

Abstracts

Panel 1:

Local Reception of Neue Sachlichkeit

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The Representation of the *Neue Sachlichkeit* in Latvia During 20th Century Interwar Period. The Opera *Hamlet* (1935) by Jānis Kalniņš

During the 20th-century interwar period in Latvia, in the first period of independence, musical life reflected interest in the new styles of the modernism period. That was manifested mainly by the performance of musical works by specific foreign composers in concerts and the evaluation of new stylistic movements in criticism. On the other hand, the reflection of new stylistic movements in the musical creativity of Latvian composers was fragmentary. Relying on the stylistic foundations and traditions of late Romanticism dominated, supplementing them with some novelties in the musical language. There were less often cases where composers implemented stylistics characteristic of the modernist period (for instance, Impressionism, *Neobarbarism*, Expressionism, Neoclassicism, *Neue Sachlichkeit* etc.) more consistently – for example, the solo songs of Jānis Zālītis (1884–1943), the piano music of Lūcija Garūta (1902–1977) and Volfgangs Dārziņš (1906–1962), the symphonic music of Jānis Ivanovs (1906–1983) and the operas of Jānis Kalniņš (1904–2000).

This presentation will highlight Jānis Kalniņš opera *Hamlet* (1935, libretto in Latvian based on Shakespeare's tragedy). In the music history of Latvia, it was a new, modernistic solution in the opera genre before World War II. Stylistically, that is an eclectic musical composition. The characteristic emotional directness of Italian Verism adds to the echoes of the German Expressionistic dissonances and the *Neue Sachlichkeit* style.

Thus, the main issues of the presentation will include the analysis of the perception of *Neue Sachlichkeit* in the Latvian (Riga) interwar musical life and the individual adaptation (echoes) of this style in Jānis Kalniņš's *Hamlet* as the first modernistic opera in Latvia in the 20th century.

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Neue Sachlichkeit and the Beginnings of Modern Slovak Music

In the interwar period, the previously stagnant musical life of Bratislava underwent significant changes. Most of the stimuli came from Alexander Albrecht, who paradoxically did not stay with the Neo-Romantic orientation, nor did he accept the impulses of Expressionism. His rejection of the self-involvement and the emotional excitement was based on his personal compositional poetics and was relating to the idea of music for use. As a result, in his works he tended to the principle of simplicity and the adoption of the models and techniques of Baroque music. Overall, these compositions represent a synthesis of the legacy of the pre-Classical period with new music, moreover enriched by the stylistic elements, which the composer specifically derived from folk music. Albrecht thus made an important move to break out of local isolation towards the then current development abroad.

In Prague – one of the centres of contemporary art – the situation was completely different. Another Slovak composer Alexander Moyzes was confronted here with various artistic manifests. One of the most typical trends was civilism, which reflected aspects that make up today's man, such as technology, entertainment, attributes of the metropolitan environment, etc. Although it originally appeared in literature, its characteristics based on the overcoming of subjectivist attitudes towards objectivism and anti-sentimentalism spread to music very soon, where the elements of jazz and other related genres were featured significantly. Moyzes with his strong sense of order and use of traditional forms was particularly impressed by the elegance of dance rhythms, which he incorporated into his musical representation of the reality of everyday life. The grotesque is obvious too, when Moyzes inspired by a successful revue performance, eventually composed its free musical pendant.

Both Albrecht and Moyzes created works in which the impulses of modernism appeared in Slovak music for the first time. As they are strongly correlated with the ideals and aesthetics of *Neue Sachlichkeit*, this paper explores these relationships and the possibility of local parallels for this phenomenon.

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***Neue Sachlichkeit* in Sweden: two examples**

So far, *Neue Sachlichkeit* has not had a strong presence in Swedish music historiography. Still, as the call for papers suggests, it is not hard to find also in Sweden examples of ideas and values shared with the German movement, particularly looking at the generation of composers that came of age in the 30s (Larsson, Wirén, de Frumerie, von Koch). In this paper I argue that there was indeed a similar rejection of an antecedent aesthetic; however, in Sweden that meant a stubbornly lingering romantic nationalism cherished by leading composers, critics and public alike. (Attempts at expressionism had been few and mainly sceptically received.)

Ideas of objectivity provided a means for the composers of the interwar years to distance themselves from the prevalent aesthetics, exploring a musical realism instead of the sentimentalism of romantic nationalism. Objectivity also offered a way for working with folk music material detached from the romantic nationalists' obsession with sentiment and national identity.

