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Glocalization—Cosmopolitanism— Contemporaneity. On Three Ambivalent Criteria of the ISCM/SIMC/IGNM

Glokalizacija, kosmopolitizmas, šiuolaikiškumas.

Apie tris ambivalentiškus ISCM/SIMC/IGNM kriterijus

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Abstract

In 1922, with the trauma of the Great War still viscerally present in recent memory, a group of composers gathered in Salzburg to lay the foundation for their utopian project of a society that would transcend national and aesthetic borders and beliefs in order to perform and promote the most current musical tendencies of the present. Today, as one of the world's oldest and largest societies for contemporary music, the International Society for Contemporary Music (ISCM) continues to aspire to these goals through its forty-seven section members in countries and regions around the globe.

By analyzing the formation, internal structures, and aesthetic debates within the ISCM, this paper draws conclusions about continuities and ruptures in the larger context of twentieth-century music historiography. In particular, three criteria that illustrate the aesthetic and political ambivalences of the society will be elaborated: First, the ISCM, as a glocal phenomenon, oscillates between local and global levels and has therefore inevitably underpinned mechanisms of marginalization since its foundation, contrary to its intention. Second, the idea of internationalization in the sense of cosmopolitanism cannot simply be read as a utopian ideal; it must also be (re-)interpreted as a necessity arising from the catastrophic developments of the two World Wars and the traumatic experiences of forced migration that followed. Third, the founding and institutionalization of the ISCM highlight the various temporalities and shifting conditions of the concepts “contemporary” and “contemporaneity,” which therefore require constant reexamination.

Keywords: ISCM, IGNM, International Society for Contemporary Music, Internationale Gesellschaft für Neue Musik, glocalization, cosmopolitanism, contemporaneity.

Anotacija

1922 m., kai Didžiojo karo trauma buvo dar labai gyva, grupė kompozitorių susirinko Zalcburge, kad padėtų pamatus savo utopiniam projektui – bendruomenei, peržengiančiai nacionalines, estetines sienas bei įsitikinimus ir atliepiančiai naujausias muzikos tendencijas. Tarptautinė šiuolaikinės muzikos draugija (*International Society for Contemporary Music*, ISCM), viena seniausių ir didžiausių šiuolaikinės muzikos draugijų pasaulyje, įvairiose pasaulio šalyse ir regionuose turinti keturiasdešimt septynias sekcijas, ir šiandien tebesiekia šių tikslų.

Straipsnio autorė analizuoja ISCM formavimąsi, vidines struktūras, estetines diskusijas ir daro išvadą apie tęstinumą ir lūžius platesniame XX a. muzikos istoriografijos kontekste. Ypač išsamiai aptariami trys kriterijai, iliustruojantys estetinių ir politinių draugijos dviprasmiškumą.

Pirma, ISCM, kaip glocalus reiškiny, svyruoja nuo vietinio prie globaliojo lygmenų, todėl, priešingai nei buvo numatyta, nuo pat draugijos įkūrimo neišvengiamai stiprina marginalizacijos mechanizmus. Antra, internacionalizacijos idėja kosmopolitizmo prasme negali būti suprantama kaip utopinis idealas; ji taip pat turi būti (per)interpretuojama kaip būtinybė, kilusi iš katastrofiškų dviejų pasaulinių karų įvykių ir juos lydėjusių trauminių priverstinės migracijos patirčių. Trečia, ISCM įkūrimas ir institucionalizavimas pabrėžia „šiuolaikiškumo“ sąvokų laikinumą ir kintančias sąlygas, todėl sąvokas reikia nuolat peržiūrėti.

Reikšminiai žodžiai: ISCM, IGNM, Tarptautinė šiuolaikinės muzikos draugija, Internationale Gesellschaft für Neue Musik, glokalizacija, kosmopolitizmas, šiuolaikiškumas.

Introduction

In 1922, pianist, composer, and musicologist Rudolph Réti spoke of the so-called “Salzburg idea” when he outlined his project of a much-needed new community in the form of an international alliance of composers and musicians (Réti 1922, 193–195). The traumas and turmoil

following the end of the Great War were still omnipresent, and in keeping with the basic idea of the League of Nations—founded only a short time before, in 1920—a cross-border exchange in a peaceful community of nations and peoples was to be initiated on a musical level as well. Regardless of national, political, and aesthetic interests, an international association was to be formed in order to

