

THE NEW AND THE OLD AS MUSIC HISTORY CATEGORIES – SOME EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS

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Abstract

The New and the Old (e.g. Latin ars nova and ars antiqua) is a widely used juxtaposition. Through music history many arguments have been fought concerning which of these directions are better suiting, more correct, more preferred or vital. The contents of New and Old emerge in interpretations and (often ideological) attitudes towards the phenomenon from the position of the musicians, composers, music critics or musicologists. This theoretical article introduces the New and the Old as music history categories. The outcome visualizes and enlarges Ballstaedt's (2003) framework of meanings of terms as temporal, epochal and imperative into a more concrete system including Taruskin's (2009) agents (agent) principles as driving force of how and by whom music history has been developed, received and interpreted through the times.

The aim is to enhance the understanding of why and by whom adjectives like 'new' and 'old' may be used to comprehend phenomena of music in history and nowadays. Departing from Schoenberg's (1950) pedagogical criticism of 'pseudo-historians' and 'New Music', the author of this article wants to support music teachers in making their students aware of the skill to approach historiography using library sources (Conor, 2019, 34), how to make explicit the modes of thought (Burkholder, 2011), acknowledging the historiographical acts of interpretation and habits of mind (Cochran, 2019). The possible path of transmission of the New in music (both academic and popular) lies in an open/supporting teaching that enables cross-domain influences and doesn't forget the past (traditions). This means accepting alongside with the academic avantgarde viewpoint in Schoenberg's idealistic sense of the "now for the first time; not existing before" of "New Music" also the principles of imitatio, aemulatio and transformation as valuable both at the local-temporal and the individual developmental level of each young composer and at the global-temporal epochal level without getting stuck in norm-driven and worldview/ideology dependent imperative meanings that enchain creativity and doesn't allow the Possible (no matter if New or Old) to evolve as necessary individually or more widely in society.

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Introduction

In order to comprehend music, its phenomena, structures, composers' choices, listeners' expectations and ideologies in the course of history, historians use among other terms the juxtaposing categories of the New and the Old in several languages, including Latin *ars nova* vs *ars antiqua*; *stile moderno*, *seconda pratica* vs *stile antico*, *prima pratica*. Sometimes the term 'new' appears in the name of composers' groups, e.g. *Neudeutsche Schule* (New German School) in the 19th century; it is often part of the names of new music festivals or ensembles in the 20th and 21st centuries.

The most challenging rediscovered understanding of music appeared during the 20th century as anything caused by oscillating waves in the form of sound and noise in the environment: Russolo's manifesto "*The Art of Noises*" in 1913 (Russolo, 1986), Varèse's "*Liberation of Sound*" in 1917 (2004), Cage's "*The Future of Music: Credo*" (1937–1940) (Cage, 2004) as well as the idea of 'silence' that is physically impossible: "[...] *There is no such thing as silence. What they thought was silence, because they didn't know how to listen, was full of accidental sounds [...]*" (Kobler, 1968, 92). With the concepts of 'acoustic ecology' and 'soundscape' developed by the Canadian composer Schafer (b. 1933) and further developed in the context of Green's Model of Informal Learning (Green, 2008) these concepts were brought also to music education. The American composer Cage's (1912–1992) famous sentence "Everything we do is music" (see Kobler, 1968) is the culmination of an understanding of music that goes far beyond tones produced by humans, natural/electronic instruments and notes written in traditional scores (Fischman, 2015).

As the New is often understood that music is contemporary, modern (also meaning the Future); as the Old the understanding includes parallel meanings of music as being traditional, established, regressive (also meaning the Past) (most prominently advocated by Adorno, 1949). Often the adjectives new or old complement other terms, but if it comes to their concrete meanings, they appear to be rather meaningless: the meaning lurks in different interpretations or ideology defined phenomena, structures, attitudes etc.

