
MARKING OUR 60th ISSUE (INTRODUCTORY STUDY)

Article received on October 24th 2022
Article accepted on November 30th 2022
Original scientific paper

UDC 78.01
050.489NEW SOUND

DOI 10.5937/newso2260001V

Mirjana Veselinović-Hofman*

University of Arts in Belgrade
Faculty of Music

NEW SOUND IN THE *NEW SOUND*

Abstract: In this text, written to mark the 30th anniversary of the establishment of the *New Sound* International Journal of Music, I discuss two concepts/terms that have exerted a formative influence on its physiognomy. Those concepts are *new sound* and *(the) international*, whose meanings have crystallised in the Journal in line with their intersections with categories that are respectively related to them. The basis of those intersections is identified in the globalising context of transcending borders.

Keywords: new, experimental, contemporary, new sound, *New Sound* journal, international, world, global

New sound in the *New Sound*... is not merely a bit of wordplay used to fashion the title above, but the essence and goal that the *New Sound* International Journal of Music has pursued ever since its founding three decades ago. The 'pun' points to the Journal's orientation, its object of attention and study, its mode of operation; it alludes to its contributors' life journeys in composition and musicology and concrete efforts built upon them as indicators of critical assessments, creative affinities, methodological approaches, theoretical posi-

* The author's contact details: mvesel@eunet.rs

tions and reflections, creative styles of musical and musicological modes of expression. On this occasion, that 'pun' will be articulated and discussed in terms of two key issues whose mutual dependence is implied in it: first, the meaning that the term *new sound* has 'acquired' in the *New Sound* journal and, second, arising from the first: the issue of the *New Sound* journal's significance regarding the meaning of new sound that has come to crystallize in the Journal and that the Journal has sought to advance. In terms of the perspective from which the *New Sound* journal has represented new sound, a highly important factor is its international dimension, as an indicator of the theoretical and social context of the affirmation of new sound in and by the *New Sound* journal.

My discussion of the first issue stated above is predicated on the generally accepted demarcation lines between the concepts of the new, experimental, and contemporary, as the defining characteristics of their corresponding types of sound and music, respectively. The answer that I am aiming for regarding that issue gestures toward highlighting the treatment of those boundaries in *New Sound* in terms of whether *New Sound* has accepted and helped enhance them or, rather, weakened them and facilitated their overcoming.

Let us begin by profiling the categories/terms of the *new*, *experimental*, and *contemporary* both as separate in their elementary, defining, respective meanings and, at the same time, largely 'overlapping' in those meanings that are correlated. Furthermore, all three categories carry two basic meanings: a chronological and a problematizing meaning. On that basis, it is possible not only to demarcate them from one another, but also, to a certain extent, to assimilate them with each other. Thus, as a concept understood in *chronological* terms, *new* may refer to any newly created work. In other words, at the time of its making every work is new, regardless of its historical epoch – be it the 17th or 21st century. But given the (historical) richness of compositional production, every individual chronological meaning of *new* is actually quite short in duration. For, a chronologically new work is new only until the emergence of another newly created work, especially within the confines of an individual oeuvre and, by extension, the wider chronological 'sequence' of the production of new works. By nature, however, works that are chronologically close are not necessarily close in aesthetic, poetic, or stylistic terms as well. It also follows that not all new works are innovative in terms of the new as a result of individual creative exploration, as an original authorial solution that exceeds what has already been explored, applied, and become conventional. Therefore, inasmuch as novelties, which goes without saying,

always seek their own systemic affirmation whereby, as a rule, they 'morph' into new conventions that stand to be, in turn, replaced by other, fresh creative swings in domains that are still unexplored... It concerns the new as the fundamental evolutionary source of 'propulsion' for music and artistic creativity in general.

However, one should not forget that in music, the category of the *new* also appears in many other, specific 'guises' that are not always of the same 'order'.¹ They include avant-garde and experimental innovation as well, the former based on a manifest and usually aggressively asserted break with precisely the evolutionary chain described above,² the latter – experimental innovation – on experiment as a "fertile soil for generating the *novum*" in art,³ "the childhood of routine" (L. Kramer).⁴ Due to this complexity in the category of the *new*, that is, the richness of its spectrum, as well as the complexity of the categories of the *experimental* and *contemporary*, on this occasion I will interpret them like discrete sets. From that perspective, the *avant-garde* and *experimental* will be viewed as two subsets of the set of elements that constitute the category of the *new*, giving rise to the conclusion that precisely in them, the set comprising the *new* largely overlaps or, more precisely, intersects with the set comprising the *experimental*. Their intersection is populated by avant-garde innovations that result from experimentation and by experiments⁵ that produce unexpectedly avant-garde innovative effects. It also includes experiments that are performed with the intent of producing an expected innovative result. Besides, although not an 'openly' chronological category, the *experimental* does imply a chronological meaning as well. Furthermore, it does so in the same sense that the category of the *new* does, but mediated by it. Namely, in chronological terms, every *experimental* work is

¹ Let us mention here, for instance, the innovations in modernism, in 1970s methodologies of composition, in the stylistic 'patterns' of 21st-century European music, in Serbian music, and so on and so forth!