perform and reflect on the current tendencies of the musical present in an appropriate manner. With composer and musicologist Egon Wellesz, Rudolph Réti soon found an ally to implement his idea. Following their call, a group of more than twenty composers—among them Anton Webern, Bela Bartók, Paul Hindemith, Darius Milhaud and Ethel Smyth, to name but a few—gathered in Salzburg in August 1922 to lay the foundation for this alliance of musicians within the framework of the “Internationale Kammermusikaufführungen”—the “International Chamber Music Festival”—which featured fifty pieces from a total of forty-six composers of fifteen Nations (Haefeli 1982, 47–48). Encouraged by the positive response to this event, the constituent meeting of the International Society for Contemporary Music (ISCM)—in French, Société Internationale pour la Musique Contemporaine (SIMC) and in German, Internationale Gesellschaft für Neue Musik (IGNM)—took place in London in January 1923 with musicologist Edward J. Dent as its first president.¹ In August of the same year, the first official ISCM music festival, the “1. Kammermusikfest,” was again held in Salzburg.

Today, the ISCM comprises forty-seven member sections² in countries and regions on all continents—with the sole exception of Antarctica—and is thus considered one of the oldest and largest institutions for the promotion of contemporary music. But more than one hundred years after its foundation, one must ask: can the utopian founding idea of transcending nations still be sustained, politically and aesthetically? Does the society’s continuation retain any relevance under completely changed geopolitical and sociocultural conditions? Or, to put it another way: does the ISCM still have a *raison d’être* apart from the rigid maintenance of continuity and a self-legitimized and museum-like institutional history?

Without a doubt, the early heyday of the young society was rooted in the spirit of optimism of the time, which came to an abrupt end with the rise of fascism and, eventually, the outbreak of World War II. The “Zero Hour” that followed was associated with the need to catch up and tie in with the musical developments of the historical avant-garde before the intellectual and cultural decay brought on by isolation, forced migration, and extermination under National Socialist dictatorship. Many artistic developments of the early twentieth century—neoclassicism, expressionism, jazz, and above all the twelve-tone technique—were ostracized and banned by the National Socialists as “degenerate” music (Dümling 1990, 95–96).

However, as the oft-repeated music-historical narrative goes, it was no longer the ISCM that provided the impetus, but rather the International Summer Courses for New Music Darmstadt, founded in 1946 by Wolfgang Steinecke,

and the International Music Institute Kranichstein, founded two years later (renamed the International Music Institute Darmstadt in 1963). There, the postwar reappraisal of musical developments at the beginning of the twentieth century, including the establishment of a documentation center with the International Music Institute Darmstadt, quickly turned into a radical extension of compositional techniques, driven in particular by a younger generation of composers.³ While the summer courses in Darmstadt provided a suitable institutional framework for a critical examination of aesthetic trends in composition (initially annually, then biennially from 1970), critical voices questioning the role and relevance of the ISCM grew louder. During a public discussion on the society’s future of the ISCM in Zurich in 1957, the society was almost unanimously judged in need of fundamental reform, and calls for greater consideration of young avant-garde movements grew ever stronger. This debate prompted ISCM President and musicologist Heinrich Strobel to initiate, in 1958, a survey in the journal *Melos* in which “well-known personalities in musical life” were asked about the “significance and mission of the ISCM” (Strobel 1958, 147).⁴ The published responses offered an equally disdainful diagnosis of the society’s condition. Pierre Boulez, for example, suggested to “let this aged and dilapidated society peacefully go to sleep” (Boulez 1958, 150), while Luigi Nono described an “effective ineffectiveness” (Nono 1958: 155).⁵ In his fundamental and important—yet now somewhat dated—history of the ISCM, published in 1982, Anton Haefeli also made the sobering statement of “hopeless inactivity” in which the ISCM had been languishing since the postwar period (Haefeli 1982: 288).

The general consensus, then, is that the ISCM has consistently lagged behind the avant-garde ideal of progress since the early second half of the twentieth century. Has its envisioned future long since failed? Does the society’s continuity consist merely in outliving its own future? And is the ISCM haunted by ideals it cannot, or can no longer, fulfill? During the centenary, much attention was rightly paid to the society’s great achievements in the spirit of cultural remembrance.⁶ Yet throughout its history, a narrative of great masters and masterpieces has been perpetuated, fueling a kind of self-legitimizing musealization and contradicting, in some ways, its founding ideals. The centenary should therefore also serve as an occasion for (self)-critical reflection: to reveal the political and aesthetic ambivalences within the society; to consider diverse, often site-specific, discourses and their interaction with broader music-historical narratives; and finally, to draw conclusions about the ISCM’s relevance and potential in the (musical) present. With these aims, this paper takes a closer look at three inextricably interwoven criteria that have shaped the society throughout its existence:

