Boydell & Brewer
Boydell Press

Chapter Title: Visions of the 'End of History', '1968', and the Emergence of 'Postmoderne Musik' in West Germany
Chapter Author(s): Beate Kutschke

Book Title: Postmodernity's Musical Pasts
Book Editor(s): Tina Frühauf
Published by: Boydell & Brewer, Boydell Press. (2020)
Stable URL: https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctvnwc03n.13

Visions of the 'End of History', '1968', and the Emergence of 'Postmoderne Musik' in West Germany

Beate Kutschke

In the late 1980s the terms '*posthistoire*', 'end of history', and 'loss of history' (henceforth PEL) began to enter the West German discourse on music. Writers on music applied these terms—which had originally been coined in theology, the philosophy of history,[1] and sociology—to music-historical phenomena, first and foremost the latest compositional developments in contemporary music, the so-called 'postmoderne Musik'.[2] Central for the connection between postmodern music and the PEL terms was the—appropriate or fictional—diagnosis of a crisis of history. German musicologist Ulrich Mosch pointed this out in 1993: 'With the crisis of the understanding of history . . . an issue emerges that appears to be essential to a theory of musical

---

[1] The term 'philosophy of history' was coined in the mid-eighteenth century by François-Marie Arouet (*alias* Voltaire) in his *La philosophie de l'histoire* (Amsterdam, 1765), but philosophy of history as a practice intimately belongs to Jewish and Christian theology.

[2] The term 'postmoderne Musik' refers to a group of works composed roughly between the early 1970s and the early 1990s. In this chapter, 'postmodern music'—i.e., the music that was composed during the postmodern era in West Germany—serves as English equivalent of the German term 'postmoderne Musik'. (According to the German theory on 'postmodernism', 'postmodernity', and 'postmodern', these words refer to both an era and a set of characteristics typical of postmodernism. The era spans the period from the (late) 1960s to the early 1990s. Postmodern characteristics are manifold and include pluralism, loss of historical consciousness, and the playful closing of the gap between high and low art.) To be sure, during the postmodern era from the late 1960s to the early 1990s in West Germany, composers wrote music in other styles as well. This music, however, would not be called 'postmoderne Musik' in German musicological discourse. (The English term 'postmodern music', in contrast, commonly refers to all music composed during the postmodern era.) For more about the concept of 'postmoderne Musik', see the section below, 'The Emergence of the Pessimistic Version of the End of History'.

postmodernism in both determining the position of musical phenomena with regards to the past as well as the future.'[3]

This essay analyzes the musicological discourse on postmodern music in the long 1990s, when the discourse turned to PEL theories. To provide a foundation, the essay traces the origins of the PEL terms and their meaning in their original context—religious and philosophical thought of earlier periods. It then analyzes to what end they were included in the discourse on (postmodern) music in the long 1990s and how they impacted the discourse in music-historiographical and -aesthetical respects.

The origin of the diverse theories to which the terms refer can be traced back to different periods: the decades after 1945 when the world population looked back at two world wars, the Holocaust, and the dropping of the atomic bomb; the mid-nineteenth century, after the Enlightenment had begun to fade; the mid-eighteenth century and the beginning of the Enlightenment when intellectuals were suffused with optimistic spirit; and as far back as the first to third century BCE with the texts of the Tanakh, to be later also canonized as part of the Old Testament. To understand the idea of the 'end of history' as it is relevant to the theory on postmodern music, it is necessary to understand its origins in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

The Optimistic Version of the Idea of the 'End of History' in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries, and Its Filtering into the Music Discourse and Aesthetics

What we call 'history' today is not a row of objectively existing events, but a creation by historiographers and other writers on history whose narratives shape events into historical facts and interrelate them based on a specific rationale. In this way the term 'historian' is misleading. 'Historiographer' would be more appropriate to designate the profession of those who in fact do not *discover* hidden historical events and their causal intertwinement, but *construct* and thus *create* those events by writing about them.

Historiography, the profession of creating history, did not emerge with the beginning of humankind, but had to be invented and theoretically framed. Unsurprisingly, throughout the ages historiographers modified and reshaped their methods of constructing and narrating history. In so doing, they were

---

[3] 'Mit der Krise des Geschichtsverständnisses . . . ist ein Punkt benannt, der für eine Theorie der musikalischen Postmoderne ganz wesentlich erscheint, und zwar gleichermaßen im Hinblick darauf, die Stellung der in Frage stehenden musikalischen Phänomene zur Vergangenheit zu bestimmen wie ihre Stellung zur Zukunft.' Ulrich Mosch, 'Musikalische Postmoderne als Krise des Geschichtsverständnisses', *Motiv: Musik in Gesellschaft anderer Künste* 2, no. 3 (1991), 25. Unless otherwise noted, all translations are by the author.

heavily influenced by their personal worldviews, which were shaped in turn by the intellectual environment in which they lived as well as individual experiences and socio-political events taking place during their lifetime. Enlightenment thought also significantly influenced the art of historiography and its theory.[4]

From the mid-eighteenth century on, historiographers and philosophers of history propagated an optimistic view of history that transferred the Christian metaphysical imagination of paradise—the eternal state after the end of history according to Christian theory—to the worldly realm. During the Baroque, Europeans had viewed the world as a valley of tears and directed their hopes and expectations to eternal paradise after death (the end of their *individual* history) or after the apocalypse (the end of *global* history). In contrast, enlightened thinkers such as the Swiss philosopher of history Isaak Iselin (1728–82) and the German historian August Ludwig von Schlözer (1735–1809) thought it possible to implement more or less omnipresent human happiness on earth. In other words, they constructed a terrestrial end of history, an eternally happy paradise for humankind on earth. In so doing, they satisfied the contemporaneous wish of individuals who longed to hear hopeful forecasts of the end of history.

Other philosophers of history constructed a history that promised the happy end of history as a result of a continuous process of improvement: first and foremost, the perfecting of humankind, but also advantageous developments in political, social, economic, and scientific knowledge and practices, in sum, progress.[5] In his essay 'The Idea of a Universal History on a Cosmopolitical Plan' of 1784, Kant created the image of a 'consoling' future, 'in which there will be exhibited in the distance how the human race finally achieves the condition in which all the seeds planted in it by Nature can fully develop and in which the destiny of the race can be fulfilled here on earth.'[6]

---

[4]   Philosophers of history are historiographers who focus less on the 'discovery' of facts than on the development of holistic explanatory models leading to so-called universal history: a narrative of history that aims at explaining the past, present, and future of the whole world as the product of a single rationality.

[5]   On the perfection of humankind as the goal of historical progress, see Isaak Iselin, *Über die Geschichte der Menschheit* (Frankfurt and Leipzig, 1764); on universal history as a tool by which to understand the conditions—supportive and preventing factors— of perfectibility, see August Ludwig Schlözer, *Vorstellung seiner Universal-Historie* (Göttingen and Gotha, 1772).

[6]   '. . . in welcher die Menschengattung in weiter Ferne vorgestellt wird, wie sie sich endlich doch zu dem Zustande empor arbeitet, in welchem alle Keime, die die Natur in sie legte, völlig können entwikkelt und ihre Bestimmung hier auf Erden kann erfüllet werden.' Immanuel Kant, 'Idee zu einer allgemeinen Geschichte in weltbürgerlicher Absicht', *Berlinische Monatsschrift* (November 1784), 409–10; English translation

The theory of the perfectibility of humankind was complemented and supported by recent findings in the natural sciences, particularly Newton's 'discovery' of causality in 1700.[7] The Judeo-Christian views before Newton saw god as the ultimate subject of events. He commanded miracles and deluges, and determined both inner-worldly and extra-worldly history. In contrast, the newly developed causal theory limited god's power and provided certainty that the course of history could be propelled and controlled by human action. In the framework of causality, men (women were not subjects, i.e. agents of history) could count on the rule that, if they did A, the anticipated B would happen. Thus, according to Enlightenment theory, man determined his own and the world's fate.[8] Together with the process of perfecting humankind, progress and its telos 'paradise on earth' appeared to be likely or, at least, not impossible. Correspondingly, the economist and statesman Anne Robert Jacques Turgot stated in 1750:

> The succession of mankind . . . affords from age to age an ever-changing spectacle. Reason, the passions, and liberty ceaselessly give rise to new events: all the ages are bound up with one another *by a succession of causes and effects* which link the present state of the world with all those that have preceded. . . . Finally commercial and political ties unite all parts of the globe, and the whole human race, through alternate periods of rest and unrest, of weal and woe, goes on *advancing, although at a slow pace, towards greater perfection* [emphasis added].[9]

These history-philosophical ideas informed the music discourse of the late eighteenth century; and in the nineteenth century, they became the foundation of music-aesthetic and -historiographical premises. As such they

---

by Lewis White Beck, https://www.marxists.org/reference/subject/ethics/kant/universal-history.htm (accessed 21 January 2018).