² Cf. Mirjana Veselinović (=Veselinović-Hofman), *Stvaralačka prisutnost evropske avantgarde u nas*, Belgrade, Univerzitet umetnosti, 1983.

³ Ивана Миладиновић Прица (=Ivana Miladinović Prica), *Ефекти америчке експерименталне музике у пољу савремене уметности и теорије*, doctoral dissertation submitted in 2018 to the Musicology Department of the Faculty of Music in Belgrade, manuscript, 32.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 41.

⁵ For a detailed discussion of the notion of experiment and a semantic focus on the term experiment with regards to its many derivatives, such as experimental, experimentalism, experimenting, and the like, see: Ivana Miladinović Prica, *op. cit.*

also new, until the appearance of another newly performed 'trial' in the same field. But not every chronologically *new* work is also experimental. The notion of *new* is broader than the notion of *experimental*.

Let us also add here the fact that at the time of their emergence, that is, in whatever segment of history they emerged, every work of music and every musical experiment chronologically constitute(d) not only a new, but also a *contemporary* product. Contemporary, as in current, present, ongoing. Of course, something that was current in its own time and that which is current today bear different concrete temporal 'prefixes' and thereby also semantic references, but essentially carry the same meaning.

Viewed from that perspective, in chronological terms every musical novelty is at the same time *contemporary* as well. But that does not mean that every (chronologically) contemporary work is likewise new in an essential, artistic way. In other words, that it features an artistically original musical substance that constitutes a shift, a link in the evolutionary chain of music. That is perhaps most evident when it comes to retrograde musical poetics that, while they may be contemporary today, not only fail to produce any innovations, but also actively reject them.

In other words, *contemporary* is a broader concept than *new*, but they intersect when the *contemporary* features an artistically innovative core. That is why it is hardly surprising that the term *contemporary* is used in multiple ways and with specific meanings, above all as a term that implies a sort of transfer from the chronological to the problem meaning of the concept, in fact, a link and, often, equivalence between those two meanings. This is best observed in the usage of the phrase *contemporary music*. Typically, it is used as an umbrella term for all of 20th- and 21st-century compositional production and disparate, even entirely unrelated poetic, stylistic, and aesthetic phenomena in the music of the same period. Also, it is used as a label for musical creativity from the latter half of the 20th century onward – mostly its avant-garde tendencies; also, it is applied to music created from the 1970s on – marked by postmodernist positions; as well as to various types of the postmodernist revitalization of some components of musical modernism over the past decades of the 21st century. In short, the term *contemporary* in the phrase *contemporary music*, with the meanings explicated above, refers to various aspects of unconventional creative choices and procedures.⁶ It is

⁶ For more on the concept of *contemporary*, see: Mirjana Veselinović-Hofman, "Savremena muzika u svetlu održivosti u autonomno muzičkom, interkulturalnom i interdisci-

thereby largely homologous with the meaning of the term *new*, especially when referring to avant-garde phenomena in Western European music, especially those tracing their lineage to Darmstadt. By the way, within the category of the *new*, they are also further specified by the phrase *New Music*.

All of these semantic equivalences between the sets comprising the *new*, the *experimental*, and the *contemporary* point to an overcoming and relativization of their shared (conceptual) boundaries. Furthermore, one should not forget that this overcoming assumes a special problematizing importance in the context of postmodernist globalization, seen as a continual process of establishing relations between differences on the global civilization level; a process that essentially rests on overcoming the boundaries between those differences and identities. And although the fading of the boundaries separating the new, the experimental, and the contemporary in music described above did not come about solely as a result of postmodernist stances and trans-cultural concepts, but occurred in music before postmodernism as well,⁷ it was only in postmodernism that it attained its 'open' status. It became one of the epitomizing symptoms of globalization.

That is precisely the set of problems that has fundamentally shaped the *New Sound* journal's position regarding new sound. The problematic of 'faded' and, as we saw above, even non-existent demarcation lines between the concepts of *new*, *experimental*, and *contemporary*. Briefly: in line with the foregoing discussion, the qualification *new sound* refers not only to the corresponding chronological definition, but also to the problematizing definition of *new* works, which are discussed in the Journal from a scholarly, analytical, or aesthetic perspective, in different sections of the Journal (*Studies*,

plinarnom okruženju", in: *Pojmovnik teorije umetnosti; Teorija umetnosti – Interdisciplinarni pristup*, Belgrade, Orion Art, 2011, 26–36.

