeology that was completely contrary to the arcane ivory-tower aesthetics of High Modernism. He would dress up in nineteenth-century capes for his concerts. His choice of composers included hitherto almost completely unknown and forgotten figures like Alkan, Rubinstein and Henselt.

His name was Raymond Lewenthal, and it was not long before historians began to contemplate the larger implications to be drawn from the kind of musical research that Lewenthal and many others like him were undertaking. In 1974, Martin Cooper cast his scholarly gaze around the then-current musical scene and saw a “picture of a sharply divided musical world” which consisted of “a small group of *avant-garde* pioneers almost out of sight of the main body of performers and listeners, who concern themselves with musical archaeology and indiscriminate truffle-hunting.”⁸³ Also in the early 1970s, the historian Rey Longyear was compelled to take note of the rapid growth of the movement, especially as it

⁸² Richard Toop, “Expanding horizons: the international avant-garde, 1962-75,” in *Cambridge History of Twentieth-Century Music*, ed, Cooke and Pople (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 466.

⁸³ Martin Cooper, ed., *The Modern Age 1890-1960*, xviii.

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applied to the revival of romantic music. The first edition of his *Nineteenth-Century Romanticism in Music* had appeared in 1969, and for the preface of the second edition in 1973, Longyear now wrote of the aesthetic shift that was taking place in the music world:

In the few years that have elapsed since the writing of the first edition there has been a great upsurge of interest in the music of the nineteenth century, especially in that of its neglected composers. Festivals of Romantic music have given listeners an opportunity to hear works in live performance that are mentioned in histories of music but had been unperformed for several decades. Unfamiliar operas of the period have been revived, and record companies have shown a new interest in the lesser-known works of a musically prolific and vital century. Much formerly unavailable music has been reprinted or has appeared in new editions prepared by enterprising publishers. Younger scholars are increasingly investigating the buried treasures of musical Romanticism. The nineteenth century is no longer an era to be rejected and distained, but is now a frontier for investigation by enterprising scholars and performers.⁸⁴

Lewenthal, then, most certainly qualified as one of Martin Cooper's truffle-hunters and musical archaeologists. In giving the Romantic Revival of the 1960s and 70s so much glamour, Lewenthal did much to inspire and pave the way for future explorers, who, by the end of the century, had expanded into a veritable army. But Lewenthal was, at the outset, perhaps an unlikely prospect for a concert pianist. He had worked as a child actor in Hollywood, and did not begin to properly concentrate on the piano until the age of 15. However, he progressed rapidly and was soon studying at Juilliard with the legendary golden age romantic virtuoso and pedagogue Olga Samaroff. He gave his orchestral debut in 1948 at the age of 20 and immediately set about

⁸⁴ Rey M. Longyear, *Nineteenth-Century Romanticism in Music*, 2nd ed. (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1973), ix-x.

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performing and recording the standard repertoire. Among his recordings were Beethoven sonatas and Rachmaninoff and Gershwin Concertos for Westminster, a new and very prolific record label that had just sprung up during the initial LP explosion of the 1950s.

But unlike most of his fellow music students, Lewenthal went on to play much more than the usual standard fare. Certainly, he busied himself with learning the central works from Beethoven and Chopin to Rachmaninoff and Prokofiev. But he also had a burning passion, a passion which had an opportunity to flourish during the long convalescence that followed a tragic Central Park mugging incident in 1953 when both of his hands were broken, and his brilliant, rapidly-growing concert career was temporarily reduced to tatters. It was during this time that Lewenthal took the opportunity to travel and work abroad. He taught piano students, rebuilt his piano technique and devoured rare nineteenth-century romantic music with the ardour of someone newly in love. He scoured the libraries and second-hand shops of the world for rare scores like the elusive Reubke Piano Sonata and the complete operatic transcriptions of Thalberg.

With all this preparation behind him, Lewenthal finally re-entered the music world in the early 1960s in spectacular fashion. In 1962, he gave a two-hour lecture recital devoted to the completely forgotten Alkan.⁸⁵ The broadcast attracted a great deal of attention and had to be repeated due to popular demand. It was soon followed up with a successful recital at New York's Town Hall in 1964, again devoted to Alkan, and Lewenthal's career was back on track.⁸⁶

Like Henselt and Godowsky, two legendary golden-age pianistic heros, Lewenthal literally practiced day and night,

⁸⁵ The entire two-hour Alkan broadcast is now posted at youtube.com.

⁸⁶ Harold C. Schonberg welcomed this concert with the following review, "Lewenthal is offering Alkan at Town Hall; Pianist back after 13 years absence." *New York Times* (September 23, 1964): 54. Such was the success of the concert that Lewenthal immediately followed it with another Alkan program at Carnegie Hall in 1965.

mastering many scores of appalling difficulty. Subsequent all-Alkan recordings for RCA and CBS became best sellers. Especially notable were his revivals of once-standard concertos by Scharwenka, Rubinstein and Henselt. Besides resurrecting Alkan's *Symphonie* for solo piano and *Grande Sonate*, Lewenthal also defended the much maligned Liszt, who was the spiritual center of the late-twentieth-century Romantic Revival. Thus, listeners could once again hear Liszt's Hexameron and a re-creation of the famous Liszt-Thalberg duel of 1837. Lewenthal's inclusion of Liszt in his revivals was a clear indication of how, as Alan Walker wrote,

Liszt's fate has always been inseparable from that of the romantic era in general. During the first half of the twentieth century, much of the romantic repertory fell into deliquescence, and Liszt's reputation suffered more than most...Only when the Romantic revival got underway, in the 1950s, could Liszt be viewed in a new and altogether more favourable light.⁸⁷

Lewenthal's extraordinary zeal became a model for many musicians of the next generation. One of the by-now countless participants in the Romantic Revival is Samuel Magill, formerly a cellist in the Metropolitan Opera Orchestra in New York. Now busy performing and making recordings, Magill recalled in a 2011 *Fanfare* magazine interview how he got started on the rare romantics. His musical journey demonstrated how one interesting musical discovery would invariably lead to another, and he is a good example of the immense attraction that romantic rediscoveries have exerted on performing musicians who are constantly on the look-out for something new and stimulating to play:

My passion for neglected romantic music was inspired by the series of recordings and festivals organized by the pianist

⁸⁷ Alan Walker, "Franz Liszt," in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, 2nd ed. (London: Macmillan, 2001), 14:785.

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Raymond Lewenthal in the late 1960s. I bought his recording of the Rubinstein D-Minor Piano Concerto while still in high school and I began a lifelong pursuit of detective work to unearth many such scores. The way I discovered the Alfano Sonata and Concerto is that, while playing Turandot so often at the Met, I had always admired his masterful ending of the opera. I wondered if this composer wrote any cello or chamber music. Then I found the Sonata in the Library of Congress and immediately fell in love with it. After reading through it for the first time, I realized the Sonata's profundity and otherworldly vision. It was like no other sonata I had ever heard, though it has many influences, from Ravel and Puccini to more modern composers, as well. Then, what to pair it with for a CD? I found the Piano Quintet to be cut from the same cloth, so when I bought the music for the Concerto, I found that its neo-Classicism seemed a delightful contrast. Perhaps later we can pair the Quintet with the Violin Sonata. And his three string quartets need to be recorded, too.⁸⁸

Along with Lewenthal, another important driving force behind the 1960s Romantic Revival was the young pianist and musicologist Frank Cooper, whom we have already referred to several times. Cooper began his university career as a young professor of piano at Butler University, where he founded the Festival of Neglected Romantic Music in 1968. This was the first public concert series to systematically present rare scores from the romantic era, and many performers associated with the new Romantic Revival appeared at Cooper's festival. Lewenthal, of course, was a regular guest, as were other specialists in the literature such as Gunnar Johansen, Jorge Bolet, and violinist Aaron Rosand. Cooper led the Festival until 1977 and is now a Professor of Musicology at the Frost School of Music, University of Miami, where he more recently founded the Miami Piano

⁸⁸ William Zagorski, "Unearthing Buried Musical Treasures," *Fanfare* (January/February, 2010): http://www.fanfarearchive.com/articles/atop/33_3/3330070.aa_Unearthing_Buried_Musical_Treasures.html (accessed June 19/2012).

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Festival in 1998. During his career he has also served four terms as president of the American Liszt Society.

During the 1960s, the same era that standard twentieth-century music history textbooks usually reserved for serial and aleatory music, Lewenthal and Cooper burst on the music scene with the counter-claim that the time was ripe for a resurgence of romanticism, and the two musicians thenceforth became key figures in the Romantic Revival of the 1960s and 70s. Wrote Lewenthal:

A Romantic revival? Take a look around. Jules Vern's romantic imaginings have come true. We *are* on the moon. Look at the young. Where are the antiseptic 'modern' crew cuts of a few years ago? Long hair, fantastic getups, 19th-century beards and moustaches and sideburns are the order of the day...'Mod' now means, in many ways, 'Rom'; involvement, causes, protests, idealism, escape from reality (not necessarily aided by drugs!) and, at the same time, increased social consciousness – these are all 'Rom'.⁸⁹

Lewenthal became involved in various important recording projects. Schirmer commissioned him to edit a volume of Alkan and a collection of works for the left hand. As preposterous as this may have sounded to those who were banking on the eventual public triumph of twentieth-century radical modernism, Lewenthal's Romantic Revival took off, with no small help from the same recording companies that were also concurrently assisting the Baroque revival.

We have already mentioned that the young British label Lyrita, which handled the music of the twentieth century English Renaissance, was also founded during this time. Lyrita's favoured repertoire was soon to be taken up and explored on a much more extensive scale by major independent labels including Hyperion

⁸⁹ Raymond Lewenthal, liner notes to Anton Rubinstein, Piano Concerto No. 4 in D minor, etc. Columbia MS 7394 [1970].

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and Chandos, and many smaller labels such as Dutton. There was also the prolific budget label Vox. Founded back in the 1940s, they jumped on the Romantic Revival bandwagon in the late 1960s and began releasing a broad swath of romantic concertos and solo works performed by artists like violinist Aron Rosand and pianist Michael Ponti.

The productive Ponti first sprang into prominence in the 1960s with a busy concert career in Germany and elsewhere. Along side Lewenthal's highly polished and carefully executed projects (using major orchestras) for RCA and Columbia, Ponti began recording mostly-rare romantic music for Vox at a furious rate that matched the headlong tempos he loved to employ as he fearlessly dispatched obscure concerto after obscure concerto. If Lewenthal cultivated the very image of a keyboard hero right out the nineteenth-century itself, Ponti presented a contrasting business-like image, although he certainly shared Lewenthal's passion for the romantic repertoire as well as Lewenthal's outsized capacity for sheer hard work at the keyboard. In 1972, the daily newspapers announced the 34-year-old Ponti's arrival in the United States. He was

balding and not especially romantic-looking, but playing the music of the Romantic Revival, the 19th and early 20th century music written by composers who are forgotten or nearly forgotten, many of whom were also virtuoso pianists. Some critics say that Ponti plays this music with the bravura and style of a Horowitz.⁹⁰

Ponti was just then embarking on his first concert tour of America, having already established himself in Europe after winning the 1964 Busoni Competition. When he arrived in New York, he had already made a good number of recordings for Vox. This was when Vox, as *Time* magazine reported, "wanted to record

⁹⁰ Mary Campbell, "Pianist finally comes out of 'hiding,'" *Eugene Register-Guard* (May 8, 1972), 11.

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what seemed like the whole of the romantic piano literature and asked Ponti to be the performer.”⁹¹ *Time* also noted that Ponti could already play 50 concertos “at the drop of a hat.”⁹² And his sold-out Carnegie Hall Debut in March, 1972 provided a good indication of his formidable capabilities. He performed a long and appallingly difficult program (including the Brahms *Paganini Variations* and Stravinsky’s *Three Scenes from Petrouchka*), capping off the evening with no less than nine encores that the audience had selected from a mimeographed list of 48 virtuoso showpieces that the pianist had distributed before the concert. In attention-getting style, the recital lasted almost three and a half hours. Clearly Ponti already had a vast repertoire at his disposal – a direct result of his willingness to learn at short notice. “If people asked me to play this or that, I would say, yes, I knew it, and learn it in a hell of a hurry.”⁹³

It was Vox Records who helped establish Ponti as an international force to be reckoned with. Consisting of extensive and systematic repertoire surveys at budget price, the Vox recordings were purchased in large quantities by libraries and curious music lovers everywhere.⁹⁴ Ponti himself commented further that “Vox asked if I knew the complete piano works of Rachmaninoff, Tchaikovsky, and Scriabin, and some others they wanted me to do. I said, ‘Oh, yes.’ Actually I learned about 98 per cent of them from scratch.”⁹⁵ And so it came to pass that Ponti become known to collectors far and wide, helping spread the gospel of the Romantic Revival to turntables in living rooms across North America and Europe.

One by one, complete cycles by the above-mentioned composers, and much else – including a long series of rare romantic piano concertos (always a favorite genre of record

⁹¹ (no author given) “Bravura in the Coop,” *Time* (June 12, 1972),

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Campbell, 11.

⁹⁴ The Saskatoon Public Library in Western Canada where I grew up owned many of Ponti’s recordings.

⁹⁵ Campbell, 11.

collectors) by Raff, Rubinstein, Reinecke, Medtner, Balakirev, Lyapunov, Henselt, D'Albert, Goetz, and Litolff – came tumbling out of obscurity and onto the record players of hungry, novelty-seeking connoisseurs in far-flung locations. Calling Ponti “ten pianists in one,” the distinguished musicologist and pianist Harris Goldsmith remarked in a 1972 issue of *High Fidelity* magazine: “For the past year or so, it would almost seem that one out of two new piano recordings featured a young American named Michael Ponti.”⁹⁶ In his recordings, Ponti raced through the music at top speed, and the exhumed concertos were accompanied by regional and often ill-rehearsed orchestras like Radio Luxembourg and the Hamburg Symphony. As was to be expected under such circumstances, the results were variable but the piano playing was often tremendously exciting. Collectors took note and the ground was set for a later and more extensive recorded survey of the romantic piano concerto literature, begun around 1990 by Hyperion records (see later in this chapter), who shared the Vox philosophy of recording extensive and complete catalogues of repertoire, much of it rarely encountered in the concert hall.

Earlier in this chapter, we cited various commentators who wrote of how a very traditional-sounding body of twentieth-century music was beginning to provide a fertile ground of exploration by classical musical connoisseurs after the 1950s. The reasons for this development were not difficult to fathom. Many passionate and dedicated music lovers were simply growing tired of yet another Beethoven or Tchaikovsky symphony cycle and wanted something new to listen to. At the same time, they largely rejected the harshest climes of New Music. A few critics, however, even when they were skeptical of the exaggerated claims of historical importance advanced by proponents of radical compositional streams, occasionally looked on the new Romantic Revival with some bemusement. Such a view was apparent in Richard Freedman’s article about Ponti in a 1972 issue of *Life*

⁹⁶ Harris Goldsmith, “Ten Pianists in One,” *High Fidelity* (March 1972): 69.

magazine:

So bored have concert audiences become with the electronic bleeps, burps and squiggles which pass for “serious” music these days, to say nothing of the chestnuts of the standard repertory, that a great romantic Revival is now afoot. Not the Standard Brands romantics like Chopin, Schumann and Liszt, mind you, but their ill-fated forgotten contemporaries. Adolf von Henselt, Xaver Scharwenka, Joachim Raff. Bach, Beethoven and Brahms are losing ground to Medtner, Moscheles and Moszkowski, all keyboard giants in their time whose brilliant but empty concertos and etudes more or less went down with the *Titanic*.⁹⁷

More receptive to the revival of minor romantic composers was the Pulitzer Prize-winning critic Harold C. Schonberg. In his position as chief music critic of the New York Times, Schonberg became the main critical advocate of the Romantic Revival in its first two decades. In 1977 he described how,

In the last few decades, avant-garde music alone of the arts failed to achieve any kind of following, and the current, enthusiastic exploration of minor romantics is in many respects a reaction to the sterilities imposed on the public by strict serial music and its offshoots.⁹⁸

In 1967, the Los Angeles critic and historian Peter Yates (whose musical tastes were very different from those of Harold Schonberg in New York) had also noticed that new modernist music was being passed up in favour of revivals of older music. In frustration, Yates dismissed concert-going and record-buying devotees as dilettantes who thwarted the progress of music. “The dilettantes,” said Yates, “are usually aware of the best but prefer

⁹⁷ Richard Freedman, “A romantic with steel fingers: The pianism of Michael Ponti,” *Life* (April 21, 1972): 29.

⁹⁸ Harold C. Schonberg, “Neo-Romantic Music Warms a Public Chilled by the Avant-Garde,” *New York Times* (March 20, 1977): Arts and Leisure Section, 69.

the more easily fashionable...and for the same reason rush in a body to admire new, fashionable recoveries from the past.”⁹⁹ The “fashionable recoveries” that Yates referred to were obviously a thinly-veiled reference to either the Early Music Revival, the Romantic Revival, or both. Certainly, the Romantic Revival was already receiving much press in the United States, not least from Harold Schonberg of the *New York Times*. And Schonberg, together with Lewenthal and Cooper, was engaged in a vigorous campaign on behalf of the Romantic Revival at exactly the same time that Yates was penning his words in the late 1960s. In addition, many record reviews of newly revived works were also appearing almost monthly in leading classical magazines like *High Fidelity* and *Gramophone*, which Yates was all too aware of. He also saw the potentially negative historical implications for New Music, and believed that those “dilettantes” who loved to recover old music were also “the most vindictive against new composers.”¹⁰⁰

However, Yates crucially neglected to mention that the music lovers whom he was labeling “dilettantes” were often very well educated professionals from disciplines other than music. Such listeners had a deep knowledge of the standard repertoire, something I myself have long known from personal experience. When I worked as a record store clerk in the late 1980s and early 1990s, my customers included a doctor who was ordering Malcolm Arnold symphonies (this was the time when they were almost thirty dollars a disc in Canada). Another doctor asked me if I had ever heard of George Lloyd, and highly recommended that composer to me. Another regular customer was a reference librarian at the University's main branch. He was especially interested in twentieth-century traditionalist symphonic music, and once asked me what he should get for his thousandth CD. I suggested Bax and Tubin symphonies, but he already had them all

⁹⁹ Peter Yates, *Twentieth Century Music: Its Evolution from the End of the Harmonic Era into the Present Era of Sound* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1967), 59.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

(I should have known). There was also a political science professor who came into the store every week, and who had perhaps the largest CD collection of all. His twentieth-century tastes were not dissimilar to those of the other customers. And so on.

Independent record companies and the Romantic Revival

Of crucial economic importance for the Romantic Revival, many of Yates' dilettantes evidently had deep pockets and the financial means to provide the not-inconsiderable funds that eventually allowed a whole range of new independent record labels like BIS, Hyperion, Chandos, cpo, Albany and Marco Polo/Naxos to suddenly rise up and flourish just as CD technology was emerging on the international scene. The record labels I have just listed are selected simply because they are six of the largest companies of their kind, according to data taken from Arkivmusic.com's comprehensive classical catalogue.¹⁰¹ Within a few years of their founding, each company had already amassed a vast catalogue, and all were filled to the brim with what Yates had derisively termed "fashionable recoveries from the past." Such recoveries found ready buyers everywhere that classical music was sold. Klaus Heymann's hyper-prolific Marco Polo/Naxos conglomerate led the way with an astoundingly busy recording schedule. In the process he built an impressively deep catalogue of well over 6000 CDs within a quarter of a century.

The most dedicated collectors of classical recordings have grown to love Naxos/Marco Polo, Albany, BIS, cpo, Chandos and

¹⁰¹ The Arkivmusic.com data is as follows: Naxos/Marco Polo (6256 releases available), Chandos (1896), BIS (1813), Albany (1235), cpo (1084), and Hyperion (1069). Berlin Classics (1179) is not included in my survey because they focus mainly on the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Also among the large independents are Centaur Records (1068) which releases much rare romantic material, and Harmonia Mundi (1068), which has many interesting rarities from all periods, from early music to twentieth-century avant-garde music. The totals are as of mid-2012.

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Hyperion because their catalogues are carefully planned by entrepreneurs who are also like-minded music lovers. They are “dilettantes” in the best sense of the word and deeply value their customer base in a personal way that only kindred spirits can. The following two posts from the Chandos website illustrate this beautifully, and give valuable insight into how the major independent record label owners and their customers think. First is a note from Ralph Couzens, managing director of Chandos Records:

For all those that have and will post new recording ideas on this forum we at Chandos/TheClassicalShop say many thanks. I know you all appreciate a response from us and a positive one at that and please believe me there is nothing we would like to do more, but there are only so many hours in a day and we cannot possibly answer every posting. Therefore please accept that every new idea coming from you is read, noted and hopefully sometime in the future acted upon. When there is some specific news regarding one of these postings we will make sure a suitable response / announcement is made on this forum...Its wonderful that there is still so much great music to be discovered and recorded and rest assured we will do what we can within this declining CD market to bring as many new pieces of music to the public as possible. We thank you for your support.¹⁰²

Upon posting the above note of appreciation, Couzens immediately received the following response from a customer:

Mr. Couzens, Thank You so much for acknowledging everyone! The assurance that we are heard, and that it matters, means very much. I can't imagine how intricate it is to balance subjective wishes with economic pragmatism in such a precarious time. Thank you for carrying on in that circumstance. You're one of us, too: a deeply-felt music lover with sincere passion. It is so

¹⁰² “New Repertoire Ideas,” discussion topic in the Chandos Forum. <http://www.classical-mp3.co.uk/index.php?topic=28.0> (accessed February 18, 2012).

elevating to also glimpse the sheer musical scholarship which pervades this forum.¹⁰³

The above exchange drawn from the Chandos Website forum (a list of the composers discussed in the forum is given in the footnote) gives a good indication of the type of musical aesthetic that shapes the philosophy of several major independent record companies. They engage in musical activities that both reflect and add to the growing public knowledge of the kind of twentieth-century composers who emphasized a healthy continuity with their past rather than a radical break from it. To musicians who are not very familiar with the specialist classical recording scene, these developments may come as something of a surprise, for they have been relatively swift. And to repeat, it cannot be emphasized strongly enough that the independent labels we are discussing in this chapter are owned and operated by classical music connoisseurs of vast musical knowledge. They have an unerring instinct for sensing how sophisticated music lovers think, and plan their release schedules accordingly.

Besides covering a great deal of the standard repertoire, many of the leading classical music entrepreneurs in the recording

¹⁰³ Ibid. In the section of the Chandos Forum devoted to discussing artists and repertoire, one can find discussion threads (all started by customers) devoted to many rare romantic composers. In compiling the following list, I have simply gone through all the titles of the forum discussion threads from beginning to end. From this, we discover that customers have been asking Chandos about composers such as the following: Rufinatscha, Potter, Napravnik, William Gaze Cooper, Rachmaninoff, Holbrooke, Cowen, Mackenzie, Raff, Bowen, Richard Rodney Bennett, Ina Boyle, Rozsa, Halvorsen, Holst, Williamson, Chaminade, Arthur Benjamin, Stanford, Grainger, Cyril Scott, Melartin, Casadesus, D'Indy, Brull, Sullivan, Coleridge-Taylor, Mahler, Oberthur, Drysdale, Mackenzie, McEwen, Brian, Leighton, Goossens, Schreker, Wallace, Balfe, Korngold, Berners, Herrmann, Smyth, Horatio Parker, Britten, Bliss, Bantock, Melachrino, Dale, Milford. There are also discussion threads in the same forum that are devoted to romantic concertos, as well as 19th and 20th century symphonies. Nearly all of above composers and topics fit at least partially into the category of twentieth-century romantic traditionalism. See <http://www.classical-mp3.co.uk/index.php?board=5.20> (accessed February 18, 2012).

business are very conscious of their role as ground-breakers in the industry and tend to focus on composers of various periods who are considered by informed music lovers to be unfairly neglected. Indeed, calls for the need to redress such historical injustice are repeated constantly and will certainly be familiar to all readers of the major review magazines. For many listeners and critics interested in traditionalist twentieth-century romantic composers, recordings of this academically underrated segment of the repertoire have been revelatory. Composers representing musical idioms that had been long been counted unimportant because they did not break new ground in an evolutionary and progressive sense have been recovered in large quantities. In 1998, on the occasion of an important new biography of Korngold, the record critic, publisher and musicologist Martin Anderson took the opportunity to look back on the previous two decades of musical revivals. He remarked how

the 1980s and '90s are proving to be the decades of The Great Rehabilitation. Again and again over the past decade or so, a composer previously considered marginal, a quasi-private enthusiasm, has been restored to a position of genuine public esteem. One of them is Erich Wolfgang Korngold, a man at whom it was once *de rigueur* to look down your critical nose.¹⁰⁴

Anderson himself was also taking an active part in the revival movement by publishing many useful monographs under his Toccata Press imprint, which he founded in 1981. According to his website, Toccata Press was “expressly dedicated to tackling important subjects that other publishers have failed to address.”¹⁰⁵ Not surprisingly, many of Anderson’s neglected composers were twentieth-century traditionalist/romantic composers who had been overlooked by historians because of the relentless academic focus

¹⁰⁴ Martin Anderson, review of “The Last Prodigy: A Biography of Erich Wolfgang Korngold by Brendan Carroll,” *Tempo* 205 (July 1998): 30.

¹⁰⁵ Martin Anderson, “About us,” *Toccata Press*, <http://www.toccatapress.com/cms/about-toccatapress.html> (accessed April 11, 2012).

on atonality, serialism, and other high modernist streams. Thus, scholars and connoisseurs have now been able to enjoy important ground-breaking monographs devoted to Franz Schmidt, Georges Enescu, Hans Pfitzner, Ronald Stevenson, Adolf Busch, Dimitri Shostakovich, Bohuslav Martinů, Ralph Vaughan Williams, Arthur Butterworth, Havergal Brian, Heitor Villa Lobos, E. J. Moeran, Vagn Holmboe, Karol Szymanowski, Carl Flesch, Adrian Boult, and Ludvig Irgens-Jensen. Anderson also later founded the record label Toccata Classics for purposes similar to his Toccata Press venture, thus joining the ranks of revival-oriented record labels.

When Hyperion's Ted Perry passed away in 2003, Anderson's obituary summed up the influence of record label founders like Perry, who had started Hyperion in 1980:

His enthusiasms refashioned music history, particularly in British music. His espousal of the works of Robert Simpson established its composer, hitherto a little-known outsider, as the most powerful British symphonist since Vaughan Williams. He went over the head of received critical opinion to find an audience for Sir Granville Bantock's music.¹⁰⁶

Hyperion's large catalogue (about 1500 CDs) fairly burgeons with traditionalist repertoire along the traditionalist lines of the composers mentioned in the above obituary. We have already mentioned the company's ongoing project to record rare romantic piano, violin, and cello concertos, many of which were written by composers who were still active long after 1910, the time of the atonal revolution. Almost entirely absent from Hyperion's catalogue, however, are composers representative of High Modernist streams, unless, like Bartók they already have one foot firmly planted in the traditionalist camp. We mentioned earlier in this chapter that Ralph Couzens of Chandos Records did not care for Schoenberg and "mathematical music" but preferred to

¹⁰⁶ Martin Anderson, "Ted Perry, 1931-2003," in *International Record Review*, Vol. 3, No. 12 (April 2003): 19.

concentrate on what he called the more “romantic side” of twentieth-century music, including composers of the British twentieth-century musical renaissance and other stylistically parallel composers from around the world. Ted Perry’s Hyperion Records, then, is very similar to Chandos in this regard.

When Hyperion began their now-famous *Romantic Piano Concerto* series, they expressly sought to continue in the spirit of the Ponti’s Vox recordings, but with better orchestras and less hasty production values.¹⁰⁷ By the time Hyperion reached Volume 50 in 2010, they had already recorded well over one hundred (mostly) rare romantic piano concertos and concerted works, which far surpassed the output of Ponti’s Vox project. Besides covering the rich early and mid-nineteenth-century repertoire (Herz, Moscheles, Weber, Rubinstein, Goetz, etc.), the *Romantic Piano Concerto* series has also encompassed many works by composers of the Rachmaninoff-Schoenberg-Stravinsky generation. The fact that these late romantic composers are contemporaneous with early twentieth-century radicals is very important to highlight once again as we continue our task of establishing a place for romanticism in the apparently alien modernist musical climate that many thinkers claimed had so exclusively defined the early twentieth century. Michael Spring, the planner of the Hyperion series, explains: “Obviously, I’m working very broadly through the whole range of material, starting from about 1820-ish up until, well, any time, as long as stylistically it fits. The latest we’ve done is the Dohnányi Second, which is 1947, I think.”¹⁰⁸ The Hyperion project is far from over, and due to its financial success, is projected to continue for years to come. “The reason we got to Volume 50 is fundamentally because it sells,” says Spring.¹⁰⁹ As one would expect, there are plenty of enthusiastic buyers who are ready with suggestions for many other romantic concertos. A good place to

¹⁰⁷ Colin Clarke, “The Romantic Piano Concerto and Mike Spring of Hyperion,” *Fanfare* (May/June 2010): 28.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 32.

observe this is in the *Unsung Composers* forum, which is specifically devoted to rare romantic music. Many of the correspondents in that forum follow the development of the Hyperion series very closely, and some are in personal contact with Michael Spring himself.¹¹⁰

Hyperion has evidently convinced a significant number of present-day connoisseurs that the romantic concerto tradition was still in much better shape during the early modern era than academic conceits like “the death of romanticism” would seem to indicate. In Table 4 we see the extent to which Hyperion has resuscitated a vast number of *ungleichzeitig* (untimely) composers and concertos. In accordance with Paul Henry Lang’s maxim (which introduces chapter four) that “nothing disturbs the picture more than taking a composer’s dates as criterion,” the reader is urged here to make special note of the birth and death dates for the following 43 composers who are represented in Hyperion’s extensive project:

Table 4: The Romantic Concerto in the Rachmaninoff-Schoenberg generation, as resurrected by Hyperion:

Anton Arensky (1861-1906)	Alexander Glazunov (1865-1936)
Eugene d’Albert (1864-1932)	Alexander Goedicke (1877-1957)
Felix Blumenfeld (1863-1931)	Reynaldo Hahn (1874-1947)
Sergei Bortkiewicz (1877-1952)	Joseph Holbrooke (1878-1958)
York Bowen (1884-1961)	Jenö Hubay (1858-1937)
Feruccio Busoni (1866-1924)	Henry Holden Huss(1862-1953)
Frederic Cliffe (1857-1931)	John Ireland (1879-1962)
Sir Frederic Hymen Cowen (1852-1955)	Mieczysław Karłowicz (1876-1909)
Ernö Dohnányi (1877-1960)	Erich Wolfgang Korngold (1897-1957)
Frédéric d’Erlanger (1868-1943)	Sergei Lyapunov (1859-1924)
Georges Enescu (1881-1955)	Sir Alexander Campbell Mackenzie (1847-1935)
Robert Fuchs (1847-1927)	Joseph Marx (1882-1964)

¹¹⁰ *Unsung Composers* can be found at unsungcomposers.com.

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Nikolai Medtner (1880-1951)	Arthur Somervell (1863-1957)
Moritz Moszkowski (1854-1925)	Charles Stanford (1852-1924)
José Vianna da Motta (1868-1948)	Wilhelm Stenhammar (1871-1927)
Henryk Melcer (1869-1928)	Zygmunt Stojowski (1870-1946)
Ignacy Jan Paderewski (1860-1941)	Richard Strauss (1864-1949)
Gabriel Pierné (1863-1937)	Sergei Taneyev (1856-1915)
Max Reger (1873-1916)	Sir Donald Francis Tovey (1875-1940)
Emil von Sauer (1862-1942)	Charles-Marie Widor (1844-1937)
Franz Xaver Scharwenka (1860-1924)	Haydn Wood (1882-1959)
Ernest Henry Schelling (1876-1939)	

An interesting pattern can be discerned by those who have been following Hyperion's explorations of the piano concerto, that most archetypical of golden age romantic genres: Hyperion often follows successful recordings of romantic concertos with other works by the same composers. Collectors can expect that solo piano cycles, chamber music, and orchestral repertoire will appear in the months and years that follow.¹¹¹ Thus, we have more Dohnányi, Bortkiewicz's symphonies and a cycle of his piano works, Stojowski piano works, a Medtner sonata cycle by Hamelin, Lamond's symphony and other orchestral works, D'Albert's piano sonata and solo works. Hyperion has also begun sister cycles devoted to rare romantic cello and violin concertos. Already, music lovers have been able to explore concertos and other concerted works from the late Romantic/early modern generation by Dohnányi, d'Albert, Somerville, Stanford and Enesco. Again, these are composers whose careers stretched far into the twentieth century. Moreover, they were often outspoken opponents of radical modernism, and commentators are observing that their presence in the recording catalogue has implications for how we evaluate the music written in the early decades of the twentieth century. Astrid Konter spelled this out clearly in a conversation with Jonathan Plowright, who is a regular Hyperion artist and has revived romantic concertos and solo works by

¹¹¹ Many more details for all Hyperion releases, including the full authoritative booklet notes, can be found at hyperion-records.co.uk.

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Stojowski (1870-1946) and Melzer (1869-1928), and has also recorded the complete Bach transcriptions of Walter Rummel (1887-1953):

Many of the works introduced by Plowright were written between the turn of the century and the 1930s, a period that is commonly understood as having created a break which led to the development of New Music. The fact that this era also gave birth to an immense variety of different musical styles is something that we are only gradually beginning to grasp. Plowright, then, is making a contribution toward helping us arrive at a more accurate picture of music historiography.¹¹²

When Ted Perry first founded Hyperion in the early 1980s, he supported his fledgling record label by working as a cab driver. This was not entirely atypical, as several other important entrepreneurs also had non-musical backgrounds. Dilettantes in the best sense, they went into the recording business simply because they were passionate about exploring rare repertoire that less exploratory major labels tended to ignore. Their new specialist labels rapidly filled a niche and found many like-minded customers. Chief among such dilettantes must be Naxos/Marco Polo founder Klaus Heymann, a German businessman who cannot read notes but has an insatiable appetite for early twentieth-century romantic rarities by composers along the stylistic and philosophical lines of Respighi, Furtwängler, Medtner and Pfitzner. And Heymann's entire commercial enterprise, more than any others,

¹¹² Astrid Konter, interview with Jonathan Plowright, "Leidenschaftlicher Anwalt romantischer Musik," *Klassik Heute* (n.d.) http://www.klassik-heute.com/kh/z_exklusiv/plowright.shtml (accessed, April 11, 2012). (Viele der von Plowright vorgestellten Werke entstanden in der Zeit um die Jahrhundertwende bis in die 30er Jahre, eine musikgeschichtliche Periode, die als Umbruch hin zur Entwicklung der Neuen Musik verstanden wird. Dass diese Zeit aber eine immense Vielfalt von unterschiedlichsten Stilen hervorgebracht hat, gelangt nur zögernd ins Bewusstsein. Insofern trägt Plowright wie nebenbei zu einer Korrektur der Musikgeschichtsschreibung bei.)

completely turned the classical recording world upside-down after 1990. He dramatically undermined the market strength of the major labels, not least by forcing even the biggest competitors to compete at the budget level.

Heymann came by his passion for romantic music honestly. Of special interest to our discussion of the Romantic Revival, it turns out that, in his earlier years, Heymann had been regularly exposed to the work of romantic revivalists. His mother was a good friend of pianist Michael Ponti's mother, and Klaus often went to Ponti's concerts.¹¹³ As we already saw earlier in this chapter, Ponti was a romantic revivalist in the tradition of Raymond Lewenthal, and had become famous among dedicated record collectors for resurrecting and recording numerous rare romantic piano concertos and solo works. Ponti eventually recorded some eighty LPs for Vox Records, most of which have since been re-released on CD.

In 1982, Heymann founded Marco Polo "as a hobby."¹¹⁴ Given Heymann's background, it was not surprising that the initial focus of his "Label of Discovery" would be romantic music. A glance at Marco Polo's current 900-CD catalogue still confirms this. It is dedicated above all to romantic, late romantic and early twentieth-century composers. Of great significance is the fact that special emphasis is placed on several outspoken anti-modernists from the Schoenberg era: Respighi, Pfitzner, Furtwängler and Medtner (We will briefly discuss the aesthetic views of each of these figures in chapter five). Also central to Marco Polo's catalogue is a huge amount film music and light music, genres which continued to embrace nineteenth-century tonal and stylistic features deep into the twentieth century. As can be expected, both of these genres have also been vitally important in the on-going

¹¹³ See Klaus Heymann, "Too Many Records," *International Record Review* 4 (June, 2003): 96.

¹¹⁴ Klaus Heymann, interview with Felix Hilde, "Wir haben unsere Hausaufgaben gemacht," *klassik.com* (July 2007), <http://portraits.klassik.com/people/interview.cfm?KID=13501> (accessed April 11, 2012).

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To list some examples from the Marco Polo catalogue, there are extensive or complete cycles of Leopold Godowsky (10 CDs – still in progress), Fritz Kriesler (13 CDs), Johann Strauss, Jr. (53 CDs), Joseph Strauss, 27 CDs, Han Christian Lumbye (60 projected CDs), Émile Waldteufel and a large survey of twentieth-century British light music from composers like Eric Coates, Edward German and Richard Addinsell. Notable too are many cycles of conservative twentieth-century symphonies by composers such as Charles Tournemire, Henri Sauget, László Lajtha, and Alexander Moyzes. A statement from the introduction to Marco Polo's 2003 catalogue sums up their essential musical credo, and, of course, that of Klaus Heymann himself:

For many years Marco Polo was the only label dedicated to recording rare repertoire. Most of its releases were world première recordings of works by romantic, Late romantic and Early Twentieth Century composers, and of light classical music. One early field of exploration lay in the work of later romantic composers, whose turn has now come again, particularly those whose careers were affected by political events and composers who refused to follow contemporary fashions. Siegfried Wagner, Pfitzner, Schreker, Enescu, Respighi, Malipiero, Pizzetti, Castelnuovo-Tedesco.¹¹⁵

Heymann has recently commented in an interview that if there were a major recording project he would still like to do – and one that would be particularly close to his heart – it would be a complete edition of Hans Pfitzner.¹¹⁶ For the last several decades, Pfitzner was of primary interest to modernist-oriented music

¹¹⁵ Klaus Heymann, "Marco Polo - The Label of Discovery," introduction to the *Marco Polo Catalogue* (2003), 2.

¹¹⁶ Klaus Heymann, interviewed by *Gramophone* magazine, "Naxos founder Klaus Heymann on what lies ahead for classical recordings," *Gramophone* website feature (August 24, 2010), <http://www.gramophone.co.uk/features/focus/the-future-of-listening-will-be-an-all-you-eat-formula> (accessed April 11, 2012).

historians only for his implacable resistance to the atonal avant-garde after 1910.

Heymann went on to start a second classical music label in 1987. Naxos Records was the result, and it is now the largest classical record label in the world (with about 5500 items in its catalogue). Naxos focuses – if one can call it that – on establishing complete cycles of more or less all the standard composers, supplemented with an equally vast range of rare material as well. The company divides its production into many sub-labels. There are the complete lieder of Schubert and the complete piano music of Liszt (the latter still in progress). There are sub-labels devoted to *Spanish Classics*, *Japanese Classics*, *21st Century Classics*, and *American Classics*. There are also the vast *Organ* and *Guitar Encyclopedias*, both by definition full of the more conservative side of twentieth-century music: The standard organ literature has always remained rooted in a liturgical context, and the bulk of the standard guitar repertoire after 1900 was shaped mainly by the musical tastes of Andrés Segovia (1893-1987). Segovia was famous for his romanticized transcriptions of Bach and other pre-1800 composers. Equally important for the future of the guitar repertoire, he surrounded himself primarily with a large constellation of highly traditionalist contemporary composers like Castelnuovo-Tedesco, Villa-Lobos, Torroba, Turina, Ponce, and Tansman.

The *American Classics* series also offers a good example of Heymann's musical priorities. First, as he promised, the avant-garde would not be totally neglected, even though they are not really to his taste, which runs more to late romantic composers like Pfitzner and Respighi ("Personally, I am not all that enthusiastic about listening to modernist music," he stated in an interview).¹¹⁷ True to his word, there is some Carter (including the string quartets, the populist and now-forgotten early Symphony No. 1, and the much more stylistically forbidding Piano Concerto), two

¹¹⁷ Heymann interview, "Wir haben unsere Hausaufgaben gemacht." (Ich persönlich höre mir moderne Musik nicht besonders gerne an.)

discs of Cage's prepared piano output, discs of Babbitt and Wuorinen, and so on. However, the bulk of the releases (close to 200 CDs so far) are of a different nature. Antheil (including the populist-sounding later symphonies), Barber, Copland, Bernstein, Creston, Diamond, Hanson, Rochberg, Piston, Schuman and Rorem are all the subject of comprehensive ongoing surveys, as is the colourful Ives who wrote many scores that do not sound especially "modern" today – and, as Taruskin has observed, actually fits the modernist template rather poorly. Thus, many composers represented in the *American Classics* series have a substantial connection to twentieth-century romanticism and tonality. Nearly all of the music, except for occasional avant-gardists and certain Ives and Copland works, represents a highly conservative idiom and/or a reaction to the most extreme stylistic departures advocated by the twentieth-century avant garde.

American Classics also explores an earlier pre-Copland generation of composers as well – those who flourished at the time of Rachmaninoff, Schoenberg and Stravinsky. They include Carpenter, Chadwick, Converse, Foote, Grofe, Hadley, Herbert, Loeffler, MacDowell, Mason, McKay, Sousa, and Strong. In the words of the Macdowell biographer Alan Levy, they were subject to "the great erasure" by the more self-consciously (but not consistently so) modernist Copland generation.¹¹⁸ However, thanks to the initiative of Naxos, the first American generation of twentieth-century composers is now being reassessed and enjoyed by interested music lovers. It should be noted that Naxos' *American Classics* series is significant not only because of Heymann's unequaled international distribution and sales network. This particular series is also one of the most popular of the many imaginatively conceived repertoire surveys planned by the indefatigable Heymann.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁸ See the relevant chapter in Alan Levy, *Edward Macdowell, an American Master*, (Lanham, Maryland: Scarecrow Press, Inc., 1998), 239-251.

¹¹⁹ This, according to an informal survey conducted by the Naxos website. See naxos.com. As of early May, 2004, this part of their website is no longer

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Other owners of large independent classical record labels are not far removed from Heymann's personal musical tastes. One of these is Peter Kermani, who is president of the fine Albany Symphony (located in the city of Albany, New York). Kermani and some of his colleagues discovered that they enjoyed George Lloyd's (1913-1998) big romantic symphonies so much that they decided to start their own label, Albany Records, in 1987 specifically for the initial purpose of making Lloyd's music more readily available to the record-buying public. This fascinating story is related in more detail in their catalogue description of Lloyd's Symphony No. 11, a work composed as recently as 1986:

Here's the work that started it all. Back in 1977 Albany Symphony president Peter Kermani heard a BBC broadcast of Lloyd's Symphony No. 8 which absolutely enthralled him. When an opportunity struck in 1984, he dispatched Albany Symphony manager Susan Bush to London to commission a new symphony, which resulted in the wonderful Symphony No. 11 from George Lloyd. This present writer was at the premiere on October 31, 1986 and, like the rest of the audience, was absolutely captivated by the work; a piece that blended both thrills and repose, and pageantry and sentimentality-plus many memorable tunes (imagine, in this day and age, a third movement which was an elaborate and kaleidoscopic waltz!). We all believed that George Lloyd was England's greatest musical secret revealed. This work, along with several of his other symphonies, was initially released on Conifer, but Kermani and Bush were eager to make Lloyd the cornerstone of a new recording venture called Albany Records.¹²⁰

As of 2012, ten Lloyd CDs are still listed among Albany's top 80 sellers – a vindication of John Ogdon's valiant advocacy in Great Britain during the 1960s and 1970s. At that time, Ogdon had

available.

¹²⁰ Promotional blurb on the Albany website for the recording of Lloyd's Symphony No. 11. http://www.albanyrecords.com/Merchant2/merchant.mvc?Screen=PROD&Store_Code=AR&Product_Code=TROY060

introduced Lloyd's First Piano Concerto, which the BBC aired.¹²¹ Later, Ogdon also convinced Glock, the strongly modernist-oriented controller of BBC Radio 3, to broadcast more of Lloyd's music, and the BBC finally relented with the Eighth Symphony in 1977. That 1977 broadcast, then, was the crucial event that serendipitously introduced Kermani to Lloyd's music and, ultimately, to the founding of the biggest American independent classical record label. To this day, a total of 27 George Lloyd CDs (including twelve symphonies, four piano concertos, concertos for violin and cello, choral works and sundry piano and chamber works) occupy a central place in the Albany CD catalogue, both as an aesthetic statement and (as their list of best-sellers indicates) in terms of sales as well. The case of George Lloyd provides a good illustration of the fact that commerce and artistic idealism are not necessarily as mutually exclusive as High Modernist philosophy would always have us believe.

Despite its initial focus on the living British composer George Lloyd, Albany Records soon branched off into what was to become their main future task, which was to record twentieth-century American music. Not surprising, given the Albany team's fondness for Lloyd's music, they immediately began devoting themselves primarily to recording the works of the twentieth century American moderate romantic/neoclassical stream, including Harris, Schumann, Menin, Gillis, Diamond, and Morton Gould. Also prominently featured were many populist operas by composers such as Menotti, Robert Ward, Carlisle Floyd and Douglas Moore. Each of these composers has long enjoyed frequent performances across the United States over the last few decades, especially at the more regional and college levels. We will recall that Carol Oja had described such composers as representing a romantic stream of composition that "meandered" through the

¹²¹ In the late 1960s, Scottish BBC broadcast the premiere of Lloyd's First Piano Concerto in a performance by Ogdon. An archival recording of that historic event has recently been posted on youtube.

entire twentieth century while modern currents “passed them by.”¹²²

Albany’s policy of recording the conservative stream of contemporary music has found eager and willing connoisseur support. It is not at all surprising that, due to their timely initiative, they have now grown into one of the largest of all independent record labels, along with Chandos, Hyperion, BIS, cpo and Naxos. In a 1999 interview article with Kermani (undertaken as part of a much larger article surveying the broader American classical recording scene), critic Steve Smith summarized the position of Albany Records in the general world of classical music:

Kermani points to the examples of the British labels Chandos and Hyperion as being analogous to his goals for Albany, recording important but neglected music by lesser known composers to give a fuller, truer representation of a nation’s native music: “There’s just so much gorgeous American music that is not brought before the public,” he says, “and it’s a crying shame.” And with Albany, Kermani is in the serious business of acquainting record buyers with the music that’s been missing from their lives.¹²³

As Smith relates, Kermani and his colleagues clearly believe in the historical significance of the kind of music they are advocating. “We’re talking about the most important part of the American repertoire,” Kermani insists. “We never are going to be able to determine how we are going to exist in the future and the present if we don’t pay proper homage to the past. That, I think, is the mission of Albany Records.”¹²⁴ Kermani’s preferred repertoire is unapologetically mainstream rather than esoteric or maverick, to use a term that has recently gained

¹²² See note 44.

¹²³ Steve Smith, interview with Peter Kermani, “Off the Record! A Hyper-History of American Independent New Music Record Labels,” *NewMusicBox* (June 1, 1999), <http://www.newmusicbox.org/articles/Off-the-Record-A-HyperHistory-of-American-Independent-New-Music-Record-Labels/2/> (accessed April 11, 2012).

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*

popularity in the American concert world.¹²⁵ His company therefore makes available to the curious music lover a vast repository of repertoire that was historically disparaged and marginalized in many important textbook overviews of American music, including those by Gilbert Chase and Wilfrid Mellers.

Mellers, for his part, had long been extremely dismissive of the more traditionalist composers. He represented a scholarly viewpoint that could not have been more diametrically opposed to Kermani, an orchestral administrator and recording executive who built his business initiative around an unmentionable like George Lloyd (perhaps the ultimate late-twentieth-century regressive composer). *Music in a New Found Land*, a classic cold war era survey of American music, showed the extent to which Mellers wrote off the American moderate stream. This became especially clear when, after Mellers had spent 200 pages analyzing the most radical developments in American music, he momentarily paused and wrote: “So far we have traced the deepest lines in the evolution of American music from Ives to Cage.” For Mellers, the Ives-to-Cage line was the most interesting historically – or as he put it, the “deepest” and “most revelatory.” Then the invective began in earnest:

With the exception of Copland, the composers we have discussed in detail are not those most frequently played in the States. There is a tiny audience of initiates for the music of the avant-garde; there is a slightly larger ‘minority’ audience for tough modern music that is not afraid of the nervous tensions of our urban lives; but there is a much larger middle brow audience for a softer modern music that will offer us opportunities for nostalgia or self-dramatization. Though we are told that Tchaikovsky and Rachmaninoff are slipping a little in the popularity-poll, it would still probably be

¹²⁵ For the definitive academic discussion of the “mavericks” concept, see Michael Broyles, *Mavericks and Other Traditions in American Music* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2004).

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true to say that the middlebrow concert-going public finds its most direct satisfaction in the music of these neurotic misfits. They were composers of talent – in Tchaikovsky’s case a composer of genius: but also composers of adolescence, of arrested development. A large public’s dedication to adolescence cannot be a sign of emotional health...nothing...could be cozier than to regress to our memories of lost childhood and youth...such regression was a dominant theme both in American literature and in the music of the American conservatives.¹²⁶

The above comments were written by way of preface to a chapter that was devoted to the most romantic American composers, and were intended to set the tone for Mellers’ discussion of Barber and Menotti, both of whom followed in the tradition of Tchaikovsky and Rachmaninoff, two composers who were labelled “neurotic misfits,” or, as Mellers also called them, “composers of arrested development.” But although Mellers in 1964 may have dismissed post-1950 American representatives of the most romantic stream of composition, such composers were evidently good enough for Albany Records and a large loyal base of record-buying connoisseurs who helped make Kermani’s business venture one of the largest and most successful of its kind in the classical music world at the end of the twentieth century.

The independent Swedish label BIS possesses another CD catalogue with a strong focus on twentieth-century traditionalism. It is owned and managed by Robert von Bahr, and devotes its energies above all to Nordic music. As all regular readers of the major review magazines know, this is an area of the repertoire that is much loved (and therefore financially supported) by record collectors. Currently numbering about 1400 CDs, the BIS catalogue features a very large proportion of less-familiar twentieth-century composers, both conservative and radical. Von Bahr places more emphasis on avant- garde music (for instance,

¹²⁶ Wilfrid Mellers, *Music in a New Found Land* (London: Barrie and Rockliff, 1964), 194-195.

there are a number of releases devoted to Xenakis and Skalkottas) than do his enterprising colleagues at Hyperion, Albany or Chandos. However, the bulk of BIS's twentieth-century repertoire has an undeniable tonal-romantic slant. In addition to the large Tubin and Holmboe cycles we have just mentioned, there is a truly gargantuan Sibelius complete edition that runs to 65 CDs. Carl Nielsen, Denmark's finest composer, is very well represented, as are Hugo Alfvén, Ernest Bloch, Alexander Glazunov, Shostakovich, Bohuslav Martinů, Nino Rota, Geirr Tveitt, Joonas Kokkonen, Harald Saeverud, Wilhelm Stenhammer, Lars-Erik Larsson, and Dag Wirén. BIS provides a very rich and useful catalogue for those who choose to explore a side of twentieth-century music that did not attempt to renounce its tonal ties to the nineteenth century.

Unquestionably, pride of place in the BIS catalogue is occupied by their complete Sibelius cycle. Upon release of the series' final volume in 2011, von Bahr wrote: "Ever since founding BIS in 1973, I had a dream to record 'every-note-he-ever-wrote' by Sibelius – one of music history's great treasures."¹²⁷ Robert von Bahr finally realized this long-standing ambition after 25 years of indefatigable recording activity and a corresponding amount of scholarly labour. The project's completion demonstrated impressive music industry support for an allegedly "backward" twentieth-century composer who had been one of the major victims of modernist-oriented history writing at its most uncompromising (as demonstrated by the historical surveys of Machlis, Yates, Salzman, Simms, Griffiths, Deri, Morgan, Stuckenschmidt, Woerner, Hodier, et. al.). BIS's feat of musical scholarship also helped transform their resident CD booklet writer, Andrew Barnett, into a Sibelius authority of international repute. In 2007 Yale University Press published Barnett's long-awaited 500-page monograph of the composer and his music.

¹²⁷ Robert von Bahr, "The Sibelius Edition: A foreward by Robert von Bahr," *BIS Website* [2012], http://www.bis.se/bis_pages/bis_sibelius-edition.php (accessed June 23, 2012).

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Like BIS, the independent German label Classic Produktion Osnabrück (which is generally known by the lower-case initials cpo) also contains somewhat more radical fare than do either Hyperion or Chandos. For example, cpo has devoted issues to Jean Barraque and Bernd Alois Zimmerman and has recorded cycles of symphonies by the Schoenberg disciples Humphrey Searle and Egon Wellesz (the last four of his nine symphonies are largely atonal). There is even a fascinating recording of the ultra-rare Berg-like 1928 Violin Concerto of Joseph Hauer, a now-shadowy figure who bitterly and unsuccessfully fought against Schoenberg for many decades over the “patent” rights to atonality. Mention can also be made of a survey of Allan Petterson’s 16 symphonies and two violin concertos, all of Mahlerian length and might. However, a great many of cpo’s big cycles are devoted to twentieth-century traditionalists, emphatically including the most backward and unapologetic romantics. There are major orchestral cycles covering the works of George Antheil (his later populist set of six symphonies), Kurt Atterberg, Paul Hindemith, Wilhelm Peterson-Berger, Korngold, Darius Milhaud, Ture Rangstrom, and Ernst Toch (a sometime avant-gardist). A landmark recent cpo achievement is the first recorded cycle of the twelve symphonies of Heitor Villa-Lobos. These symphonies are mostly late works in Villa-Lobos’ more expansive and romantic vein, all in formidably accomplished and very well-reviewed performances.

Since 1991, cpo’s chief repertoire planner has been Burkhard Schmilgun, who arrived at cpo after having just completed a dissertation on Korngold. Conveniently enough, his new job of finding interesting repertoire coincided with cpo’s recording sessions of Korngold’s complete orchestral works, for which Schmilgun was then serving as an orchestral violist. It was during these sessions that cpo made the serendipitous discovery that Schmilgun was a Korngold expert, and therefore asked him to write the scholarly notes (a standard policy for cpo).¹²⁸ Needless to

¹²⁸ Schmilgun provides much useful background in an interview with Ilja Nieuwland. See “Burkhard Schmilgun: Talking to a musical treasure-hunter,”

say, the ultra-romantic subject matter of his Korngold dissertation happened to fit in exceptionally well with the general musical aesthetic that was shaping cpo's rapidly growing catalogue. In common with the majority of classical record collectors (and like Heymann, Kermani and Couzens), Schmidgun himself is not especially enthusiastic about the most radical twentieth-century music:

Classical music, 'art music if you like', has become an intellectual exercise, not a hedonistic pleasure in the lazy chair. The other day, I heard a discussion about the influence of birdsong on music, and all sorts of bird songs were played – of an incredible rhythmic and melodious diversity. But it was all tonal – and that is exactly the reason why so much atonal music doesn't connect with the public. We lack the internal sensor to process something that someone has put to paper and which may make mathematic sense, but doesn't reach you on an aesthetic level. Understand me, some of it is very interesting, but it can also be very impenetrable.¹²⁹

Other ongoing projects in cpo's early years included at least 15 CDs comprising the complete organ, piano and harmonium works of Karg-Elert (1877-1933). As we noted in chapter one, Karg-Elert was a composer who, in mid-life, renounced the avant-garde and began again in C major. Another major cpo recording project encompasses the lieder, orchestral works and chamber works (around 15 CDs) of Pfitzner, one of the most prominent and out-spoken anti-modernists during the time of Schoenberg. Pfitzner, as we mentioned in our discussion of Marco Polo and Naxos, was also one of Klaus Heymann's favorite composers. Overall, cpo's catalogue seems to be especially focused on German romantic contemporaries of Strauss. Besides Korngold, Pfitzner and Karg-Elert, there are many more Germanic composers of late-romantic music in cpo's catalogue. I have listed about thirty of

MusicWeb International (n. d.), <http://www.musicweb-international.com/classrev/2007/june07/Schmidgun.htm> (accessed June 23, 2012).

¹²⁹ Ibid.

these composers together with their dates in a footnote.¹³⁰ In sum, cpo's catalogue is unanswerable proof of the highly-romantic sound world inhabited by the Austro-German contemporaries of Schoenberg and Stravinsky. cpo also reflects the musical priorities of connoisseurs, and provides plenty of reasons to be skeptical of the way historians have traditionally painted the early twentieth century.

Over the last few years, cpo has also been devoting an extended series (at least 13 releases so far) to the many stage works of Franz Lehar (1870-1948), who was still active in the Nazi era and whose wildly popular 1928 operetta *Friederike* was banned(!) in Germany during the 1930s. Additional cpo discs of Lehar's orchestral works and lieder have also been recorded and released, as have stage works by other operetta composers. Notable too is an 8-CD cycle of Hindemith's complete orchestral works. Hindemith had spent the last three decades of his life deeply opposed to atonality and, as we saw in chapter one, had even gone so far as to voice his support of Sibelius after the Second World War.¹³¹

Recent projects on the cpo label include several Joseph Marx discs and a projected cycle of the twenty Julius Röntgen symphonies, most of which were written in the 1920s and early 1930s. Together with Hyperion, BIS, Chandos, Albany, and Marco Polo/Naxos, cpo ranks among the half-dozen largest and most

¹³⁰ d'Albert Eugene (1864-1934); Bischoff, Hermann (1868-1936); Fritz Bose, also a musicologist (1906-1975); Leo Fall (1873-1925); Furtwängler, Wilhelm (1886-1954); Goldschmidt, Bertold (1903-1996); Graener, Paul (1872-1944); Hausegger, Siegmund von (1872-1948); Humperdinck, Engelbert (1854-1921); Juon, Paul (1872-1940); Kalman, Emmerich (1882-1953); Mahler-Werfel, Alma (1879-1964); Marx, Joseph (1882-1964); Mittler, Franz (1893-1970); Pepping, Ernst (1901-1981); Raphael, Günter (1903-1960); Reger, Max (1873-1915); Reznicek Emil Nikolaus von (1860-1945); Schillings, Max (1868-1933); Schmid, Heinrich Kaspar (1874-1953); Schreker, Franz (1878-1934); Wagner, Siegfried (1869-1930) Walter, Bruno (1876-1962); von Waltershausen, Hermann Wolfgang (1882-1954); Felix Weingartner (1863-1942); Julius Weissmann (1879-1950); Wellesz, Egon (1885-1974); Richard Wetz (1875-1935); Zeisl, Eric (1905-1959); Zemlinsky, Alexander (1871-1942).

¹³¹ See also pages 80 and 81 in chapter one.

successful independent classical record labels active today. All were founded in the late twentieth-century. Like the others, cpo's success is founded above all on an insider's understanding of what classical music connoisseurs typically want to explore.

Many other record labels founded around the same time as Naxos/Marco Polo, Hyperion, Chandos, BIS, cpo and Albany have also grown rapidly, uncovering not only neglected nineteenth-century music but also twentieth-century music of a particularly conservative cast. Among these are Dutton in Great Britain, Sterling in Sweden, and Danachord in Denmark. Today, after a full half-century of vigorous and comprehensive excavations, the intrepid explorers have eagerly gone where the major labels had largely refused to go. And they have yet to come anywhere near the bottom of what has turned out to be a truly vast musical terrain – terrain which is of uncommon interest to present-day connoisseurs of the still-vigorous Romantic Revival.

Two major-label projects

Two major-label recording projects should also be mentioned in this chapter because they also shed valuable light on aspects of twentieth-century traditionalism and romanticism. One project is from Philips Records. It is the mammoth 200-CD *Great Pianists of the Twentieth Century*. The other is Decca's *Entartete Musik* series. The Philips *Great Pianists* project was masterminded by producer and inveterate piano maven Tom Deacon and involved unprecedented cooperation on the part of all the major labels as well as many smaller ones. The twentieth century repertoire included in the *Great Pianists* series is overwhelmingly tonal, romantic and traditionalist and is understandably based on the preferences of the pianists included in the anthology (and by extension, their audiences). Thus, music by Rachmaninoff bulks very large indeed. Besides being given his own volume as a pianist, there are no less than eleven performances of various

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Rachmaninoff concertos by other pianists in the Philips series. All of the concertos are represented, some in many performances. There are also dozens of recordings covering virtually all of Rachmaninoff's shorter piano works. In addition, we are given the two large-scale sonatas, the *Corelli* Variations and the two suites for two pianos.

Throughout Philips' 200 discs, there is also a healthy sampling of Romantic Revival-type nineteenth and early twentieth-century encore pieces from Herz and Czerny to Moszkowski, Paderewski and Godowsky. These works are mainly to be found in the volumes devoted to Golden Age romantic pianists like Rachmaninoff, Hofmann, Godowsky, Lehviene, Moiseiwitsch, and Friedman, as well as later representatives of that tradition, like Horowitz, Bolet, Wild and Cherkassky. Earl Wild's 1980s "defiantly kitsch" Carnegie Hall recital (consisting exclusively of romantic transcriptions) is included complete, as are the famous historic Moiseiwitsch and Gilels recordings of Medtner sonatas. There are also large portions of Debussy, Ravel and Prokofiev, and even sonatas by later twentieth-century romantics like Kabalevsky and Ned Rorem.

Among the 200 CDs there are only three performances of works by Stravinsky and a single brief sampling of Schoenberg (Uchida playing the *Three Piano Pieces, Op. 11*). Post-Schoenberg avant-garde repertoire is virtually non-existent except for Pollini playing the Boulez Second Sonata and Steven Kovacevich in the Piano Concerto by Richard Rodney Bennett. As a real-world snapshot of twentieth-century performance and composition, the Philips *Great Pianists* project is utterly at odds with the ivory-tower viewpoint that saw Schoenberg and Stravinsky as the two great giants of the early modern era. This Philips set is therefore a historical alternative to the textbooks of Morgan, Griffiths, Simms, Salzman, Machlis and Whittall, and serves to illustrate in a real-life way how a large number of musicians, music industry personnel, and last but not least, the intelligent musical public, have all viewed the last century. They have produced their own musical

picture of the era, sizing it up in a manner that is most logical for them.

In 1993, Decca began their releasing their landmark *Entartete Musik* series of recordings devoted to music banned by the Third Reich. The project eventually ran to over 30 releases and contained works by Korngold, Zemlinsky, Schreker, Krenek, Goldschmidt, Schulhoff, Eisler, Braunfels, and Weill. There was also a selection of German cabaret songs included in the series. As Decca's recorded conspectus of banned works showed, most of the composers and works classified by the Nazis as *Entartete* were not only unapologetically tonal, but also very romantic-sounding in style. Some of the more familiar composers, like Korngold, Zemlinsky and Schreker, were already being exhumed in the two decades prior to the Decca project, as part of a much broader Romantic Revival. In comments that acknowledged the true romantic-oriented tastes of the musical public, Christopher Hailey observed that the Schreker revivals of the 1970s and 1980s were also "abetted by market-driven speculation upon the public's appetite for novelty." Hailey further noted that "For many, the Schreker that emerged in the 1980s was at last a 'twentieth-century' composer whose lush scores belied that dread epithet, a composer of the modern era with whom one could exorcize an array of thornier spirits from both the near and distant modernist past."¹³²

The *Entartete Musik* project has served as a corrective to the common academic belief that the Nazis always supported late romantic music while banning modernism. This long-unchallenged assumption unfairly damaged the reputations of many composers, especially in view of the fact that some in the modernist camp also had closer ties to the Third Reich than was admitted in the halcyon days of total serialism. It allowed a post-1950 avant-garde to write off romantic-oriented composers simply by tacitly linking them and their late romantic idioms with the atrocities of National

¹³² Christopher Hailey, *Franz Schreker, 1878-1934: A Cultural Biography* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 321.

Socialism. In a 2005 lecture, Michael Haas, the producer of Decca's series, reflected on the historiographical implications of his *Entartete Musik* project. In an article that was provocatively entitled "The recording producer as musicological filter," he commented that

the element of interest for future historians will no doubt be the fact that musicians and musicologists in the early 90s cringed at the view that Nazis had banned works, in their opinion, as toe-curlingly kitch as Korngold's *Das Wunder der Heliane* or as whimsically light-weight as Krenek's *Jonny Spielt Auf*.¹³³

As Haas emphasized, Decca's survey was accomplished at great financial expense partly to make a musicological point about the complex nature of the musical styles that were supported or banned by the Nazis. The *Entartete Musik* recording project conclusively demonstrated that early twentieth-century radicals were far from being the only composers who were maltreated. Indeed, as Taruskin and others have pointed out, there was even an officially approved twelve-tone school during the Third Reich. In response to such revelations, *Musical Quarterly* editor Leon Botstein aptly noted in 1999 that "in our post-postmodernist eclectic moment, we have begun to see fissures in the all-too-neat structural correspondence between aesthetic and political conservatism, just as there turns out to be no precise parallelism between modernism and progressive politics."¹³⁴ Due to the work of Decca producer Michael Haas, Botstein's musicological "fissures" have turned into veritable earthquake zones. The net result is that scholars who have long been accustomed to automatically tarring late-romantic German composers with the Nazi brush have now been thrown into

¹³³ Michael Haas, "The recording producer as musicological filter," in *The Proceedings of the 2005 Art of Record Production Conference* (held 17th - 18th September, 2005 at the University of Westminster, London), http://www.charm.kcl.ac.uk/about/symposia/p7_3.html (accessed April 10, 2012).

¹³⁴ Leon Botstein, "Pfitzner and Musical Politics," *Musical Quarterly* 85 (Spring 2001): 65.

a very awkward position indeed.

Record critics and the Romantic Revival

Glancing through the catalogues of several leading independent classical CD labels, we see what amounts to a new perspective on twentieth-century music history. It is a perspective that is driven by the wallets of music lovers and dedicated connoisseurs who simply buy and listen to what they love most. Just as Babbitt (see earlier in this chapter) exercised his right to turn the radio off and put on a CD whenever regressive romantic music by Bax, Finzi and Howells came over the air waves, the music lovers who have been exploring the romantic stream have also exercised their right to choose the kind of twentieth-century music that pleases them. The general musical public has spoken, and the small but vigorous economy of the specialist classical music recording industry overwhelmingly reflects their preferences. Nowadays, there are so many favourable reviews of non-avant-garde twentieth-century composers that one hardly knows where to begin. Numerous monthly examples can be read in all the leading journals, both in print and on the web. Several reviewers of international stature actively promote large portions of this repertoire and occupy prominent journalistic positions. To give an idea, we will consider the following cases.