[7] Natural sciences developed and came to be distinguished from natural philosophy (as well as speculation and magic) in the course of the eighteenth century; see Gerhard Wiesenfeldt, *Leerer Raum in Minervas Haus: Experimentelle Naturlehre an der Universität Leiden, 1675–1715* (Amsterdam, 2002), pp. 280–1.

[8] See the articles of Wolfgang Krohn, Hans-Peter Schütt, Rainer Specht, and Friedrich Steinle, in *Kausalität und Naturgesetz in der frühen Neuzeit*, ed. Andreas Hüttemann, Studia Leibnitiana Sonderhefte 31 (Stuttgart, 2001).

[9] Anne Robert Turgot, 'A Philosophical Review of the Successive Advances of the Human Mind' [1750], *Turgot on Progress, Sociology and Economics*, ed. and trans. Ronald L. Meek (Cambridge, 1973), p. 41. In contrast, Condorcet was much less optimistic. He also believed in the perfectibility of mankind, but did not expect that this would lead to a *telos*. He rather assumed 'que la perfectibilité de l'homme est réellement indéfinie: que les progrès de cette perfectibilité, désormais indépendants de termes que la durée du globe où la nature nous a jetés.' Marie Jean Antoine Nicolas Condorcet, *Esquisse d'un tableau historique des progrès de l'esprit humain* (Paris, 1795), p. 4.

prevailed throughout the twentieth century. They perpetuated the notion that music history, and especially compositional history, were moving forward, thus articulating aesthetic progress.

In his multi-volume history of 1789 Charles Burney, for instance, emphasized that since antiquity music history was marked by progress, but without detailing in which aspects progress manifested itself.[10] Emulating Iselin's and Schlözer's universal history and drawing on Hegel's 'Vorlesungen über Ästhetik' of 1835, Franz Brendel's music history of 1854 conceived compositional advancement as progress of consciousness. Adopting Wagner's aesthetic program in order to define his own aesthetic premises, he saw art's future to lie in the merging of different art forms in the *Gesamtkunstwerk*:

> In the progression of world history, the different arts are, in changing sequence, the highest expression of the respectively attained state of consciousness. . . . The turn that is preparing itself to arrive consists of the abolishment of the separation of the art forms and their merging in the Gesamtkunstwerk.[11]

Further, the idea of man's perfectibility and his power to act as subject of history began to manifest itself in the concept of the genius artist that emerged in the eighteenth century and peaked in the nineteenth. Art critics portrayed the genius artist as an autonomous agent (a 'subject' in philosophical terminology) who did not merely ignore existing rules, but even created his own.[12] The idea of the genius artist as autonomous subject appears to have been formulated first by Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph von Schelling, in his *Philosophie der Kunst* of 1802/3, posthumously published in 1859: 'The genius is autonomous. It evades only foreign, yet not its own legislation. For it is genius only as long as it is supreme legislation.'[13] At the same time and in line with the

---

[10]   Charles Burney, *A General History of Music*, 4 vols (London, 1776–89).

[11]   'Im Fortgang der Weltgeschichte sind die verschiedenen Künste in wechselnder Folge entsprechender, höchster Ausdruck der jedesmaligen Stufe des Bewusstseins. . . . [Es] bereitet sich unzweifelhaft eine neue Wendung vor, deren Wesen in der Aufhebung der bisherigen strengen Absonderung der Künste, in dem Aufgehen derselben in ein grosses Gesammtkunstwerk besteht.' Franz Brendel, *Grundzüge der Geschichte der Musik* (Leipzig, 1854), p. 65.

[12]   For the concept of the autonomous genius they could draw on the artist's image as it had already been shaped during the eighteenth century, when the poetics of rules (*Regelpoetik*) prevalent in the Baroque era increasingly lost significance.

[13]   'Das Genie ist autonomisch, nur der fremden Gesetzgebung entzieht es sich, nicht der eignen, denn es ist nur Genie, sofern es die höchste Gesetzmäßigkeit ist.' Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph von Schelling, 'Philosophie der Kunst', *Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph von Schellings sämmtliche Werke, Erste Abteilung, Fünfter Band, 1802/1803* (Stuttgart and Augsburg, 1859), p. 349.

prevalent zeitgeist, the concept of the genius artist became a kind of *fashionable* thought figure.[14]

The idea of genius's autonomy and self-legislation strikingly corresponds to the first sentence of the above-quoted 'Idea of a Universal History' of 1784, in which Kant intertwined the metaphor of a plant that, according to the theory of entelechy, grows and unfolds by following an internal plan, with the concept of the human subject as an autonomous and self-guided entity*:*

> Nature has willed that man should, *by himself,* produce everything that goes beyond the mechanical ordering of his animal existence, and that he should partake of no other happiness or perfection than that which he *himself, independently* of instinct, has created *by his own reason* [emphasis added].[15]

After being consolidated in the nineteenth century, the idea that music and the other arts perform a progressive process, in which the artist as subject plays a decisive role, shaped (music) aesthetics and philosophical thinking on music history into the twentieth century. From at least 1930 until his death in 1969, Theodor W. Adorno forcefully propagated and vehemently defended concepts of progress and autonomy in numerous writings on new and avant-garde music.[16] His *Philosophie der neuen Musik*, for instance, played Arnold

---

[14]   In his review of the premier of Richard Wagner's *Lohengrin*, published in 1858, Eduard Hanslick wrote: 'Wer in der Musik kein "Erfinder" ist, wer der geheimnissvollen Kraft entbehrt, in Tönen und aus Tönen selbstständig Schönes zu schaffen, der kann allenfalls der geistreichste Experimentator der Kunstgeschichte werden—ein Meister seiner Kunst, ein musicalisches Genie nie nimmermehr.' Eduard Hanslick, 'Die Oper "Lohengrin"', *Niederrheinische Musik-Zeitung für Kunstfreunde und Künstler* 6, no. 47 (20 November 1858), 371. Similarly, Arrey von Dommer stated in his heavily revised second edition of Heinrich Christoph Koch's *Musikalisches Lexicon*, published in 1865: 'Das Genie ist, eben als schöpferisch, stets original und selbständig, es ahmt niemals nach; auch wenn es schon häufig von anderen Künstlern behandelte Stoffe wieder aufs neue ergreift, oder . . . sogar Gedanken der Vorgänger geradezu aufnimmt, prägt es ihnen doch den Stempel seiner eigenen Bildkraft auf, sie zu einer Vollendung, welche sie bei seinen Vorgängern noch nicht hatten, ausgestaltend.' Arrey von Dommer, ed., *Koch's Musikalisches Lexicon*, rev. edn (Heidelberg, 1865), p. 375. Koch's first edition appeared in 1802.

[15]   'Die Natur hat gewollt, daß der Mensch alles, was über die mechanische Anordnung seines tierischen Daseins geht, gänzlich *aus sich selbst herausbringe* und keiner anderen Glückseligkeit oder Vollkommenheit teilhaftig werde, als die er *sich selbst, frei* von Instinkt, durch *eigene* Vernunft verschafft hat [emphasis added].' Kant, 'Idee zu einer allgemeinen Geschichte'.