This is illustrated by looking at two compositions from the 40s: Erland von Koch's *Nordiskt capriccio*, op. 26, (1943) and Gunnar de Frumerie's *Symfoniska variationer över Vårvindar friska*, op. 25, (1941). In both works one finds several characteristics typical of the *Neue Sachlichkeit*. They show an apparent objective character, offering clarity and directness in both melody and structure. There is a prominent focus on kinetic drive, above all in von Koch's work. Both works treat their folk music material with objectivity, focussing on rhythmic and material aspects rather than sentimental. In de Frumerie's work the use of a well-known folk song as foundation also offers an element of familiarity, assuring a desired public appeal. The wish to compose specifically for the public was pronounced by both composers, and also a characteristic of the *Neue Sachlichkeit*.

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Blending Neoclassicism, jazz and cabaret music: the playful objectivity of Les Six

The formation of the avant-garde collective "Les Six" was a pivotal moment in its music history. Initially congregating under the influence and ambition of Jean Cocteau, the group began to take shape during the First World War. However, it was in the post-war era of the early 1920s that Les Six truly matured and gained significant recognition.

This ensemble, comprising Darius Milhaud, Francis Poulenc, Arthur Honegger, Georges Auric, Louis Durey, and Germaine Tailleferre, not only embraced elements of popular culture, neoclassicism, and mechanical rhythms but also reflected a broader European zeitgeist, paralleling key aspects of Germany's *Neue Sachlichkeit*. Their association was brief yet tumultuous, marked by intense collaborations and conflicts, not only among themselves but also with other contemporary artists and movements such as the Dadaists. This dynamic interplay of ideas and styles was further complicated by their relationships with Erik Satie and Jean Cocteau.

Despite the criticism they faced during and after their time, the legacy of Les Six remains significant in the annals of music history. Their approach can be seen as a precursor to postmodernism, with an eclectic blend of neo-classicism, modernism, and avant-garde elements. They boldly challenged the prevailing norms of the era, confronting the musical hegemony and legacy of figures like Stravinsky and Debussy. Notably, they were among the first in European art music to integrate elements of jazz, raising questions about racial influences in their work. Additionally, their music was inspired by the sounds of urban life, incorporating elements of popular and cabaret music, as well as the rhythms of machinery, into their nationalistic expressions – a stark contrast to the neo-primitivism of Stravinsky and the nationalistic works of Bartok and Kodaly.

From a contemporary perspective, is looking at Les Six still relevant? Their compositions reflect societal upheaval and trauma post-World War I, but do they also offer parallels to our

increasingly turbulent times? While some examination of the social-historic context of Les Six exists, why is there a scarcity of in-depth analysis of the music from their collective efforts, such as *L'Album des Six Les Mariés de la Tour Eiffel*? This presentation challenges the assumption that their collaborative music, perceived as deceptively simple, offers little for analytical scrutiny.

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Panel 2:

Cosmopolitanism, Networks, and Connections with Germany

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Roberto Gerhard and the Reception of the Neue Sachlichkeit in 1920s Catalonia

At the end of his life, the Catalan composer Roberto Gerhard (1896–1970) recalled the exciting musical effervescence of Berlin during the three years he studied with Arnold Schönberg in the city, between 1926 and 1929. In those years, the German capital had seen...

...the first impact of jazz on the Western world. Ragtime, foxtrot, Shimmy, Blues and Charleston were the rage. The reign of the saxophone and the percussionist had begun. Kurt Weill with his *Dreigroschenoper* [1928] and *Der Zar lässt sich photographieren* [1927] and Ernst Krenek with *Jonny spielt auf* [1926] and *Leben des Orest* [1929] cashed it on the craze. [...] No other climate could have produced such works as Hindemith's *Neues vom Tage* [1929] or Hanns Eisler's mock-lyric *Newspaper Cuttings* [1926]; his marching songs for workers [1928–1932]; or Hindemith's easy pieces for children such as *Wir bauen eine Stadt* [1930].

This presentation delves into the influence of these composers on Gerhard's music by demonstrating that the two *Sardanas* for instrumental ensemble that he composed in Barcelona in 1929 were his main response to the *Neue Sachlichkeit*. My talk discusses the first of these pieces, scored for an ensemble halfway between a jazz-band and a cobla (the traditional Catalan wind ensemble). I contextualise Gerhard's interest in the sound of these ensembles as part of the interwar anti-Romantic modernist tendencies that valued and preferred wind instruments over string instruments, the latter being considered too “romantic” and expressive. I then show that the unusual instrumentation of this *Sardana* is directly influenced by Kurt Weill's *The Threepenny Opera*, a work that Gerhard particularly admired. In the final part I discuss the reception of this *Sardana* in relation to sound and symbology of “jazz” in the 1920s, considered by some Catalan critics an unacceptable element of racial and national otherness.