Through history many arguments have been fought concerning which of these directions are better suiting, more correct, more preferred or vital. The content of the New and the Old emerges in interpretations and (often ideological) attitudes towards the phenomenon from the position of the musicians, composers, music critics or musicologists. The use of the New and the Old as music history categories is complicated and depends on the historical context, contemporary and modernized understandings, goals and how to interpret tools of music creation in this context. This is also the concern of the *Journal of Music History Pedagogy* (JMHP since 2010), e.g. in the article of Burkholder (2011), who has applied Pace's and Middendorf's Model of Decoding the Disciplines, that makes explicit the modes of thinking we use and giving students the opportunity to practice using them so that they learn how to participate in the discipline by doing it.

An important pedagogical aspect is the way students approach historiography using library sources, because, as the librarian Conor (2019) explains: “...historiography is a logical entry point into critical information literacy for music history. Our information sources are a window into our disciplinary discourses. They reveal how we have defined music history over time, as well as the ongoing debates and discussions that have shaped our definitions” (p. 34). Conor (2019) underlines that with the development of an understanding of historiography the students see “that information does not consist of absolute sets of facts; it constantly shifts in relation to ongoing debates” (p. 34).

The author of this article fully agrees with the American music history educator Cochran (2019) who teaches his students “to become historians not only through the acquisition of discipline-specific knowledge, but also through historiographical acts of interpretation and habits of mind” (p. 67).

This article introduces the New and the Old as music history categories based on the German musicologist Ballstaedt's (2003) theoretical framework of meanings of terms as ‘temporal’, ‘epochal’ and ‘imperative’ in the light of the Oxford History of Western Music editor-in-chief Taruskin's (2009) understanding of the *agens* (agent, active person) as driving force of how and by whom music history has developed, has been received and interpreted through the times. The latter sheds light on a basic problem in school music history textbooks: in order to generalize and generate short overviews of the development of music either 1) the *agens* (agent) has been taken out of the narrative (leaving the impression that music develops on its own) or 2) the narrative evolves in simplified manner around some single, canonized agent leaving out important surrounding aspects (including other agents) that have influenced and shaped these (without doubt) outstanding agents, but they cannot be understood without their context.

The outcome of this theoretical article visualizes and enlarges Ballstaedt's framework into a more concrete system including also Taruskin's (2009) *agens* (agent) principles. The aim is to enhance the understanding of why and by whom adjectives like ‘new’ and ‘old’ may be used to comprehend phenomena of music in history and nowadays. The author of this article wants to support music teachers in making their students aware of this topic.

The thoughts presented here have been developed over around ten years during the music history courses taught by the author at Tallinn University. They have been applied by the author in the Tallinn University Institute of Digital Technologies led Estonian state (EU funded) project “*Digital Learning Resources for High Schools*” (DÕV, 2017–2018) (Vihterpal, Lock, Kallastu, Getman, Selke, Konsap, Ulvik, Mihkelson & Palu, 2018). The introduction and chapter 1 of this digital book described important terms, directions and processes of the whole western music history.

The author would like to stress that this article opens the New and the Old rather as general categories. It will not deal especially with 20th century music that embodies the most mutual relationship and pluralistic-synchronic existence of the New and the Old.

Despite of the constantly growing recognition of ‘noise’ and ‘silence’, ‘electronic music’ and ‘soundscape’ as the before mentioned most challenging new concepts of music that have nowadays found its way also into music education (via electronic instruments like synthesizers as well as computers and audio workstations), the following subsection

takes into account that the traditional note-based practice of music in (choir) singing and instrumental teaching is still actual in music education in many countries around the world – not to mention informal approaches via internet (e.g.) *YouTube* tutorials how to learn the guitar or mediated through audio workstations' MIDI standard to compose melodies or harmonies.

The Austrian composer and music theorist, Arnold Schoenberg (1874–1951) hereby represents the score note-based composing tradition as well as is a conjoining link to future developments in music. He is an outstandingly influential historical *agens* as composer and teacher till today: as head of the Second Viennese School as well as author of traditional fundamentals of composition and harmony textbooks. He is either misunderstood or highly appreciated with his expressionistic and atonal music, and dodecaphonic composing principle. The following subsection offers some of Schoenberg's (in the author's view still today relevant) pedagogical thoughts. The aim is to open with some direct quotations the historical meaning of Schoenberg's attitude concerning the ubiquitous phrase 'New Music'.