[16]   The first known documentation of this propagation is Adorno's article with the telling title 'Reaktion und Fortschritt' (Reaction and Progress, 1930), published in *Gesammelte Schriften*, ed. Rolf Tiedemann, 20 vols (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1982), XVII, pp. 133–9.

Schoenberg's and Igor Stravinsky's compositional innovations off against each other, arguing that Schoenberg's style is progressive while Stravinsky's is regressive. These music-aesthetical and music-historiographical key concepts that developed from the mid-eighteenth century persisted, however, only until the early 1970s.

The Emergence of the Pessimistic Version of the 'End of History' in the Mid-Nineteenth Century, and Its Adoption in the Musicological Discourse of the Long 1990s

In the early 1970s young composers unexpectedly attracted attention with compositional styles that were later labeled 'postmoderne Musik'. Although these composers considered themselves followers of the generations of avant-garde composers coming to the fore in the postwar era, they ignored the progress-oriented key concepts that had prevailed since the nineteenth century and particularly shaped avant-garde music. Wolfgang Rihm's orchestral piece *Morphonie* of 1974 is paradigmatic for this new direction. It is indicative that its premiere took place in a concert of the Donaueschinger Musiktage. This festival has been one of the major cultural institutions in West Germany and, since the early postwar era, has acted as a guardian of the avant-garde music aesthetics that in essence epitomized the music-aesthetical premises initiated by the Enlightenment philosophy of history. After the end of World War II, composers—established and aspiring ones—as well as journalists made the pilgrimage to the festival in order to learn about the newest, most innovative and progressive, developments in avant-garde composition.[17] Premiered during this festival, Rihm's *Morphonie* (and some of his other works) could be understood by contemporaries as a countermovement against the aesthetic premises that the international musical avant-garde had consolidated during the past decades. Although *Morphonie* did not entirely ignore the aesthetic premises of the avant-garde, it subversively merged music-idiomatic elements that in the 1970s (and still today) have been considered late-Romantic into the avant-garde musical style: highly expressive gestures, thick string vibrato, sophisticated mélanges of instrumental timbres; Wagnerian turns and Mahlerian apotheoses with strings, trumpets, and tonal allusions infiltrated anti-organic, fragmented, torn-apart gestures, and atonality.[18] Looking back

---

[17] The term 'avant-garde' emphasizes the progressive character.

[18] On the aesthetics of the fragment, see Beate Kutschke, *Wildes Denken in der Neuen Musik: Die Idee vom Ende der Geschichte bei Theodor W. Adorno und Wolfgang Rihm* (Würzburg, 2002), pp. 143–5. If an organic gesture is based on a series of crescendos and decrescendos (i.e., swelling and fading), an anti-organic gesture consists of a crescendo that on its climax suddenly stops with a *sforzato* or, the other way around, a

at *Morphonie*'s premiere more than twenty years after the event, the music journalist and radio editor Josef Häusler classified the work as the beginning of a new era in composition.[19]

Like Rihm, various other composers in Germany—such as Hans-Jürgen von Bose, Hans Christian von Dadelsen, Wolfgang von Schweinitz, Detlev Müller-Siemens, and Manfred Trojahn,[20] and in other parts of the Western world Henryk Górecki, Luciano Berio, Alfred Schnittke, and George Rochberg—created new works that deliberately dismissed the idea of progress.[21] They ignored the prescription to write only music that strictly represented the current state of the composition, as Adorno had authoritatively mandated in 1948:

> [N]ot all things are possible at all times. . . . The demands made upon the subject by the [musical] material are conditioned . . . by the fact that the "material" is itself [sedimented spirit] . . . , an element socially predetermined through the consciousness of man. As a previous subjectivity—now forgetful of itself— such an [objective spirit] . . . has its own kinetic laws [i.e., laws of change and development over time].[22]

Contrary to Adorno's claims, this new generation of composers seemed to follow an ahistorical eclecticism that drove them to combine diverse musical elements from the present and past, i.e. foreign and obsolete periods, and to mix compositional genres usually classified as representing 'high' and 'low art'.[23]

---

decrescendo that begins with a *sforzato* and immediately decreases, or the combination of both—the decrescendo followed by the crescendo. Those compositional means can often be found in the works of Luigi Nono (middle period, *azione sceniche*, before his turn to the silent works starting with the 1981 string quartet *Fragmente—Stille: An Diotima*) and Wolfgang Rihm.

[19]   See Josef Häusler, *Spiegel der Neuen Musik: Donaueschingen—Chronik, Tendenzen, Werkbesprechungen* (Stuttgart, 1996), pp. 314–15.

[20]   See anonymous, 'Junge Avantgarde: Sieben junge Komponisten geben Auskunft', *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik* 140, no. 1 (1979), 5–24.

[21]   Despite their similarities, postmodern music should not be confused with contemporary art music of the twentieth century, which has been composed throughout the entire twentieth century. West German critics, radio editors, concert organizers, and musicologists, who favored the radical avant-garde of the post-1945 era, often neglected these 'moderate' compositions. The composers of postmodern music, however, succeeded in gaining a strong position within, not outside, the field of avant-garde music.

[22]   Theodor W. Adorno, *Philosophy of Modern Music*, trans. Anne G. Mitchell and Wesley V. Blomster (New York: Seabury, 1973), p. 33. The German-language original, *Philosophie der Neuen Musik*, was first published in 1948.

[23]   Historical consciousness does not necessarily manifest itself in the use of historical idioms, but can also manifest itself in the avoidance of them. In the first case, historical

In light of these new compositional and aesthetical developments, writers on music began to look for explanatory models and labels. (Naming an unknown phenomenon is an established strategy by which to overcome one's own feeling of incomprehension and helplessness.[24]) To this end, applying key concepts of the postmodernism found in the postmodern discourse on architecture, aesthetics, philosophy, and sociology[25] allowed them to explain not only the strikingly backward-looking neo-expressionism of Rihm's *Morphonie*, but also the playful pluralism of styles in Berio's *Sinfonia*.[26] But describing the new generation's music aesthetics with a borrowed vocabulary did not sufficiently explain the fact that these composers no longer felt bound to what had become something of an 'eternal law' in music aesthetics: innovation and progress. Indeed, there was no doubt that the new generation of composers aimed to attack those unwritten laws. The composers underscored this intention by verbal statements. In 1978 Rihm claimed that 'new music has come to itself . . . [after] it had been relieved from the dependence to expose *new* [i.e. innovative, progressive] modules [emphasis added]'.[27] Rihm's statement clearly articulates his conviction that innovation and progress were not the sole, ultimate guideline, or the path to salvation, but rather an aberration. In the same year, Bose stated even more bluntly that his work is based on the 'desire for lost beauty [a taboo in avant-garde music] and content and the neglect of a feigned belief in progress'.[28]

---

consciousness is equivalent to knowledge of and reference to the past; in the second, it manifests itself in the avoidance of styles that do not belong to one's own time and therefore are not appropriate compositional means.

[24] On this strategy, see Olaf Briese, *Angst in den Zeiten der Cholera* (Berlin, 2003).

[25] Charles Jencks, *The Language of Post-Modern Architecture* (London, 1977); Wolfgang Welsch, *Unsere postmoderne Moderne*, 7th edn (Berlin, 2008); and Frederic Jameson, *Postmodernism; or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (London, 1991).

[26] In the third movement of his *Sinfonia*, premiered in 1968, Berio combines quotations from Mahler's symphonies no. 2 and no. 4, Debussy's *La Mer*, Schoenberg's *Five Orchestral Pieces*, Brahms's and Berg's violin concertos, Strauss's *Rosenkavalier*, Ravel's *La Valse*, Beethoven's Symphony no. 6, Webern's Cantata, op. 31, and Stockhausen's *Gruppen für drei Orchester*; he instructs that this mixture of compositional styles is to be performed by a classical orchestra and the Swingle Singers, a vocal ensemble specializing in scat, a vocal style commonly associated with gospel music and jazz.