David Hurwitz, long-time *Fanfare* reviewer and founder/editor of *Classicstoday.com*, has called George Lloyd's Symphony No. 5 (see also our earlier discussion of Lloyd's relationship to Albany Records) one of the great romantic symphonies of the twentieth century.¹³⁵ Hurwitz also strongly supports composers like Rued Langgaard, Alan Hovhaness, Johan Halvorsen, Julius Röntgen and David Diamond. And his praise of Hyperion's *Romantic Piano Concerto Series* is unstinting. Upon

¹³⁵ David Hurwitz, review of *George Lloyd: Symphony No. 5* (Albany compact disc), *Classicstoday.com*, <http://classicstoday.com/review.asp?ReviewNum=7335> (accessed April 30, 2004).

the release of concertos by Cowen (1852-1935) and Somervell (1863-1937), Hurwitz wrote:

The Romantic Piano Concerto Volume 54? My God! And the series shows no lack of interest or quality. These works are delightful. Frederic Cowen's single-movement Concertstück is beautifully written, full of good tunes, and thoroughly captivating. It's a worthy successor to Weber's famous piece with the same title, and one of a long list of concerto-like works that deserve to be heard live but likely never will earn that distinction. Arthur Somervell's Normandy variations, based on a French folksong, date from 1912 and for a couple of decades became a repertory work. The solo part was taken by no less than Donald Francis Tovey. It may be that the theme returns one too many times toward the end, but really, who cares? The "Highland" Concerto is a lot of fun. Whether Somervell borrowed actual Scottish folk tunes or not, you'll swear you've heard some of these themes before. The concerto has three pithy movements lasting a bit less than half an hour. Even the first movement, usually the Achilles' heel of Romantic concertos owing to their patchwork construction, goes swiftly on account of its attractive melodic material....This series looks set to go on forever, and we can only hope that it does.¹³⁶

Another important critical advocate of traditionalist streams is Donald Vroon, who has been the outspoken owner and editor of the feisty 75-year-old specialist journal *American Record Guide* since 1987. His frequent reviews and lengthy monthly editorials occasionally testify to his lack of enthusiasm for the post-1910 avant-garde and his support for the more approachable twentieth-century idioms. In 2004 Vroon wrote an editorial stating his views on the role and status of romanticism in the twentieth century:

In the twentieth century, there was a predictable backlash against

¹³⁶ David Hurwitz, "Concerto Charmers by Cowen and Somervell," *Classicstoday.com* (undated, but first posted in May of 2012), <http://www.classicstoday.com/review/concerto-charmers-by-cowen-and-somervell/?search=1> (accessed June 3, 2012).

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romanticism; and a few composers, performers, and musicologists went away too far. But they failed to erase its huge influence upon music and the way all of us hear it...we can never lose the sensitivities romanticism brought to our cultural life. Most people hear music as a romantic would – at least partly. The romantic sensibility cannot be denied. We expect music to have emotional power and meaning. We listen for that in Bach and Mozart as well as in music written last week...100 years later people still felt life strongly under its influence, even if the world had changed and even if the avant-garde was determined to crush it. Modernism failed to banish romanticism. Post-modernism will also fail. The historical performance people have also failed to change the fact that we hear all music as romantic. You can't go back.¹³⁷

In 1995, Len Mullenger founded a classical music review website on his university's biology server. The website soon became independent, and is now known as *MusicWeb International*. It holds the largest data-base of classical recording reviews on the internet, with over 40 000 archived CD reviews. More than 200 000 visitors log onto *MusicWeb* at least once a week, and almost 100 000 visit the site more than 200 times per year. This makes *MusicWeb*, by a very large margin, the most widely-read on-line classical CD review journal in the English language.¹³⁸ Mullenger's official career was spent as a professor of Molecular Biology – a common type of professional profile for the kind of classical music connoisseur who is interested in and financially supports music that is associated with our Romantic Revival. With barely concealed glee, the now-retired biologist describes his ground-breaking web-magazine hobby in the following way: "I now have even more time to spend listening to music (mainly classical) and indulging my interest in Early

¹³⁷ Donald Vroon, "Critical Convictions," *American Record Guide* (Nov/Dec 2004): 47.

¹³⁸ More background information can be found in Len Mullenger, "MusicWeb International (1995-): Where we are at..." *MusicWeb International*. (article continually updated between 1998 and 2012), <http://www.musicweb-international.com/historyMotW2000.html> (accessed April 4, 2012).

Twentieth Century British composers.”¹³⁹ As a life-long classical music connoisseur, Mullenger’s twentieth-century music tastes are representative of a significant number of music-lovers who are passionate about the kind of modern-era music that is regularly recorded by labels like Lyrita, Danacord, Naxos, BIS, cpo, Chandos and Hyperion.

Record critic Rob Barnett, a local government worker from North-West England, serves as the classical music editor of Mullenger’s *MusicWeb International*, and is also one of its most prolific reviewers. Since 1995, Barnett has also been the editor of the British Music Society Newsletter. In his own biography on the website, Barnett, writing in the third person, summarizes his own musical tastes, which are very similar to those of Mullenger:

Rob came to classical music not via Beethoven, Brahms and Bach. Introduced during his technical college years in 1969-71 via a friend’s record collection of Janáček, Stravinsky, Sibelius, Tchaikovsky, Martinů, Bax and Vaughan Williams. Key works from that era included: Janáček Sinfonietta and Glagolytic Mass; Stravinsky The Rite and Firebird; Sibelius Tapiola, Symphony No. 5, Martinů Symphony No. 4; Bax Symphony No. 5; RVW Tallis Fantasia and Symphonies 5 and 6, Brahms Symphony 3 and Piano Concerto 2, Rachmaninov Symphonic Dances (Kondrashin, of course), Tchaikovsky Symphony 4, Manfred and Francesca da Rimini. Believes that people with the spark of interest in or curiosity about classical music should not be afraid of going direct to the more unusual repertoire rather than feeling they must start with Bach, Mozart, Haydn and Beethoven....

He has been an enthusiast for fine neglected music since the early 1970s. *Special interests: twentieth-century orchestral romanticism* [my emphasis]: USA, Scandinavia (just listen to the magically poised opening bars of Madetoja’s Symphony No. 3), Europe and Australasia, USSR/Russia, British.

Rates the wildly imaginative music of Arnold Bax very highly on

¹³⁹ Len Mullenger, [personal biographical sketch], *MusicWeb International*, <http://www.musicweb-international.com/len2.htm> (accessed June 23, 2012).

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an international stage. Bax's best works (Piano Quintet, Symphony No. 6, November Woods, Winter Legends) have a desperate beauty and crushing emotional impact paralleled by that of very few composers of any era. Granville Bantock is also a special interest (among many others).

Bantock's Omar Khayyam (soli, chorus, orchestra) is a magnificent tapestry of music and philosophy. Bantock's similarly-specified Song of Songs is also likely to yield great rewards. Both Bantock's red-blooded fantasy and lyrical style leaves the staid, lachrymose and somewhat mournful glories of Gerontius in the gloomiest of shades. There is a 1979 BBC tape of the complete Omar conducted by Norman Del Mar and more recently Chandos have issued the work almost complete. Cannot understand why BBC Radio 3 ignores (or largely ignores) so much fine orchestral music (Hovhaness, Braga Santos, Pettersson, Nystroem, Schuman, Marx, Goossens) but nevertheless cherishes the service. The BBC Proms programme remains a history of missed opportunities: when for example will we get Havergal Brian's Gothic Symphony, a Roy Harris Symphony other than No. 3 or Franz Schmidt's Second Symphony instead of the standard fare?¹⁴⁰

The above statement is as good a demonstration as any of the kind of connoisseur attitudes that are the financial driving force behind the Romantic Revival and the closely related growth of labels like Chandos, Hyperion, BIS, cpo, Albany and Marco Polo/Naxos. Another commentator with musical tastes similar to those of critics we have already mentioned is the audio expert John Sunier. For over a decade now, Sunier has owned and edited *Audiophile Audition*, a website that has amassed an archive of several thousand classical reviews.¹⁴¹ Both Sunier and several other

¹⁴⁰ Rob Barnett, [personal biographical sketch], *MusicWeb International*, <http://www.musicweb-international.com/contrib/barnett.htm> (accessed April 4, 2012).

¹⁴¹ John Sunier's website, *Audiophile Audition* can be found at audaud.com. Formerly, Sunier was active in classical music broadcasting. In that capacity he hosted a top-ranked radio show from 1985 to 1998 which was also called *Audiophile Audition*. In its time, it was syndicated on up to 200 radio stations in the United States.

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reviewers at *Audiophile Audition* are very welcoming of rare romantic music, both of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Together, these leading critics from major print and web magazines paint a picture of twentieth-century music that goes far beyond the obscurely revolutionary. Collectively, critics like Barnett, Mullenger, Hurwitz, and Vroon follow a historical framework that was recommended by John Steane. In a 2003, Steane, a senior vocal critic for *Gramophone*, articulated a view of the twentieth century that unquestionably resonated with many classical music connoisseurs. While reviewing a new monograph covering English song from Parry to Finzi, Steane could not help observing that the book's contents

probably would not rate so much as a chapter to itself in the history of twentieth-century 'classical' music as conventionally viewed. Received opinion still has it that history begins with Schoenberg and is signposted on its way by key figures such as Webern, Stockhausen, Berio, Boulez, and John Cage...What I want to see is a history which puts these composers into the margins where – after a reasonable period of trial and assimilation – in practical terms they already are. I would like to see it trace a line whereby musical experience has been enriched through a developing continuity rather than by pioneers into the wilderness.¹⁴²

Steane's practical vision of a reformed twentieth-century historiography has a high degree of acceptance among many reviewers, including those we have cited. Thus, it is not surprising that some scholars like Robert Fink (a postmodern analyst who claims to reject any sort of master narrative) do not receive them with much welcome. Fink observes that views similar to those of Steane are currently "rampant in the popular press." For Fink, they represent "conservative revisionism," an attempt to elevate composers like Rachmaninoff, Barber and Pfitzner. In a somewhat

¹⁴² John Steane, "Singer Talk," *Gramophone* (February 2003): 20.

dubious attempt to preserve what was once assumed to be a clear and direct link between conservative music and conservative politics, Fink calls such revisionism a “right-wing settling of scores that should have little effect on professional historians.”¹⁴³ However, the depth of musicological involvement in many important recording projects devoted to “regressive” composers would seem to dispute Fink rather drastically. We noted the example of the Sibelius Edition, but there are many others as well. One can directly access thousands of Hyperion, Chandos, Naxos, Albany, cpo, and BIS CD booklets directly on the internet, and observe that a great many of them are written by supportive writers who are able to boast good to outstanding musicological credentials. We can point out, for example, the hundreds of CD booklets written by Bax scholar Lewis Foreman, one of the outstanding historians of the English musical renaissance in the twentieth century. It would take another book to properly discuss the sheer extent of scholarly involvement in recordings of traditionalist twentieth-century music. Fink is utterly and completely off base in his assessment.

The 1500-page *Penguin Guide to Classical CDs*, a de facto arm of *Gramophone*, strongly reflects Steane’s outlook. With very few exceptions (see appendix), the *Penguin Guide’s* listings are filled with the type of twentieth-century repertoire that is contrary (often drastically so) to the general philosophy of musical modernism. For several decades now, the best-selling *Penguin Guide* has been ubiquitous in the English-speaking world of classical record buyers and has gone through many editions. It is usually published every two or three years, with added annual updates in the form of yearbooks. As many record buyers, know, the *Penguin Guide* has long been indispensable in classical record shops throughout the English-speaking world, where multiple

¹⁴³ See Robert Fink, “Teaching Music History (After the End of History): ‘History Games’ for the Twentieth-Century Survey,” in *Teaching Music History*, ed. M. Natvig (Aldershot, Hants: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2002), note 9.

copies are often in tatters from overuse. When I worked as a sales clerk in a specialist classical record store during my student years, I would also sometimes see customers walking into the store clutching their own copy.

Notably, the *Guide's* writers include the distinguished Sibelius scholar and *Gramophone* reviewer Robert Layton, who for several decades has been one of the world's leading English-speaking authorities on Scandinavian music.¹⁴⁴ Layton, Ivan March and Edward Greenfield have been the *Guide's* indefatigable writers over thirty years. Like Layton, March is another long-time *Gramophone* reviewer who shows little enthusiasm for some of the twentieth century's most radical offerings. In 2005 he caused a considerable stir among *Gramophone* readers when he published an article that called atonality "the 20th century's biggest musical disaster."¹⁴⁵

To conclude this chapter, I append Table 5, which shows how the Layton-March-Greenfield *Penguin Guide* represents the twentieth century for its target audience of dedicated classical music connoisseurs – those who influence the stylistic priorities of the classical recording industry. Not surprisingly, and given what we have seen in this chapter, the twentieth-century composers represented in the *Penguin Guide* could be said to be overwhelmingly "on the romantic side," to use the words of Chandos Records owner Ralph Couzens. On a personal note, I have at least some music by most of these composers in my own record collection, or at least have a general idea of what their sound worlds represent in historical terms. For those who have not (yet) taken the time to familiarize themselves more deeply in the music of the twentieth century, (and perhaps remain skeptical that such a large proportion is indeed something like what I have described) my only suggestion would be to start listening now. You have a life time of discoveries awaiting you. Meanwhile, be

¹⁴⁴ Ivan March, Edward Greenfield and Robert Layton, *Penguin Guide to Compact Discs and DVDs*, 2004 ed. (London: Penguin Books, 2003).

¹⁴⁵ Ivan March, "Calling the Tunes," *Gramophone* (June 2005): 51.

assured that large part of the *Penguin Guide* is filled with the fruits of the Romantic Revival, including once-forgotten composers whose careers stretched well into the twentieth century. The fact that so much rare repertoire of this kind is of such strong interest to connoisseurs even today in the twenty-first century speaks for its ultimate historical importance.

**Table 5. Modern music according to
Layton, March and Greenfield:
The 2008 Penguin Guide (1588 pp)**

I have chosen to include composers born after about 1850 because, beginning around this time point, roughly starting with Janáček (who historians often consider to be “the first twentieth-century composer”), they are generally considered to be too late to be properly included in standard historical overviews of nineteenth-century music. See our detailed discussion of this particular problem of chronology in chapter four as well as the last two pages of the introduction.

The following list simply gives us the number of columns devoted to each composer, with each page in the *Guide* containing two columns. The *Guide* emphatically shows how, in the view of present-day classical CD collectors, the most radical musical revolutions after 1900 utterly failed to displace what their proponents confidently assumed was a dying (or dead) tonal-romantic idiom. This list therefore reflects, for the most part, a continuation of the older tonal and romantic-sounding tradition. Alert readers will also find in this list many composers who were active in contributing to the guitar, light music, pipe organ, wind band, and choral repertoires. All of these sub-genres have a high proportion of music that is conservative harmonically and melodically – due, of course, to the fact that (to mention two outstanding examples) few choirs or high school wind ensembles (or their audiences) want to have anything to do with the extreme fragmentation, dissonance, and lack of obvious melody that is so often found in the century’s most radical offerings.

Faure and Parry, both born in the 1840s, are also included in this list. This is due to their long lives, late productivity, and awareness of Schoenberg’s 1910 revolution. Nevertheless, Saint Saens (1837-1921) is not included, although he too was productive (and an outspoken opponent of post-1910

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modernism) until the end of his life.

**Composers born between 1850 and 1915
(There are 268 composers in the following list)**

Less than half a column

d'Albert, Eugen (1864-1932)	Moody, James (1907-1995)
Bortkiewicz, Sergei (1877-1952)	Moyzes, Alexander (1906-1984)
Confrey, Edward (1895-1971)	Parker, Clifton (1905-89)
Darnton, Christian (1905-1981)	Peterson-Berger, Wilhelm (1867-1942)
Delage, Maurice (1879-1961)	Pjijper, Willem (1894-1947)
Deutsch, Adolph (1897-1980)	Porter, Cole (1891-1964)
Emmanuel, Maurice (1862-1938)	Rowley, Alec (1892-1958)
Forsyth, Cecil (1870-1941)	Sauer, Emil von (1862-1942)
Gál, Hans (1890-1987)	Sauguet, Henri (1901-1989)
Goedicke, Alexander (1877-1957)	Searle, Humphrey (1915-1982)
Gough, John (1903-51)	Seiber, Mátyás (1915-1960)
Gruenberg, Louis (1884-1964)	Serly, Tibor (1901-1978)
Herbert, Victor (1859-1924)	Slavicky, Klement (1910-1999)
Hyde, Miriam (1913-)	Still, William Grant (1895-1978)
Johansen, David Monral (1888-1974)	Surinach, Carlos (1915-1997)
Jones, Sidney (1861-1946)	Thompson, Randall (1899-1984)
Jongen, Joseph (1873-1953)	Thompson, Virgil (1896-1989)
Joplin, Scott (1868-1917)	Tórroba, Federico (1891-1982)
Kajanus, Robert (1856-1933),	Tovey, Donald (1875-1940)
Kolessa, Mykola (1903-)	Valle, Walter (1875-1939)
Montsalvatge, Xavier (1912-2002)	

Half a column or more

Alnæs, Eyvind (1872-1932) – 1/2	Finzi, Aldo (1897-1945) – 1/2
Binge, Ronald (1910-1979) – 1/2	Furtwängler, Wilhelm (1886-1954) – 1/2
Cliffe, Frederic (1857-1931) – 1/2	Gillis, Don (1912-1978) – 1/2
Clifford, Hubert (1904-1959) – 1/2	Grofé, Ferde (1892-1972) – 1/2
Conus, Julius (1869-1942) – 1/2	Goossens, Eugene (1893-1962) – 1/2
Cowell (1897-1965) – 1/2 (only later symphonic works)	Hadley, Patrick (1899-1973) – 1/2
Curzon, Frederick (1899-1973) – 1/2	Halvorsen, Johan (1864-1935) – 1/2
Davies, Sir Henry Walford (1869-1941) – 1/2	Liadov, Anatol (1855-1914) – 1/2
	Lilburn, Douglas (1915-2001) – 1/2
	Piggott, Patrick (1915-1990) – 1/2

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- Ponce, Manuel (1882-1948) – 1/2
Rathaus, Karl (1895-1954) – 1/2
Revueltas, Sívestre (1899-1940) – 1/2
Rota, Nino (1911-1979) – 1/2
Stojowski, Zygmunt (1870-1946) – 1/2
Tcherepnin, Nikolai (1873-1945) – 1/2
Torch, Sidney (1908-1990) – 1/2
Schierbeck, Poul (1888-1949) – 1/2
Weiner, Leo (1885-1960) – 1/2
Alfano, Franco (1875-1954) – 2/3
Anderson, Leroy (1908-1975) – 2/3
Cage, John (1912-1992) – 2/3 (only prepared piano)
Foerster, Josef Bohuslav (1859-1951) – 2/3
Gould, Morton (1913-1996) – 2/3
Harrison, Julius (1885-1963) – 2/3
Messenger, André (1853-1929) – 2/3
Moreno Torroba, Federico (1891-1982) – 2/3
Reed, W. H. (1875-1942) – 2/3
Turnbull, Percy (1902-1976) – 2/3
Barrios, Agustin (1885-1944) – 3/4
Caplet, André (1878-1925) – 3/4
Ippolitov-Ivanov, Mikhail (1859-1935) – 3/4
Carpenter, John Alden (1876-1951) – 3/4
Chadwick (1854-1931) – 3/4
German, Edward (1862-1936) – 3/4
Klami, Uuno (1900-1961) – 3/4
Maconchy, Elizabeth (1907-1994) – 3/4
Scharwenka, Xavier (1850-1924) – 3/4
Schmitt, Florent (1870-1958) – 3/4
Smyth, Ethel (1858-1944) – 3/4
Somervell, Arthur (1863-1937) – 3/4
Séverac, Déodat de (1872-1921) – 3/4
Addinsell (1904-1977) – 1
Alain, Jehan (1911-1940) – 1
Bainton, Edgar (1880-1956) – 1
Berners, Lord (1883-1950) – 1
Boulanger, Lili (1893-1918) – 1
Castelnuovo-Tedesco, Mario (1895-1968) – 1
Collins, Anthony (1893-1963) – 1
Cooke, Arnold (1906-2005) – 1
Dupre, Marcel (1886-1971) – 1
Griffes, Charles Tomlinson (1884-1920) – 1 3/4
Gurney, Ivor (1890-1937) – 1
Hurlstone, William (1876-1906) – 1
Jones, Daniel (1912-1993) – 1
Ketelbey, Albert (1875-1959) – 1
Leigh, Walter (1905-1942) – 1
MacCunn, Hamish (1868-1916) – 1
Madetoja, Leevi (1887-1947) – 1
Maconchy, Elizabeth (1907-1994) – 1
Magnard, Albéric (1865-1914) – 1
Pfitzner, Hans (1869-1949) – 1
Pierne, Gabriel 1863-1937) – 1
Philips, Montague (1885-1969) – 1
Pizzetti, Ildebrando (1880-1968) – 1
Rósza, Miklós (1907-1994) – 1
Schoeck, Othmar (1886-1957) – 1
Sorabji, Khaikhosru (1892-1988) – 1
Auric, Georges (1899-1983) – 1 1/4
Cilea, Francesco (1866-1950) – 1 1/4
Creston, Paul 1906-1985) – 1 1/4
Glière, Reinhold (1875-1956) – 1 1/4
Alfvén, Hugo (1872-1960) – 1 1/3
Reznicek, Emil von (1860-1945) – 1 1/3
Romberg, Sigmund (1887-1951) – 1 1/3
Varèse, Edgar (1883-1965) – 1 1/3
Butterworth, George (1885-1916) – 1 1/2
Boughton, Rutland (1878-1960) – 1 1/2
Diamond, David (1915-2005) – 1 1/2
Frankel, Benjamin (1906-1973) – 1 1/2
Hovhaness, Alan (1911-2000) – 1 1/2
Piston, Walter (1894-1976) – 1 1/2
Romberg, Sigmund (1887-1951) – 1 1/2
Saeverud, Harald (1897-1992) – 1 1/2
Schmidt, Franz (1874-1939) – 1 1/2
Tcherepnin, Alexander (1899-1977) – 1 1/2
Toch, Ernst (1887-1964) – 1 1/2
Turina, Joaquin (1882-1949) – 1 1/2
Tveitt, Geirr (1908-1981) – 1 1/2
Carter, Elliott (1908-) – 1 2/3
Arensky, Anton (1861-1906) – 1 3/4
Ferguson, Howard (1908-1999) – 1 3/4
Foulds, John (1880-1939) – 1 3/4
Panufnik, Andrzej (1914-1991) – 1 3/4
Kálmán, Emmerich (1882-1953) – 1 3/4
McEwen, John Blackwood 1868-1948) – 1

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- Bantock, Granville (1868-1946) – 2
Brian, Havergal (1876-1972) – 2
Bush, Alan (1900-1995) – 2
Canteloube, Marie-Joseph 1879-1957) – 2
Coleridge-Taylor (1875-1912) – 2
Hanson, Howard (1896-1981) – 2
Harris, Roy (1898-1979) – 2
Hahn, Reynaldo (1875-1947) – 2
Harty, Hamilton (1879-1941) – 2
Kern, Jerome (1885-1945) – 2
Langlais, Jean (1907-1991) – 2
d'Indy, Vincent (1851-1931) – 2
Jacob, Gordon (1895-1984) – 2
Macdowell, Edward (1860-1908) – 2
Mompou, Federico (1893-1987) – 2
Nováček, Vitezslav (1870-1949) – 2
Schreker, Franz (1878-1934) – 2
Schuman, William (1910-1992) – 2
Sinding, Christian (1856-1941) – 2
Benjamin, Arthur (1893-1960) – 2 1/4
Humperdinck, Engelbert (1854-1921) – 2 1/4
Rodgers, Richard (1902-1979) – 2 1/4
Ibert, Jacques (1890-1962) – 2 1/3
Vierne, Louis (1870-1937) – 2 1/3
Giordano, Umberto (1867-1948) – 2 1/2
Koechlin, Charles (1867-1950) – 2 1/2
Kreisler, Fritz (1875-1962) – 2 1/2
Leoncavallo, Ruggiero (1857-1919) – 2 1/2
Kabalevsky, Dmitri (1904-1987) – 2 1/2
Menotti, Gian-Carlo (1911-2007) – 2 1/2
Bowen, York (1884-1961) – 3
Coates, Eric (1886-1957) – 3
Francaix, Jean (1912-1997) – 3
Mascagni, Pietro (1863-1945) – 3
Beach, Amy (1867-1944) – 3 1/4
Moeran, E. J. (1894-1950) – 3 1/4
Bloch, Ernest (1880-1959) – 3 1/3
Holmboe, Vagn (1909-1996) – 3 1/3
Scott, Cyril (1879-1970) – 3 1/3
Taneyev, Sergei (1856-1915) – 3 1/3
Roussel, Albert (1869-1937) – 3 1/2
Dukas, Paul (1865-1935) – 3 1/2
Dyson, George (1883-1964) – 3 1/2
Enescu, Georges (1881-1955) – 3 1/2
Reger, Max (1873-1916) – 3 1/2
Satie, Erik (1866-1925) – 3 3/4
Weill, Kurt (1900-1950) – 3 3/4
Dohnányi, Ernő (1877-1960) – 4
Durufié, Maurice (1902-1986) – 4
Honegger, Arthur (1892-1955) – 4
Lutoslawski, Witold (1913-1994) – 4
Stenhammar, Wilhelm (1871-1927) – 4
Tubin, Eduard (1905-1982) – 4
Zemlinsky, Alexander (1871-1942) – 4
Suk, Josef (1874-1935) – 4 1/4
Bridge, Frank (1879-1941) – 4 1/3
Busoni, Ferruccio (1866-1924) – 4 1/3
Granados, Enrique (1867-1916) – 4 1/3
Miaskovsky, Nikolay (1881-1950) – 4 1/3
Webern, Anton (1883-1945) – 4 1/2
Medtner, Nikolai (1880-1951) – 4 3/4

Five columns or more

- Albéniz, Isaak (1860-1909) – 5
Berkeley, Lennox (1903-1989) – 5
Kodaly, Zoltan (1882-1967) – 5
Lambert, Constant (1905-1951) – 5
Rawsthorne, Alan (1905-1971) – 5
Orff, Carl (1895-1982) – 5 1/2
Simpson, Robert (1921-1997) – 5 3/4
Milhaud, Darius (1892-1974) – 6
Chausson, Ernest (1855-1899) – 6
Ireland, John (1879-1962) – 6
Scriabin, Alexander (1872-1915) – 6
Stanford, Charles (1852-1924) – 6
Villa-Lobos, Heitor (1887-1959) – 6
Alwyn, William (1905-1985) – 6 1/4
Parry, Hubert (1848-1918) – 6
Fallá, Manuel de (1876-1946) – 6 1/4

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Finzi, Gerald (1901-1956) – 6 1/2	Khachaturian, Aram (1903-1978) – 8 1/2
Korngold, Erich (1897-1957) – 6 1/2	Szymanowski, Karol (1882-1937) – 8 1/2
Bliss, Arthur (1891-1975) – 7	Rubbra, Edmund (1901-1986) – 8 3/4
Grainger, Percy (1882-1961) – 7	Barber, Samuel (1910-1981) – 9
Lloyd, George (1913-1998) – 7	Copland, Aaron (1900-1990) – 9
Berg, Alban (1885-1935) – 7 1/4	Howells, Herbert (1892-1983) – 9
Lehár, Franz (1870-1948) – 7 3/4	Ives, Charles (1874-1954) – 9
Martin, Frank (1890-1974) – 8 1/3	

Ten columns or more

Gershwin, George (1897-1937) – 10	Holst, Gustav (1874-1934) – 13
Rodrigo, Joaquín (1901-1999) – 10	Glazunov, Alexander (1865-1936) – 13 1/3
Schoenberg, Arnold (1874-1951) – 10	Martinů, Bohuslav (1890-1959) – 14
Messiaen, Olivier (1908-1992) – 10 1/4	Nielsen, Carl (1865-1931) – 14
Respighi, Ottorino (1879-1936) – 10 1/2	Delius, Frederik (1862-1934) – 14 1/2
Bax, Arnold (1883-1953) – 11 1/2	Bartók, Bela (1881-1945) – 15 1/2
Tippett, Michael (1905-1998) – 12	Faure, Gabriel (1845-1924) – 16 1/3
Hindemith, Paul (1895-1963) – 12 1/2	Janáček, Leos (1854-1928) – 18
Poulenc, Francis (1899-1963) – 12 1/2	Walton, William (1902-1983) – 29

Thirty columns or more

Debussy, Claude (1862-1918) – 30	Shostakovich, Dmitri (1906-1975) – 38 1/2
Rachmaninoff, Sergei (1873-1943) – 32 1/2	Britten, Benjamin (1913-1976) – 44
Ravel, Maurice (1875-1937) – 32 1/2	Elgar, Edward (1857-1934) – 44 1/2
Stravinsky, Igor (1882-1971) – 33	Prokofiev, Sergei (1891-1953) – 46
Mahler, Gustav (1860-1911) – 34	Sibelius, Jean (1865-1957) – 48
Puccini, Giacomo (1858-1924) – 34 1/2	Strauss, Richard (1864-1949) – 48
Vaughan Williams, Ralph (1872-1958) – 38	

A few important earlier radicals without any representation

Italian Futurists – 0	Hauer – 0
Antheil – 0	Ruggles – 0
Casella – 0	Valen – 0
Haba – 0	Skalkottas – 0
	Vermeulen – 0

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Some later figures who were born after 1915

(no Babbitt, Wuorinen, Martino, Lachenmann listed)

Rihm, Wolfgang (1952-) – 1/4	Sallinen, Aulis (1935-) – 1 3/4
Vainberg, Moishei (1919-1996) – 2/3	Butterworth, Arthur (1923-) – 1 3/4
Stevenson, Ronald (1928-) – 2/3	Boulez, Pierre (1925-) – 2
Sheng, Bright (1955-) – 3/4	Shchedrin, Rodion (1932-) – 2
Stockhausen, Karlheinz (1928-2008?) – 3/4	Turnage, Mark-Anthony (1960-) – 2
Rochberg, George (1918-2005) – 3/4	Górecki, Henryk (1933-) – 2 1/4
Theofandis, Christopher (1967-) – 3/4	Birtwistle, Harrison (1934-) – 2 1/2
Tomlinson, Ernest (1924-) – 3/4	Leighton, Kenneth (1929-1988) – 2 1/2
Rorem, Ned (1923-) – 3/4	Penderecki, Krzysztof (1933-) – 2 1/2
Del Tredici, David (1937-) – 1	Henze, Hans Werner (1926-) – 3
Corigliano, John (1938-) – 1	McCabe, John (1939-) – 3
Rouse, Christopher (1949-) – 1 1/4	Maxwell Davies, Peter (1934-) – 3
Takemitsu, Toru (1930-1996) – 1 1/2	Pärt, Arvo (1935-) – 3
Ligeti, György (1933-2009?) – 1 3/4	Dutilleul (1916-) – 4

Chapter Three

Some Problems of Definition

Modernism has become warm and inclusive as never before; it is possible today to contemplate Ravel, Elgar, Nielsen, even Poulenc and Puccini as modernists in a way that one doubts would have been possible in the 1970s or 1980s, as the old drive towards atonality and then dodecaphony is increasingly rejected or recast as just one privileged stylistic development amongst so many others.¹ (Andrew Timms, commenting on the 2004 *Cambridge History of Twentieth Century Music*).

Late romanticism as modernism

How is one to apply the descriptive category “romantic” to twentieth-century “art” or “concert” music? That is a question bristling with difficulties, foreseen and unforeseen. To begin with, even to properly define romanticism in its eighteenth and nineteenth-century contexts presents a nearly intractable challenge – and that is without any additional

¹ Andrew Timms, see “Modernism’s Moment of Plenitude,” in Björn Heile, ed., *The Modernist Legacy: Essays on New Music* (Surrey, England: Ashgate, 2009), 18.

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philosophical and musical complications introduced in the period after 1900. A precise taxonomy of traditionally romantic-sounding twentieth-century composers would be well-nigh impossible to accomplish to everyone's satisfaction although many composers already mentioned in our opening chapters have clearly been described (whether by their opponents or by themselves) as preserving, to a lesser or greater degree, a traditional romantic sound in their music. The word "romantic" could imply a vague sort of aesthetic disapproval, being – in Taruskin's words – little more than "an all-purpose punching bag."² At the same time, it could be a badge worn proudly by twentieth-century composers and performers themselves, as we will see later in this chapter. In any case, for our purposes here, a hard and fast (let alone complete) definition is ultimately not the point, even if such a thing were possible.

Nor can romanticism's opposite in this context, radical modernism, ultimately be defined with any greater precision. This has always been true, even despite the still powerful link between modernism and a highly dissonant sound world. If romanticism is an all-purpose punching bag, it can equally be pointed out that, as Taruskin also notes, "Any attempt to reduce modernism to a set of core beliefs or practices quickly turns into an exercise in chasing one's tail."³ Carol Oja agrees. Speaking of what she calls the "iconoclastic, irreverent innovation" that made up modern music in the "pluralistic" setting of New York just after the First World War, Oja writes that "the beauty of modernism was that it encompassed no dominating center or clear line of authority. Modernism was impossible to pin down. It embraced many styles. It did not even have a stable home." Despite such a vague pedigree, modernism nonetheless managed to convey "the abundant 'chaos'...of the

² Richard Taruskin, "Early Music: Truly Old-Fashioned at Last?" in *The Danger of Music and Other Anti-Utopian Essays* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2009), 129.

³ Richard Taruskin, *The Oxford History of Western Music*, Vol 4, *The Early Twentieth Century* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 2.

period's multiple modes of creative expression."⁴

The problems with defining romanticism and modernism become still clearer when we consider a recent and widespread academic trend that is largely over-turning Whittall's thumbnail definition of modernist music (fractured and atonal) given at the beginning of chapter one. There, the reader will also recall our discussion of the now-persistent scholarly complaint that Schoenberg had essentially "hijacked" the definition of musical modernism, in part by forcing it too far in the direction of extreme dissonance. Still clearly reflecting the tradition of such hijacking, Oja's description of musical modernism duly included references to "innovation," "plurality," and "multiple modes of expression" but stopped well short of including tonal romanticism, as her application (elsewhere in her book) of the words "conservative" and "reactionary" and "neoromantic" to Ornstein's much less radical works from the 1920s clearly showed.⁵ For Oja, pluralism was not always as plural as it purported to be. It did have its limits, and romantic-sounding idioms were clearly not part of the pluralistic package.

But now in the twenty-first century – and this is of the utmost significance for music historiography – a whole generation of younger scholars are intent on turning many romantic-sounding composers dating from the generation of Elgar, Puccini, Sibelius, Pfitzner, Glazunov, Sibelius, Stanford, and Rachmaninoff (in short, a veritable who's who among Schoenberg's most regressive contemporaries) into the first generation of modern composers. We now have book-length academic studies with titles that would have been unthinkable only 30 years ago, like *Edward Elgar, Modernist*.⁶ Ironically, as Strauss scholars like Bryan Gilliam and Morten Kristiansen observe, this modernizing trend was started

⁴ Carol Oja, *Making Music Modern* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 4.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 22.

⁶ J. P. E. Harper-Scott, *Edward Elgar, Modernist* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

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back in the 1970s by none other than Carl Dahlhaus, the greatest German musicologist of his time. At that time, Dahlhaus had taken the bold musicological step of referring to the years 1890-1910 as a modern period instead of the twilight of the romantic era.⁷ However, his interest in his newly-coined modern period was reserved mainly for the kinds of technical developments that would ultimately lead up to atonality around 1910.⁸ For Dahlhaus, modernism also had its clearly set limits, and he found it “absurd to yoke Strauss, Mahler, and the young Schoenberg, composers who represented modernism in the minds of their turn-of-the-century contemporaries, with the self-proclaimed antimodernist Pfitzner.”

For Dahlhaus, the phrase “late romantic” constituted “a terminological blunder of the first order.”⁹ That particular description, he noted, had first been applied to Strauss by avant-gardists in the 1920s as a way of consigning him to the past. In the process of dismissing Strauss, advanced composers and commentators after the 1920s soon lost sight of an important historical reality, which was that Strauss had actually been the leader of a new and very modern generation around the turn of the century. The practical result, wrote Gilliam, was that “For decades Strauss remained at the periphery of the musicological discourse, somehow lost between the Brahms-Wagner polemic of the late nineteenth century and the Schoenberg-Stravinsky dialectic of the twentieth.”¹⁰ However, Gilliam also observed that when Dahlhaus made his somewhat daring scholarly gambit, he “galvanized present and future research.” The result was that scholars then

⁷ See especially chapter six (“1889-1914”) in Carl Dahlhaus, *Die Musik des 19. Jahrhunderts* (Wiesbaden: Laaber-Verlag, 1980), English translation as *Nineteenth-Century Music*, trans. J. Bradford Robinson (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1989), 330-389.

⁸ Ibid. Dahlhaus’s entire final chapter (chapter 6) of his *Nineteenth-Century Music* is constructed in this way, and ends with a discussion of Schoenberg’s first atonal works.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Bryan Gilliam, ed., *Richard Strauss and his World* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), xii.

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seized on Dahlhaus's initiative, using it as an opportunity to expand the definition of musical modernity "beyond the tonal-atonal axis," thus creating a way of re-incorporating Strauss into the twentieth-century historical narrative.¹¹

"A central project in Strauss scholarship over the last decade or so," observed Kristiansen in 2002, has been "rescuing the composer from his outdated status as a 'late romantic' and recasting him as an anti-romantic and early modernist."¹² The "modernizing" strategy to which Kristiansen and Gilliam refer has now also been applied to many other composers in Strauss's generation as well. For James Hepokoski in 2004,

Recontextualising Strauss's generation more properly as 'early modernists' is a historical task that has just begun – a central component of a much-needed, larger project to reconstrue early twentieth-century modernism in terms more complex than those typically proposed in the mid-century historical consensus that emerged in the decades after 1945.¹³

A very important sign of the changing academic climate is that J. Peter Burkholder has now honoured the new "modernizing" trend. Burkholder was commissioned by Norton to undertake the revisions for the seventh edition (2006) of the late Donald Jay Grout's venerable sixty-year-old university textbook *A History of Western Music*. For Burkholder, the music of the so-called late-romantic generation may sound romantic to our ears, but what makes it "modern," (or "modernist," and for some, even "post-modern") is the fact that all of those composers faced a common

¹¹ Ibid., xii-xiii.

¹² Morten Kristiansen, review of *Richard Strauss's Orchestral Music and the German Intellectual Tradition: The Philosophical Roots of Musical Modernism*, by Charles Youmans, in *Notes: Quarterly Journal of the Music Library Association* 63 (December 2006), 374.

¹³ James Hepokoski, "Beethoven reception: the symphonic tradition," in *The Cambridge History of Nineteenth-Century Music* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 456.

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set of musical and philosophical issues.¹⁴ For example, they had to decide what to do about the new problem of atonality, the arrival of which had suddenly broadsided their entire generation with all the force of a tidal wave while they were still in the middle of their composing careers. Furthermore, even the most popular of them faced stiff competition from an already-established museum repertoire.

Burkholder boldly writes that “while some music by composers of this generation may sound late Romantic in spirit or technique, what makes all of it modern is this overwhelming sense of measuring oneself against the past.”¹⁵ He further notes how “all the composers of this generation have aspects of both eras, combining nineteenth-century elements with twentieth-century sensibilities. Perhaps that is why much of this music – especially that of Mahler, Strauss, Debussy, Ravel, Sibelius, and Rachmaninov – has proven extremely popular with listeners.”¹⁶ Burkholder, then, is willing to recognize that romantic-sounding elements can readily be integrated into a distinctively twentieth-century sensibility without raising compatibility issues. Such a concept in twentieth-century music of, shall we say, “modern romanticism,” is nothing short of epochal. It allows for much broader diversity within the “modern” or “modernist” umbrella than scholars like Dahlhaus and Oja were willing to allow with their more circumscribed definitions of what made early twentieth-century music modern.

For Burkholder’s new edition of Grout to allow such a revisionist historical concept to see publication in the most standard and mainstream of university textbooks truly represents a

¹⁴ Burkholder, unlike many of the other scholars mentioned here (Albright, et. al.), stops short of categorizing his modern generation of Strauss, Rachmaninoff, Ravel, Debussy, etc. as full-fledged modernists. Rather, he reserved the more self-conscious “modernist” designation for the Schoenberg group.

¹⁵ Peter J. Burkholder, Donald Jay Grout, and Claude V. Palisca, *A History of Western Music*, 7th ed. (New York and London: Norton, 2006), 800.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 799

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sea change in aesthetics within the academic world.¹⁷ It is reminiscent of how Brian Hyer (see chapter one) had been commissioned to write the vitally important article on tonality for the 2001 *New Grove* (a dramatic contrast to the 1980 *New Grove* article by Dahlhaus), and how the *New Grove* editors had allowed Hyer to be deeply critical of the extent to which the progress narrative of musical evolution had written off so much important twentieth-century music that did not fit comfortably with high modernist notions of originality and newness. We will also see how the *Cambridge History* editors Nicholas Cook and Anthony Pople – much to Yale theorist Robert Morgan’s chagrin – gave a crucial chapter on early twentieth-century innovation to Christopher Butler instead of, say, to a major Schoenberg scholar like Morgan’s doctoral pupil Joseph Auner, who was assigned a specifically atonal topic in the same *Cambridge* volume. All of these cases were significant because, as surely as death and taxes in the realm of real life, tonality was always one of the hot-button issues that more or less guaranteed passionate reactions in discussions of modern music. As Burkholder’s new edition of Grout shows, the tide has been turning in the textbook industry as well. The practical result is that several major post-1900 composers who still sounded romantic, and were once deemed untimely by historians, have finally been allowed to be contemporaneous with their own era – simply through the act of labelling them modern instead of late-romantic.

By designating a far larger and more diverse group of composers as modern, irrespective of how romantic their music may sound to many ears, Burkholder has done the modern period a great favour: In a sense, he has conferred official textbook affirmation on several of the early twentieth century’s most popular composers – in particular, those who had long been among the worst casualties of evolutionary, “race-to-the-patent-office” (cf. Taruskin) historiography. As concert programming and record

¹⁷ A list of 26 scholarly advisers, including major names in American musicology, is included at the beginning of Burkholder’s textbook.

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catalogues have proven over the decades, several of the best composers from the early modern era had always been popular with the concert-going and record-buying public. And public popularity, we repeat, was also a status to which the more self-consciously modernist composers ultimately aspired. To state the obvious, frequency of performance has always been a standard way of measuring popularity. As we have already seen in chapter one, even the most radical avant-gardists like Boulez, Wuorinen and Stockhausen insisted in word and deed that their favoured repertoire be given a central place in the programming of concert organizations. Burkholder's general positioning of a large group of late romantic composers under the umbrella of modern music also can be taken as an official apology of sorts for past academic neglect, including prior editions of Grout. In the long run, the belated addition of several much-loved composers to the ranks of musical modernity can only result in much-needed luster for the (in many music lovers' minds) tarnished label "Twentieth-Century Music" – a label that has been used as an ideological rather than a simple chronological construct for far too long.

This is not to say that the emancipation of the dissonance will no longer be important in musicological discourse as an interesting and fruitful notion in its own right. It will continue to have at least some currency, but it will now be seen in a larger historical context, as one of a great many historical trends that were being played out in the music world of the early twentieth century. Even if it cannot explain Sibelius piano pieces or *Bolero* or 1920s radio music, it will remain useful for helping explain certain esoteric and specialized departures in compositional technique that, for some musicians in the early modern period at least, seemed to promise a new level of creative freedom. However, a recognition of the essentially *rarefied* nature of such "emancipated" historical developments naturally implies that they can no longer in good conscience be used to undergird the highly specialized view that the twentieth century was a time dominated by extreme dissonance. In the larger musical world it emphatically

was not. Such a view was originally hatched by a surprisingly small group of musicians who ultimately contributed very little to the standard repertoire as most audience members and performing musicians preferred to construct it.

For that reason, the criteria of dissonance cannot be given so much weight in the grand scheme of things, to the point where it is used to justify the academic elimination of several widely-performed composers from standard historical accounts. Such a concept cannot be allowed to turn an entire era into an ideology that masquerades under a deceptively neutral-sounding label like “twentieth-century music.” Essentially, the “modernizing” efforts of many recent scholars on behalf of romantic-sounding early-twentieth-century composers serves notice that Schoenberg in particular no longer defines his era to the same extent that he once did. To be sure, the inventor of atonality is still important, but he now becomes a part of a much larger picture of modernity. He is henceforth required to compete on the same “modern” terms as composing peers who *have* earned formidable positions in the everyday repertoire. In the terminological respect, the playing field has been leveled somewhat.

One practical result is that it will become harder and harder for writers of history textbooks to devote the twentieth-century so exclusively to atonal streams – as the great German historian Hans Heinrich Eggebrecht was still able to do in his *Musik im Abendland*, which is a particularly extreme example of what we are talking about here. In Eggebrecht’s 800-page German-language university textbook, seventy-seven pages were devoted to the twentieth century time period. Out of that total, seventy-three pages dealt exclusively with atonal composers and the rest were deemed sufficient to handle what Eggebrecht termed “the wealth of other new departures, streams and directions.”¹⁸ For him, this absurdly short space was enough to dispatch a whole list of figures

¹⁸ Hans Heinrich Eggebrecht, *Musik im Abendland: Prozesse und Stationen vom Mittelalter bis zur Gegenwart*, rev. ed. (Munich, Hamburg: Piper Verlag, 1996), 772.

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ranging from Puccini, Strauss, Bartók, Hindemith, Janáček, Busoni, Scriabin, Stravinsky and Debussy. Many major repertoire figures like Elgar, Vaughan Williams, Sibelius and Rachmaninoff were not so much as mentioned. Atonality, said Eggebrecht, was the only aspect of music that was fundamentally new after 1900. It was the only new musical advance that was worthy of the descriptor “New Music.” New Music, he stated simply, started with Schoenberg, Webern and Berg, and led to composers such as Boulez, Stockhausen Nono, Ligeti and Rihm.¹⁹ Meanwhile, nearly all of the standard twentieth-century “repertoire” music languished.

The difference between Eggebrecht and the new generation of scholars is vast, to say the least. For the leading Strauss scholar Bryan Gilliam, the elegant and lyrical *Der Rosenkavalier* (1911), written just after the more dissonant operas *Salome* (1905) and *Elektra* (1909), was not a regression but rather the beginning of post-modern plurality, an observation that Taruskin called

a beautifully calculated slap in the face of conventional historiography, which has always regarded *Salome* (together with its immediate successor, *Elektra*) as Strauss’s modernist peak, and therefore his high-water mark as a creative figure and *Der Rosenkavalier* as the beginning of the stylistic backslide that eventually condemned Strauss to historical irrelevance.²⁰

Even more unthinkable for scholars still devoted to upholding the progressive tradition, Daniel Albright has now broached the possibility of “a theory of the modernist movement that might embrace both Pfitzner and Schoenberg.”²¹ This is a truly astonishing move on the part of Albright, because Pfitzner was always one of the most infamous of early twentieth-century regressives in his capacity as a polemicist fighting a pamphlet war

¹⁹ Ibid, see discussion, “Das Grundsätzlich Neue der Neuen Music,” 752ff.

²⁰ Richard Taruskin, “A Surrealist Composer Comes to the Rescue of Modernism,” *New York Times* (December 5, 1999): AR1

²¹ Daniel Albright, ed, *Modernism and Music* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 11.

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against the evils of new developments like futurism and atonality.²² In order to accommodate figures like Pfitzner, Albright has explored the possibility of defining modernism as “a testing of the limits of aesthetic construction,” whereby each composer very consciously decides for himself how far he is willing to go.²³ Albright, then, takes aim at what he calls Dahlhaus’s “triumphalist definition” of musical modernism. Such a definition, says Albright,

tends to create an artificial distinction between history’s winners (Richard Strauss until about 1909, Debussy, Schoenberg, Stravinsky from about 1911 to 1917, Alban Berg, Webern, Edgard Varèse, Partch, Elliott Carter) and history’s losers (Giacomo Puccini, Jean Sibelius, Sergei Rachmaninov, Francis Poulenc, the later Richard Strauss, Stravinsky from about 1919 to 1951) – from brave progressives willing to endure humiliation as they blazed trails through the jungles of unheard acoustic phenomena and slothful retrogressives eager to flatter the tastes of a complacent bourgeois public. A great many points could be made to refute this (basically political) narrative of Modernism, including the fact that Strauss built his villa at Garmisch-Partenkirchen on the royalties of his challenging but wildly successful “Modernist” opera *Salomé*. But the fundamental problem is this: To define Modernism in terms of dissonance is to ignore the fact that a composer can be original in dimensions other than harmonic novelty.²⁴

Also taking aim at the traditional academic definition of musical modernism, Christopher Butler (we will hear more from Butler in chapter six) similarly maintains that “any truthful picture of innovation is likely to be a collage.”²⁵ And Schreker scholar

²² See Hans Pfitzner, “Futuristengefahr. Bei Gelegenheit von Busonis Ästhetik,” in *Gesammelte Schriften*, Vol. 1 (Augsburg: Filser-Verlag, 1926), 185-223.

²³ Albright, ed, *Modernism and Music*, 11.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 10-11.

²⁵ Christopher Butler, “Innovation and the avant-garde, 1900-20,” in *The Cambridge History of Twentieth-Century Music*, ed. Nicholas Cook and

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Christopher Hailey issues a direct challenge to the exclusive claims to modernity put forth by the Viennese trinity:

To regard Viennese musical modernism as a saga of harmonic evolution from late-Romantic chromaticism through atonality to serialism is to dismiss nine-tenths of all that this rich musical culture produced. For decades research has been driven by a preoccupation with the consequences of the atonal and serial revolutions, a narrative that excluded, by definition, all composers who pursued other paths. This preoccupation encouraged a general cultural bias that also banished them from the concert and recorded repertory, published music histories, classroom syllabi, and academic research²⁶

Hailey's "nine-tenths" includes many composers that, for today's observers, can still sound very romantic in the conventional sense, like Korngold, Schmidt and Schreker. And as we discussed in chapter two, music lovers can now extensively explore the works of those composers – and many others as well – with great ease thanks to numerous recent CD and opera house revivals.

For leading scholars to even contemplate placing composers like Strauss, Puccini and Elgar, not to mention Pfitzner and Korngold, among the "moderns" serves notice that the reclassification of traditionally-labelled late-romantic composers is fully intended to have the strongest historiographical implications, as Andrew Timms made clear in the quotation that opened this chapter.²⁷ It is also a highly sophisticated and fruitful line of inquiry which, alas, we cannot go into further for reasons of space. Suffice it to say that I support the "modernizing" aims discussed above. They are intended to enhance the academic respectability of

Anthony Pople (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 74. See also my comments in chapter six regarding Robert Morgan's hostile review of Butler's article.

²⁶ Christopher Hailey, ed., *Alban Berg and His World*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010), ix.

²⁷ See note 1.

composers who, for better or worse, are still commonly referred to in the general music world and the recording industry as romantics or late-romantics. And at the end of the day it may not be so important whether certain composers are classified as romantic or modern. What matters more is that many younger musicologists now generally agree that somehow, these “romantic modernists” and the varied styles they represent deserve a respected place in historical accounts devoted to the modern era.

Walter Simmons’ framework for defining twentieth-century romanticism

Hailey mentioned the extraordinary stylistic diversity of early twentieth-century Viennese composers. And even a casual glance at other national scenes can only multiply this diversity further. Due to the wide variety of styles that romantic-sounding twentieth-century music can embrace, perhaps we can reiterate that romanticism (like modernism) is much more than simply a specific style. Rather, the use of romanticism as a descriptive term (in a positive sense) reflects a general public attitude to composition in the twentieth century as well as to the overall performing repertoire itself. Ironically, it also ends up being a powerful critique of originality as an end in itself (which, as many writers have pointed out, is also a romantic notion). That is how we can best make sense of comments like those of Chandos Records owner Ralph Couzens, who explains the repertoire balance in his 30-year-old company’s vast catalogue of almost 2000 CDs by simply noting that, as far as the twentieth century is concerned, “there’s a lot of mathematical music out there that does nothing for me... we are more on the romantic side.”²⁸ Couzens’ catalogue (like that of many other labels like Naxos/Marco Polo, Hyperion, cpo, BIS and Albany) includes a

²⁸ Rob Barnett, “30 Years of Chandos – An Interview with Brian and Ralph Couzens,” *MusicWeb International* (January 9, 2009), http://www.musicweb-international.com/classrev/2009/Jan09/chandos_interview.htm (accessed April 23, 2012).

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very large group of post-1900 composers who for the most part stayed loyal to romantic-era notions of melody, texture and harmony. Chandos is therefore devoted to exploring composers as wildly diverse as Bax, Vaughan Williams, Kabalevsky, Rota, Menotti, Halvorsen and Korngold. In defining twentieth-century romanticism along the lines of the kind of modern repertoire that dominates the Chandos catalogue, I am simply expanding on common parlance, which naturally implies such expected and common-place features as clear tonality, lyricism, textural blend, and yes, the obvious singable melodies. These have always conjured up the sound of musical romanticism for the vast majority of people in the music world, including avant-gardists themselves. Further, because such latter-day romantic streams of composition are now more highly valued than ever, not least among record-buying connoisseurs, this general body of repertoire should be considered inherently “twentieth century” rather than a mere recapitulation of the nineteenth. The untimely should become the timely, as Burkholder’s new edition of Grout’s venerable history textbook has strongly implied by allowing composers as romantic-sounding as Rachmaninoff and Strauss to be an integral part of the modern musical sensibility that shaped early twentieth-century music.

Perhaps a good way to lay an academic foundation for our discussion of romanticism in the twentieth century is to draw on the framework of the American scholar Walter Simmons, whose ground breaking series of musicological studies devoted to American traditionalists lays out with some precision what it means to be a romantic composer in the age of modernism. The year 2004 saw the publication of Simmons’ *Voices in the Wilderness: Six American Neo-Romantic Composers*, the first book in his series, *Twentieth-Century Traditionalists*. Although research on many twentieth-century composers of a more romantic persuasion has been increasing in recent years, Simmons is one of the first to dedicate an entire book to properly defining, and dealing with, twentieth-century romanticism as a large-scale

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phenomenon in its own right, fully worthy of being considered alongside other twentieth-century streams such as serialism, neoclassicism, chance music and futurism. He provides a good theoretical basis for what romanticism – or, if one prefers, neoromanticism (Simmons finds the distinction between the two terms to be somewhat arbitrary since romantic music has had a continuous and unbroken tradition that extends right up to the present day) – means for twentieth-century music. He also outlines some of the problems and implications of such terminological usage – which is in many ways contrary to the specialized musicological definition of romanticism based primarily on the themes of alienation and innovation, which we will be discussing a little later in this chapter.

In defining twentieth-century romanticism, Simmons gives primacy of place to the continued use of tonality and the unapologetic appeal to the emotions. Both tonality and overt heart-on-sleeve emotional content were, of course, hotly disputed within the most advanced compositional circles throughout much of the twentieth century. As we will discuss further in chapter five, the historical status of both elements plunged to an all-time low during the post-1945 period when highly objective-sounding performances of Webern were held up as an ideal of sorts. In 2004, William Bolcom looked back on how the post-war generation rethought Webern according to their resolutely anti-emotional values:

The so-named post-Webern era was largely predicated on our misapprehension of Anton Webern; far from being as divorced from history as many postwar composers had wished, his music turns out to be deeply rooted in both late Romanticism and the Renaissance. There is a famous description by pianist Peter Stadlen of hearing Webern play his new Piano Variations for the first time; Webern pedaled through the huge silences and employed wildly romantic rubato throughout, a far cry from the white-coat-and-stethoscope Webern performances by Robert Craft

we grew up with in the sixties.²⁹

In Simmons' view, to be a twentieth-century romantic composer means reacting specifically against the "white-coat-and-stethoscope" emotional values that Bolcom witnessed in his younger years. It means being willing to place a premium on the deepest emotional qualities inherent in music, and maintaining a vital emotional connection with the audience. By "audience," Simmons does not only mean the audience of the future (as Schoenberg had hoped for), or the audience of a few initiates (as Carter and Boulez had aimed for), or even the audience of oneself. Rather, Simmons is speaking of the proverbial "general" audience – those who purchase the bulk of classical concert tickets and recordings.³⁰ Simmons' romantic composers, therefore, tend to question the most radical compositional tendencies of the modern era. At most, they make only limited use of the most advanced discoveries in compositional technique. They believe that such means are a contributing factor in driving audiences away from classical music in general, and contemporary music in particular.

The composers that Simmons selects for his monograph on American neoromanticism are Ernest Bloch (1880-1959), Samuel Barber (1910-1981), Paul Creston (1906-1985), Howard Hanson (1896-1981), Nicholas Flagello (1928-1994), and Vittorio Giannini (1903-1966). However, Simmons is careful to emphasize that these composers are far from being an isolated group. Rather, they only

²⁹ William Bolcom, "The End of the Mannerist Century," in *The Pleasure of Modernist Music: Listening, Meaning, Intention, Ideology* (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2004), 50.

³⁰ It is important to make this distinction between types of audiences here. There is a useful discussion by composer Jonathan Harvey, (written from the modernist perspective) about these different audience types, entitled "The Composer and the Audience." In his discussion, Harvey argues that modernist music did not renounce the audience as such, but rather redefined what an audience really was. His motive is to demonstrate that modernist music does in fact also command an audience if one defines the term in ways other than simply "bums in seats." See Jonathan Harvey, *Music and Inspiration*, ed Michael Downes (London: Faber & Faber, 1999), 79-124.

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represent a small sampling of the many who were active in the United States throughout the twentieth-century, and he rightly observes that he could just as well have substituted other equally romantic figures like Leo Sowerby (1895-1968), Randall Thompson (1899-1984), Douglas Moore (1893-1969), Bernard Herrmann (1911-1975), Norman Dello Joio (1913-2008), David Diamond (1915-2005), Robert Ward (1917-), Ned Rorem (1923-), Carlisle Floyd (1926-), Lee Hoiby (1926-2011), Dominick Argento (1927-), or several major European immigrants like Mario Castelnuovo-Tedesco (1895-1968), Erich Wolfgang Korngold (1897-1957), Miklós Rózsa (1907-1995), and Gian Carlo Menotti (1911-2007). Together, these figures contributed to a romantic stream that, as Carol Oja mentioned earlier, meandered through the entire twentieth century while modern developments passed them by. As we saw in chapter two, they were also the kind of composers who tended to bulk large in the catalogue of Albany Records.

Simmons also clarifies the broad international context of his American neoromantic composers by naming figures from other countries who are stylistically parallel to those he chose for his book. A more international list of twentieth-century (neo)romantics, says Simmons, would also include Sergei Prokofiev (1893-1953), Nikolai Myaskovsky (1881-1950), Dmitri Shostakovich (1906-1975), Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872-1958), Arnold Bax (1883-1953), Gerald Finzi (1901-1956), William Walton (1902-1983), Arthur Honegger (1892-1955), Heitor Villa Lobos (1887-1959), Joly Braga Santos (1924-1988), Henri Barraud (1900-1997), Kurt Atterberg (1887-1974), Gösta Nystroem (1890-1966), and Ture Rangström (1884-1947). As we can observe, Simmons' list of European and Soviet romantic composers contains many of the same names that Whittall, Watkins, Griffiths, Simms, and Leonard B. Meyer had mentioned in chapter two when they spoke of the persistence of traditional romantic idioms in the twentieth century. Simmons writes:

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Perhaps more than any other group among the American Traditionalists, the Neo-Romantics have borne a stigma of disrepute. Few would dispute the claim that the general listening public is most readily drawn to music with the qualities associated with the Romantic aesthetic. However, an implied assumption underlying much critical and musicological commentary suggests that a direct appeal to the emotions represents a lower form of artistic expression, as if accessibility somehow diminished the magnitude of a work's aesthetic achievement. Such an attitude plagued the reputations of composers like Tchaikovsky, Puccini, Strauss, and Rachmaninoff for years; indeed, it is only since the last decades of the twentieth century that the critical community has acknowledged their greatness without significant reservations.³¹

The reader will note Simmons' application of the term "romantic" to a broad range of traditionalist twentieth-century composers. This, of course, directly conflicts with revisionist scholars who now suggest that many late-romantic composers should instead be re-classified as "modern" or even "modernist," intentionally putting them on the same terminological level as Schoenberg and Stravinsky. Admittedly, the switch from "romantic" to "modern" has been pursued partly because scholars are still distancing themselves from lingering negative connotations surrounding late romanticism (cf. Kristiansen et. al.). Simmons, on the other hand, clearly sees no need to fight shy of the term. Unlike some scholars who are re-casting traditionally designated late-romantic composers as modern or modernist, Simmons is not embarrassed by romanticism. And so, there remains a fundamental lack of agreement on how we label those composers who maintained a basically romantic-sounding idiom in the twentieth-century. This fact alone makes a hard and fast definition of twentieth-century romanticism virtually impossible to achieve.

³¹ Walter Simmons, *Voices in the Wilderness: Six American Neo-Romantic Composers*, (Lanham, Maryland: Scarecrow Press, 2004), 10-11.

Nineteenth-century romanticism and the problem of *Unterhaltungsmusik*

In the same way, scholars can no longer agree on which nineteenth-century composers and compositional characteristics are to be considered specifically romantic. Peter Rummenhüller spoke out strongly against what he called the “sweeping” generalization of seeing the nineteenth century as essentially romantic. Using Schumann’s disparaging comments on “cheap” virtuosity as the gold standard (“Spend your time with musical scores rather than virtuosos”), Rummenhüller cast composer pianists like Thalberg and Herz in opposition to the romantic spirit as articulated by Schumann.³² Frederick Blume, the distinguished editor-in-chief of the first edition of massive German encyclopedia *Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart (MGG)*, also thought that on a certain level, instrumental virtuosity and salon music (*Unterhaltungsmusik*) represented anti-romantic tendencies in the nineteenth century.³³ However, this was a minority position in Blume’s generation, certainly among scholars in England and North America.

Perhaps in keeping with romanticism’s contradictory nature, Blume’s “anti-romantic” characteristics also turned out to be essential to a late-twentieth-century grassroots musical movement that became known as the Romantic Revival, which was the subject of chapter two. It was a movement that was beginning to establish itself during the same decades that Blume was overseeing the completion of the first edition of *MGG*. For leading Romantic Revival figures like Raymond Lewenthal and Frank Cooper, romantic music was utterly unthinkable without the spirit of the salon, the transcription, and good, old-fashioned

³² Peter Rummenhüller, *Romantik in der Musik: Analysen, Portraits, Reflexionen*. (Munich: Bärenreiter Verlag, 1989), 191. Schumann’s words, as cited by Rummenhüller: “Verkehre mehr mit Parituren als mit Virtuosen.”

³³ Friedrich Blume, “Romantik,” in *Die Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, ed Friedrich Blume (Kassel: Bärenreiter-Verlag, 1949-1986), 11:801.

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virtuoso high-jinks. Lewenthal and Cooper had, after all, taken the pulse of the musical public, gauging its musical tastes. Appropriately enough, one of the Romantic Revival's most sought-after performance series was the annual Newport Festival, founded in 1969. Right from its earliest years, the Newport Festival utilized some of the splendid and luxuriant mansions in Newport, Rhode Island for its principle concert venues. For several weeks each summer, these mansions resounded with music ranging from the piano concertos of Anton Rubinstein and Ignaz Moscheles to ground-breaking complete performances of the fifty-three Chopin-Godowsky etudes. The re-creation of an quasi-authentic nineteenth-century salon atmosphere was able to add an extra dimension to the Romantic Revival.

For classical music connoisseurs in the 1970s as well as critics like Harold C. Schonberg of the *New York Times*, the electric musical atmosphere generated by Lewenthal blazing through Alkan's *Symphonie* for solo piano, Liszt's *Hexameron* or the spectacular concertos by Henselt, Scharwenka and Rubinstein represented the absolute epitome of the old romantic spirit as revived in modern times.³⁴ In a sense, Lewenthal and Cooper were merely following the then-current academic conception of the "romantic" category. As Ruth Solie noted, mid twentieth-century scholarship "habitually treated 'Romanticism' as synonymous with the [nineteenth] century as a whole...By now, however, most musicologists would argue that a more nuanced view is necessary."³⁵ Solie nevertheless admitted, however, that the old default romantic description of the nineteenth century as a whole still remained in place, largely for want of a better alternative:

It is not that we have devised a finer grid for discriminating musical style periods within the century: On the contrary, even the

³⁴ All of these works were also recorded by Lewenthal for major labels such as RCA and Columbia.

³⁵ Ruth Solie, ed., *Source Readings in Music History*, Vol. 6, *The Nineteenth Century* (New York, London: Norton, 1998), 3.

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latest studies agree – whether with conviction or resignation – that musical style remained “romantic” until something “modernist,” or perhaps “impressionist,” arrived on the scene.³⁶

Solie’s comments were published in 1998. A decade and a half later, her “finer grid” remains elusive, and we still have difficulties establishing a consistent means of evaluating romantic elements versus anti-romantic elements within the nineteenth century itself.

For the twentieth century, such difficulties of classification are compounded by a culture war – romantic versus modern – that was, if anything, more lasting and severe than any culture war experienced in the nineteenth century. Battles over the allegedly “anti-social” nature of atonality and the related problem of “unsingable” modernist conceptions of melody still have not fully run their course. Even today, in the second decade of the twenty-first century, such disputes still fester here and there, although the academic receptiveness for post-1900 romantic-sounding composers has improved considerably. But in the cold war musical context circa 1960, the intellectual atmosphere for any musical elements that smacked of latter-day musical romanticism was downright intolerable. In 1964 the great Mahler scholar Deryck Cooke, in conversation with Nielsen scholar Robert Simpson – Simpson was a loyal defender of recent tonal composers, and was himself the composer of 11 symphonies and 15 string quartets – voiced a common frustration of many traditionalist musicians living in the post World War II era. Cooke remarked that “due to the present atonal climate, where all tonal music belongs to the past – Sibelius and Nielsen, and likewise Vaughan Williams and even perhaps Shostakovitch are linked in the minds of atonal composers with the ends of Romanticism.”³⁷ As Cooke implied, the idea of such a belated musical romanticism could not be studied

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Deryck Cooke, Denis Matthews, Bernard Keffe and Robert Simpson, “Musicians Talking. Symphonic thinking, avant-garde and Romanticism (1964),” in *Tonic. The Journal of the Robert Simpson Society* 11 (Summer 2001), 22.

without becoming directly immersed in the sometimes-ugly debate over modernism and the vexed question of what really constituted the legitimate music of the twentieth century.

The wide stylistic range of the romantic twentieth-century traditionalists only begins to hint at the deeper problems of taxonomy. Some will no doubt protest at the possibility of this or that figure being considered as a romantic. Debussy is sometimes called an anti-romantic. And Prokofiev and Shostakovich have often been labelled by scholars as modern neoclassicists, with all the anti-romanticism that this unavoidably “Stravinskian” term implies. Poulenc, too, has generally been lumped in with the neoclassicists.³⁸ But as far as romanticism itself is concerned, it was ever thus. As Taruskin points out, the idea of romanticism in music was actually an invention of the eighteenth-century Enlightenment era and was therefore well-established as an aesthetic movement long before the arrival of composers whom we traditionally designate as the first romantics (Schumann, Chopin, etc.). This of course explains why Taruskin found it necessary to initiate his long discussion of romantic aesthetics in volume two (*The Eighteenth Century*) rather than volume three (*The Nineteenth Century*) of his six-volume *Oxford History*. By the time the Schumann-Chopin generation began composing around 1830, there was already much controversy as to which styles and composers should be labelled “romantic.” Were musical philistines like Herz, Thalberg and Rossini with their apparently trivial melodies and virtuoso padding to be considered legitimate romantics? Many in Schumann’s time certainly thought so, but Schumann himself would have disagreed. Instead, he preferred to call them “modern,” a word that he intended in a very uncomplimentary sense. As far as he was concerned, the “moderns” were those who were too beholden to the prevalent virtuoso fashion sweeping Europe in the 1820s and 1830s. For

³⁸ We will discuss Debussy and Prokofiev later in this chapter. Poulenc and the problem of romantic neoclassicism will be discussed in chapter five.