I. Glocalization

Since its foundation, the ISCM has been organized glocally. The globally active umbrella organization, with its international executive committee, is currently made up of forty-seven local sections, each with its own executive board, tasked with promoting contemporary music at the local level in their countries and regions. If we view the macrocosm of the umbrella organization as a pluralization of the individual, local sections—the site-specific microcosms—the universality and singularity of the ISCM is put into perspective. The Austrian IGNM section, for example, continued after its foundation in 1922⁷ the aesthetic ideals of the Verein für musikalische Privataufführungen (“Society for Private Musical Performances”), which had been dissolved one year earlier and was founded by Arnold Schönberg only two weeks after the end of World War I in November 1918, with him as its president. Many of the ISCM’s co-founders—Rudolph Réti and Egon Wellesz, Alban Berg, Anton Webern, Hanns Eisler, Josef Polnauer, Paul Amadeus Pisk, and Olga Novakovic—had been members of that society.⁸ Because of the “conservative spirit that did not allow the new to emerge in Vienna’s musical life [...]”, as Wellesz stated (Wellesz 1958, 28), and since “the recognized conservative musicians who held official positions pleased themselves with the presumption of the natural succession of a music from a glorious past,” as Réti remarked (Réti 1957, 114), performances of modern works, especially by the Viennese School, increasingly turned into scandalous concerts. For this reason, progressive, future-oriented composers, musicians, and listeners felt compelled to acquire precise knowledge of modern music by retreating into a closed, private space resembling a study community rather than a public concert audience, free from public expressions of approval or disapproval (Krones 2005, 45). Due to the deteriorating economic situation, the Schoenberg-Verein was forced to discontinue its activities just two years after its founding in 1921. Yet just one year later, “the newly founded International Society for Contemporary Music [...] took up the legacy of the ‘Verein für musikalische Privataufführungen’—albeit in a much watered-down form, noticeably stripped of its artistic and spiritual ideals—a legacy that is essentially the quintessence of the spirit of the Schönberg circle,” notes Friedrich Wildgans, composer, clarinetist, and president of the Austrian section of the ISCM from 1948 to 1961 (Wildgans 1967, 79). In this context, it is worth noting Rudolph Réti’s comment on Arnold Schönberg’s role in the ISCM:

However, one simple negative observation should not be suppressed. Schönberg did not personally take part in the first festival. Apparently he was too much of an individualist to be part of a programme conducted by others. But he not

only took part in the later music festivals, his group even took control of the Austrian section, and successively that of several others as well. The air of exclusivity towards other modern movements that this development evoked later led to some disagreements within the society. (Réti 1957, 116–117)

Thus, the Austrian section pursued a clear aesthetic orientation towards the Viennese School, marginalizing other aesthetic compositional techniques in concerts organized by the section⁹—a contradiction of the ISCM’s statutes, which stipulated the society’s role was to reflect and launch the latest trends in contemporary music across *all* aesthetic currents (Haefeli 1982, 53). This orientation towards the Viennese School was continued in postwar Austria with the re-institutionalization of the IGNM. As early as April 1945, the Austrian section of the International Society for New Music resumed its activities. A transcript of its initial plans reads:

Only with completely united positive forces can we successfully work towards the resurrection of Vienna’s old reputation as a true international city of music. The position of President of the IGNM, Austrian Section, is intended for Dr. Anton Webern. We hope he agrees with our goals and plans and look forward to seeing him in Vienna as soon as possible.¹⁰

Plans for Anton Webern’s presidency failed due to his well-known tragic death on September 15, 1945, and the position was filled by Hans Erich Apostel. Already in mid-June 1945, the Austrian section organized its first event in the Brahms-Saal of the Vienna Musikverein (Szmolyan 1982, 624). The IGNM was thus one of the first art and cultural institutions to be reconstituted after the war, resuming its role in Austrian cultural life, which had begun in 1922 but was cut short by its forced dissolution under National Socialism in 1938. The society played a decisive role in reconstructing postwar concert life, especially in Vienna. It was not until the late 1960s and early 1970s that its aesthetic orientation broadened significantly, mainly due to a generational shift when Friedrich Cerha succeeded Josef Polnauer (a close associate of the Viennese School) as president in 1968, a position he held until 1975 (Cerha 2001, 45). Today, the IGNM comprises five local groups in Austria’s federal provinces (Carinthia, Salzburg, Styria, Tyrol, and Upper Austria)—nanocosms within the local IGNM-Austria microcosm, in turn within the global ISCM macrocosm. With around four hundred members, the section realizes and financially supports approximately fifty artistic projects each year, involving artists working predominantly in Austria with diverse aesthetic backgrounds.¹¹ Its presence and relevance in Austria’s contemporary music scene since its re-institutionalization in 1945—not only in an active performing role, but also (perhaps even more so) in a passive, supporting function—should therefore

be evaluated independently of other local sections, which operate under completely different historical circumstances, institutional structures, and funding networks. Hence, the sections in their activities act independently of the macrocosm ISCM, each functioning according to its own traditions and site-specific conditions in the microcosm of their respective regions and countries.¹²