[27] ' . . . die neue Musik . . ., erleichtert von der Abhängigkeit, *neue* Bausteine zu exponieren, ist . . . zu sich selbst gekommen, Sie kann bauen' [emphasis added]; Wolfgang Rihm, 'Der geschockte Komponist', *Darmstädter Beiträge zur Neuen Musik* 17 (1978), 40–51.

[28] 'Sehnsucht nach einer verlorengegangenen Schönheit und Inhaltlichkeit und Ablehnung eines erheuchelten Fortschrittsglaubens'; Hans-Jürgen von Bose, 'Suche nach einem neuen Schönheitsideal', *Darmstädter Beiträge zur Neuen Musik* 17 (1978), 34–9.

In light of these provocative confessions, the critique of the imperative of progress and innovation could not be explained sufficiently by relying on postmodern theories alone. Writers on music therefore began to apply PEL concepts and theories to the compositions of the new generation. In 1983 Carl Dahlhaus explained the emergence of 'New Expressivity'—the style that Rihm's compositions exemplified—as a result of composers having lost confidence in the idea of 'being carried by history as an objective [and progressive] spirit [in the Hegelian sense]'.[29] (Postmodern music was initially labeled *Neue Expressivität*, in addition to other labels such as *Neue Einfachheit* and *Neotonalität*). Along the same lines, Danuser asserted a year later:

> Since the mid-1970s, caused by the shock of the oil crisis of 1973/4 [when] the economical, political, and cultural idea of progress[30] in Europe had been seriously called into doubt, the decade-long, yet never unchallenged hegemony of 'modernity's' philosophy of history, as regards the field of art and aesthetics, had simultaneously turned into a crisis, during which the principle that art has to be new to claim its authenticity, had disintegrated or turned into its opposite. These 'tendencies' are an all-embracing phenomenon: categories such as 'liberty', 'subjectivity', 'inwardness', and 'privacy', which had been pointed to as characteristics of German literature of the 1970s, are also applicable without any restrictions to music.[31]

The musicologists Eberhardt Klemm, Albrecht Riethmüller, and Harry Halbreich brought forward similar arguments.[32] Unlike her colleagues, Helga

---

[29] '... von der Geschichte als objektivem Geist getragen zu werden' (Carl Dahlhaus, 'Vom Altern einer Philosophie', *Adorno-Konferenz 1983*, ed. Ludwig von Friedeburg and Jürgen Habermas (Frankfurt am Main, 1983), p. 136.

[30] The adjectives are probably not appropriately positioned. They most likely specify the areas in which progress was pursued, not the disciplines in which the ideas of progress were propagated. In brief, Danuser most likely meant: 'the idea of economic, political, and cultural progress'.

[31] 'Seit Mitte der 70er Jahre, ausgelöst zumal durch den Schock der ersten Ölkrise 1973/74, [als] das ökonomische, politische und kulturelle Fortschrittsdenken in Europa in tiefe Zweifel gestürzt wurde, ist gleichzeitig im Bereich von Kunst und Ästhetik die jahrzehntelange (freilich niemals unangefochtene) Vorherrschaft der Geschichtsphilosophie der "Moderne" in eine Krise geraten, in deren Verlauf der Grundsatz, Kunst müsse neu sein, um als authentisch gelten zu können, aufgelöst oder gar in sein Gegenteil verkehrt wurde. Diese "Tendenzen" stellen dabei ein übergreifendes Phänomen dar: Kategorien wie "Freiheit", "Subjektivität", "Innerlichkeit", "Privatheit", die als Charakteristika der deutschen Literatur der 70er Jahre genannt worden sind, gelten uneingeschränkt auch für die Musik.' Hermann Danuser, *Musik des 20. Jahrhunderts* (Laaber, 1984), p. 400.

[32] Eberhardt Klemm, 'Nichts Neues unter der Sonne: Postmoderne', *Musik und Gesellschaft* 47, no. 8 (1987), 403; Albrecht Riethmüller, 'Theodor W. Adorno und der Fortschritt in der Musik', *Das Projekt Moderne und die Postmoderne*, ed. Wilfried

de la Motte-Haber backed her ideas by referencing key PEL authors, particularly Hendrik de Man and Arnold Gehlen, as well as the (cultural) historian and philosopher of history Arnold J. Toynbee and the art historian Hans Sedlmayr. She wrote an essay on the relationship between postmodernism, the consciousness of time, concepts of history, theories on historiography, and the manifestation of these factors in compositional practice since the late nineteenth century. In her text, PEL theories—or rather selected aspects and fragments of them—serve to explain the composers' 'neglect' of the aesthetic and historiographic premises of progress and innovation. She emphasized that contemporaneous composers and artists did not consider the past in the same way as previous generations had and, therefore, the past, with its specific compositional styles and idioms, could be reproduced or emulated in compositions of the present. In this, she asserted, the loss of the 'consciousness of a temporal distance from the past' manifested itself.[33] In her opinion, it was this distance from the past that until the 1970s had motivated individuals to maintain and conserve past cultural products and achievements, while asking them to produce new works that were different from those past products to be conserved.

What role did the PEL theories—especially the ideas of 'crisis of the understanding of history', 'loss of the past', 'loss of history', and 'loss of the consciousness of time'—ultimately play in the understanding of history as outlined by Helga de la Motte-Haber and the aforequoted Ulrich Mosch? How was this new view on history drawing on or distinguishing itself from the optimistic Enlightenment ideas on history?

In the historical-philosophical discourse on which de la Motte-Haber drew, PEL '*posthistoire*', the 'loss of history', and the 'end of history' referred to the opposite of the Enlightenment understanding of history with its vision of a possible positive end. While the optimistic end of history promised eternal paradise on earth, the emphatically pessimistic one foretells the decline of civilization and the universe, in brief, no future. Within this pessimistic outlook two variants can be found: the first foretells an eternal hell on earth—socio-political, cultural, and humanitarian-moral decline would be followed by the persistence of the deficient state at which humankind had arrived; the second prophesizes the physical disappearance of the world caused by a nuclear war or the destruction of the biosphere (as this variant is marginal and not sufficiently developed in PEL theories, it is not pertinent to this essay's discussion).[34]

Gruhn (Regensburg, 1989), p. 17; Harry Halbreich, 'Die Neubewertung des Begriffs "Konsonanz" jenseits des Begriffs Tonalität', *Wiederaneignung und Neubestimmung: Der Fall 'Postmoderne' in der Musik*, ed. Otto Kolleritsch (Vienna and Graz, 1993), p. 119.

[33] Helga de la Motte-Haber, 'Die Gegenaufklärung der Postmoderne', *Musik und Theorie*, ed. Rudolf Stephan (Mainz and New York, 1987), p. 42.

[34] Günther Anders, *Die Antiquiertheit des Menschen* (Munich, 1956); Dietmar Kamper, *Zur Soziologie der Imagination* (Munich and Vienna, 1986), pp. 59 and 60;

The idea of the end of history as eternal hell on earth first appeared in 1861 with Antoine Cournot; Célestin Charles Alfred Bouglé interpreted and developed the writings of Cournot and introduced the term *posthistorique* some forty years later.[35] Both drew on 'world-explanatory' models such as theories on energy and entropy, Darwin's theory of evolution, as well as geometric and physical analogies.[36] But Cournot aimed less at presenting a coherent explanation than at designing a specific dark atmosphere and spirit (note the added emphases):

> We maintain that ... the political system tends toward *stability*, at least in the sense that the political reasons for instability decrease or disappear. It is important to note that, in politics and elsewhere, the condition of *fixation*, or the *tendency toward the fixation*, is always a kind of *solidification* of vital energy, a disposition of passing from the sphere of living nature, ruled by instincts and passions, to one that is dominated by experience, the *laws of logic and calculation*. Progress drives humanity toward a *final state* in which, strictly speaking, the elements of civilization have imposed their *control* on all other elements of human nature ... (due to the continuous intervention of experience and general reason). All original distinctions tend to weaken themselves, and the society, like a hive of bees, tends to come to terms with the *quasi-geometrical conditions* of which the experience operates as ... the essential condition.[37]

While Cournot's and Bouglé's historical-philosophical ideas were primarily speculative, later promoters of pessimistic PEL ideas—Roderick

---

Dietmar Kamper, 'Kupierte Apokalypse: Eschatologie und Posthistoire', *Ästhetik und Kommunikation* 16, no. 60 (1985), 85.