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Schumann, the moderns comprised the largest group.³⁹ The real romantics, on the other hand, were those who courageously upheld the high standards set by the greatest composers of the past, which meant Beethoven and Bach.⁴⁰

Or, taking a completely different angle, had the younger composers of the 1820s and 30s already lost the purer strain of romanticism which had once been characteristic of Haydn and Mozart's generation? In 1841, Gelbcke asserted in Schumann's *Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung* that "the recent tendency has been increasingly to move away from the essential spirit of romanticism, although men would argue that they are still respecting that spirit."⁴¹ In any case, Gelbcke hastened to add, he still did not deny the term's use in contemporary music. Romanticism, he said, was actually applicable to the music of all epochs, "for the simple reason that all music is essentially romantic."⁴² Which, of course, was the standard view in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

There is also the question of whether early nineteenth-century romanticism was meant in the sense of the new status that "absolute" or purely instrumental music was enjoying, or whether it primarily reflect a supposedly "new" nineteenth-century focus on program music. These suggestions lead us into even more difficult waters, those of the thorny historiographical problems unknowingly visited upon future scholars when the late eighteenth-century generation of romantic composers (including Mozart and Haydn) were turned into "classics" by nineteenth-century commentators. Recognition of this "classicizing" trend (essentially

³⁹ See discussion in Dahlhaus, *Nineteenth-Century Music*, 248. Schumann divided composers up into three general groups: liberal (romantic), middle-of-the-road (modern), and reactionary (classic).

⁴⁰ Plantinga has a valuable discussion of this. See "Schumann's View of 'Romantic,'" in *The Musical Quarterly* 52 (April 1966), 221-232.

⁴¹ Gelbcke, quoted in Peter le Huray and James Day, ed., *Music and Aesthetics in the Eighteenth and Early-Nineteenth Centuries* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 525.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 525.

a form of historical revisionism) has led Taruskin to take the bold step of discussing Haydn and Mozart within the context of the early romantic movement in his six-volume *Oxford History*.⁴³ Which, of course, was how the period's theorists like Hoffmann and Reichardt had originally described the music of those two composers in the first place.⁴⁴

Kravitt's conundrum: Popular romantic composers versus the idea of romantic alienation

Clearly, in the words of Taruskin, "Romanticism was (and is) no single idea but a whole heap of ideas, some of them quite irreconcilable."⁴⁵ Some thinkers, however, have taken issue with this widely-held view, finding it much too broad. Edward Kravitt, in a 1992 article "Romanticism Today," has suggested that the best solution is to pin down, once and for all, the true essence of romanticism and thereby hopefully get rid of the contradictions. To this end, Kravitt advocates what he calls a "newer theory of romanticism."⁴⁶ His views are representative of a general scholarly approach that, as he pointed out, had already made significant inroads in musical scholarship by 1992. For Kravitt, the root of romanticism "centers on the artist's estrangement from society and

⁴³ See especially "The First Romantics" (chapter 31) in Richard Taruskin, *The Oxford History of Western Music*, Vol. 2, *The Eighteenth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 641-689.

⁴⁴ Hoffmann, for example, wrote that Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven "breathe[d] a similar romantic spirit." Hoffmann further distinguished between the different types of musical romanticism in the music of these three composers: Haydn's romanticism was pastoral in nature, and "grasp[ed] romantically what is human in human life." Mozart reflected the "superhuman, the wondrous element that abides in inner being." Beethoven's music was full of "fear, of awe, of horror, of suffering, and waken[ed] just that infinite longing which is the essence of romanticism." See Ruth Solie, ed., *Source Readings in Music History*, Vol. 6, *The Nineteenth Century* (New York, London: Norton, 1998), 152-153.

⁴⁵ Taruskin, *The Eighteenth Century*, 641.

⁴⁶ Edward Kravitt, "Romanticism Today," *The Musical Quarterly* 76 (Spring 1992), 93.

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consequent reaction: to turn within.” Kravitt continues: “The traditional definition, in contrast, centers on a host of subjects, all of which are interpreted as romantic attributes.”⁴⁷ In building his case, Kravitt recounts how the traditional pillars of upper-class support had disappeared by the nineteenth century: “Bereft of patronage, the artist faced a public that was often hostile – and met this crisis through alienation and isolation.”⁴⁸

Taruskin, in his exhaustive *Oxford History* analysis of romanticism, vividly describes many of the apparent contradictions to which Kravitt refers (and rejects in principle). For example, Taruskin contrasts the “I” (which he describes as “romantic individualism”) and the “We” (which he labels “romantic nationalism”).⁴⁹ In their time, composers like Beethoven, Schumann, Liszt, Verdi, and Wagner, all of whom earned considerable public popularity during their lifetimes, were ultimately a manifestation of both. As Taruskin demonstrates repeatedly during the course of subsequent volumes in his *Oxford History*, the “I” did eventually become exacerbated, resulting in a progressively “alienated” stream of composition that battled, Don Quixote-like, the rampant latter-day philistinism – whether real or imagined – of the supposedly uncritical music-loving masses. This was the eventual historical consequence of what Taruskin termed the “encroachment of the sublime upon the domain of the beautiful.”⁵⁰ In one practical illustration of such encroachment, Taruskin describes romanticism’s slow transformation from the ravishingly beautiful melodies of composers like Bellini into later musical idioms that deliberately down-played such traditional aesthetic priorities. Tucked away in Taruskin’s exhaustive portrayal of early nineteenth-century romanticism is a description of the

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Richard Taruskin, *The Oxford History of Western Music*, Vol. 3, *The Nineteenth Century* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 63ff.

⁵⁰ Richard Taruskin, “The Pastness of the Present and the Presence of the Past,” in *Text and Act* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 133.

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famous “Casta Diva” aria from Bellini’s *Norma*. It is a description that we can keep in mind, because it is useful in contributing to the tone of our general approach to twentieth-century romanticism:

These purely melodic dissonances are smoothly approached and quit. None stands out as a jagged stab. One is conscious only of peaceful lyricism, but one’s ear is kept perpetually on edge by an insistent undercurrent of harmonic tension in which practically every beat, crying out softly for resolution, maintains an understated but powerful undertow. When this great wave, this surge of melodic and harmonic electricity, has at last subsided, one feels that one has been transported and deposited in a different place. One’s own consciousness has been altered. That is romanticism.⁵¹

Taruskin shows how the cultural ferment of the early romantic period had created a broad repertoire that was viewed in its time – and is still generally acknowledged even today – as being emotionally rich and full of memorable tunes, not least the melodies of Bellini himself. Large swaths of the early romantic repertoire, from the new operas that were written in rapid profusion (Donizetti alone wrote around 75) to the countless romantic character pieces for piano, were tailored to the *current* melodic tastes of a broad and rapidly-growing middle class audience. In any case, observed Taruskin, during Bellini’s time romanticism still showed “benign cultural effects that transformed the arts. The ugliness came later.”⁵² With his mention of “ugliness,” there inevitably arises one of those pesky contradictions of definition that Kravitt had tried to so hard to avoid – that of beauty versus its opposite, with the latter leading to the growth of a progressively more and more “alienated” strand of romantic philosophy within music history. This opposite strand, by being considered independently, was instrumental in shaping the

⁵¹ Taruskin, *The Nineteenth Century*, 42.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 63.

exclusivity of Kravitt's definition of romanticism as alienation – and the resultant, often vicious, culture wars that erupted after the onset of the Schoenberg revolution. The alienated strand of romanticism thus found its logical culmination in the more esoteric realms of the twentieth-century avant-garde. As the traditionalist composer and Nielsen scholar Robert Simpson stated in 1964, “if one wished to put it unkindly, one might describe it [the avant-garde] as being the rotting remnants of the corpse of Romanticism. The fragments, lying all over the place, stinking.”⁵³ But Simpson's own musical nemesis (which was the cold war avant-garde) was more than a match for such colourful rhetoric. One could find enough examples to fill entire books, but a particularly memorable riposte came from the formidable Helmut Lachenmann, who today remains the acknowledged dean of a still politically powerful German atonal avant-garde. In the early 1980s, Lachenmann (targeting Hans Werner Henze in particular) blasted the music of post-war “neo-symphonists,” among whom Simpson was unquestionably also a prime example. Said Lachenmann: “The recent teeming abundance of powerfully emotional music exists thanks to the degenerate fruitfulness of maggots having a good time on the fat of the tonal cadaver.”⁵⁴

Taruskin's marvellously eloquent thumbnail sketch of Bellinian melody can show us at least one potential weakness in Kravitt's overall interpretation of the nineteenth century: In the attempt to do away with any sense of contradiction, Kravitt has drawn a picture of an era that comes perilously close to caricature. His view of romanticism fails to recognize the far-reaching influence of some very widespread realities in the nineteenth century. How, for example, does the picture of an alienated artist account for the above-cited Bellini, who created what Dahlhaus

⁵³ Deryck Cooke, Denis Matthews, Bernard Keffe and Robert Simpson, “Musicians Talking. Symphonic thinking, avant-garde and Romanticism (1964),” in *Tonic. The Journal of the Robert Simpson Society* 11 (Summer 2001), 21.

⁵⁴ Helmut Lachenmann, “Open Letter to Hans Werner Henze,” *Perspectives of New Music* 35 (Summer 1997), 191.

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called “the quintessence of what the nineteenth-century with astounding unanimity, understood by melody in the strong sense of the term.”⁵⁵ “Astounding unanimity” on the part of public acceptance, and “alienation” would seem to be opposites. For a supreme melodist like Verdi (who dominated Italian opera for half a century between Bellini and Puccini), such public popularity had served as nothing less than a clear ratification of quality. Were operatic giants like Verdi, Gounod, Massenet, Tchaikovsky, Dvorak and Puccini, not to mention salon composers like Moszkowski and Chaminade, really subjecting themselves to ever-greater alienation?

As the huge popularity of many romantic composers during their own time reminds us, Kravitt’s basic view of the nineteenth century fails to properly recognize a fundamental reality – the sheer enthusiasm of the concert and opera-going public for so much of the music of their own time, growing alienation notwithstanding. It is pertinent at this point to mention the French romantic theorist F. R. De Toreinx. Rossini’s motto, Toreinx observed in 1829, was “I write for the rabble.”⁵⁶ Toreinx immediately added that Rossini was “assured in the knowledge that the rabble would soon become the entire public. For us Frenchmen, then, musical romanticism, can you believe it, is singing in grand opera!”⁵⁷ In terms of rallying the masses, (which was akin to Taruskin’s romantic “We”), no less a figure than Wagner was also destined to follow in Rossini’s footsteps, although Wagner, especially in his later years, would certainly not have wanted himself seen as a stylistic descendent of the Italian Rossini. In any case, Wagner’s operas did manage to achieve a Rossinian level of public popularity within his own lifetime – a level of popularity that every post-1910 radical modernist would

⁵⁵ Dahlhaus, *Nineteenth-Century Music*, 117.

⁵⁶ Toreinx was the pseudonym for Eugène Ronteix, who published his *L’Histoire du romantisme* in 1829 in Paris. Extended excerpts are translated in le Huray and Day, ed., 419.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

have envied.

As le Huray observed, Toreinx (like many writers of his era) “used the term romanticism from time to time as the synonym for all that was new in contemporary thought.”⁵⁸ As we will see, Toreinx’s conception of romanticism is very different from, and even opposite to, that of Schumann and his colleagues at the *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*. Although Schumann certainly won the romantic battle as far as future historians were concerned, we will also allow Toreinx the right to speak his mind on the subject of romanticism, especially in view of the recent growth in academic respect for the more popular, salon-like, aspects of nineteenth-century music. In this way, we can usefully connect Toreinx’s early nineteenth-century concept of a very public kind of romanticism to the much more recent Cooper-Lewenthal Romantic Revival. In doing so, we can better understand from a theoretical point of view how the comprehensive twentieth-century (and now twenty-first-century) revivals of once-popular genres like salon music and operatic transcriptions are now able to underscore a very important historic aspect of the early romantic movement more clearly. Certainly, the Romantic Revival’s usage of the word “romantic” is far removed indeed from Kravitt’s conception of romanticism as alienation. Many will see it as downright wrong-headed, but it serves as a useful historical check and balance. As Alain Frogley stated in his 1984 review of the lighter, salon-like repertoire that dominated the Romantic Revival’s Newport Music Festival, “We need to hear more of this body of music so hastily dismissed by post-Wagnerian solemnity. Considering the variety of music we now hear from the eighteenth century, our experience of the nineteenth still seems very narrow.”⁵⁹ At the time Frogley wrote his

⁵⁸ le Huray and Day, ed., 8.

⁵⁹ Alain Frogley, “The Newport Music Festival,” *19th-Century Music* 6 (Spring, 1983): 270. In common with many present-day scholars, Frogley himself is cautious about using the term “Romantic Revival.” In his article about the Newport Festival, he uses the phrase a total of one time, and then only in scare quotes. His preferred term is the more neutral-sounding phrase “nineteenth-century music.” Equally revealing is the fact that Frogley’s short

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review, the Newport Festival was already well-established as the most important annual Romantic Revival festival. Today, with approximately 70 yearly concerts, it is still considered one of the largest and most prestigious summer music festivals of any kind in North America, with a reputation comparable to the festivals at Tanglewood, Aspen, and Ravina. Numerous cultural accolades attest to this status. Newport is, for example, routinely cited in various general tourist guides as one of the top musical and cultural destinations in North America. And it still maintains a strong focus on rare romantic repertoire.

Kravitt's definition, then, is not able to recognize the implications of the continuous, indeed raging, public success of salon music and opera, let alone a long list of other related historical facts such as Tchaikovsky's secure position as the top nineteenth-century Russian composer in the eyes of the Russian public. A definition based on alienation simply cannot be squared with the brisk sales of salon music from the early nineteenth century until well into the twentieth century, when, to use a German academic term, such *Trivialmusik* was still flowing from the pens of Sibelius, Reger, Scott, Ireland, Petterson-Berger and a hundred other composers at the behest of publishers trying to earn their daily bread. During this time, Fritz Kreisler (1875-1962) also wrote his wildly popular violin vignettes and Andres Segovia (1893-1987) almost single-handedly created a guitar repertoire partly by means of the discredited genre of transcriptions. The works of both Kreisler and Segovia are still standard today.

Significantly, Kravitt's theoretical framework cannot even explain many events that are pivotal for all historians of nineteenth-century music, such as the premiere of Wagner's *Ring Cycle*. This is a real problem because Wagner later became one of

review article is the only article in the database of the journal *19th-Century Music* that even mentions the Lewenthal-Cooper Romantic Revival. This is very odd when we consider that both the Romantic Revival and the journal *19th-Century Music* were conceived in the late twentieth-century for essentially the same purpose, which was to remedy what was seen as the unjustly low reputation of nineteenth-century (aka romantic) music.

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the most important nineteenth-century links in the post-Schoenbergian version of the progress narrative of music history. How could such an innovative work like the *Ring* be an instant hit? Were not great works supposed to be rejected at first? Moreover, it was actually the musical public who accepted the *Ring* before many a more learned musician, partly because a portion of the latter group, led by the brilliant critic Hanslick, were still philosophically beholden to the conservative Brahms faction in the Wagner-Brahms controversy. Moreover, after its premiere in the 1870s, the *Ring* was immediately placed in high demand by opera houses throughout Germany, while bizarrely (from a modernist historiographical point of view), Bizet's *Carmen* from the same decade was initially a failure. Go figure. Needless to say, the *Ring*'s instant and fabulous public success does not offer the most convincing support for the romantic caricature of Wagner the genius not being recognized in his own time. It may have taken Wagner a while, but he got there well before he died. Moreover, the reasons for the sporadic success of his early grand operas in the Meyerbeer tradition were also due to reasons that were more complex than the notion that he was merely "ahead of his time."

Kravitt goes on to insist that "our understanding of romanticism in music is blurred by the old [contradictory] definition."⁶⁰ He then admonishes his own scholarly peers, saying that "musicology remains isolated from the critical advances made by scholars in literature and art in discussion of the theory of romanticism."⁶¹ We can surely all agree that it is not pleasant to be singled out as being regressive – as being behind the times. It is no fun contemplating the possibility of being made into a laughing stock for future generations. This can only bring to mind figures like the old Renaissance theorist Artusi, who foolishly resisted Monteverdi's operatic innovations, which, as we know, did very well in public terms. It also brings to mind the many Artusi-like late-Romantic composer-professors in the first half of the twentieth

⁶⁰ Kravitt, 94.

⁶¹ Ibid.

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century like Daniel Mason (1873-1953) of Columbia University (see also discussion in chapter five) and George Dyson (1883-1964) of London's Royal College of Music (see chapter six). Both Mason and Dyson had long and distinguished careers as leading academics in major institutions. Both composed large bodies of late-romantic music according to the conventional definition. And both were active for decades as outspoken anti-modernists, writing many books and essays that fought against radical new developments like the rise of atonality.

Maybe, as Kravitt believed, musicology was indeed dragging its heels by not being cognizant of the latest research in literature and art. But on closer examination, that may not be an entirely satisfactory explanation either. Could it be that "Kravitt's conundrum" is, at the very least, partly a manufactured problem? After all, why does it have to be considered imperative that a musical category should exactly parallel, say, a literary category? Although there certainly were parallels between music and literature, it could equally be maintained that there were also different issues to deal with in what, after all, were two very different and contrasting disciplines. And, did not late eighteenth and early nineteenth-century commentators also believe that music was in a separate (and even idealized) category of its own, as far as romantic theory was concerned? Was not music considered to be *inherently* romantic, as opposed to the other arts? For the early romantics, music was romantic simply because it explored regions of human feeling that went far beyond what literature, sculpture, and painting were able to portray.

Rummenhüller has lamented the fact that the music world's concept of romanticism eventually strayed far from that of the literary world, which to this day ends the romantic period in literature around 1830.⁶² But even concerning early nineteenth-century romantic music alone, Donald Francis Tovey, for one, was not entirely convinced by the need to push the music-literature

⁶² Peter Rummenhüller, *Romantik in der Musik: Analysen, Portraits, Reflexionen* (Munich: Barenreiter Verlag, 1989), 8.

parallel so far:

The association of romantic music with romantic literature is a natural fact; but its musical importance is less than one might suppose. The derivation of many of Schumann's finest pianoforte works from the writings of Jean-Paul Richter and E. T. A. Hoffmann is enthusiastically proclaimed in general and in detail by Schumann himself. But I frankly own that, though I know most of the music by heart, I have, like many of my contemporaries, failed to penetrate deeply into the jungle of those prose writers, and have not found my efforts in the slightest degree necessary to my understanding of the music.⁶³

And in regard to early twentieth-century musical developments, there is another less-than-satisfactory parallel between music and literature that has been pointed out many times. If nothing else, this should also serve as yet another warning for us to *not* push the music-literary parallel any farther than is reasonable: Shortly after 1900, we will recall, a small but significant number of composers had abandoned traditional melody and tonality. However, this particular historical development in music had few parallels in the contemporaneous literary world, where, aside from a few writers like James Joyce, the broad gamut of accepted grammatical structures, standardized spellings, and so forth, maintained a much stronger foothold among the literati and evolved much more slowly. The implications of this will be discussed further in chapter six, which deals in greater depth with the linguistic analogy and the twentieth-century survival of traditional tonality.

Moreover, late twentieth-century English literary criticism does not normally distinguish between, say, a late nineteenth-century "romantic" writer and a more "modern" early twentieth-century writer in the way that musicians habitually distinguish between late-romantic nineteenth-century composers and early

⁶³ Donald Francis Tovey, "The Main Stream of Music," in *The Main Stream of Music and Other Essays* (Cleveland and New York: 1959), 348.

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modern twentieth-century composers. For today's literary critics, a common historical division is to reserve romanticism in literature for a period that ended around 1830. For English critics at least, this is then followed by the Victorian Age up until about 1900. Is Kravitt also suggesting, then, that we should "keep up" with English literary criticism by designating the music of Sir Hubert Parry as "Victorian" instead of as late-romantic?

Nor has the literary world commonly used "romantic" and "modern" to distinguish between antithetical (conservative and radical) literary streams within the twentieth century itself. The novelist H. G. Wells is not held up as an example of an old-fashioned romantic writer who supposedly utilized clear and direct old-style "common practice" English grammar in a modern age that had already "moved on" to Joyce's revolutionary new grammar. It would be absurd to maintain that Wells' old-fashioned "word consonances" were merely redolent of outmoded nineteenth-century English usage. Wells is not contrasted with Joyce the Modernist who (finally!) broke down the old English language by isolating and seizing on nineteenth-century grammatical irregularities, dramatically increasing the statistical frequency of those irregularities, adding a heap of neologisms while jettisoning old words left and right, and thus forming a "New English."

In the music world after 1900, the words "romantic" and "modern" were certainly used in countless discussions, both scholarly and journalistic. The two polar concepts may have been the bluntest of tools, but they effectively represented what were often thought of as "old" and "new" compositional streams. They came, almost pre-packaged, with a great deal of aesthetic baggage and served to form the most common of twentieth-century binary musical oppositions. They effectively, if all too simplistically, described a fundamental distinction between the supposed rearguard and the supposed vanguard within twentieth-century composition, without regard to the taxonomical difficulties or problems of consistency that arose when trying to conclusively fit

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composers into one or the other of these two categories. Such romantic/modern usage was deeply embedded, not least in a hundred music history textbooks, and we simply cannot read and understand musical commentary dating from much of the twentieth century without knowledge of this fact.

Some twentieth-century composers seemed to be exclusively entrenched either in the camp of romantic emotion or in the camp of modern constructivism but for most other musical figures it was clearly not so simple. To pick one example, American composer and scholar James Tenney saw such a contrasting juxtaposition as a basic characteristic of Conlon Nancarrow's music. In describing Nancarrow's *Studies for Player Piano*, Tenney also gave us a good example of how the word "romantic" was so often used in modernist circles as a stand-in for the warm emotional sense, and as such was played off against its modernist opposite, which Tenney described as "cold-as-ice" constructivism:

On the one hand, there is enough in these pieces in the way of systematic intellectual organization to satisfy the most mathematically abstruse "constructivist". On the other hand, there is enough lyrical freedom, rhapsodic invention, and sheer fantasy to warm the heart of the most outrageously romantic "intuitionist". The music is at times austere, dry, cold-as-ice; at other times warm, passionate, explosively exuberant.⁶⁴

Ever since the 1920s the two words, romantic and modern, were used to help describe the general break between between the music of the late nineteenth century and the music representing the most radical advances of the early twentieth century. Clearly, the established daily terminological usage of the literary versus musical worlds was not always a perfect match. Further, by inordinately focusing on innovation and alienation, Kravitt

⁶⁴ James Tenney, "General Introduction," in accompanying booklet, *Conlon Nancarrow: Studies for Player Piano*, performed by Conlon Nancarrow, ampico reproducing piano, WER 69072, 2000, compact disc, 3.

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strongly implies that the larger musical world erred in how they applied the word “romantic” throughout the twentieth century. However, when any given word is used enough times in a certain way, and for a long enough period, we finally come to the point where we have to deal with a much more banal truism. This simply states that dictionary meanings of words ultimately capitulate to common daily language usage. Dictionaries accept that fact as a matter of course, and give us etymologies that go back centuries. Musicology can too, as Leonard B. Meyer (who we will discuss presently) implies in his study of the persistence of romanticism in the twentieth century – an era which Meyer refers to as romanticism’s “late-late” period. Which, of course does not solve all our problems. Despite Kravitt’s valiant attempts at simplification, the difficulty of defining romanticism will probably always remain. The concept has so many simultaneous and even outright conflicting meanings that most writers sensibly embrace that fact and make multifariousness and inherent contradiction an integral part of their definition.

For twentieth century music, there is also a logical problem that inevitably surfaces when we insist too strongly on Kravitt’s drastically pared down definition of romanticism. Indeed, it seems almost counter-intuitive to imply that the most self-consciously innovative twentieth-century composers – those who (intentionally or unintentionally) did manage most fully to alienate the public with their music – would then become the twentieth century’s most romantic composers. That would be very strange indeed, and would make little or no sense to performing musicians, let alone the concert-going public. One can only imagine the public relations effect of advertising a Romantic Revival Music Festival devoted to reviving neglected works from the early Darmstadt years. And to be fair, few commentators have ever pushed the usage of the word “romantic” this far, except in the most specialized of academic contexts.

One of these is theorist Neil Minturn, who has drawn attention to what he calls Prokofiev’s opposing romantic and

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traditionalist inclinations. Throughout his analysis of Prokofiev's music, Minturn uses the word "romantic" as a synonym for the more radical elements – by which he mainly means those which do not easily submit to traditional tonal harmonic analysis.⁶⁵ Minturn thus builds on, and brings to a logical conclusion, the idea that harmonic innovation is one of the nineteenth century's most distinctive features. This framework provides justification for him to submit short excerpts of Prokofiev's music to what theorists call the "atonal terms" of set theory. In direct contrast, he labels the tonal and melodic side of Prokofiev as "traditionalist" (obvious examples would include the broad lyrical melodies that dominate the first and fourth movements of the Second Piano Concerto or the finale of the Third Piano Concerto). Minturn's binary pairing of opposites – traditionalist versus romantic – will fall oddly on non-scholarly ears, even though his rationalization seems impeccable. And ironically, this brings up yet another difficulty: Here, even Minturn himself *still* cannot get away from conflating the entire nineteenth century *in toto* with romanticism in general: Ultimately, his reasoning, like that of Kravitt, ends up sounding somewhat like the following: since the nineteenth century means innovation above all, it therefore follows that innovation is a romantic trait.

Throughout the twentieth century, it was nevertheless true that long before scholars like Kravitt and Minturn, many commentators were already sensitive to the connection between modernist innovation and certain philosophical antecedents in the so-called Romantic Era, a time that also famously gave birth to so much music that conservative audiences still see as being traditionally beautiful. Paul Hindemith, in his 1949-1950 Norton lectures, mercilessly exploited this irony at his opponents' expense by gleefully pointing out that such "modern" composers, deep down, had not actually succeeded in freeing themselves from romanticism at all:

⁶⁵ Niel Minturn, *The Music of Sergei Prokofiev* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997).

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We may ask, however, whether we could not assemble chords novel in their succession (even if not in their individual arrangement of tones) to produce less traditional patterns of sound. Would not such novelty in succession be proof of a further extensibility of the harmonic material, thus showing that the steadily ascending line of harmonic development had not reached its end? This idea, like so many others concerning musical styles and aesthetics, is extravagant, born of fancy, and defies reasonable investigation. If we are justified in calling any structure of ideas naïve romanticism, this theory concerning harmony deserves that name: it is unsurpassably naïve and romantic.⁶⁶

Hindemith also found a certain irony in the fashionable urge to extend musical language by imitating mechanical devices.

Only a composer of the romantic type can deceive himself to such a degree as to believe [that] music has to portray the spirit of our time and consequently make use of impersonal, unsentimental, nonseducing antiromantic sounds.⁶⁷

Composers like Boulez and Babbitt, (to mention only two appropriate candidates for Hindemith's comments) are not normally referred to as romantic composers, not even among specialists, and certainly not by Hindemith (1895-1963), who lived long enough to experience the ultra-radical compositions of both. Nor did they refer to themselves as romantics.

It is interesting to note here that Schoenberg did claim a romantic side to his musical makeup, not least because he loved word play and paradox. But Edward Dent – the distinguished British scholar who co-founded ISCM together with Schoenberg and was one of his most articulate critical advocates – certainly did not consider the atonal music of the Schoenberg circle to be a part

⁶⁶ Paul Hindemith, *A Composer's World: Horizons and Limitations. The Charles Eliot Norton Lectures, 1949-1950* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1952), 120.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 30.

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of the post-1910 late-romantic stream, together with the works of Strauss and Sibelius. However, Schoenberg himself still believed that his twelve-tone music had much the same emotional content and communicative powers as did earlier romantic music. He himself did not fight against romanticism in the sense of it being associated with highly emotional expression. Late in life, the great atonalist even spoke out against newer performing styles which, as he saw it, were “suppressing all emotional qualities and all unnotated changes of tempo and expression” in the performance of the romantic literature.⁶⁸ “Why is music written at all?” he asked. “Is it not a romantic feeling which makes you listen to it? Why do you play the piano when you could show the same skill on a typewriter? Why do you sing? Why play the violin or the flute?”⁶⁹

Not all scholars are as limiting as Kravitt when they discuss romanticism in the context of innovation and alienation. A case in point is Leonard B. Meyer. In his important *Style and Music* (1989), Meyer usefully outlines many of what he calls the “less obvious” characteristics of romanticism. Throughout his analysis, Meyer (like Taruskin) points out and emphasizes romanticism’s contradictory elements. But when he specifically applies the term “romantic” to the twentieth century, he carefully explains that he is only considering “less obvious manifestations of Romanticism such as are exemplified in ‘advanced’ music and music theory.”⁷⁰ In a section entitled “The Persistence of Romanticism” (which forms the epilogue to his *Style and Music*), Meyer makes clear that he has no intention of chasing the illusory goal of finding a single essential meaning, either of romanticism in the twentieth century or of romanticism in general. Rather, he readily admits that he is being selective in his definition, and hastens to add that his analysis “will not be concerned with obvious continuations of the

⁶⁸ Arnold Schoenberg, “Today’s Manner of Performing Classical Music (1948),” in *Style and Idea* (London: Faber & Faber, 1975), 320.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 321.

⁷⁰ Leonard B. Meyer, *Style and Music: Theory, History, and Ideology* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1989), 338.

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styles of Romanticism in the music of composers such as Strauss, Vaughan Williams, Prokofiev, and Barber, or with reversions to earlier dialects as in the music of Rochberg.”⁷¹ Indeed, Meyer’s common-sense observation – that even composers like Prokofiev and Vaughan Williams reflected many of the more obvious features of traditionally romantic-sounding music (such as the basic preservation of long-established conventions of melody and harmony) in the twentieth century – will be of great assistance to us as we continue our attempt to forge a rough and ready sketch of what the term “romantic” has meant over the past one hundred years.

As Kravitt’s work demonstrates, the rich etymological history of the word “romanticism” has not stopped thinkers from attempting the impossible and trying to bring a semblance of order to the terminological chaos. When Kravitt attempts to pin down what he thinks is the word’s underlying essence, he is trying to show that writers who submit to the commonly used “contradictory” definition are missing something more fundamental. But as the preceding Hindemith comments show, Kravitt’s contradiction-free definition is still left with an unresolved contradiction – when applied to the twentieth century, his narrowed-down view of romanticism ends up describing the world of radical modernism and can scarcely apply to composers like Rachmaninoff, Barber and Strauss, none of whom felt compelled to cultivate the embattled Schoenbergian romantic attributes like self-imposed isolation, harmonic innovation for its own sake, or the writing of music for the future.

With Kravitt’s sanitized and manageable view of romanticism (he never explains how he would classify hundreds of composers like Alfvén, Medtner and Bax – and neither, by the way, does Dahlhaus), he ends up having to discount so many common applications of the word that his new definition becomes almost unrecognizable for the every-day music lover. And that is not

⁷¹ Ibid.

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entirely convincing either. After all, dictionary editors, faced with words containing a vast array of multiple and conflicting meanings, would never attempt to instill a false sense of orderliness by eliminating the majority of definitions that did not support what they thought a given word should mean, and finally settle on a single meaning that was, dare we say it, as obscure as possible. From a lexicographical point of view, such a tactic would be severely misguided. And practically speaking, few would buy such a dictionary. Instead, an editor would simply compile a list of all the definitions that have grown up over time, often with helpful citations and quotations that illustrate the differing contexts.

That is what we must be free to do when grappling with the idea of romanticism in the twentieth century, even as we stop well short of the impossible task of assembling any sort of exhaustive definition. And that is why tackling the theme of romanticism in the twentieth century can be such a useful musicological endeavour, yielding many practical insights regarding the historiography of a very confused, contradictory and unsettled period. For our purposes, chasing down and defining romanticism in its twentieth-century context should be considered as one of at least two possible ways of forging a theoretical framework that is intended to give certain early twentieth-century composers – above all, those who were traditionally written off as romantic, late-romantic, or neoromantic – a historical weight that is at least somewhat commensurate with their established presence in the performing repertoire.

A second strategy for giving such composers a historical presence (which we already discussed earlier in this chapter) is now being brilliantly employed by leading scholars like Gilliam, Hepokoski and Albright. To briefly recapitulate that section, they have been suggesting that the early twentieth-century late-romantic generation of Strauss and Sibelius be re-named as the first “modern” generation. Thus, Strauss and even Pfitzner are henceforth to be considered “modern” along with Schoenberg and Stravinsky rather than identified as late-romantic. As we have

already seen, such an alternate strategy is accomplished by expanding the definition of “modern” well beyond its narrow confines of dissonance and fragmentation. But the question of whether Strauss is a romantic or a modern ultimately matters little. What does matter for us here is that during the so-called New Music era after 1910, the word “romantic” was still very often applied to a lot of recently composed music, and it was used both by its supporters and its detractors.

**Romantic composers as a moving target:
Problems in the classification of Debussy and
Prokofiev, and the riddle of Busoni.**

As we saw at the beginning of this chapter, Strauss was historically classified as a late-romantic but is now rapidly becoming established in academic circles as a true modernist in his own right. Such a major transformation is an apt illustration of the reality that, along with being a “whole heap” of meanings (cf. Taruskin), romanticism has long been a moving target. It is also a timely reminder that the target has been shifting continuously for at least the last two hundred years. The first edition of *Grove's Dictionary* (1879-1889) reflected an earlier stage of this phenomenon when it observed how “romantic” tended to be superseded by “classic” as the decades went by. The *Grove* article went on to explain how,

as the associations of the word Classical convey the highest meed of praise, works at first pronounced to be romantic establish, by general recognition of their merit, a claim to be considered classical. What is ‘romantic’ today may thus grow, although itself unchanged, to be ‘classical’ tomorrow. The reader will thus understand why, in Reichardt’s opinion, Bach, Handel and Gluck were classical, but Haydn and Mozart romantic, and why later critics, in presence of the fuller romanticism of Beethoven, placed Haydn and Mozart among the classical composers; and why

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Beethoven himself, in his turn, was declared to be classical.⁷²

The writer of that early Grove article was simply following a long-established pattern in how the words classic and romantic were used – a pattern that could be traced back to earlier romantic commentators. In 1829, Toreinx already bore witness to a similar trend in his *Histoire du Romantisme en France* when he observed that romantic music generally became “classic” over time: “As far as we are concerned, Paisiello, Cimarosa and Mozart are classics, though their contemporaries regarded them as romantics.”⁷³ In 1933, Dent also attempted to continue developing the historical pattern outlined by Toreinx and the first edition of *Grove’s Dictionary* along more or less the same lines by suggesting that it was now time for musical commentators to begin placing early nineteenth-century romantic composers among the “classics” as well:

And as we look back now on what is called the Romantic period—the period of Weber, Berlioz and the rest—we find ourselves nowadays regarding them as almost classical; their romantic quality has faded with the passing of generations, and we are conscious of having to make a deliberate effort to put ourselves back into their state of mind.⁷⁴

But if the application of the term romantic threatened to go in all directions, the same was also true of the new (or neo) classicism after the 1920s, as Marion Bauer pointed out in 1933:

Neoclassicism covers a multitude of styles. To include under that head the trivialities and mannered works of Poulenc and Auric, the later Stravinsky compositions, Schoenberg’s abstractions,

⁷² Ware, Colonel H., “Romantic,” in *A Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, ed. Sir George Grove (London Macmillan, 1900), 3: 148.

⁷³ le Huray and Day, ed., 416.

⁷⁴ Edward Dent, “The Romantic Spirit in Music,” *Royal Musical Association* 59 (1932-1933): 94-95.

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Prokofieff's *Classical Symphony*, Bartók's works when he puts aside the folk music research, Hindemith's masterly counterpoint, Casella's manufacture, and the artificial style of many who should be romanticists, shows the elasticity of the term.⁷⁵

For these reasons, it is not uncommon to find numerous twentieth-century composers classified in diametrically opposing ways. Rodrigo, Strauss, Prokofiev, and Shostakovich could be called romantic or neoclassical. Hodier called the entire American symphonic school (Samuel Barber, Howard Hanson, David Diamond, William Schuman, etc.)⁷⁶ neoclassical, while others such as Walter Simmons saw the same group of composers (at least in part) as essentially romantic.

Another very difficult task for historians was the question of whether Debussy (and impressionism in general) were representative of the old romanticism or the new modernism. One factor that clouded this issue was the fact that different observers valued different elements in Debussy's music. What, then, is one to do with Debussy – and the impressionism with which his name seems to be permanently associated – when considering the phenomenon of musical romanticism in the twentieth century? This question is very much complicated by two factors: First, some writers consider impressionism to be anti-romantic because it grew out of Debussy's battle against excessive German influence in France. However, this view makes the most sense only if one thinks of German music and romantic music as being synonymous. For Blume, romanticism was essentially a German phenomenon, and France and Italy were relatively untouched by the movement.⁷⁷

⁷⁵ Marion Bauer, *Twentieth Century Music: How it Developed. How to Listen to it*, (New York: Putnam, 1933; reprint, New York: Da Capo Press, 1978), 238 (page citations are to the reprint edition).

⁷⁶ André Hodier, *Since Debussy: A View of Contemporary Music* (New York: Grove Press, 1961), 222.

⁷⁷ Blume, "Romantik," 832. Blume wrote: "Im allgemeinen wird in den Darstellungen der Mg. viel zu vielerlei leichtherzig unter den Begriff 'Romantik' subsumiert, was damit nichts oder wenig zu tun hat. Das ist auch der Grund, weshalb sich unter dem Schlagwort 'Romantik' im wesentlichen

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However, not everyone agrees with the idea that Germans monopolized the definition of nineteenth-century romanticism, not least early nineteenth-century French commentators like Torienx. The difficulties with such a Teutonic-oriented “anti-romantic” theory become especially obvious when we consider the sheer beauty and sonic sheen of Debussy’s music, the rich orchestral blends, and the supple Chopin-like figurations in the piano music, the Lisztian ingenuity in the sonic manipulation of keyboard devices. We also cannot help but recall here that Debussy loved and respected the music of his older colleague Massenet, who was still alive and composing as late as 1912. Indeed, Massenet’s ravishingly sweet melodic style finds echoes in many works composed throughout Debussy’s life, and not only in the music of the earliest period, like the famous *Claire de lune*. Many later works (including some of the *Preludes*, *Images* and *Nocturnes*) also reflect this aspect. It is even still present in the apparently drier final works such as the Violin Sonata – that is, if performers care to bring it out.

Another problem posed by the phenomenon of musical impressionism is that many post World War Two composers and historians essentially co-opted certain aspects of Debussy’s harmonic reforms for their own advanced or constructivist purposes. In reality, this was part of a larger process of “modernizing” certain early twentieth-century composers in order to rescue their historical reputations, which is a very old scholarly game by now. We already discussed the latest developments in that story earlier in this chapter when we described the recent academic process of transforming Strauss, Pfitzner, Sibelius and Rachmaninoff into modern or even modernist composers. Modernizing the latter group of composers, however, was based on entirely different philosophical assumptions about the nature of

nur die deutsche Mg. des 19. Jh., wenn auch mit vielen Ausblicken in andere Länder, aber diese selbst auch wiederum nur z. T. rubrizieren läßt, während die ital., frz. usw. Musik trotz allen deutsch-romantischen Einflusses eben doch vorwiegend außerhalb des romantischen Bereiches bleibt.”

musical modernism itself. That is to say, post-war radicals were modernizing Debussy (and Berg and Mahler as well) for very different reasons than scholars such as Gilliam and Hepokoski had in mind when they were undertaking the more recent modernizing of Strauss and Sibelius. Whittall in 1999 sensibly observed that in order to see Debussy principally as a radical rather than as a (romantic) traditionalist, one had to treat his output very selectively: “Freedom, for Debussy, did not involve an unrealistic attempt to reject all aspects of tradition...As a result, more recent, more radical musicians have tended to pay tribute to parts of the Debussian inheritance, rather than to the whole.”⁷⁸ It was in Whittall’s radical sense, therefore, that Debussy was featured as the first modern composer in Griffiths’ 1978 survey, *A Concise History of Avant-Garde Music from Debussy to Boulez*. It was left to Griffiths’ generation of modernist-oriented critics and composers to finally honour Debussy for his seminal role in the development of early twentieth-century radical modernism, thus ranking Debussy as an advanced composer on a par with Schoenberg and Stravinsky. Boulez was another post-1950 radical who attempted to prove how Debussy’s harmonic reforms helped shape the High Modernist project, a project that was vitally dependent on the belief in a decline and final dissolution of traditional harmonic functions and vocabulary. And that was how late twentieth-century music history textbooks subsequently portrayed Debussy, although there does now seem to be a growing scholarly reaction to the old Griffiths/Boulez assessment of the composer. Boyd Pomeroy, for instance, notes

a striking divergence of perception between musical scholars (especially analysts) on the one hand and the listening public on the other, regarding Debussy’s harmonic language or tonal practice in a general sense. While analysts have usually considered this aspect of Debussy’s art to be rather problematic in

⁷⁸ Arnold Whittall, *Musical Composition in the Twentieth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 18.

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the sense of abstruse, elusive or otherwise difficult to grasp...it would be fair to say that this perception has not been shared by concert audiences; on the contrary, Debussy remains one of the most enduringly popular composers of the post-Romantic era...Debussy's tonality, while perennially new and exotic-sounding, yet retains powerful and familiar resonances from the tonal language of his predecessors; it exhibits a strong sense of tonal centre, expressed through vividly projected attributes of tonal function both melodically and harmonically.⁷⁹

We will observe here that the adjective “romantic” could be a not-unreasonable way of summing up what Pomeroy called Debussy's “powerful and familiar resonances from the tonal language of his predecessors.”

For this writer, originally trained in the traditional late-twentieth-century academic view of Debussy, it has been something of a surprise (although, in retrospect, not surprising at all when one considers Debussy from Pomeroy's perspective) to go back and re-read what early twentieth-century observers had to say about the composer's style. In the most radical circles of that time, Debussy was usually counted among the late romantics. Writers like Paul Bekker, Hans Merseman, and Aaron Copland, all of whom distanced themselves from contemporaneous late romantic composers and supported various “modern” streams (however they defined them), considered Debussy and impressionism to be a late manifestation of romanticism. In 1926, Bekker, who was one of the chief critical defenders of Schoenberg's Vienna circle, called *Pelléas et Mélisande* a “thoroughly romantic work.”⁸⁰ And in 1928, Merseman was able to write that the last representatives of

⁷⁹ Boyd Pomeroy, “Debussy's tonality: a formal perspective,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Debussy*, ed. Simon Trezise (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 155.

⁸⁰ Paul Bekker, *The Story of Music* (New York: Norton, 1927), 249. The original German translation reads: “Es ist ein Werk absolut romantisches Geprages.” *Musikgeschichte als Geschichte der musikalischen Formwandlung*. (Berlin and Leipzig: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt Stuttgart, 1926), 218.

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romanticism were still active in the 1920s, and that “impressionism [was] the last classifiable phase of [romanticism’s] demise.”⁸¹ And Copland, who found Debussy’s “sentimental side...already wearing thin,”⁸² also called his impressionistic idiom “the Romanticism of an introvert.”⁸³ The most popular textbook writers as late as 1960 duly picked up on this traditional classification of Debussy as a late Romantic. Machlis (1961 and 1979) still saw Debussy basically as a romantic because of his lyricism, beautiful sound, emphasis on mood and atmosphere, and poetic titles. Machlis concluded: “What the Impressionists did, really, was to substitute a sophisticated French type of Romanticism for the older German variety.”⁸⁴ The first edition of Grout (1960) also still classified Debussy as a late romantic, and Peter Burkholder, editor of Grout 2006, observed that “The first edition of this book in 1960 treated Debussy as a late Romantic figure; but by the 1973 second edition, he was regarded as a seminal force for modern music.”⁸⁵

In 1968, Otto Deri discussed the ongoing problem of how to categorize impressionism. Deri outlined the contradictory historical claims, probably in light of the recent trend among young radicals like Boulez who were even then already seeking to “modernize” Debussy, rescuing him from his then-familiar late-romantic context.

Is Debussy’s art – or impressionism, as some would like to have it – a stylistically self-contained phase in the history of music, or is it

⁸¹ Hans Mersmann, *Die Moderne Musik seit der Romantik* (Wildpark, Potsdam: Akademische Verlagsgesellschaft Athenaion, 1928), 3. (Ihre Ausläufer feichen bis in unsere Zeit hinein...der Impressionismus ist ihre letzte fest abgrenzbare Ablaufphase.)

⁸² Aaron Copland, *The New Music, 1900-1960*, revised and enlarged (New York: Norton, 1968), 32.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 31.

⁸⁴ Joseph Machlis, *Introduction to Contemporary Music*, 2nd ed. (1979), 88-89. See also Joseph Machlis, *Introduction to Contemporary Music* (New York: 1961), 114-115.

⁸⁵ Peter J. Burkholder, Donald Jay Grout, and Claude V. Palisca, *A History of Western Music*, 7th ed. (New York and London: Norton, 2006), 799.

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a late manifestation of romanticism? The question is not an easy one to decide, since, as noted before, romanticism itself encompasses a complex musical idiom with contradictory tendencies. If sound consciousness is recognized as a common denominator of all romantic music, then the French composer's music belongs to it most decidedly. Additional common features are subjectivity in feeling and a tendency toward the unification of the senses.

Despite these similarities, however, Debussy's music also represents a countercurrent in the stream of later romanticism; his restraint, his understating style and economy of writing, together with his idiosyncrasy toward the closed forms, and his completely novel harmonic language, set him strangely apart from most of his musical contemporaries...If one wishes to generalize, he is more *anti-German* than antiromantic.⁸⁶

Deri further pointed out how Debussy's music could simultaneously evolve in very different directions. He described Debussy's influence on composers as varied as Webern and Berg, two figures who were considered to be aesthetic opposites in the 1960s. On the one hand, Deri wrote, Webern's music was "devoid of romantic sentiment and effusiveness." Webern, said Deri,

never returned to a more traditional outlook from his advanced position as did Schoenberg and Berg; there is no flirtation with tonality, and except for a few instances, no employment of the traditional forms. His pulverized textures, understated dynamics, and intricate rhythmic scheme, in which the pause plays a significant role, suggest some kinship with Debussy.⁸⁷

On the other hand, Deri gave the following description of Berg, who, in his estimation, emanated from Debussy's romantic side:

The warmth and beauty of Berg's music is enhanced by his highly

⁸⁶ Otto Deri, *Exploring Twentieth-Century Music* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1968), 156.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 387.

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refined sense of instrumental color: his orchestral sound, often reminiscent of Debussy, is beautifully blended, another vestige of the romantic past.⁸⁸

Prokofiev and other stylistically related Russian composers from his generation (Tansman, Tcherepnin) have also represented a similarly complicated case in their relationship to romanticism. Morgan in 1991 saw Prokofiev as an antiromantic with a trace of lyricism while Whittall in 1999 found the same composer to have an essential romantic undercurrent. From a historical point of view, Prokofiev himself was considered quite radical and modernistic in his early years and it has only been in recent decades that the romantic label has become more common. He did, after all, adhere for the most part to a fairly direct tonal language, although he certainly could emancipate his dissonances as well as anyone when he felt like it. Moreover, he undeniably had a very strong lyrical streak which he at no time attempted to eliminate as thoroughly as Stravinsky did in the *Octet* and other groundbreaking neoclassical works of the 1920s.

In Prokofiev's earlier years, his music did often seem comparatively dissonant and audacious. However, now that we have been through the post-1945 avant-garde, Prokofiev's dissonances seem mild indeed. Moreover, he was never afraid of a long and broad melody, always one of the biggest sources of discomfort for commentators who are not sympathetic to the idea of composing romantic-sounding music in the modern period. In a work like the Third Piano Concerto, which dates from the early 1920s (the same time as the more impenetrable Second Symphony), Prokofiev showed an uncanny sense of how to deploy his very Russian melodies for maximum emotional impact in the grand cinematic sense. In this sense, the long melody in D flat major that dominates the central section of the Third Concerto's finale is nothing if not romantic. Indeed, it is as sumptuous as anything written in its era, and its strategic positioning near the end

⁸⁸ Ibid., 352.

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of the Third Concerto retrospectively bathes the entire work in a warm glow.

It was not for nothing that many commentators cited earlier (Watkins, Meyer, Whittall, etc.) had no hesitation in identifying a strongly romantic element in Prokofiev. His music was, after all, eminently suited to the grand romantic line of later pianistic giants like Bolet, Horowitz, Cliburn, and Richter, as well as string players like Heifetz, Oistrakh and Rostropovich. Their performances of Prokofiev's music did much to pull his big concerted works into the romantic orbit where they sit today along side the contemporaneous Rachmaninoff concertos. Prokofiev's Second Piano Concerto, largely unplayed for decades, was revived by the Liszt and Godowsky specialist Jorge Bolet, no less, after the Second World War and was given its first recording by him in 1951. Along the same lines, all those grand orchestral statements from the 1930s and 40s like the Fifth, Sixth and Seventh Symphonies are also nothing if not part of the grand tradition of romantic symphonic writing.

As our discussion on "Prokofiev the romantic" implies, performance style has an undeniable effect on our perception. Do we, for example, view Prokofiev (and Bartók as well) as essentially lyrical, melodic and warm or do we give greater emphasis to the hard-edged, dry, and even futuristic qualities that are also sometimes evident in their music? In 1964, the pianist, critic and musicologist Harris Goldsmith reviewed recent recordings of Prokofiev's Fifth Piano Concerto for *High Fidelity* magazine. In the review, Goldsmith discussed the merits of a romantic performing style versus a more modern percussive style. He observed how Sviatoslav Richter and Samson François approached the Fifth Concerto from a more romantic angle.⁸⁹ It was an interesting observation for the 1960s, given Prokofiev's then-frequent classification among the neoclassicists (a description with very dry and angular connotations). As Stravinsky himself

⁸⁹ Harris Goldsmith, review of Prokofiev Piano Concerto No 5, *High Fidelity* (1964):

was only too acutely aware, dry neoclassicism could indeed lose some of its dryness and become more expressive or romantic if a performer wanted to present it in such a manner. (And conversely, a romantic work could also be played in a very dry and unromantic way).

Prokofiev's Fifth Concerto is a particularly revealing test case for Goldsmith's discussion of romantic performing values because it is a work that is, by a considerable margin, Prokofiev's driest and most spiky concerto for any instrument. However, it attains a greater measure of lyricism in Richter's hands, as that great pianist's many surviving live and studio recordings of the work demonstrate. Commentators have often mentioned how post-war performers often made Prokofiev, and Bartók as well, more percussive and dry than did the composers themselves. We need only hear Prokofiev's highly flexible rubatos and pliant tone in 1930s recordings of several of his own short piano pieces.⁹⁰ Certainly, they provide a great contrast to the pianola-imitating Stravinsky. For Bartók, another alleged neoclassical composer, we can similarly take note of his non-percussive and singing tone, which are also in marked contrast to Stravinsky's pianism. Bartók's many recordings (including some privately-recorded excerpts of Bach and Mozart) demonstrate that his music-making still reflects a decidedly old-world context, one that is nowhere as hard-edged as one might expect. As Bartók authority Gilles notes, "These performances, with their wealth of tonal shadings, tempo fluctuations and occasional deviations from the published scores, remind present-day interpreters of the essentially Romantic underpinning to Bartók's performing art."⁹¹

We have just discussed some of the problems of viewing Debussy and Prokofiev from a romantic angle. Our third example, Busoni, is even more difficult to pin down. Busoni represents one

⁹⁰ All of Prokofiev's own electrical recordings are now available on Naxos.

⁹¹ Malcolm Gilles, "Béla Bartók," in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, 2nd ed. (London: Macmillan, 2001), 2:807. Bartók's own recordings as a pianist are available on twelve Hungaraton compact discs.

of the strangest cases of romanticism in the twentieth century, partly because he has also been counted as one of the principal fountainheads of twentieth-century radical modernism – and even as one of early modernism’s most enthusiastic supporters. This apparent contradiction appears again and again in textbook discussions of the composer. Salzman, for example, called him an “important late-romantic” who “anticipated part of the development of contemporary ideas with visionary clarity,” but whose “vast output escapes the late nineteenth century only occasionally.”⁹² Morgan called him “a puzzling figure,” and Whittall also briefly grappled with the Busoni problem.⁹³ Griffiths, in his discussion of Varèse, mentioned that Varèse “had been closely acquainted with Busoni, whose *Sketch of a New Esthetic of Music* probably had more influence than the Futurists on his revolutionary ideas.”⁹⁴ Nevertheless, Griffiths concluded that “Busoni was never as daring in his music as he was in his *Sketch of a New Esthetic of Music*.”⁹⁵ Like so many other commentators, Griffiths did not see fit to examine this apparent contradiction further. Nor did Bryan Simms, who noted that Busoni’s

attitude toward modernism was ambivalent. While he supported younger composers with exceptional generosity and conducted new music with the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra, his own compositions were generally conservative, and he resolutely avoided twentieth-century works in his own piano repertory.⁹⁶

⁹² Eric Salzman, *Twentieth-century Music: An Introduction*, 3rd ed. (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1988), 13.

⁹³ Whittall, *Musical Composition in the Twentieth Century*, 37.

⁹⁴ Paul Griffiths, *A Concise History of Avant-Garde Music from Debussy to Boulez* (New York and Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1978), 108.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 22.

⁹⁶ Bryan Simms, *Music of the Twentieth Century: Style and Structure* (New York: Schirmer Books, 1986), 163. Following a pattern all too common among modernist historians Simms also misuses Puccini’s expression of interest in Schoenberg in much the same way that he misuses Busoni. Simms relates that Puccini expressed interest in Schoenberg in 1924 but does not give a full account of Puccini’s real attitudes to the wider spectrum of composers in his time, and how he ultimately cast his lot in favour of

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Simms also wrote that Busoni “expressed admiration for Schoenberg’s atonal works.”⁹⁷ This was true up to a point but Simms was incomplete and misleading. Certainly, Busoni did express initial enthusiasm for *Pierre Lunaire*, but what Simms did not mention was Busoni’s strong and even devastating later criticisms of atonal expressionism, which we discussed in chapter one.

None of these writers resolved the traditionalist-modernist riddle in Busoni’s musical makeup. Simms left the impression that Busoni’s own works were more conservative than the modern works he programmed when he was conducting his celebrated Berlin Philharmonic new music concerts from 1903 to 1909. But who were the “younger composers” that Simms was referring to? And how radical were they? Well, it turns out that Busoni’s “moderns” on the Philharmonic’s new music programs were none other than Elgar, Heinrich Schenker, Strauss, Sibelius and others of that stripe. That, after all, was where new music was at in those pre-atonal days. Interestingly enough, Helmut Federhofer has shown that Busoni did not seem particularly eager to program Schoenberg although the latter kept begging for a spot in the prestigious series. After an exchange of letters, Busoni relented and assigned Schoenberg the admittedly menial task of orchestrating some *Syrian Dances*, which Heinrich Schenker had originally written for piano. Busoni wrote in a letter to Schenker that it would not only save the latter some work, but would also “create an opportunity for Schoenberg to have his name on the program too.”⁹⁸ In such manner did Busoni, as they say, kill two birds with one stone.

Korngold. As Puccini himself put it, “With regards to modern German music, my biggest hope lies with Erich Wolfgang Korngold.” Quoted in Brendan Carroll, *The Last Prodigy: A Biography of Erich Wolfgang Korngold* (Portland, Oregon: Amadeus Press, 1997), 158. See also 148-149.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Helmut Federhofer, “Heinrich Schenkers Verhältniss zu Arnold Schönberg,” in *Neue Musik als Widerspruch zur Tradition: Gesammelte Aufsätze (1968-2000)* (Bonn: Orpheus-Verlag, 2002), 75. 73-93.

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In the familiar modernist timeline, Busoni has always played a role as a transitional figure. This is mainly due to his very influential *Sketch of a New Esthetic of Music*, which he first published in 1906 when he was 40 years old. Like the first atonal works of Schoenberg, which were published four years later, Busoni's little book sparked a fierce battle of words. It inspired a host of advanced young composers like Varèse and Wolpe to seek new languages. The ultra-traditionalist Pfitzner stubbornly dug in his heels and wrote articles against what he saw as Busoni's modernist-constructivist implications. Busoni's ideas, Pfitzner feared, would squeeze out nineteenth-century romantic feeling.⁹⁹ In hindsight, Pfitzner need not have been so alarmed. After all, Busoni, great romantic pianist that he was, had no intention of breaking with the past, certainly not to the radical extent that Schoenberg had. Indeed, Pfitzner also should not have been so worried that Busoni was abandoning human feeling in music, losing himself in self-referential compositional structures. Busoni himself had written in the same *Sketch of a New Esthetic of Music* that "all arts, resources and forms ever aim at the one end, namely, the imitation of nature and the interpretation of human feelings."¹⁰⁰ Indeed, as we have already noted in chapter one, Busoni had often expressed concern with the more radical tendencies of his day as well, in particular when he issued his powerful critique against the expressionism of the Second Viennese School.

Since Busoni's *Sketch of a New Esthetic of Music* did so much to galvanize turn-of-the-century avant-gardists into action, it will be useful to briefly recall one of the book's most famous sayings. It runs as follows: "Music was born free; and to win freedom is its destiny."¹⁰¹ Writers dealing with twentieth-century music have often singled out this aphorism, sometimes by using it

⁹⁹ See Hans Pfitzner, "Futuristengefahr. Bei Gelegenheit von Busonis Ästhetik," in *Gesammelte Schriften*, Vol. 1 (Augsburg: Filser-Verlag, 1926), 185-223.

¹⁰⁰ Ferruccio Busoni, *Sketch of A New Esthetic of Music*, trans. T. Baker (New York: Schirmer, 1911), 3.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 5.

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as a heading for a book or a chapter. For Ton de Leeuw, the “born free” citation constitutes the only mention of Busoni in his classic Dutch overview *Muziek van de twintigste eeuw* (*Music of the Twentieth Century*). de Leeuw further explains that “These words of Busoni would be a fitting motto at the cradle of new music.”¹⁰² Ingo Metzmacher gives Busoni’s memorable words a page of their own just before the table of contents to his 2005 book, *Keine Angst vor Neuen Tönen*.¹⁰³ Machlis, in his 1961 *Introduction to Contemporary Music*, uses the quotation as a header for his chapter on Busoni, and then proceeds to draw a picture of Busoni as a “cerebral composer – a type that, with the intellectualization of art in the twentieth century, has come to be ever more important.”¹⁰⁴ And along with his citation in the Busoni chapter, Machlis had already headed chapter one of his book with another Busoni aphorism: “The modern and the old have always been.”¹⁰⁵ Machlis (in direct contrast to Salzman, Whittall and Morgan) strongly emphasizes what he calls the “antiromantic” nature of Busoni’s music. Rather surprisingly, among the works included under Machlis’s antiromantic matrix, one can find the lyrical 1897 Violin Concerto and the 70-minute Piano Concerto from 1904. The irony of the Piano Concerto’s “anti-romanticism” will become fully apparent when we realize that Machlis’ book came out in the 1960s – the same decade that Busoni’s Piano Concerto, Sonatina No. 6 (the so-called *Carmen* Fantasy) and his many Bach transcriptions were beginning to enjoy a resurgence through the advocacy of John Ogdon and others, thus playing a seminal role in the late twentieth-century Romantic Revival.

With ironies such as the above, it is not at all surprising to

¹⁰² Ton de Leeuw, *Muziek van de twintigste eeuw*, 3rd ed. (Bohn: Scheltema & Hokema, 1977), English translation as *Music of the Twentieth Century*, trans. Stephen Taylor (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2005), 26.

¹⁰³ Udo Metzmacher, *Keine Angst vor neuen Tönen: Eine Reise in die Welt der Musik*, 2nd ed. (Berlin: Rowohlt, 2005).

¹⁰⁴ Joseph Machlis, *Introduction to Contemporary Music* (New York: Norton, 1961), 239.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 3.

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find at least one historian who also uses Busoni's "born free" statement in a radically different and even anti-modernist sense. To this end, the quotation also serves as a header for the first chapter of Ronald Stevenson's *History of Western Music* from 1971. Besides being a historian of penetrating insight, Stevenson is also a composer-pianist in the grand romantic tradition, and his little-known book contains observations of a kind that are almost never encountered in the historical survey genre. In the section devoted to the twentieth century, Stevenson categorizes all of the romantic traditionalists under the rubrik "nationalism." He then states that

this school of composition contains a greater number of considerable figures than any other single school of 20th century composers...to read some of the younger music critics, one would think that cosmopolitan serialism had become world-wide, whereas it has made little impact on Latin America, Africa or Asia, or on the Western music public at large; and its representatives are known to musicians rather than to music lovers...The 20th century composers who have had a real impact on the concert-going public are almost all nationalists: such names as Bartók, Elgar, Falla, Gershwin, Respighi, Sibelius, Prokofiev, Vaughan Williams, Holst Shostakovich, Britten and many more.¹⁰⁶

To the above nationalists, Stevenson (elsewhere in the same chapter) also adds Albeniz, Granados, Rachmaninoff, Glazunov, Villa Lobos, MacDowell, Ives, Nielsen, Paderewski, Grainger, Szymanowski, Janáček, Harris and Copland.

In the same chapter, Stevenson (who is an authority on Busoni, Grainger and Marek) strongly criticizes Stockhausen and other extreme modernists, while singling out Rachmaninoff and Medtner for special praise among twentieth-century composers. To conclude his chapter on twentieth-century

¹⁰⁶ Ronald Stevenson, *Western Music: An Introduction* (London: Kahn & Averill, 1971), 179. Stevenson is now in his eighties, and a new edition of this book is in preparation.

music, Stevenson chooses ten lines from Medtner's *Muse and the Fashion*, which take modernism to task for being the "fashion for fashion" and seeking to "expel the muse."¹⁰⁷ All of this would be unthinkable for more orthodox historians like Griffiths, Salzman, Machlis, Watkins, Simms, Antokelez, Morgan and Whittall. Needless to say, Stevenson's perspective – which is that of a composer-pianist in the high romantic tradition – is exceedingly rare among music historians and overview writers of his generation.

Undoubtedly, Busoni *is* important in the history of New Music, and one certainly cannot deny that his *Sketch of a New Esthetic* is a landmark in the history of radical modernism. However, an equally enduring legacy of Busoni is how he also foreshadowed a very different twentieth-century historical trend that was to become one of radical modernism's most powerful opponents in second half of the twentieth century. To wit, Busoni was, and remains for us today, a vital link in what was still an ongoing tradition of romantic composers and composer-pianists. He also sought to revive the works of Alkan and Field, composers who are highly significant for the later Romantic Revival. And just as he foreshadowed Varèse and Cage, so too can we claim him (along with his disciple Ronald Stevenson) as an *Immer-noch-Romantiker* (a composer who was still romantic), to use the phrase that Sibelius scholar Tomi Mäkelä's applied to Busoni, Stevenson, Sibelius and Barber. We will discuss Mäkelä's comments on these *Romantiker* further at the end of chapter four.

All told, there are several threads in twentieth-century romanticism that emerge when we contemplate the contradictory case of Busoni. First, there was his role in pianistic history. Along with Josef Hofmann and Rachmaninoff, Busoni was one of the undisputed giants of early twentieth-century romantic pianism during its so-called Golden Age.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 196.

¹⁰⁸ Some books that provide a good introduction to the golden age of pianism

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David Dubal, professor of Piano Literature at Juilliard, wrote that Busoni, besides having a classical side, was also “one of the last incarnations of Romanticism.”¹⁰⁹ Very closely related to his romanticism was his stubborn and passionate advocacy of Liszt in a hostile, largely anti-Lisztian period. Busoni was contracted to edit Liszt’s piano works, and, observed Dubal, “his Liszt playing...was the start of a new age in Liszt performance.”¹¹⁰

The Liszt factor is important in view of the Romantic Revival because, as Alan Walker observed, Liszt stood to gain a great deal from such a revival because he was so central to the romantic period. He had, after all, been the romantic musical hero *par excellence* – the ultimate virtuoso, transcriber, dreamer, and genius to end all geniuses – and his music had suffered a terrible blow in prestige during the anti-romantic backlash at the beginning of the twentieth century. His over-the-top melodic gestures were seen as bombastic, tawdry and cheap, and his unparalleled virtuosity was held against him. In short, Liszt, as represented by works like the wildly popular *Liebesträume*, *Les Preludes* and the Hungarian Rhapsodies, stood for a kind of no-holds-barred emotionalism that went dreadfully out of fashion in advanced circles with the onset of the Schoenberg and Stravinsky revolutions.

Liszt had also been the principle representative of the grand tradition of the romantic piano transcription, and wrote several hundred such works that recast orchestral and vocal music by Bach, Mozart, Beethoven, Schubert, Bellini, Rossini,

are: Harold C. Schoenberg, *The Great Pianists*, revised ed. (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1987). Abram Chasins, *Speaking of Pianists*, 2nd ed. (New York: Knopf, 1961). Robert Rimm, *The Composer-Pianists: Hamelin and the Eight* (Portland, Oregon: Amadeus Press, 2002). Kenneth Hamilton, *After the Golden Age: Romantic Pianism and Modern Performance* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

¹⁰⁹ David Dubal, *The Art of the Piano: Its Performers, Literature, and Recordings*, 2nd ed. (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1995), 46.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 45.

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Verdi, Wagner, Tchaikovsky and many others in pianistic terms for contemporary audiences. Throughout the nineteenth century, many of Liszt's works in the transcription genre had ranked among his most popular, and Busoni stoutly defended and continued the aesthetic legitimacy of making transcriptions. His famous Bach arrangements were a continuation of this Lisztian tradition, and served as a standard component in piano recitals before 1950. During this time, Liszt's name also continued to be kept alive to a certain extent due to the devoted advocacy of a few loyal disciples. In addition to Busoni (whom the Liszt circle accepted as an honorary member in the 1890s), there were Liszt's students themselves, the last of whom were still active until the 1940s. They included Emil von Sauer, Alexander Siloti, Frederic Lamond, and José Vianna da Motta. Many later pianists in the romantic tradition, such as Vladimir Horowitz, Sviatoslav Richter, Alfred Cortot, Gunnar Johansen, Jorge Bolet, Van Cliburn, György Cziffra and Earl Wild, kept the Lisztian torch burning after 1950. Many of these later figures even had the courage to disregard the ban on transcriptions, and all of them lived to witness (and even participate in) the Romantic Revival as it burst into life in the 1960s and 70s.

A second thread linking Busoni to the Romantic Revival is his high ranking of Alkan. It was a view which Busoni passed on to his greatest student Egon Petri, as well as to da Motta, a late Liszt pupil who became associated with Busoni. (da Motta was also the central figure in the development of a twentieth-century Portuguese school of pianism). Alkan was to become central to Lewenthal's zealous romantic revival work of the 1960s as we saw in chapter two. The Parisian recluse was the first high-profile discovery of Lewenthal, and the growing presence of Alkan's music in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries (Alkan is central to Marc-André Hamelin's repertoire, for example) has been symbolic of the continued growth and success of the Romantic Revival.