⁷ The complex issue of criteria for establishing boundaries in all kinds of domains of civilized life – from natural, inherent boundaries to those that are socio-politically formed and militarily imposed/altered – is not part of my considerations here, although we are currently very much witnessing its continued relevance and, moreover, tragic repercussions. I am focusing here only on the positive aspects of globalization, crucially involving genuine communication as a basis for overcoming boundaries in the global context: communication informed by mutual artistic, cultural, social, and historical respect and striving to understand every individual, autonomous creative identity and 'structure' in that context, which participates in it. Although these positive aspects remain largely utopian in the broader socio-political projection of today, in the domain of music's general tendencies since the demise of modernism they do constitute the prevailing reality.

New Works, Analytical Perspectives, Interpretations, Views). Moreover, the *chronological* definition also includes recent production and presents it as a selection of artistically worthy contributions by Serbian and foreign authors, whereby it simultaneously also qualifies it as *contemporary* in the broader sense of the word explained above. At the same time, the possible innovative contribution of that production, exceeding the significance of a personal poetics, is not decisively important. But it is when it comes to applying the term *new sound* to the *problematizing* definition of new works. Then the set of the *new* in that phrase implies the phenomenon of intersecting between its subsets of the *avant-garde* and *experimental* with analogous elements from the sets comprising the *experimental* and the *contemporary*.⁸

It is important to note here that the reading of the term *new sound* expounded above is pursued in the Journal in its international context. That is significant not only because the Journal, with its international prefix and activities, strives to help the affirmation of contemporary Serbian and international musical and musicological creativity both in our country and beyond,⁹ but also because it views the category of the *international* – just as it sees the category of *new sound*! – as a semantic intersection between related concepts, that is, overcoming *their* boundaries. From that perspective, we could use Daniel Chua's explication of those terms (*international*, *world*, and *global*) offered in his article "Global Musicology: A Keynote without a Key".¹⁰ Namely, in his discussion of the phenomenon of global musicology, Chua first an-

⁸ For more information about works selected for discussion in *New Sound* as *new* according to the criteria described above, see the appendices published in all the main sections of the Journal's 40th issue. With that issue the Journal marked its 20th anniversary, by producing a self-reflective volume. Namely, the special topic of the issue was the Journal itself, its policies, activities, sections, their contents, problems discussed... Cf. *New Sound*, 40, II/2012.

⁹ Let us remember that *Нови звук / New Sound* is a bilingual journal, whose electronic edition is published in Serbian and English. Also, every issue features an audio section as well, comprising the recordings of some of the pieces discussed in the Journal.

¹⁰ Daniel K. L. Chua, "Global Musicology: A Keynote without a Key", *Acta musicologica*, Volume 94, Number 1, 2022, 109–126. This study is an extended version of Chua's text titled "Global Musicology", which he wrote for *Нови звук/New Sound* on its silver jubilee (cf. Daniel K. L. Chua, "Global Musicology", *New Sound*, 50, II/2017, 12–16). In the former study, published five years later, Chua used the main features of the conception, vision, mode, scope, and import of *New Sound*'s work as his main theses (at times literally copying passages from his earlier text). However, that earlier text, published in *New Sound*, was somehow omitted from the list of references in his more recent, 2022 article.

swers the question of what is global and then what is musicology, asserting that his answers, i.e. definitions of those terms are extremely simplified “so the reader can complicate them later”.¹¹ We may expand on that by seeking to posit the meaning of the term *international* in the ‘subtitle’ of the *New Sound* journal in light of the concepts related to the *international* cited above, starting from their mutual differences, which form the basis of Chua’s definitions. But not, however, to dwell on those differences, but, rather, to highlight the common semantic locus of those concepts, since *that* locus actually determines the international physiognomy of *New Sound*. Thus, Chua defines the concept of the *global* and, by the same token, those of the *international* and the *world* as well, “in contrast to two related terms – [e.g. in the case of the global] *the international* and *the world*”, noting that these “three words – international, world, and global – are often used interchangeably”.¹² He therefore defines the *global* as something that “by definition, is *always* emerging”,¹³ the result of a process of globalization “characterized by the *interconnectivity* of the entire world”,¹⁴ wherein “identities are formed through their interaction with difference”.¹⁵ “The ‘world’”, by contrast, “is about diversity and differentiation”,¹⁶ that is, akin to a set of local, static integrities and identities,¹⁷ as opposed to the *international*. The latter Chua interprets as “a model for integration”, i.e. a set of prescribed rules of cooperation intended for those that may participate in that integration.¹⁸

In relation to the definitions elaborated above, the *international* designation of *New Sound* expands, on the one hand, to include the characteristics of the *world* and, on the other, the *global*. It ‘absorbs’ *the world* by being open to representing the differences and specificities of local musical phenomena and identities, that is, affirming them – ranging from those rooted in our own musical soil to those rooted in any other soil in the world, that is, across the

¹¹ “In fact, they’re going to be too simple, too naive, too stereotypical, and too black and white. This is deliberate, because I want to lay out these definitions in their most basic forms so the reader can complicate them later.” *Ibid.*, 112.