[35] Célestin Charles Alfred Bouglé, 'Les rapports de l'histoire et de la science sociale d'après Cournot', *Revue de métaphysique et morale* (1905), 368.

[36] Theories of entropy were extremely popular around 1900 and revived in the 1980s, see Jeremy Rifkin, *Entropy: A New World* (Toronto and New York, 1981).

[37] 'Notre thèse consiste à soutenir que ... le système politique tend vers la *stabilité*, en ce sens du moins que les causes politiques d'instabilité s'amoindrissent ou disparaissent. Et remarquons bien que la condition de la *fixité*, ou du progrès vers la fixité, c'est toujours dans l'ordre politique comme ailleurs, une sorte d'*engourdissement* de l'énergie vitale, une disposition à passer, de la sphère où s'accomplissent les phénomènes de la nature vivante, sous l'empire des instincts et des passions, à celle où tout se gouverne d'après l'expérience, par les lois de la logique et du calcul. [... L'histoire] conduit progressivement l'humanité vers un *état final* où les éléments de la civilisation proprement dite, ayant pris sur tous les autre élément de la nature humaine ... une influence prépondérante (grâce à l'intervention continuelle de l'expérience et de la raison générale), toutes les distinctions originelles tendent à s'affaiblir, et la société tend à s'arranger, comme la ruche des abeilles, d'après des conditions quasi géométriques, dont l'expérience constate ... les conditions essentielles.' Antoine Augustin Cournot, *Traité de l'énchaînement des idées fondamentales dans les sciences et dans l'histoire*, 2 vols (Paris, 1861), II, pp. 341–2.

Seidenberg and Hendrik de Man, both publishing in the early 1950s, Arnold Gehlen publishing in the 1960s and early 1970s, and Lewis Mumford publishing in the mid-1960s—based their horrific visions on recent developments in modern Western societies including Nazism and fascist states.[38] The state of the world to which they referred by the terms '*posthistoire*' and 'end of history' (and to a lesser extent 'loss of history') emerged from a self-dynamic process that led to a 'crystallized', stagnant state, a real end of history here and now. According to the theories of '*posthistoire*' and 'end of history', several areas of society and the state would be involved in this self-dynamic. The authors (and inventors) of these theories believed, for instance, that in the near future knowledge (especially in the natural sciences), technology, and industrial production would jointly form a system which, aiming at expansion and efficiency, would eliminate all kinds of disruptive elements, including modes of behaviors characteristic of human beings, such as spontaneity, passion, and creativity. With the extinction of such behavior modes, the remaining human beings would be desubjectivized. Human beings in an emphatic sense would disappear. Instead, they would be exclusively directed by a rationality that would maintain the status quo of the system. Accordingly, in his monograph *Posthistoric Man* of 1950, Seidenberg envisioned an 'inherent, obligatory, and accelerating trend toward increased organization in every aspect of life—a process tending toward the final crystallization of society—[that would lead to a] world of the future . . . characterized by a wholly new type of universal collectivism arising out of an inexorable principle of social integration'.[39]

Similarly, Gehlen and Mumford considered desubjectivized individuals as an outgrowth of reproductive work structures (automatization) and of a merciless system of administration; in Gehlen's words, the 'regular functioning of the wheels of administration and industry'.[40] 'Under these conditions', Mumford prophesized, 'all human purposes would be swallowed up in a mechanical process immune to any human desire that diverged from it. With that a new creature, the post-historic man, would come into existence.'[41] Gehlen labeled this new kind of human 'target type' or 'ideal type'.[42]

---

[38]   Roderick Seidenberg, *Posthistoric Man* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1950); Hendrik de Man, *Vermassung und Kulturverfall* (Salzburg, 1951); Lewis Mumford, *The Transformations of Man* (New York, 1956); Arnold Gehlen, 'Ende der Geschichte?', *Einblicke*, ed. Arnold Gehlen (Frankfurt am Main, 1975), pp. 115–34.

[39]   Seidenberg, *Posthistoric Man*, p. 234.

[40]   ' . . . regelmäßige Funktionieren der Räder der Verwaltung und der Industrie'; Gehlen, 'Ende der Geschichte?', p. 126.

[41]   Mumford, *The Transformations of Man*, p. 155.

[42]   'Solltypus' or 'Idealtypus'; Arnold Gehlen, 'Ende der Persönlichkeit' [1956], *Studien zur Anthropologie und Soziologie*, ed. Arnold Gehlen (Neuwied am Rhein and Berlin, 1963), p. 333.

The '*posthistoire*' and 'end of history' visions of Seidenberg, de Man, Gehlen, and Mumford share essential ideas with the famous cultural critique of the Frankfurt School researching and publishing in the first half and middle of the twentieth century. In the *Dialektik der Aufklärung* of 1947, Adorno (together with Max Horkheimer) warned that in Western, highly industrialized societies, individuals would 'shrink to the nodal point of conventional reactions and the modes of operation objectively expected of [them]. . . . [Their] criterion is self-preservation, the successful or unsuccessful adaptation to the objectivity of [their] function and the schemata assigned to it.'[43] Adorno also claimed to have observed an 'immanent tendency of administration towards expansion and independence as a . . . form of domination'.[44] Furthermore, the 'system' had a prominent position in Adorno's dystopic visions: 'The absurdity of the [current] state in which the force of the system over human beings increases with every step that frees them from the force of nature denounces the reason of the reasonable society as obsolete.'[45]

In what way, however, does a system dominated by industry and administration, and eliminating human subjects in the emphatic sense, terminate the course of history, as the expression 'end of history' suggests? The meaning of the term 'end of history' reveals itself in light of the Western concept of history. If history is a creation by historiographers or other writers who narrate and shape events into meaningful, reasonably ordered historical facts that epitomize development and progress, the writing of history, historiography, cannot take place without events which the historiographers narrate. The term 'event' does not refer to all actions of living beings—the growth of plants, the change of seasons—but such occurrences which the historiographer deems of sufficient significance, because they had an impact on societies, politics, the state of knowledge and sciences, and many other domains. Moreover, events are changes that, in the view of historiographers, are related to each other in a meaningful way. In contrast, the posthistoric socio-economic

---

[43] 'Das Individuum schrumpft zum Knotenpunkt konventioneller Reaktionen und Funktionsweisen zusammen, die sachlich von ihm erwartet werden. . . . Sein Maßstab ist die Selbsterhaltung, die gelungene oder mißlungene Angleichung an die Objektivität seiner Funktion und die Muster, die ihr gesetzt sind.' Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, *Dialektik der Aufklärung* [1947] (Frankfurt am Main, 1969), p. 34.

[44] ' . . . immanente Expansions- und Verselbständigungstendenz von Verwaltung als bloßer Herrschaftsform.' Theodor W. Adorno, 'Kultur und Verwaltung' [1956], *Gesammelte Schriften: Soziologische Schriften 1*, ed. Rolf Tiedemann, 20 vols (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1980), VIII, pp. 125.