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Thirdly, we should not forget Busoni's support of so-called lighter styles. For Busoni, depth also embraced the unpretentious atmosphere of the carnival, and there is a long quotation (which can be read later in this section) which clearly shows his expanded definition of what constitutes depth in music. Equally worthy to Busoni was a finely wrought virtuoso paraphrase, whether of Paganini, Bizet, Liszt or Bach. All of which only goes to show that Busoni clearly advocated a type of repertoire that is not dissimilar to the concert programming and recording outputs of leading romantic revivalists like Lewenthal, Bolet, Wild, Ponti, Marshev, Hamelin, Lane, Plowright, and Hough.

Fourth, there is Busoni's little-known plan to instigate a revival of John Field's works, a plan that was thwarted by Busoni's early death in 1924. Field's music, one could say, is the very definition of pleasing and soothing. A twentieth-century counterpart to Field would perhaps be someone like Finzi, or piano music by Sibelius and Cyril Scott, or even the traditional light music of Coates, Anderson and Ketelbey. For some, the Field aspect may be puzzling at first, but only until one grasps Busoni's expanded definition of musical depth. Field's music foreshadows the later twentieth-century large-scale revivals of what could be termed the "entertainment" (or as German scholars sometimes say, *Trivial* or *Unterhaltung*) side of nineteenth-century music.

In the same *Sketch* that has been historically cited mainly for its prophecies of later radical modernism, there is also a very revealing passage in which Busoni describes his expanded concept of expressive depth in greater detail. Although he certainly appreciated the most profound and serious pages of Wagner, Schumann and Beethoven, he was nonetheless highly critical of musicians and music lovers who focused on the ultra-serious side of music to the detriment of lighter streams. Busoni's own stylistic sympathies were very wide, and his range in this respect was infinitely more catholic

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than Schoenberg's. Along side the deepest expressions of German art, even the carnival spirit had depth, as far as Busoni was concerned, provided one participated in the carnival with all one's heart. When we bear this fact in mind, the Busoni paradox begins to resolve itself. The many seemingly contradictory facets of his troubling poly-stylism and the related (and very deliberate) juxtaposition of trivial and sublime – all can be seen to be cut from the same cloth. All of those apparently incongruous moments in Busoni's works begin to make logical musical sense – a case in point being the riotous and seemingly banal elements in his gigantic Concerto for Piano, Orchestra and Male Chorus in C major Op. 39. The Piano Concerto, wrote Harold C. Schonberg in 1966, was

the weirdest amalgam of everything: Italian sunshine, German metaphysics, neo-Liszt (Venezia e Napoli division) Rubinstein-like romanticism. It is the absolute height of the romantic concerto, the kind of display concerto represented by the works of Rubinstein (especially the D minor), Scharwenka and others of that school. Busoni claimed to have gone beyond them.¹¹¹

Harold Schonberg's comments, made on the occasion of the work's first ever New York performance (with Gunnar Johansen) really get to the heart of what Busoni was about, and his observations could also apply to Busoni's later transcriptions of Bizet, Mozart, Paganini, and Liszt. This side of Busoni may seem trivial to some, and not worthy of the "advanced" composer whose prize exhibit is the near-atonal Second Sonatina. However, such apparent stylistic inconsistency clearly did not matter to the composer himself. The idioms he used could be dissonant or diatonic, willfully obscure or popular in flavour.

This, of course, was anathema to many of those who continued in the more severe and deliberately anti-populist

¹¹¹ Harold C. Schonberg, "Busoni Piano Concerto Arrives," *New York Times* (January 27, 1966): 28.

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tradition of Schoenberg, Adorno, Boulez, and Elliott Carter. But one senses that Busoni, towering figure that he was, would not have cared in the least what they thought. As Tamara Levitz noted in her study of Busoni's composition masterclasses during the early 1920s,

Busoni showed little interest in musicological definitions of serious and popular music. He enjoyed singing popular songs and playing them on the piano, and commented on several occasions that all music should entertain. His students profited enormously from this liberal attitude. Their teacher no longer represented the avant-garde and did not encourage them to take part in it.¹¹²

For Busoni, a musical evocation of public festivity could be a sign of greater, not lesser, depth. His *Sketch of a New Aesthetic* has a long and important passage that explains his attitude toward lighter music. It directly challenges the diligently serious German historiographical tradition begun by Schumann, who Frank Cooper considered to be "the culprit who set about to destroy the salon music of the nineteenth century."¹¹³ Cooper suggested that German musicology was heavily influenced by Schumann's attitudes on the high seriousness of music – attitudes which Cooper's Romantic Revival was still battling in the 1970s. In this respect, Busoni's aesthetic stance fit in very well with the kind of music that the Romantic Revival was advocating. Perhaps not surprisingly, the following excerpt from Busoni's *Sketch* is rarely if ever quoted in standard (and often modernist-oriented) discussions of Busoni:

The 'Apostles of the Ninth Symphony' have devised the notion of 'depth' in music. It is still current at face-value, especially in

¹¹² Tamara Levitz, *Teaching New Classicality: Ferruccio Busoni's Master Class in Composition* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1996), 293.

¹¹³ Jesse F. Knight, *The Romantic Revival – Setting the Record Straight. A Conversation with Frank Cooper* (Walkerton, Ind.: Lion Enterprises, 1979), 37. Cooper's discussion of Schumann and German musicology runs from pages 37 to 41.

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Germanic lands. There is a depth of feeling, and a depth of thought; the latter is literary, and can have no application to tones. Depth of feeling, by contrast, is psychical, and thoroughly germane to the nature of music. The Apostles of the Ninth Symphony have a peculiar and not quite clearly defined estimate of 'depth' in music. *Depth* becomes *breadth*, and the attempt is made to attain it through *weight*; it then discovers itself (through an association of ideas) by a preference for a *deep register*, and (as I have had opportunity to observe) by the insinuation of a second, mysterious notion, usually of a literary sort. If these are not the sole specific signs, they are the most important ones.

To every disciple of philosophy, however, depth of feeling would seem to imply exhaustiveness in feeling, a complete absorption in the given mood. Whoever, surrounded by the full tide of a genuine carnival crowd, slinks about morosely or even indifferently, neither affected nor carried away by the tremendous self-satire of mask and motley, by the might of misrule over law, by the vengeful feeling of wit running riot, shows himself incapable of sounding the depths of feeling. This gives further confirmation of the fact, that depth of feeling roots in a complete absorption in the given mood, however frivolous, and blossoms in the interpretation of that mood; whereas the current conception of deep feeling singles out only one aspect of feeling in man, and specializes that. In the so-called 'Champagne Aria' in Don Giovanni there lies more 'depth' than in many a funeral march or nocturne: Depth of feeling also shows in not wasting it on subordinate or unimportant matters.¹¹⁴

It needs to be emphasized here that a crucial aspect of Busoni's musical philosophy was downplayed and, in certain cases, even ignored completely after the idea of musical modernism had become so closely associated with the emancipation of the dissonance. In the process of establishing the "dissonant" viewpoint as the general shaping force of twentieth-century music, scholars naturally tended to slant Busoni's

¹¹⁴ Ferruccio Busoni, *Sketch of A New Esthetic of Music*, trans. T. Baker. (New York: Schirmer, 1911), 40-41.

academic reception much farther in that direction than was perhaps warranted. In doing so, they modified the Busoni legend in a way that was most useful to their agenda. Levitz's analysis of Busoni's late masterclasses clearly describes the distortions that arose in later scholarly treatment of Busoni. She demonstrates at length how our view of Busoni as a key precursor of twentieth-century radicalism had become shaped through the eyes of the Busoni students Vladimer Vogel and Philipp Jarnach (both of whom pursued atonal languages after Busoni's death in 1924) rather than through Kurt Weill, who later went on to produce works like *Mahagonny* and several Broadway musicals. To see Busoni from the perspective of Weill's aesthetic, Levitz implies, would give us a more truthful picture of the artistic impulses that drove this endlessly fascinating Italian musician. In addition, focusing on Weill rather than Vogel and Jarnach would better emphasize the important fact that Busoni, although he supported modernist developments in principle, also later believed that radical elements like atonality were being used in a much too extreme, intolerant, and exclusive manner.¹¹⁵

Levitz shows how Jarnach tried to erase Weill from the Busoni legacy. Jarnach accomplished this partly by using Weill's own Jewish heritage against him, and sadly, Jarnach's views fit only too well into the National Socialist agenda of the 1930s: In 1938, Jarnach's own compositions were enjoying official Nazi approval through performances in Germany at precisely the same time that Weill was being branded as a degenerate composer in the infamous *Entartete Kunst* exhibition. Here, then, was a clear case where the Nazis ended up espousing the more advanced stylistic preferences of Jarnach rather than the more regressive tonal views of Weill, who ultimately represented twentieth-century tonal backwardness – and with a popular Broadway twist thrown in for good measure.

When one recalls the supremely awkward revelation that

¹¹⁵ Busoni's extended criticism of extreme tendencies is cited in chapter one.

Webern had in fact been sympathetic to National Socialism during his later years, it becomes apparent that (as we have already noted several times) there were more close links between Nazi politics and radical modernism than post-1945 historians were willing to admit.¹¹⁶ Certainly, such links were emphatically not acknowledged in post-war Darmstadt, which had made Webern into a hero and in the process had temporarily managed to white-wash him of any uncomfortable war-time associations. It is indeed ironic that Busoni's legacy and scholarly reception were coloured by Jarnach. But as Levitz convincingly demonstrates in her thorough documentation of Busoni's last years, it is Weill rather than Jarnach who should be considered the more truthful twentieth-century continuation of Busoni's own musical aesthetic – an aesthetic that did not attempt to separate art and entertainment to anywhere near the same extent that was advocated by composers like Schoenberg, Carter, Wuorinen, Boulez and Stockhausen.

And so, with Busoni we find ourselves discussing a motley mixture of Weill, Broadway, entertainment music, Liszt, Italian opera, late Beethoven, Paganini, Bizet, Bach, Field, the transcription, virtuoso pianism at a transcendental level, and the mixing of high and low art. We even have Busoni's occasional use

¹¹⁶ It is true that in his 1932-33 lectures, Webern spoke out strongly against the Nazi government: "What's going on in Germany at the moment amounts to the destruction of spiritual life!" See *The Path to the New Music*, ed. Willi Reich, trans. Leo Black (Bryn Mawr, Penn.: Theodore Presser, 1963), 19.

By wartime, however, Webern had apparently changed his views. In a letter from May 2, 1940, he wrote: "This is Germany today! But the *National Socialist* one, to be sure! Not just any one! This is exactly the *new* state, for which the seed was already laid twenty years ago. Yes, *a new state it is*, one that has never existed before!! *It is something new!* Created by this unique man!!! ... *Each day becomes more exciting*. I see such a good future. It will be different also for me." Quoted in Alex Ross, *The Rest is Noise: Listening to the Twentieth Century* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2007), 323. Regarding this change in attitude, what historian Alex Ross found "especially odd in his case is that he resisted the Hitler idea early on and then later fell for it – the opposite pattern from what one finds in Strauss's case. (quoted from Ross's own blog entry of April 6, 2007, <http://sohothodog.blogspot.ca/2007/04/object-lesson.html>, accessed June 18, 2012).

of radical techniques derived from the “emancipation of the dissonance,” although in his case the radical aspect was leavened with a healthy dose of circumspection and profound skepticism. These, then, are some of the disparate elements that feed into our poly-morphous picture of Busoni. And they all somehow fit into our equally heterogenous concept of romanticism in the twentieth century. Busoni’s music united many apparently antithetical elements such as the German and the Italian, the intellectual and the passionate, golden-age pianism and futurism, the popular and the abstruse, the Liszt camp and the Brahms camp. Perhaps we can even go so far as to say that Busoni *was* the ultimate embodiment of a peculiarly twentieth-century strain of musical romanticism.

Neoromanticism: The revolt against romantic notions of innovation and originality

In chapter two, we briefly recounted how many early twentieth-century romantics had rebelled against the romantic notion of progress. Their rebellion became especially pronounced after the atonal revolution of 1908-1910, at the critical point when harmonic innovation had arguably become an end in its own right, and no longer paid adequate heed to the actual “rhetorical effect” (cf. Butler) on the audience.¹¹⁷ When Rochberg and a large number of other neoromantics (Penderecki, Gorecki, del Tredici) in the 1970s re-embraced romantic-sounding elements derived from a whole stream of composers from Bach and Beethoven to Prokofiev and Bartók, they did so because they had found themselves to be in profound disagreement with precisely those elements – originality and alienation – that Kravitt said were most essential to a consistent definition of musical romanticism.

“The ring of authenticity is more important than the clang of originality,” wrote Rochberg in 1973 on the occasion of the first

¹¹⁷ Christopher Butler’s comment is examined further at the end of chapter four.

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performance of his String Quartet No. 3.¹¹⁸ Bearing this in mind, a proper definition of romanticism, especially as the word applies to a specifically twentieth-century body of music, need not be so excessively beholden to innovation and originality – at least as far as the formal and harmonic materials of music are concerned. To be sure, innovation (especially harmonic innovation) was an important element of romanticism in its nineteenth-century context, a point that Paul Griffiths took up when he cited Liszt as a precursor to twentieth-century harmonic radicalism. “Liszt,” wrote Griffiths, “had said that any new composition must contain at least one new chord, and this emphasis on harmonic innovation brought with it the weakening of the diatonic system, not least in Liszt’s own late works.”¹¹⁹ In stark contrast, the romantics of the twentieth century were usually considered to be the backward and regressive compositional stream of their time. They were the ones who were allegedly too reliant on the (old) nineteenth century with its attendant emotion, melody and tonality. The twentieth-century avant-garde’s use of the description “romantic” for composers they considered to be latter-day epigones of the nineteenth-century became so imbedded in the daily vocabulary of the modern music world that we still cannot ignore it, even now in the twenty-first century.

When Boulez called Berg a romantic, he was referring to romanticism as it had been traditionally understood. When Rachmaninoff or Barber were called romantics, the word was also meant in a similar sense. That is to say, it was not because Barber, for example, was being “innovative” by using a little bit of serialism in his 1949 Piano Sonata. That sonata, after all, had been written for none other than Horowitz, perhaps the ultimate late-twentieth-century romantic pianist, and one of the acknowledged

¹¹⁸ George Rochberg, “On the Third String Quartet,” in *The Aesthetics of Survival: A Composer’s View of Twentieth-Century Music* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1984), 242.

¹¹⁹ Paul Griffiths, *A Concise History of Avant-Garde Music from Debussy to Boulez* (New York and Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1978), 25.

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keepers of the old romantic flame, as we will see in chapter five. This general sense of romanticism is also the context for Rochberg's neoromanticism, although late twentieth-century neoromanticism goes farther because it not only embraces nineteenth-century idioms but also the more traditional side of early twentieth-century music as well. Neoromantics have been so-labelled by the avant-garde even if they borrow a little from the sound world of Prokofiev, late Bartók, Vaughan Williams, Poulenc, Britten, and other composers who have not always readily been assigned to the romantic category. The *New York Times* critic Anthony Tommasini, for example, spoke of "the lushly tonal 'Tempest Fantasy' by the Poulenc-infatuated Paul Moravec," a leading American neoromantic composer of the younger generation.¹²⁰

Although not all present-day composers in the general neoromantic camp have preferred to be associated with romanticism, the term "neoromantic" has nonetheless proven persistent. Composer Alex Shapiro notes that her

difficulty with the term neo-romantic, or neo-anything, for that matter, lies with the fact that such descriptions cheat music that's new by insisting on labeling it as something that's new-but-actually-old. It seems that each time we come across music that we can't quite describe, we preface it with "neo" and tether it with a ball and chain to the past.¹²¹

¹²⁰ Anthony Tommasini, "Unraveling the Knots of the 12 Tones," *New York Times* (October 14, 2007): <http://www.nytimes.com/2007/10/14/arts/music/14tomm.html?pagewanted=all> (accessed June 21, 2012).

¹²¹ Alex Shapiro, "Would you describe yourself as a neo-romantic? Why (not)?" *NewMusicBox* (September 1, 2003): <http://www.newmusicbox.org/articles/would-you-describe-yourself-as-a-neoromantic-why-not/> (accessed June 21, 2012). NewMusicBox asked thirteen composers this question and most of them did not like the term. The following composers were asked: Bruce Adolphe, Beth Anderson, Nancy Bloomer Dussen, Lawrence Dillon, Nancy Galbraith, Jake Heggie, Anthony Iannaccone, Lowell Liebermann, Thomas Pasatieri, Tobias Picker, Kevin Puts, Alex Shapiro, and Andrew Violette.

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And Jake Heggie is similarly reticent about being pigeonholed as a romantic: “I have never considered myself a ‘new romantic’ just because I tend to favor long lyrical lines and colors more rooted in traditional harmonies.”¹²² Despite many such objections along the lines of Shapiro and Heggie, the neoromantic category has proven remarkably resilient, and has come to signify that “vast middle ground” (cf. Taruskin) inhabited by a broad range of composers, many of whom were former avant-gardists of the cold war era.¹²³ For the establishment of the neoromantic term, no small thanks are also due to historians and text-book writers (Morgan, Simms, Antokoletz, Machlis, Grout, Salzman, Bernhard, Watkins, et. al.), most of whom originally used “neoromantic” in a subtly pejorative or negative sense for once-progressive composers who were now turning back the clock.¹²⁴

In order to help us establish the nature of early twentieth-century romanticism, a good strategy could therefore be to look at what constitutes late twentieth-century neoromanticism. If we can consider Picker, Rochberg, Penderecki, Rorem, Rautavaara, Lloyd, and Diamond as romantics or neoromantics, we should have no problem using the term romantic for Debussy, Ravel, Prokofiev, Vaughan Williams, Falla, Shostakovich, Weinberg, Poulenc, and even some works of Milhaud, Hindemith, Copland, Messaien, and Bartók. Almost every early twentieth-century composer, no matter how radical, sooner or later composed at least some works or passages that clearly sounded romantic – illustrating Bartók’s 1938 comment there was hardly a modern composer who did not let a little romanticism slip into their music from time to time.¹²⁵

¹²² Jake Heggie, “Would you describe yourself as a neo-romantic? Why (not)?” *NewMusicBox* (September 1, 2003): <http://www.newmusicbox.org/articles/would-you-describe-yourself-as-a-neoromantic-why-not/> (accessed June 21, 2012).

¹²³ Richard Taruskin, *The Oxford History of Western Music*, Vol. 5, *The Late Twentieth Century* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 516. See also discussion of neoromanticism in chapter two.

¹²⁴ See Watkins, 645-651;

¹²⁵ See chapter 5, note 30.

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In this light, Stravinsky, that paragon of dryness, could also fit in certain cases. First of all, there are the early works – obvious candidates for romanticism like the luxuriant *Firebird* Ballet, the Symphony in E flat, the Piano Sonata in f sharp minor, and the Four Etudes for piano, Op. 7. As far as Stravinsky’s deliberately “dryer” neoclassical period after 1920 is concerned, even works like the *Symphony of Psalms* are partial candidates, as Bauer points out.¹²⁶ Stravinsky’s Pergolesi arrangements could pass as romantic when played with the warmth and humanity of a Stokowski, Piatagorsky, or Koussevitzky. When seen through the lens of performers like these, Stravinsky’s neoclassical arrangements are not all that different from the normal run of early twentieth-century romanticized arrangements (by, say, Segovia, Stokowski, or Respighi) of pre-1800 music. In 1967, Harold C. Schonberg reviewed a recital by the great Russian cellist Gregor Piatigorsky. As he observed,

Mr. Piatigorsky has always been an exponent of the sweeping, Russian, romantic style of playing. He remains so, and his heart is still young even if his bow arm occasionally may falter. No matter what he plays, the music tends to sound the same – with a big line, the big ritard, the sentimental phrasings, the various expressive devices beloved of a previous generation.¹²⁷

Having described Piatagorsky’s general style, Schonberg then went on to relate how the great cellist, together with some colleagues,

played his own arrangement of Stravinsky’s “Suite Italienne” for four cellos. It was quite an experience. In this kind of performance, the music was sheer kitsch, a long way from Stravinsky’s clean, uncluttered treatment of Pergolesi melodies. The composer would have listened unbelievably.¹²⁸

¹²⁶ Marion Bauer’s comment is discussed further in chapter five.

¹²⁷ Harold C. Schonberg, “Music: For Piatigorsky,” *New York Times* (May 22, 1973): 47.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*

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Stravinsky, with his “life-long battle against nuance,” (cf. Toorn)¹²⁹ particularly loathed the type of interpretive approach that Piatagorsky represented, but it nevertheless remains an unalterable part of twentieth-century reception history. Artists like Piatigorsky (and Casals and Stokowski) are emblematic of the fact that performing musicians throughout the modern period ultimately reserved the right to play music in any way they chose, even if some (like Stravinsky) thought they were being too romantic.

Clearly, then, romantic elements can turn up in the most unexpected places. Thus, if some of the composers mentioned in the preceding paragraphs seem to be unlikely candidates for the title of romantic or neoromantic, we must remind ourselves once again how their music can be made to sound if the performer so chooses. We can see how neoromantic composers after the 1970s often hearken back to the tonal music of the first half of the twentieth century, emphatically including in their list of influences Debussy, Bartók, Prokofiev, Poulenc and even tonal Stravinsky, providing more evidence that the lines between romanticism, impressionism and neoclassicism can be exceedingly blurry.

We therefore reiterate that twentieth-century romanticism must, of necessity, be a very general category. As I have already made clear, it is not my intention to split hairs too finely over which modern-era works and composers constitute exact specimens. In the same way, most commentators no longer make a distinction between what were once thought to be opposing classic and romantic streams in the late nineteenth century, when Brahms was a classicist and Wagner was a romantic. (The 1954 Grove articles on *Classic* and *Romantic* still made this classic-romantic distinction for nineteenth-century music). Nor am I using the fine sense of restricting romanticism to German lands in the nineteenth century, while then-current composers in France, Italy and Scandinavia were relatively untouched by romanticism – as Blume

¹²⁹ Pieter C. van den Toorn, “Stravinsky, *Les Noces* (*Svadebka*), and the Prohibition against Expressive Timing,” *Journal of Musicology* 20 (2003): 298.

suggested in his MGG article *Romantik*. I am also not using it in the precise sense of Dahlhaus, who called the first half of the nineteenth century “romantic,” and the second half of the nineteenth century “neoromantic,” while reserving “modern” for the years 1890 to 1910.¹³⁰

Despite the “modernising” trend of Gilliam, Hepokoski, Albright and others, one senses that most performing musicians today would still balk at calling someone like Richard Strauss a modern (or modernist) composer, due to the simple fact that few in the general musical public consider the modernism of 1890 to 1910 to be modern any longer. All ages, after all, were once modern. Even Debussy, a key figure in twentieth-century modernism, composed much that soon became an embarrassment to a later generations of modernists and they picked and chose elements from his works that best fit into their ideological program. Few self-respecting radicals from Darmstadt in the 1950s would have dreamed of considering Strauss, the popular side of Debussy, or even the slightly later Prokofiev, Hindemith and Shostakovich, as fellow travellers on the Good Ship Modernism, in the sense that Webern and Varèse were. And by 1950 Debussy had already been established for almost half a century in the central repertoires of vastly influential anti-modernists like Beecham and Toscanini: As two of the leading conductors of the twentieth century, neither of them had much to do with either the radical neoclassic or atonal streams. During the last three decades of his career, Toscanini in fact conducted the ground-breaking *La Mer* more often than any other single work in his vast repertoire. Indeed, by the 1920s Debussy was already an establishment figure with a host of romantic-impressionist “imitators” like Delius, Griffes, MacEwen, Loeffler, and Joseph Marx. Moreover, Debussy had many bona fide public hits.

Twentieth-century romanticism presupposes a clear line of

¹³⁰ See Carl Dahlhaus’s discussion (pages 1 to 18) in *Between Romanticism and Modernism*, trans. Mary Whittall (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980).

continuity with the nineteenth and does not depend on a “break” with the past in order to justify its existence. This, certainly, was how Simmons saw his neoromantic composers (Bloch, Hanson, Creston, Barber, Gianini, Flagello). Such latterday romanticism, therefore, has little or nothing to do with continuity in the German dialectical sense, where the true twentieth-century heirs of the nineteenth-century romantic tradition are the hard-core modernists (Leonard B. Meyer’s late-late-romantics), and that those who broke most clearly with the past (above all Schoenberg with his atonality) were in fact its most legitimate heirs. Such is the position of the prize-winning theorist Joseph Straus, in his study, *Remaking the Past*.¹³¹ To the unwary browser walking through the university library stacks, a glimpse of Straus’s title on the shelf may suggest a discussion of twentieth-century tonalists and latter-day romantic traditionalists. In reality, Straus follows Schoenberg’s lead in taking great pains to show that the atonal language is really traditionalism in disguise – that Schoenberg respected tradition, and was merely building on it.¹³²

As far as twentieth century romanticism is concerned (in the sense that we are defining it), Schoenberg’s most enduring position in history is as a revolutionary. He wanted subsequent generations to know that he was the true inventor of atonality, and bitterly fought any and all pretenders to the atonal throne. As Szmanowski put it, Schoenberg was the one who “crossed the Rubicon.”¹³³ Stuckenschmidt’s perceptive comment is also apt here: “Berg’s music always proclaims its connection with tradition. Although Schoenberg and Webern were always conscious of their own links with the past, as their theoretical writings show, in their music this awareness always took second place to their passion for

¹³¹ Joseph Straus, *Remaking the Past: Musical Modernism and the Influence of the Tonal Tradition* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1990).

¹³² For Taruskin, *Remaking the Past* amounts to a “sustained gloss” on Schoenberg’s essay, “Brahms the Progressive.” See Taruskin, *The Early Twentieth Century*, 360.

¹³³ See also note 89 in chapter one.

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new discoveries.”¹³⁴ Schoenberg may have painted himself as a traditionalist, loved Bach and Beethoven, used motivic development, and even written some moderately successful tonal music in the traditional romantic sense, but the fact remains that many other composers of his generation wrote tonal music that was much more successful with the public.

In this chapter we have discussed the “moving target” of romanticism. We have also noted how recent scholars have tended to restrict the musicological definition of romanticism mainly to the themes of alienation and innovation. In chapters four and five, we will further expand on how, during the long and protracted culture wars that disrupted the classical music scene after 1900, many of the more self-consciously avant-garde figures wanted tonal romanticism to disappear as a legitimate modern-era compositional phenomenon – which, of course, ultimately supports the notion that there remained a significant stream of romantic music in the twentieth century. If nothing else, ongoing negative reactions to romanticism merely served to indicate that it was still a living phenomenon. Any music with that much power to stir up controversy must also have enough historical weight to stand on its own, and be considered in its own right. In order to help establish this, I am especially interested in the rich tapestry of musical events that the larger concert-going and record-buying public experienced throughout the twentieth century. My foundation for examining the issue of romanticism in the modern era is therefore based more on a descriptive strategy rather than a prescriptive one.

¹³⁴ Hans Heinz Stuckenschmidt, *Twentieth Century Music*, trans. R. Deveson (London: World University Library, 1969), 63.

Chapter Four

The Contemporaneousness of the Non-Contemporaneous (*Die Gleichzeitigkeit des Ungleichzeitigkeiten*)

“There is nothing that more disturbs the picture than the acceptance of a composer’s dates as a criterion.”¹ (Paul Henry Lang, 1965, commenting on Rachmaninoff’s presence in the twentieth century)

The death of romanticism and the passage from the old to the new

When attempting to define twentieth-century romanticism, it is important to emphasize the extent to which generations of commentators tried to dissociate their specialized historical construction of a “modern” twentieth century with the kind of music they termed “romantic.” Robert Morgan, in his 1991 textbook *Twentieth-Century Music*, set out the parameters in typical fashion when he insisted on the first page of

¹ Paul Henry Lang and Nathan Broder, eds., *Contemporary Music in Europe: A Comprehensive Survey* (New York: Schirmer, 1965), 3.

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his preface that twentieth-century music was to be considered “a stylistic as well as a temporal category.” More specifically, the beginning of the century, said Morgan, was marked by “The passage from the ‘old’ to the ‘new’ music, from nineteenth-century Romanticism to twentieth-century modernism.”²

Morgan’s description of a passage from the old to the new aptly illustrates how applying the terms “late romantic” or “romantic” to *any* music from the early twentieth century onward has been a target for musicological controversy. His textbook, like many others, was written as though the “new” had, for all intents and purposes, replaced the “old” as far as the most important historical considerations were concerned. The implication was that any post-1900 music that still smacked of the old romanticism no longer needed to be discussed unless (like Strauss’s 1909 *Elektra*) it could demonstrate how the old fed directly into the new. Otherwise, romanticism was *passe*, and not worth any music student’s time and attention.

From Morgan’s example, it is apparent that discussing twentieth-century romanticism in an academic context is not simply about focusing on obvious factors such as gorgeous tunes that the public loves and radical composers presumably avoid; or ubiquitous performance chestnuts like Rachmaninoff’s Third Piano Concerto (composed, incidentally, in 1909, around the birth of atonality); or lush sonorities, comfort, and nostalgia; or the optimism of the English musical renaissance as represented by Elgar, Bax, Ireland and Vaughan Williams; or the apparent backwardness of almost all pre-1950 composers from a host of “peripheral” nations like Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Finland, Bulgaria, Hungary, Australia, Japan and Russia; or the traditionally romantic sound of dozens of Austro-German contemporaries of Schoenberg (as we saw in chapter two, cpo, one of the largest independent German recording companies, has recorded music by at least thirty of these composers); or even the stubborn persistence

² Robert Morgan, *Twentieth-Century Music* (New York, London: Norton, 1991), xi.

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and ultimate triumph of traditional tonality itself. To be sure, twentieth-century romanticism does include all of the above. However, in studying the phenomenon one also comes face to face with a somewhat *ad hoc* but immensely powerful intellectual movement (let us resist the temptation to speak of “conspiracies” here) that relentlessly attempted to push a broad range of melodically and tonally-based styles out of the twentieth century and into the preceding nineteenth century. In other words, we are studying something that, by rights, should not have existed at all. In the orthodox academic terms of the late twentieth century, a phrase like “twentieth-century romanticism” is tantamount to an oxymoron.

In higher education, one of the simplest strategies for intentionally or unintentionally excluding romantic-sounding music from the standard twentieth century historical framework has always been one of the most effective: All students who have formally studied music history are at least vaguely conscious of the fact that scholars in the later twentieth century typically termed the nineteenth century “romantic” and the twentieth century “modern” in their historical overviews. Because romanticism always seemed to be inseparably wedded to the “old” common practice tonality and traditional melody, and because extreme dissonance, atonality and fragmentation (cf. Whittall, et. al.) were generally cited as the most important stylistic markers of the modern period, we conveniently ended up with a distinctive taxonomy that helped dictate which kinds of composers and compositional techniques were henceforth to be given the most emphasis within the covers of twentieth-century historical overviews.

Clearly, if a composer were to earn a respectable mention in twentieth-century historical accounts, it was not going to be by composing music that was overly tarnished with obvious melodic and tonal elements that, rightly or wrongly, went under the default label “romantic.” The established names for the two centuries helped provide and support what was now confidently assumed to be a foregone conclusion: Juxtaposing “romantic” with the

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“modern” time period was a simple contradiction of terms, if not as egregious an error as speaking of eighteenth-century total serialism or nineteenth-century aleatory techniques. Twentieth-century romantic composers may indeed have been physically present *in* their time, but they were not *of* their time, to use the kind of vocabulary employed by historian Norman Demuth in regard to the organ symphonies of Widor and the later works of Bliss.³ The now-beleaguered late romantic composer could never play a central role in historical scenarios of the post-1900 modern period because, by definition, romanticism had essentially run its course by that time.

Many writers throughout the twentieth century identified the decline or death of romanticism as one of the principle historical characteristics of early twentieth-century music. But before discussing romanticism’s “death” in a twentieth-century context, we should momentarily go back to the late nineteenth century itself in order to clear up at least one potential source of confusion as to what such a death actually meant. Interestingly enough, when we read documents dating from well before the atonal revolution, we occasionally find that musicians were already speaking of the imminent death of romanticism. But what did this really mean in an earlier, pre-1910 era? In the late nineteenth century, obviously, the idea of such a retreat from romanticism was provoked by something other than nascent atonality, dry neoclassicism or brutal futurism. In 1897, Vaughan Williams, who was later to become one of the outstanding twentieth-century beacons of tonal traditionalism, wrote: “The romantic school has lived its life and done its work, and has died an honourable death; to honour it truly is to let it rest in peace.”⁴ Now, if we did not know by whom, or why, this was written, the words of the 25-year-old Vaughan Williams could almost be mistaken for post-1920

³ Norman Demuth, *Musical Trends in the 20th Century* (London: Rockliff, 1952), 15, 124.

⁴ Ralph Vaughan Williams, “The Romantic Movement and its Results,” in *Vaughan Williams on Music*, ed. David Fanning (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 16.

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anti-romantic rhetoric as voiced by Stravinsky or representatives of the Schoenberg school like Edward Dent or Paul Bekker. But it clearly was not, and Vaughan Williams explained further:

Wagner...is the logical outcome of the romantic movement in music: in this way he dealt it its death blow, and out of the tentative gropings of Schumann evolved a new art – a subtle blend of music and drama – ...no progressive musician can go on writing romantic music; that is over and done for, and the way has been cleared for pure music to resume its sway. The next musical pioneer after Wagner must be a man who will start again on the lines from which the romanticists broke away, and who will write pure music out of a purely musical heart – and who has done this if not Brahms, the first whole-hearted classical composer since Beethoven? True, there has been an interregnum, but that does not make Brahms a reactionary, it only means that he has waited his time.⁵

Alert readers will note here that Vaughan Williams (as far back as 1897!) specifically recast Brahms (who was one generation younger than Wagner) as a progressive rather than as a reactionary. And Vaughan Williams wrote his article several decades before Schoenberg wrote his groundbreaking essay “Brahms the Progressive.” But alas, as Schoenberg’s own copious writings show all too well, the great atonalist was barely aware of the music and opinions of a wide range of important contemporaries who would end up forming the bulk of the twentieth-century standard repertoire as it eventually took shape in real life.⁶

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ A glance at the standard published collections of Schoenberg’s own writings (including Auner’s *A Schoenberg Reader*, and Schoenberg’s own *Style and Idea*) reveals almost no engagement whatsoever with the bulk of his contemporaries who, in today’s repertoire, are among the top twenty or thirty most performed and recorded composers: He has a knowledge of Strauss, Mahler and Reger, but one looks in vain for any useful commentary on Shostakovich, Prokofiev, Rachmaninoff, Sibelius, Puccini, Vaughan Williams, Elgar, Ravel.

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Shortly after Vaughan Williams made his comments on the death of romanticism, the notion dramatically evolved into something completely different. Schoenberg was now able to write that he too had escaped from a bygone aesthetic. In the 1920s and 1930s, that bygone aesthetic was labelled as “romantic” by numerous observers including Dent and Bekker, two of the most important spokespersons for the Schoenberg circle.⁷ Indeed, Schoenberg’s atonal revolution henceforth became one of the main turning points for later generations of modernist commentators whenever they spoke of the transition from romanticism to modernism, as we saw with Robert Morgan at the beginning of this chapter.

In academic circles, the basic attitude of avoiding romantic music was not only felt in twentieth-century studies; it also had a dampening effect on research pertaining to romantic nineteenth-century music in general. The so-called “Romantic Century” itself was for a long time rarely dealt with properly, certainly at the level of primary research, although romantic music continued to form the bulk of the concert and operatic repertoire. Instead, most scholars preferred to concentrate on the eighteenth century and earlier. Vital areas like Liszt research were plagued with hostile commentators such as Ernest Newman, who infamously (given his high standard as a scholar in other respects) wrote a biography that the great Liszt scholar Alan Walker called a “foolish character assassination of Liszt.”⁸ In his ground-breaking three-volume biography of Liszt, Walker thoroughly and relentlessly unmasked numerous myths and basic biographical errors that had gone unchallenged for decades, which in itself was an indication that a peculiar antipathy to romanticism in general, and Liszt in particular, ran deep.

In 2008, Walker looked back and briefly recalled the old academic avoidance of romantic topics: “When I was young,

⁷ See their comments in chapter five.

⁸ Alan Walker, *Franz Liszt: The Virtuoso Years, 1811-1847*, revised ed. (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1987), 25.

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growing up in England, one did not readily confess one's love of Tchaikovsky – or Chopin, for that matter: they were much too popular for a musicologist to take them seriously.”⁹ With such an academic climate as Walker described, it was not surprising that there was not even a specialist academic journal devoted to the romantic period until 1978, when the peer-reviewed *19th-Century Music* (now carefully avoiding the term “romantic” in its title) was founded for the purpose of properly covering musical issues that arose in the romantic era. With or without the word romantic, the journal was indicative of how, as Walker noted, “later in the 20th century, and certainly now, in the 21st, the 19th century suddenly becomes respectable enough to be put into university courses.”¹⁰

For numerous textbook writers like Joseph Machlis, Eric Salzman Paul Griffiths, Elliott Antokelez, Robert Morgan, the early twentieth century was dominated by figures who most effectively “escaped” from the “confines” of nineteenth-century styles. Walker himself knew from early academic experience that a basic skepticism concerning the ultimate worth of traditional nineteenth-century romantic idioms had coloured the academic discourse of those decades. The situation was, perhaps, a late reflection of Goethe's famous judgement from almost two centuries earlier, which had seen romanticism as something “weak, sickly, and ill.”¹¹ As we have already mentioned, Liszt's reputation suffered enormously. Between 1900 and 1950, his name was kept alive mainly by his musical descendents – composer-pianists like Sauer, Friedman, da Motta and Siloti who stubbornly continued to perform the works of their beloved master for a public that was still very receptive. As a not-inconsiderable aside, Liszt's musical descendents were also active until the 1930s and even 1940s as

⁹ Walker also added that “once the Romantic period is revived, Liszt is inevitably revived with it, because he was central to his time.” See Alan Walker and Judit Rátz, “Liszt's Life after Death: An Interview with Alan Walker,” *Hungarian Quarterly* 190 (2008): 122.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Goethe, quoted in Arnold Whittall, *Romantic Music: A Concise History from Schubert to Sibelius* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1987), 9.

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extremely influential piano pedagogues who implanted certain musical values in later generations of pianists. In these ways, Liszt's direct musical offspring directly had the effect of shaping anti-modernist attitudes among later generations of performing musicians.

As a group, Liszt's late pupils also helped lay the foundation for Romantic Revival that exploded as the twentieth century drew to a close. The revival of romantic music, in essence, ultimately helped to short-circuit the high modernist narrative of musical evolution: We already saw in chapter two how the Romantic Revival's influence was felt where it counted most – which was in the daily musical life of the concert hall, on the radio and above all in the recording studio. Those public avenues of access had the ear of the music lover, and it was there that music history was to come alive in all its facets, no matter how obscure. Through recordings in particular (which Stephen Banfield called a “lifeline between unfashionable composer and unfashionable public”), connoisseurs could easily bypass academic opinion and could now decide for themselves what music was most important.¹²

Of the above-mentioned writers, Machlis (who died at the age of 92 in 1998 after a very long career) still retains his position after more than half a century as one of the most popular of all English-language music history textbook authors. The first edition of his general overview *The Enjoyment of Music* appeared in 1955. An instant classic, it covered medieval music to the present and is still widely-used by pre-university music students and, at the university level, by music appreciation students. The book is now in its eleventh edition. Revisions are handled by musicologist Kristine Forney, and the book remains as indispensable as ever.

But even more pertinent to our topic, Machlis also wrote a more specialized survey that was devoted exclusively to the twentieth century. It first appeared in 1961, with a second edition coming out in 1979, and was a dependable mainstay for music

¹² See especially the second half of chapter two.

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majors at the university level for decades. Due to the constant presence of Machlis' two textbooks over many years, his opinions undoubtedly contributed toward forming a general perceptions of how the specialized concept "Twentieth-Century Music" was to be defined by musically educated people. For example, the competition rules of the local music festival in my current home city of Winnipeg, Canada, still clearly state that Rachmaninoff is not allowed in twentieth-century repertoire classes – which, as we will now see, was precisely how Machlis himself felt. There is a certain irony here, as I am willing to guarantee that virtually all of the local music teachers working at the regional level in Western Canada would far sooner go a Rachmaninoff concert than a Schoenberg concert. Consciously or unconsciously, Machlis's writings have left their mark among the many music students who have gone on to become local music teachers and literate music lovers throughout Canada and the United States.

Machlis is typical of textbook writers who pronounced their academic verdict on the "remnants" or "last gasps" of romanticism in the twentieth century, supplementing the myth of a dying romanticism with its inevitable corollary, the subsequent rise of dissonant modernism. In his overviews, Machlis offers a good if simplistic distillation of academic attitudes and presents those attitudes in a clear and digestible form that professors everywhere have evidently found acceptable. For Machlis, we can apply Taruskin's dictum which states that, in order to best appreciate the modernist myths themselves, it is "better to look...not at the specialized literature or the cutting edge of research, but at the textbooks that transmit and cement the conventional wisdom...about modernist music in general."¹³ We have already taken advantage of such sources of conventional wisdom by drawing on Morgan, Whittall, Salzman, Griffiths, and others. And

¹³ Richard Taruskin, "Stravinsky and the Subhuman. A Myth of the Twentieth Century: *The Rite of Spring*, the Tradition of the New, and 'the Music Itself,'" in *Defining Russia Musically* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), 369.

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we will continue to employ this strategy from time to time as we proceed.

In his 1961 *Introduction to Contemporary Music*, and true to the cold war academic tradition after 1950, Machlis gave many of the major early twentieth-century tonal romanticists an exceptionally rough ride. He basically had to, because for him, the “crucial issue” of the early twentieth century was the reaction against nineteenth-century romanticism.¹⁴ In his textbook, therefore, the modernist myth of romanticism’s death shines forth in all its cold war splendour. For example, we read the following: “One realizes with surprise that [Rachmaninov] was only nine years older than Stravinsky; the two men seem to have lived in different centuries...” Further, Machlis maintained, “Rachmaninov has no proper place in a book on contemporary music. He was a traditionalist who moved within the orbit of late nineteenth-century romanticism.”¹⁵ Puccini was similarly rejected for coverage in Machlis’ textbook: “We do not discuss the music of Giacomo Puccini...because he functioned within the tradition of Italian opera...and had to remain within the limits of what was accessible to the big public.”¹⁶

Machlis did, however, reserve slightly more space for Sibelius – although that did not mean that his ultimate assessment of the great Finnish composer was any more complimentary. Machlis began by giving Sibelius a little more credit than Rachmaninoff, and wrote that

Sibelius had a definite contribution to make in the first quarter of our century, when the public was finding its way to the new music. There was sufficient novelty in his work to attract those listeners who liked to think of themselves as advanced. At the same time there was enough of the old to reassure those who were not yet

¹⁴ Joseph Machlis, *Introduction to Contemporary Music* (New York: Norton, 1961), 11.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 108.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 107.

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ready for the truly modern in art.¹⁷

The above comments are all very politely phrased, but on closer analysis they are painfully patronizing. The reality is that Machlis is doing little more than throwing the audience a bone, giving them a pacifier. After all, he noted, some music lovers did “like to think of themselves as advanced,” even despite the fact that not all were able to handle “the truly modern in art.”¹⁸ But then came Machlis’ final punishing verdict:

We today see the Finnish master more realistically. His music came out of the last period in European culture that was capable of romantic idealism. It stands in the nineteenth-century tradition. By the same token, it has little relevance to the problems of contemporary musical thought.¹⁹

In view of his comments on Rachmaninoff and Sibelius, it is understandable that Machlis rapidly passed over a wide range of later romantic figures like Dohnanyi, Pizzeti, Ireland, Bax and Bliss. Emblematic of this group was Mario Castelnuovo-Tedesco (1892-1968), whom Machlis called

a facile, agreeable composer...one of those who achieved popularity a quarter-century ago because they were working in a postromantic idiom accessible to the public. Their avoidance of contemporary problems has told heavily against them. The time has passed them by.²⁰

This, of course, was easy enough to say for composers who soon did pass out of the repertoire – or as in Castelnuovo-Tedesco’s case, were central only to “less important” repertoires like film and guitar music. Castelnuovo-Tedesco was one of guitarist Andrés

¹⁷ Ibid., 98.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid., 99.

²⁰ Ibid., 316.

Segovia's favoured composers and was also acknowledged in Hollywood as one of the greatest teachers of an entire younger generation of film composers. Machlis saw no need to mention such peripheral details. But he could not get rid of Rachmaninoff quite so easily. Here he momentarily dropped his mask of objectivity and resorted to sarcasm, with the not-so-subtle implication that the public would (or at least should) tire of the great Russian composer's music sooner or later. Of the piano works, he wrote: "Chances are that, mercilessly overplayed as they are, they will continue to be with us for some time to come."²¹

Robert Morgan's time line

Robert Morgan's 1991 *Twentieth-Century Music* (published by Norton) clearly shows how the standard progressive time line works.²² Using a chapter sequence that is also followed in Salzman's survey of twentieth-century music, Morgan first devotes a chapter to "transitional" composers who stopped just short of atonality in a few of their works written just after 1900, and immediately follows that discussion with a chapter devoted to the atonal revolution. In Morgan's transitional chapter, his only illustrative musical example for Strauss is a passage representing the most chromatically saturated passage that he could manage to extract from the score of *Elektra*. In the same chapter we can view a similarly dissonant passage by Busoni, taken from his radical Second Sonata of 1912. There is also one single musical illustration representing Reger, drawn from the *Symphonic Fantasy and Fugue*, Op. 57 (1910). As with the Busoni Sonata, Morgan admits that the Reger example represents "the most extreme stage in the composer's development toward increased chromaticism,"²³ which for Reger occurred during the decade between 1900 and 1910. In later works, both Reger (1872-1916) and Busoni (1866-

²¹ Ibid., 107.

²² See chapter two of Morgan, *Twentieth-Century Music*.

²³ Ibid., 39.

1924) pulled back from the atonal brink and moderated their musical language, but the important historical implications of this retreat are not contemplated by Morgan.²⁴ A picture is worth a thousand words, and Morgan makes his point clearly but, alas, the hapless student unfortunately ends up without a broader picture of how those transitional composers actually sound, or the issues they struggled with. For a reader flipping through the Morgan textbook (including, by now, two decades worth of music history students across North America), the impression given by these well chosen musical quotations is of a time when “transitional” composers were indeed at the end of their chromatic tether.

Then comes Morgan’s third chapter, entitled “The Atonal Revolution.” As expected, it deals with Schoenberg. The narrative thread picks up at the point where Schoenberg begins to compose atonally. Schoenberg is 34 years old in 1908 and has already composed a vast catalogue of tonal works: According to Walter Frisch, “There are probably several hundred complete compositions or substantial fragments from Schoenberg’s early years.”²⁵ Be that as it may, the cream of Schoenberg’s early years – works like *Verklärte Nacht* and *Gurrelieder*, which still rank as his most widely loved music – count for virtually nothing even though they are impressive technical and musical achievements in their own right. Therefore, Morgan hardly mentions them. The logic, complete with visual cues from the previous chapter, is smooth. One thing comes before the other. Everything is in its place. As Morgan says, “In fact, the fatal step that carried music beyond tonality in to a new stage of technical evolution was taken not by Strauss but by Schoenberg, at approximately the same time that *Elektra* was being completed.”²⁶

And so, with the events of 1908-10, the twentieth century is finally off to the races. History, it is implied, moves forward like a

²⁴ See our long discussion on vacillating composers in chapter one.

²⁵ Walter Frisch, *The Early Works of Arnold Schoenberg, 1893-1908* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, 1993), xiv.

²⁶ Morgan, *Twentieth-Century Music*, 33.

well-oiled machine. But what to do with later romantic music, such as the forty years worth of post-1910 compositions by Strauss, who is now suddenly a “late” composer before his time? For Morgan the answer is simple: He merely observes that “all of Strauss’s music after *Elektra* seems curiously ‘ahistorical,’ giving the impression of being composed in a time warp.”²⁷ With this astonishing pronouncement, we have one of the best academic demonstrations of a German saying we have already alluded to several times, *Die Gleichzeitigkeit des Ungleichzeitigkeiten* (the contemporaneousness of the non-contemporaneous). In thus manner has Strauss played his final card in the grand scheme of music history, as accounted for by one of the most respected university textbooks from the last two decades.²⁸ This is the same Strauss whose own brand of radical modernism was such a financial success in the half-dozen years before 1910 that the composer was able to build his villa at Garmish with the proceeds from *Salome*, an opera that had very good modernist credentials when it first appeared in 1905. This is the Strauss who died as late as 1949 after a very full and productive life. This is the Strauss who, at the time Morgan published his textbook in 1991, still ranked as the most performed German twentieth-century composer.

Dahlhaus’s “no-man’s land:” The generation gap between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries

Because the word “romantic” was, for so many decades,

²⁷ Ibid., 35.

²⁸ Morgan’s textbook is still cited by 2001 edition of *New Grove* as well as Burkholder’s 2006 edition of Grout’s *History of Western Music* one of the most important current surveys of twentieth-century music. See Paula Morgan, “Robert Porter Morgan,” in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* (London: Macmillan, 2001), 117-118. See also J. Peter Burkholder, Donald Jay Grout, and Claude V. Palisca, *A History of Western Music*, 7th ed. (New York and London: Norton, 2006), A67.

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associated with the nineteenth century, and “modern” with the twentieth, it may still sound like a contradiction to many musicians and music lovers when they hear references being made to major twentieth-century romantic composers. Such an immediate gut reaction is testimony to the power that labels have in shaping the way we think. Already by 1920, living composers who were still maintaining the traditional tonal techniques and general sound world of traditional romantic composition were henceforth to be consigned to nineteenth-century past, and that was that. In Germany, Strauss was a major target of this kind of invective from important New Music critics even though, ironically, the same critics were forced to admit that the majority of listeners were still enthusiastic as far as Strauss’s music was concerned. As Paul Bekker stated in reviewing the 1919 premiere of Strauss’s opera *Die Frau ohne Schatten*, “The multitude of listeners still support Strauss and will continue to enjoy his music, at least for the time being.”²⁹ But although music lovers were, as Bekker indicated, still enthusiastic, he felt compelled to complain that Strauss had now contented himself with writing

a kind of music that appears to us like a ghost from an empty past that has already been lived. It is the kind of music in which we hear worn-out forms, cheap and titillating melodies, artificially generated passion, overpowering gestures, and a psycho-intellectual, illustrative compositional technique. It is a kind of music that is no longer able to move us.³⁰

Seven years later, in his general survey of music history from 1926, Bekker again emphasized that contemporary composers

²⁹ Paul Bekker, *Kritische Zeitbilder* (Berlin: Schuster & Loeffler, 1921), 133. (Die Menge steht heut noch zu Strauss, und wird ihn einstweilen weiter feiern.)

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 127. (eine Musik, aus der uns nur das Gespenst einer leeren, abgelebten Vergangenheit erkennbar wird, eine Musik, aus der wir die abgebrauchten Formeln einer billigen Gefälligkeitsmelodik, einer künstlichen Temperamentserhitzung, einer gewaltsamen Steigerungsmanier, einer psychointellektuellen, illustrativen Kompositionstechnik heraushören. Es ist eine Musik, die nichts mehr in uns zu bewegen vermag.)

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were duty bound to move beyond moribund late-romantic styles and embrace the new music. One of Bekker's ways of illustrating this was to draw an analogy to instrument building:

We could also disassemble a Stradivarius violin, take all its precise measurements, and use them to build a new instrument. But the best possible result, wrought with the utmost skill, would still be a Stradivarius imitation. That cannot be our way. Our way must go forward."³¹

Going forward: There is no better way of describing the venerable academic cliché of a progression from romanticism to modernism. Such a progression illustrates how accepted labels can create and perpetuate stylistic and technical assumptions that henceforth require little explanation or defence. But at the same time, simple textbook terms like romantic and modern can be far from neutral: Indeed, they can help frame the debate and set the tone of the discussion before it even starts. Dahlhaus readily acknowledged this point in 1979 when he wrote that "definitions of a period in the history of music or any of the other arts are never completely independent of value judgements: aesthetic decisions are made about which works belong to history (instead of merely to the debris of the past) and which do not."³² Of course, Dahlhaus was also preoccupied with the related problem: According to the existing historiographical framework that was academically popular in the post-1950 cold war era, many turn-of-the-century composers like Strauss, Sibelius, Busoni and Reger did not have a

³¹ Paul Bekker, *Musikgeschichte als Geschichte der musikalischen Formwandlung* (Berlin and Leipzig: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt Stuttgart, 1926), 223 (Wir können auch eine Geige des Stradivarius zerlegen, alle Maßverhältnisse genau feststellen und danach ein neues Instrument bauen. Das denkbar günstigste Resultat höchster Geschicklichkeit wäre dann eben eine Stradivarius-Imitation. Das kann nicht *unser* Weg sein. Dieser Weg muß vorwärts führen.)

³² Carl Dahlhaus, "Neo-Romanticism," *19th-Century Music* 3 (November, 1979), 100. Dahlhaus also discusses this concept more extensively in chapter 7 ("The value-judgement: object or premise of history?") of his 1967 book *Foundations of Music History*, trans. J. B. Robinson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

proper niche in either the nineteenth or the twentieth centuries. They floundered in what Dahlhaus called an “aesthetic no-man’s land.”³³ That no-man’s-land arose as a direct result of historians having access to only two general turn-of-the-century categories: the romantic category (up to about 1910) and the modern New Music category after 1910. But what if the composers seemed to be in a neither/nor category? Sibelius’s Fourth Symphony, said Dahlhaus, had only a “slight...connection with modern twentieth-century music” but it was also “wrong to call [it] a late-romantic relic...”³⁴ For Dahlhaus, then, Sibelius and many others were part of a “neither/nor” generation. This presented a problem, and Dahlhaus wanted to find a framework for reserving at least a sliver of a category in history (specifically, 1890 to 1910) for the “neither/nor” generation, even if it meant recognizing only the early portion of their careers while disregarding their later compositional outputs (in Strauss’s case, it meant ignoring about four decades worth of music after *Electra*). But for someone like Dahlhaus, that was better than nothing.

In the one-page article entitled “Twentieth-Century Music” in Willi Apel’s *Harvard Dictionary of Music* (1969 edition), the beginning of the twentieth-century period is described as being dominated by experimentation. It is summarized as follows: “Among the most important styles and trends since 1900 are expressionism, atonality, serial music, neoclassicism, and, since World War II, electronic music, aleatory music, and *musique concrete*.”³⁵ As one can observe in this standard *Harvard Dictionary* definition, there are no stylistic parameters mentioned that could be fully applied to a traditional romantic

³³ Carl Dahlhaus, *Die Musik des 19. Jahrhunderts* (Wiesbaden: Laaber-Verlag, 1980), English translation as *Nineteenth-Century Music*, trans. J. Bradford Robinson (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1989), 367.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 368.

³⁵ Willi Apel, “Twentieth-Century Music,” in *Harvard Dictionary of Music*, 2nd ed., revised and enlarged, ed. Willi Apel (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1969), 880.

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idiom, such as long lyrical melodies, clear tonality, Lisztian sonorities, and warm textural blends, even though plenty of composers from the post-1900 period in question were still writing in such a manner and were therefore called romantics, either by themselves or by other observers. One need only flip back a few pages in the same *Harvard Dictionary* and read the entry for “Romanticism.” Here, the lexicographer defines the “last phase” of the romantic movement as being represented by Elgar (1857-1934), Puccini (1858-1924), Strauss (1864-1949) and Sibelius (1867-1957).³⁶ The above composers’ dates are usefully printed in the “Romanticism” article, but alas, such dates clearly do not have any implications for the *Harvard Dictionary’s* description of twentieth-century music.

If we insist on treating the twentieth century as a chronological rather than merely as an ideological entity, composer’s dates do have implications for how we define this period. The reader will recall that we prefaced this chapter with a quotation from Paul Henry Lang, who wrote (in regard to Rachmaninoff’s uneasy presence in the twentieth century) that “nothing disturbs the picture more than taking a composer’s dates as criterion.” Apel, certainly, did not risk disturbing the *Harvard Dictionary’s* picture of the twentieth-century with composers who did not fit the standard picture of dissonance, fragmentation, experimentation, and so on. In other words, dates had become entirely beside the point for post-1900 music. The *Harvard Dictionary* did not allow romantic-sounding composers, even those who had flourished for several decades after 1900, to define the modern era in any way. They had become *ungleichzeitig*, or untimely. There was little place in Apel’s carefully-constructed twentieth century for traditionally tonal and melodic music that did not obviously rebel against the sonic surfaces of the nineteenth century. Putting the two *Harvard Dictionary* articles side by side

³⁶ Willi Apel, “Romanticism,” in *Harvard Dictionary of Music*, 2nd ed., revised and enlarged, ed. Willi Apel (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1969), 737-738.

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vividly shows us the extent to which the term “twentieth-century” was used as a philosophical rather than as a chronological construction – even to the point of deliberately making four of most-performed twentieth-century composers unable to fit into the stylistic parameters which allegedly defined their own era. Apel’s picture (circa 1969) of the post-1900 era therefore ended up being a badly skewed caricature.

Apel’s *Harvard Dictionary* was merely symptomatic of a broader problem in musicology. Romantic twentieth-century composers were largely avoided in musicology as a whole. Back in chapter one, we began with Taruskin’s comment that Puccini was almost completely eliminated from all standard historical accounts of modern music. In chapter two we related how Rachmaninoff (who, like Puccini, was one of the five most performed composers born after 1850) was also left out of virtually all historical overviews of the twentieth century. (Neither composer was included in nineteenth-century overviews either, for obvious chronological reasons). Although there were isolated pockets of academic support for Rachmaninoff in English-speaking lands after 1950, there was no German-language biography of the composer until Maria Beisold’s was published in 1993. A recent word search of the database *Doctoral Dissertations in Musicology* (DDM) still lists less than ten doctoral dissertations on Rachmaninoff, and some of those are DMA documents by piano performance students. A search for Schoenberg in DDM, on the other hand, brings up almost 200 citations, despite the fact that there are a good three dozen composers of the Rachmaninoff-Schoenberg generation who are performed as much as, or more than, Schoenberg is. To cite another example, as late as the 1990s Elgar was still a problem for academics as well – even in Britain, where a major 2004-2005 national orchestral repertoire survey rated him at number five among all composers past or present.³⁷

³⁷ In the British Isles, the top ten most-performed composers for the 2004-5 season were (in order): Mozart, Beethoven, Tchaikovsky, Brahms, Elgar, Dvorak, Handel, Haydn, Mendelssohn, Bach. See data published by the

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Comprehensive record catalogues such as that published by Arkivmusic.com have always listed more recordings of Elgar than any of other British composer past or present.³⁸ However, it did not matter for academics that Elgar was Britain's most widely performed or recorded composer. As the young Elgar scholar Matthew Riley described the situation,

Even in the mid-1990s, when, as a Master's student, I mooted the idea of a doctorate on Elgar to a potential supervisor, I was gently guided in other directions. Studying Elgar was not a good career move, it seemed. It was 'something you can always come back to later.'³⁹

Riley's comments were made in the context of a review essay welcoming the new 2004 *Cambridge Companion to Elgar*, which raised another point: Astonishingly, it had taken until 2004 for England's favourite musical son to finally be included in the venerable, decades-old *Cambridge Companion* series. Some important scholarly platforms, however, remain completely cordoned off, even in the twenty-first century. One still searches in vain for any meaningful discussion of twentieth-century tonal composers of a more romantic inclination in a journal like *Perspectives of New Music*.

For a significant number of the most frequently-performed early twentieth-century composers, then, there is still a glaring lack of detailed musicological attention such as one would expect to find in the usual dissertations, journal articles and monographs.

Association of British Orchestras (ABO), *ABO Repertoire List 2004-2005*. Their complete 169-pg listing can be found at http://www.abo.org.uk/user_files/Downloads/pdf/about-orchestras/repertoire-2004_05.pdf, (accessed April 8, 2012). ABO has also published a useful 5-page summary of their complete 2004-2005 list. I have a copy of the summary in my possession but it is no longer available on the internet.

³⁸ See Table 2 in chapter one

³⁹ Matthew Riley, review of *The Cambridge Companion to Elgar*, by Daniel M. Grimley and Julian Rushton, eds., in *Music & Letters* 86 (November, 2005): 654.

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Into this chasm of academic neglect fall several well-known composers who have earned a very high ranking in the international repertoire over the last one hundred years. As we saw earlier, Dahlhaus showed that he was aware of this neglect, and his attempt at creating an early “modern” period from 1890 to 1910 (which was then to be followed by the New Music after 1910) was designed to partially compensate for such a lack. He thereby created room in the historical narrative for unfashionably-romantic composers like Strauss and Sibelius – at least up to 1910, after which, in Dahlhaus’s estimation, they became traditionalists who backed away from the front lines of musical development. After 1910, Schoenberg “bore the torch of musical progress,”⁴⁰ as Dahlhaus put it. But do we really need Dahlhaus’s short “modern” period to accommodate a category of composers who supposedly belong to neither the nineteenth nor the twentieth centuries? If Wagner and Brahms dominated the late nineteenth century, then why not say that the very next generation – the generation beginning with Janáček (1854-1928) – represents the early twentieth century: After the late nineteenth century comes the early twentieth century – it could be as simple as that. Nothing would have to be needed in between. But it is not so simple for historians. As Morgan states outright, and as Apel’s two *Harvard Dictionary* articles demonstrate, the term “twentieth century” is not merely a chronological category. There are also some very specific stylistic requirements as well. And given the often bitter cultural politics that arose in tandem with the sweeping academic success of high modernism, such requirements ensured that battle for the “true” definition of modern twentieth-century music was won at the cost of leaving several major composers out of the standard historical narrative. The category was a highly ideological one. In Daniel Albright’s words, it was built around history’s winners and history’s losers.⁴¹

One general assumption that had always dominated history

⁴⁰ Dahlhaus, *Nineteenth-Century Music*, 255.

⁴¹ See also note 24 in chapter three.

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writing throughout the twentieth century was that the pace of stylistic change had increased dramatically around the turn of the century. This view plainly favoured Schoenberg. The “rapid change” theory certainly contains some merit when we consider Schoenberg himself, but it is not the whole truth. Some composers evolved new styles and techniques more quickly than others, and scholars should have a way of constructing the historical narrative in such a way that it can allow for such multiple rates of change – and accept those multiple rates as a normal fact of life. Why should that be so difficult? Moreover, the apparent stylistic sameness of many traditionalist composers, as Taruskin’s *Oxford History* has reminded us in the cases of Korngold, Medtner and Rachmaninoff, was relative rather than absolute.

Stasis, it should be emphasized in fairness, was only relative. Even within recognizably old styles there was room for freshness and originality as long as composers were drawn to them; and as long as that was the case, the styles could not be declared dead except as propaganda.⁴²

Even the most conservative figures of the early twentieth century, when taken on their own, changed considerably over their lifetimes when one cared to examine their music more closely. As a front-rank conductor, solo pianist, chamber musician, and accompanist, Vladimir Ashkenazy has performed and recorded virtually every note that Rachmaninoff ever wrote. In these capacities, he has observed close hand the extent to which Rachmaninoff’s music actually changed from the 1890s to the 1940s.

I think his development as a composer and as an individual was quite spectacular. You wouldn’t really recognize the Rachmaninoff of the *Symphonic Dances* from the naive Rachmaninoff of the

⁴² Richard Taruskin, *The Oxford History of Western Music*, Vol. 4, *The Early Twentieth Century* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 556.

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early piano pieces, the opera *Aleko* and the First Symphony. If I didn't *know* that the early piano works were by Rachmaninoff, they could almost be by any Russian composer of that period – such as Cui or Liadov. But the gift he had was greater than he himself thought. Those early works are like a bud that was to blossom later on. If you look at *The Bells* [1913] or the Third Piano Concerto [1909], he was a different person...[and likewise], The difference between the Third Piano Concerto and the *Symphonic Dances* [1940] is tremendous. His last pieces have a different hue...The inventiveness is still there...but...there is a dark hue...in such works as the *Corelli Variations*, the *Paganini Rhapsody* or the Third Symphony. I have just finished recording Rachmaninoff's piano transcriptions, including the Tchaikovsky *Lullaby*, which was Rachmaninoff's last work. There is an incredibly dark hue here – harmonies that Tchaikovsky would never have dreamed of, fantastic harmonies."⁴³

When one reads the remarks of major performing musicians as vastly experienced and perceptive as Ashkenazy, one can legitimately wonder how well some major commentators really knew the music of Rachmaninoff. He was, after all, generally considered to be one of the most backward and unchanging of all twentieth-century romantic holdovers. That is, he was not worth bothering with on a historical level. And bother with him they evidently did not: It is probably safe to say that no modernist-oriented commentator ever undertook any serious research on Rachmaninoff. (If this statement is in any way incorrect, I would be more than happy to be proven wrong). And if their strictly analytical knowledge of the composer was as limited as this would seem to imply, it is also likely that their picture of him was ultimately founded in faulty assumptions regarding his “undeveloped” compositional technique.

The idea of a greatly-accelerated harmonic evolution was

⁴³ Geoffrey Norris, “Vladimir Ashkenazy on Sergei Rachmaninoff,” *Andante*, (Sept. 4, 2002), <http://www.andante.com/magazine/article.cfm?id+15463> (accessed July 15, 2006). The andante.com website is now defunct.

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widely followed by scholars, who in turn made it into a sweeping truism that all creative musicians were obligated to honour. Composers who did not seem to fit such a paradigm inevitably got swept under the rug. They were part of Dahlhaus's "debris of the past." No wonder Dahlhaus was vexed by the historiographical problem presented by the neither/nor generation – a problem that he ultimately could not solve. The reason was obvious: Included in Dahlhaus's "no-man's land" were virtually all composers, great and small, who had stayed reasonably faithful to tonality and a general late-romantic sound world in the several decades after 1900.

Dahlhaus's conception of a neither/nor generation also resulted in the logical absurdity (and Dahlhaus fell victim to this absurdity as did many others) of making a twentieth-century repertoire giant like Strauss into a "transitional" figure who prepared the way for what turned out to be the much more modest repertoire contributions of his greatest atonal contemporaries, some of whom he even managed to outlive. To observe the academic success of "Strauss the transitional figure" in view of his performance statistics (versus those of the Vienna trinity) over the last 100 years is to observe one of the really bizarre practical consequences of the progress narrative of musical evolution, which did so much to help shape the way twentieth-century music history came to be written. Like most of the other composers from the neither/nor generation, if Strauss *was* to be considered historically important, it was only because of how he led up to atonality and the emancipation of the dissonance, the ultimate goal to which history had apparently been "striving," as Schoenberg and his followers so firmly believed. Strauss's brief involvement in this preparation was what garnered him the label "modern" for Dahlhaus.⁴⁴

Another way of illustrate missing historical coverage as

⁴⁴ Dahlhaus's final chapter (entitled "1889-1910") in his nineteenth century overview begins with Strauss and ends with a discussion of Schoenberg's first atonal works. See *Nineteenth-Century Music*, 330ff.

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historians moved their narrative from the nineteenth to the twentieth century is to examine pairs of nineteenth and twentieth-century music history overviews which were specifically conceived in chronological series. Such pairs of textbooks clearly demonstrate that those in the neither/nor generation are considered to be born too late to be comprehensively included in a typical nineteenth-century survey. On the other hand, the neither/nor generation is, on stylistic grounds, also deemed unfit to be considered truly twentieth-century, as Dahlhaus wrote.