Schoenberg's Criticism of 'Pseudo-Historians'

Schoenberg has himself become a subject of history either through contemporary criticism by Cocteau (1921, 4) who treated him as master to whom all contemporary composers, also Stravinsky, owe something, but who remains a blackboard musician, or via the one-directed praise by Adorno's historical misjudging juxtaposition of Schoenberg the progressive vs Stravinsky the regressive in *"Philosophie der neuen Musik"* (Adorno, 1949).

Schoenberg (1950) complains in the essay *"New and Outmoded Music"* that *„unfortunately, methods in music teaching, instead of making students thoroughly acquainted with the music itself, furnish a conglomerate of more or less true historical facts, sugarcoated with a great number of more or less false anecdotes about the composer, his performers, his audiences, and his critics, plus a strong dose of popularized esthetics“* (p. 37).

Schoenberg's (1950) criticism goes against 'pseudo-historians' as well as the slogan 'New Music' propagated by 'pseudo-historians' after WW I: *„The popularity acquired by this slogan, "New Music," immediately arouses suspicion and forces one to question its meaning“* (pp. 38-39).

Schoenberg (1950) defines New Music as follows: 1) must differ in all essentials from previous music; 2) must express something *„which has not yet been expressed in music“*:

- *"In higher art, only that is worth being presented which has never before been presented"* (p. 39);
- *"There is no great work of art which does not convey a new message to humanity; there is no great artist who fails in this respect"* (p. 39);
- *"This is the code of honor of all the great in art, and consequently in all great works of the great we will find that newness which never perishes, whether it be of Josquin des Pres, of Bach or Haydn, or of any other great master. Because: Art means New Art"* (p. 39).

According to Schoenberg (1950), *“the idea that this slogan “New Music” might change the course of musical production was probably based on the belief that history repeats itself... If history really repeated itself, the assumption that one needs only demand the creation of new music would also suffice in our time, and at once the ready-made product would be served”* (p. 39). In his view, this is mistaking symptoms for causes. The real causes of changes in the style of musical composition are others. For Schoenberg and his Second Viennese School these other causes of changes are structural aspects of music, e.g. the development and filling of the vertical (chords, harmony) and the horizontal (melody) musical space (see also Webern’s lectures from 1932–33, printed in Webern, 1960).

Schoenberg describes the role of so-called pseudo-historians (Ballstaedt’s imperative use of the adjective ‘new’, *agens* in Taruskin’s means – see terms and concepts in next subsection) as unnecessary for understanding turns in musical styles:

„If music abandoned its former direction and turned towards new goals in this manner, I doubt that the men who produced this change needed the exhortation of pseudo-historians. We know that they – the Telemanns, the Couperins, the Rameaus, the Keyzers, the Ph.E. Bachs and others – created something new which led only later to the period of the Viennese Classicists. Yes, a new style in music was created, but did this have the consequence of making the music of the preceding period outmoded?” (Schoenberg, 1950, 41).

He introduces the evaluative (pejorative) term ‘outmoded’ instead of the rather neutral term ‘old’ for non-modern music. This way of thinking was alive through the whole 20th century in academic contemporary (new) music, but has given way to a more liberal pluralistic comprehension till today. In popular music, however, the evaluative pair of the terms ‘modern’ and ‘outmoded’ is still alive even today.

Schoenberg’s above presented historical pedagogical criticism raises for today’s reader the question of whether this is still actual in our days: teachers should ask themselves how they have learnt, understood and apply music history teaching. This can be the subject of a consecutive empirical study among music teachers, but is not the goal of this article.