[45] 'Die Absurdität des Zustandes, in dem die Gewalt des Systems über die Menschen mit jedem Schritt wächst, der sie aus der Gewalt der Natur herausführt, denunziert die Vernunft der vernünftigen Gesellschaft als obsolete.' Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialektik der Aufklärung*, p. 38.

systems that Gehlen, Seidenberg, Mumford, and Horkheimer and Adorno described were marked by mere repetition and absurd routine: reproduction, circular reiterations, and the rotation of the machine—actions that are not events in the sense defined above.[46] Gehlen cynically coined the following motto for posthistoric society: 'What repeats itself is healthy.'[47] Seen in this light, the envisioned socio-economic systems could, indeed, be understood as manifestations of the 'end of history'. Such horrific visions were of course not pure fantasy, but reflected concrete experiences: well-planned extermination mechanisms of the European Jews between 1941 and 1945, Soviet bureaucracy, the increasing presence of machines, and the adoption of the assembly line, starting in 1913 in a Ford plant.[48]

Although philosophers of history who focused on the idea of a *posthistoire* explained the decline they envisaged as the result of modern civilization, thus pertaining only to Western industrialized societies, this variant of the end of history was imagined as global. They neglected the possibility that not-yet-industrialized civilizations could continue to change themselves and their environment, including the Western industrialized countries that had crystallized.[49]

How could such a conception of the end of history serve as an explanatory model for the emergence of postmodern music? To be sure, the playful patchwork character of Berio's *Sinfonia* and the hyperexpressivity of Rihm's *Morphonie* do not quite align with the dystopic visions of a crystallized, standardized, and dehumanized society. The compositions are much too spontaneous, creative, vital, and subjective to serve as an analogy of an imagined posthistoric society.[50]

---

[46] They described the 'reproduction of sameness' [Reproduktion des Immergleichen], 'travestied routine' [travestierte Routine] and 'standardization and serial production' [Standardisierung und Serienproduktion]; ibid., pp. 120 and 115; see also Jean Baudrillard, 'Die Abschreckung der Zeit', *Tumult* 9 (1987), 109.

[47] 'Gesund ist, was sich wiederholt.' Arnold Gehlen, 'Die gesellschaftliche Situation in unserer Zeit' [1961], *Anthropologische und sozialpsychologische Untersuchungen*, ed. Arnold Gehlen (Reinbek bei Hamburg, 1986), p. 133.

[48] In the 1980s Christopher R. Browning, for instance, reconstructing the causes of the Holocaust, suggested: 'one must shift away from an exclusively Hitlerocentric focus and look much more carefully at what the middle- and lower-echelon Germans of the emerging '*machinery* of destruction' were doing [emphasis added].' *Fateful Months* (New York, 1985), p. 7.

[49] In contrast, Fukuyama, saw the end of history achieved through the victory of liberal capitalism over communism. He turned away from the pessimistic view of history advocated by Gehlen, Seidenberg, Mumford, and Horkheimer and Adorno; see Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man* (New York, 1992).

[50] It should have been clear to the reader of de la Motte-Haber's article that the posthistoric society is dystopic, not reality, and thus that postmodern music cannot be the effect of an already existing posthistoric society.

The reason for this incongruity lies in the fact that Helga de la Motte-Haber developed her argument and theory on the basis of spurious similarities between musical trends that were called 'postmodern', on the one hand, and '*posthistoire*' and the 'end of history' as theories and visions, on the other. This procedure was stimulated by the superficial and inaccurate reception of PEL theories. De la Motte-Haber conflated various ideas that were circulating in different contexts, among them 'crisis of history', '*posthistoire*', 'crisis of historiography', the 'end of history', the 'abandonment of the idea of progress', and the 'loss of history'—terms that sound similar, but often refer to quite different issues. In PEL theories, the terms '*posthistoire*' and 'end of history' serve as metaphors for a crystallized *social state*, which cultural critics envisioned as a kind of science fiction. In contrast, the '*loss* of history' refers to a specific *mode of perception* or *consciousness* of history.[51] Individuals who perceived things in this way believed that history (as a meaningful series of events) was over or stagnant, that is, described a posthistoric socio-economic system. The crisis of history or historiography, meanwhile, described the insight of historiographers that writing history is concerned less with the reconstruction than with the actual construction of facts and their relationship to each other. Proponents of the 'abandonment of the idea of progress' held that progress was no longer a central value. Therefore, while '*posthistoire*' and 'end of history' referred to a global state that lacked history (in the sense of meaningfully related events in the emphatic sense), the terms 'loss of history', 'crisis of history and historiography' and 'abandonment of the idea of progress' referred to ideas of and attitudes toward history.

Unsurprisingly, musicological publications on postmodern music and PEL theories after de la Motte-Haber, by Gerd Rienäcker, Elmar Budde, Marc Delaere, and Herman Sabbe, did not continue her argument.[52] However, their alternative theories on (or rather, narrations of) music history drawing on modes of PEL thinking were hardly more convincing. Their

---

[51]   Because of the difference between 'posthistoire'/'end of history' and 'loss of history', both have occured in publications independently from each other. It is logically possible for individuals to claim that they do not perceive the course of the world as history (i.e., a series of significant as well as causally and reasonably connected events); they can do so independent of, for instance, the opinion of the majority of people or the actual condition of the world.

[52]   Gerd Rienäcker, 'Musiktheater—Dialektik der Aufklärung—Postmoderne?', *Motiv: Musik in Gesellschaft anderer Künste* 2/3 (1991), 22–3; Elmar Budde, 'Der Pluralismus der Moderne und/oder die Postmoderne', *Wiederaneignung und Neubestimmung: Der Fall 'Postmoderne' in der Musik*, ed. Otto Kolleritsch (Vienna and Graz, 1993), pp. 50–62; Mark Delaere, 'The End of History: New Music in Post-Communist Societies', *The European Legacy: Toward New Paradigms* 2, no. 1 (1997), 155–9; Herman Sabbe, 'Pour en finir avec la "fin de l'histoire"', *Revue belge de musicologie / Belgisch tijdschrift voor muziekwetenschap* 52 (1998), 137–45.

writings seemed to aim less at explaining the specific aesthetics of a post-modern music, as de la Motte-Haber and Mosch had done, than at pleasurably delving into the specific discourses described in the preceding sections.[53] Indeed, by plunging into pessimist history-philosophical theories, the musicologists overlooked what was right before their eyes: concrete historical facts that, from our perspective today, can be considered as a second—and perhaps more weighty—group of factors that contributed to the emergence of a postmodern music. Mosch's previously mentioned article serves as a useful approach to the reconstruction of those factors. He presented the composers' aesthetic premises, which they articulated as a kind of revolt, as reactions against a regime that had become unpopular: the established, consolidated, aesthetic premises of avant-garde music. Trojahn protested against the authoritarian 'interdiction of tonality',[54] and Rihm rejected the 'polite manners of world music' and 'any manners in art'.[55] In highlighting the oppositional, dissenting attitude of the postmodern composers, Mosch's article—intentionally or coincidentally—related the activities of the new generation of composers to the student and protest movements that took place a few years earlier. Just as Trojahn and Rihm protested against authorities and 'manners', in the 1960s and early 1970s students had protested against the authoritarian and repressive state institutions and their employees, as well as other individuals in power: teachers, professors, parents, police, courts. Are those allusions and analogies mere coincidence?

Postmodern Music and '1968'

The German literary theorist Roman Luckscheiter asserts that postmodern aesthetics have shared more with the New-Leftist movements than the advocates

---

[53] Rienäcker, for instance, adopted the gloomy, apocalyptic, end-of-millenium rhetoric characteristic of the end-of-history discourse. In the 1980s and 1990s, the concept evoked associations with the apocalypse, last judgment, and global demise. He prophetically exclaimed: 'Life is all over, the philosophy of life is over; so is the theology which has been conjured up; history is all over and each attempt to write it!?' (Zu Ende das Leben, zu Ende auch das Philosophieren darüber, zu Ende auch die Theologie, welche heraufbeschworen ist, zu *Ende die Historie* und jeder Versuch, sie zu schreiben!?); Rienäcker, 'Musiktheater', p. 22.