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ *Ibid.*, 110.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 113.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 114.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 113.

¹⁷ Cf. *ibid.*

¹⁸ “The international is a model for integration. It is the law of the one under which the many cooperate.” *Ibid.*, 113.

global face of civilization. That openness of the Journal to differences on a global scale stimulates the exchange of insights and viewpoints, comparative studies, forging relations that are not hierarchical, unlike, for instance, the tiring relation of periphery-centre.¹⁹ It continually stimulates musicological communication on a global authorial scale, by including contributions constructed on various methodologies, produced within different musicological genres, addressing musical and musicological creativity in a global world.

But at the same time, the Journal's *international* quality essentially continues to 'function' as an institutional "model for integration" based on a cooperative acceptance of and respect for the established standards of professional ethics and cooperation, on organizing the journal in clearly profiled sections,²⁰ on a conception of new sound defined on the basis of overcoming the boundaries of its related categories, as well as the concept of *international*, defined according to the same principle: the semantic intersection of related categories, which is primarily symptomatic of the globalizing problematic of extended and open borders, with respect for individual creative autonomy.

Works Cited

- Chua, Daniel K.L.: "Global Musicology", *New Sound*, 50, II/2017, 12–16.
---: "Global Musicology: A Keynote without a Key", *Acta musicologica*, Volume 94, Number 1, 2022, 109–126.
- Миладиновић Прица, Ивана: *Ефекти америчке експерименталне музике у пољу савремене уметности и теорије*. Doctoral dissertation submitted in 2018 to the Musicology Department of the Faculty of Music in Belgrade, manuscript *New Sound*, 40, II/2012.
- Veselinović (=Veselinović-Hofman), Mirjana: *Stvaralačka prisutnost evropske avangarde u nas*. Belgrade: Univerzitet umetnosti, 1983.
- Veselinović-Hofman, Mirjana: "Savremena muzika u svetlu održivosti u autonomno muzičkom, interkulturalnom i interdisciplinarnom okruženju", in: Dragorad Kovačević (Ed.), *Pojmovnik teorije umetnosti; Teorija u metnosti – Interdisciplinarni pristup*. Belgrade: Orion Art, 2011, 26–36.

¹⁹ Cf. Mirjana Veselinović-Hofman, "Music at the Periphery under Conditions of Degraded Hierarchy between the Centre and the Margins in the Space of the Internet", in: Tilman Seebass et al. (Eds), *Identities: The World of Music in Relation to Itself*, Belgrade, Faculty of Music, 2012, 23–33; M. Veselinović-Hofman, "On the Future of Music History in Professional and Central-Peripheral European Musical Circumstances", *Muzikologijal Musicology*, Vol. 26, I/2019, 115–124.

²⁰ Cf. *New Sound*, 40, II/2012.

- : "Music at the Periphery under Conditions of Degraded Hierarchy between the Centre and the Margins in the Space of the Internet", in: Tilman Seebass, Mirjana Veselinović-Hofman, and Tijana Popović Mladjenović (Eds), *Identities: The World of Music in Relation to Itself*. Belgrade: Faculty of Music, 2012, 23–33.
- : "On the Future of Music History in Professional and Central-Peripheral European Musical Circumstances", *Muzikologija/Musicology*, Vol. 26, I/2019, 115–124.

Summary

The subject of this text is approached here from the perspective of two closely related and mutually dependent issues: one of them concerns the meaning that the category of new sound has 'acquired' in the *New Sound* International Journal of Music and the other the significance of the *New Sound* journal regarding new sound in the sense advanced by the journal. The discussion of the first issue is based on the widely accepted borders between the concepts of the new, experimental, and contemporary, as the defining concepts for their corresponding types of sound and music, respectively. With regard to the semantic complexity of those concepts, they are interpreted here as separate sets, whose interrelations give rise to the definition of new sound that the Journal has sought to affirm. Thus, apart from the concept of *new* in the chronological sense, that is, in the sense of a newly composed work, the set comprising the *new* in the phrase *new sound* implies the phenomenon of intersecting between its subsets comprising *the avant-garde* and *the experimental* with corresponding elements from the *experimental* and *contemporary* sets.

The same principle governs the conception of the category of *the international*: as the intersection of its closely related sets of the *world* and the *global*. It overlaps with the *world* by virtue of affirming emblematic, "static" diversities, and with the *global* not only by encompassing those diversities in the global span of civilization, but also by affirming them as a stimulus and subject of open musical communication in the same range. And such communication rests on the phenomenon of overcoming borders.