Ballstaedt’s Methodological Concept-View at the History of ‘New Music’

The history of ‘New Music’ (German *Neue Musik*) from a methodological aspect has been researched by Ballstaedt (2003) being inspired by Webern’s book’s title *“The Path’s to the New Music”*. The first part of the book introduces such important terms like ‘new’, ‘modern’, ‘avant-garde’. It describes historical trends of the terms till the 19th century, their historical, epochal and imperative meanings and usage, leading concepts and hierarchy of the terms, and missing accuracy as chance. The second part deals with historiography: how the musical ‘New’ can be detected and traced in the 20th century. It also includes the description of features of the New, and what to take as beginning, what are models of history, and about chronological order as historical side-by-side. The third part introduces the way how two 20th century first half composers – the American Ives (1874–1954) and Austrian Webern (1883–1945) have constructed the ‘beginning’. One finds the descriptions of the positions of the composers in history, their historical treatment, their poetics, what the term ‘musical piece’ means, and thoughts

about the comparison of the incommensurable. The summary title is "*Outlook: New music as pluralistic category*". Ballstaedt (2003, 199) offers that the 'New' as the 20th century pluralistic category appears at several levels simultaneously.

Ballstaedt (2003, 14) approaches the term 'new' from terminological perspective defining, firstly, the meaning of the term and, later, detecting more closely the musical content and layers of meanings. He derives the meaning 'new' from two Greek language roots: temporal and genuine aspect as well as particular meanings. He further uses the term at both levels of understanding and treats as its synonyms the terms 'modern', 'avantgard', 'contemporary'. In the *Oxford Dictionaries* the adjective 'new' (New OD, 2020) has the following layers of meaning: (1) Produced, introduced, or discovered recently or now for the first time; not existing before; (2) Already existing but seen, experienced, or acquired recently or now for the first time; (3) Beginning anew and in a transformed way.

As the parallel term of Latin *nova* (new), Ballstaedt (2003, 17-18) discovers the 5th century term *modernus* (Latin *modo* means now, just). Zayaruznaya (2020) explains that "*colloquially but not inaccurately, we might translate "moderni" as "folks nowadays"*" (p. 96). She refers to Tanay (1999) who points out that "*moderni need not be practitioners of explicitly innovative doctrine saying that in medieval times the term modernus expressed only a contemporaneous mode of thought, rather than a necessarily radical or innovative one*" (p. 148). According to Ballstaedt (2003, 17-18), people started to ask if something in the now-moment holds well as actual. Everything that was not new in the meaning of *modernus* was called in Latin *antiquus* (ancient) or *vetus* (old). When in renaissance times the 'New' became a particular focus, also the post-antique understanding of the cyclical nature of history was reestablished. In the humanistic philosophy of history, the progress idea enables two different aspects: the Latin *imitatio* (imitation) and *aemulatio* (emulation) in the meaning of imitating and overcoming the antique example. The comparison with antique examples are further developed in the discourse about classicist music, when Mozart's (1756–1791) biographer Niemetschek (1766-1849) ascribed to his music a 'classical value' (1797, 1808) that is based on repeated and taste developing listening – as it was the practice with Greek classical literature. Also, Mozart's widow Constanze called Mozart's compositions comparable to classical authors' fragments (1800) (Hartz & Brown, 2001). On the other hand, the German poet and composer Hoffmann (1776–1822) wrote in 1814 that Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven developed a new art, whose germs can be found in the mid-18th century (see Rosen, 1997). The antique-related view prefers a rather universal understanding somehow in the *imitatio* sense, the 18th century-related view prefers a rather developmental understanding somehow in the *aemulatio* sense with the claim of developing a 'new art'.

Taking music simply as art in the earlier meaning of *ars* as craft Zayaruznaya's (2020) following statement binds together its practice and theory as well as the Old and the New: "*Ars is about doing something and then theorizing the doing. Ars is activity. Old and new activities can and do coexist, in part because people of different generations co-exist, doing the activities and theorizing them as they go*" (p. 138).