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Between Expressionism and Neue Sachlichkeit? Transformations of the Handel opera revival in the light of artistic networks

The staging of George Frideric Handel's opera *Rodelinda* in Göttingen in 1920, initiated by the art historian Oskar Hagen, is considered a milestone in the reception of Handel. From the traditional university town of Göttingen the exceptional success of *Rodelinda* quickly spread to other cities, and even major cultural centres like Berlin looked curiously at the impulses from the province, which were modernist and historicist at the same time.

Especially the avant-garde elements of the Göttingen performances are remarkable, with a unique mixture of expressionist stage designs, modern dance, ensemble choreography and a post-Wagnerian music theatre concept which was intended to counter the perceived predominance of Wagnerian opera aesthetics in the repertoire of the theatres of the Weimar Republic with a new, fresh approach – Handel as an antidote. Over the course of the years, the expressionist approach turned increasingly towards ideas taken up from the discourse about *Neue Sachlichkeit*, which amongst others was a result of personal connections between the Handel renaissance and the Bauhaus.

Characteristic for this period was the high degree of mobility among musicians, directors and other artists and organizers of the cultural life of the Weimar Republic. Traveling from one production to the next, they provided a constant exchange of knowledge, creating personal networks, sharing their experiences and skills and transferring ideas from one stage to another. For example, Oskar Hagen invited soloists from Berlin or Vienna to Göttingen, where they worked with the local forces and then travelled on to their regular engagements. In that way, extraordinary local events such as the Handel Opera Festival in Göttingen provided a temporary platform for collaboration and exchange of excellent creative protagonists to discuss and transform ideas of expressionism and *Neue Sachlichkeit*.

Drawing on source material from various archives, this presentation aims to examine the configuration of the network of protagonists and institutions giving shape to the Handel opera revival in order to gain a better understanding of knowledge flows and mutual influences in the musical life of the Weimar Republic and beyond concerning the idea of *Neue Sachlichkeit*.

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Deconstructive Tonality: Neo-classicism and Popular Music in Pauline Hall's *Suite for Wind Quintet*

The work of the Norwegian composer and music critic Pauline Hall (1890–1969) may be understood as crucial to contemporary music in Norway in the first half of the 20th century. Having studied composition in Paris in the 1910s and worked as a news correspondent in Berlin in the late 1920s, she was regarded as a cosmopolitan character in Norwegian music in the interwar years and beyond. In her compositions, she drew on the influence of Debussy as

well as Brecht and Weill. As a critic, she wrote favourably about visiting popular music stars such as Josephine Baker, Louis Armstrong and Fats Waller.

Researchers have referred to Hall's *Suite for Wind Quintet* (1945) as exemplary of neo-classicism in Scandinavia, emphasising the simplicity of the ensemble and of the tonal language. What is more, Hall's work also contains links with popular music, as exemplified by her use of popular dance music forms and melodies in the *Suite*, which is commonly interpreted as ironic and as "disclosing the banality of the waltz genre" (Vollsnes, 2000).

I take the *Suite* as a focal point for this paper. The composition, which consists of five short movements, contains paraphrases on popular dance music forms as well as quotations from popular songs of the period. I pay special attention to the fourth movement, "Tempo di Valse", which quotes a popular waltz tune of the time in a comical way that deconstructs the dance music style. From this, I argue that Hall's use of musical irony also highlights the musical and cultural complexity of the neo-classical period. This way, neo-classical music, in a context of *Neue Sachlichkeit*, may be seen to function as a hinge between musics, and as opening the door to the popular music of the day.

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Panel 3:

Discourses

Discussant: **Michela Garda** (Università degli Studi di Pavia)

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***Neue Sachlichkeit* and the Problem of the "Austro-German"**

Conventional wisdom tells us that *Neue Sachlichkeit* gained little traction in the Austria of the 1920s, not least in music. In a new republic that had managed to maintain a popular music sphere across the war's disruptions – in operetta, for example – and in which modernists typically formed cadres uninterested in reaching a greater public, it seems that there was little appetite for such a movement. An "accessible" modern found only a meagre market in which to thrive.

