Musical Modernism at the Turn of the Twenty-First Century

Providing a new approach to developments in recent modernist music – from 1980 to the present day – this study also presents an original perspective on the larger history of modernism. Far from being supplanted by a postmodern period, argues David Metzer, modernist idioms remain vital in the contemporary scene. The vitality comes from the ways in which those idioms have extended impulses of modernist styles from the early twentieth century. Since that time, works have participated in lines of inquiry into various compositional and aesthetic topics, particularly the explorations of how to build pieces around such aesthetic ideals as purity and silence and how to deliver and manipulate expressive utterances. Metzer shows how these inquiries have played crucial roles in defining directions taken since 1980, and how, through the inquiries, we can gain a clearer idea of what makes the decades after 1980 a distinct period in the history of modernism.

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