Accusations of irrelevance and lack of topicality, which have not abated since the second half of the twentieth century, often focus on the rigid structures and opaque mechanisms behind programming for the annual ISCM Music Festivals. Since 1974, the festivals have been known as the ISCM World (New) Music Days. They take place every year (the only cancellations so far were in the years 1943–1945 due to World War II and in 2020 and 2021 due to the COVID-19 pandemic) at different locations, hosted and organized by different sections (Haefeli 1982, 326). Their stated central aim is to showcase “international contemporary music, without prejudice or bias towards different forms of musical expression, styles, genres or formats; nor regarding race, gender, religion or politics.”¹³ A jury selects a set number of works from the submissions (at least one submitted piece from each section must be represented in the festival). Nevertheless, the criteria—both in terms of the constitution of the jury and the selection criteria for the pieces (apart from the quantitative balance of pieces in the individual sections, whereby individual submissions can also be made)—are anything but transparent, let alone specified. Unsurprisingly, one of the main points of criticism is directed precisely at this selection process, according to which aesthetic and local (and hence partly also inevitably political)¹⁴ interests undeniably play a decisive role (Haefeli 1982, 190–232).

However, if we take a closer look at precisely this aspect and understand the selected works as manifestations of various artistic practices in different regions—each with its specific aesthetic discourses—interesting conclusions can be drawn about a global approach to music history. Björn Heile remarks on such an approach:

For better or worse, our histories are ‘entangled’, and our historiography has to reflect this. The notion of entangled histories emphasizes the relations between different traditions, cultures and areas, and the reciprocity of their impacts on one another; it thus seeks to correct the emphasis on autonomy in traditional historiographies with their focuses on nation, tradition or culture. (Heile 2019, 179)

Heile also identifies great potential specifically in the ISCM’s international, which offers an important platform for participants from comparative peripheries alongside established centers—even if such contributions are still only gradually being given increasing consideration in

reception and research (Heile 2019, 182). A synchronous, poly-perspective approach to diverse musical practices, compositional techniques, and networks allows for a better understanding of continuities and ruptures beyond a Eurocentric Western art music tradition. Crucially, it requires analyzing entangled power structures in order to highlight marginalized tendencies, rather than presenting diversity uncritically.

In this context, George Lewis proposes applying the concept of “creolization” to the study of contemporary music. Lewis draws on *Éloge de la créolité* (1989), the manifesto by Caribbean writers Jean Bernabé, Patrick Chamoiseau, and Raphaël Confiant, who in turn developed the concept of “creolization” coined by the French philosopher Édouard Glissant. Originally a linguistic concept describing the intermingling of different linguistic influences, through which new, hybrid creole languages have emerged (and continue to emerge), creolization has evolved historically and culturally since the era of colonialism. The formation of new identities went hand in hand with the enslavement and traumatic uprooting of various ethnic groups (Müller/Ueckmann 2013, 7–42). In their manifesto, Bernabé, Chamoiseau, and Confiant state:

We declare ourselves Creoles. We declare that Creoleness is the cement of our culture and that it ought to rule the foundations of our Caribbeanness. Creoleness is the interactional or transactional aggregate of Caribbean, European, African, Asian, and Levantine cultural elements, united on the same soil by the yoke of history. For three centuries the islands and parts of continents affected by this phenomenon proved to be the real forges of a new humanity, where languages, races, religions, customs, ways of being from all over the world were brutally uprooted and transplanted in an environment where they had to reinvent life. [...] Because of its constituent mosaic, Creoleness is an open specificity. It escapes, therefore, perceptions which are not themselves open. Expressing it is not expressing a synthesis, not just expressing a crossing or any other unicity. It is expressing a kaleidoscopic totality, that is to say: the nontotalitarian consciousness of a preserved diversity. (Bernabé/Chamoiseau/Confiant 1989, 87–89)