As this paper shows, however, this does not mean that the idea of an Austrian *Neue Sachlichkeit* remained unscrutinised in the media and in intellectual circles. On the contrary: it was keenly debated. If the Upper Austrian artist Herbert Ploberger could be faintly praised in late 1926 for his Viennese exhibition of *neusachliche* paintings, then in the next years conservative critics – particularly those inclined towards Dollfuss's "Austrofascism" – became more suspicious. The composer Joseph Marx and the writer Aurel Wolfram, for example, saw *Neue Sachlichkeit* as a threatening German import, a trend anathema to the musical heritage of Bruckner and Mahler, and thus an *Entseelung* ("un-souling") of Austrian art; awkwardly, they found themselves looking longingly back to the 'homegrown' Austrian phenomenon of expressionism.

Neue Sachlichkeit therefore problematizes the label “Austro-German” we so often find ourselves applying uncritically to musical repertoires. But it also created difficulties within individual oeuvres. One example is Ernst Krenek, perhaps the foremost Austrian commentator on the trend in the 1920s. Comfortable in German culture and having enjoyed success there with the *neusachliche* opera *Jonny spielt auf*, Krenek nonetheless participates in Austrian disdain. In an essay of 1927, he finds little to praise in the term itself, but accepts instead a need to readdress the “outside world”, offering it both “subject matter that is common property” and “means that it can comprehend”. It was this thought, the paper concludes, that inspired *Das Leben des Orest* (1929), an opera that integrated Krenek’s “jazz” style into an ancient scenario. It thus contradicted understandings of *Neue Sachlichkeit* in both countries, and found little favour in either.

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Towards objective music: the ascendancy of *Neue Sachlichkeit* as norm in Swedish church music

Church music is one of the domains within musical life in which Sweden was most intimately linked with musical creativity and Protestant thought in Germany during the first decades of the twentieth century. Stints in cities like Berlin and Leipzig formed a natural part in the higher education of organists and church-related composers from the turn of the century. A number of leading church musicians also took active part in the launch of modern musicology – with German role models – and promoted performances of previously unknown historical repertoire, by J.S. Bach and older Lutheran composers.

This paper initially sketches a brief pre-history of how new German-inspired liturgical and aesthetic ideals from the late nineteenth century gradually superseded Romantic conceptions of church music as primarily related to religious sentiments. This background paves the way for a more detailed analysis of discourses launched from the 1920 and into the early 1930s in order to establish a new aesthetic paradigm, based on recent developments in historical German musicology. Particular attention is given to Carl-Allan Moberg’s writings from the period, and most specifically to his 1932 *Kyrkomusikens historia* – a book of substantial length, written not least to convey his construed contrast between subjective and objective church music to a wide readership. Other writings taken into account are Knut Peters’ *Den gregorianska sången* (1930), A. O. T. Hellerström’s *Liturgik* (1932) and *Tidskrift för kyrkomusik och svenskt gudstjänstliv* (issued from 1926). The material is chosen because of its long-lasting impact as a normative ideology for *Neue Sachlichkeit* in Swedish church music.

The main questions are how the antithesis between subjectivity and objectivity is pursued, which technical requirements it elevates as central to modern compositions for the liturgy, as well as how a certain historical canon of role model works emerges. The reading gives attention to the backdrop in coeval continental developments and notes how certain authors are spotlighted as exemplary sources of inspiration. Finally, the reading of Swedish sources investigates to what extent the German political background is heeded, in which a leading Lutheran church music ideologue such as Oskar Söhngen explicitly connected the birth of a

new paradigm in his field to the denunciation of liberalism and the subsequent ascendancy of Nazism.

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A Lost Potential? “New Objectivity” and The Swedish International Society for Contemporary Music (ISSM)

This paper deals with the knowledge transfer of the 1920s concept of *Neue Sachlichkeit* or “New Objectivity” into Swedish musical life through the Swedish Society for Contemporary Music (*Internationella sällskapet för samtida musik*, ISSM) 1923–1939. My emphasis will be on Swedish ISSM members *translating* musical knowledge with regards to “New Objectivity” from the continental (mainly German speaking) context into Swedish discourse.

The ISSM was the Swedish section of the International Society for Contemporary Music (ISCM). The ISCM was founded in 1922 in Salzburg as an international support and exchange organisation for “contemporary” art music. Although Swedish attitudes to interwar continental European musical “modernism” have often been characterized as moderate, reactionary, or disinterested, Swedish composers did found the ISSM already in 1923, directly corresponding to the creation of the central ISCM.