Admittedly, as far as textbooks covering nineteenth-century music are concerned, it does make little sense to include composers such as Elgar, Puccini, Sibelius, and Rachmaninoff, in that they composed virtually all of their most important works after the year 1900. Textbooks covering the nineteenth century start with Rossini, Mendelssohn, Chopin and Schumann (and sometimes Beethoven who, even though he died in 1827, may also be claimed by the eighteenth century as well – but at least he is not left out). The story of nineteenth-century music more or less comes to a close with composers such as Liszt (who died in 1886), Wagner (1883) and Brahms (1897). Those giants were among the most prominent figures in the prime musical battle (romantic versus classic) of the late nineteenth century. In standard textbooks, other figures active at the end of the nineteenth century include Verdi (died 1901), Dvorak (1904), Grieg (1907), Saint-Saens (1921), Tchaikovsky (1893), Bruckner (1896) and Franck (1890).

A survey devoted to the nineteenth century, such as Leon Plantinga's *Romantic Music* (1984), normally ends with these composers. The early careers of a few subsequent "stragglers" born after 1850 are then ever-so-briefly mentioned at the end of the overview. Obviously, the later careers of this final group are not followed up because the period after 1900 is out of the nineteenth-century time range. As Plantinga explained at the beginning of his survey of *Romantic Music* (which formed the nineteenth-century companion to Morgan's twentieth-century survey in *The Norton introduction to music history* series), his end point of the year 1900

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seemed “especially whimsical.”⁴⁵ He admitted to cutting off several composers in mid-life, and noted that there was indeed a great deal of romantic music still to be composed in the twentieth century. However, continuing the discussion of romanticism as it made its way deep into the twentieth century would, Plantinga noted, “launch us on a daunting journey with no natural stopping place: Saint-Saëns lived until 1921, Puccini until 1924, Rachmaninov until 1943, both Strauss and Pfitzner until 1949.”⁴⁶

Let us then continue to illustrate the historical gap between the two centuries by going to specific pairs of textbook overviews. Arnold Whittall, during the course of his long and distinguished career as a theorist and historian, has written both a nineteenth-century survey and a twentieth-century survey. His nineteenth-century survey briefly mentions Rachmaninoff and Puccini (among many others) in the last chapter. They were among the many who, as Whittall puts it, took their first musical steps shortly before 1900 and went on to continue the romantic tradition until well into the twentieth century.⁴⁷ Indeed, for Whittall, Rachmaninoff was “one of the most consistent twentieth-century Romantics.”⁴⁸ So far so good. Moving on, then, to the first edition of Whittall’s own

⁴⁵ Leon Plantinga, *Romantic Music* (New York: Norton, 1984), ix.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Rather unusually for textbooks devoted to modern music, the title of Whittall’s 1977 overview advertises that he starts his discussion around the year 1918. In reality, however, he actually begins with Schoenberg’s early career as a tonal composer prior to 1910. See Arnold Whittall, *Music since the First World War* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1977). To be fair, Whittall does include good discussions of late symphonic works by composers like Nielsen (Symphony No. 5), Vaughan Williams (Symphony No. 4), Sibelius (Symphony No. 7) and Prokofiev (Symphony No. 6). This is the type of “conservative” twentieth-century music (so beloved of classical music connoisseurs) that is normally avoided by textbook writers (cf. Antokelez, Simms, Morgan, Salzman, et. al.). Of course, none of these composers receive coverage that is remotely comparable to that given to Stravinsky and Schoenberg. A much more serious blind spot for Whittall is Ravel (given a mere page). Even worse off are Rachmaninoff, Elgar and Puccini: They are almost completely ignored.

⁴⁸ Arnold Whittall, *Romantic Music: A Concise History from Schubert to Sibelius* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1987), 181

twentieth-century survey from 1977. Puccini rates a brief mention but mysteriously, there is no mention of Rachmaninoff at all, despite the fact that he died in 1943. In the second edition from 1999, we can find a brief mention of Rachmaninoff at the beginning of the book, but the tone has noticeably changed and he is now referred to in distinctly negative terms. Clearly, neither Puccini nor Rachmaninoff are welcome in the new century, despite the fact that, historically speaking, they both rank among the century's five most-performed composers. Whittall (who was also active for over 30 years as one of the principle *Gramophone* reviewers devoted to the magazine's coverage of the modernist side of twentieth-century music) refuses to properly acknowledge the vast importance of a broad range of more traditionalist composers who were active during the three or four decades of the twentieth century. It was a time when Elgar, Rachmaninoff and Puccini reigned supreme in the recording studios and concert halls of Whittall's own homeland of Great Britain, but Whittall does not give them a historical weight that even remotely corresponds with their position in the repertoire.

As we saw in chapter one, central repertoire status in the general music world (which tended to be occupied by the latter-day romantics) was always one of the main goals of modernist music as well. Griffiths clearly pointed this out in his *Modern Music and After* (2010).⁴⁹ Understandably, in view of his professional career devotion to high modernism, Whittall devotes most of his space to the Schoenberg and Stravinsky revolutions. Because he naturally assumes that his view is commonly accepted in academic circles, he has no need to explain or justify himself, and several major composers therefore fall into the proverbial "cracks of history." They sink with hardly a trace into Dahlhaus's neither/nor chasm.

Let us also consider another example of textbook pairings: In the *Prentice Hall History of Music Series*, Rey Longyear's *Nineteenth-Century Romanticism in Music* is followed by Eric

⁴⁹ Paul Griffiths, *Modern Music and After* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), xvii. See our expansion of this point in chapter one (note 52).

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Salzman's *Twentieth-Century Music: An Introduction*. Like the Whittall pairing, the Longyear/Salzman sequence also clearly embodies the historical chasm that swallowed up several major late-romantics. Longyear discusses the early careers of a few post-1850 late-romantic composers whose careers straddled both centuries. For the twentieth-century portions of their lives – which, as Longyear stated, were chronologically out of his scope – the author logically directs the reader to Eric Salzman's overview. In Longyear's preface, he describes how his final chapter

posed a problem because of the number of post-Romantic composers whose careers began with many important works written during the nineteenth century yet whose active musical lives continued well into the twentieth; for those who may consider my discussions of d'Indy, Puccini, Mahler, and Richard Strauss to be too brief, I...refer the reader to the subsequent volume in the Prentice-Hall series for coverage of their twentieth-century works.⁵⁰

But the predictable happens, and Salzman's twentieth-century survey utterly ignores the later careers of the same late-romantic composers, of whom Longyear had given us the early years. Longyear's comment – that the reader should look to the twentieth-century survey for information on the later careers of d'Indy and Strauss – turns out to be a blind alley that leads to nowhere. Interestingly enough, in Longyear's final chapter, he does indirectly criticize the twentieth-century survey when he writes that “Twentieth-century post-Romanticism, covered briefly in Eric Salzman's *Twentieth-century Music*...deserves more intensive investigation.”⁵¹

There are other textbook pairings that demonstrate the same problem as Prentice Hall's Longyear/Salzman sequence. A case in point is Morgan/Plantinga, which we have already mentioned. The

⁵⁰ Rey M. Longyear, *Nineteenth-Century Romanticism in Music*, 2nd ed. (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1973), x-xi.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 248.

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above examples are only a small sampling of a wide-spread phenomenon whereby academic writers decade after decade steadfastly avoided dealing with what to them was the troublesome issue of continued musical romanticism in the twentieth century. This in itself is more than a little odd because, as musicological and journalistic commentary over the past one hundred years amply attests, such a stylistic stream surely did exist. Romantic-sounding music still reverberated everywhere music was heard and composed. However, for anyone who considered themselves an adherent of the more self-consciously “advanced” streams that developed after 1910, composers who preserved too much of the old romanticism had to be avoided at all costs. Romanticism’s most representative composers were simply written out of historical narratives that were deemed acceptable for student consumption. For writers of historical surveys (like Joseph Machlis, Eric Salzman, Paul Griffiths, Elliott Antokelez, Robert Morgan, Glenn Watkins, Bryan Simms and Arnold Whittall) the early twentieth century was instead “dominated” by figures who most effectively demonstrated the atonal, futurist or neoclassical “escape” from nineteenth-century romanticism.

**The third way: The Schoenberg-Stravinsky polarity
and the *Immer-noch-Romantiker***

Calling the nineteenth century romantic and the twentieth century modern was just one very practical way of removing twentieth-century romantics from historical consideration. Within twentieth-century historiography itself, there was also another tactic, and that was to build the early modern period around what were often considered to be its two main antipodes: The two poles consisted of Schoenberg (atonality) and Stravinsky (neoclassicism), and their overpowering presence in the academic world had the practical effect of leaving very little room for traditional, romantic-sounding twentieth-century composers in the

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resultant historical construction. Theorist Joseph N. Straus, in *Remaking the Past*, described how this particular scholarly framework functioned:

Music criticism has traditionally divided the first half of the twentieth century into two opposing camps: the neoclassical and the progressive. The dichotomous view crystallized in the music criticism of the 1920s and has remained influential up to the present day. It depicts the neoclassicists (Stravinsky in particular) as attempting to restore and revive aspects of earlier music while the progressives (specifically Schoenberg, Berg, and Webern) pushed music forward in a direction determined by the historical developments of late nineteenth-century chromaticism. Neoclassical music is seen as relatively simple, static, and objective – as having revived the classical ideals of balance and proportion. Progressive music is seen as relatively complex, developmental, and emotionally expressive – as having extended the tradition of romanticism.⁵²

Straus described a general framework that was widely followed. Peter Yates called Schoenberg and Stravinsky “the two chief masters of their generation.”⁵³ Adorno, who deeply despised Stravinsky’s neoclassic aesthetic, also set them up as opposites:

The virtuosity of Stravinsky and his followers forms an exact antithesis to the mastery of Schoenberg and his school; here the game is opposed to the absence of illusion; the seductively arbitrary change of masks, whose wearers are consequently identical but empty, is set against responsible dialectics, the substratum of which transforms itself in sudden changes.⁵⁴

⁵² Joseph N. Straus, *Remaking the Past: Musical Modernism and the Influence of the Tonal Tradition* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1990), 1-2.

⁵³ Peter Yates, *Twentieth Century Music: Its Evolution from the End of the Harmonic Era into the Present Era of Sound* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1967), 218 .

⁵⁴ Theodor W. Adorno, “On the Social Situation of Music, “ in *Essays on Music*, ed. Richard Leppert (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of

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As recently as 2006, Constantin Floros was still articulating the traditional atonal-neoclassical polarity: The music between the two world wars, said Floros, moved between two poles:

On the one hand, there was a feeling of despair and inescapable dread, which was the main theme of Alban Berg's output. The other pole was caught in superficial lightness and the need to entertain. Art was often understood as an amusement, as maskerade, bluff, irony and the copying of styles...many of these elements found their way into neo-classicism and the New Simplicity.⁵⁵

In actual fact, Straus took the Schoenberg-Stravinsky polarity one step further: He proceeded to remove the antithesis altogether by rolling both Schoenberg and Stravinsky together into one largely atonal, modernist stream.⁵⁶ First, though, he effectively eliminated the traditional twentieth-century romantics by pronouncing the atonal Schoenberg as the true heir of the romantic tradition. The next step was to merge the two remaining poles of Schoenberg and Stravinsky together into one great mainstream of music history. As Straus summarized it,

The belief that Stravinsky and Schoenberg were compositionally antithetical, so prevalent among critics during the earlier part of this century, diminished rapidly after Stravinsky adopted the serial approach and has diminished further as our understanding of his

California Press, 2002), 403.

⁵⁵ Constantin Floros, *Neue Ohren für neue Musik: Streifzüge durch die Musik des 20. und 21. Jahrhunderts* (Mainz: Schott, 2006), 7. (Der eine war Verzweiflung, auswegloses Grauen – das Leitmotiv des genialen Oeuvres von Alban Berg. Der andere Pol lag in gedankenloser Leichtigkeit, Oberflächlichkeit, Unterhaltung. Kunst wurde vielfach als Spiel, Maskerade, Bluff, Ironie oder Stilkopie verstanden...Vieles von dem, was als Neoklassizismus und Deutlichkeit bezeichnet wurde, rangierte darunter.)

⁵⁶ Many others have added their weight to such a view of modernism. Whittall, for example, has suggested a dialogue between neoclassicism and atonality as two sides of the same modernist coin.

pre-serial music has deepened.⁵⁷

Straus noted further that even “Stravinsky’s recompositions, generally considered the epitome of his neoclassicism (and thus of his dissimilarity to the progressive Schoenberg), reveal a Schoenbergian concern with motivic structure.”⁵⁸ Indeed, and as Straus sought to demonstrate, it turned out that non-tonal techniques had already been a part of Stravinsky’s music for several decades, long before he actually converted to serialism in the 1950s.

Unlike Marion Bauer – who much earlier (in 1933) had included Schoenberg’s twelve-tone works under the general rubric of austere neoclassicism (thus bending Schoenberg more toward the Stravinsky side, perhaps) – Joseph Straus went in the opposite direction: He bent Stravinsky toward the Schoenberg pole after “discovering” that Stravinsky – even before his conversion to serialism – had always been a little Schoenberg-in-waiting. And so, it was Stravinsky who now had to make the historical adjustment. Neoclassicism, with its distorted tonal sense, was henceforth to be regarded by theorists in an atonal context, complete with the abstract atonal terms of set theory. In Joseph Straus’s scenario, Stravinsky bowed to Schoenberg, and not the other way around (as was implied by Bauer).

There is no better modern-day symbol of Stravinsky’s capitulation to Schoenberg than that of analyzing Stravinsky with what scholars call the “atonal terms” of set-theory. Stravinsky, of course, had once been seen by Schoenberg’s circle as *the* outstanding symbol of twentieth-century tonal regressiveness masquerading as progressiveness. Schoenberg himself, in his *Three Satires*, had lampooned Stravinsky as a “little Modernsky.” Now, however, Stravinsky is regularly subjected to set-theory analysis, even though set theory is far from a neutral analytical tool. It can, and conveniently does, obscure tonal elements, even

⁵⁷ Straus, 54.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

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when those elements are still easily audible in the music, as Peter Deane Roberts has observed in his book on Russian avant-garde music. Roberts, for example, comments that theorist James Baker “applies set-theory analysis to [Scriabin’s] Sonata No. 10 on the assumption that the piece is atonal, although the experience of listening to the music shows it to be tonal, and thus he misses many vital aspects of the structure.”⁵⁹ Nevertheless, as Joseph Straus notes, “Pitch-class set theory has spawned a large analytical literature that has grown to encompass not only the Viennese atonalists, for whose music the theory was originally designed, but Stravinsky and Bartók as well.”⁶⁰ In one fell swoop, what was formerly assumed to be the regressive tonal world of neoclassicism has been absorbed into the Schoenbergian post-tonal world. Only one pole remains in twentieth-century music history. And, needless to say, there is less room than ever for romantic tonalists in the academically accepted historical construction that goes under the label “Modern Music.”

It must be noted, however, that when Joseph Straus made the observation that the “two poles” concept had been common since the 1920s, he was not representing commentators from 1920 to 1950 with complete fidelity. Although many observers in those early years, such as Mendel and Gray, did indeed see Schoenberg and Stravinsky as opposites, they also seemed to give somewhat more weight to a third pole, the romantics. Others, like Bauer, presented a more chaotic picture of the time, one in which a new romanticism was about to re-surface. And to be fair to Straus, one should not expect flawless objectivity from later twentieth-century scholars and analysts when the musical scene before 1950 was

⁵⁹ Peter Deane Roberts, *Modernism in Russian Piano Music, Vol. 1* (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1993), ix. Roberts also comments on George Perle’s analysis of Scriabin’s Ninth Sonata, in which Perle identifies and singles out a variable, unordered set of intervals: “A set which is both unordered and variable is not a particularly meaningful concept. The variants have in common the fact that they are all slightly dominant sounding.” (159, note 3).

⁶⁰ Straus, 3.

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itself so full of contradiction. In 1972, Francis Routh effectively summed up the problem of assessing the early twentieth-century through its original participants:

The environment itself was constantly changing, compounded of several factors, and it varied from place to place. Historians and critics of the time give widely differing accounts, according to their prejudices and differing backgrounds; and to accept one as definitive means to ignore others. Moreover, the most active musicians, and the most articulate, are not always those whose work is most lasting. One cannot necessarily form a complete picture solely from the accounts of individual writers, composers and critics.⁶¹

As Routh implies, the predominant message that one gets from commentators living in the Rachmaninoff-Schoenberg era is an overwhelming sense of confusion and a rapid pace of change.

In spite of the difficulties, writers often did attempt to create order out of the chaos by attempting to classify trends. Percy Scholes, in a widely distributed *Listener's History* that went through many editions and printings between the 1920s and 1950s, simply divided early twentieth-century composers into two streams, neoromantic and antiromantic.⁶² Other writers identified more streams. In addition to the two streams lead by Stravinsky and Schoenberg respectively, some historians of the time also acknowledged a third stream, the romantic traditionalists. For these writers, the romantics were not pushed aside to the point where Schoenberg usurped the old expressive stream at the expense of major composers like Richard Strauss. Rather, the traditional romantics were given a stream of their own; they were the many composers who stubbornly continued nineteenth-century tonal and

⁶¹ Francis Routh, *Contemporary British Music: The Twenty-Five Years from 1925 to 1975* (London: Macdonald and Co., 1972), 4.

⁶² Percy Scholes, *The Listener's History of Music: A Book for any Concert-Goer, Gramophonist or Radio Listener*, Vol. 3, *To the Composers of Today*, 5th ed. (London: Oxford University Press, 1954).

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melodic traditions deep into the twentieth century. Some historians represented them as an embattled breed, perhaps out of fashion, but they were definitely present in the melee.

Yet another commentator who had his own rather unique view of the early twentieth century was the critic and composer Virgil Thomson (1896-1989). In 1961, Thomson put the late romantics (Rachmaninoff, Sibelius, Strauss) on the right, the dissonant composers on the left, and the neoclassicists in the middle, together with the impressionists. The neoclassicists, Thomson felt, were by far the largest contingent. Interesting for us is the fact that within his center group, Thomson also carved out a place for a small neoromantic group which included composers like himself and Sauguet. Equally revealing is the fact that Thomson, in using the word “romantic,” nevertheless took pains to distance himself from what he described as “embarrassing” terminological associations with the romanticism of Sibelius and Rachmaninoff.⁶³

In opposition to Joseph Straus’s picture of Schoenberg as the exclusive legitimate heir of the nineteenth-century tradition of expressive or emotional music, many musical commentators from Schoenberg’s chaotic time had a more nuanced view of the inventor of atonality. Although, like Straus, they indeed tended to consider Schoenberg essentially as a romantic, they often felt that because of Schoenberg’s complicated methods he had become too abstract: He did not, or was unable to, communicate his emotional intensity effectively, as he once had in earlier works such as *Verklärte Nacht* or *Gurrelieder*. Schoenberg was therefore placed in a different category from the romantic traditionalists, but occasionally jumped back into the traditional romantic fold whenever he reverted back to tonality, as he often did in the 1930s and 40s with many overtly tonal works like the Suite in G, Second Chamber Symphony, Organ Variations, a number of choral works, and several arrangements of works by Brahms, Monn, Bach, and

⁶³ Richard Kostelanetz, ed., *Virgil Thomson: A Reader. Selected Writings, 1924-1984*, (New York: Routledge, 2002), 163.

Handel.

In 1935 Arthur Mendel wrote a twentieth-century supplement for the republication of Waldo Pratt's massive 1907 survey textbook, *The History of Music*. Mendel set up his concluding chapter in three extended sections – those who continued the traditions (Strauss, etc.), those who rebelled (Schoenberg, etc.) and those who reversed tendencies (Stravinsky, etc.). For each of the three sections Mendel listed many names, and gave short descriptions to some of the more important figures. Of those who reversed tendencies (the neoclassicists), Mendel wrote: “Romanticism and all it meant have been anathema to many contemporaries. Where nineteenth-century music tended towards the grandiose, the earnest, the rhapsodic, the poetic, the lush, the erotic, twentieth-century composition has inclined to be ironic, frivolous, coldly intellectual, prosaic, acid, naked, sexless.”⁶⁴

Mendel also offered a general explanation of the rebel camp: “It is impossible to count the composers who invent their own inventions, but it is safe to say that never in the history of Western Music has there been such diversity of methods as during the first part of the twentieth century.”⁶⁵ The Schoenberg school was included among the rebels. Importantly, Mendel observed that atonality was used mainly by composers of romantic inclination. In this, Mendel agreed with Joseph Straus, who (as we saw earlier) considered Schoenberg to be an extension of the romantic tradition. Mendel's assessment, however contained a crucial difference; although he noted that Schoenberg and other radicals were authentic romantics, he added that they deliberately broke with the true romantic stream. In essence, then, they cut themselves off from that tradition.

In 1936, the British historian Cecil Gray also divided up contemporary composition into three general areas. Like Mendel,

⁶⁴ Waldo Pratt, *The History of Music: A Handbook and Guide for Students, with an additional chapter on the early twentieth century by Arthur Mendel* (New York: Schirmer Books, 1935), 708.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

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he put the Schoenbergians and Stravinskians at opposite ends of the spectrum, with traditionalists in the middle:

On the one hand we find violent experiments in every conceivable direction save that in continuation of the line traced by our immediate predecessors; on the other is to be perceived a headlong and precipitate retreat to the ideals and technical procedures of a former age. And in between these two extremes of revolutionary innovation and conservative reaction, of which atonalism and neoclassicism respectively are the most characteristic and important manifestations, the vast majority of creative musicians stand helplessly rooted to the ground in growing uncertainty and perplexity. It is taken for granted that no progress along what may be vaguely and comprehensively termed ‘traditional’ lines is possible today.⁶⁶

For our purposes, the really significant element in Gray’s assessment is his reference to what he calls a “vast majority” of musicians, or by implication those who occupied a sort of traditionalist-romantic middle ground. In 2004, Taruskin would write of a similarly large number of post-1945 avant-gardists who had turned their backs on progress and were “now meeting in the vast moderate middle ground labelled ‘neoromanticism.’”⁶⁷ Gray’s “vast majority” of composers in the 1930s referred to those who had become untimely and had the historical misfortune of being caught in the middle of the Schoenbergian and Stravinskian extremes. We would do well to keep Gray’s “vast majority” in mind as we continue to contemplate the meaning of romanticism in the twentieth century. The very quantity hinted at by Gray is extremely significant in the light of thousands of present-day CD revivals devoted to precisely this branch of the early twentieth-century repertoire – Bax, Ropartz, Tveitt, Atterberg, Vladigerov,

⁶⁶ Cecil Gray, *Predicaments, or, Music of the Future* (London: Oxford University Press, 1936; reprint, Freeport, NY: Books for Libraries Press, 1969), 20 (page citations are to the reprint edition).

⁶⁷ See also our discussion of the neoromantic resurgence in chapter two.

Dohnanyi, Weiner, Korngold and hundreds of others.

Gray's "vast majority" conforms to the alternative middle stream in the early twentieth century that some writers have been talking about recently, as the academic world has sought to break away from the view of a twentieth century dominated by the twin peaks of Schoenberg and Stravinsky. The Sibelius scholar Tomi Mäkelä has recently written of such a stream, which he calls *Der dritte Weg*, or "The Third Way." Mäkelä includes a discussion of this stream in his recent biography of Sibelius, under the heading, "Der dritte Weg: Busoni, Barber, von Einem und Stevenson." He writes:

For some of his contemporaries, Sibelius was the hero of an alternative way, which emerged via the unconscious traditionalism of composers who had remained romantics (*Immer-noch-Romantiker*) and had systematically circumvented the kind of renewal represented by dodecaphony. For Ronald Stevenson in 1948, Sibelius was the "shining exception in a time of modernist experiments." Like few others, Sibelius was able to retain his independence from both neoexpressionism and neoclassicism.⁶⁸

Mäkelä also echoes a recent reappraisal of composers such as Richard Strauss, whom Bryan Gilliam considered to be the beginning of post-modern diversity. The only difference is that Mäkelä still labels his composers as *Romantiker* whereas Gilliam avoids the term romantic and calls them modern or post-modern. Either way, the important point here is that Mäkelä describes his stream of *Immer-noch-Romantiker* as a multifaceted and polymorphous stream in the post-modern sense, much like Sibelius

⁶⁸ Tomi Mäkelä, "Poesie in der Luft." *Jean Sibelius. Studien zu Leben und Werk*, (Wiesbaden, Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 2007), 59. (Für einige Zeitgenossen war Sibelius der Heros des anderen Weges, der die unreflektierte Tradition der Immer-noch-Romantiker entlarvete und die systematische Erneuerung durch Dodekaphonie umging. Für Ronald Stevenson war er noch 1948 „die leuchtende Ausnahme in der Zeit des modernen Experimentalismus“, und, wie kaum ein anderer, unabhängig von der neoexpressionistischen sowie neoklassizistischen Richtung.)

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and Busoni themselves also thought of their music. Busoni, who freely juxtaposed apparently contradictory styles, had forged a kind of poly-stylism that has fit in surprisingly well with the post-modern move toward new stylistic mixtures and blends.

As we saw at the end of chapter three, Busoni had also defended music that was considered to be little more than light entertainment (and which was anathema to Schoenberg and his followers). Indeed, Busoni saw the lighter side as an essential aspect of true musical depth. His notion of Young Classicality was not meant as a break with romanticism in the way that Stravinsky's intentionally arid and unemotional neoclassicism was intended. Rather, Busoni had something much grander in mind: In his music, he intended to encompass the sum total of all that had been done before, emphatically including the romantics (for Busoni, Liszt was ranked at the top, along with Bach and Beethoven). Busoni clearly thought of music history as something cumulative, something that was not bound by any sort of Adornian "law of stylistic succession." Some Sibelius scholars believe that the idea of Young Classicality first took shape during Busoni's friendship with Sibelius in the 1890s.⁶⁹ Not surprisingly, the idea of a multi-layered and almost poly-stylistic sense of modernity in Sibelius and Busoni finds resonances in our present-day academic climate, but Mälekä notes that the idea was already present among early commentators who advocated Sibelius:

Already in the earliest years, the idea of a multi-layered modernity had become a central notion among writers dealing with Sibelius. It formed the traditional foundation in their defence of composers who had pitted themselves against the avant-garde. Besides that, the heterogeneous works of Sibelius were instructive in illuminating a framework of history that was poly-linear. This helped to encourage the acceptance of contemporary [*gleichzeitig*] composers who were deemed to be non-contemporaneous

⁶⁹ Ibid. See especially Mälekä's discussion on pages 63 and 64 of his book.

[*ungleichzeitig*] in a historical sense.⁷⁰

Mäkelä's "Third Way," with its implied acceptance of those composers who were thought to be *ungleichzeitig* or untimely, attempts to carve out a place at the musicological discussion table for Busoni, Sibelius, Samuel Barber, and other *Immer-noch-Romantiker*. Interestingly, in this context Mäkelä also mentions the Scottish composer, virtuoso pianist and Busoni scholar Ronald Stevenson. In its time, Stevenson's 1972 *Western Music: An Introduction* was one of the very few books in the historical overview genre to take a strongly anti-modernist stance. Astonishingly – but also understandably, in view of Stevenson's career as a composer-pianist in the grand tradition of Liszt and Busoni – Stevenson went so far as to single out Rachmaninoff and Medtner for special praise.⁷¹

Mäkelä's strategy also makes room for a framework that Christopher Butler has recently articulated. Butler utilizes the concept of three historical strands which were outlined by Mendel and Gray back in the 1930s. However, he adds a fundamental twist in that he now places Strauss and Stravinsky at the poles and has Schoenberg "awkwardly poised" between them. Butler's framework may yet turn out to be one of the cleverest solutions of all. Surprising at first, it has undeniable advantages. In contrast to Whittall, Straus, and others who maintained their devotion to the essential tenets of progressive modernism, Butler is deeply critical of the idea of equating musical progress with the march toward

⁷⁰ Ibid., 64. (Unter den Sibelius-Autoren war die Idee der Multilateralität der Moderne schon früh die gängigste Maxime. Sie bildet das traditionelle Fundament der Verteidigung gegen die Mainstream-Avantgarde(n). Außerdem schult das heterogene Werk von Sibelius im mehrschichtigen, geschichtlich polylinearen Denken und in der Akzeptanz der aktuellen Gleichzeitigkeit des historisch Ungleichzeitigen).

⁷¹ Ronald Stevenson, *Western Music: An Introduction*, (London: Kahn & Averill, 1971). Stevenson dedicated his 80-minute Passacaglia for piano to Shostakovich. In dedicating the work to Shostakovich, Stevenson praised the great Russian composer for defending melody in a century that was so often against it.

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atonality. He therefore completely dismisses the Josef Straus image of a Schoenberg towering over his time, superseding and obliterating the expressive Strauss on the one hand and subsuming the modern neoclassicism of Stravinsky on the other:

The very idea of historical ‘progress’ is an essentially intolerant and illiberal one which may have misled many in the modern period, because an eclectic pluralism was in fact becoming dominant – with Strauss and Mahler so to speak on the Romantic and self-expressive side, Stravinsky on the ‘objective’ becoming neoclassical side, and Schoenberg awkwardly poised in between. All three traditions became and remain available, and it is nonsensically unempirical to invent a dialectic in which the Schoenberg school really bore the ‘burden of history’ while neoclassicism with all its cultural motivations isn’t allowed to count.⁷²

On closer examination, Butler’s scenario emerges as a genuine stroke of brilliance because it allows us to account for some very contradictory reception patterns that have always dogged Schoenberg. As Butler choice of words implies, it may indeed be Schoenberg himself who occupied the most “awkward” presence in his era, and not the untimely (*ungleichzeitig*) tonal romantics. Ironically, romantics may have been a more accurate reflection of the spirit of their early-twentieth-century era than later modernist commentators had originally thought. All those untimely romantics, after all, also lived in an era of classic film scores that were heard and enjoyed by millions – precisely while the atonalists were languishing in obscurity. From this fact alone, we should have been able to conclude that it was not necessary to adhere to a kind of music history that was based on the academic assumption that a major composer such as Richard Strauss spent his last forty

⁷² Christopher Butler, “Innovation and the avant-garde, 1900-20,” in *The Cambridge History of Twentieth-Century Music*, ed. Nicholas Cook and Anthony Pople (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 76.

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years composing in a “time warp,” as Robert Morgan maintained. After all, it cannot be denied that the musical language of Strauss (much more than that of Schoenberg or even Stravinsky) closely reflected the common harmonic practice of film, Broadway and popular music in the 1900 to 1950 period. Anthropologically speaking, he was the man.

As a corollary to Strauss’s dominance, there is the not inconsiderable point that Schoenberg’s still-modest place in today’s repertoire makes him a less-than-ideal candidate for being a pole, or, as we phrased it more strongly in chapter one, a “fulcrum of history.” Is it heresy, then, to finally broach the possibility that the inventor of atonality is simply not big enough to fill such historic shoes? In the long run, it may be better (indeed, it may eventually be deemed necessary) for those composers who make only modest contributions to the standard repertoire to be placed between other composers whose repertoire contributions are far more imposing. Thinking in this way could have the effect of absolving us of dependence on a historical construction of twentieth-century music (atonal versus neoclassical) where the romantics could hardly squeeze in edgewise. We could do away with the need for all of those by-now painful-sounding and convoluted historical justifications (like the death of tonality, or the death of romanticism, or that film music was cheap and despicable) that were constantly trotted out in order to help prop up a shaky historical edifice in which dissonant modernism trumped all.

Furthermore, Butler’s scenario is valuable in that it also accounts for another aspect of Schoenberg reception, and this brings us to the perennial question of Schoenberg’s emotional expressivity – or lack thereof. Schoenberg, as we all know, has long been perceived anywhere along the gamut from intensely expressive to emotionally constricted. How is one to account for such wildly diverging and contradictory views? Many historians writing before 1950, not to mention the musical public, had always tended to view the atonal and serial Schoenberg as being severely

restricted expressively, even mathematical. This judgement was in complete contrast to later apologists, like Josef Straus and Arnold Whittall, who insisted on Schoenberg's virtually unlimited expressive potential, even in the more constructivist twelve-tone works. Schoenberg himself sought to answer the hurtful "unemotional" charge in his essay *Heart and Mind*, in which he attempted to prove that there was plenty of emotion to be discerned even in his post-expressionist serial works.

Butler therefore provides a possible solution to this fundamental discrepancy within Schoenberg reception: "As is often pointed out," Butler writes, "a study of the (progressive) 'grammar' of music can also fail to attend to the ways in which the music is actually heard...It doesn't pay nearly enough attention to the rhetorical effects of innovatory works upon the intelligent public."⁷³ It is safe to say that few if any musicians studied the theoretical implications of the most progressive musical grammar more thoroughly than Schoenberg, who was one of the most brilliant theorists in history. But as Butler has pointed out, some of the most advanced and innovative musical ideas did not always achieve their *intended* expressive effect on the audience. Moreover, the ongoing public desire for music that duly generated a proper "rhetorical effect" (such as the need for a least a few direct and memorable melodic snippets that the public could take home with them) was ultimately ignored at the composer's own peril.

Schoenberg wrote that he had poured his very heart and soul into his music – and it would be uncharitable for us to doubt this claim. But he could never accept that his music failed to communicate in a consistent manner. And he certainly did not contemplate that, at the end of the day, the fault may have been his own. For all its intensity and skillful construction, his music faced the perennial problem of only sporadically being able to leap beyond the foot lights and into the hearts of listeners. For us grappling with the problem of Schoenberg reception today, here is

⁷³ Ibid., 77.

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a case where the opinion of the receiver has to be balanced against the opinion of the creator. We cannot automatically assume that the customer is always wrong. Sooner or later, even the most forward-looking composers must ultimately be able to sell a reasonable amount of their musical product.

Schoenberg insisted on the right to peddle his wares exclusively on his own terms. Among other things, he thought traditional melody was “primitive” (see chapter five) and honestly seemed to believe that the twelve-tone series would provide a more sophisticated substitute. But Schoenberg, alas, may have been like the comedian who firmly believes that his jokes are funny – even to the point of getting angry and making ill-advised explanations in case someone does not “get it.” Certainly, a few insiders – such as Yates or Whittall – may “get the joke,” but the general audience at the comedy club reacts with stony silence. An awkward silence fills the room. The comedian refuses to take this for a “no,” and proceeds to go on the offensive. He even writes polemical pieces that defend his sense of humour, but there remains a fundamental disconnect between the comedian’s intent and the general audience’s response.

For an unsuccessful comedian, we would probably side with the audience’s judgement. We would be willing to concede that the comedian’s jokes had bombed, and that he had miscalculated rhetorically on the most fundamentally obvious level, no matter how well his comedy routine had been constructed on a purely intellectual level. Schoenberg, despite his undeniable genius in so many ways, was perhaps not so different from our hypothetical comedian. Whether or not the public was correct in its negative evaluation of his music’s expressive potential is entirely beside the point, then or now. Their judgement was that Schoenberg was emotionally constricted, and that he and others in his tradition composed what Chandos Records founder Brian Couzens in chapter two called “mathematical music.” Just as Schoenberg exercised his prerogative in composing only as he himself saw fit, his receivers also exercised their prerogative to

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react as they wished. And the public's judgement, rightly or wrongly, has remained an unalterable part of the reception history of twentieth-century music.

Butler's scenario is certainly all-embracing enough to make ample room for a "Third Way," a compositional path that strongly resembled the alternative twentieth-century category that Mälekä had suggested for *Immer-noch-Romantiker* like Sibelius, Busoni, Stevenson and Barber. Furthermore, Butler is only one of a veritable flood of scholars who, one way or another, are now studying and defending such an openly expressive and tonal stream – even to the point of renaming early twentieth-century romantic tonalists as "modern" or "modernist" instead of "late-romantic," thus stripping the word "modern" of its predominantly dissonant connotations. But whether we call such composers romantic or modern does not particularly matter. What matters is that the growing scholarly recognition of *Immer-noch-Romantiker* has been decisive in paving the way for a more balanced historical view of twentieth-century "art" music.

For decades, the ruling Stravinsky-Schoenberg framework had functioned in a way that prevented the proper inclusion of the romantic stream because it implied that the contemporary romantics were *ungleichzeitig*. However, for many commentators today, including musicologist Joseph Horowitz, the reigning influence of the Schoenberg-Stravinsky polarity is rapidly becoming a thing of the past. And with its passing, a major obstacle will be finally lifted. We will consequently be in a better position to more fairly evaluate the unique contributions of romantic composition in the twentieth century. Most importantly, some of the early twentieth century's most-performed composers will finally have a historical framework that they are able to fit into easily and without apology. They will be elevated to timeliness, or *Gleichzeitigkeit*.

Composers like Strauss, Ravel and Sibelius will all gain in stature, but perhaps the one with the most to gain will be Rachmaninoff. This is not because he is necessarily better than the

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others. Rather, it is due to the fact that, out of all the top twentieth-century “repertoire” composers, Rachmaninoff (and Puccini ran him a close second) was always one of the most neglected by scholars. Horowitz summarized the changing academic landscape in the following way:

The topography of twentieth century music has changed dramatically over the past two decades. Witness Eric Salzman’s *Twentieth Century Music: An Introduction*, an admirable and much-used American survey from 1974. Salzman devotes 13 pages to Stravinsky, 11 to Schoenberg, and 6 to Berg versus 2 for Ravel, 2 for Shostakovich, 1 for Sibelius, and 1 for Richard Strauss. To Rachmaninoff, he allots a single sentence, consigning him to the “older Romantic tradition” of Russian music. For decades, Rachmaninoff’s abject intellectual disreputability seemingly required no comment. His popularity was held against him – music so easy to know and like, it was assumed, would become tedious. The century would outgrow Rachmaninoff. He would go away.⁷⁴

But as everyone knows, the great Russian composer did not go away, and on the occasion of the 2009 Rachmaninoff festival in Pittsburgh, Horowitz was able to observe:

This is a moment we can come back to [Rachmaninoff’s] music in a fair-minded way because we’ve lived through a sea change in aesthetics. We’re no longer captive to seeing Stravinsky and Schoenberg as the towering figures of 20th-century music. We have to rethink Ravel, Sibelius, and, most of all, Sergei Rachmaninoff.⁷⁵

⁷⁴ Joseph Horowitz, “Re-encountering Rachmaninoff,” [posted on the author’s own website, undated, but written between 2000 and 2005]: http://josephhorowitz.com/up_files/File/archives/RE-ENCOUNTERING%20RACHMANINOFF.pdf (accessed June 21, 2012).

⁷⁵ Mark Kanny, “Festival aims to Rehabilitate Opinion of Rachmaninoff’s Music,” *Pittsburgh Tribune-Review* (March 29, 2009): <http://triblive.com/home/1244991-85/rachmaninoff-music-april-concert-pittsburgh-symphony-horowitz-piano-hall-university> (accessed June 21, 2012).

Chapter Five

Romantic Emotion and Melody in the Modern Era

Emotional classicism versus dry Stravinskian neoclassicism: A loss of context

Some very conventional views of emotional representation and melody are integral to our picture of romanticism in the twentieth-century music. In his formidable *Nineteenth-Century Music*, Carl Dahlhaus (d. 1989) uncontroversially acknowledged what had long been a common belief when he wrote the following: “In the everyday speech of our century the aesthetic of feeling is automatically called ‘romantic.’”¹ The great German musicologist was well known for being a vigorous and influential supporter of the historical primacy of the atonal avant-garde and made his comment within the context of the cold war era of serialism and chance music. During those years, many advanced composers were still doing their best to avoid, as a matter of principle, what they thought was (romantic) feeling in music.

¹ Carl Dahlhaus, *Nineteenth-Century Music*, trans. J. Bradford Robinson (Berkeley, Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1989), 89. (original German-language edition published in 1980).

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Meanwhile, within musicology the definition of romanticism itself had travelled a long way from its historic role as a descriptor for music in general. Prior to the early romantic generation of Chopin and Schumann, and during so-called “classical” times, music had been considered the most romantic of the arts because – unlike sculpture, painting or verbal utterances – it was the medium of human creativity that was best able to express emotion. It was an era when human feeling was an indispensable component of musical composition and performance, as recent historians like Dahlhaus, Peter le Huray, James Day, Leonard Ratner and Julian Rushton have readily confirmed. Indeed, writers of musical treatises during the time of Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven were unified on one very important point: Music that did not move the listener was worthless. le Huray and Day wrote:

While some commentators have seen the romantic age as one in which emphasis was placed on emotional content rather than form, we find that if there was one point on which every eighteenth-century writer was agreed, it was that music was the art that most immediately appealed to the emotions. Music that failed to engage the emotions, they felt, was of little or no consequence. ‘Expression,’ therefore, was the central theme around which the debate revolved...²

² See le Huray and Day, *Music and Aesthetics in the Eighteenth and Early-Nineteenth Centuries* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), xiii-xvi.

Many other late twentieth-century scholars confirm le Huray and Day’s general point about the presence of emotion in the music of the “classical” period: Dahlhaus, for instance, wrote that “The music aesthetic of the Enlightenment was by no means marked by the formalism that we hastily associate with rationalism; on the contrary, its main category was sensibility. Bourgeois audiences gradually came to self-awareness during the Enlightenment and what they wanted from music was ‘feeling’...Music that did not reach the heart, that was not intelligible as a reflection of inner emotion, was considered meaningless noise: however astonishing the virtuosity of the performance, it left the emotions untouched.” 89.

Julian Rushton wrote: “The implication of Classical as opposed to Romantic is often taken to be a tendency towards formal discipline rather than strength of feeling. The aestheticians and educationalists of music in the late

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The emotional aspect lay at the core of how “classical” musicians thought about music in the eighteenth-century. Specifically, this meant that music was able to awaken human emotion and feeling even more effectively than words or visual images. Echoing writers like E. T. A. Hoffmann, and summing up what was by then already a long tradition of thinking on the matter, Schilling’s *Encyclopedia* stated in 1838: “All music is romantic through and through. Musical sounds with their rhythmic sweep can express what no word, painter’s brush, or sculptor’s chisel is able to express.”³

By post-1900 times, however, some had greatly distanced themselves from the age-old idea that music was *inherently* romantic, and therefore unusually well suited to communicating the full gamut of emotional states. Ironically, no composers in the early twentieth century had distanced themselves from this expressive aesthetic more completely than those who purported to be recovering the classical era – the so-called “neoclassicists.” The early twentieth-century anti-romantic backlash, therefore, was at its most extreme when (rather than following atonalism) composers attempted to write a so-called neoclassical music that

eighteenth century, on the contrary, emphasized feeling rather than form; and it was the age of Romanticism which showed so marked an interest in structure. It would be wrong to suppose that Classical music is not replete with feeling. What academics later classified as typical forms of the period, and as models of balanced structure, were novel for the composers who used them.” See *Classical Music: A Concise History from Gluck to Beethoven* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1986), 10.

Leonard Ratner wrote: “Expression was an ever-present concern in eighteenth-century musical thought and practice. In its most general sense, expression referred to ways in which the listener’s feelings could be stirred. The term covered a wide range of concepts and procedures, from frank pictorialism to subtle evocations of mood.” See *Classic Music: Expression, Form, and Style* (New York: Schirmer Books, 1980), 1.

³ Gustav Schilling, ed., “Romantik,” in *Encyclopadie der gesammten musikalischen Wissenschaften, oder Universal-Lexicon der Tonkunst* (Stuttgart: Verlag von Franz Heinrich Rohler, 1838), 4:35. (Alle Tonkunst ist ihrem innersten Wesen nach Romantik. Was kein Farbenglanz, kein Meißel, kein Wort vermag, kann der musikalische Klang auf seinen rhythmischen Schwingen erreichen.)

purported to be about “nothing at all,” as Stravinsky himself so famously stated. Lazare Saminsky, in his 1939 overview *Music of our Day: Essentials and Prophecies*, was one of many writers who summarized this trend. Reacting to Hanslick’s famous old declaration that “The sole content of music is the tonal arabesque,” Saminsky immediately added: “This old maxim of Hanslick should be thought of as the forgotten source of our modern doctrines of neoclassicism, objectivity and the doctrine of autonomous sonority, a new substitute for old emotion.”⁴ On the opposite end of the spectrum from neoclassicism were those who continued to affirm the centrality of emotion in music. They tended to be the romantic hold-overs. As we will see later, it was the age-old appeal to human emotions that early twentieth-century romantics like Bax, Respighi, Hanson and Furtwängler saw themselves as upholding.

As harpsichordist and musicologist Robert Hill has outlined in his essay “Overcoming Romanticism,” anti-romantic rhetoric was in full force during the 1920s and early 1930s.⁵ Now, and rather suddenly, neoclassicism was in and old (romantic) emotion was out. Emotion had become something that many composers with cutting-edge aspirations felt pressure to avoid. The *Neue Sachlichkeit* (New Simplicity) had finally come of age, and it was an aesthetic movement which had a long-term effect not only on composition but also on performance as well. Rubatos became less exaggerated, even among performers who were not necessarily sympathetic to the avant-garde, and string portamentos were gradually weeded out. As Hill wrote, this was the age of the pianola, an instrument that could potentially cleanse music of every vestige of (romantic) nuance and was therefore held up by Stravinsky and others as an ideal of sorts.

It is a well-worn cliché of twentieth-century music history

⁴ Lazare Saminsky, *Music of our Day: Essentials and Prophecies* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1939), 8.

⁵ Robert Hill, ““Overcoming romanticism”: on the modernization of twentieth-century performance practice,” in *Music and Performance during the Weimar Republic*, ed. Bryan Gilliam (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

writing that Stravinsky devoted himself to a highly “objective” and even anti-emotional philosophy of music production (albeit inconsistently). And not only did he attempt to write a non-expressive music; he also engaged in what Pieter C. van den Toorn called a “life-long battle with ‘interpretation’ and ‘nuance’” on the part of romanticizing performers.⁶ Such a general interpretive approach, Stravinsky felt, was misrepresenting his music, rendering it too expressive. Composers too, he stated, were not always going far enough in realizing the kind of objective and classicizing concepts that formed his own compositional ideal.

The mere act on the part of Stravinsky’s late romantic contemporaries of employing eighteenth-century classic forms was clearly not enough. Nearly all of the composers of the time still used classic forms, but much of this output had little or nothing to do with the anti-emotional movement. To state the obvious, works with classic-sounding titles like Paderewski’s *Menuet in G* and Rachmaninoff’s *Prelude in C sharp minor* certainly did not fit a dry conception of neoclassicism, even though they were two of the most popular piano pieces written by composers who lived during the first four or five decades of the twentieth century. Along the same lines, the late romantic composer-pianist Eugene D’Albert, too, had composed a piano suite with a popular Gavotte that he recorded at least twice, and which evidently constituted something of a calling card for him. There were also perennial orchestral favorites like Respighi’s three suites of *Ancient Airs and Dances* and the ubiquitous Bach-Busoni, Bach-Stokowski, Bach-Mengelberg, Handel-Beecham and so on, but none of these properly fit Stravinsky’s neoclassical conception.

Basically stated, a great many new compositions and arrangements which used classical forms did not end up being part of the neoclassical movement for the simple reason that they did not utilize a dry and spiky sound surface. They did not attempt to

⁶ Pieter C. van den Toorn, “Stravinsky, *Les Noces* (*Svadebka*), and the Prohibition against Expressive Timing,” *Journal of Musicology* 20 (2003): 298.

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divorce the formal idea from the original emotional context. Stravinsky explained more fully in 1927 what he had actually intended his revolutionary version of classicism to signify:

There is much talk nowadays of a reversion to classicism, and works believed to have been composed under the influence of so-called classical models are labelled as neoclassic...It is difficult for me to say whether this classification is correct or not...I fear that the bulk of the public, and also the critics, are content with recording superficial impressions created by the use of certain technical devices which were current in so-called classical music...The use of such devices is insufficient to constitute the real neoclassicism, for classicism itself was characterized, not in the least by its technical processes, which, then as now, were themselves subject to modification from period to period, but rather by its constructive values...If those who label as neoclassic the works belonging to the latest tendency in music mean by that label that they detect in them a wholesome return to the formal idea, the only basis of music, well and good. But I should like to know, in each particular instance, whether they are not mistaken.⁷

Following the example of Stravinsky's self-declared constructivist devotion to "the formal idea, the only basis of music," commentators of modernist inclination have long tended to downplay a crucial aspect of twentieth-century neoclassicism, by which we mean its tendency to overlap with a warmer expressive style in many composers of traditional, or tonal, inclination. Which is to say, neoclassicism's association with a tendency toward emotional dryness has persisted. In a typical thumb-nail textbook definition, Elliott Antokoletz simply states that neoclassicism, in modern usage, "has come to represent those styles devoid of personal expression and extra-musical symbolism underlying the

⁷ Stravinsky, writing in a 1927 issue of the *Gamut*, quoted in Marion Bauer, *Twentieth Century Music: How it Developed. How to Listen to it*, (New York: Putnam, 1933. Reprint, New York: Da Capo Press, 1978), 239.

aesthetics of late-Romantic and Expressionist movements.”⁸ However, and as Antokoletz is occasionally forced to admit in his own 1992 overview of twentieth-century music, there were many composers who were placed under the general neoclassical umbrella but were at the same time far from being “devoid of personal expression.”

The abrupt appearance of an apparently less emotional, or in extreme cases completely unemotional, music suddenly rendered a whole generation of obviously expressive and romantic-sounding composers from Alfvén to Zemlinsky historically irrelevant while they were still in mid-career. But the energy of the Stravinskian “anti-emotional” movement was matched by the equally obvious fact that there was still a large cultural base of musicians who upheld the old romantic stylistic values. They refused to go down easily. The romantic status quo still remained very strong, but this too was necessary for the revolution.⁹ After all, what was a rebel without a cause? For George Antheil in his bad-boy days, one could not act vigorously enough in escaping romanticism’s baleful influence. In 1924, at the height of his brief period of dissonance-hurling notoriety, he was at his outrageous best when he wrote a newspaper article stating that even the supposedly objective neoclassical movement that was sweeping Paris in the early 1920s had not fully escaped the old romantic influence:

Anti-Romanticism? Faugh! I assure you that the present period in fashionable Paris’ excitement over the fashionable Six...and the rest of Satie and Co. is quite the height of “Romanticism.” I offer you a glass of clear water in its stead, the consideration of this: *the*

⁸ Elliott Antokoletz, *Twentieth-Century Music* (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1992), 242. Although Antokoletz discussed Poulenc almost exclusively from an objective neoclassical perspective, there have been many other commentators who have found deeply romantic elements in this composer as well.

⁹ As Dahlhaus once noted, New Music was able to stay “new” for so long precisely because its traditionalist opponents continued to be so plentiful.

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age of two dimensional music has passed forever. If you write it you will be repeating yourself for some Debussy, Scriabine, Ornstein, Bloch, Rachmaninoff, Beethoven, Mozart, or Bach you heard the summer before last. The big wavy, sprawling, and idealistic line a la Bloch, Ornstein, etc. has left us. So has the jolly, pumping Rossini-line of the Six, etc....We want music that locks itself and that one can put one's hand about. We want music, sheerly and physically music, without a literature, or a mythical "purification."¹⁰

The former futurist Ornstein was probably on Antheil's list of unregenerate romantics because by 1924 Ornstein had already pulled away from the advanced idiom found in savagely dissonant works like *Suicide in an Airplane*. Indeed, Ornstein had recently been composing some very traditional-sounding works like the unabashedly romantic and tonal Fourth Piano Sonata (1918). There was also a piano concerto from 1923 that represented an obvious return to romantic-sounding textures, harmonies and melodies.¹¹

There was no question that others in Antheil's generation also felt a similar general revulsion to the old romanticism. In 1940, Elliott Carter commented that for many modern-day composers like himself, "the Dvorak, Tchaikovsky, Wagner, and even Sibelius brand of romantic heroics sound[ed] hollow."¹² As far as Carter was concerned, both Sibelius and his audiences were reactionary, which meant that they adhered to a musical viewpoint that was no longer supposed to be current. This of course was little more than wishful thinking, especially since Carter, in the same breath, was also able to admit that the old romanticism was still

¹⁰ George Antheil, "Why a Poet Quit the Muses," in *Ezra Pound and Music: The Complete Criticism*, ed. R. Murray Schafer, (New York: New Directions Publishing Corp., 1977), 516.

¹¹ See also our reference to Carol Oja's discussion of Ornstein's return to romanticism in chapter one.

¹² Elliott Carter, "The New York Season Opens, 1939," in *The Writings of Elliott Carter: An American Composer Looks at Modern Music*, ed. Else Stone and Kurt Stone (Bloomington and London: Indiana University Press, 1977), 65.

very popular. As far as the great Finnish master was concerned, thought Carter,

It is not that he is unoriginal (at best he has some new color effects which are one of the minor originalities); not that he is unskillful, although in his rather subconscious style of composing he often falls into the abuse of crude procedures; not that his nationalist point of view is a little belated; but that his whole attitude toward music is deeply reactionary. This inevitably prevents his being really fresh and new. A few pieces sum up his point of view artfully and well. The rest are generally flat. But since audiences well trained in nineteenth-century heroics will stand for a lot of tedium, his music has what it takes to be popular at this time.¹³

The distinguished British musicologist Edward Dent also sought to put the old romantic emotion in its place. In addition to being a great classical scholar, Dent was also one of the most influential figures in the Second Viennese circle in his capacity as co-founder (together with Schoenberg) and president (from 1923 to 1938) of the radical International Society for Contemporary Music (ISCM). In 1933 Dent addressed the distinguished Royal Musical Association in London on the topic of romanticism. Feeling confident enough to speak for everyone, he wrote:

At the present day it is generally considered that the romantic composers are, of all composers, the most remote in feeling from ourselves; there are many musicians who cannot contemplate them without positive disgust. That is perhaps a very good reason for studying them in a spirit of scientific analysis. Nothing can be disgusting if we approach it in a scientific spirit, and the dissection of romantic emotion may teach us much about the psychology of musical expression.¹⁴

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Edward Dent, "The Romantic Spirit in Music," *Proceedings of the Musical Association* 59 (1932-1933): 95.

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As Dent's remarks showed, he was representative of those who had already taken definite measures to distance themselves from the comfortable and nostalgic emotional climes associated with the old romantic music. It was a historical development that undeniably left a mark on scholarly writing for decades to come. Many writers, of course, did not completely conform, but if they did not, they could lay themselves open to the charge of lacking objectivity. In targeting Hugh Wood, a commentator with traditionalist sympathies, the British modernist composer and writer Roger Smalley wrote in 1969 that "The apparently inescapable English prejudice against any writing about music which concerns itself more with objective fact than with emotional generality is well to the fore in Hugh Wood's review of the reissue of a book on serial composition by George Perle"¹⁵ At the end of the twentieth-century Whittall could still tersely note: "Understanding 'through feeling' is evidently a difficult concept to theorise, and most musicologists writing about twentieth-century music have preferred to offer interpretations in which matters formal remain at the forefront."¹⁶

Shortly after the Second World War, a young mathematician named Milton Babbitt decided to devote himself to a career in music theory and composition. He may well have represented the most potent cold war era symbol of Whittall's "matters formal." Heavily under the influence of positivist philosophy, Babbitt prided himself on being able to give a theoretical explanation for every detail in his compositions. Understandably, he was highly critical of how the discipline of musical analysis had been practiced by earlier generations, as his disparaging references to the "analytically unsophisticated" work of Marion Bauer and Hans Mersmann confirmed.¹⁷ Through

¹⁵ Roger Smalley, "Just Twelve Notes," *The Musical Times* 110 (November, 1969): 1138. This was a letter to the editor, in response to Wood's article from August, 1969.

¹⁶ Arnold Whittall *Exploring Twentieth-Century Music: Tradition and Innovation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 2003), 190.

¹⁷ Milton Babbitt, Introduction to *Twentieth Century Music: How it Developed*.

Babbitt's pioneering efforts, the most advanced compositional efforts became (as Taruskin put it) a "legitimate branch of music research."¹⁸ Such research took on an especially complicated mathematical-sounding jargon, giving music theory and composition a decidedly scientific aura that conformed with the academic mood of the time. As Paul Griffiths, a longtime historian and observer of the New Music scene confirmed in 1978, his musical colleagues in the composition departments during the 1960s and 70s "pursued their ideas with quasi-scientific rigour; there was much talk of 'research', and much mathematics in their technical writings."¹⁹ In 1991 William Thomson looked back on this mid-century trend more critically, and wrote: "Such terminology prompted a comforting fantasy in the 1960s and 1970s. It allowed us metaphorically to put on laboratory smocks and pretend to be 'genuine scientists,' the Einsteins of harmony."²⁰

But there were serious historical consequences that resulted as the focus gradually shifted away from emotional and symbolic content, and toward the more external technicalities of composition: In one of the most glaring cases of cold war era historical revisionism, Webern ended up playing a very significant role as the ultimate constructivist, anti-romantic hero to the Darmstadt generation, the latter having somehow forgotten just how ultra-romantic Webern's own musical temperament had been.²¹ Webern's later reception was merely one small example of

How to Listen to it, by Marion Bauer (New York: Putnam, 1933. Reprint, New York: Da Capo Press, 1978), [beginning of the book, no pagination indicated].

¹⁸ Richard Taruskin, *The Oxford History of Western Music*, Vol. 5, *The Late Twentieth Century*, (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 136.

¹⁹ Paul Griffiths, *Modern Music: A Concise History*, rev. ed. (London: Thames and Hudson, 1994), 144.

²⁰ William Thomson, *Schoenberg's Error* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1991), 185.

²¹ A famous practical demonstration of Webern's innate romanticism as a conductor can be found in his recording of Berg's Violin Concerto. See Alban Berg, *Violin Concerto*, BBC Symphony Orchestra conducted by Anton Webern, with Louis Krasner, violin, Continuum SBT 1004, recorded 1936, reissued 1996, compact disc. Another valuable corrective is Peter Stadlen's

how the cultural context out of which early modernism arose had become severely neglected – perhaps because (among other reasons) consideration of the broader musical culture also inevitably brought up issues of public reception (always a sensitive topic for a stream of twentieth-century music with, as Arved Ashby put it, “popularity problems”).²² In other words, a consideration of culture would have unavoidably exposed the nature of emotional interaction (or lack thereof) between the most advanced music and the public. Schreker scholar Christopher Hailey summed up the situation in the following way:

This narrowing of focus likewise meant that the musical debate was largely restricted to questions of method and materials, that compositional identity could be defined by a nomenclature – “twelve-tone”, “serial”, “neoclassical”, or the like – as self-contained as it was antiseptic. There was little willingness to examine the cultural context for these movements.²³

Cracks in the anti-emotional facade

Despite Dent’s earlier protestations that his own Schoenberg circle had distanced itself from romantic emotion, other commentators in the 1930s like the young Arthur Mendel could not help but note that atonality was nonetheless used mainly by composers of romantic inclination.²⁴ Cecil Gray agreed.

edition of Webern’s Variations, Op. 27. Stadlen had originally prepared this work in 1937 under the supervision of Webern himself. At that time, Webern had instructed Stadlen to use all manner of rubatos and envelop the “pointilistic” textures in plenty of pedal. See Peter Stadlen, ed., preface to Anton Webern, *Variationen für Klavier, Op. 27* (Vienna: Universal Edition, 1979).

²² Arved Ashby, ed., *The Pleasure of Modernist Music: Listening, Meaning, Intention, Ideology* (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2004), 1.

²³ Christopher Hailey, *Franz Schreker, 1878-1934: A Cultural Biography* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 314.

²⁴ Waldo Pratt, *The History of Music: A Handbook and Guide for Students, with an additional chapter on the early twentieth century by Arthur Mendel* (New York: Schirmer Books, 1935), 708. Pratt’s book had originally been

“Schoenberg,” said Gray in 1936, “is at heart a Romantic. Always has been and always will be.”²⁵ And Joseph Horowitz has recently argued that despite all the anti-romantic rhetoric, the old highly-emotional romantic style still simmered in Stravinsky’s own Russian soul: He had simply suppressed it upon emigrating. In essence, said Horowitz, Stravinsky had acquired a “foreign accent.”²⁶ The musical world of Glazunov and Rimsky-Korsakov had, after all, formed Stravinsky’s musical mother tongue, and it was this colourful and highly-charged emotional world that had strongly influenced all the music Stravinsky had written before the age of thirty.

Interestingly enough, Stravinsky’s romantic past is now being recovered in full force by front-rank Russian performers. In an interview given on the occasion of a major recent festival of Stravinsky’s works (*The Stravinsky Project*, 2011), Joseph Horowitz described how musicians like Valerie Gergiev and Alexandre Toradze were now intent on resurrecting the highly emotional side of Stravinsky – a trend that is of great significance for future performance practice of neoclassical music in general. Comments Horowitz:

They hear it differently than we do. They play it differently than we do. They have no use for the ‘neoclassical’ Stravinsky: Stravinsky and France, Stravinsky and Robert Craft – its all irrelevant to them. So when Toradze...performs the Piano Concerto, it doesn’t sound like the concerto we know. It’s huge.

published in 1907 without the Mendel chapter.

²⁵ Cecil Gray, *Predicaments, or, Music of the Future* (London, Oxford University Press, 1936; reprint, Freeport, NY: Books for Libraries Press, 1969), 190 (page citations are to the reprint edition). Gray explained further that “The German romanticism of [Schoenberg’s] first works does not disappear from his later ones, but is merely inverted and reacted against...just as we have seen his counterpoint is only a kind of inverted academism.” (187).

²⁶ A podcast of Joseph Horowitz’s interview with the classical WETA radio station (April 5, 2011) is available at: <http://www.weta.org/fm/features/conversations/full?filter0=Angel+Gil-Ordenez+and+Joseph+Horowitz>

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It's muscular. It's very jazzy...The slow movement is slower than you've ever heard it, and he certainly hears the opening as liturgical music. So it becomes a big, massive, exciting, Russian concerto, nothing to do with Paris, nothing to do with neoclassicism. And that's the nub of our entire festival, The Stravinsky Project, a second look at Stravinsky through the ears and eyes of [major Russian performers].²⁷

Among Stravinsky's contemporaries, similar romantic backgrounds can of course be found in all of the composers who later experimented with classicising tendencies, including Casella, Prokofiev, Tcherepnin, Toch, Hindemith and Bartók, although none of the latter group purported to reject romantic emotion as thoroughly as Stravinsky did. Perhaps one could say that the dry neoclassical musical accents adopted by the majority of composers were merely a little less pronounced than the new accent affected by Stravinsky himself. A good example is seen by the music of Alfredo Casella. Around 1913 (after having written two massive late-romantic symphonies and other orchestral works in a style akin to Respighi), Casella suddenly changed his musical approach and henceforth considered himself among those who sought "liberation from every residue of romantic rhetoric."²⁸ But by the 1930s Casella had more or less fully reconsidered his position and was now able to concede that

the battle which arose over the legitimacy of this renaissance

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Alfredo Casella, *Music in My Time*, trans. Spencer Norton (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1955), 116. Now slowly being revived again, Casella was the leading Italian modernist in the interwar years and was personally acquainted with many of the key figures in the European scene. Like many composers of his time, he rejected atonality as a self-contained technique after experimenting with the "tonal doubt" of Schoenberg from 1914-1918 (see page 137). However, Casella remained a loyal supporter of Schoenberg through his (Casella's) sponsorship of numerous concerts for the Italian wing of the ISCM. In 1938 he wrote, "Even if it appears today that the victory has been won by tonal music, this does not diminish the greatness of Schoenberg." (106).

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of classicism as opposed to the necessity of remaining true to romanticism can be considered a thing of the past...The conviction has been renewed, at least in the best of us, that a true classicism can be achieved only by the restoration of a superior equilibrium in creation, a restoration which is at the same time classic, in its fullness and serenity of form, and romantic, in its subjective idea of a present which has been nourished by tradition.²⁹

Bela Bartók, who represented Hungarian folk influence wedded to a sometimes strongly-dissonant harmonic language, is another composer who has often been classified among the neoclassicists. However, late in life, the stern Hungarian giant too had a few surprising things to say about romanticism. Although cautioning against what he termed its “misuse,” he stated in 1938 that “We cannot condemn romanticism ‘in general.’ There is no composer, even among the greatest ones, who at one time or another has not slipped a bit of it into his creations.”³⁰ This is a revealing comment from Bartók, a composer who not only loved Liszt and Strauss, but whose supple and colourful pianism fit in well with the Golden Age pianistic values of late-romantic virtuosos like Dohnányi, Rachmaninoff, Hofmann and Sauer. Bartók even expressed a fondness for Rachmaninoff’s famous *Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini*, composed in 1934. Appropriately enough, Bartók’s own mellow late works were, in Adorno’s words, “almost unabashed continuations of Brahms.”³¹ In 1994 Paul Griffiths looking back on the 1930s musical scene, confirmed in a general way the comments that Casella and Bartók had made back in the late 1930s. “Throughout Europe and

²⁹ Ibid., 227.

³⁰ Bela Bartók, “Bela Bartók’s Opinion on the Technical, Aesthetic and Spiritual Orientation of Contemporary Music,” in *Bela Bartók Essays*, ed. Suchoff (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1976,1992), 517.

³¹ Theodor W. Adorno, “The Aging of the New Music,” trans. Hullot-Kentor and Will, in *Essays on Music*, ed. Richard Leppert (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2002), 184.

America,” concluded Griffiths, “there was an anti-anti-romantic reaction in the thirties and forties to the dominating trends of the previous decade.”³²

Francis Poulenc is frequently cited (cf. Antokoletz, Griffiths, Simms, et. al.) as an outstanding example of the neoclassical movement. One can see the reasons, with his clear-cut, transparent textures, parodies of Mozart, and so on, but such a stylistic assessment neglects another vital aspect also found throughout most of Poulenc’s work. These are the unabashedly “purple patches,” the long heart-felt melodies of a very personal, even sentimental nature, often accompanied by rich, sonorous harmonies which bespeak a lushness that is nothing if not conventionally romantic in tone. In David Burge’s 1990 overview of twentieth-century piano music, such a passage from Poulenc’s music is printed as a musical example. Burge explains: “For the pianist who is attracted by such voluptuous sequences...Poulenc may be just the thing.”³³

Although Poulenc, like many others, was indeed part of a general French reaction to Wagner, it did not follow that he therefore also rejected all nineteenth and twentieth-century music that showed an old-fashioned and romantic outpouring of emotion. He retained a special fondness for the effusively melodic slow movement of Prokofiev’s Seventh Piano Sonata, which can elicit adjectives like ‘saccharine’ from critics made of sterner stuff. The slow movement of Poulenc’s Two-Piano Concerto is pure Mozart at his most romantic. To be sure, Mozart is updated ever so slightly, but the concerto has little of the ironic distortions and dryness associated with Stravinsky. The late *Sinfonietta* and *Dialogue of the Carmelites* openly drip with plangent heart-on-sleeve expression of a sort almost unthinkable in any of Stravinsky’s music after *Firebird*. Thus, however one decides to categorize

³² Paul Griffiths, *Modern Music: A Concise History*, rev. ed. (London: Thames and Hudson, 1994), 76.

³³ David Burge, *Twentieth-Century Piano Music*, (New York: Schirmer Books, 1990), 113.

