Music and Decadence
in European Modernism:
The Case of
Central and Eastern Europe

Decadence is a crucial yet often misunderstood aspect of European modernism. This book demonstrates how decadence as an idea, style or topic informs Central and Eastern European music of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Combining close analysis with hermeneutic interpretation and cultural critique, Stephen Downes examines works by composers including Wagner, Richard Strauss, Scriabin, Rachmaninov, Mahler and Bartók, considering structural and expressive forms of decay, deformation, mannerism, nihilism, sickness and convalescence. Through the use of critical and cultural theory these musical works are contextualized, and the relationship of music and musical discourse to wider cultural issues is scrutinized. The study will enhance the understanding of musical forms and aesthetics for the reader. Exploring crucial aspects of modernism and the place of music in the development and diversity of decadence, Downes refines and redefines our understanding of musical modernism.

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STEPHEN DOWNES
In Memoriam
Clive Randolph Downes
1933–2007
Contents

List of examples   [page ix]
Acknowledgements   [xii]

1. Decadence, music and the map of European modernism   [1]
   Introduction   [1]
   Music and decadence   [5]
   Defining and defending decadence   [29]
   The sources and styles of modern decadence   [36]
   Themes of decadence in Central and Eastern Europe   [44]

2. Pessimism and nihilism   [63]
   Introduction   [63]
   Nietzsche’s symptoms of decadence: Turgenev, Baudelaire, Schopenhauer   [66]
   Musical pessimism: Wagner, Tchaikovsky and Strauss   [73]
   Dionysus debilitated: the symphonic poems of Karłowicz   [84]
   Divergent Russian decadents: Rachmaninov, Scriabin and the end   [97]
   Bartók’s elegiac modernism   [113]

3. Degeneration and regeneration   [126]
   Introduction   [126]
   Brünnhilde’s double end   [134]
   Salome’s double end   [154]
   The double Elektra   [163]

4. Deformation and dissolution   [174]
   Introduction   [174]
   Romantic wave form and energetics   [175]
   Intensification and dissolution: a wave deformation in Strauss’s Salome   [186]
   Resisting decadence: the finale of Mahler’s Sixth Symphony   [194]
   Berg’s Op.1 and the emaciation of dissonance   [203]
   Artificial waves: the Count’s ballad from Schreker’s Der ferne Klang   [213]

5. Mannerism and avant-garde   [224]
   Introduction   [224]
   Russian miniaturism: Scriabin, Lyadov and the Chopinesque   [226]
   Strauss and mannerism: Der Rosenkavalier   [237]

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Decadence and avant-garde: extremes touch  [245]
Strauss as decadent and avant-gardist  [251]
Hearing decadence in Schoenberg  [258]

6. Convalescence and primitivism  [279]
 Introduction  [279]
 Nietzsche contra Schumann? The convalescent philosopher-composer  [282]
 Wagnerian agony and Wolf’s leading-note treatment  [299]
 Szymanowski, pain and recovery: the rehabilitation of Chopin and Dionysian regeneration  [312]

Bibliography  [332]
Index  [361]
Examples

1.2 Arnold Schoenberg, ‘Erwartung’ (Dehmel), Op.2 No.1, bars 1–2 [10]
1.3 Franz Schubert, ‘Wer sich der Einsamkeit ergibt’ (Goethe), bars 1–14 [13]
1.4 Hugo Wolf, ‘Wer sich der Einsamkeit ergibt’ (Goethe), bars 1–12 [14]
1.5 Richard Wagner, *Parsifal*, Prelude to Act 1, bars 1–6 [18]
1.7 Wagner, *Tristan and Isolde*, Prelude to Act 1, bars 1–3 [26]
2.2 Wagner, *Twilight of the Gods*, Act 2 scene iv, celebration as Siegfried embraces Gutrune [76]
2.3 Mieczisław Karłowicz, *Returning Waves*, Op.9, bars 481–570, harmonic progression [88]
2.4 Sergei Rachmaninov, Piano Sonata No.1, Op.28: harmonic structure [108]
2.5 Rachmaninov, Piano Sonata No.2, Op.31: harmonic structure [109]
2.6 Rachmaninov, ‘A Passing Breeze’ (Balmont), Op.34 No.4, bars 27–31 [112]
2.7 Rachmaninov, *The Bells* (Balmont–Poe), Op.35, finale, figs.121–2 (texture simplified) [113]
2.8 Béla Bartók, *Elegy*, Op.8b No.1, opening [117]
3.3 Chromatic corruption of the opening of the Valhalla theme [143]
List of examples

3.8  Strauss, *Salome*, Salome: ‘Allein was tut’s?’  [159]
3.9  Strauss, *Salome*, cadential motifs  [160]
4.1  Wagner, *Tristan and Isolde*, Prelude to Act 3, bars 1–15  [182]
4.2  Wagner, ‘Im Treibhaus’ (Wesendonck), ending  [183]
4.5  Gustav Mahler, Symphony No.6, Andante, opening theme  [197]
4.6  (a) Mahler, Symphony No.6, Andante, theme (part); (b) Alban Berg, Piano Sonata, Op.1, opening  [204]
4.8  Berg, Piano Sonata, analysis of second subject  [209]
4.9  Berg, Piano Sonata, closing bars  [210]
4.10 Johannes Brahms, Intermezzo Op.119 No.1, closing bars  [211]
4.11 Wagner, *Tristan and Isolde*, closing bars  [218]
4.12 Franz Schreker, *Der ferne Klang*, Act 2 scene vi, the Count’s ballad, Count: ‘(und) nassem Haar …’  [220]
5.1  Anatoliy Lyadov, Prelude Op.10 No.1, bars 41–71  [232]
5.2  Alexander Scriabin, Prelude Op.39 No.3, bars 1–4  [234]
5.3  Strauss, *Der Rosenkavalier*, Introduction, bars 1–7  [240]
5.4  Strauss, *Salome*, Page: ‘Sie gleitet langsam dahin’  [256]
5.5  Schoenberg, *The Book of the Hanging Gardens*, Op.15 No.15, ‘Wir bevölkerten die abend-duëstern’ (George), bars 33–51  [265]
5.6  Schoenberg, Piano Piece Op.11 No.1, bars 1–11  [268]
List of examples

5.7 Schoenberg, *Herzgewächse*, Op.20 (Maeterlinck), opening gesture [270]

5.8 Schoenberg, *Pierrot lunaire*, Op.21, ‘O alter Duft aus Märchenzeit’ (Hartleben–Giraud), bars 1–6 [273]


6.1 (a) Friedrich Nietzsche, *Eine Sylvesternacht*, bars 1–18;
(b) Nietzsche, *Nachklang einer Sylvesternacht*, bars 1–35;
(c) Nietzsche, *Manfred-Meditation*, bars 1–34 [289]


6.3 Wolf, ‘An den Schlaf’ (Mörike) [306]

6.4 Wolf, ‘Schon streckt’ ich aus im Bett die müden Glieder’ (*Italian Songbook*) [310]

6.5 Wolf, ‘Schon streckt’ ich aus im Bett die müden Glieder’, bars 7–12: tonal structure [312]

6.6 Karol Szymanowski, ‘Święty Boże’, Op.5 No.1 (Kasprowicz), bars 106–9 [316]


6.9 Szymanowski, *King Roger*, Op.46b, from 2 bars before fig.73 [331]

Figure 4.1 Mahler, Symphony No.6, finale: wave deformations [200]
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