Although the ISSM was poorly represented at the annual ISCM festivals during the interwar years, several members attended the events and translated what they heard and saw to readers at home. Although much of Sweden’s musical life was characterized by romanticism and traditionalism well until the post-war era, ‘New Objectivity’ was, in its various definitions, brought into Swedish musical discourses by the ISSM. The paper studies the ISSM’s main *arenas* of knowledge exchange: correspondences of individual members such as Hilding Rosenberg, as well as articles and announcements connected to the ISSM in the music press. ‘New Objectivity’ in music, often referred to as *nysaklighet*, only entered the ISSM’s arenas in the late 1920s, several years after Germany. Their translations of ‘New Objectivity’ into Swedish discourses focused on the high potential of Swedish composers of ‘reaching’ the audience, ‘adapting’ to contemporary society, and ‘embracing’ the functionality of musical ‘material.’ However, these aspects were described as being mostly lost on Swedish musical life.

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Resisting Utility: *Gebrauchsmusik* at the ISCM Festival

In the Weimar Republic, one of the most significant and widely debated musical products of the *Neue Sachlichkeit* movement was so-called *Gebrauchsmusik*: music for use. An established body of scholarship has explained how and why this term and its associated

repertoire emerged in Germany in the mid-1920s and traced its effects on musical practices and discourses. Yet although there have been individual studies of how exiled and émigré composers such as Kurt Weill transplanted its characteristic values and techniques into new cultural and political contexts, we know surprisingly little about the international circulation and reception of *Gebrauchsmusik* prior to 1933.

This paper recovers overlooked dimensions of transnationalism, mobility, and (mis)translation in the musical history of *Neue Sachlichkeit* through a focus on the annual festivals of the International Society for Contemporary Music (ISCM). Following the concept's rapid rise to domestic prominence, or even orthodoxy, the ISCM's German section repeatedly sought to showcase *Gebrauchsmusik* at the organisation's annual festival of contemporary music. Yet they struggled to overcome the doubts of their colleagues abroad about the quality and politics of a 'utility' music. Their campaign also sparked debate about the extent to which this trend was uniquely German and whether it therefore belonged at an international festival. In 1931, the German section scored a minor victory, when Paul Hindemith's short musical "game" *Wir bauen eine Stadt* was performed by British schoolchildren as part of that year's festival in Oxford. This event and its reception shed further light on the mechanisms by which *Gebrauchsmusik* achieved its enduring international profile in what we might call (after Lydia Goehr) the imaginary museum of musical concepts, even as the repertoire itself made little impact on the imaginary museum of musical works, to which it expressed an almost, if not quite, radical ambivalence.

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Panel 4:

Mechanical Music and Criticism

Discussant: Morten Michelsen (Aarhus Universitet)

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Record criticism and new attitudes of music listeners

In September 1928 the Hungarian music critic István Péterfi (1884–1962) proclaimed the need for record criticism almost as a programme. As he pointed out: the proportion of radio and gramophone listeners among music consumers was increasing, and empty concert halls were becoming more and more frequent, so music criticism could not remain in the old tradition. However, Péterfi himself did not follow his own proclamation. In the late 1920s and early 1930s, in the lack of a permanent record journal in Hungary, the gramophone columns of daily newspapers provided the framework for articles on new record releases. These brief reports were rarely more detailed than the gramophone news of the turn of the century, and their seriousness is marked by the fact that their authors usually did not sign their articles. Professional record review writing essentially began in Hungary only in the second half of the

1930s. In the journal *Tükör*, music experts – the musicologist Dénes Bartha (1908–1993) and the composer Tibor Polgár (1907–1993) – published extensive and thorough record reviews. In my lecture I will first briefly overview the phases of the emergence of record criticism in Hungary, and then, through the writings of Tibor Polgár, I will discuss the phenomenon of the new attitudes of the professional music listener in the second half of the 1930s, which were brought about by the listening of music by machine.

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***Neue Sachlichkeit* on Swedish Record Covers in the 1950s – Jazz and *Neue Sachlichkeit* in postwar Sweden**

This paper discusses how inputs from *Neue Sachlichkeit* arose on record covers for jazz during the 1950s, the period in which jazz records were packaged in sleeves specific for the recording. It argues that by the 1950s, the aesthetics that arose from *Neue Sachlichkeit* could be used to legitimize jazz as an art form, and did so by positioning jazz as specifically linked to modernity. Furthermore, the focus on objectivity connects to the newly arisen focus on the recording as an artistic artefact that was created in the recording studio. This was done by visualizing this place in the artwork, but also by connecting information about the recording process to the actual artefact. The discussion also relates to the extensive discussion of the new technologies on the record covers and their argued importance for the optimal listening experience of jazz enthusiasts.

The Swedish record covers from the early 1950s are of particular interest as they are unique in post-war Europe, where the devastation of World War II meant that the interested jazz audience in most other European countries had considerably smaller means to buy records. This meant that the Swedish output of jazz records at the time with their specific covers is considerably bigger than in other European countries.