Different Meanings/Usage of the New Enlarged with the Concept of *Agens*

Ballstaedt's (2003, 25) temporal meaning/usage concerns only the contemporaneous or immediate temporal neighborhood aspects of events. Different from that is his notion of the imperative meaning/usage that concerns the essential content of the term pending on which it must be in accord with norms of a particular style, aesthetics, poetics or worldview. Ballstaedt adds that these norms may be unspoken, but they can still be derived from the type of describing or the narrative. The epochal meaning/usage concerns, however, longer (stylistically assumingly and/or generalized as stable) time periods due to the choice of criteria. In this article the enlarged system embraces the following concretizations (see Figure 1): the temporal meaning functions at the local-temporal or micro level (narrated often through synchronic events and their immediate local-temporal neighborhood), the epochal meaning functions at the global-temporal or macro level (narrated often through diachronic events in decades or centuries including reason-consequence logics). The imperative meaning adds to the phenomena under observation certain essential features both at the local- and global-temporal levels posing content norms that are more or less binding. This creates the juxtaposition of the New and the Old.

According to Taruskin (2009), the *agens* (agent) (p.4) is a person (composer, musician, listener, critic, musicologist) who

1. has caused a phenomenon in the moment it appears at the local-temporal level (Ballstaedt's temporal meaning), being aware or not of one's attitudes;
2. is the contemporary recipient and creates in this contemporary moment the first narrative (temporal meaning), being aware or not of one's attitudes, acting based on the popular beliefs (principles or ideas) of one's time;
3. is a later recipient and shapes the music reception narrative in a longer temporal period at the global-temporal or macro level (Ballstaedt's epochal meaning), being aware of the popular beliefs (principles or ideas) in music history of one's time or earlier times.

A scientific agent (musicologist) decides the imperative use of terms and concepts consciously; a music critic, also composers and musicians use them either consciously or based on their ideological worldview. All authors (also referred in this article) are more or less agents. The principles of thought and worldviews of the author of this article are influenced by the structural and musical material of German compositions (Gieseler, 1975) as well as music history methodological concepts (Dahlhaus, 1983; Eggebrecht, 1996) and history of the New in music (Blumenröder, 1980; Danuser, 1997).

A listener is often influenced by the worldviews and popular beliefs without being aware of them. However, he/she still participates in the shaping of music history as agent, e.g. supporting the visibility or recognition (fame) of a composer or musician. Nowadays it works the way the listener pays for a concert or a recording on disc (20th century), or as user in streaming portals (21st century): being part in big data statistics that generate awards, fame and money.