Poulenc's music, it cannot be considered to subscribe only to a Stravinskian neoclassical "style devoid of personal expression." Much as Poulenc admired, (indeed, "worshiped") Stravinsky, he clearly saw the latter in a more general way "as a stimulus." For Poulenc, Stravinsky was simply a great personality, rather than as someone whose ultra-dry style was to be emulated directly.³⁴

Poulenc is an outstanding demonstration of just how warm and lyrical the supposedly dry neoclassical style could be in real life. His music strongly disputed Simms' observation that "Neoclassical composers who dominated music in Europe and America between the world wars delved into all major styles of Western music except romanticism."³⁵ At the beginning of the twenty-first century, *New York Times* critic Anthony Tommasini would be referring to what he called the Poulenc-like idiom of the neoromantic American composer Paul Moravec. Not for nothing did the modernist commentator Wilfrid Mellers – who had so badly disparaged romantic composers like Rachmaninoff, Puccini, Barber and Menotti in his 1964 *Music in a New Found Land* – finally, late in his academic career, allow Poulenc some overtly romantic characteristics.³⁶ Poulenc's works, then, were emblematic of the fact that, just as there was a neoromantic movement in the 1970s and after, there was also a similar romantic upsurge among many composers in the 1930s and 40s (prior to the new wave of anti-emotional avant-gardism which rose up partly in response to post-1945 American-Soviet cold war hostilities). The historian Marion Bauer, herself a minor neoromantic composer, had already heralded the first neoromantic resurgence in 1933:

But the writing on the wall points to a new romanticism...a renaissance for beauty and of simplicity – but a romanticism composed of the new materials. The spirit of beauty must be born

³⁴ Francis Poulenc, *My Friends and Myself* (London: Dennis Dobson, 1963), 141.

³⁵ Bryan Simms, *Music of the Twentieth Century: Style and Structure* (New York: Schirmer Books, 1986), 428.

³⁶ Wilfrid Mellers, *Poulenc* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993).

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again, It must be released from the fetters which have held it earthbound. It will be a new beauty to fit a new epoch which is gradually rising from the ashes of the old.³⁷

In keeping with this observation, Bauer detected a new romantic warmth in figures like Martinu and Hindemith. Even Stravinsky, felt Bauer, showed similar signs: “Could it be possible that he is headed for a *neoromanticism*?” she asked. “*Oedipus Rex* and *La Symphonie de Psaumes*, written for Koussevitzky for the fiftieth anniversary of the Boston Symphony Orchestra, show indications of a warmer, more personal expression.”³⁸

In some cases, however, early twentieth-century participants caught in the romantic/anti-romantic war seemed to be reacting more to the term “romantic” itself rather than to the general emotional sound world that was associated with it. This seems to be the case with Karol Szymanowski (1882-1937). As the foremost Polish composer of his time, he had developed a relatively dissonant but hyper-expressive and often lush idiom that many of his contemporaries saw fit to label as romantic. But as Szymanowski himself put it, he believed in neither neoclassicism nor neoromanticism: “In reality, like every artist, I have been influenced not by Romanticism so much as by the succession of great composers living during that era, as well as those who lived in earlier times.” Szymanowski also complained of how his art was described as romantic “albeit from two opposing points of view... the ‘ancients’ who have already developed a liking for my music... the others are the ‘young’ ones who no longer approve of my music and use the term to indicate their dislike.”³⁹ Szymanowski expressed a personal fondness for the music of Bach and Mozart as

³⁷ Marion Bauer, *Twentieth Century Music: How it Developed. How to Listen to it*, (New York: Putnam, 1933. Reprint, New York: Da Capo Press, 1978), 306.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 197.

³⁹ Karol Szymanowski, *Szymanowski on Music: Selected Writings of Karol Szymanowski*, trans. Alistair Wightman (London: Toccata Press, 1999), 149-150.

well as Chopin, who, he said, “cannot possibly be imprisoned in a tiny Romantic Cage.”⁴⁰ It is apparent that Szymanowski’s relationship to romanticism is akin to Debussy’s antipathy towards the label “impressionism,” or, for that matter, Schoenberg’s hatred of the descriptor “atonal.”

As the difficulty in classifying Bartók, Casella, and Poulenc from a consistently neoclassical perspective demonstrates, the early twentieth-century goal of eliminating emotional content in music was not at all clear-cut, nor was it consistently applied. The music of many so-called neoclassicists could be anything but cold and dry – and long, lyrical melodies were still to be found. Their works showed that some form of emotional content, which neoclassicism in its strictest form had tried to relegate to the past, still remained. This was a major reason why the general attempt to escape from romantic emotion could sometimes lead to unintended difficulties of logic – the reality being simply that such a goal could never be entirely successful.

As a result, there were plenty of early twentieth-century critics who found insupportable the whole notion of a putatively “inexpressive” music. It is interesting that even during the early years of the anti-emotional movement, commentators were able to see through the logic of neoclassicism’s questionable foundation, which in retrospect had been built on a dubious interpretation of eighteenth-century aesthetics. Many observers of the music scene made it clear that they did not swallow the view point of Stravinsky, who had famously believed that the true eighteenth-century classical style was founded on unemotional and essentially “constructivist” musical values, as reflected (or so he thought) in the music of composers like Bach and Mozart.⁴¹ The historian Marion Bauer, who once had a young student by the name of

⁴⁰ Ibid., 150.

⁴¹ In the 1920s, Bach was still commonly considered to be part of the Classic Era along with Mozart – it was not yet the norm to call him a Baroque composer. The 1927 third edition of *Grove’s Dictionary* does not yet contain an article on the Baroque, and “neoclassical” (and not “neobaroque”) was therefore applied to the “Back to Bach” movement.

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Milton Babbitt in her college classroom, voiced her concerns on this matter in her 1933 overview, *Twentieth Century Music*, one of the first important book-length academic assessments of the early modern compositional scene:

In the first place, the artist of today has a phobia against any display of feeling. In the fear of being sentimental he has sacrificed sentiment. He rationalizes to the point of revolting against the nineteenth century, the epoch of romantic thinking and belief in a soul, and of establishing an affinity with the 18th C when art and thought was intellectual, classic, and ‘pure.’ To my way of thinking, however, our artist is building a false foundation for his declaration of faith, if he thinks that Bach, Mozart, or Haydn were coldly classical and chastely intellectual! They were expressing their emotions in the means at their command... ‘Back to Bach’ has been the slogan of the musicians since the War, But Bach would turn in his grave could he hear some of the compositions committed in his name. The truth is that the young musicians have not really gone back to Bach, they could not even though they would. They have not been concerned with the ‘inner spirit’ which is the ‘element of pure artistry,’ the eternal quality of Bach, but they have taken a few technical means and twisted them to fit their ideas of a revolt against the romantic spirit. *Neoclassicism* is the result.⁴²

Percy Scholes was also quick to point out that the attempt to write such an “emotionless” music came with its own internal contradictions. Scholes dealt with this problem in his popular three-volume *The Listener’s History of Music*, which went through seven editions between 1923 and 1954. He took note of a then-current *Grove’s Dictionary* article which described Bartók as having a “singular and systematic lack of emotion.” Scholes pointed out how the *Grove* article then proceeded to contradict itself with its own description of *Bluebeard’s Castle*:

⁴² Bauer, 294-295.

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What is this talk of a work ‘full of atmosphere and dramatic tenseness’ coming from a composer who ‘might be reproached with a singular lack of emotion?’ What is this about a composer from whom we are ‘to expect nothing in the way of subjective expression,’ and who ‘never sets out to convey his personal feelings to his audience,’ yet who can awaken in the hearer ‘deeply human feelings of his own’?...The frequent attempt to make us believe that the music of the Anti-Romantics is scrupulously devoid of emotion and of ‘programme’ constantly produces these very curious statements.⁴³

Scholes then had a word of advice for his readers:

The best plan for the man of common sense is to brush on one side all statements such as that, that music of Stravinsky is ‘pure abstract sound’ and that he produces music in which ‘every vestige of poetic implication is negated,’ to recognize that all music is necessarily more or less romantic (the human being cannot live in a vacuum), but to admit frankly that that of the composers in question is of the ‘less so’ variety.⁴⁴

Another English historian, the brilliant and polemical Cecil Gray, also ridiculed the whole notion of there being an “inexpressive” music. Gray pointed out that the unpredictable Stravinsky himself was forever reversing his aesthetic positions. Gray noted how Stravinsky would first claim that stringed instruments were too expressive, emotional and romantic for his objective music, only to turn around and write *Apollo Musagetes* for strings alone. Or, Stravinsky would claim that the expression of emotion was anathema, after which he would proceed to write the *Symphony of Psalms* which described emotional states. Then Stravinsky would maintain that music was incapable of expressing

⁴³ Percy A. Scholes, *The Listener's History of Music: A Book for any Concert-Goer; Gramophonist or Radio Listener*, Vol. 3, *To the Composers of Today*, 5th ed. (London: Oxford University Press, 1954), 109-110

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 114.

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anything at all (either emotions, pictures, states of mind, etc.). That, said Gray, contradicted not only the heightened emotions in the *Symphony of Psalms*, but also earlier pronouncements by the composer that music should avoid being emotional – now Stravinsky was saying music was incapable of doing so.⁴⁵

The British composer Philip Heseltine (aka Peter Warlock) was also dismissive. For Heseltine, neoclassicism was little more than

a passing phase, not so much the preface to a new development as the tail-piece of an old, the end of a chapter. The anti-emotional movement in music is unquestionably a case of sour grapes – and that attitude towards the achievements of the immediate past which so often manifests itself in what looks like irreverence and disregard, has its unconscious roots, I am convinced, in the sense of awe that is inspired by contemplation of things altogether unapproachable.⁴⁶

Heseltine also described how he could

see in certain contemporary composers – more particularly in Stravinsky, who by reason of the number of his imitators, has come to be regarded as a kind of leader – a tendency to exalt automatism to the place where their predecessors set spontaneity, and signs of a dehumanising, anti-emotional reaction that is simply the reflux of the great wave of romanticism that swept over music in the last century.⁴⁷

The tradition of attempting to compose “less emotional” or even completely “unemotional” music probably reached its ascetic peak after the Second World War. Boulez was one of its most

⁴⁵ Gray, 156-159.

⁴⁶ Philip Heseltine, “The Modern Spirit in Music. A Criticism, in Relation to a Suggested Definition of the Function of Musical Art, and an Attempt at a New Perspective,” *Proceedings of the Musical Association* 45 (1918-1919): 128.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 127-128.

famous propagandists, and for him even the advanced works of Schoenberg, that fountainhead of atonal radicalism, were to be seen as emotionally tainted. “From Schoenberg’s pen,” wrote Boulez,

flows a stream of infuriating clichés and formidable stereotypes redolent of the most wearily ostentatious romanticism: all those endless anticipations with expressive accent on the harmony note, those fake appoggiaturas, those arpeggios, tremolandos, note-repetitions, which sound so terribly empty...⁴⁸

What, one wonders, was a “fake” appoggiatura? Boulez evidently did not aspire to be a scholarly authority on ornamentation, but he certainly counted as one of the ultimate representatives of the cold war version of musical modernism, a modernism that attempted to be completely stripped of any residual trace of romantic expression or tonality. His view contrasted dramatically with that of his great teacher Messiaen, who together with Jolivet had led a neoromantic resurgence among French composers in the 1930s and 1940s. Like Virgil Thomson and Henri Sauguet with their neoromanticism in the 1920s and 1930s, Messiaen and Jolivet were also attempting to distance themselves from the initial 1920s wave of allegedly “inexpressive” music. The towering Messiaen, whom Taruskin appropriately called “a maximalist against the tide,”⁴⁹ maintained his deeply romantic outlook after WW2. “I’m not ashamed of being a romantic,” wrote Messiaen with a spirit of generosity that was largely absent from his advanced colleagues. “The romantics were magnificent craftsmen . . . The romantics were aware of the beauties of nature, of the grandeur of divinity; they were grandiose, and many of our contemporaries would be better off if they

⁴⁸ Pierre Boulez, “Schoenberg is Dead,” in *Stocktakings from an Apprenticeship*, ed. Paule Thévenin, trans. Stephen Walsh (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), 213.

⁴⁹ Richard Taruskin, *The Oxford History of Western Music*, Vol. 4, *The Early Twentieth Century* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 227ff.

‘romanticized’ themselves.’⁵⁰

Needless to say, Boulez patently refused to be “romanticized” by his great teacher. In any case, he had made up his mind early in life on such matters, and has been consistent in his outlook throughout his long career. His disdain for anything that smacked of traditional romantic heart-on-sleeve rhetoric, not least Messiaen’s own vast and panoramic *Turangalila-symphonie* of 1948, (which Boulez famously dismissed as “brothel music”) helped turn the young rebel against Schoenberg as well. If anything, Berg was even worse, in Boulez’s view. Such anti-romantic attitudes were at their strongest during the 1950s and 1960s, a time when the now-ascetic Webern (as it turned out, this was a revisionist version of Webern, who had somehow been scrubbed free of his highly romantic musical temperament) was the only Second Viennese model worth following and Berg was still something of an embarrassment. *High Fidelity* critic Alan Rich, in surveying Berg on LP in 1964, observed that “The current taste among the far-out tends to relegate Berg to the status of a hopeless romantic.”⁵¹ Boulez himself noted that people saw Berg’s music as human, in comparison to Schoenberg or Webern. “That’s one of the reasons I went into battle,” Boulez stated in 1975. The impulsive young radical then went on to describe how he had subsequently rediscovered Berg, having “found out that there was a lot more to Berg than his immediately accessible romanticism...what thrilled me was the complexity of his mind: the number of interval correspondences, the intricacy of his musical construction...”⁵² Another late-romantic composer, Mahler, who in the 1950s had not yet been rescued by historians as a composer relevant to the evolution of early modernism, and was also written off by Boulez and his colleagues. Henze later recalled the viciously anti-Mahler

⁵⁰ Olivier Messiaen, *Music and Color: Conversations with Claude Samuel* (Portland, Oregon: Amadeus Press, 1994), 120.

⁵¹ Alan Rich, review of Berg, *Chamber Concerto*, Scherchen, cond., *High Fidelity* (November 1964): 100.

⁵² Pierre Boulez, *Conversations with Celestin Deliege* (London: Ernst Eulenberg, Ltd., 1976), 23-24.

climate of the early Darmstadt seasons, in which both he and Boulez had actively taken part: “The music of Mahler was regarded as Art Nouveau kitsch, suited at best only to provoke laughter.”⁵³

There were many other members of the post-war avant-garde who shared Boulez’s anti-emotional sentiments. In a lecture that was delivered at the 1960 international composer’s conference in Stratford, Ontario, British composer Ian Hamilton rhetorically asked his audience of composing peers:

Why do many people think that classical composers were so concerned with subjective things and highly emotional things, with their soul the whole time, when their works, as we have them, were so perfectly constructed, so beautifully calculated, and so beautifully written? They were equally concerned, in different ways, with the technicalities that concern us today. It is a small section of the romantic thought of the 19th C which assesses creativity in terms of an outflowing and outpouring of effusive emotion.⁵⁴

Clearly, Hamilton had not read his eighteenth-century theorists, any number of whom had plenty to say about the importance of conveying emotion in music. Nevertheless, he fearlessly pressed on:

We have...escaped from the tyranny of the theme and the overpowering sublime ideas and ideals of the Romantics. Much as we may enjoy a certain amount of this music, we cannot but admit that too often it submits to the tyranny of the other arts.⁵⁵

⁵³ Hans Werner Henze, *Music and Politics: Collected Writings, 1953-81*. trans. Peter Labanyi (Ithaca, N. Y.: Cornell University Press, 1982), 42-44.

⁵⁴ John Beckwith and Udo Kasemets, eds., *The Modern Composer and His World: A Report from the International Conference of Composers, held at the Stratford Festival, Stratford, Ontario, Canada, August 1960* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1961), 75-76.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 51.

Hamilton, ironically, was actually a wearer of two opposing compositional attires, which he donned as the occasion required: He was also composing tonal music in the British light music tradition on the side during his heady years as a radical. (I have in my record collection a lovely, jazzy and tuneful trumpet concerto that Hamilton had written around the time of the Stratford conference).⁵⁶ Be that as it may, when he assumed his modernist face, it was evident that even the slightest audible nineteenth-century traces were open to condemnation. References to tonality were an unavoidable reminder of the old romantic ways, and therefore one of the biggest culprits. In Hamilton's view even Bartók, Stravinsky and Hindemith were tainted. They were "obviously related to the past, as far as aural experience is concerned, because of their adherence to tonality. They sum up periods...and open up very little of consequence that is really vital and seminal."⁵⁷

**New defenders of old emotion:
"Brazen" romanticism in the twentieth century,
and the long tradition of "The Last Romantic"**

In the preceding section, we have seen how various representatives of the anti-romantic camp went about waging war against their romantic opponents. The anti-romantics, however, were only half of the equation. There were two very articulate

⁵⁶ Rob Barnett reviewed the Hamilton concerto as follows: "This is renowned controversialist Hamilton slumming it with death-defying style. There is not a hint of the 1960s and 1970s Manchester School. The concerto is tremendously enjoyable being one of three works he wrote for the BBC Light Music Festivals of the 1950s and 1960s...Hamilton carries off the act without an arched eyebrow or a wink. He plays it serious and for me the piece works resoundingly well. He vies with Gershwin and Bernstein in evocation of hot summers..." *MuscWeb International* http://www.musicweb-international.com/classrev/2006/Jan06/British_Trumpet_CDWHL2159.htm (accessed June 1, 2012).

⁵⁷ Beckwith and Kasemets, 50.

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sides to the modernist-romantic controversy, and the musicians we have just cited, including Antheil (in his earliest years only), Stravinsky, Dent and Boulez, represented only one side. For many traditionalists from Hugo Alfvén to Alexander Zemlinsky, romanticism was still a living force, a viable means of musical expression. It remained well-represented in the composing and performing world. Older notions of melody and tonality, and the frank and direct appeal to the emotions, all still remained. A good American antipode to the British scholar and avant-garde supporter Edward Dent was the highly articulate Daniel Mason, who served as a professor of music at Columbia University from 1905 to 1940. “What are the most essential qualities of great music, always and everywhere?” Mason asked rhetorically in his 1931 book, *Tune in America*.

To begin with, then, music is of all the arts proverbially the most emotional. In comparison with literature, for instance, it compensates for an inferior power in dealing with specific detail by a deeper eloquence in the presentation of fundamental moods and attitudes. Its penetration to the profoundest levels of our consciousness is akin to that of philosophy; but it expresses emotionally, as Schopenhauer recognized more fully than most philosophers, what philosophy only formulates intellectually. In so far, then, as our contemporary music has turned a cold shoulder upon emotion, it has repudiated its most essential quality and foregone its supreme advantage.⁵⁸

Mason blamed some of this repudiation of music’s essential qualities on science. Science, said Mason, had made people “skeptical of all values not expressible in rigorously intellectual terms...as long as science maintained its nineteenth-century materialism, emotional values could not breathe.”

Mason also noted that post-World War One cynicism played a part. For him, such cynicism had

⁵⁸ Daniel Mason, *Tune in America* (New York: Knopf, 1931), 170-171.

made us suspicious of all sentiment, and launched the cult of anti-romanticism. The result was the ultra-modernist attitude toward emotion conveniently summed up in the story of Stravinsky's thanking Josef Hofmann for playing a work of his absolutely to perfection – exactly as he wanted it – completely without expression.⁵⁹

Mason believed that “the path from emotion to expression is direct, and the creative act naive and unselfconscious.” But, he continued,

in place of this innocence, this fecund naiveté, we find in ultra-modernism a sterile sophistication, a restless itch for formulas. Music can no longer be just music; it must be atonal, or polytonal, or polyrhythmic, or primitive, or impressionistic, or symbolistic.⁶⁰

It was not insignificant that Mason dedicated *Tune in America* to the brilliant young Eastman professor Howard Hanson, who was perhaps the most romantic American composer of the next generation. In 1931, Hanson had just composed his Symphony No. 2, which was provocatively subtitled *The Romantic*. It was one more reason Mason saw Hanson as one of the great hopes for the future of American music. And indeed, revitalized romantic idioms such as Hanson's (and the same went for Mason's own admittedly weaker music) were still of much use in forging direct emotional connections with the public in the United States and elsewhere. Very significantly, because of the clear tonal language employed, such music was able to accomplish this essential task without undue interruption of communication: The general public, after all, was still fully familiar with the harmonic language of late-romantic music, not least because such language also continued to be foundational to the popular idioms of the day as well (as we will see in chapter six). As it turned out,

⁵⁹ Ibid., 171-172.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 173.

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Hanson's *Romantic Symphony* went on to become one of the most-performed twentieth-century American symphonies, along with Copland's Third Symphony. It is also pertinent to mention that the *Romantic Symphony* is still programmed in the United States many times each year, even now in the twenty-first century.⁶¹

Latter-day defenders of romantic-sounding idioms sincerely believed that an interruption in communication with concert audiences was in no small part due to a surfeit of esoteric advances in musical language. Armed with this conviction, a multitude of composers stubbornly continued to write in the "old" way. Rachmaninoff and Strauss were merely among the most popular of a vast group of composers that extended to many nations. In commenting on this phenomenon, Percy Grainger could not help but note the continued persistence of traditional romantic idioms on the British scene as late as 1949, and his remarks could just as easily have been applied to every other nation producing art music in the European tradition:

We are continually told in England that the musical trend of today is anti-romantic. Nevertheless, frankly romantic composers such as John Ireland (*The Forgotten Rite, These Things shall Be*, Piano Concerto in E flat, Sonata for 'Cello and Piano), Arnold Bax (Seventh Symphony, *The Island of Fand*, Overture to a Picaresque Comedy, film music to *Oliver Twist*), E. J. Moeran (Serenade in G for Orchestra, String Quartet) and Frederic Austin (*The Beggar's Opera, Sea Venturers* Overture) are steadily performed and enthusiastically received.⁶²

⁶¹ The 2007-2008 *Orchestra Repertoire Report* from the League of American Orchestras informs us that the *Romantic Symphony* was included on 11 different programs, many of which will also have been repeated (the report does not specify repeat programs). A reasonable assumption, therefore, would be about 20 performances of this work for the season, which is a very impressive total. The entire 370-page report is available at: http://www.americanorchestras.org/knowledge_research_and_innovation/orrarchive.html (accessed June 1, 2012).

⁶² Percy Grainger, *Grainger on Music*, ed M. Gillies and B. C. Ross (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 351.

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As we can see, one of the composers on Grainger's list was the highly-regarded British symphonist Arnold Bax, a self-described "brazen romantic" who has enjoyed a considerable revival on CD in the last three decades. Bax made the following statement in 1928:

As far as I know, the only new tendency in my style is but a modification of the manner in which I have always written. I am a brazen romantic, and could never have been and never shall be anything else. By this I mean that my music is the expression of emotional states. I have no interest whatever for sound for its own sake or any modernist 'isms' and factions.⁶³

Also pertinent to our discussion, Bax left us his thoughts on Schoenberg upon the composer's death in 1951:

I instantly developed an ice-cold antipathy to Schönberg and his whole musical system on the far-away day when I first came upon those three piano pieces, Op. 11. I conclude that, dissatisfied with his early milk-and-water derivations from 'Tristan' and Hugo Wolf, he deliberately resolved to turn himself into the world's premier mathematician in sound. I believe that there is little probability that the twelve-note-scale will ever produce anything more than morbid or entirely cerebral growths. It might deal successfully with neuroses of various kinds, but I cannot imagine it associated with any healthy and happy concept such as young love or the coming of spring.⁶⁴

In calling himself a "brazen romantic," Bax used a description that could just as easily have applied to many of his British contemporaries including Ireland, Moeran, Bowen, Finzi, Walton, and Vaughan Williams. None of those composers had much to do

⁶³ Lewis Foreman, ed., *Farewell, My Youth and other writings by Arnold Bax* (Aldershot, Hants: Scolar Press, 1992), 168.

⁶⁴ Arnold Bax, et. al., "Arnold Schönberg 1874-1951," *Music and Letters* (October 1951): 307.

with either the Stravinsky or the Schoenberg movements. The great Vaughan Williams himself, when asked to contribute his thoughts on Schoenberg for a memorial edition of *Music and Letters* at the time of Schoenberg's death in 1951, submitted one curt sentence: "Schoenberg meant nothing to me – but as he apparently meant a lot to a lot of other people I daresay it is all my own fault."⁶⁵

In Germany, the most famous polemicist among a veritable glut of twentieth-century romantic tonalists (see the long list in our discussion of cpo in chapter two) was Pfitzner, an implacably cantankerous personality who famously found radical new music "impotent" and sought to maintain the primacy of Romantic inspiration and expressiveness over modernist constructivism.⁶⁶ One of his aphorisms ran as follows: "One mocks the romantics all too easily these days. But has their star really grown so dim?...Or are they merely illuminating the world from a greater distance?"⁶⁷ A separate issue was Pfitzner's distinct lack of tact in human relations. It too made him many enemies, and for many reasons – and not only among modernists like Berg who responded to Pfitzner's famous polemics in kind by turning the "impotent" label back on Pfitzner himself.⁶⁸ The traditionalist Polish composer-pianist Czesław Marek (1891-1985), who surely would have otherwise been sympathetic to Pfitzner's romantic aesthetic, had temporarily studied composition with Pfitzner but found his character downright intolerable.⁶⁹ Even the Nazis, who were the

⁶⁵ Ralph Vaughan Williams, et. al., "Arnold Schonberg 1874-1951," [obituary by 25 writers and composers] *Music and Letters* 32 (October 1951): 322.

⁶⁶ Hans Pfitzner, *Die neue Aesthetik der musikalischen Impotenz: Ein Verwesungssymptom?* (Munich: Verlag der Süddeutschen Monatshefte, 1920). [Die Romantik, man schilt sie gerne. Ist wirklich so schwach das Licht ihrer Sterne?...Oder leuchten sie nur diese Erde zu ferne?]

⁶⁷ Hans Pfitzner, *Über musikalische Inspiration*, 2nd ed. (Berlin: Adolph Fürstner, 1940), 94.

⁶⁸ Alban Berg, "Die musikalische Impotenz der „Neuen Ästhetik“ Hans Pfitznerns," *Musikblätter des Anbruch* 2 (June 1920): 399-408.

⁶⁹ Chris Walton, ed., *Czesław Marek: Komponist, Pianist, Padagoge. Leben und Schaffen in Dokumenten* (Winterthur: Amadeus Verlag, 1999), 103. Marek stopped composing around 1930 but remained active as a piano pedagogue for the rest of his long life. In recent years, several musicians

supposed upholders of outdated romanticism, soon looked on Pfitzner with distaste. As Schoenberg scholar Joseph Auner observed, by the end of the Second World War, Pfitzner had been completely marginalized in German musical circles, and his career destroyed, at which point even Schoenberg took pity on Pfitzner.⁷⁰ The sad end of Pfitzner was further proof, if any was needed, that writing romantic-sounding music was not an automatic ticket to official approval from the Third Reich.

Before 1920, Pfitzner had already earned an enduring reputation as perhaps the most articulate German thinker to defend the continuation of traditional romantic values in the twentieth century. The fact that his music also seemed to more or less die with him in 1949 only confirmed his historical status as an old fogey *par excellence*, an Artusi-like figure on a par with George Dyson in England and Daniel Mason in America. All three – Pfitzner, Dyson and Mason – had engaged in the apparently futile act of taking up their pens against encroaching modernism, and each now could safely be tossed forthwith into the dustbin of history. Pfitzner's temporary neglect in the second half of the twentieth century, then, apparently represented the just desserts of a composer who had dared to defy the mandate of historical progress. He had attempted to turn the clock back to the tonal and romantic ways of the nineteenth century.

Pfitzner's opponents, however, did not predict that he would later be one of German businessman Klaus Heymann's favorite composers. As we saw in chapter two, it was Heymann who went on to turn the international classical recording scene upside down after the 1980s, in the process filling his Marco Polo and Naxos catalogues with hundreds of CDs devoted to early twentieth-century composers, many of whom matched Pfitzner's

including Ronald Stevenson have taken an active interest in reviving his music. Koch Schwann has recorded an 8 CD cycle of his complete works.

⁷⁰ Auner writes that "By the end of the war he was personally and professionally devastated." See Joseph Auner, ed., *A Schoenberg Reader: Documents of a Life* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2003), 317.

general aesthetic stance. Typical of music connoisseurs who set up recording companies in part so that they themselves could more easily hear rare music that was poorly represented in the record catalogue, Heymann recorded a vast amount of rare late-romantic repertoire so that he too could indulge in the kind of composers who had hitherto been so difficult for music lovers to access. At this point, therefore, it is pertinent to mention one of Heymann's most recent recording projects for Naxos: His eightieth birthday gift to himself is scheduled to be a recorded edition of the complete orchestral works of none other than the once academically-shamed Pfitzner.⁷¹ Leon Botstein, one of today's most prominent figures in the world of musicology, is another who has taken part in the recent revival of Pfitzner. Besides being a top scholar, Botstein has also forged a successful career as a conductor. In that capacity, he has devoted considerable energies to performing and recording many rare romantic twentieth-century works including late Strauss operas and the vast *Herbstsymphonie* of Joseph Marx, whom we will discuss in a moment. Botstein has recently led a revival of Pfitzner's operatic masterpiece *Palestrina*, and considers the opera to be

a disturbing but powerful antidote to the arrogant claim that a progressive modernism, one that jettisoned the conventional surfaces bequeathed by the nineteenth century, was and ought to have been the only legitimate path for music in the twentieth century.⁷²

Another out-and-out German romantic to match Pfitzner was Wilhelm Furtwängler, without question the greatest conductor on the German scene between Nikisch and Karajan. Also a minor

⁷¹ See Robert Hugill's interview article, "An Interview with Klaus Heymann," *MusicWeb International* (May 11, 2012): http://www.musicweb-international.com/classrev/2012/May12/Klaus_Heymann.htm (accessed June 1, 2012).

⁷² Leon Botstein, "Pfitzner and Musical Politics," *The Musical Quarterly* 85 (Spring 2001): 74.

but passionately dedicated composer of massive symphonic and chamber works in a Brucknerian mold, Furtwängler was one of only a few front rank performers who continued to program Pfitzner's works immediately after World War Two. The "anti-anti-Romantic" thaw of the 1930s and 1940s had turned out to be temporary, and international avant-garde attitudes against romantic music had abruptly taken a turn for the worse in the new Darmstadt-Princeton era where young serialists like Stockhausen, Boulez and Babbitt wielded immense influence. In an equally significant political move that had untold consequences for the post-war international musical climate, the CIA had undertaken massive covert funding of modernist-oriented European cultural institutions, for the simple reason that modernist tastes ran counter to the kind of music and art that was officially supported by post-war communist regimes. The Soviets at mid-century still had many composers of an overtly tonal and even outright romantic approach, including Glière, Prokofiev, Miaskovsky, Khachaturian and Shostakovich. In order to counteract the kind of music coming out of communist countries, American intelligence responded by facilitating various modernist venues such as the contemporary music festival at Darmstadt. Thanks in no small part to the CIA's unbounded generosity, Darmstadt became one of the major post-war centers of abstruse modernism.⁷³ The sheer depth of the CIA's financial involvement in cold war musical modernism was not general knowledge for many years, but their dedication to musical propaganda had the practical result of ratcheting up anti-romantic and anti-emotional sentiments to a level that surpassed even the dry but now-old-fashioned neoclassicism of the 1920s.

It was in the new context of Darmstadt and Boulez that Furtwängler wrote in 1951: "I will even risk being the target of the

⁷³ There is a rapidly growing literature on the close CIA connection with post-war radical modernism. See especially *Who Paid the Piper: The CIA and the Cultural Cold War* by the British investigative journalist Francis Stonton Saunders (London: Granta Books, 1999). See also Taruskin's comments in note 61 of chapter one.

most horrible epithet that a musician in present-day Germany can be slandered with – I dare to be romantic.”⁷⁴ Along with his vivid and passionate interpretations of Beethoven and Brahms, Furtwängler’s own compositions also bore out his self-evaluation. As he explained in 1949, “I will remain with the older artistic methods, and will produce music in a manner that was standard in the last century.”⁷⁵ Like Pfitzner and Bax, Furtwängler also lashed out against what he felt was excessive calculation. “I demand from modern music...that it be composed for living human beings of flesh and blood, and not for intellectual acrobats...”⁷⁶ He summed up the Romantic/Modernist problem as follows: “What do Romanticism and Modernism mean? There is only one way to describe these two opposites: truth and deception.”⁷⁷

In the United States, Howard Hanson (1896-1981) took a similar stand, which followed that of Mason, whom we met earlier. In addition to being a fine romantic composer in a post Sibelius style, Hanson was also an expert conductor and pianist (and phenomenal score reader). He started his brilliant and highly-productive academic career as an unusually precocious 20-year-old professor of music, and went on to build the Eastman School of Music into an institution of international stature during his long tenure there, which lasted from 1924 to 1961. He was also an important theorist but, needless to say, his personal views did not always square with those of Babbitt and Sessions, who were holding down the serial fortress at Princeton during many of the

⁷⁴ Wilhelm Furtwängler, *Aufzeichnungen, 1924-1954*, ed. Elisabeth Furtwängler and Günter Birkner (Zürich and Mainz: Atlantis Musikbuch-Verlag, 1996), 330. (Ich riskiere sogar die ärgste Beschimpfung, die einem Musiker im heutigen Deutschland entgegengeschleudert werden kann – ich riskiere es, ‘romantisch’ zu sein).

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 305. (Ich bleibe bei der alten bescheidenen Art und mache Musik, wie es die letzten Jahrhunderte hindurch üblich war.)

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 328. (Ich verlange von der modernen Musik...daß sie für lebendige Menschen aus Fleisch und Blut geschrieben ist, nicht nur für Gehirn-Akrobaten...)

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 306. (Was heißt Romantik oder Moderne? Es gibt nur einen Gegensatz: den von Echtheit und Verlogenheit.)

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same years that Hanson held forth at Eastman. We have already mentioned how Hanson provocatively gave his popular Second Symphony (composed in 1930) the subtitle *Romantic*. To make doubly sure that his intentions were not misunderstood, the composer issued the following explanatory statement at the work's premiere:

The symphony represents for me my escape from the rather bitter type of modern musical realism which occupies so large a place in contemporary thought. Much contemporary music seems to me to be showing a tendency to become entirely too cerebral. I do not believe that music is primarily a matter of intellect, but rather a manifestation of the emotions. I have, therefore, aimed in this symphony to create a work that was young in spirit, lyrical and romantic in temperament, and simple and direct in expression.⁷⁸

In the fiercely anti-emotional climate generated by the 1920s avant garde, Hanson's *Romantic* Symphony was, as Walter Simmons has noted, conceived as a protest.⁷⁹ Hanson himself remained resolutely romantic right until his Seventh Symphony, composed at the grand old age of eighty-one. As far as our general theme of romanticism in the twentieth century is concerned, one could also say that Hanson's entire cycle of seven romantically-oriented symphonies was symbolic of a much larger general twentieth-century trend. In Scandinavia alone, where Hanson's family had originated, there were also many other living composers of a similar aesthetic. Kurt Atterburg (1887-1974), for example, was a composer of nine unreservedly romantic symphonies. Similar to Hanson, Atterberg also wrote a *Sinfonia Romantica* (the subtitle for his Symphony No. 7, dating from 1942) as a protest against the powerful wave of anti-romanticism that had

⁷⁸ Howard Hanson, quoted in Gilbert Chase, *America's Music, from the Pilgrims to the Present*, 2nd ed. (New York, London: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1966), 550.

⁷⁹ Walter Simmons, *Voices in the Wilderness: Six American Neo-Romantic Composers* (Lanham, Maryland: Scarecrow Press, 2004), 116-117.

swept through Europe in the previous two decades.

There was also Wilhelm Petterson-Berger (1867-1942), a Swedish critic and composer of five symphonies. He too was well-known for his reactionary views. Both composers, incidentally, have been extensively revived in the CD age, in response to connoisseur demand. Their symphonic cycles have now been given splendid recordings by the cpo label, which is Germany's largest independent classical label (and whose repertoire planner is also a Korngold scholar).⁸⁰ As we already discussed in chapter two, the trend to record twentieth-century romantics has been a simple reflection of the tastes of independent record label owners and the dedicated connoisseurs who have so loyally supported their work in recording such composers. In Denmark there was another major romantic symphonist – the highly eccentric Rued Laanggard (1893-1952), who wrote several hundred works including a cycle of 16 symphonies. That cycle has already received two complete recordings. Significantly, Laanggard believed that romantic music was the music of paradise. True to this conviction, his music does indeed reflect lush and melodic sound preferences. However, it does have some very odd, even post-modern-sounding juxtapositions of mood and form that can be highly unsettling – all out of proportion to the music's seemingly innocent harmonic surface. As a side note, Langgaard may well have been a little mad.

In Austria, the composer Joseph Marx (1883-1964) was known as a latter-day “Romantic Realist.”⁸¹ On August 8-11, 1923 Marx and the sympathetically-minded Korngold held an alternative New Music festival that competed directly, and very successfully, with the new ISCM of Schoenberg and his disciples, much to the consternation of Edward Dent.⁸² Marx remained a life-long foe of

⁸⁰ See our discussion of the cpo label in chapter two.

⁸¹ This is reflected in the title of an important collection of Marx's essays published in 1945. See Joseph Marx, *Betrachtungen eines Romantischen Realisten*, ed. Oswald Ortner (Vienna: Gerlach & Wiedling, 1945).

⁸² See discussion of the “Alternative Festival,” in Brendan Carroll, *The Last Prodigy: A Biography of Erich Wolfgang Korngold* (Portland, Oregon: Amadeus Press, 1997), 158.

atonality, finding it woefully inadequate for a wide range of expressive needs. Besides composing voluptuous works like the *Romantisches Klavierkonzert* (1921)⁸³ and the *Herbstsymphonie*, he was a prominent academic in Austria until his death in 1964. As 1500 extant letters in his *Nachlass* show, he communicated with most of the important musicians of his time. He taught thousands of music students at the university level and engaged in extensive research on topics like atonality and the problems it presented in terms of aural perception.

From the Russian contingent, there was the brilliant expatriate virtuoso pianist and composer Nicolas Medtner (1880-1951), who came from a family of intimidating intellectual brilliance and was himself an exceptionally articulate member of the Russian *intelligentsia*. In 1935 his *The Muse and the Fashion* was published. It was one of the strongest anti-modernist polemics of the time and owed its existence to the generosity and like-mindedness of none other than the towering Rachmaninoff himself. Medtner mourned the loss of the old expressive ways as much as anyone of his era: "Sometimes it seems that we have completely estranged ourselves from the emotions and thoughts that are alone capable of begetting and fructifying art."⁸⁴ Few in the early twentieth century were more adamant than Medtner about *not* breaking with the spirit or the materials that had historically given life to music: "If there is any kind of 'problem' to be posed in art, the sole problem of every epoch should be the preservation

⁸³ Significantly, it was Jorge Bolet who revived Joseph Marx's *Romantisches Klavierkonzert* in the 1980s and performed it internationally several times. Bolet was a super-virtuoso who specialized in Godowsky and Liszt and belatedly reached international stardom as the 1970s Romantic Revival was reaching its stride. In an interview with Elyse Mach, he spoke of his special fondness for the Marx Concerto. See *Great Pianists Speak for Themselves* (New York: Dover Books, 1991), 34-35. The Marx Concerto has now also been recorded for Hyperion's *Romantic Piano Concerto* series by Marc-André Hamelin, another specialist in Romantic Revival repertoire.

⁸⁴ Nicholas Medtner, *The Muse and the Fashion*, trans. Alfred Swan (Haverford, Pa.: Haverford College Bookstore, 1951), 103.

of a continuous connection with the great past.”⁸⁵

In Italy, Respighi and Pizzetti were leading signatories in a famous 1932 anti-modernist manifesto against the dry and dissonant neoclassical modernism of Casella, who was head of the Italian wing of the Schoenberg/Dent ISCM and worked hard to give Schoenberg’s works regular airings. Ironically, especially in view of the modernist belief that the great dictators necessarily supported the most reactionary (i.e. romantic) streams of music, it was Casella who was backed by Mussolini in his opposition to Respighi’s manifesto. That manifesto, as far as advanced thinkers were concerned, had been almost as notorious as Pfitzner’s *Futuristin Gefahr*. Respighi and company reiterated very clearly the traditionalist romantic position as it was commonly understood in the post-1910 period. To summarize, their manifesto conveyed essentially the same sentiments that Bax, Furtwängler, Pfitzner, Hanson and Medtner had also spelled out:

We are against the so-called objective music which achieves its goal by eliminating the living expressiveness of the mind and soul that created it in the first place. We are against an art that has no human content and is only a mechanical reproduction of a cerebral puzzle. The romanticism of yesterday, which is our root, will also be the romanticism of tomorrow.⁸⁶

⁸⁵ Ibid., 129.

⁸⁶ See Ottorino Respighi, et. al., “Ein Manifest italienischer Musiker für die Tradition der romantischen Kunst des 19. Jahrhunderts [A manifesto by Italian musicians advocating the romantic nineteenth-century artistic tradition],” reprinted in a German translation in Jürg Stenzl, *Von Giacomo Puccini zu Luigi Nono: Italienische Musik 1922-1952. Faschismus-Resistenz-Republik* (Buren, the Netherlands: Frits Knuf, 1990), 86. [Wir sind gegen die sogenannte objektive Musik die, um objektiv zu sein, nur ihren Klang als sochen darstellen würde, ohne den lebendigen Ausdruck des beseelenden Geistes, der ihn schafft. Wir sind gegen diese Kunst, die keinin menschlichen Inhalt haben soll und hat, und die nur ein mechanisches Spiel und eine zerebrale Spitzfindigkeit sein will und ist...Die Romantik von gestern, die übrigens von all unseren Großen stammt, und die Leben im Werden, in Freude und Schmerz ist, wird auch die Romatik von morgen sein].

To further compound the irony, by the time Casella was to publish his own autobiography in 1938, he too would once again be acknowledging a renewed need for at least some of the same romantic elements that his countrymen Respighi and Pizzetti had so stoutly defended in their manifesto from half a dozen years earlier.⁸⁷

Yet another defender of traditional romantic values was Ernst von Dohnányi (1877-1960), one of the greatest all-around musicians of his era. In addition to being the top piano pedagogue in Hungary, he was also considered to be the greatest Hungarian pianist and conductor of the first half of the twentieth century. It was an array of talents that matched Rachmaninoff in Russia, and enabled Dohnányi to dominate Hungarian musical life for forty years. He was also one of Bartók's closest colleagues and most loyal supporters and the two often collaborated in two-piano work. His own compositions, although skillfully wrought, were considered to be as regressive as those of the great mass of late-romantic composer-pianists including Medtner, Bax, York Bowen, Godowsky, Sauer, De Greef, Ignaz Friedman, Borkiewicz and Rachmaninoff. By 1950, and along with most of this kind of repertoire except perhaps for Rachmaninoff, almost all of Dohnányi's output had fallen into near total eclipse.

To add insult to injury, both Dohnányi and his old romantic idiom were unjustly tainted by being subtly connected with Nazi ideology. After all, was it not the National Socialists who supported late romanticism while condemning radical modernism? It was a bitter pill for this principled composer to swallow, especially after his opera *Der Tenor*, a runaway hit of the late 1920s, had been banned by the Nazi regime in the early 1930s after hundreds of performances simply because the composer had refused to remove a Mendelssohn quotation. Also, Dohnányi had later put himself in great personal danger by not co-operating with the collaborating Hungarian regime: He elected to disband his

⁸⁷ Casella's comments are cited in chapter one.

orchestra (the leading orchestra in Hungary) rather than follow government orders and dismiss all Jews. Dohnányi also used his power and influence (which was vast) to help countless fellow citizens escape the country.⁸⁸ To top it off, his own son was killed due to direct involvement in the resistance movement against Hitler. Only in the final stages of the war did the now elderly Dohnányi finally manage a harrowing escape from Hungary.

Miraculously, he somehow retained his innate optimism in the post-war era, and managed to re-start his career as a virtuoso pianist in the West. As one of a great many aging musicians who still stoutly defended their romantic aesthetic in the age of Boulez and Stockhausen, Dohnányi remained unrepentant until his death in 1960.

Yet it is not really too late; people do still understand when they are given the chance. In the fall of 1959 at my concert in Atlanta a great audience rewarded me with a real ovation. It has come about that I am being called ‘The Last Romantic.’ Well....Even though as moderns we try to hold that there is no ‘romanticism,’ no ‘sentiment,’ and hence no feeling, nevertheless I know better. I know what it is that audiences and I have given to each other in Atlanta, in Minneapolis, in Miami, in Chicago, and even in New York, during the last three years.⁸⁹

A common thread in our discussion of the preceding figures was that they were all living representatives of romantic values. That is, in the context of the anti-romantic and anti-emotional movement represented by the Darmstadt-Princeton aesthetic, they continued to equate their own romanticism with the continuation of direct emotional expression. Twentieth-century romantic

⁸⁸ More information is found in Alan Walker’s essay, “Ernst von Dohnányi: A Tribute,” in *Perspectives on Ernst von Dohnányi*, ed. James A. Grymes (Lanham, Maryland: The Scarecrow Press, 2005), 3-28.

⁸⁹ Ernst and Ilona von Dohnányi, “Message to Posterity,” in *Perspectives on Ernst von Dohnányi*, ed. James A. Grymes, (Lanham, Maryland: The Scarecrow Press, Inc. 2005), 214-215

composers readily and eagerly cast themselves in opposition to what they believed were excessively cerebral modernist tendencies. To the ends of their lives, they celebrated the primacy of emotional feeling in music. And there were many composers in the next generation – figures such as Malcolm Arnold, Leonard Bernstein, Joaquín Rodrigo, George Lloyd and Samuel Barber – who followed the lead of Dohnányi’s romantic generation. And for the next generation of instrumentalists – especially those who sympathized most with the romantic performance values of the Dohnányi generation, Dohnányi’s own unofficial “Last Romantic” title in the 1950s was a badge to be worn proudly. It was passed on to deserving figures as subsequent decades flew by. Indeed, to be “The Last Romantic” became something of a journalistic cliché and was especially applied to pianists as they approached the ends of their careers. Artur Schnabel, Shura Cherkassky, Earl Wild, Jorge Bolet, Sergio Fiorentino and even Claudio Arrau were some of the top contenders for the compliment.

But perhaps the most famous of all the so-called “Last Romantics” was Vladimir Horowitz. He burst onto the international stage around 1920, during the anti-romantic heyday of Debussy and Stravinsky. This, as we have already seen, was a time when many composers and commentators were seeking to accomplish the historically unprecedented task of downplaying and even eliminating emotional expression in music. Vladimir Horowitz’s legendary reputation as a latter-day romantic virtuoso provides yet another illustration of romanticism in its twentieth-century “common parlance” – which, blunder that it was, the great Dahlhaus did not develop further. Horowitz died in 1989, having achieved one of the most glorious careers of all pianists past or present. His awesome technical brilliance and equally astounding range of pianistic colour were wedded to an intimate emotional identification with the grand romantic repertoire, which for Horowitz began with Bach, Clementi and Mozart, and ended with the big sonatas of Barber and Prokofiev in the late 1940s (and included Horowitz’s own dazzling transcriptions). In a career that

spanned more than six decades, Horowitz routinely roused his audiences to a state of frenzy and his fees soared to comparably stratospheric heights. In the late 1980s, he famously toured the globe as (what else?) the “Last Romantic,” now commanding six-figure fees and still regaling the public with his unique blend of Scarlatti, hyphenated Bach, Mozart, Schubert, Chopin, Schumann, Liszt, Rachmaninoff, Scriabin and Moszkowski.

Harold C. Schonberg, in his classic 1963 book, *The Great Pianists*, had identified Horowitz as “in many respects...a romantic throwback, an atavist.”⁹⁰ The reasons were obvious: Horowitz carried on the singing tone and repertoire priorities of the previous generation, who still operated at a time when concerts of more serious and heavy musical works were typically leavened with lighter fare. Unlike some of his contemporaries (such as Serkin, Arrau, or Curzon), Horowitz had no shame in keeping a salon composer like Moszkowski alive. Nor was he ashamed of stubbornly insisting that Liszt and Rachmaninoff were worthy of respect. His audiences agreed. In addition, he was also one of the few in his generation (another was Cziffra) who kept alive the older custom of composing virtuoso transcriptions for concert use. This long and venerable tradition had still been in place during the 1930s and 1940s when pianists like Hofmann, Rachmaninoff, Friedman and Moiseiwitsch ruled the international stage.

Aside from a few of his own transcriptions (which are now swiftly entering the repertoires of the youngest generation of international virtuosos), Horowitz did not develop into a composer as such. However, his enormous prestige as a legendary virtuoso in the grand tradition going all the way back to Clementi, Dussek and Mozart ensured that he (Horowitz) became a very powerful symbol for the survival of expressive romantic values in an era that so often fought against them. Very useful to our discussion, Horowitz – not normally a musical commentator as such – was moved to leave a rather precise account of his concept of romanticism. Fully

⁹⁰ Harold C. Schonberg, *The Great Pianists*, revised ed. (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1987), 438.

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conscious of his wider cultural role as a “Last Romantic,” he penned the following words near the end of his life:

All music is the expression of feelings, and feelings do not change over the centuries. Style and form change, but not the basic human emotions....A dictionary definition of “romantic” usually includes the following: “Displaying or expressing love or strong affection; ardent, passionate, fervent.” I cannot name a single great composer of any period who did not possess these qualities. Isn’t then, *all* music romantic? And shouldn’t the performer listen to his heart rather than to intellectual concepts of how to play Classical, Romantic or any other style?⁹¹

Well, it seems we have heard all of this before, and indeed, Horowitz’s explanation seems curiously redolent of how writers had once discussed romanticism two hundred years earlier. In order to better understand Horowitz’s classic-romantic conception of the primacy of emotion in music, there may well be no better place to start than with the “classical” eighteenth-century theorists, who, ironically, lived in an era which composers like Stravinsky and Ian Hamilton once assumed was constructivist, anti-emotional, and anti-romantic. But it was precisely those old theorists who did so much to articulate what it meant for music to be, first and foremost, a language of the emotions. And why, therefore, music was the most romantic of the arts.

As a post-script to our discussion of expression, and to be fair, many post-war modernists later modified their their extreme 1960s stance against the expression of emotion in music. Indeed, few remained as implacably opposed to this essential element as they had been in their youth. Boulez, one of the most outspoken of all anti-romantics, even accomplished the unthinkable by later becoming something of a Mahler specialist (though he never ever gave in to Rachmaninoff or Shostakovich). In the early years of

⁹¹ Vladimir Horowitz, “The Art of Performing,” in accompanying booklet, *The Magic of Horowitz*, Deutsche Grammophon 474 334-2, 2003, compact disc. 17-18.

Darmstadt, Mahler had been considered exceptionally bad taste, and admittedly, Boulez never went so far as to actually make his interpretations of Mahler as cinematically intense as those of Leonard Bernstein, not to mention venerable Mahler conductors of the past like Mengelberg or Stokowski. Nor did Boulez replicate the *echt* Viennese warmth and lilt of Bruno Walter, who (like Mengelberg and Stokowski) had been steadily championing Mahler ever since the 1910s.

But in a sense, Boulez's change-of-heart and subsequent advocacy of Mahler (and also of Berg) did help open the door for the romantic/expressive aesthetic to begin the process of merging with the supposedly anti-expressive modernist aesthetic. A much needed rapprochement was clearly beginning to take place between the expressive and supposedly non-expressive twentieth-century poles. After all, Mahler was also at the same time being claimed by the recent Romantic Revival and leading anti-modernists like Leonard Bernstein. By the end of the twentieth century, emotional expression, in principle at least, was once again honourable. Some highly respected modernist commentators who had been trained in the severe post-war decades even went so far as to now claim an unprecedented level of expressive intensity in the most advanced music, which was henceforth to be seen as comparable to the exalted emotional states found in late romantic music. The supposedly cold and ascetic Webern, who had served as a "founding father" to the post-1945 avant-garde, was re-discovered as a deeply expressive composer (and highly romantic conductor, as well). Wayne Alpern, in his review of Anne Schreffler's new book (provocatively titled *Webern and the Lyric Impulse*) has written that recent examination of "Rehearsal and performance materials confirm Webern's preference for an expressive performance style far removed from antiseptic precision of Boulezian modernist performance practice."⁹²

⁹² Wayne Alpern, review article "Will the Real Anton Webern Please Stand Up?": Anne C. Schreffler, *Webern and the Lyric Impulse* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994)," *Music Theory Online* 4 (1998), <http://www>.

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In a 2002 *New York Times* article, Paul Griffiths explained the historical process that made possible the new resurgence of emotion in high modernist circles:

Musical scores are not monuments fixed for all time. They behave more like living beings, constantly in change, revealing new facets of themselves not only because of what fresh performers bring to them but also by virtue of their inner potential. As conditions around them alter, so they adapt. We can hear this happening with the music of the 1950's and 60's, which used to appear so abstract and remote but which now – at a time when greater immediacy and expressivity are needed in art – comes close and speaks intimately.

When Stanley Kubrick wanted to produce an effect of future strangeness and eerie threat for the moon station of “2001,” he turned to music written just a few years before, in the early 60's, by Gyorgy Ligeti. Everything in it seemed to be aimed at disorienting the listener: the dissonances sustained long beyond any hope of resolution, the unplaceable sounds made by welded instrument colors, the voices that jabbered to themselves, not to any audience.

Three decades later, this same music has a warm emotional presence, and the direction of its gaze through time has switched from the future to the past. No longer the music of astronautics, it brings forward images of grief and conviviality as palpable as those of the great Romantic Symphonies.⁹³

In another 2002 *Times* article, Griffiths made similar expressive claims for Brian Ferneyhough's *Terrain*, where “the slow throb of harmony from a complex of wind instruments [was] as compelling and as expressive as a slow movement by Franck or Bruckner.”⁹⁴

mtosmt.org/issues/mto.98.4.2/mto.98.4.2.alpern.html (accessed May 15, 2012).

⁹³ Paul Griffiths, “Music That Switches Its Gaze, From Future to Past,” *New York Times* (July 21, 2002): A29.

⁹⁴ Paul Griffiths, “Performers Let Energy Fly, as Listeners Catch the Ideas,” *New York Times* (December 17, 2002): E5.

These were formidable claims, but they served notice that radical twentieth-century modernism, which had tried for so long to excise romantic emotion, had finally come full circle. For some commentators at least, the post-war avant-garde could now finally match the emotional force of the same late Romantic styles that they had once so vehemently rejected.

Melody as a reminder of old romanticism

In 2004, the following public comment appeared during the course of a widely followed week-long ArtsJournal.com internet discussion between several major critics who were pondering the future of classical music:

Dear Fellow Classical Music Lovers: In answer to ArtsJournal.Com's apparently serious, and thus pretentious question “[W]hether or not it is still possible for a Big Idea to animate classical music” may I offer the following as a possibility: Melody.....singable, danceable, hummable, organ-grindable, uplifting, happiness-making, inspiring, lasting and eternal Melody. Thank you for your consideration. John N. McBaine.⁹⁵

Along with emotional content, good old-fashioned melody was another major point of contention in disputes between supporters of recent romantic composers and supporters of the avant-garde. A recurring lack of melody was possibly the number one complaint of the general musical public (here represented by one John N. McBaine) when they were confronted by radical modernist works. In the heat of the battle between modernism and the “old” romanticism, McBaine’s traditional-sounding, “organ grindable” melody had routinely been mocked and disparaged, but it always

⁹⁵ John N. McBlaine, [reader response] “Big Ideas? How About Melody?” *Critical Conversation* (ArtsJournal.com: July 28-August 7, 2004), <http://www.artsjournal.com/cc/archives/08-05-04.shtml> (accessed May 16, 2012).

surfaced as a valued commodity on the traditionalist side. Moreover, such a high ranking of melody had a very long history. The venerable theoretical treatise *De institutione musica* by Boethius (c. 480 – c. 524), which had been authoritative in Western thought for well over 1000 years, gave melody a position of great importance in music. At the beginning of Book 1, for example, Boethius noted that a “sweet melody“ had the power to grip young and old alike.⁹⁶ And as we will be observing shortly, Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778) declared that melody was the main musical vehicle through which emotion was expressed.

Fast-forwarding now to the age of post-1945 cold war modernism, the popular textbook writer Joseph Machlis was still forced to admit much the same thing in 1961 as Boethius and Rousseau had articulated in centuries past. “Of all the elements of music,” wrote Machlis, “melody stands first in the affections of the public.” Machlis further quoted Haydn, who had once called melody “the charm of music.”⁹⁷ As far as the most widely consumed post-1900 music was concerned (popular, Broadway, film and tonal/romantic art music), melody did continue to play a primary role. It was in this commonly understood sense of melody that theorist Arnold Whittall (in 1999) wrote disparagingly of “the popular indestructibility” of Rachmaninoff’s Second Piano Concerto, *Paganini Rhapsody* and various shorter works, which, he claimed, “may have more to do with the short-term memorability of tuneful melody than anything else.”⁹⁸

But what exactly was melody? Such an apparently obvious musical element seemed to be easy enough to hear. On the other hand, it was notoriously difficult to define. Machlis vaguely spoke of a “new” kind of melody in the twentieth century, one which was

⁹⁶ Anicius Manlius Severinus Boethius, *De institutione musica* [German title: *Fünf Bücher über die Musik*], trans. Oscar Paul (Leipzig: Leuckart, 1872), 2.

⁹⁷ Joseph Machlis, *Introduction to Contemporary Music* (New York: Norton, 1961), 14. The Haydn quotation is also reiterated on page 11 in the second edition (1979) of this textbook.

⁹⁸ Arnold Whittall, *Musical Composition in the Twentieth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 37.

less vocal in character and tended not to follow prescribed harmonies (as we saw in chapter four, the melodies of composers like Rachmaninoff and Puccini were not really representative of true twentieth-century music for Machlis).

The melodies of Mozart, Schubert, Chopin, and Tchaikovsky were shaped to the curve of the human voice, even when written for instruments. This is why the instrumental themes of these masters can be converted, year after year, into popular song hits. Twentieth-century music, on the other hand, has detached instrumental melody from its vocal origins...The themes of twentieth-century works contain wide leaps and jagged turns of phrase that are not to be negotiated vocally. Contemporary melody ranges through musical space, striding forward boldly along untrodden paths...⁹⁹

As Machlis himself readily admitted, his “modern” definition did not always concur with the opinion of the public. On the other hand, if the applause of the public was not a composer’s top priority, the public’s view did not matter.

But what was the public’s definition? As the ever-practical Percy Grainger (no mean tune-smith himself) formulated it,

I think we all mean fundamentally the same thing by the term ‘melody’. Even the most unmusical person will hardly speak of ‘a melody on the bugle’ or ‘a melody on the drum’; so we may assume that even the popular conception of melody does not associate melody primarily with broken chords or with rhythm. Melody, I take it, is single-line sound that follows the nature of the human voice. The human voice occasionally gives out shouts and barking sounds and other detached sounds: but in the main it tends towards long, continuous, sustained legato sounds – ‘prolonged utterances’ – and it is these sounds that we call melody.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁹ Machlis, 1961, 18.

¹⁰⁰ Percy Grainger, “Melody versus Rhythm,” in *Grainger on Music*, ed. Malcolm Gillies and Bruce Clunies Ross (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 256-257.

Grainger, as it happened, had immense respect for the social aspect of music, and in this way his musical outlook ran counter to the highly esoteric and isolationist views of contemporaries like Adorno and Schoenberg. Grainger collected and arranged a great deal of folk music. He also dared to defend Rachmaninoff, one of history's supreme melodists, at a time when few other prominent commentators would. In the early 1940s, Grainger made the observation that a certain (un-named) critic's assessment of Rachmaninoff – as a first-rate pianist and a sixth-rate composer – was “a feat of mis-criticism worth remembering.”¹⁰¹ Grainger continued his defense of the much-loved Rachmaninoff as follows:

Before 1895, Rachmaninoff had penned the greatest piano piece of modern times – is that not what the C-sharp minor Prelude is? Long before the 1918 revolution drove him from Russia, he had composed one of the greatest of Russian symphonies and perhaps the most satisfying volume of Russian Church music – the Fifteen Songs of the Church. When the economic blow fell, this great composer was so much of an all-round man that he was able to pose as a specialist in what, for him, was merely a side-line – pianism.¹⁰²

Clearly, Grainger was better qualified to speak on the public's behalf than some of his more “alienated” colleagues.

The loss (albeit only in the most self-consciously modernist circles) of such melody as Grainger described – singable and easily assimilated – did not go unnoticed in the academic world. In a composition pedagogy textbook, Leon Dallin dealt with the aspect of melody at length. After analyzing various techniques of good melodic construction, he continued,

No discussion of melodic writing, even in the twentieth century, is complete without some mention of those emotion-packed melodies typical of the romantic era...Though no longer in vogue with the

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 314.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*

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majority of composers, the ability to write such a tune is a priceless gift in any age. The difficulty of drawing with certainty the fine line between emotion and sentiment is perhaps one reason this aspect of the art is neglected now.¹⁰³

The audible decline of “old” melody was mourned by its supporters but was often openly celebrated by representatives of high modernism – those who found it too banal or redolent of the past to be of use in more sophisticated situations. “The romantics brought us emotion-packed melodies.” wrote the leading critic and New Music advocate Paul Bekker back in the 1920s. “But,” he added, “we will certainly not find such emotional melodies in the new music.”¹⁰⁴ Edward Dent, president of ISCM and close associate of Schoenberg, simply felt that the value of melody had worn down:

Dissonance wears down in the course of time; music which excited us thirty years ago excites us now no longer. The value of melody seems to wear down too; at any rate it is curiously difficult for musicians of to-day to work up in themselves the intensity necessary for the interpretation of most of the older melodic

¹⁰³ Leon Dallin, *Twentieth Century Composition: A Guide to the Materials of Modern Composition*, third ed. (Dubuque, Iowa: Wm. C. Brown Company Publishers, 1974), 14. Dallin illustrated the above observation with the famous tune from the finale of Rachmaninoff’s *Piano Concerto No. 2*. With no little irony, several other aspects of melody writing were also illustrated by Dallin with equally romantic-sounding 20th C examples: the slow movement to Rachmaninoff’s *Symphony No. 2*, the opening to Prokofiev’s *Violin Concerto No. 2*, an excerpt from Sibelius’ *Pelleas and Melisande*, and a haunting folk melody from Stravinsky’s *Firebird* (a work still redolent of the exotic fairy-tail world of Rimsky-Korsakov). All are emotion-packed, to use Dallin’s words. Slightly farther afield, though still full of romantic associations to this writer’s ears, is the opening of Ravel’s *Sonatine. The Wasps Overture* by Vaughn Williams is more folkish, but that too is not inconsistent with the romantic idiom. Is Dallin, perhaps unintentionally, suggesting an inherent connection between melody and romantic feeling?

¹⁰⁴ Paul Bekker, *Organische und Mechanische Musik* (Berlin and Leipzig: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt Stuttgart, 1928), 21. [Die Romantik hat uns die Gefühlsmelodie gebracht. Diese Gefühlsmelodie allerdings werden wir in der neuen music nicht finden.]

music.¹⁰⁵

However, Dent neglected to specify for whom the value of melody had actually become worn down. In reality, many composers continued to value melody highly. Vaughan Williams complained of a lack of tunes in modern music.¹⁰⁶ Holst, too, was no friend of the anti-melody sentiments of Dent and Bekker, or the New Music they propagated. In 1932, Holst spent a short time as a guest lecturer at Harvard, where, among others, he met the 24-year-old Elliott Carter. Writing to his close friend Vaughan Williams, he stated, “I got square with one ultra-modernist, wrong-note merchant, by pointing out that I was an old fogey” and that “he’d better humour me and even, occasionally, write a good tune.”¹⁰⁷

And certainly, opera lovers in the 1920s and 1930s continued to affirm traditional melody. They either kept to the still-current Puccini-Mascagni school, the contemporary operettas of Lehar, and to a healthy extent the post-Wagnerian contemporary composers like Richard Strauss, Schreker and Korngold, although the “endless melody” that was often deployed by some of these composers was already extending the traditional definition of melody to the breaking point. Last, but certainly not least, opera aficionados retreated into the past and began digging up early romantic Italian operas – a foretaste of the Callas-Tebaldi-Sutherland revival of bel canto after 1950. “The opera world,” observed Marion Bauer in 1933,

went into the archives and brought out old works which were novelties to the twentieth century. Works which a generation ago were discarded as too ‘melodious’ and musically naive, were held

¹⁰⁵ Edward Dent, “The Romantic Spirit in Music,” *Proceedings of the Musical Association*, 59 (1932-1933): 95.

¹⁰⁶ Michael Kennedy, *The Works of Ralph Vaughan Williams*, new edition (London, New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), 376.

¹⁰⁷ Jon C. Mitchell, *A Comprehensive Biography of Composer Gustav Holst, with Correspondence and Diary Excerpts: Including his American Years* (Lampeter, Ceredigion, Wales: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2001), 539.

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up as models simply because they were at the opposite extreme from Wagnerian theories.¹⁰⁸

Not surprisingly, the public's taste for melodies along more traditional lines continued to be disregarded in the most radical circles. After the Second World War, British composer Ian Hamilton spoke for a new generation, for whom new and novel pointilistic textures and so-called "moment forms" were now taking the original anti-melody sentiments of Bekker and Dent to their absurd conclusion. "The rejection of the great classical line and the over-evident stream of melody, while not yet complete in Schoenberg, is wholly so in Webern and in such composers as Stockhausen and Boulez," proclaimed Hamilton at the 1960 international composer's conference in Stratford, Canada.¹⁰⁹ Schoenberg himself had spoken of the need to redefine melody as something more than merely "what someone can whistle back to you."¹¹⁰ "Melody," wrote Schoenberg,

is the most primitive form of expression in music. Its goal is to present a musical idea through many repetitions (motivic work) and the slowest possible development (variation) so that even the dense can follow it. It treats the listener the way a grown-up treats a child or a sensible person treats an idiot. For the swift intellect this is an insulting presumption, but that's the reason our grown-ups make it the essence of music.¹¹¹

Although Schoenberg was, as he put it, fighting against the "dense" (which, rather uncharitably, would have included the vast majority of music lovers and performers of the time), he was also unwittingly casting himself in direct opposition to the general

¹⁰⁸ Marion Bauer, *Twentieth Century Music: How it Developed. How to Listen to it* (New York: Putnam, 1933, reprint, New York: Da Capo Press, 1978), 225.

¹⁰⁹ Beckwith and Kasemets, 50.

¹¹⁰ Joseph Auner, *A Schoenberg Reader: Documents of a Life* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2003), 59.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 64.

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opinion of many theorists from past centuries, for whom melody had indeed been essential. However, Schoenberg's relationship with melody was paradoxical to say the least. Having written many tunes in the more traditional sense, he had temporarily given up traditional concepts of melody around 1908-09 when he entered into what theorists call atonality's early "athematic" period. It was a time when some composers, above all Schoenberg and his circle, began writing works that were exclusively based on the manipulation of short motivic cells rather than more extended melodic material. In doing so, Schoenberg knew full well that he had sacrificed one of music's most valuable historic assets. After a few years of motive-based writing, therefore, he tried to resurrect the old melodic component that he had lost, and in the 1920s hatched a new concept of melody via the twelve-tone row or series.

Too intelligent not to be fully aware of what had been lost, Schoenberg partly intended that twelve-tone music would bring melody back, but its re-emergence had to be on the peculiar and highly esoteric terms of his own fully chromatic universe. Schoenbergian melody, therefore, became peppered with jagged major sevenths, minor ninths and tritones, intervals which made his music extraordinarily difficult to sing for anyone without absolute pitch. In other words, the new and chromatically saturated "tone-row" concept of melody ventured very far indeed from the singable and tonal terms of every-day music lovers who were still on the lookout for new tunes, preferably ones with a different kind of "hook."