[54] 'Tonalitätsverbot'; Manfred Trojahn, 'Manfred Trojahn', *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik* 140, no. 1 (January/February 1979), 18.

[55] 'Ich hasse diese höflichen Umgangsformen der Weltmusik. . . . Ich will jede Wohlerzogenheit aus der Kunst draußen lassen.' Wolfgang Rihm and Hartmut Lück, 'Mit vermeintlich kruden, geschmacklosen Werken wider die Wohlerzogenheit der Kunst und die höflichen Umgangsformen der Weltmusik', *Musik und Medizin* (6 April 1982), 88.

of the postmodern turn have usually wished to acknowledge.[56] Yet the publication date of the article 'Cross the Border—Close the Gap' by the American novelist and literary theorist Leslie A. Fiedler, which is celebrated as the founding manifesto of postmodernism, proves the close relationship between postmodernism and '1968'.[57] Published in 1969, a year after the climax of the student and protest movements around the globe, Fiedler's article declared the 'death throes of literary modernism and the birth pangs of postmodernism'.[58] He supported his argument by pointing to literary and musical works that, in his view, had overcome the 'class-structured world', crossed the line between 'elite and mass culture', and/or were consciously ironic.[59]

In literature and music (and culture in general), the intertwinement of '1968' and postmodernism manifests itself strongly because '1968' was not only a socio-political movement, but also a cultural one. The counterculture performed by the 68ers included aesthetic premises that anticipated several features later categorized as characteristic of postmodernism.[60] This also applied to music.[61] The rediscovery of subjectivity which manifested itself in the hyperexpressive compositions of Rihm and Trojahn, for instance, can already be found in compositions of Luigi Nono, who had sympathized with the *resistenza* against fascism during World War II and became a member of the Italian Communist Party (CPI) in 1952 (in spite of belonging to the Italian upper class). In the radical, avant-gardist 'azioni sceniche' *Intolleranza 1960* (1961) and *Al gran sole carico d'amore* (1975), two dramatic works among his numerous politically engaged compositions, Nono created a pulsating fabric of crescendos and decrescendos.[62] In *Intolleranza 1960*, they enter in a cascade-like manner (figure 5.1). In *Al gran sole*, Nono employs compound crescendos, crescendos with canonical entrance, and crescendos and decrescendos

---

[56]   Roman Luckscheiter, 'Der postmoderne Impuls: "1968" als literaturgeschichtlicher Katalysator', *1968: Ein Handbuch zur Kultur- und Mediengeschichte der Studentenbewegung*, ed. Martin Klimke and Joachim Scharloth (Stuttgart, 2007), pp. 151–60.

[57]   See Welsch, *Unsere postmoderne Moderne*, p. 15; Michael Drolet, ed., *The Postmodernism Reader: Foundational Texts* (London, 2003), p. 64.

[58]   Leslie Fiedler, 'Cross the Border—Close the Gap', *Playboy* (December 1969), 151.

[59]   Ibid., pp. 151, 253, 256, 252, and 230.

[60]   Luckscheiter, 'Der postmoderne Impuls', p. 152.

[61]   Regarding the contribution of New-Leftist participants to the 'aesthetic de-dogmatization' of new music in the Darmstadt Summer Courses that prepared the later invitation of composers to be classified as postmodern, see Frank Hentschel, 'Ein Popkonzert und die ästhetische Entdogmatisierung der "Neuen Musik" nach 1968', *Musikkulturen in der Revolte: Studien zu Rock, Avantgarde und Klassik im Umfeld von '1968'*, ed. Beate Kutschke (Stuttgart, 2008), pp. 39–54.

[62]   Since Wagner's music dramas, theater pieces with music are rarely classified as operas; Nono called his music-theater piece 'azione scenica'.

Figure 5.1 Luigi Nono, *Intolleranza 1960*, p. 8.

that overlap and mutually intensify or neutralize each other. In 1968, at the peak of the student and protest movements in West Germany, Hans Werner Henze, a public supporter of the movements,[63] started his oratorio 'volgare e militare' *Das Floß der Medusa* with a 20-second crescendo from *pp* to *ff* (mm. 1–5) effected by means of successively accumulating brass on top of a counterbass pedal tone.

How, though, are crescendos and decrescendos significant for my premise that hyperexpressivity in many postmodern compositions can already be found in avant-gardist compositions? Crescendos and decrescendos are important means of creating expression on a fundamental, gestural level. The crescendos and decrescendos in Nono's 'azioni sceniche' convey to the listener an overall expressive atmosphere of extreme tension, agitation, desperation, and perhaps also rage. The crescendo at the beginning of Henze's oratorio emulates a human scream, a highly expressive musical gesture. Remarkably, the crescendo does not end on a downbeat or light part of the measure, such as the end of a whole note terminating the measure, but *before* the end of the measure, on an eighth note that naturally accentuates the very final section of the crescendo. Thus, the very end of the crescendo, as the scream itself, appears to be torn off.

Differentiated forms of (de)crescendos can be best realized by means of a colorful combination of musical instruments.[64] Therefore, Rihm's hyperexpressive works are written for huge, late-Romantic orchestras. Drawing on Nono's and Henze's techniques, Rihm's large-scale orchestral compositions further developed and intensified his models. In the *Dritte Symphonie* of 1977 and the oratorio *Andere Schatten* of 1985, crescendos and decrescendos serve to shape the 'interior' of the sound (figures 5.2 and 5.3).

Another way for composers to display subjectivity is to employ compositional methods that demand spontaneous decision-making.[65] An example is Rihm's String Quartet no. 5, provocatively titled *Ohne Titel* (1983). In his

[63]   From the mid-1960s Henze actively supported the student movement. He helped to organize the Vietnam Congress in Berlin in February 1968 and provided Rudi Dutschke with asylum in his villa in Marino, Italy, when Dutschke was recovering from an attack that had almost killed him; see Hans Werner Henze, *Reiselieder mit böhmischen Quinten: Autobiographische Mitteilungen, 1926–1995* (Frankfurt am Main, 1996), pp. 291 and 294. *Das Floß der Medusa* is Henze's first explicitly politically engaged composition.

[64]   This is not to say that chamber-music works such as string quartets are less expressive; they are differently expressive. The expressivity of chamber music is introverted while that of the late-Romantic orchestra is extroverted.

[65]   Like expressivity and emotionality, spontaneity is generally considered to be characteristic of humans. Regarding the significance of spontaneity for Kant's concept of the subject, see Rudolf Eisler, 'Spontaneität', *Kant-Lexikon* (Berlin, 1930), http://www.textlog.de/32648.html (accessed 12 December 2017). Max Horkheimer draws on Kant's concept, see *Eclipse of Reason* (New York, 1947).

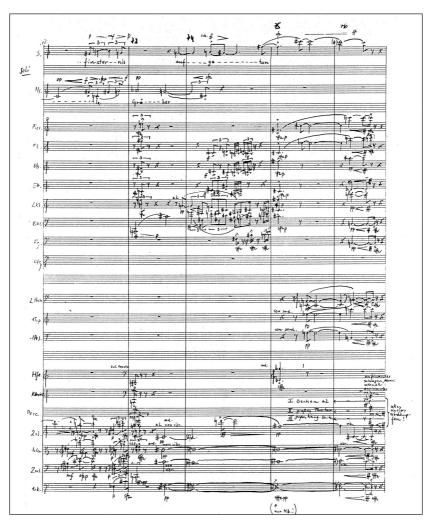Figure 5.2   Wolfgang Rihm, *Dritte Symphonie*, p. 30.

Figure 5.3   Wolfgang Rihm, *Andere Schatten*, p. 13.

commentaries on the piece, he explained that he conceived it by carrying a sketchbook close to his body ('am Leib') and, more or less uninterrupt-edly, noted musical thoughts in the order in which the sound imaginations emerged.[66] Thus, the fair copy truly is a sketchbook.