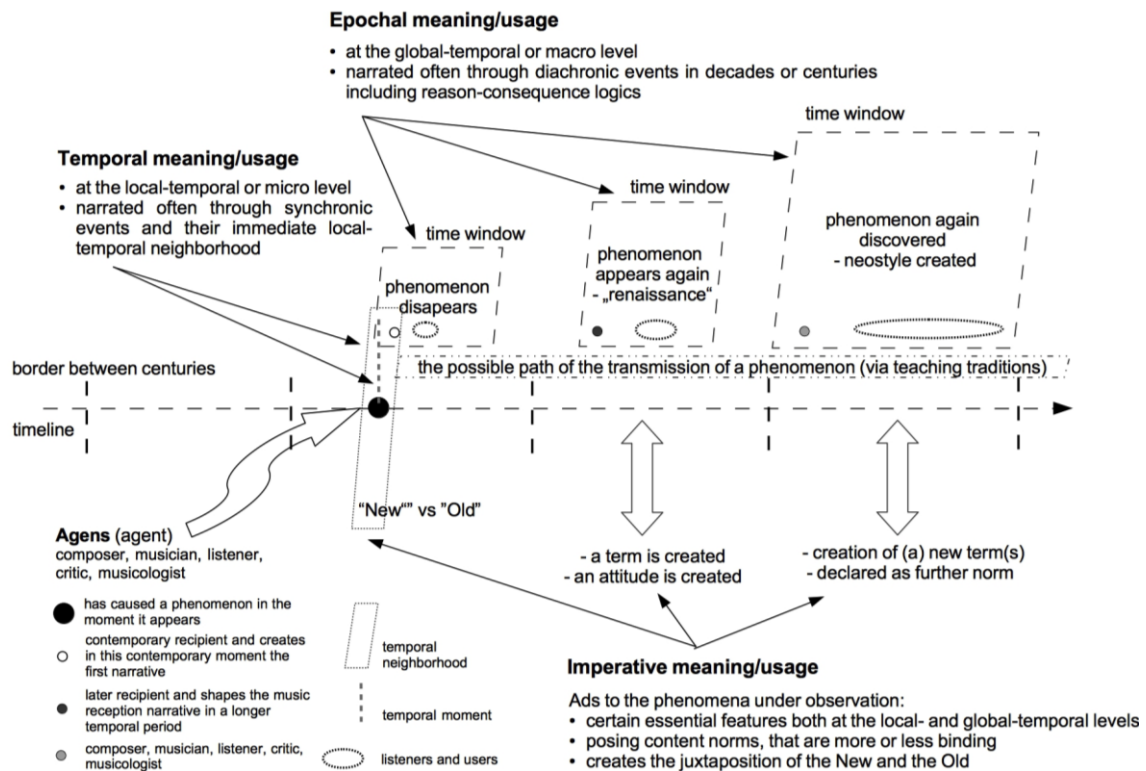


Figure 1. The usage of temporal, epochal and imperative meaning of the term ‘new’ after Ballstaedt (2003) enlarged with Taruskin’s (2009) agens

In Figure 1, one finds visualized the different layers of meaning of the New as given in the *Oxford Dictionaries* before (New OD, 2020): (1) phenomena/music produced, introduced, or discovered recently or now for the first time; not existing before – idealistic view, because it depends on what one actually knows of the past; (2) phenomena/music already existing (e.g. those of point 1), but listened, experienced, or acquired recently or now for the first time (re-discovered renaissance); (3) can apply also to point 2 as music in the meaning of renaissance – beginning a new and in a transformed way, see *aemulation* as overcoming of the antique, or classicist development of antique-based classical principles.

These layers of meaning depend on the chronological position of the *agens* in one’s own time (local-temporal usage) as causing person or first narrative creator – contemporary recipient; or as later recipient or composer/musician who shapes the music reception narrative or further direction in a longer temporal period (global-temporal usage) – either re-discovering as renaissance or classicism (*imitatio* or *aemulatio*) or starting over again as neo-style as in the 20th century. In turn, the 1970ies postmodern thinking has brought back rather the *imitatio* principle. The 21st century synthesizing approaches rather use the transforming way of understanding the New that is more conformable to the modern, avantgarde way of thinking in contemporary music. Something actually New in the “not existing before” meaning like Schoenberg defined it, seems to be impossible, because in the 20th century almost every possibility in the dodecaphonic vertical-horizontal musical space (in the Schoenbergian and Webernian sense) has been done already – from single note to sound field (sonoristic) and computer generated music.

The author claims that only the systematic microtonal compositional way of thinking and its listening experience – intervallic steps mostly smaller than a half-tone – offer something that might fit in categories 1) not existing before; and 2) experienced, or acquired recently or now for the first time. Even if artificial intelligent (AI) computer algorithm creators (systems like AIVA – Artificial Intelligence Virtual Artist, and others) claim to create something new, it still doesn't fit the first meaning (discovering the "previously non-existent"), because they still take fragments or music compositional/theoretical rules from earlier music recombining them either in the *imitatio* or re-create (re-discover) them in the *aemulatio* way of thinking. The really New in the third meaning (beginning anew) can be developed in rather chosen aspects, if transforming cross-domain analogies from other arts, mathematics, biology, technology etc. into music. Such interdisciplinary concepts have been already in use since the 20th century.

The possible path of transmission of the New and the Old in music and pedagogy is influenced by „*perspectives that are dominant, hegemonic, and overpowering – views that 'hide' their ontological existence as one perspective among many and, based on the rhetoric of truth, objectivity or sanctity, impose themselves as singular and legitimate*“ (Glaveanu, 2018, p.527).