The longer melodic lines that were hopefully to be made possible through the use of the tone row seemed to be Schoenberg's way of attempting to realize an even deeper ambition: As the deeply frustrated composer wrote to conductor Hans Rosbaud in 1947, "There is nothing I long for more intensely than to be taken for a better sort of Tchaikovsky – for heaven's sake; a bit better, but really that's all. Or if anything more, then that

people should know my tunes and whistle to them.”¹¹² Tchaikovsky, of course, had created some of the most famous melodies ever written, but Schoenberg’s intricately-written later works – like the more tunefully conceived Piano Concerto, Op 42 which began with an atonal waltz theme sounding a bit like wrong-note Godowsky – failed to impress the same sophisticated concert-going public that so willingly continued to applaud Tchaikovsky’s melodies.

In the tradition of Schoenberg, many later modernist commentators also either downplayed the importance of melody or attempted to define it on their own terms. “Great music,” thought Rudolf Stephan, “does not merely consist of beautiful melodies. In any case, they are not especially important. Rather, it is above all the formal criteria that constitute worth.”¹¹³ But Stephan’s drastic downplaying of melody’s importance directly contradicted what leading theorists had been saying in centuries past. “The melody, harmony, movement, and choice of instruments and voices, are the elements of musical language,” wrote Rousseau in 1768,

and the melody, by its immediate connection with the grammatical and oratorical account, is that which gives the character to all the rest. Wherefore, it is always from the air that the principal expression should be drawn, as well in instrumental as vocal music.¹¹⁴

In the parlance of the eighteenth century, “air” was another word for melody, especially vocal melody. The descriptive term “melodious,” Rousseau elaborated further, “in general, is said of

¹¹² Schoenberg’s letter to Hans Rosbaud, May 12, 1947, see *Arnold Schoenberg: Letters*, ed. Erwin Stein, trans. Eithne Wilkins and Ernst Kaiser (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1987), 243

¹¹³ Rudolf Stephan, *Neue Musik: Versuch einer kritischen Einführung*, 2nd ed. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1958), 3.

¹¹⁴ Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Complete Dictionary of Music*, trans. William Waring, 2nd ed. (London: J. French, 1779), 161. (Rousseau’s original French publication comes from Paris in 1768).

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agreeable sounds, sonorous voices, sweet and pleading airs, etc.”¹¹⁵ Clearly, melody was to be considered the most important aspect of music. It was what gave music its ultimate worth. Melody, Rousseau emphasized, was precisely what was required for the proper expression of emotion.

If music paints only by melody, and receives from thence its whole force, it follows that every music, which does not sing, however harmonious it may be, is not an imitative music; and not being able either to touch or paint with its beautiful concords, soon fatigues the ear, and always leaves the heart in a state of coldness.¹¹⁶

Along the same lines as Rousseau, Sultzer in 1798 wrote that melody was “The sequence of tones that created the songfulness (*Gesang*) of a piece of music.”¹¹⁷ Further, Sultzer added, “The songful aspect is the goal of music, its actual purpose, and all the skillful application of harmony has no other purpose than the creation of beautiful song.”¹¹⁸ As with Rousseau, there was no doubt in Sulzer’s hierarchy of musical priorities that melody was more important than harmony, even though the two were closely intertwined.

In 1968, the historian Otto Deri observed that a recent edition of *Webster’s Dictionary* was still defining melody as something like a “a sweet or agreeable succession or arrangement of sounds.”¹¹⁹ But for Deri, a standard dictionary definition such as that found in *Webster’s* was much too dependent on what he

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 228.

¹¹⁷ Johann Georg Sultzer, *Allgemeine Theorie der Schönen Künste* (Frankfurt and Leipzig, 1798), 3:401. (Die Folge der Töne, die den Gesang eines Tonstücks ausmachen.)

¹¹⁸ Ibid. (Die musik hat den Gesang, als ihr eigentliches Werk, zu ihrem Ziel, und alle Künste der Harmonie haben bloss den schönen Gesang zum letzten Endzweck.)

¹¹⁹ Otto Deri, *Exploring Twentieth-Century Music* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1968), 18.

denounced as “the view current in the nineteenth century, as if the original meaning of the words *melos* (song) and *aidos* (singer) still prevailed, thus suggesting that melody necessarily should be tuneful or singable.”¹²⁰ As far as Deri was concerned, modernist melody merely appeared unmelodic because “the listener [was] conditioned to eighteenth- and nineteenth-century music and to the resultant narrow generalization as to what music (melody) should be like.”¹²¹

Several years before Deri had attempted to define modernist melody in his 1968 historical overview *Exploring Twentieth-Century Music*, his idea of what modern melody should be like (or more precisely, what it should not be like) had already been put on a more sophisticated philosophical footing by none other than the vastly influential Adorno. In an essay on popular culture, the formidable German philosopher had noted that there was clearly “a large gap between the layman’s idea of a melody and its strictly musical connotation.” Nevertheless, said Adorno, “It would still be valuable to study exactly what laymen call a melody. It would probably turn out to be a succession of tones related to one another by simple and easily understandable harmonic functions, within the framework of an eight-bar period.”¹²²

Ultimately, Adorno reckoned, the public’s notion of melody dated back to “late romanticism and the folkloristic schools,” where “attention was increasingly focused on the solo melody, which, originally, and even as late as Schubert, had been subjectively lyrical. This melody made itself independent, as a brand name, to the detriment of the objective, constructive context of the musical whole.”¹²³ In another essay Adorno named some of the composers who had brought this older, backward-looking

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² Theodor W. Adorno, “On Popular Culture,” in *Essays on Music*, ed. Richard Leppert (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2002), 448.

¹²³ Ibid.

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concept of melody into the twentieth century, and he further emphasized that it was the duty of New Music to counteract the still-powerful and all-pervading influence of melodically oriented music:

A music history that would not be satisfied with distinguishing between high and low music, but would see through the low and a function of the high, would have to trace the path that leads from the most drastic formulations of Tchaikovsky, such as the secondary theme of *Romeo and Juliet*, to the harmonically spiced favorite melodies from Rachmaninoff's piano concertos, to Gershwin, and from there on down into the bad infinity of entertainment. Musical cultivation must work against all this, in view of its overwhelming quantitative weight. I myself have been attempting to do so long enough and probably even coined the concept of atomistic listening.¹²⁴

At the heart of Adorno's complaint, then, was that music lovers tended to "atomistically" isolate beautiful melodies from their structural contexts. That is, their listening skills were shallow and superficial. Radio broadcasts of classical music, Adorno added, only contributed further to what he termed the "romanticising" of music. But the late-romantic composer-pianist Nicholas Medtner, who was as much of a polar opposite to Adorno's aesthetic as anyone at that time, was not so quick to dismiss the value of such a direct, even "atomistic," musical experience. Medtner, almost totally forgotten after his death in 1951, had been one of the most articulate and outspoken of all late-romantic regressives, but has enjoyed extensive revival in recent years. We will give the last word to him. Melodies, wrote Medtner in 1935, were the natural vehicle by which the average listener's connection to music first manifested itself:

¹²⁴ Theodor W. Adorno, "Little Heresy," in *Essays on Music*, ed. Richard Leppert (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2002), 319.

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If the non-specialist can at first directly experience the main images, the melodies (themes), it will be easier for him to work his way from these themes to a perception of the whole, than for the dull specialist who has put on the spectacles of the theoretician from the start, and can see through them only separate notes and details.¹²⁵

Which, of course, fit in remarkably well with Rousseau's comment in the 1760s that the melody was the principle vehicle through which the music transmitted its emotional message to the listener.

¹²⁵ Nicholas Medtner, *The Muse and the Fashion*, trans. Alfred J. Swan (Haverford, Pa.: Haverford College Bookstore 1951), 132. This book was originally published in Russian in 1935, with the financial backing of Sergei Rachmaninoff himself.

Chapter Six

Twentieth Century Musical Vocabulary and the Linguistic Analogy

“What should concern us about contemporary musical culture is the power it has to define the contemporary allied to the fact that it is based on a deception: a premodern musical language masquerading behind the latest technology.” (Composer and Webern scholar Julian Johnson, in his 2002 book *Who Needs Classical Music*).

“Somehow, you know a lot about this chord without having to read a book about it.” (Kostka and Payne, addressing first-year music students in their university textbook, *Tonal Harmony*, 1984)

“...no language is considered intrinsically more modern than any other.” (Alex Ross, in his 2007 book *The Rest is Noise*, describing his new approach to writing a history of twentieth-century music.)

“Dead tonality” in the twenty-first century

How did we end up with a large and incredibly varied group of self-consciously modern musical languages over the last one hundred years that very few music

lovers ever learned to “speak?” And how was it that so much musical vocabulary that actually survived in the common day-to-day musical practice of the twentieth century ended up being relegated to the nineteenth – which in common parlance is still often called the “Romantic Century?” Was there truly something approaching a common musical language in 1980, a language (or, if you prefer, a group of closely related languages) that easily crossed cultural and class boundaries, as was the case in 1880 or 1780? Thirty or forty years ago, these kinds of questions were not seriously entertained by musicians and scholars who were actively pursuing and defending the more esoteric streams of “modernist” or “new” music. As numerous historical overviews of twentieth-century music demonstrated over the last half a century, the progress narrative of musical evolution heavily influenced the kinds of twentieth-century musics that were deemed most worthy of scholarly consideration. The reigning academic assumption, long since degenerated into a cliché, was that the tonal structure of European musical language was progressively weakened during the nineteenth century. That language, often termed common-practice tonality, ultimately broke down at the beginning of the twentieth century, or, as some versions of the tale have it, died.

The problem of how to justify an “outdated” musical language still sometimes surfaces when one is arguing for the musicological legitimacy of a traditionally romantic – that is, apparently nineteenth-century-sounding – stream of twentieth-century composition. However, it is probable that there will also be many who feel that the discussion presented in this chapter is no longer relevant since, having largely left behind the High Modernist aesthetic climate of the cold war era, we are already a generation or more into a post-modern age of compositional pluralism, where, quite literally, “anything goes.” In other words, why continue to flog a dead issue?

But even in the early twenty-first century, there do remain some long-entrenched views in the rarefied academic world of twentieth-century music studies. The old default position of

elevating Schoenberg's historical stature at the expense of many contemporaries who still tower over him in the daily repertoire remains relatively strong within some academic circles. The older progressive way of evaluating the importance of twentieth-century composers still lingers, which means that we are still dealing with the legacy of an otherwise largely-discredited evolutionary view which saw tonality as being largely superseded by atonality. Although the basic ideas of scholars like the Yale theorist and textbook writer Robert Morgan are now ripe for being challenged as never before, such an outlook still finds a sympathetic response in at least some influential scholars of the younger generation.

A case in point is the Schoenberg authority Joseph Auner. He completed his dissertation on Schoenberg under Morgan in 1991, and has now been commissioned by the major textbook publisher Norton to write a new music history textbook devoted to the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.¹ That, of course, is one of the most prestigious and potentially influential assignments that a scholar can receive, not least because of the guaranteed wide circulation among impressionable students. Despite the fact that the general way of looking at the twentieth century has changed greatly over the last decade (cf. Taruskin, Ross, Cook and Pople), the Norton contract was given to a musicologist whose general hard-line stance in favour of the traditionally high historical ranking of Schoenberg and atonality has been apparent right from the beginning of his career. (See, for example, Auner's highly negative review of William Thomson's important 1993 book *Schoenberg's Error*).² The Norton commission demonstrates that although the high modernist position may be said to be on the wane, it still retains at least some of its older ability to propagate itself in higher education as new generations of scholars are

¹ As of early 2012, Auner's textbook is still forthcoming. Its full title is: *A Norton History, Music of the 20th- and 21st Centuries*. It is part of a new series from Norton entitled *Western Music in Context*, ed. Walter Frisch.

² Joseph Auner, review of *Schoenberg's Error*, by William Thomson, *Theory and Practice* 17 (1992): 119-130.

mentored by their distinguished predecessors.

Despite ongoing support in some circles, the old progressive view is indeed showing signs of weakening. We have seen this in important examples like the concluding paragraphs of Brian Hyer's *New Grove* article on tonality, which was discussed at the beginning of chapter one. To reiterate briefly, Hyer's conclusion was that the idea of a historical progression culminating in atonality had also produced the unfortunate result of creating a powerful academic framework that allowed scholars throughout the twentieth century to shut out a whole range of post-1910 musical styles from being taken seriously – for no other reason than that those styles used an “older” language and were therefore deemed regressive rather than progressive.

Nowadays, however, scholars dealing with the historical period after 1900 no longer busy themselves primarily with avant-garde radicals at the expense of composers representing a broad range of other compositional streams. Instead, they devote their collective energies to the general sweep of twentieth-century music as a whole. Little, if anything, is out of bounds. This is a very significant development when we ponder the question of tonal traditions as they continued to change after 1900. In such a broadened landscape, areas of study that were once ignored and even denigrated for various musical and philosophical reasons now bulk very large in scholarship. Prominent in this list is the continued tradition of tonal-romantic composition and its subset film music. Conductor John Mauceri has recorded several volumes of film scores for Decca's *Entartete Musik* series, which we discussed at the end of chapter two. As Mauceri observed in 2011, film had essentially become a home for composers who still chose to write in the tonal symphonic tradition during the age of high modernism:

Movies – their directors, producers, studios and, most of all, their audiences – simply continued to do what theatre music had always done in Western lyric theatre tradition. It continued to use the musical

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metaphors and similes that had developed since the era of the madrigals, while embracing, when appropriate, all the newest ideas of what was now called ‘contemporary music.’ Because of this, a vast legacy of orchestral music was composed, performed, recorded and promulgated to hundreds of millions throughout the world – not in concert halls, but in movie palaces.³

In addition to latter-day romantic-sounding composers of concert and film music, there were also the vast musical terrains (all unthinkable without clear tonality) of Broadway, top-40 popular idioms, hymn tunes and the folk traditions of many nations.

In the last decade or two, the history of recorded sound, which really began in earnest around 1890 (see the recent re-discovery of the Julius Block cylinders),⁴ has also been studied and analysed as never before. Historical recordings have the potential to completely overturn our conventional view of the first half of the twentieth century as an age dominated by esoteric compositional techniques – that is, if we are willing to follow the implications that arise when we are directly faced with the aural evidence of all those old performers who dominated the classical music world before 1950. How many conductors, singers and instrumentalists representative of an atonal school, or even a dry neoclassical school, were active around 1925? How many

³ John Maurceri, “Film Music,” *Gramophone* (April 2011): 37. Maurceri continued: “And it is not surprising that composers of film music used Wagner’s aesthetic and compositional ideas (leitmotif, scenic descriptive devices, epic scale) and continue to do so today. If Mahler was convinced that the Germanic symphonic tradition would end with his symphonies, he was only partially right. What he could not predict was that this very tradition would continue not in symphonies but would be delivered in another medium.”

⁴ The exciting re-discovery of over 120 cylinder recordings in St. Petersburg in 2002 brought to light recordings from the early and mid-1890s by Pabst, Arensky, Hofmann, Conus and Taneyev. There is even a short conversation between Anton Rubinstein and Tchaikovsky himself. Ward Marston, the remastering engineer responsible for transferring the cylinders to compact disc, calls these recordings “a ‘Rosetta Stone’ of nineteenth century musical performance practice.” See *The Dawn of Recording: the Julius Block Cylinders*. Marston 53011-2, 2008. Three compact discs.

specifically allied themselves to either stream? Very few indeed. It also cannot be denied that recent trends in academic research have also provided an equally strong challenge to the long-established “techno-essentialist” (cf. Christopher Williams)⁵ way of writing twentieth-century music history, with its traditional dependence on the idea of ever more radical innovations ultimately leading to a “break” with the common tonal language of the nineteenth century – or, if an even more sophisticated approach is desired, the explication of an avant-garde “dialectical” relationship (in lieu of a “break”) with the past.

Recent trends in twentieth-century music studies also have profound implications for how the commonly-used linguistic analogy in music is handled – and in particular, how this analogy is applied to twentieth-century music. The musical vocabularies of almost all twentieth-century musical styles that are now being dealt with in the newer scholarly climate ensure that some sort of clear tonality, and even common-practice tonality, still maintains an essential presence. For music of the past one hundred years, it has been comparatively rare that music for worship, popular songs of all kinds, or instrumental teaching pieces would not use the most common-place features like tonic and dominant chords at every turn. Taking this everyday reality into consideration, it therefore becomes untenable, even within the specialized academic context of a self-consciously “New Music,” to maintain the heuristic position that there existed little or no trace of a common musical language during the twentieth century. The common language was still there, right under everyone’s noses. Certainly, specialists did master a wide variety of new and highly esoteric languages, but it did not follow that they no longer also used, or at least understood and taught, the traditional common practice harmonies and melodic shapes that had been bequeathed to them by the nineteenth century. The old did not automatically pass away, no matter how

⁵ Christopher Williams coined this term in his article “Of Canons & Context: Toward a Historiography of Twentieth-Century Music,” *Repercussions* 2 (1993): 37ff.

much it was denigrated. Indeed, the old still maintained an uncanny ability to maintain and transform itself, and in this way was still heard and used on a daily basis by a broad base of musicians – not least those who considered themselves to be dedicated proponents of new and novel musical languages.

New languages or new turns of speech?

Thanks in part to all the new languages, an unprecedented number of new “isms” proliferated in the so-called “art” music of the last century. But despite all of these new “isms,” some form of traditional romanticism (or neoromanticism, if you prefer) still retained an audible presence in daily musical life. And romanticism (even more so than tonal neoclassicism with its veneer of irony and dry dissonance) was the “ism” that was most dependent on the common-practice language of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. As the late-romantic composer-pianist Nicholas Medtner wrote in his highly polemical 1935 treatise, *The Muse and the Fashion*, “new turns of speech, not a new language, do we expect from every new composer.”⁶ Medtner was far from being alone in this belief. Of great significance was the fact that the book’s publication was funded by none other than Rachmaninoff himself, one of the most popular composers of his age and, as we noted in our first chapter, one of the most completely equipped musical geniuses in history. Barrie Martyn, who wrote important recent biographies of both musicians, duly observed that “Medtner in fact had articulated what Rachmaninoff and many other conservative musicians undoubtedly felt but generally chose not to express publicly.”⁷

As Medtner and Rachmaninoff emphasized in word and deed, latter-day twentieth-century romantics were very

⁶ Nicholas Medtner, *The Muse and the Fashion*, trans. Alfred J. Swan (Haverford, Pa.: Haverford College Bookstore, 1951), 136.

⁷ Barrie Martyn, *Nicholas Medtner: His Life and Music* (Aldershot, Hants: Scolar Press, 1995), 216.

conscientious and principled in *not* breaking down the language of the past. Among twentieth-century art-music composers, they were consequently among the least dependent on dialectic theory in order to assert their traditionalism, their link with the past. We recall how Adorno and Boulez had argued that all of those old-fashioned traditionalists were in reality the least traditional of the lot because they did not carry through with what were confidently thought to be the implications of the past.⁸ But the quixotic recourse to strategies like dialectic theory in order to “prove” the traditionalism of the most extreme radicals was perhaps nothing more than, as Taruskin suggested, an “attempt to marry the Permanent Revolution to the Great Tradition,” which in turn “led to a vast proliferation of newspeak and doublethink.”⁹ Only through such a notion could Adorno, Boulez and their followers convincingly advance the claim that, on the one hand, Webern was a greater traditionalist than his more regressive contemporaries. This, even as the term “traditional” (Dahlhaus, for example, said that Strauss converted to traditionalism after 1910) continued to be used by progressive commentators in the negative sense, as a means of denigrating latter-day tonalists and romantics.¹⁰

As has already been mentioned, there was said to be a break or upheaval in common-practice musical language somewhere around the beginning of the twentieth century. The extremity of that break was something new in the history of music. In degree, it

⁸ See Pierre Boulez, “Aesthetics and the Fetishists,” in *Orientations* (London: Faber and Faber, 1986), 39. Theodor Adorno also discusses the dialectic conception of tradition at length. See his article, “Tradition,” in *Gesammelte Schriften*, Vol. 14, *Dissonanzen. Musik in der verwalteten Welt* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1970-c1986), 127-142.

⁹ Richard Taruskin, “Stravinsky and the Subhuman. A Myth of the Twentieth Century: *The Rite of Spring*, the Tradition of the New, and ‘the Music Itself,’” in *Defining Russia Musically* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), 360.

¹⁰ Carl Dahlhaus, *Die Musik des 19. Jahrhunderts* (Wiesbaden: Laaber-Verlag, 1980, English translation as *Nineteenth-Century Music*, trans. J. Bradford Robinson, Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1989), 255.

far surpassed any new harmonic discoveries made by the greatest radicals of the nineteenth century like Berlioz and Liszt. This was a point generally agreed upon by conservative and revolutionary alike. In 1954, the distinguished British historian George Dyson (also a composer who had continued to write in what, by the 1950s, was a hopelessly outdated romantic and tonal idiom) wrote:

In the nineteenth century Wagner was a revolutionary, though at our present distance he is only slightly less orthodox than Brahms. He arranged his musical thought in a new order, but he did not attempt to create a new musical language. The explorers of the twentieth century have been content with no such half-measures. They have asked us not only to think new thoughts, but to think them in new terms, and it is hardly an exaggeration to say that some of them have deliberately chosen to be incomprehensible to normal ears. They are full of strange words of which the meaning eludes us. The first composer to adopt a new grammar of sound was Debussy. The single words were not new, but the sentences were strange and vague.¹¹

The increasing presence of “strange words” eventually reached a critical point and precipitated an unprecedented breakdown in musical communication with the vitally important target audience of ticket buyers, wrecking immediate havoc among music lovers in the concert hall. Early premieres by Schoenberg and like-minded radicals provoked a long-lasting standoff between public and composer, the residue of which is still felt in concert programming today. The break dating back to Schoenberg’s atonal revolution around 1908-10 has long been Exhibit A in the mythology of musical modernism, where a premium has historically been placed on using complicated and esoteric musical languages that take a

¹¹ George Dyson, *Fiddling While Rome Burns* (London: Oxford University Press, 1954), 36. Several CDs of Dyson’s tonal-romantic music have recently been recorded by Chandos, Hyperion and Naxos, labels which specialize in what Chandos owner Ralph Couzens called the “romantic side” of twentieth-century music.

great deal of time and effort to unravel and understand.

In a 1977 interview, an almost forgotten one-time rebel from the 1910s (who finally died in 2002 at the astonishing age of 108) looked back on what was already a long career as a composer. His name was Leo Ornstein, and he had swiftly sprung to notoriety in the tumultuous decade following the invention of atonality. In the process, he had earned radical modernist credentials second to none. However, like so many others (see chapter one), he soon backed away from the extremity of his early years and decades later looked back on what he described as a severely fragmented musical landscape. He compared the tools of twentieth-century composition to artificially-constructed languages:

Today each composer is not only involved in aesthetics, but he's actually trying to create his own language. We have the paradox of each one making up his own language. The danger of that – and there's a grave danger that I, myself, have to be very aware of – is that you become so involved and intrigued in the language that sometimes you lose track that that is only a means to an aesthetic experience that the listener has to get. No wonder it is very difficult for the listener to make any evaluations because, before anything else, he has to first of all learn the language. And since each one invents his own language today, the poor listener is really in quite a stew because how can he make any evaluation? How can he even understand what the aesthetic value of the piece is, when he still is floundering around trying to understand and learn the language first of all?...one can't blame many listeners who rebel because they don't understand.¹²

Statements similar to Ornstein's can be found throughout the literature, and his comments acknowledged a new reality in music history: One could not forever continue to chase the ultimate

¹² Leo Ornstein, "The Last of the Original 20th Century Mavericks," interview with Vivian Perlis, November 19 and 20, 1977 (from the Archives of Oral History, American Music, at Yale University), reprinted, *NewMusicBox* (April 1, 2002), <http://www.newmusicbox.org/articles/leo-ornstein-the-last-of-the-original-20th-century-mavericks/> (accessed May 20, 2012).

(and ironically, romantic) goal of originality to the point of drastically downplaying or excluding vital elements like traditional melody and harmony – concepts that had largely been intact for centuries. As we know from Ornstein’s own compositions written before 1920, he had clearly seen and tasted the enticements. At the same time, however, he was willing to admit that there was a considerable price to pay. Referring to his Violin Sonata Op. 31 (1917) as his most radical work, he later commented, “Beyond that lies chaos.”¹³ In 1929, A. E. Brent Smith wrote an article for *Music and Letters* mourning the rejection of common language among advanced composers. He too strongly criticized the penchant for chasing originality at all costs:

To attract notice and to gain a reputation for originality, many composers are forced to write in a style which can only be described as a jargon, that is, they use not the vocabulary of the ordinary man but a vocabulary which is, to borrow a phrase from the half-witted knight, ‘all their own invention.’ Doubtless the message they give is of great value, its only drawback is that it is meaningless to others.¹⁴

Ernst Roth (1896-1967), who had come to know many composers personally through almost 40 years of work in the publishing industry noted, “With greater assiduity than ever before music was not only compared with language but was even defined as one, one which developed according to its own laws; Schoenberg was reproached with having invented a musical Esperanto which could never replace the ‘natural’ musical language.”¹⁵ As Daniel Albright has recently demonstrated,

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ A. E. Brent Smith, “The World’s Sweet Inn,” *Music & Letters* 10 (July 1929): 232.

¹⁵ Ernst Roth spent his life working in the music publishing business, first for Universal and later for Boosey & Hawkes, serving as long-time chairman for the latter. *The Business of Music: Reflections of a Music Publisher*. London: Cassell, 1966. Electronic republication at Music Web International: <http://www.musicweb-international.com/Roth/index.htm>. (accessed February

composers pushed even further. Besides inventing new languages, they also attempted to “reconcile nearly incompatible languages” within their own work. “Multilingualism,” Albright writes,

remains either the chief curse or blessing of Modernist music. Poets have always lamented the confounding of human languages after God destroyed the Tower of Babel; but the twentieth century has seen, for the first time in history, a confounding of the languages of music. Composers have tried to make the best of this, often by becoming polyglots.¹⁶

The distinguished musicologist Gerald Abraham (himself a true linguistic polyglot, having mastered many European and Slavic languages) was among the many commentators who compared the new languages and greatly expanded vocabulary of twentieth-century music to specially developed verbal languages which were beyond the comprehension of the common man. In his book *This Modern Music*, Abraham attempted to grapple with the problem in a constructive way. His concern was founded on the widely-acknowledged reality that, as he put it, the “beginning of the century was disastrously rich in theory-ridden composers.”¹⁷ Abraham’s comments were echoed by numerous writers and composers of the early twentieth century, including Busoni, Bartók, Casella, Honegger, and Szymanowski, to name only a few of the more progressive composers.¹⁸ The exact theoretical basis for all those different methods devised by “theory-ridden” composers was usually shrouded in mystery, but that was not the point. Indeed, it was often part of their mystique.

Amidst all the rhetoric from both sides, Abraham adopted a

6, 2012). No pagination in electronic version. The quotation is from part two, chapter three.

¹⁶ Daniel Albright, ed., *Modernism and Music: An Anthology of Sources* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2004), 21.

¹⁷ Gerald Abraham, *This Modern Music*, third ed. (London: Gerald Duckworth, 1955), 22. The book was first published in 1933 as *This Modern Stuff*.

¹⁸ Many composers expressed serious reservations as to the efficacy of certain radical twentieth-century revolutions. See our discussions in chapter one.

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conciliatory tone. His intention was practical in nature. He recognized the obvious fact that listeners could no longer keep up with many of the latest developments, and therefore tried to smooth the way by helping these listeners see the musical value in atonal experiments. In order to do so, Abraham used the following linguistic analogy:

If the English language were seized and molded by a tiny but authoritative minority of intellectuals, scientific philologists with a passion for experiment, the man-in-the-street would in just the same way soon find the cultural classes talking and writing a language different from his own.¹⁹

Giving Schoenberg the benefit of the doubt, Abraham suggested that music lovers should attempt to learn the new “grammar.” Putting listening experience ahead of analysis on paper, he recommended that the musical public “practice” by engaging in plenty of listening and even playing, if possible. Abraham further encouraged music lovers not to condemn 12-tone music as “mere mathematics.” In order to successfully penetrate the music, they must first try to become familiar with the row, although, he warned, “it is a flinty path.”²⁰ In a comment that was surely guaranteed to raise the ire of the aging but ultra-competitive Schoenberg (who was still very much alive in 1939), Abraham singled out the more romantic and mellow-sounding Berg as the most successful of the atonalists, and thus recommended him rather than Schoenberg as the logical starting point for the uninitiated music lover.

However, many scholars of the period were still not as open as Abraham. The great British musicologist Eric Blom, chief editor of the 1954 *Grove's Dictionary*, fell back on a similar linguistic comparison but was far more dismissive. He openly questioned the

¹⁹ Abraham, 23.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 102.

viability of the twelve-tone technique as a new teaching tool:

To ask that twelve-note classes should turn out the new sort of composer is like suggesting that Esperanto should be taught at Oxford and Cambridge in order to produce a new kind of poetry. It would no doubt be far easier to indoctrinate mechanical mastery in the writing of verse in Esperanto than in Greek, Latin or English, just as a fluent twelve-note technique is incomparably easier to acquire than a conventional contrapuntal technique.²¹

The rate of change in musical language versus spoken language

Unlike traditional tonal composers, Schoenberg, supported by a tight circle of students and sympathetic critics like Paul Bekker, profoundly believed that the musical language had to change. Subscribing to the now academically discredited teleology of musical progress which we described in chapter one, Schoenberg felt that he had been mandated by nothing less than the entire course of Western music to be the chosen one who would bring music to its next evolutionary level. But with Schoenberg's progress model (not to mention his own visions of grandeur) often the butt of ridicule nowadays, it has become legitimate for us to question such a need. We therefore pose the following question: To what extent, and how rapidly, does a language, any language, really need to change over time?

Well, a cursory look at history reveals that in spoken and written communication, language does not have to change very quickly at all. At any rate, what purpose would there be in trying to push such rapid change? After all, the unrelenting pursuit of such a goal in verbal communication would only exacerbate problems with inter-generational communication, which, as parents of

²¹ Eric Blom, et. al., "Arnold Schönberg 1874-1951," *Music & Letters* (October 1951): 308.

teenagers know, can be a problem at the best of times. Some of the world's languages, like Greek or Icelandic, have changed at a glacial pace over millenia, with no demonstrable negative consequences to their citizenry. On the contrary, this very stability makes it possible for present-day readers to comprehend ancient texts, albeit with some difficulty – which of course is an undeniable advantage in terms of maintaining an understanding of one's past history.

Perhaps there is an implicit recognition of this by the guardians of the French language, who attempt to prevent their native tongue from inordinately rapid change due to foreign influence. The deeply engrained cultural attitude toward preserving the French language contrasts with a much looser attitude in the English-speaking world. One practical result for French linguists, in contrast to the English, is that they need not revise the standard French dictionary anywhere near as often. Although there are also guardians of a “pure” English, the keepers of the English grammatical gates are now largely powerless in the face of constant and rapid change within the language. As a result, the English-speaking world must revise their dictionaries much more often than the French revise theirs. But even with the sweeping changes that are now occurring within the English language, there do remain a great many stabilizing features that have stayed remarkably constant over the centuries. To mention only one of countless possible examples, we have had the same basic verb “to be” (analogous to the perfect fifth or the octave, perhaps?) for hundreds of years, and it shows no sign of disappearing. There are enough such instances in the English language to enable us to still read and understand Shakespeare, albeit with difficulty. Shakespeare's works are now over 400 years old.

Like spoken languages, the “language” or “vocabulary” of music has also changed very gradually over the centuries. A good illustration of this is the oft-remarked, virtually imperceptible change from medieval and renaissance modality to later common-practice tonality. The beginning of common-practice tonality is

sometimes dated at around 1650 or 1700 but there is no universal agreement on this, and some reference works have cited a time point one or even two centuries earlier.²² This general lack of precision in dating does not reflect superficial scholarship. Rather, it is testimony to the lack of abruptness in the rate of change, and also to a prevailing vagueness in the accepted definitions of modality and tonality. With the advent of atonality, however, the situation is completely different, and there is almost universal agreement that atonality first appeared in published form at the beginning of the twentieth century – 1910 to be exact. Like the invention of Esperanto, Klingon and other artificial languages, atonality and its principle theoretical derivative, the serially organized twelve-tone technique (which appeared around 1924), are ascribed a relatively exact date of inception. For the twelve-tone composer and theorist George Perle, such dates loom large in the advent of modernist music:

The crucial and monumental development in the art music of our century has been the qualitative change in the foundational premises of our musical language – the change from a highly chromaticized tonality whose principal functions and operations are still based on the seven notes of the diatonic scale, to a scale that comprehends all twelve notes. We can point to the moment of that change with some precision. It occurs most obviously in the music of Scriabin and the Vienna circle, Schoenberg, Webern, and Berg, in 1909-1910, and very soon afterwards, though less obviously, in the music of Bartók and Stravinsky. I think it is safe to say that nothing comparable to this transformation in the language of music has occurred since the beginnings of polyphony.²³

²² See, for example, Hans Heinrich Eggebrecht, ed., *Riemann Music Lexicon. Sachteil*, 12th ed. (Mainz, Paris, London: Schott, 1967), 65. In the entry for “Ausdruck” we read that “functional harmonic tonality” arose in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, together with an aesthetically-aware use of expression (Ausdruck) in music.

²³ George Perle, “New Music and the Intuitive Listener,” in *The Right Notes: Twenty-three Selected Essays by George Perle on Twentieth-Century Music*

Above all, it is the advent of atonality and later procedures like serialism and chance techniques that provide the best evidence of rapid change in the basic language of music after 1900. But, despite what many theorists have maintained, when we honestly survey the broad panoply of common musical styles in the twentieth century (i. e. those “spoken” by a significantly large population base), we are forced to acknowledge that the general “language” of atonality and its many sub-groups have in fact always occupied a peripheral role in twentieth-century music as a whole. Charles Rosen, a well-known pianist and writer who also happens to be an authority on French literature, observes that Mallarmé, for example, “refused to accept” the stable conventions of his native tongue. However, Rosen is fully aware that Mallarmé’s own rejection of convention is not a general principle that can also be applied to the evolution of the French language in the larger historical sense. As Rosen puts it, we “cannot speak of the breakdown of a linguistic system with Mallarmé or the decline of French. The ‘breakdown of tonality’ is similarly a fiction.”²⁴ Christopher Butler confirms Rosen’s general observation:

There are in fact in the modernist period relatively few cases of *linguistic* experimental discovery through the disruption of the grammar of a natural spoken language, so as to bring about stylistic changes. Mallarmé is the great precursor here – in an inflected language, which is easier – to be followed by Gertrude Stein’s naive minimalist repetitions, Stramm’s stripping away of grammatical connectives, Dada poetry, and Joyce’s polysemy.²⁵

Rosen’s frank comments – commendable in their honesty, especially since they come from someone who is decidedly not in

(Stuyvesant, NY: Pendragon Press, 1995), 304.

²⁴ Charles Rosen, *Arnold Schoenberg* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 20. (Originally published in 1975 by the same press).

²⁵ Christopher Butler, “Innovation and the avant-garde, 1900-1920,” in *Cambridge History of Twentieth-Century Music*, ed. Nicholas Cook and Anthony Pople (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 75 (note).

sympathy with what he somewhat derisively calls the “easy music” of the twentieth century²⁶ – have powerful implications for how we view twentieth-century music: As befits a fringe status in a larger cultural context, the new atonal languages are (as Rosen would be first to admit) of limited use in discussing twentieth-century pop, Broadway, folk, church music, and even the bulk of twentieth-century concert music (Strauss, Sibelius, Rachmaninoff, Ravel, Shostakovich, etc.) that is regularly performed. Although predominantly dissonant and atonal film scores are not unknown, the most advanced techniques still tend to provide, for the most part, a colouristic or decorative aspect to the genre of film music. Precisely for this reason, it was Gershwin, no less, who had recommended that the expatriate German composer Ernst Toch write for Hollywood during the 1930s. Toch had been an important figure in the 1920s European avant-garde. He had just fled to the United States and desperately needed gainful employment. As Lawrence Weschler explains,

Owing to the ‘eeriness’ of his modernist idiom, Toch was quickly typecast as a specialist in horror and chase scenes, and he was to have a hand in most of the mysteries coming out of the Paramount studios for the next several years. During the next decade his scores would receive three Academy Award nominations.²⁷

²⁶ Charles Rosen, *Critical Entertainments: Music Old and New* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2000), 310. Rosen takes the interesting view that the musical public is not really interested in composers like Barber, Arnold, or the newer neoromantics: “There is a widespread misunderstanding about the taste of the public for classical music...In fact, the most serious music-lovers are not particularly attracted by easy music even if they hate some of the difficult music that may be thrust upon them.” Rosen further takes aim at the rise of the neoromantics after the 1970s: “The proposal to bring the alienated audience back to contemporary music by patronizing composers who write in a nice, agreeable style is impractical. ‘Listener-friendly’ music – to use the current term – may not inspire noisy protests, but it also arouses no enthusiasm.” Rosen ends with the astonishing, if not downright bizarre claim that “the music of conservative modern composers like Samuel Barber...has no more popular mass appeal than that of the most extravagant modernists.” (311).

²⁷ Ernst Toch, *The Shaping Forces in Music: An Inquiry into the Nature of*

Toch's example is a perfect illustration of how, in Steven Banfield's words, "Hollywood film composers introduced modernism into their work. But they kept it where the public, and indeed the tonal tradition as a whole, has always preferred it: for the depiction of anguish."²⁸ Banfield's comments were specifically directed toward composers of the 1930s, but the general pattern of usage he was describing has continued throughout the twentieth century and on to the present day, much to the frustration of Elliott Carter. In a BBC interview dating from the year 2000, Carter, who was by now one of last surviving representatives of cold war avant-gardism, lamented the stubbornly persistent tonal context of modernism in film music. Carter commented that as far as film scores were concerned, modernism's chief function was, alas, essentially no different at the beginning of the twenty-first century than it had been in the 1930s when Toch had first fled to America:

the thing that has happened is that the young composers will do anything to reach the audience, as you probably know... very large amounts of recordings of music for backgrounds of films, very often this kind of background of music is not at all concerned with the problem of writing pieces that have any length, that have any development. It's concerned with different kinds of styles and different kinds of characters. It actually makes no difference whether the music is, let's say, for a horror film, for which that may be a little 12-note music, or music for a love story, which will be like, I don't know, Gershwin ... and so all this kind of music is all mixed up into one stretch of music which, to my mind, is one of the things I can't stand.²⁹

Harmony, Melody, Counterpoint, Form, (New York: Criterion Music, 1948; reprint [with a new introduction by Lawrence Weschler], New York: Dover, 1977), ix.

²⁸ Stephen Banfield, "Music, text and stage: the tradition of bourgeois tonality to the Second World War," in *The Cambridge History of Twentieth-Century Music*, ed. Cook and Pople (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 108.

²⁹ Elliott Carter, interview with John Tusa, *BBC Radio 3* (July 2, 2000), transcript available at http://www.bbc.co.uk/radio3/johntusainterview/carter_transcript.shtml (accessed May 21, 2012).

As Carter correctly observed, atonal music had indeed penetrated film music, although not in the way he and many of his advanced colleagues preferred.

Although the most radical languages penetrated film music to a certain extent, they have had virtually nothing to do with international folk idioms, however we may decide to classify such idioms in tonal or modal terms. Both Bartók and Janáček were adamant that there was no such thing as atonal folk music, and rejected atonality partly on those grounds. Thus, atonal considerations have little or no relevance to any kind of ethnomusicological discussions. Philip Bohlman, in his *Cambridge History* discussion of the development of twentieth-century immigrant, folk, and regional musics in the United States, explains that he has to fall back on a historical model that “stresses the patterns of continuity more than those of discontinuity. The emphasis, therefore,” Bohlman continues, “falls primarily on the ways in which distinctive musical repertoires and practices serve as means of connecting different groups and communities to American history.”³⁰ In other words, Bohlman appeals directly to tonal and stylistic continuity in nineteenth and twentieth-century folk and immigrant repertoires in order to provide the best framework for explaining the characteristics of the regional musics he is describing. Bohlman is clearly aware that the rate of harmonic change in folk and immigrant repertoires bears no comparison whatsoever to the evolutionary “art music” model, what with the latter’s ever-greater chromaticism hurtling toward an atonal break. For Bohlman’s purposes, there is a very direct tonal continuity between the two centuries, and it makes no sense to conceive of any kind of tonal rupture in immigrant music around 1910, the time of the atonal revolution.

A traditional tonal context is also true of most jazz that has historically found a broad audience. Jazz musician Doug Ramsey

³⁰ Philip Bohlman, “Immigrant, folk, and regional musics in the twentieth century,” in *The Cambridge History of American Music*, ed. David Nicholls (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 278.

explains why he would devote a column in his popular Arts Journal blog to his new-found love of Schumann's lieder: "What does this have to do with jazz? Nothing, unless you accept that there is no such thing as jazz harmony. All harmony in jazz was first used by the great composers from before Bach to Stravinsky. To extrapolate loosely, you might say: no Schumann--no Todd Dameron."³¹ One senses that for Ramsey, jazz's nineteenth-century "classical" roots are a positive thing. Such roots give validity to jazz, directly grounding it in history. It is self-evident that Ramsey and others in his field would take a dim view of the absurd notion advanced by Julian Johnson (whom we will discuss later) that popular idioms are not of the twentieth century simply because they are directly indebted to nineteenth-century harmonic usage.

Up to this point, we have avoided grappling with a very important and obvious question: Is music actually a language? I will not attempt a solution to that question here, but will be content to observe that thinkers have never come to any real agreement on this long-standing philosophical issue. For Adorno, music was not a language but nevertheless bore many similarities to language, and Adorno himself frequently used the linguistic analogy in musical discussions.³² However, some commentators did not go that far. Stephen Davies, for example, has argued that "music is not usefully to be compared to language with respect to its meaning and...it is more misleading than illuminating to highlight such parallels as there are."³³ Such demurs have certainly not stopped countless other writers from using the linguistic analogy, for whatever purpose. Indeed, as Dahlhaus points out in his *Aesthetics*

³¹ Doug Ramsey, "Other Matters: Robert Schumann," in ArtsJournal.com blog, *RiffTides: Doug Ramsey on Jazz and other Matters...* (May 8, 2007), http://www.artsjournal.com/riffTides/2007/05/other_matters_robert_schumann.html (accessed May 21, 2012).

³² Theodor Adorno, "Music, Language, and Composition," trans. Susan Gillespie, in *Essays on Music*, ed. Richard Leppert (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2002), 113.

³³ Stephen Davies, *Musical Expression and Meaning* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1994), 1

of Music, “The concept of a ‘language of tones’ (*Tonsprache*) has become a cliché,” and he notes that the situation has been that way ever since the eighteenth century.³⁴

Deryck Cooke worked from such a basis when writing his 1959 classic, *The Language of Music*.³⁵ And Webern, who in his 1932-33 lectures had famously pronounced tonality “dead,” also emphasized outright that “Music is a language,” albeit a language of musical concepts rather than verbal ones.³⁶ Leibowitz advanced the familiar avant-garde claim that Schoenberg had created a new musical language that trumped all others in providing a foundation for a new kind of music – a music that was truly idiomatic to the twentieth-century. Leibowitz’s conviction was broadcast loud and clear in the title of his 1946 polemic, *Schoenberg and His School: The Contemporary Stage in the Language of Music*.³⁷

And so, let us continue to pursue the linguistic analogy for a moment and consider how the common harmonic and melodic patterns found in the most widely-consumed streams of contemporary music could be said to parallel the recurring patterns found in normal spoken language (i.e a common set of every-day verbs, nouns, prepositions, etc., which enable children to communicate with grandparents, or a blue-collar worker to communicate with a highly-trained scientist). When casually contemplating such a parallel, it will immediately become apparent that the general rate of change in musical language throughout the twentieth century has been exceedingly gradual. That is why most music of the modern period is still absolutely full of harmonic and melodic similarities to nineteenth-century musical vocabulary. To

³⁴ Carl Dahlhaus, *Aesthetics of Music*, trans. William Austin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 24.

³⁵ Deryck Cooke, *The Language of Music* (London: Oxford University Press, 1959).

³⁶ Anton Webern, *The Path to the New Music*, trans. Leo Black (Bryn Mawr, Penn.: Theodore Presser, 1963), 42.

³⁷ René Leibowitz, *Schoenberg and His School: The Contemporary Stage in the Language of Music*, trans. Dika Newlin (New York: Philosophical Library, 1949; reprint, New York: Da Capo Press, 1970).

take Anglican church music as an example, John Rutter's recent harmonic language still has a lot in common with John Stainer's back in 1890, although the styles are very different.

As a broad truism, therefore, we can state that the very slow rate of change in musical language over the course of the twentieth century, as represented by the kinds of music that the public generally consumes, can be seen to offer a direct parallel with the spoken word after all. Country singer Wilf Carter's harmonies in the 1930s are not all that different from those of Elvis Presley in the 1960s or Celine Dion in the year 2000 – or Stephen Foster in the mid-nineteenth century for that matter.

And, the harmonic language of all of these popular musicians has always had much in common with the musical language of the more conservative side of twentieth-century “art music,” in that it has not completely jettisoned familiar cadence types, for example, or abandoned key signatures. Tertian (triadic) harmony still gets more than a look-in, and many chord progressions are recognizably the same, although the instrumentation, rhythmic contexts, note distribution and voice-leading may have undergone subtle changes. Many elements that were once forbidden have become permissible. Like the dead grammatical issue of whether or not one is allowed to have a preposition at the end of a sentence, the strict avoidance of parallel fifths and octaves, and progressions whose roots move at the interval of a tritone, are of no particular concern in most twentieth-century tonal music. The Beatles use them as surely as Vaughan Williams, Dohnányi, Stravinsky, or the steel guitarist in a country and western band.

To be sure, there are many changes in the basic materials of twentieth-century music, but these are generally subtle in nature (again, like the spoken word). For those in the know, Rachmaninoff is patently *not* the same as Tchaikovsky. Korngold is not Strauss. Bax is not Elgar. It is a serious mistake, therefore, to automatically assume that the most subtle changes in language are insignificant. Small changes are all that one really needs in order to

articulate important (and very audible) changes in musical expression and style. The experienced listener can often use the slightest of musical clues in order to determine the provenance of a composition, a point that would be of no surprise to a linguist. Kabalevsky does not advance very much harmonically or melodically from the nineteenth century, but any small-town music teacher on the Canadian Prairies can surely perceive a stylistic difference between Kabalevsky and Tchaikovsky piano pieces in the graded piano books.

Perhaps even more to the point, the common listener, our proverbial “man on the street,” usually untutored musically, can often assign various twentieth-century popular music idioms to a specific decade simply by hearing the music for a few seconds. To the average person, the changes in popular music over the decades are patently obvious, even though the harmonic vocabulary as such may not be all that different. Indeed, the harmonies may be almost identical, but radio stations devoted to 1970s music may have a completely different set of listeners than those devoted to 1990s music. With a flick of the tuning dial, the listening public knows instantly which station is which.

The otherwise highly-exacting scholarly discipline of musical analysis, especially when using ultra-sophisticated tools like set theory, is generally powerless to explain such differences. Set theory cannot tell us why Reinhold Glière (1874-1956) does not sound like Alexander Borodin (1833-1887). Perhaps it is a comment on the very unsuitability or clumsiness of theoretical tools like set theory which give rise to Webern scholar Julian Johnson’s charge (which we will discuss later) that twentieth-century music by popular musicians and conservative art-music composers both use an essentially nineteenth-century harmonic language.

To those doing detailed work within a given language, musical or verbal, small changes are all that are necessary in order to mark a profound difference. Experienced listeners can hear a marked difference between early and late Beethoven, even though

Beethoven, in both periods, makes use of the same common practice harmonies. Or to use a high modernist example, Andrew Mead can distinguish between periods of Babbitt (tri-chord period, etc).³⁸ To Mead, if not the untutored listener, Babbitt's music has audibly (visibly?) changed. Mead notices these exceptionally slight differences because of his own close proximity to the music. In the same way, linguists can often assign a given person to a certain region or clan on the basis of a few barely perceptible differences in word usage and accent. They notice these details because of their deep knowledge of unbelievably subtle linguistic inflections. Slightly different vowel shapes in a few well-chosen words may be enough to give away the provenance of the person, but with that revelation could come further assumptions about social class and perhaps even religious and philosophical outlooks. In many cases, unfortunately, slightly different accents are used to justify blatant discrimination.³⁹

Theorists can still find profit in analyzing less harmonically adventuresome twentieth-century music, even though such music may make extensive use of the "old" common practice tonality and is therefore not of a particularly advanced nature in relation to the highly varied vocabulary used by the avant-garde. All we need are the requisite tools. Not all tools apply to all jobs. Arved Ashby aptly likens Babbitt's highly specialized, quasi-scientific analytical prose to a specific type of forceps which is attuned to one task, and one task only.⁴⁰ For that one task the forceps does its job surpassingly well, but the unavoidable corollary is that the tool is unusable for anything else. When Babbitt dismissed all earlier

³⁸ See Andrew Mead, *An Introduction to the Music of Milton Babbitt* (Princeton, N. J.: Princeton University Press, 1994).

³⁹ See, for instance, Rosina Lippi-Green's discussion of accent-based discrimination in *English with an Accent: Language, Ideology, and Discrimination in the United States* (London and New York: Routledge, 1997).

⁴⁰ Arved Ashby, "Intention and Meaning in Modernist Music," in *The Pleasure of Modernist Music: Listening, Meaning, Intention, Ideology* (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2004), 37.

twentieth-century analytical techniques as “methodologically unsophisticated” – Babbitt cited historical surveys by Marion Bauer and Hans Mersemann – he was perhaps merely observing that their tools did not find the specific things that he was looking for.⁴¹ But then, Babbitt’s favoured analytic tools may have missed some elements of music that Bauer and Mersemann thought were important. I once learned in a university class on atonal theory that Alan Forte’s 037 set could not tell me if the chord was major or minor although my ear instantly informed me that there was a world of difference. In the same way, I also realized that Forte’s set theory could not distinguish between a half-diminished 7th chord and a common dominant 7th chord because both were composed of the same basic set of intervals. The fact that set theory, in Forte’s strict formulation, was also unable to comment on inversions also went without saying. Any intermediate music student with a little ear-training can do better than that. Babbitt was also, perhaps inadvertently, revealing that certain new analytical methods were unable to comment usefully on some musical elements that were perhaps of greater importance to a different kind of composer. There are many ways of intelligently analyzing and talking about music. Analysts from earlier generations may have been more sophisticated in their own way than Babbitt cared to admit.

Common language, innovation, and intellectual status

Much ink has been spilled in recent decades on the need to create a “common language” in advanced twentieth-century music. In 1955, Stockhausen called it an “urgent necessity,”⁴² and it went on to constitute the bottom-line motivation for Boulez’s work at

⁴¹ Milton Babbitt, Introduction to *Twentieth Century Music: How it Developed. How to Listen to it*, by Marion Bauer (New York: Putnam, 1933. Reprint, New York: Da Capo Press, 1978), no pagination in Babbitt’s Introduction.

⁴² In the same article, Stockhausen also expressed the hope that Webern’s works would provide the desired common language, see Karlheinz Stockhausen, “Zum 15. September, 1955,” in *Kommentare zur Neuen Musik I* (Cologne: Verlag M. DuMont Schauberg, 1960), 9.

IRCAM (Institut de Recherche et Coordination Acoustique/Musique) after the mid 1970s. Among Boulez's many pronouncements from IRCAM, we can read of what he called his "grand design" for the next phase of musical evolution:

The creator's intuition alone is powerless to provide a comprehensive translation of musical invention. It is thus necessary for him to collaborate with the scientific research worker in order to envision the distant future...In this way, we hope to forge a kind of common language that scarcely exists at present.⁴³

And, Boulez added, "The effort will either be collective or it will not be at all. No individual, however gifted, could produce a solution to all the problems posed by the present evolution of musical expression."⁴⁴

However, Boulez was unwilling to admit that one does not, and indeed cannot, completely create a new common language merely by issuing some sort of fiat from on high – or, in Boulez's case, from an underground concrete bunker at the Pompidou Centre in Paris. Certainly, there have been few if any historical precedents for such a bold gambit, either musically or linguistically. Rather, humans throughout history have always participated in an already-existing language, and that language grows and changes at its own rate, with normal everyday use in a broad range of contexts. This participation naturally signifies a certain amount of free will on the part of the participants. To the extent that Boulez realized that a common language had to be a product of a collective effort, he was on the right track. The fatal weakness in his methodology was that he was not allowing enough people to contribute in such a way that his grand enterprise would

⁴³ Quoted in Georgina Born, *IRCAM, Boulez, and the Institutionalization of the Musical Avant-Garde* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1995), 1. These comments were drawn from IRCAM's publicity materials of 1976, 1977, and 1981.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

truly become collective. Furthermore, even those few who did participate were rigorously screened: It went without saying that composers representing a tonal and neoromantic ethos were conspicuously absent: There were no Samuel Barbers or Malcolm Arnolds at IRCAM.

It is true that a political authority can, and does occasionally, decree language changes that may be long lasting. When I briefly studied Russian as a student, I learned that Stalin had eliminated six letters from the Russian alphabet. His reforms were to prove permanent, except for the continued use of the old “Church Slavonic” texts in liturgical settings. However, it is important to point out that Stalin’s changes did not materially affect existing vocabulary, pronunciation or meaning of words. On the other hand, for more dramatic changes there is no guarantee that the populace will follow suit. The Soviet regime found this out the hard way when they attempted to rename St. Petersburg after the 1917 revolution, first as Petrograd and then (after 1924) as Leningrad. Just as the world kept on using major triads, the citizenry of that great city on the Baltic Sea persisted in using the old name of St. Petersburg. When the communist regime fell after seventy years, the new authorities finally capitulated to common usage and changed the name back to St. Petersburg. With our 20-20 hindsight, the old regime could have saved themselves a lot of effort and expense simply by admitting the obvious and leaving well enough alone.

Billy Layton (writing in a 1965 issue of the resolutely avant-garde journal *Perspectives of New Music*) responded to the need, keenly felt among advanced theorists and composers in his generation, to forge a new common musical language. Noting that “the best music of the period was undoubtedly written by Pierre Boulez,” Layton made it clear that he had deep respect for Boulez’s musical aesthetic.⁴⁵ Layton continued:

In this connection we may return once again to the question of the

⁴⁵ Billy Jim Layton, “The New Liberalism,” *Perspectives of New Music* 3 (Spring – Summer 1965): 138.

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musical “language,” one of the crucial points at issue around the music of the recent radicals. It has already been stated that the overwhelming force in the world today is the drive toward integration-however far in the future this goal may be reached. It is obvious that a prerequisite for a unified musical culture is a common language.⁴⁶

But despite Layton’s general sympathy for Boulez and the avant-garde, he harboured deep reservations as to the efficacy of Boulez’s longed-for common language, a language that was to be created from scratch by the most advanced composers and theorists. For Layton, such a “tabula rasa” option was perhaps too artificial to be workable or even desirable.

There are two ways in which such a language can come about. The first is by the invention of a new style, a kind of musical Esperanto, without ties to the past (insofar as this is humanly possible). This is, in fact, what has actually been attempted by the extremist composers of the ‘50’s. They have very nearly arrived at an objective, abstract style which not only is cleansed of national characteristics, but in which one can hardly discern the personality of the individual creator. I am well aware that many critics, far from finding this an advantage, consider it to be a crippling defect, but personally I see no reason to withhold the most sincere respect for an ideal of universality which would seem to provide an answer to the world’s need. But there are grave doubts that this is, indeed, the true answer. There is no evidence to prove that the objectivity which is so desirable in science is also desirable in art.⁴⁷

“The second way,” Layton continued, “that a universal language may come about, of course, is for an already existing ‘natural’ language to be taken up and adapted to the needs of people everywhere.” Boulez, of course, elected to go with a process of language construction that resembled Layton’s first

⁴⁶ Ibid., 142.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

option. But when one examines the issue of twentieth-century musical language and observes the various attempts at forcing (and enforcing) changes such as those advocated by Boulez at IRCAM, the practical result is all-too-predictable: Similar to the Soviet example, where Leningrad was unable to displace St. Petersburg, we have a widespread situation where the general musical public simply refuses to follow the “decrees” of Boulez and other advanced musicians. In as much as Boulez refused to take into account the already-existing collective usage (which was Layton’s second option), the true makers of collective usage refused to take him seriously as well. As far as the general musical public was concerned, they already had their own common and flourishing twentieth-century musical language, thank you very much. It served their expressive needs and was easily to be found in the styles of music that the population as a whole consumed. That is to say, the old common-practice harmonies resounded in Boulez’s ears every time he walked out the door of the Pompidou Centre and sat down in any given café and heard whatever canned music or live act was on offer that day.

For the recent *Cambridge History* series, Stephen Banfield has written a landmark analysis of early twentieth-century music which is closely related to Layton’s second option. In what can only be described as a triumph of common sense in the not-always-so-practical world of musicology, Banfield “discovers” an unpalatable fact of twentieth-century musical life – unpalatable, at least, for those devoted to maintaining the academic status of the “march toward atonality.” He describes how the existing musical language in the decades after 1910 simply went on its merry way, oblivious to what the most radical composers assumed were the front lines of musical progress. The existing language, said Banfield, was not only very much alive, but was also utterly tonal. In other words, it was still heavily dependent on the familiar chord progressions, melodic archetypes and other features that had been well-established for centuries:

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A comprehensive code of expression, structure, and meaning – in short, a system – continued to suit most of music’s artistic, social, and commercial obligations and had no intention of relinquishing its hold on Western culture. Tonality is the best single word for that system, with its keys and cadences, expressive and unifying calibration of major and minor scales, directional harmony, exquisite manners of voice-leading and quadratic frameworks – that is, working in multiples of two and four – of metre, phrase, and period. Moreover, individual gestures, such as the trumpet signal, horn call, whistle, or drum beat, that had for even longer accompanied or signalled action, were early co-opted by the tonal system, which thereby became intrinsically pantomimic.⁴⁸

Banfield was describing the broadest of social contexts, where tonality was firmly established as the “true” or “common” musical language of the present. Any artificial attempts at expanding the vocabulary by superimposing an inordinate number of innovations in such a context were bound to have limited success at best. Even less successful were the attempts (such as Schoenberg’s atonal system) that went well beyond mere supplementation and attempted to *completely* displace the existing harmonic vocabulary – a vocabulary that was still so relevant to contemporary expressive needs. What to do? How could proponents of a radical twentieth-century avant-garde ignore such an obvious reality? How could they continue to shore up their faulty teleology? One technique that worked rather well in academic circles was to insist that “older” aspects of tonal usage were not idiomatically twentieth century traits. Instead, they were seen as nineteenth-century, or “romantic” traits. In this way the twelve-tone ideology of Boulez, Babbitt and Wuorinen was assured an easy victory. Taruskin quite simply dismissed such a tactic as “vulgar Darwinism:” Using the journalistic platform of the *New York Times*, Taruskin continued: “Like its bloodier cousin, vulgar Marxism, it offered a marvelous rationale for

⁴⁸ Banfield, “Music, text and stage: the tradition of bourgeois tonality to the Second World War,” 91.

intolerance...toward Neanderthals, social democrats, tonalists and other underevolved species whose continued existence was only foiling Nature's plan."⁴⁹

For the classical music world, one of the major consequences of such an application of "vulgar Darwinism" was that "underevolved" composers like Rachmaninoff and Strauss essentially became pigeon-holed as *de facto* "nineteenth-century" figures – this, despite the fact that they maintained a leading position on the international concert scene right up until their deaths in 1943 and 1949 respectively. Schoenberg, who had virtually no public presence, somehow took his place as the leader of a highly abstract and artificially constructed "Twentieth Century." His leadership in such an imaginary realm was only possible because of a bizarre scenario whereby the most-performed twentieth-century composers were conceptually banished to the nineteenth. To repeat, the Twentieth Century now became ideologically rather than chronologically determined.

If nothing else, Schoenberg's posthumous career as the grand academic centrepiece of a highly utopian construction of music history demonstrated that a crippling lack of public success did not have to be an impediment if an individual was sufficiently single-minded and motivated. Christopher Butler has recently written a very important article, which (like Banfield's essay cited above) forms another chapter in the same *Cambridge History of Twentieth-Century Music*. Banfield's article had very subtly and indirectly undermined the universal claims put forth by the atonal revolution. Butler, however, goes head to head with the old academic orthodoxy and directly challenges the avant-garde's exclusive claims to how the basic concept of early twentieth-century innovation is defined. Butler describes how the music-language analogy had often been used by theorists and historians in such a way as to bolster the legitimacy and even necessity of the most radical developments, effectively stacking the historical

⁴⁹ Richard Taruskin, "Calling all Pundits: No More Predictions," *New York Times* (Nov. 2, 1997): AR37.

argument in favor of Schoenberg:

The linguistic model facilitates a technical approach to modernist innovation and helps to tell an apparently ‘progressive’ story of the loosening of the restrictive bonds of tonality, Debussy, Schoenberg, Bartók, and others enrich it with new strategies, and Schoenberg finally puts the whole system into question. The old language is conquered, and the death of tonality announced.⁵⁰

As can be expected, Butler’s challenge to the musicological status quo has not gone without comment in long-established “progressive” circles. In a manner reminiscent of how the avant-garde had once treated Hindemith, Rochberg, Thomson and Lerdahl, Butler’s article was singled out for unusually harsh rebuke in Robert Morgan’s otherwise relatively positive review essay of the entire *Cambridge* volume. Morgan had long been loyal to the traditional avant-garde definition of innovation, and we have already referred several times to his 1991 textbook *Twentieth Century Music*. There, he had described how early twentieth-century radical innovations had provided *the* vital foundation for how the following decades of the twentieth century were to be viewed by historians. But as Morgan pointed out in his 2005 review of the *Cambridge History of Twentieth-Century Music*,

the sole chapter dealing with this critical moment, Christopher Butler’s ‘Innovation and the Avant-garde, 1900–1920’, often seems – despite the title – intent upon maligning the more experimental tendencies or avoiding them entirely. For example, Butler dismisses Schoenberg’s ‘ludicrously self-conscious manner’, before turning with relief to Sibelius; and he ignores Satie except for one brief mention in connection with the use of popular elements. Nor does he say anything much of a specific nature about the deep transformations in musical language that took place in these critical

⁵⁰ Christopher Butler, “Innovation and the avant-garde, 1900–20,” in *The Cambridge History of Twentieth-Century Music*, ed. Cook and Pople (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 75.

years, or their impact on both compositional practice and music's position in the larger social order. If Butler's aim is, in his words, 'to understand the nature of artistic innovation', he has a very odd way of going about it.⁵¹

The frustration with Butler's deliberate neglect of what Morgan calls the "deep transformations in musical language" from the critical early years of the century also reflects the deeper fact that Butler's article signifies a major shift in musicology – a trend that is gaining momentum with every passing decade. This trend cannot be emphasized too strongly here: Now, in a prestigious and resolutely academic publication like the new *Cambridge Music History* series, it is increasingly common to hear an alternative view on the controversial topic of "innovation" from a scholar who is not in the high modernist tradition. The volume's editors, Cook and Pople, most certainly knew what to expect when they allowed Butler to contribute that pivotal chapter. He was already a known quantity in the scholarly world. They could just as easily have asked Joseph Auner (a former doctoral student of Morgan) to write about innovation, but they gave Auner a different topic to cover in the same *Cambridge History* volume, one that was specifically atonal in context (the Second Viennese School).

Cook and Pople, then, put together a history of twentieth-century music in which the Vienna School was merely one of a smorgasbord of historical offerings, rather than the centerpiece of twentieth-century music as a whole. As far as the subject of innovation was concerned, what Cook and Pople evidently did *not* want was the same old story of all-conquering atonality steamrolling its way to triumph. Morgan was an important older representative of that tradition. Cook and Pople clearly represented a reaction to the long-time trend where the atonal revolution had dominated the discussion of innovation, as generations of "techno-

⁵¹ Robert Morgan, review of *The Cambridge History of Twentieth-Century Music*, ed. Nicholas Cook and Anthony Pople, *Music and Letters* 86 (2005): 494.

essentialist” university textbooks testified (chief among them Morgan’s own widely-used *Twentieth-Century Music* from 1991). And so, it came to pass that Butler (and not Auner) was given the vital assignment of analyzing early twentieth-century innovation. Butler took that opportunity to deconstruct the traditional view of innovation, and in doing so made the valuable point that the avant-garde had opportunistically used the linguistic analogy in such a way that would further its own agenda.

Inspired by Butler, we too can push the music-language analogy beyond the limited parameters set by twentieth-century radicals. We too can use the analogy in a way that the avant-garde did not intend. In doing so, we first have to accept what the term “common language” means in the sense of the spoken word. The basic concept I wish to spell out here is relatively uncontroversial and can be expressed as follows: A common spoken language is to be identified simply by taking note of the number of people who speak a given tongue in a given geographical area. This idea is simple enough to grasp, even for non-experts. To take a practical application, if a newspaper wanted to reach a reasonably large circulation in a given city or other geo-political region, it would have to publish in a language that a broad cross-section of readers with different professional and educational backgrounds could understand. The newspaper would therefore choose its mode of communication accordingly, and specialist jargon from various disciplines would have to be kept to a minimum or the paper would not be financially viable. In order to survive, it would require a readership that was reasonably broad. And needless to say, it could not simply invent its own Esperanto-like language or it would be doomed from the outset. Few would buy it, no matter how intellectually sophisticated the product.

So too in music. In order to determine a common language of music – and bearing in mind that language and style are two different things, as Pople reminds us⁵² – one would have to

⁵² Anthony Pople makes this very important point in his “Styles and languages around the turn of the century,” in *The Cambridge History of Nineteenth-*

examine and consider the musical styles consumed by an appropriately wide cross-section of people, irrespective of profession or status. There would have to be an appropriately broad range of cultural settings. We would also have to completely disregard the kind of value judgements that are implied by the familiar musical categories designated as “low entertainment” and “high art,” or as Germans scholars often formulate it, *Trivialmusik* (or *Unterhaltungsmusik*) and *Ernstmusik*.⁵³ In other words, our social sampling strategy would have to be broad enough to, at the very least, justify the adjective “common.” In scouring the last one

Century Music, ed. Jim Samson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 601. He explains further: “The title of this chapter implies not only a concern with musical style and musical language, but also that a distinction may be drawn between the two. In the paragraphs that follow I shall take this distinction to be roughly equivalent to the point at which the style of a musical passage, work or repertory can be said to be more than simply a matter of how a composer’s musical mannerisms, habits or inclinations are identifiable as an emergent property of the music he or she produces. At this point, ‘style’ – as an attribute of a passage, piece or repertory – becomes something that can be manipulated along with the musical elements that express that style. Such manipulation allows musical language to be deployed as a means to a variety of ends: to express emotion, for example, or to articulate a drama, or to engage in cultural politics.”

People’s view directly challenges writers who assume that to use a musical language resembling the late nineteenth century is to automatically imitate the *style* of the period as well. For an extreme example of this, see Julian Johnson’s comments on pop music in this chapter. Another example is Joseph Machlis, who states that because twentieth-century neoromantics use nineteenth-century musical language, they thereby run the risk of losing their originality. See *The Enjoyment of Music*, 5th ed. (New York: Norton, 1984), 575.