---

66 Wolfgang Rihm, in discussion with Wilhelm Matejka, 11 November 1992, private recording of the Sender Freies Berlin radio broadcast in possession of the author. The interview took place in the framework of the concert dedicated to the performance of

Like the excessive use of crescendos and decrescendos, the practice of instantaneous composing was by no means Rihm's invention. He adopted a practice that had become characteristic for the New-Leftist new-music scene since the mid-1960s. Sharing the values of the student and protest movements, politically engaged contemporary musicians strove for anti-authoritarian, anti-hierarchical, and grassroots-oriented modes of composing and performing music. The method that, in their view, was most consistent with the socio-political impetus of the movements was free improvisation: no composer, no score, no conductor—in sum, no authoritative instance that 'commanded' the musicians what to do. The tendency toward free improvisation manifested itself in the so-called Sound Pools that the musicians' collective Musica Elettronica Viva (MEV) organized beginning in 1966,[67] and in progressive pedagogy in elementary school since 1970. Free-improvisation groups established themselves in numerous West German cities throughout the 1970s.[68] Rihm was well aware of this development, as confirmed in an interview in 1992.[69]

Two other characteristics of postmodern music that occur, often in combination with each other, can be traced back to the spirit of '1968': an irreverent treatment of quotations and the aesthetics of fragmentation. This becomes visible in the context of the bicentennial of Beethoven's birthday in 1970. Striving to bring the New-Leftist anti-authoritarian revolt into the musical field, New-Leftist composers, who were invited to contribute compositions to the celebration ceremonies, refused to include the expected references to the great master, Beethoven. Instead, they alienated the long tradition of *hommage* compositions. While, in the past, composers had praised masters in music by basing variation sets on their famous themes, avant-gardists such as Mauricio Kagel, Karlheinz Stockhausen, and Wilhelm Dieter Siebert removed the great master Beethoven from his pedestal by processing his music according

---

Rihm's string quartets nos. 3, 5, and 8 by the Arditti Quartet at the broadcasting station (today: Radio Berlin Brandenburg, or RBB).

[67] Frederic Rzewski, Alvin Curran, and Richard Teitelbaum founded the ensemble 1966 in Rome. In the sound pools, the audience was invited to freely improvise together with the ensemble. When the non-professionals joined the sound pools the result was regularly charivari and turmoil; see Frederic Rzewski, 'Sound Pool (1969)', *Dissonanz* 6 (1970), 13–14. The art of improvisation is to avoid playing without a break and instead to allow enough phases of silence.

[68] On the relationship between research on creativity, (music) pedagogy, and free improvisation, see Beate Kutschke, 'Improvisation: An Always-Accessible Instrument of Innovation', *Perspectives of New Music* 37, no. 2 (1999), 147–62; Beate Kutschke, *Neue Linke/Neue Musik: Kulturtheorien und künstlerische Avantgarde in den 1960er und 70er Jahren* (Cologne and Weimar, 2007).

[69] Wolfgang Rihm, in discussion with Wilhelm Matejka.

to radical aesthetics.[70] Avant-gardist compositional techniques are marked by fragmentation; around 1970 a non-fragmented composition would not have been classified as modern or avant-gardist (unless composed in the minimalist style). Drawing on the aesthetics of fragmentation, Kagel's *Ludwig van* (film, LP, and score), Stockhausen's *Kurzwellen mit Beethoven*, and Siebert's *Unser Ludwig 1970* literally tore Beethoven's music apart, ripped it off, distorted, alienated, and deconstructed it.[71] In so doing, however, they also created pluralist compositions that combined contrasting tonalities and styles: major-minor-tonal classical and atonal modernist.

Again, postmodern composers adopted the achievements of modernist composers for their *hommage*-and-variation compositions. While the titles of their pieces seemed innocuous—Wilhelm Killmayer's *Brahms-Bildnis* (1984), Detlev Müller-Siemens's *Variationen über einen Ländler von Franz Schubert* (1977–8), Wolfgang Rihm's *Erscheinung: Skizze über Schubert* (1978), Wolfgang von Schweinitz's *Mozart-Variationen*, op. 12 (1976), and *Streichsextett—Hommage à Franz Schubert*, op. 16 (1978)—their compositional structures and moods were subversive. This can be observed in Müller-Siemens's *Variationen* (figure 5.4). He created a kitschy atmosphere through obsessive repetitions of a turning figure, luscious instrumentation, and a non-Wagnerian 'redemption' cadence[72] right before the coda, in contrasting combination with a shredded texture. Müller-Siemens generated the disintegration of the smooth surface of the music by means of numerous short crescendo–decrescendo sequences that overlap between the different voices,[73]

---

[70]   Important contributors to the *hommage* genre, which was strongly informed by neoclassical aesthetics and predominated on the West German contemporary music scene, were composers such as Ralph Vaughan Williams (*Fantasia on a Theme by Thomas Tallis* [1910]), Philipp Jarnach (*Musik mit Mozart*, op. 25 [1935]), Benjamin Britten (*Variations on a Theme of Frank Bridge*, op. 10 [1937]) and *Variations and Fugue on a Theme of Henry Purcell*, op. 34 [1945]), Alfredo Casella (*Paganiniana* [1941]), Boris Blacher (*Orchestervariationen über ein Thema von Niccolò Paganini* [1947]) and *Variationen über ein Thema von Muzio Clementi* [1961]), Werner Egk (*Französische Suite nach Jean-Philippe Rameau* [1949]), and Bohuslav Martinů (*Variationen auf ein Thema von Rossini* [1949]).

[71]   Mauricio Kagel, *Ludwig van* [1969], *The Mauricio Kagel Edition* (Munich: Winter & Winter, 2006), DVD; Mauricio Kagel, *Ludwig van* (Deutsche Grammophon, 1970), LP; Mauricio Kagel, *Ludwig van* (Vienna, 1970); Karlheinz Stockhausen, *Stockhausen—Beethoven—op. 1970* (Deutsche Grommphon, 1970), CD; Wilhelm Dieter Siebert, *Unser Ludwig 1970* (score) (unpublished).

[72]   The emphatically solemn character of this passage—each chord of the progression (iv6, cadential 6/4 [with minor sixth], V, I [Picardy third in the upper voice]) is interrupted by rests; the tonic is played *messa di voce*—has strong transcendental connotations.

[73]   Abrupt changes between *piano* and *forte* from one bar to the next in the theme (mm. 9–16).

Figure 5.4   Detlev Müller-Siemens, *Variationen über einen Ländler von Franz Schubert*, first page of variation 3, p. 15

as well as the use of microtones and glissandos that produce an out-of-tune sound. The Ländler that Müller-Siemens depicts does not simulate the idyll of Viennese suburban living and wine taverns, but the era of Metternich, which was marked by censorship and a large spy network suppressing freedom of speech in the early-nineteenth-century Austria.

Having proposed an explanation for the emergence of postmodern music—the zeitgeist of '1968'—that replaces the established explanation brought forward by musicologists such as de la Motte-Haber and Mosch, a key question remains: if it was the subversive, critical, pluralist, anti-authoritarian, and expressive impetus of New-Leftist avant-gardist composers, and not PEL theories, that inspired them in the early 1970s to develop a postmodern style, why did the musicologists avail themselves of the PEL discourse in order to explain the emergence of postmodern music? What motivated them to do so? One answer may be that the association with postmodern music was created less by the content of PEL theories—a posthistoric, dehumanized society, organized down to the last detail; without progress, but with stagnation; the loss of historical consciousness—than by the general mood those theories conveyed. For the hyperexpressivity in the pieces by Rihm, Trojahn, and Müller-Siemens does not cover the entire spectrum of human emotions. Instead, like atonal, avant-gardist music in general, this music has a pessimistic, negative, self-ironic, depressive mood—a mood that excellently matched the apocalyptic tone of the PEL theories at the end of the last millennium.