Music teachers should focus the awareness of their students towards these three layers of the meaning of the New, especially in the field of popular music, because much of the activity of such young EDM (Electronic Dance Music) composers (music producers that unconsciously correctly don't claim to call themselves composers in the classical meaning) is just *ars* (craft) with the aim to enjoy what they love, collaborate with friends or make money. They indeed rather recombine same elements used by their example stars (treated as norm, using presets of computer programs, nothing new, *imitatio*) or re-discover by using same form, melodic and rhythmic principles (imitating and overcoming their examples, *aemulatio*) by developing also own features and using computer programs at least creatively. But these young composers are mostly rather unaware of the classical and avantgarde music traditions (e.g. form and structure, motivic work, harmony, algorithms etc.); they actually emulate something and claim it for themselves as New – this often results in a strict conservative (less creative) attitude towards music composing (Tikerpuu, 2019). They think mostly on the local-temporal or micro level, sometimes in a shorter durational 'epochal' (quasi global-temporal or macro level) as pop music develops only since the 1950ies in decades, not over centuries. Their imperative understanding (in norms) is based on those short-term chosen aspects that introduce, maybe, something technologically New (e.g. the synthesizer or the vocoder), but the musical structure remains rather conservative or is based on ancient pentatonic scales or church modes etc. avantgard principles like the Beatles' rhythmic and harmonic experiments or Progressive Rock or Bebop/experimental free jazz approaches are influential in a lesser extent to specialists and not foremost usable to make money (as pop music generally do). Also, the avantgarde field of improvisational music has a rather exclusive audience similar to that of academic contemporary music. The constant quasi-progressive self-declaration of doing something New in the pop music field has other aims (e.g. money, similarly to the clothing fashion domain) than in the academic avantgarde tradition and often doesn't leave the local-temporal level, even if it is a global (whole world) embracing phenomenon.

Conclusions

1. Innovations in music history are treated as either qualitatively positive or negative phenomena in the process of simplifying and complexifying. This has been most prominent in the musical modernism. The transition from tonality to modernism took place with late romanticism while composers extended the elements of tonality with chromaticism (complexifying). At the end of the 19th century and beginning of the 20th century modernism started with impressionism and expressionism. In the second half of the 20th century avantgarde and experimental music (complexifying), later also American minimalism (simplifying) changed the way of composing and listening. The latter brought back also tonal elements, third-based harmonic triads. This has been called restauration of earlier century compositional traditions (their re-discovering) in neoclassicism/neobarock/neoromantism or postmodernism (including poly-stylistic approaches). But this Adorno (1949) based dualism between modernism (progress – positive attitude) and restauration (regress – negative attitude) needs to be treated as relative to its context (back and forth in the timeline of styles) and their agents.
2. The possible path of transmission of the New in music (both academic and popular) lies in an open/supporting teaching that enables cross-domain influences and doesn't forget the past (traditions). It doesn't label the use of previous music/the Old as regressive (Adorno, 1949) but merges it in the understanding of the New in the three possible ways described above. This means accepting alongside with the academic avantgarde viewpoint in Schoenberg's idealistic sense of the "now for the first time; not existing before" of "New Music" also the principles of *imitatio*, *aemulatio* and transformation as valuable both at the local-temporal and individual developmental level of each young composer and at the global-temporal epochal level without getting stuck in norm-driven and worldview/ideology depend imperative meanings that enchain creativity and doesn't allow the possible (New or Old) to evolve as necessary individually or more widely.
3. Based on Conor (2019), Burkholder (2011) and Cochran (2019), the teachers could support their students' skills (1) to approach historiography using library sources wittingly to understand the path of transmission of the New, (2) to make explicit the modes of thought to become aware of worldview-/ideology-driven reasons for phenomena in history brought to the present and projected into the future, (3) to reasonably apply the historiographical acts of interpretation and habits of mind in order to understand, how norms appear or have been installed by agents.
4. Everybody listening and making music today is an agent for its future history either for oneself (individual), in a small subculture (with friends or a group that appreciates certain styles), or at a more universal level (as music specialist). In school context these influences meet and cross each other: the teacher and the students bring their own music to the classroom and learn from each other as explained in the Critical Pedagogy for Music Education (CPME) concept (Abrahams, 2005). If both understand that they are mutual agents and where the music of the past and present is located at the timeline, as worldview or ideology, they will become aware of the local-temporal and the global-temporal levels as well as imperative meanings/usage of the New and the Old in music.

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