⁵³ In the 1960s, Carl Dahlhaus edited a pioneering study of *Trivialmusik* that attempted to show why nineteenth-century salon music was bad, or as he put it, “trivial.” See *Studien zur Trivialmusik des 19. Jahrhunderts* (Regensburg: Gustav Bosse Verlag, 1967). As we have already pointed in chapter two, the “trivial” music denigrated by Dahlhaus and his colleagues turned out to be vitally important to the late twentieth-century Romantic Revival, a movement which was rapidly growing in strength among connoisseurs during precisely the same years that Dahlhaus was seeking to discredit the salon repertoire. Over the last fifty years, the Romantic Revival has brought to light vast quantities of once-forgotten “trivial” music, much like the Early Music revival has resurrected a great deal of light music from before 1800.

hundred years for such a phenomenon, one would very quickly find that there has indeed been something akin to a common musical language used all across Europe and North America, as Stephen Banfield beautifully demonstrates in his essay on popular music. By definition, this language has always found its clearest form in the styles of music (whatever they may be) that have been listened to and consumed by significantly large numbers of people.

Tracing the history of popular styles from the late nineteenth century to the Second World War, Banfield is able to draw a very useful conclusion: Within the broader musical culture there was very little change in the musical language – despite the inevitable changes in musical style over the decades.

1910 or 1924? It hardly matters, for despite these revolutions, tonal practice – certainly tonal meaning in its defining relationship to text and stage – continued; indeed it was growing rapidly throughout the first third of the twentieth century...what changed was its status. It travelled from the mastery of Wagner's music dramas to the servitude of Hollywood; from *The Ring* to *King Kong*.⁵⁴

Here Banfield makes his most crucial point: It is really the change in the academic *status* of common-practice tonality that is the crux of the controversies surrounding what actually happened to musical language during the twentieth century. It is decidedly not the breakdown or death of tonality itself, as so many of us were taught in our impressionable undergrad years. The fact that such a drastic change in status occurred therefore takes pride of place over any radical changes in progressive musical grammar itself. The change in the status of the musical language itself has ultimately had the biggest impact on how we have rated and evaluated the importance of a broad panoply of music in the twentieth century.

Throughout much of the twentieth century, music theorists

⁵⁴ Banfield, "Music, text and stage: the tradition of bourgeois tonality to the Second World War," 120.

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were fond of pointing to a time, centuries ago, when there *had* existed a common musical language. However, this language was said to have gone into (terminal) decline by the beginning of the twentieth century, which of course is one of the prime clichés of music history as it had been taught for generations. As befits a cliché, it was more or less automatically trotted out by numberless theory and history professors in undergraduate classrooms year after year, decade after decade. Indeed, music students are still often taught this concept in first-year university theory classes. Even if professors nowadays may tend to view the putative decline of tonality as a “fiction” (as Rosen was honest enough to admit earlier), they probably still render at least some sort of lip service to the “dead tonality” notion. The applicable introductory harmony textbooks, as well as more advanced textbooks dealing with atonal theory, have long referred to the period from roughly 1700 to 1900 as some kind of a “common practice” era. Walter Piston, in his definition of tonality, clearly pointed out the difference between what could be considered common practice and what could not.

Tonality is the organized relationship of tones in music. This relationship, as far as the common practice of composers in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries is concerned, implies a central tone with all other tones supporting it or tending toward it, in one way or another. Other organized relationships exist, as for example the twelve-tone system of Arnold Schoenberg, but they cannot be said to have been at any time in common practice.⁵⁵

Late twentieth-century commentators constantly reminded us that before the advent of atonality, musical language had evolved ever so gradually. Any changes that did occur only manifested themselves over the course of decades or even centuries. At the same time, it was admitted that the “old” harmonic language was still in use throughout the twentieth century, if only in a “limited” sense. Wuorinen, in his 1979

⁵⁵ Walter Piston, *Harmony*, 5th ed. (London: Victor Gollancz, 1959), 29.

textbook *Simple Composition*, famously began with the following statement:

Most of the Western music we know from the past is representative of the tonal system...But while the tonal system, in an atrophied or vestigial form, is still used today in popular and commercial music, and even occasionally in the works of backward-looking serious composers, it is no longer employed by serious composers of the mainstream.⁵⁶

In its time, Wuorinen's view – that the twelve-tone system now reigned supreme – was by no means isolated. On the contrary, it assumed the status of orthodoxy, and many fell into line. As Nicola Le Fanu confidently stated in her 1982 *Music Analysis* review of Wuorinen's book, "Like most of my colleagues, I share Mr. Wuorinen's view that this lies at the centre of any compositional mainstream."⁵⁷ Wuorinen himself had unlimited confidence in what he called "the organizing powers of the twelve-tone system." As he somewhat grandiosely attempted to demonstrate by means of his own composition, *Grand Bamboula* (which was a twelve-tone abstraction on Gottschalk's nineteenth-century salon piece of the same name), the twelve-tone system had

become...a musical system of such encompassing size that it seems to merge into a yet larger organism that embraces Western tonal music too. In the *Bamboula*, the set can never be heard in the foreground; rather it is shape-defining, harmony-determining, and gesture-unleashing...different though their classic expositions may be, the tonal and twelve-tone systems are non-dichotomous and complementary – overlapping, moreover, and converging in the kind of musical continuity that may be said to underlie all Western music. *Credo in unam musicam*.⁵⁸

⁵⁶ Charles Wuorinen, *Simple Composition* (New York: Peters, 1979), 3.

⁵⁷ Nicola Le Fanu, review of *Simple Composition*, by Charles Wuorinen, in *Music Analysis* 1 (March 1982): 108.

⁵⁸ Wuorinen, quoted in Gilbert Chase, *America's Music, from the Pilgrims to the Present*, revised 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1987), 589.

Wuorinen apparently hoped to bring a measure of unity to a fragmented musical world which had long since split into hostile tonal and atonal camps, although any projected unity was clearly to be on his own twelve-tone terms. In 1987 the great American historian Gilbert Chase was still expressing the hope that “Wuorinen’s ‘unifying credo’ would ultimately prevail as a future ‘shape of time’ in musical composition.” But we do also detect a little skepticism in Chase’s comments when he subsequently admits that “during the presumed transitional period many listeners will probably continue to experience difficulty in coming to terms with the plethora of accelerating innovations and technical advances as we approach the twenty-first century.”⁵⁹ Other writers, however, professed complete optimism. For Charles Rosen, the victory of the twelve-tone system was not merely assured at some point in the future, but had already arrived in the late twentieth-century. “What the enemies of modernism cannot accept,” wrote Rosen in 1998, “is the way the avant-garde have taken possession of the mainstream of the great Western tradition.”⁶⁰

Rosen’s claims of outright victory on behalf of the academic avant-garde provide us with the context we need for the next stage of our discussion. Stefan Kostka and Dorothy Payne, in their 1984 university textbook *Tonal Harmony, with an Introduction to Twentieth-Century Music*, describe a truly a paradoxical situation, whereby a still ever-present tonal language is no longer able to musically define its own era – which is now owned or “possessed” by the defining presence of the victorious twelve-tone system as promulgated by formidably brilliant and articulate advocates like Wuorinen and Rosen. Kostka and Payne write:

And tonal harmony is not really limited to the period 1650-1900. It

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Charles Rosen, “Who’s Afraid of the Avant-Garde?” *The New York Review of Books* (May 14, 1998): <http://www.nybooks.com/articles/archives/1998/may/14/whos-afraid-of-the-avant-garde/?pagination=false> (accessed May 23, 2012).

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began evolving long before 1650, and it is still around today. Turn on your radio, go to a night club, listen to the canned music in the supermarket – it’s almost all tonal harmony. Then why do we put the demise of tonal harmony at 1900? Because from about that time, most composers of “serious,” or “legitimate,” or “concert” music have been more interested in nontonal harmony than in tonal harmony. This does not mean that tonal harmony ceased to exist in the real world or in music of artistic merit.⁶¹

Kostka and Payne then point out that the eighteenth-century music of Bach and late twentieth-century popular music also share many similar harmonic elements:

Much of today’s popular music is based on tonal harmony, just as Bach’s music was, which means that both types have a good deal in common. First, both make use of a *tonal center*, a key pitch class that provides a center of gravity. Second, both types of music make use almost exclusively of major and minor scales. Third, both use chords that are tertian in structure....Fourth, and very important, is that the chords built on the various scale degrees relate to each other and to the tonal center in fairly complex ways.⁶²

Kostka and Payne thus remind us that even high art in the eighteenth century and low art from the twentieth century overlap in their use of language, and therefore “have a good deal in common.” Since this is indeed true, we can also expect that high and low art within the period of the eighteenth century itself also shared a common language, which of course they did. The general situation we have just described illustrates what music theorists have long called “common practice.” Such common practice not only stretched across centuries but bridged class differences within centuries as well. As with our earlier example of the common language used by any daily newspaper, musical language in the

⁶¹ Stefan Kostka and Dorothy Payne, *Tonal Harmony, with an Introduction to Twentieth-Century Music* (New York: Knopf, 1984),

⁶² *Ibid.*,

eighteenth century effortlessly straddled class boundaries. Mozart's compositional output is a good example: All of his music was cut from basically the same harmonic cloth, whether the intended audience consisted of connoisseurs or the more general public. As Eva Badura-Skoda has noted, Haydn and Mozart saw no problem with such dual-purpose musical language. Indeed, they borrowed regularly and willingly from the common music theatre idioms of the day.⁶³

Robert Morgan has described the idea of common practice tonality and its connection to spoken language in the following way:

In reading recent literature on the history and aesthetics of Western music, one consistently encounters references to the "language" of this music, especially with regard to the common-practice period of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century tonality. Although the word "language" is used metaphorically in such cases, the metaphor seems remarkably apt (and convenient), and this no doubt accounts for its persistence.⁶⁴

But crucially, Morgan goes on to insist that a fundamental change occurred in the years just following the end of the common practice era, when the old language "broke down." He therefore finds the notion of any kind of a common practice twentieth-century musical language to be a major stumbling block:

When applied to twentieth-century music, however, the sense of the word – and thus the nature of the metaphor – requires significant adjustment. For here, unlike in earlier Western music, one is unable to find that most characteristic feature of all natural languages: the universal acceptance of an enduring set of formal

⁶³ See Eva Badura-Skoda, "The Influence of the Viennese Popular Comedy on Haydn and Mozart," *Proceedings of the Royal Musical Association* 100 (1973-1974): 185-199.

⁶⁴ Robert Morgan, "Secret Languages: The Roots of Musical Modernism," *Critical Inquiry* 10 (March 1984): 443.

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conventions evident throughout a given linguistic domain.⁶⁵

Morgan thus reaches the conventional scholarly conclusion that the musical language of European music reached a state of fragmentation. In certain musical circles this was undoubtedly true, as we saw in Ornstein's description of the early twentieth-century avant-garde scene at the beginning of this chapter. Morgan further makes the point that as far as radical new music is concerned, attempts by scholars at

elevating its technical and systematic foundation to the status of a uniquely "proper" language for the age, appear seriously misguided and in flagrant opposition to the actual course of twentieth-century musical developments. Musical modernism is marked above all by its "linguistic plurality" and the failure of any one language to assume a dominant position.⁶⁶

Here, however, Morgan makes clear that he is restricting his frame for "linguistic plurality" mainly to the world of radical modernism, in which very few musicians and music lovers actually took part. He takes no account of the infinitely wider general musical world described by Banfield earlier. For Morgan, unlike for many younger scholars like Gilliam and Albright, the term "modernism" still refers above all to a very narrow and self-consciously avant-garde segment of twentieth-century music. Clearly, Morgan is unwilling to admit that the old common practice maintained a legitimate existence along side all of the esoteric languages that sprang up after about 1910. Moreover, even the most radical inventors of new languages had not actually forgotten the traditional means of musical expression. They too were still completely fluent in the old language – not least Schoenberg himself, a renowned theorist, writer, and teacher of traditional tonal techniques.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

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Although the idea of a twentieth-century common practice is clearly unthinkable for Morgan in the music history classroom, one cannot help but observe a delicious irony, and there is no better place for this irony to be played out than in Morgan's own back yard – by which we mean the music theory classrooms of the university. In the “Intro to Music Theory” class, located just down the hall from Morgan's history class, the harmony textbook writers Kostka and Payne are far more dependent on the common practice notion, wittingly or unwittingly. Morgan may have no use for it, but they certainly do. Because the basic functions of common practice tonality are so fundamental to an introductory harmony course, Kostka and Payne expend much time and effort in illustrating how functional harmony works. Notably, they appeal to nothing less than the relatively untutored musical instincts and backgrounds that would be encountered in first year university music students. Kostka and Payne therefore set the stage for their explanation by beginning with the following instruction:

Because each chord tends to have more or less standard roles, or functions, within a key, this characteristic is sometimes referred to as *functional* harmony...To get an idea of what it's all about, play the chord of Example 3 on the piano.⁶⁷

At this point in their textbook, Kostka and Payne print their Example 3, which is a dominant 7th chord consisting of the pitches F, C, E flat, F, A, (but with no contextual chord following it). The authors then continue:

Play it several times. Roll (arpeggiate) it up and down. The “function” of this chord is clear, isn't it? Somehow, you know a lot about this chord without having to read a book about it. Play it again, and listen to where the chord “wants” to go. Then play Example 4, which will seem to follow Example 3 perfectly. This is an example of what is meant by the relationships between chords in

⁶⁷ Kostka and Payne, ix.

tonal harmony and why we sometimes use the term *functional harmony*.” (Kostka and Payne’s second example is the chord of B flat major: B flat, D, F, B flat).⁶⁸

All of which begs the question: If there was no common practice in 1984 when this textbook was published, how could relatively untutored students be expected, *en masse*, to instinctively know how a given chord functioned? How could they so readily give an enlightened response to the (intentionally leading) questions posed by the textbook writers? How could the students (majoring in music at a university!) be privy to knowledge about a “common language that scarcely exists at present,” as Boulez had insisted? Even more importantly, why would theory textbook writers like Kostka and Payne even assume in the first place that there was anything like a correct response to their questions?

The fact was, in order to conceive of such an illustration of how common chords functioned in an everyday context, Kostka and Payne were forced to draw on a still-existing musical language that had evolved very slowly over many centuries and was evidently in everyday use in 1984. All of those presumably “green” students knew the basic semantic contours of this common language instinctively, whether they realized it or not, and Kostka and Payne knew it. Of course, this meant nothing less than that tonality’s historic features were still recognizably intact, or the above-cited textbook illustration could not have worked. The tonal system was still very much present. But, as Banfield observed earlier, its status had plummeted: It was no longer used by composers of “legitimate” music, as Kostka and Payne also stated.

Sergei’s shadow: Slow may be okay after all

The slow rate of change in the language of popular music is

⁶⁸ Ibid.

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really nothing less than what one would expect from any spoken language. Reverting back to our original linguistic analogy once again, let us contemplate, for a moment, the ever-so-slight difference between the standard English of 1870 and 1940, which is roughly the period covered by Banfield's essay. New words, concepts, inventions and names will have been added over the course of those decades. For example, in books, journals and magazines we will find the first mentions of the gramophone, the light bulb, telephone, the Model T car, the "New Deal" and so forth. There will also be the inevitable local idioms that will go in and out of fashion, and perhaps even a few tiny new grammatical habits or tendencies. Nothing more than that. The rate of change in spoken and written English from 1870 to 1940 is therefore comparable to the ongoing stability in the common-practice language of popular music during the same time period, not to mention the life work of composers like Strauss and Rachmainoff. But under no circumstances would literary critics use the English language's slow evolution as a basis for concluding that novelists in 1940 were merely recapitulating and regurgitating content from nineteenth-century novels via some sort of out-dated "paleo-English." One cannot imagine any critic seriously trying to maintain that John Steinbeck was using a debased form of English that had been actually been current back in the time of Charles Dickens.

But many music theorists have done just that when they have gone on to conclude that twentieth-century popular music language is, for all intents and purposes, merely a recapitulation of late nineteenth-century (romantic) musical language. Adorno, one of the most famous and influential advocates of such a "recapitulation" theory, claimed that

The dramatic historic decline in the quality of lighter genres stood in diametric opposition to the peculiar consistency of the kind of musical language they used. Such genres merely availed themselves of degraded late-romantic goods, and Gershwin was

but a skillful continuation of Tchaikovsky and Rachmaninoff in the world of musical amusement. As for the evolution of musical materials that has occurred in higher music over the last fifty years or more, the lighter musical idioms have hardly participated.⁶⁹

Julian Johnson, a contemporary composer and Webern scholar, was still echoing Adorno's basic point at the beginning of the twenty-first century, now simply updating Adorno's pronouncement to include more recent popular styles as well. In Johnson's 2002 defence of Adorno's aesthetic (which Johnson, perhaps a little too conveniently, also presented as a defence of classical music in general), he railed against

music that purports to be of the modern world and...[deals] with modern sensibility and thought while nevertheless being profoundly indebted not only to an archaic musical language but often to a simplified form of it. In various ways, much of the musical culture that surrounds us derives its basic musical procedures from a much earlier age, a fact well illustrated by the music we encounter in film and TV. *What is striking is not so much that in its essential vocabulary and syntax much of this music derives from the late nineteenth century, but that its expressive devices have become normative.* We do not question their appropriateness or authenticity in representing narrative or carrying emotional content even in a film with a contemporary setting.

Normative music, defined above all by its melodic and tonal materials, has simply bypassed musical modernism as if it had

⁶⁹ Theodor W. Adorno, "Leichte Musik," in *Gesammelte Schriften*, Vol. 14, *Dissonanzen. Einleitung in die Musiksoziologie: Zwölf theoretische Volesungen*, (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1970-c1986), 202. (Der groben und drastischen Verfallsgeschichte von Typen und Formen leichter Musik steht eine eigentümliche Konstanz ihrer musikalischen Sprache gegenüber. Sie hält durchweg mit dem depravierten spätromantischen Vorrat haus; noch Gershwin ist eine talentvolle Transposition von Tschaikowsky und Rachmaninow in die Amüsiersphäre. An der Evolution des Materials, die seit mehr als fünfzig Jahren in der oberen Musik sich zutrug, hat die leichte bis heute nicht viel Anteil gehabt).

never happened. [my emphasis]⁷⁰

Johnson, like Adorno before him, wilfully disregarded those all-important but subtle differences that go into making up the almost unlimited variety of what he called “normative” musical styles. But simply by using the word “normative,” was not Johnson himself also tacitly admitting the reality of a “common practice?” And what is most striking of all, Johnson (a scholarly authority on some very recondite modernist musical languages) also admitted that what he calls today’s “normative music” still used late nineteenth-century musical vocabulary – or to use Adorno’s terms, late-romantic goods, albeit in a degraded form.

If one uses a sharp enough analytical lens, subtle changes in common practice musical vocabulary should indeed be detectable as the nineteenth century gives way to the twentieth. Such changes may utterly escape the broad analytical brush strokes of an Adorno or a Johnson, but for someone with the sensitivity of a linguist, such miniscule differences in an otherwise stable language would signify much. Tiny changes introduced over the decades, new vocabulary for new inventions, or a slight change in the statistical frequency with which a word or grammatical structure is used, count for a lot in the extraordinarily subtle and sophisticated discipline of linguistics. Why wouldn’t analogous changes in musical language be just as significant for the musical analyst? The presence, in an otherwise undated text, of telltale references to gramophone recordings or radio broadcasts would be enough to tell a reader that the given written document could not have been created in 1850. Everything else in the text might well be indistinguishable with 1850 usage, but even one tiny detail would be enough to conjure up a world that only came into existence several decades later. That is all it would take. One detail. If references to gramophone recordings were to be made in a work of historical fiction purportedly set in the early nineteenth century, we would immediately accuse the writer of inserting an anachronism.

⁷⁰ Julian Johnson, *Who Needs Classical Music? Cultural Choice and Musical Value* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 101-102.

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The entire flavour of the text would be changed, all on the strength of a “minor” detail.

If Johnson were to seriously contrast the harmonic differences in Tchaikovsky and Rachmaninoff, or Wagner and Korngold, with the same close attention to the level of subtleties that make such a vast difference for linguists when they study spoken languages, he would surely be able to find new inflections in traditionalist twentieth-century music as well. Why, then, have he and so many other musical commentators chronically felt the need to focus only on the seismic shift in the musical language of a small group of composers as the nineteenth century gave way to the twentieth? Why the break? Why all the scholarly drama? And why the need to make such a radical adjustment in how the linguistic analogy was implemented on a musical level, as Morgan insisted was necessary.

Perhaps, as we have seen, this need arose simply because some composers and commentators refused to continue to acknowledge common tonal usage where it could be found. For a while, it must have seemed self-evident that such acknowledgement was unnecessary because the *status* of the musical styles that still used common practice vocabulary had sunk so low as to become practically non-existent. If something is of a low enough status, we need not bother with it. Kostka and Payne described certain kinds of twentieth-century music as “legitimate” or “serious.” Although they had used scare quotes for those words, the unavoidable implication still remained: Those elements in contemporary musical composition which did continue to partake of the established common language were to be understood as something other than legitimate or serious – this despite the fact that Kostka and Payne did render brief lip service to modern styles that continued to use common practice elements.⁷¹ The lip service was little more than tokenism, but not everyone felt the need even for niceties. Hans Werner Henze, in his description of the

⁷¹ Kostka and Payne, ix.

Darmstadt scene in the 1950s, related just how drastic the cultural divide had become in the resolutely serialist climate of the cold war era:

The existing audience of music-lovers, music-consumers, was to be ignored. Their demand for ‘plain-language’ music was to be dismissed as improper. (A wise man does not answer an impertinent questioner.) On top of this we had to visualize the public as illiterate, and perhaps even hostile.⁷²

The historic lack of research in twentieth-century popular music and tonal concert music provides ample testimony of the lack of general respect that Henze had once witnessed first-hand (in a peculiarly aggravated form) at Darmstadt. However, scholarly priorities have been changing rapidly in recent decades, and as they change, some old modernist assumptions about “out-dated” languages are also bound to undergo a fundamental re-examination – and the sooner the better. Alex Ross’s recent overview of the twentieth century, *The Rest is Noise*, bears witness to that change. And at this late date, it has become problematical in the extreme for a musicologist to continue maintaining, even as a heuristic position, that there is no such thing as a twentieth-century common-practice harmonic language: That would be like a team of linguists trying to write a dictionary of English without recourse to any of the contemporary organs of public discourse. The new dictionary would be filled with Klingon-like terms, or would perhaps resemble Alan Forte’s recondite list of pitch collections, which were catalogued specifically in order to help theorists analyse atonal works by composers like Schoenberg, Babbitt, and Carter.

In other words, the approach would be founded on a fallacy. As the American neoromantic composer Paul Moravec put it, “When some people announced the death of tonality earlier in the

⁷² Hans Werner Henze, *Music and Politics: Collected Writings, 1953-81*. trans. Peter Labanyi (Ithaca, N. Y.: Cornell University Press, 1982), 40.

century, they apparently forgot to tell the billions of people who have continued to speak it as a living tongue.”⁷³ And, as we have already pointed out, for those defenders who were devoted to devising and mastering new esoteric musical languages, it did not follow that they were no longer able to read the morning papers or listen to the daily news like everyone else. The unvarnished fact was that there did indeed remain a general musical language that was familiar to all.

Webern famously proclaimed in his 1932-33 lectures that the tonal language was dead but the general musical world simply did not realize it yet, and therefore continued to use common practice materials like simple triads.⁷⁴ In making such a stunning, even absurd, proclamation, Webern was really doing nothing less than turning the definition of a “dead language” on its head; he was, as it were, engaging in his own little bit of linguistic revisionism. Imagine the editors of the Oxford or Duden dictionaries implementing a similar logic: The English and German that have been used in the past few decades are dead, but the multitudes still speak those languages because they do not realize the fact. No. In verbal language, dead really does mean dead. It means that people no longer actually use a given language as their native tongue in everyday written and spoken communication. Because the language is dead, it must be artificially resuscitated whenever someone has need of it. If, on the other hand, a broad populace uses a language for all of their daily, mundane needs, whether in school, at home or in the market place, does that not become the principle defining feature of a living language?

The following anecdote is a practical illustration of a living

⁷³ Moravec quoted in Lloyd Whitesell, “Twentieth-Century Tonality, or, Breaking Up is Hard to Do,” in *The Pleasure of Modernist Music: Listening, Meaning, Intention, Ideology*, ed. Arved Ashby (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2004), 113.

⁷⁴ Anton Webern, *The Path to the New Music*, ed. Willi Reich, trans. Leo Black (Bryn Mawr, Penn.: Theodore Presser, 1963). Webern reiterated the death or disappearance of tonality over and over, see especially pages 42-47. He spoke of the disappearance of the triad on page 16.

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musical language in action. In 2009, the young American composer Dan Visconti, a regular contributor to the American Music Center's online magazine *New Music Box*, was one of the judges overseeing a state-wide competition (he did not say in which state) for composers aged 14 to 20. Visconti related how a large and "overstuffed" package arrived in the mail, and went on to describe how he first proceeded to

separate the scores into a few main groups: loosely "neoromantic" works; pieces that seem to be in love with being "weird;" and things that sound like Corelli with bass lines that descend stepwise to the dominant. This last category, specific as it is, ends up being the largest; interestingly, I find neither minimalism nor any kind of serialized technique—something I might have expected with a slightly younger crowd, but it puzzled me in this case since I suspect the entries contained more than a few college freshmen. ...All in all, wallowing in other people's music can be a great way to spend the time away from one's own. And after last week especially, it felt good to be in touch with the way I used to compose when I just did it for fun and everything was basically in the style of Rachmaninoff (don't ask).⁷⁵

In a telling admission, Visconti also added that "More so than our later efforts, perhaps, our earliest compositions tell a story – about what kind of things we find meaningful and what kind of person we really want to become."⁷⁶ Equally interesting is the fact that Visconti saw fit to bring up the ghost of old Sergei Rachmaninoff, who, despite his longstanding rejection in musicology and *New Music* circles, still managed to cast a shadow – almost a century after the "death" of romanticism.

Kevin Volans, a former Stockhausen pupil, also started his musical life in a stylistic vein not dissimilar to that of Visconti. In a

⁷⁵ Dan Visconti, "The Other Foot," *NewMusicBox* (February 13, 2009): <http://www.newmusicbox.org/articles/The-Other-Foot/> (accessed June 23, 2012).

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

2006 interview, Volans recalled how, at age 12 he “started buying all the big piano concertos and tried to play them, of course.”⁷⁷ Volans’ fledgling compositional attempts at the same age were along similar lines: “Again, I started with a big romantic piano concerto but it never got finished.”⁷⁸ Volans soon matured, of course, and went on to become one of the most prominent composers to come out of the Stockhausen orbit. But in 2006 Volans retraced his steps a little, and composed a large-scale work that once again incorporated echoes and gestures of the native musical language that had once been indigenous to his childhood:

I decided with this piece to really take on the glamorous romantic piano concerto, which meant doing things which I’ve never done before; stringing the material together in a kind of narrative form. I actually started with the end of the piece, the material at the end of the piece really represents me today so to speak, and the rest of the piece is a kind of historic extrapolation of that. I borrowed a chord from the Chopin *Études* and there are gestures from Tchaikovsky and Liszt, and then there’s a whole section which is reminiscent of Ravel I think. I did that quite consciously, but I didn’t realise that all the references were actually in chronological order! I felt that one of the easiest ways of writing is to ignore the huge tradition of the piano concerto. This time I thought I’d take it on. Some of my students have practically disowned me for it! But I’m absolutely happy with what I did because that’s what I wanted to do. I haven’t just become conservative; I deliberately referred to the past in many different ways.⁷⁹

The story of radical composers who have begun their musical life with the usual twentieth-century common-practice musical tools (which they themselves often associate with academically discredited romantic idioms), is a familiar one.

⁷⁷ Kevin Volans and Jonathan Grimes, “An Interview with Kevin Volans,” *the contemporary music centre ireland* (November 23, 2006): <http://www.cmc.ie/articles/article1120.html> (accessed June 23, 2012).

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

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Equally familiar is how, with a little advanced tutelage in composition, they have matured. Carefully and consciously, they have taken steps to distance themselves from those presumably worn-out “romantic” tools – and have finally abandoned what was in effect their musical mother tongue. Not infrequently, they have felt sheepish and embarrassed by their earlier common-place efforts, imitations of Rachmaninoff, and what not. (As Visconti put it, “don’t ask.”)

In the above examples, we can see two opposing notions of musical language at war with each other: The first one arises autochthonously – from the twentieth century’s musical soil, as it were. Perhaps, following Visconti’s story, we can term this “Sergei’s shadow.” The second one must be approached as one would learn a second language, which is to be acquired with great effort, and only in the most learned of settings. To say that the latter situation also happens to fit the profile of an artificially invented (or even “dead”) language does not have to be interpreted as a derogatory judgement, just as it has never been an insult to say that Latin is dead or Esperanto is artificial. That is simply what those languages are. Many linguistically talented people have learned Esperanto simply as a mental challenge, an intellectually stimulating amusement. Scholars and researchers still work at mastering Latin and other dead languages for the purpose of examining ancient texts, and that has always been a noble and worthwhile endeavour. Hebrew, too, was essentially a dead language for many centuries. During this time it was still read by Hebrew scholars, whose real native tongue may have been Russian, Spanish, English, German or French. Hebrew was then revived on a much larger social scale in the twentieth century and is now used in every-day situations by millions of people from all walks of life. Thus, it is once again a living language. It is no longer a dead language understood only by scholars, but is spoken by humans great and small as they wend their way through life from the cradle to the grave. That is why we say the language lives once again.

If a musical language were dead, we would expect that it too would seldom be encountered by the general public and would rarely be found in public venues. It would have to be resuscitated by each composer wanting to adopt it. As Visconti and Volens showed earlier, the dead or artificial languages would not be learned from birth, but later in life, as befits the acquisition of a second language. Composition under such rigorous circumstances would become a much slower process. There would be few if any composers writing a cantata a week, or an opera every two months, for example. Schoenberg, following the fabled compositional fluency of his early tonal period, went on to breathe the air of another planet, thereby creating compositional difficulties for himself that were of cosmologically comparable proportions – which is to say that he became infinitely less prolific. Boulez has spent sixty years picking away at the same handful of pieces, and there is no better illustration of publisher Ernst Roth’s comment that “new music is no errant child of a carefree muse. It does not float into life, but is born with great labour.”⁸⁰ And who among even the most radical of atonal and experimental composers has not begun their life immersed in tonal-romantic music, as were Visconti and Volans? To borrow terms from classic evolutionary biology, we could say that, ontologically speaking, these two composers were only recapitulating the larger phylogenetic flow of music history as it moved inexorably from tonality to atonality. Indeed, the nature of their journeys found a template in none other than the great Schoenberg. It was, after all, the master himself who was thought to have brought musical history out of the wilderness of late romanticism to the promised land of free atonality. Visconti and Volans were still making that same progression in their individual musical lives almost a century later.

⁸⁰ see Ernst Roth, *The Business of Music: Reflections of a Music Publisher*, (London: Cassell, 1966), no pagination in the electronic version. Roth’s discussion is located in part 2, chapter 7 (“New Developments”). Electronic reprint at MusicWeb International: <http://www.musicweb-international.com/Roth/index.htm> (accessed February 6, 2012).

But we would expect to find usage of artificial or “dead” musical languages in certain learned circles where a group of select, often highly-gifted, individuals painstakingly and methodically worked at mastering them, as one masters a second language. Perhaps the special languages would be used to write research or PhD music at IRCAM, Princeton, or a similar institution. Again, the historical precedent of Schoenberg and his elite circle of Berg, Webern, Wellesz, Searle and Skalkottas comes to mind. That circle still provides the definitive template for the kind of rarefied social context we have come to encounter in so many artificially-invented musical languages that sprang up in the recently-departed “theory-ridden” twentieth century.

In a less topsy-turvy musical world, it would surely be Banfield’s scenario of continued twentieth-century tonal stability and constancy (which Adorno earlier had associated with debased late-romanticism) that would be the difficult-to-challenge cliché in twentieth-century music historiography. However, such a notion of tonal continuity is very far removed from the traditional, twice-told tale of a “breakdown” of musical language and the death of tonality. This, of course, cuts to the heart of a dilemma created by twentieth-century musical modernism. As was shown by our illustration from Kostka and Payne’s harmony textbook, that dilemma arose out of the fundamental real-world presence of a still-existing, and even expanding, twentieth-century common practice musical language that paradoxically no longer had the cultural power to represent its own era – not via popular idioms, and certainly not via the most popular “classical” composers. It is this logical contradiction that has given us so many examples of what Taruskin referred to as academic “doublespeak.” There are few better illustrations of the chronic charge that historians have not been able to account for twentieth-century music as it really existed, at least for the broad mass of music lovers, performers and the more traditionalist composers who lived during that time.

As many academics and music critics today admit, and as we have already seen in chapter one, the artificial construction of a

High Modernist-dominated reading of twentieth century music history is a notion that is itself now rapidly becoming relegated to history. Although it still commands a following, it no longer has such formidable political power within scholarly circles to prevent other musical streams from being heard and considered. This change in priorities is aptly symbolized by Hyer's *New Grove* article on tonality as well as Rachmaninoff's revised assessment in the latest editions of Grout's textbook. The change is also evident when we observe how modernism is being fundamentally redefined. As we saw in chapter three, the new theory of modernism has been broadened to the point where it can now include Pfitzner, Rachmaninoff and Strauss along side Schoenberg and Stravinsky. Further, some of the old beliefs such as the alleged loss of a common language, are ripe for being challenged as never before. The persistence of a common musical language in the twentieth century (a language that, logically enough, still strongly resembles the "old" romantic language of the nineteenth century) is another reason why, as Ben Parsons has explained in an essay exploring the post-war political context of Boulez's music,

Musical modernism as we have come to understand it is not so much the stuff of history as that of fairy tales: stories we are told when we are young in order to instil certain values and support pre-eminent belief systems. Made up of heroes, icons and symbols, they tell us more about how we, as musicologists, have constructed our world than about the world in which the music itself was created and first experienced.⁸¹

Parsons' reference to the "world in which the [modernist] music itself was created" was, of course, a world which had its own musical traditions. Reasonably enough, those traditions were the "real world" for the vast majority of people, and it was this same wide world that Kostka and Payne rightly assumed was common

⁸¹ Ben Parsons, review article, "Arresting Boulez: Post-war modernism in context," in *Journal of the Royal Musical Association* 129 (2004): 162.

property among music students entering university. Kostka and Payne briefly found it useful to acknowledge this world when they were devising an effective pedagogical approach that could explain to young music students how harmony functioned in that larger social setting – a setting which included people from all walks of life and remained fundamentally and resolutely tonal. Future generations looking back on the past one hundred years of music making may well develop Ben Parsons' less-than-flattering notion of an academic "fairy tale" still further and conclude with finality that the most radical revolutions of the twentieth-century really were but a dissonant passing tone on an otherwise tonal century.

The implications for the kind of twentieth-century music that has often been described as romantic will be obvious. The "traditional styles" of composers like Sibelius, wrote the composer, critic and cultural commentator Greg Sandow in 2002, "still haven't died out. Somehow the musical vocabulary of the 19th century is still with us. What does that mean?"⁸² What it means for scholars today is that, in the context of the broader musical world, the invention of atonality – which generations of historians, theorists and textbook writers, beginning with early observers like Cecil Gray, considered to be the prime issue of twentieth-century musical modernism⁸³ – did not come anywhere close to displacing the existing common-practice musical vocabulary at all, either in popular idioms or even in the most successful tonal-romantic streams of concert music. The temporary institutional success of atonality merely succeeded in demoting the common practice to a lower status in the minds of historians, theorists and composers,

⁸² Greg Sandow, "View From the East: Second Thoughts," *NewMusicBox* (August 1, 2002), <http://www.newmusicbox.org/articles/View-From-the-East-Second-Thoughts/> (accessed May 23, 2012).

⁸³ Cecil Gray, *Predicaments, or Music and the Future: An Essay in Constructive Criticism* (London: Oxford University Press, 1936), 168. Gray begins his highly critical chapter on Atonalism as follows: "There can surely be little doubt in the mind of any one who takes an intelligent interest in music that by far the most important issue of our time is that which is raised by the later work of Arnold Schoenberg and the school to which it has given rise."

many of whom – as their scholarly careers became established and their viewpoints entrenched in textbooks – ended up having a vested career interest in maintaining the now badly-discredited progress narrative model upon which modernist historiography was so heavily dependent. As Taruskin has pointed out, such a vested interest was blatantly obvious in the case of Webern scholar and composer Julian Johnson's *Who Needs Classical Music*.⁸⁴

As long as the model upheld by Johnson (and Wuorinen, et. al.) stood unquestioned, any musical styles and harmonic usage that stood in its way could be safely ignored and written off, no matter how widespread their presence in public life. But, as J. Peter Burkholder observed in his 2007 review of Cook and Pople's *Cambridge History of Twentieth-Century Music*, "the days of pretending that a coherent history of music can be written by acting as if certain types of music are beneath notice are long over."⁸⁵ In the same review Burkholder also pointed out that the continued early twentieth-century composition of tonal concert music (which largely falls under a romantic or neoromantic umbrella, as we have been defining those terms) "in retrospect seems a major trend worth considerably more coverage than standard histories have allotted to it."⁸⁶

Ironically, however, the wider musical culture has always, in its own way, given the most radical musical languages of the twentieth century a certain amount of credit, even throughout the

⁸⁴ Richard Taruskin, "The Musical Mystique: Defending Classical Music against its Devotees," in *The Danger of Music, and Other Anti-Utopian Essays* (Berkeley, Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2009). Taruskin notes that Johnson is a modernist composer-professor who writes "in an academically protected style." Johnson's defense of classical music, writes Taruskin, "[claims] to be offering disinterested commentary and...universal values" but is compromised by his "obvious self-interest." Johnson is "desperate...to recover for himself and the rest of his deposed cohort the unquestioned cultural authority, and the unlimited official patronage, that once were theirs." 338.

⁸⁵ J. Peter Burkholder, review of *The Cambridge History of Twentieth-Century Music*, ed. Cook and Pople, in *Notes: Quarterly Journal of the Music Library Association* 63 (June 2007): 848.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 846.

decades when many advanced composers and historians sought to denigrate the continued cultural use of what Wuorinen mistakenly thought were merely the “vestiges” of common practice usage. Despite exaggerated claims of autonomy, radical musical idioms did end up having social utility after all – though not necessarily in the kind of musical associations that Adorno, Boulez and company would have found flattering around 1960. Life is full of unplanned ironies, and that can be okay if we are willing to accept some things as they are: The usefulness of high modernist music in daily social contexts is becoming clearer as historians accord greater respect to areas like film music. What is so bad about that? Even some avid supporters of the most radical twentieth-century musical languages have now found it useful to tap into this new respect. For his 2004 book *The Pleasure of Modernist Music*, Arved Ashby has written an essay entitled “Modernism Goes to the movies.”⁸⁷ In it, Ashby even criticizes Schoenberg’s lone attempt to write film music in the 1930s, and sagely observes that Schoenberg’s “unknowing condescension to the genre...led him to stifle the very aspects of his style that were most appropriate to film.”⁸⁸

As we observed earlier, beginning with Hollywood composers like Toch in the 1930s, popular cultural practice during the era of High Modernism allowed the common vocabulary (as Banfield noted, tonality still remains the best word for it) to be enriched with a supply of new and colourful “words.” This, of course, was what dissonant combinations had always done since time immemorial, would likely continue to do in the future. However, belated scholarly acknowledgement of this fact still does not provide an excuse for historians, especially those after 1950, who gave radical early twentieth-century post-tonal departures so much academic attention at the expense of other concurrent

⁸⁷ The Schoenberg work that Ashby is referring to is the little-known *Begleitmusik zu einer Lichtspielszene*, Op. 34 (1930). See Arved Ashby, “Modernism Goes to the Movies,” in *The Pleasure of Modernist Music: Listening, Meaning, Intention, Ideology*, ed. Arved Ashby (Rochester: University of rochester Press, 2004).

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 376.

streams of music, nor for the scholarly failure to recognize that the value of twentieth-century dissonance was partly to be found in how it was absorbed in a real-world tonal context, such as film.

Such an every-day context, of course, was very different from the kind of context sought by Charles Wuorinen. Earlier, we recounted how, in a moment of supreme confidence, Wuorinen had symbolically attempted to incorporate the larger Western tonal tradition into an all-embracing twelve-tone context with his Gottschalk-inspired *Grand Bamboula Music*. But such a ludicrous attempt to absorb a common language (spoken by the many) into an esoteric language (spoken by the few) was doomed to certain failure. The reality was that Wuorinen's twelve-tone idiom existed within an infinitely larger tonal world dominated by what Julian Johnson appropriately called "normative music."

We can use Kostka and Payne's "Intro to Music Theory" to draw a parallel as well: We still place the dissonances of eighteenth and nineteenth-century music in their tonal context, and for pedagogical reasons do not allow our harmony students to pluck those dissonances out and give them undue priority by elevating them to the status of autonomous entities (as Schoenberg did with dissonances in composers like Bach and Brahms). We can do much the same thing with twentieth-century dissonances in the larger world. By giving them a tonal context, their ultimate survival is assured, just as tonality itself (with all its dissonant passing notes and chords) has survived. Everyone wins in this scenario, and even the beleaguered Schoenberg can still hold an important place in music history, if not quite to the same unsustainable degree that he and his followers once insisted was rightfully his. Most importantly, the romantic traditionalists (or whatever we will want to call them in the twenty-first century) will finally receive some of the academic recognition that had long been accorded to them by music connoisseurs and the general musical public.

Vaughan Williams once observed that English folk song, like the English language, was "like an old tree, continually putting

out new leaves.”⁸⁹ One could also add that Vaughan Williams’ own musical language, so resolutely grounded in tradition, also showed that the same was to be said of historically-based tonality in general as it continued to be drawn on and modified throughout the twentieth century, in “art” music and popular music alike. Tonality, too, was like an old tree that continually put forth new leaves. Perhaps the time will yet come when we can finally put to bed, once and for all, any remnant of the already much-weakened notion that it was only the most esoteric, or advanced, musical languages of the twentieth century that really had a claim of historical priority. Such a claim, unfortunately, could only be made at the expense of properly respecting the time-honoured and historically-based musical vocabulary that stubbornly continued to undergird common musical usage in numberless social contexts, even including much new music in the concert hall. So much so, that Burkholder in 2007 was still able to affirm the remarkable resilience of tonality in his revision of Grout’s classic textbook: “Even today, every music student learns the rules of tonal music, and it remains the common language against which others are judged.”⁹⁰

⁸⁹ Ralph Vaughan Williams, “British Music,” in *Vaughan Williams on Music*, ed. David Manning (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 45.

⁹⁰ J. Peter Burkholder, Donald Jay Grout, and Claude V. Palisca *A History of Western Music*, 7th ed. (New York and London: Norton, 2006), 797.

Chapter Seven

Conclusion

Connoisseur turf or musical fodder for the less discerning?

What kind of historical status should romantic music have in the twentieth century, and how are we to determine such a position? Should we even be using the term “romantic” for certain post-1900 repertoire or is it too problematic and general to be of much use? And can common language, connoisseur interest, and sheer long-term popularity be considered as legitimate criteria for establishing musical importance? Canon building is not particularly fashionable in musicology at this time, but even so, the human impulse remains to seek out the best. Even those working hardest to deconstruct the canon ultimately have to choose some composers and works around which to build their historical scenarios when they teach a history class or write a historical overview.

As we saw at the end of chapter two, Robert Fink, like many others today, claims to have rejected the modernist master narrative with its major focus on atonality, serialism, chance music, the new complexity, and so on. But when one examines how Fink has set up his twentieth-century music course, it is readily apparent that he is still heavily dependent on the same old figures and isms – now merely jumbled up chronologically, partly in order to get rid

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of the appearance of the linear evolutionary aspect. He does include much popular music and that is to be welcomed. But there still seems to be little room for discussing the kinds of composers who might be termed romantic. Essentially, Fink jumps from the avant-garde to pop. Upon reading the footnotes of the article, we find that Fink remains implacably opposed to leading modern romantic composers. This becomes especially clear when he decries the “conservative revisionism rampant in the popular press at the turn of the century.” He also denounces what he calls the “right wing settling of scores” on the part of critics such as Terry Teachout, who support a listener’s canon built around composers like as Rachmaninoff and Barber.¹ But how much longer can such widely-played composers be ignored?

William Weber, who has spent his career researching the idea of the musical canon and its formation, once noted that it was “dubious to call a repertory ‘canon’ in the full sense if it does not enjoy the acceptance of the larger public.”² If, for the sake of argument, we can accept Weber’s general observation and also apply it to twentieth century music, our traditional academically-constructed canon of Great Twentieth-Century Composers becomes somewhat suspect. The fact is, music students have long had to grapple with a history of academic support for highly esoteric music that largely failed to acquire an audience in its own time or later. In short, they learned the history of a kind of music that often did not have more than a peripheral application to the repertoire they needed to learn. It was rather like putting choral music by Vaughan Williams into a history class aimed at jazz students. Students would go to a class and learn about Schoenberg, Webern and Boulez, and then walk down the hall and practice Rachmaninoff, Rodrigo and Poulenc. What could be more normal?

¹ Robert Fink, “Teaching Music History (After the End of History): ‘History Games’ for the Twentieth-Century Survey,” in *Teaching Music History*, ed. M. Natvig. (Aldershot, Hants: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2002), 58.

² William Weber, “The Eighteenth-Century Origins of the Musical Canon,” *Journal of the Royal Musical Association* 114 (1989): 15.

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And it did seem perfectly normal to me once upon a time.

We do not have the same problem for the eighteenth or nineteenth centuries. That is, for those periods, scholars have never focused the bulk of their attention, or their historical overviews, on lesser composers like Hummel at the expense of Mozart and Beethoven. Late nineteenth-century overviews of the romantic era give a central place to most of the names we would still consider important today, along with a few who have been inevitably forgotten. Either way, the older overviews tended to give credit to then-contemporary composers who were widely played. In doing so they often contradicted the persistent modernist myth that great composers were not recognized in their time. Even as far back as 1834, the historian Kiesewetter got it more or less right when he called his own era the age of Beethoven and Rossini.³ For us, the problem with the nineteenth century and earlier (if one can call it a problem) is that modern scholars perhaps became *too* focused on the acknowledged master composers like Bach, Mozart, Beethoven and Wagner, thus not allowing us a fuller picture of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. There was not enough attention given other worthy figures such as Schütz, C. P. E. Bach, Clementi, Hummel or Spohr.

With earlier periods in music history, an inordinate focus on the most-performed composers has dictated that we often fail to grasp larger musical contexts that were operating at the same time. As Frank Cooper's *Romantic Revival* emphasized, the growing critical focus, especially after Schumann, on the most serious and elevated side of nineteenth-century music led later observers to first downplay, and then finally dismiss altogether, the lighter salon and virtuoso repertoire that also swept Europe at the same time. Schumann thought such music was cheap and trashy, and subsequent generations followed the lead of his influential opinions. As Frank Cooper observed, Schumann was instrumental in helping establish the high seriousness of classical music. The

³ Raphael Georg Kiesewetter, *Geschichte der europäisch-abendländischen oder unsrer heutigen Musik* (Leipzig: Breitkopf und Härtel, 1834).

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Romantic Revival of the late twentieth century has helped to counteract this, in that it was conceived in explicit reaction to Schumann and his dismissal of then-popular music genres. Thanks to the Romantic Revival, we now have much better access to Italian operas by Rossini and Donizetti. We also have many recordings of salon-like works, and have now witnessed the full revival of the transcription genre. In the later twentieth century, unabashedly romantic pianists like Earl Wild, Jorge Bolet, and Vladimir Horowitz worked hard to recover the balance between “high” and “low” in their programming – a balance that had once been normal in earlier generations. In 1981, Earl Wild gave what he called a “defiantly kitsch” Carnegie Hall recital of nothing but transcriptions, in order to recover “a sense of fun.”⁴ Jorge Bolet also described the importance of this aspect of music-making:

There is a great deal of music that people don't play anymore, not necessarily great works, but fine music that should be in the concert repertoire...There is a vast, vast literature of encore pieces that one could choose...after one has played a whole recital consisting of serious works, very important works, great works! At my concerts, I give the audience such bonbons as Moskowski's *Étincelles* or *La Jongleuse*, the latter of which I play constantly. I love that piece because every time I play it and get up to take a bow, the entire audience has big smiles all over their faces. And that, I think, is *one* of the great functions of music – to be fun. Why can't music be fun?⁵

As Bolet's comments imply, the Romantic Revival has done much to elevate the more approachable and overtly popular-sounding idioms. In doing so, it has also helped us to clarify what romanticism means as far as the twentieth century is concerned. Indeed, there are parallels between the close nineteenth-century

⁴ Harold C. Schonberg, “Earl Wild's ‘Defiantly Kitsch’ Celebration,” *The New York Times*, (October 25, 1981): D21.

⁵ Jorge Bolet in an interview with Elyse Mach, see *Great Pianists Speak for Themselves* (New York: Dover Books, 1991), 34.

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connection that composers once enjoyed with their audiences, and the early twentieth-century romantic composers like Rachmaninoff and Strauss who also had broad audiences in their time. Finally, there is a connection with the 1970s neoromantics who worked to re-establish at least a measure of those old direct emotional ties and thus recover a late twentieth-century audience that had been essentially “spooked” by the idea of contemporary “classical” or “serious” music in general.

Despite the modern-day recovery of many forgotten rarities from the last several centuries (and not only the nineteenth), we are still musical slaves to an overpowering canon of Great Composers. However, beginning in the first half of the twentieth century this is complicated by another situation – a strong academic focus on self-consciously avant-garde leaders who created a new kind of canon, and who were opposed to the already-emerging public canon of standard twentieth century composers and works. Stravinsky’s *Rite of Spring* was one of the very few radical early twentieth-century works that really broke through to widespread acceptance.

However, despite the overall failure of the avant-garde canon to cross over into the public canon, we cannot henceforth ignore key twentieth-century modernist radicals in an academic setting. The musical radicals of the twentieth century, after all, were central to a very real problem in the music world, a problem of dramatically increased alienation and division – ironically, a romantic legacy as well. Alienation was felt on all sides, and commentators who persistently equated romanticism with alienation were making a valuable point, even though such alienation was antithetical to the musical attitudes of true twentieth-century romantics like Rachmaninoff and Barber. For his part, Schoenberg felt cut off from the larger music world which did not accept his atonal music, although this same musical public, in its infuriatingly selective manner, granted him instant and repeated success with *Gurrlieder*.⁶ Schoenberg did not acknowledge the

⁶ See Egon Wellesz’ personal tribute to Schoenberg in “Arnold Schoenberg, 1874-1951,” *Music & Letters* 32 (October 1951): 322-323.

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ovations for *Gurrelieder* because the public didn't accept his more radical work. Instead, he turned his back on the warm applause of the audience at the premier performance, choosing instead to cultivate an "embattled" image even in cases where it was emphatically not warranted. That was a case of pure posturing, and one of Schoenberg's legacies was that such histrionics became a key ingredient in the construction of the twentieth-century modernist tradition. As Taruskin observed, the Schoenberg circle (and those, like Carter, who followed their example)

did not recognize good will from any critical corner. Their embattled (or "alienated") posture—another maximalized inheritance from romanticism, though not often recognized as such—was widely imitated by modernists who otherwise had little in common with them. "The customer is always wrong" became an implicit motto⁷

Thus, it became wrong to appreciate the kinds of music that concert ticket and record buyers tended to like, as Carter insinuated in 1940 when he was discussing what he called Sibelius' hollow brand of romantic heroics. Naturally, it followed that it was wrong for audiences to reject the music they did not like. As we saw in chapter one, Carter had also stated in the same article that it was wrong for composers to write music intended to have immediate success. Even music that was not specifically intended for immediate success, but somehow achieved it, was also suspect. But, if a work was deemed successful from an artistic standpoint but nobody bought tickets or recordings, the composers then blamed the public and musical organizations for not supporting them. Nobody could win here. "The twentieth century," said Stephen Banfield in 1995, "has turned everything it touches into some structure of exclusion."⁸ An unavoidable long-term

⁷ Taruskin, *Oxford History of Western Music*, Vol. 4, *The Early Twentieth Century*, (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 351.

⁸ Stephen Banfield, ed., *The Blackwell History of Music in Britain: The Twentieth Century* (New York: Norton, 1995), 2.

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consequence of such exclusion was a century that was at war with itself. Under such circumstances, it was no surprise to find that along with alienated composers, the audience itself also felt alienated even as they stubbornly expressed their preferences and went on demanding new traditional-sounding symphonies and concertos from Elgar, Sibelius, and Rachmaninoff. The public did not fully understand or embrace many of the strange new sounds, which in any case only really found unqualified acceptance within highly esoteric New Music enclaves like the Schoenberg-Dent International Society for Contemporary Music.

Specialist groups advocating New Music, in the sense that the ISCM conceived it, were a uniquely twentieth-century phenomenon. Before the twentieth century such special pleading on behalf of contemporary music was usually not necessary. As it was, people mostly wanted the newest and latest music, much like there is a large and ready market for the latest movies and popular music today. Even in the nineteenth century – the supposed heyday of the misunderstood genius shivering in rags while writing for posterity – new music still provided a continuous supply of musical stimulation for the general music lover. There was opera, amateur choral music, chamber music, piano duets, and salon music. Practically every orchestral, chamber and operatic work of any importance found eager customers who demanded them in the form of utilitarian transcriptions, if not in full score. Publishers in the nineteenth century grew fabulously wealthy on contemporary music. The best new music, as a rule, still held its own very well despite the problem (new in music history) of massively-increased competition from a growing museum repertoire.

Twentieth-century New Music organizations beginning with the Schoenberg/Dent ISCM in the 1920s are not really comparable to the rarefied and elevated royal courts of old. Nor are they comparable to the proselytizing activities of passionate nineteenth-century new-music advocates like Liszt. Liszt loyally encouraged and presented the latest music throughout his lifetime, whether it was by Beethoven, Schubert, Rossini, Bellini, Berlioz,

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Schumann, Chopin, David, Cornelius, Verdi, Wagner, Grieg or Tchaikovsky. As for Haydn, his audience was certainly a tiny one at the remote Hungarian palace of Prince Esterhazy, but it did not follow that his music there was hopelessly esoteric in style, and had no larger appeal. On the contrary, Haydn's music had so much public appeal that word-of-mouth grew. The result, as we all know, was that later in life the now-celebrated composer was invited to write even more symphonies for Paris and London as well. Those later works used essentially the same musical language as the works Haydn had written in the Hungarian hinterlands. The main difference was that he now had huge orchestras, which his audiences enjoyed immensely. Both factors – large orchestras and a growing and enthusiastic public – were rare but intensely exciting prospects for so many musicians in the eighteenth century.

To be a romantic composer in the twentieth century meant knowing the sting of rejection by an intellectual elite who tended to support the most progressive streams. Ironically the failure on an intellectual level extended even to geniuses like Korngold and Rachmaninoff, who were two of the most comprehensively equipped musicians in history (much more so than many of the leading modernist heroes who did claim the intellectual high road. It is a grave and foolish mistake to assume that musicians as brilliant as Korngold and Rachmaninoff operated on a lower intellectual plane than, say, Schoenberg). These two figures were rejected by forward-looking critics if not by audiences – although some works, especially in later years, were not initially successful with either critics or the public. Korngold's non-film music lost its repertoire status when he fled to Hollywood, and his concert works from after 1945 failed to be taken up until the end of the twentieth century. Most of Rachmaninoff's late works – the *Corelli* Variations, Fourth Concerto, *Symphonic Dances* and Third Symphony – surprisingly enough (in view of their stature today) had a luke-warm initial public reception in the 1930s and 1940s and did not become standard concert or recorded fare until later. Rather, the top traditionalists had to contend with the stinging rebukes of

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composers and critics who had thrown in their lot with the idea of progressive modernism, and who were suspicious and perhaps even envious of anyone who had popular success, as Carter showed in his comments.

As a direct result, the romantic traditionalists were clearly put on the defensive, and searched for ways to justify their harmonic “outdatedness,” even though, ironically, their harmonies were still current as far as the most popular idioms were concerned. In 1935, Tovey defended the out-of-date language of his Piano Concerto: “My general position is that I write to please myself, and that it pleases me to get things right and simple according to my own lights without being bullied into getting them wrong and sophisticated in order to avoid classical precedent.”⁹ And Korngold commented in 1955 that he did not feel obligated to write in the style of his own time. “The atomic age,” he admitted, “has produced atomic painters and atomic musicians,” but he would have none of that. Rather, he described his own era as one that cultivated the “tendency away from beauty towards ugliness, away from the noble towards the revolting, ill-sounding, and chilling.”¹⁰ How Korngold could have felt that his own very romantic movie music (so beautiful in the conventional sense of the word) – or works like the 1945 Violin Concerto, which was based on material from film scores – were not also part of the common culture of the 1930s and 40s he did not explain. And then there is Rachmaninoff, who made what seems to us like a rather strange statement given his enormous world-wide popularity in the 1930s (both as composer and pianist): “Perhaps music such as mine is no longer wanted.”¹¹ Rachmaninoff’s words, of course, do

⁹ Donald Francis Tovey, program note for Concerto in A major for Pianoforte and Orchestra, Op. 15, in *The Classics of Music. Talks, Essays, and Other Writings Previously Uncollected*, ed. Michael Tilmouth, David Kembell and Roger Savage (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 215.

¹⁰ Brendan Carroll, *The Last Prodigy: A Biography of Erich Wolfgang Korngold* (Portland, Oregon: Amadeus Press, 1997), 358.

¹¹ “The Composer as Interpreter: An Interview with Norman Cameron,” *The Monthly Musical Record*, 44 (November 1934): 201. Quoted in Robert

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not refer to the runaway public success of his Second and Third Concertos or the 1934 *Rhapsody*, all of which guaranteed sold-out concerts right up to his death, even to the point where concert promoters were reluctant to book him in any concertos other than his own. He knew full well the irony of his statement.

Early twentieth-century romantic composers like Rachmaninoff, Elgar, Puccini, and Sibelius were of enormous stature in public terms, and all continued to flourish despite continuous critical sniping. Not surprisingly, they numbered among the most frequently recorded composers of their era. There are many complete studio recordings of Puccini's operas dating from the 1930s, and many individual Puccini arias recorded in the previous decades. Rachmaninoff recorded his complete concertos as well as his Third Symphony, *Isle of the Dead* and many shorter works. From a commercial standpoint alone, the opportunity to record these giants of contemporary music would have been sheer economic folly to pass up. Similarly, Richard Strauss recorded most of his own tone poems, which were also championed by many other conductors. And between 1933 and 1939, the Sibelius Society issued six large albums of 78 RPM recordings comprising the Finnish composer's symphonic cycle, the string quartet, the violin concerto, and sundry orchestral works and instrumental works. In yet another example, over the two decades leading up to Elgar's death in 1934, a great many of *his* major works were recorded multiple times, both by Elgar himself as well as by others.

All of the above-described recording activity – including many complete operas, symphonies and concertos – managed to take place even though the recording of large-scale works was a horrendously expensive prospect in the 78 RPM era. Nevertheless,

Morgan, *Twentieth-Century Music* (New York, London: Norton, 1991), 112. Morgan used the quotation to support the prevalent academic notion that Rachmaninoff did not really belong to his era and admitted as much. Morgan was therefore unable to appreciate the profound irony that was implicit in Rachmaninoff's words.

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such projects did have commercial success and carried vast prestige. Moreover, most of these recordings are still easily available on CD, which is yet another indication of present-day connoisseur interest in romantic music from the early twentieth century, showing that early demand for large recorded editions of Rachmaninoff, Elgar and Sibelius was indicative of those composers' future stature as well. Rachmaninoff's own recordings of his works have been one of the prime gems of the catalogue for several generations and are directly responsible for the fact that many today still consider him the single greatest pianist of the twentieth century as a whole. Elgar's acoustical and electrical output is still readily available in handsome box sets totaling thirteen CDs (which represents well over one hundred 78 RPM discs). Clearly, all of those original discs would never have been cut had there been no public for new romantic music in the early twentieth century. Also indicative of this general demand in the modern era was the fact that works like Elgar's perennially delayed Third Symphony and Sibelius's oft-promised Eighth were two of the most eagerly awaited orchestral premieres of the 1930s. The fact that both premieres were delayed again and again, ultimately never taking place – Elgar died in 1934 and Sibelius is now thought to have destroyed his Eighth Symphony in the 1940s – only stoked the fires of public anticipation and fuelled newspaper copy.¹²

¹² When Elgar's Third Symphony was completed by Anthony Payne in the 1990s, it became something of a minor hit among connoisseurs of romantic orchestral music. It was performed worldwide and was immediately recorded three times. Strangely enough, one of the recordings came out on NMC, a label that boasted a catalogue of about 250 CDs and was mostly known for advocating composers in the high modernist tradition. Elgar's Third Symphony became one of only six NMC recordings ever to turn a profit. NMC's modernist offerings were heavily subsidized, and ironically, these subsidies came from none other than the Holst Trust. To the end of his life Holst could not warm to the music of what he called "wrong note merchants" (see chapter five, note 107). His major orchestral hit *The Planets*, which has always been a staple for the kind of concert audiences and record buyers who largely reject the more forbidding areas of New Music, ended up being used to underwrite much radical fare through the recording label NMC.

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At least some tonal traditionalists, then, most certainly continued to have popular success but they were simultaneously the subject of critical barbs from the avant-garde. In 1932, the great musicologist Edward Dent (whose birthplace was England, the Land of Hope and Glory) made the peculiar, not to say inaccurate, observation in Adler's important two-volume German-language *Handbuch der Musik* that "for English ears, Elgar's music is far much too full of emotion and not completely free of vulgarity."¹³ The critical habit of writing off successful late-romantic composers continued throughout the twentieth century, as we have seen time and again in the preceding chapters. In America, Hanson, Barber and Menotti were prime recipients of similar negative criticism. Barber's grand operas in the 1950s and 1960s were eagerly received on opening night, only to turn into critical failures in the newspapers the next morning. The same thing happened with Hanson's *The Merry Mount* in the 1930s. In one of the most infamous cases of all, the ovations that greeted Korngold's now-standard Violin Concerto at its dazzling 1947 premiere by Heifetz, somehow turned into "more corn than gold" the next morning, effectively putting the final nail in the coffin in the reputation and status of both composer and composition during the next half a century. In 1955, a series of eight sold-out performances of Korngold's *Die Tote Stadt* in Munich were greeted with unreserved critical derision despite lengthy standing ovations. Astonishingly enough, it took until the end of the century for that opera to finally enter the repertoire.¹⁴ In thus manner did critics caught in the grip of a questionable progress narrative of musical evolution wittingly or unwittingly try to put down many of the century's finer musical products, effectively overriding public opinion when it came to determining what was suitable for the

¹³ Guido Adler, *Handbuch der Musikgeschichte*, second ed., Vol. 2, (Berlin: H. Keller, 1930, reprint, Tutzing: Hans Schneider, 1961) 1047. [für englischen Ohren ist Elgars Musik allzu gefühlvoll und nicht ganz frei von Vulgarität.]

¹⁴ See Brendan Carroll's account of Korngold's later reception in *The Last Prodigy: A Biography of Erich Wolfgang Korngold* (Portland, Oregon: Amadeus Press, 1997).

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historical record. It was, as we stated earlier, a century at war with itself. The traditionalists tried to combat what they saw as destructive tendencies, while the progressive element heaped invective on those who ended up making some very substantial long-term contributions to the repertoire. That was a major historical miscalculation – a miscarriage of critical justice that will eventually be summarized in a new Slonimsky-like “Lexicon of Musical Invective” for the delectation of future generations.

Despite the plentiful and ever-growing connoisseur support for twentieth century traditionalists today, academic disputes continue. The fact remains that there *was* an aesthetic battle in the twentieth century between those who thought of themselves as modernist or avant-garde and those whom the modernists called romantic (or traditionalist, or regressive, or backward). This battle is a matter of historical record, and it left many scars. It is a battle that has lasted much longer than the old dispute between the Brahmsians and the Wagnerians. That earlier controversy had essentially played itself out by the time of Schoenberg’s maturity around 1910, by which time numerous younger composers from d’Albert to Zemlinsky had long since taken on stylistic elements of both the Brahms and the Wagner/Liszt camps. Even the young Schoenberg himself duly followed in the path of this well-established trend. But the twentieth-century wounds have not yet healed, and may not completely heal for some time to come. However, we cannot, and should not, leave composers like Webern and Varèse out of future history books in the same manner that Rachmaninoff, Elgar and Puccini were struck from the historical record. In any case, the progressive evolutionary view is too deeply embedded in the story of twentieth century music as it has traditionally been told by historians and theorists. It affected many in the music world – both positively and negatively. It must therefore remain because it is a cultural fact. Despite its general failure to become more than peripheral to daily concert programming, many believed in it and a few still continue to believe in it – and they have every right to do so.

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All my life, I too have been driven by an endless curiosity, and also find this body of repertoire intriguing and fascinating. I have acquired many recordings of this material and can privately appreciate it on all kinds of levels, even as I try to understand why it had only limited success in public terms. The issue here, then, is the extent to which such specialized and esoteric views of music history were presented to generations of music students as, to use Botstein's words, "the only legitimate path for music in the twentieth century."¹⁵ Here it is suggested that the most dedicated supporters of high modernism overstepped their historical mandate and made exaggerated claims of historical importance which sometimes bordered on the preposterous and were therefore ultimately unconvincing and unsustainable.

There are clearly many aspects of twentieth century musical life that the old modernist framework is at a loss to explain. Why did common-practice harmonies, if they were dead, still have the immense power to help shape the living language of pop, Broadway and film music? Also, why was the musical language of popular music not all that far removed from the language of the most-performed modern composers in the classical tradition, and why were the latter composers not allowed to help define their era? Did it not seem a little strange when historians consigned a large number of common harmonic patterns to the previous century when those harmonic usages were still present everywhere around them in a wide variety of musical styles? When questions like these are properly dealt with, we will have a more accurate idea of what constitutes the full range of idiomatically twentieth-century concert music. Following the recent example of Strauss scholars, we can even call twentieth-century romantic music "modern" if we like, but we need not be ashamed of the romantic label either. Several major romantic-sounding twentieth-century composers, after all, ended up forming a large part of the standard repertoire, essentially taking their place along side Beethoven and Brahms.

¹⁵ See also note 72, chapter five.

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And there is also the important related matter of the widespread connoisseur and recording industry interest in rediscovering hundreds of minor twentieth-century romantic traditionalists as well. What historians such as Machlis and Mellers once portrayed as musical fodder for the less discerning has turned out to be prime musical turf for experienced and highly-knowledgeable music lovers who spend a great deal of time exploring rare music.

One possible outcome resulting from our changing historical view of the recently-departed twentieth century will be a gradual and arguably long-overdue “market adjustment” in the academic stature of many composers from that era. As the twenty-first century wears on, we will become less and less inclined to use the century-old “emancipation of the dissonance” as a criteria for determining greatness. Instead, the relative stature of composers will end up following George Perle’s suggestion as mentioned in chapter one, which is to say that the greatest composers of the twentieth century will simply tend to be those who form the performing repertoire itself, as is often the case for the eighteenth and nineteenth-century repertoires. And so, in the same way that music lovers in the modern era were once told to open their minds to music they found difficult, we too can now expand and open up our historical frame of reference. We can speak of a broader kind of musical modernity in which the “old” romanticism is finally allowed to play a healthy role – a *romantic* modernity if you like. We need not be afraid to describe much of the century’s music as romantic, out of fear that the term will merely signify musical traits that are out-of-date. Most of all, when the romantic stream is able to hold its head high in the historiography of the modern period, we will no longer have to deal with the problem of two centuries in one.

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