Following this, Lewis suggests that a “new sonic créolité” can be heard in contemporary music, nourished by conditions of mobility—whether forced, resistant, or voluntary (Lewis 2018, 445–446). Only through such “mental creolization,” in which the mere, uncritical and limited pluralistic and Eurocentric conception of new music is overcome, can contemporary music become a “true world music”:

A creolized contemporary music culture would be race-aware, not race-deaf, establishing a mosaic identity that recognizes historical, geographical and cultural cross-connections—not so much to achieve diversity as to pursue a new complexity that promises far greater creative depth. (Lewis 2020)

Taking up Lewis' proposition, it could be argued that the annual ISCM *World (New) Music Days*—with a special emphasis on the word “World” on the one hand and the bracketing of the word “New” on the other—has obviously reflected this aspiration (and not only in their name) with its goal to provide an aesthetic and national border-crossing reflection of currents in contemporary music with a global claim. This perspective also relativizes the discourse surrounding the society since the second half of the twentieth century with regard to its lack of topicality and relevance. As mentioned, the ISCM—at least since the 1950s—has been accused of lagging behind the musical avant-garde and its paradigm of progress. Yet here the critical question must be asked: which avant-garde? As is well known, the idea of the “progress of musical material” derives from Theodor W. Adorno, who developed his theory on the basis of the compositional techniques of the Viennese School centered around Arnold Schoenberg.¹⁵ Musical serialism in the postwar avant-garde extended this idea, and the discourse took place primarily in the German-speaking realm, around the Darmstadt Summer Courses. It is thus no coincidence that the ISCM's most vocal critics mentioned above—Boulez and Nono—are attributed with their serial compositional techniques as the main representatives of the so-called Darmstadt School.¹⁶ The discourse of (material) progress is thus limited to specific avant-garde compositional developments, which in their discursiveness are bound to certain traditional and local references and differ from other time- and place-specific perspectives from a global point of view.

If we compare, for example, the ISCM section of the Faroe Islands—where the ISCM World (New) Music Days were held in June 2024—with that of Austria, the diversity of time and place specifics, which are of essential importance in the manifestations of music-historical traditions, becomes clear: Unlike the Austrian section of the IGNM, which has been active since 1922 and about whose history a lot has already been said, the Faroese section has only existed since 2004. Due to geopolitical factors and their isolated location, oral traditions—especially ethnic ballad dancing, hymns, and rhymes—were predominant on the Faroe Islands for a long time. The oldest works oriented towards a Western, emphatic ideal of art music appeared only in the late nineteenth century in the form of strophic songs, inspired by the rising nationalist movement, and peaked in the late 1940s. It was also at this time that the Faroese written language first developed, and a more conscious effort was made to create a “national style” of expression. Hence, the first instrumental music compositions only emerged at the beginning of the twentieth century, and a concert music tradition only since the 1980s.¹⁷ Thus, the history of Faroese music is closely linked to the islands'

own (colonial) history. The completely different artistic traditions and structures must be considered from a global perspective, both in musicological research and in the standards applied to the criticism of the pieces performed, since aesthetic and political tendencies on a local level are inevitably interwoven.

II. Cosmopolitanism

At the same time that the ISCM was founded with the intention of creating an international, cross-border musical exchange based on the ideals of the League of Nations, the idea of a pacifist cosmopolitanism experienced a revival; the Salzburg Festival, which had existed since 1920, also followed this ideal in its conception. In the geographical heart of the newly organized Europe, its idea of a festival sought not only to bring together the arts, but also nations, spaces, worldviews, and cultures (Steinberg 2000, 84–115). It was here that the suitable breeding ground germinated to lay the foundation of the project of an international community of musicians, only two years later, in the form of the ISCM.

In his article on the significance of “internationalism” in the International Society for Contemporary Music, Giles Masters points out that at the time of the ISCM's foundation, its internationalist claim could not be understood as the equivalent of globalism. Furthermore, Masters does not see the significance of the internationalism of the society as synonymous with transnationalism or cosmopolitanism. He writes:

To label oneself ‘international’, in 1922, signified a moral-political commitment (an internationalism) and an associated subject position (as an internationalist) that were closely related to, and perhaps ultimately derived from, the ethics of cosmopolitanism (the belief in a single human community). But whereas the cosmopolitan world view foregrounds the rights and responsibilities of ‘world citizens’, the liberal internationalist one upheld the principle of national sovereignty [sic!]. (Masters 2022, 561)

In fact, as Masters rightly recognizes, the internationality of the ISCM in its structure can in no way be equated with the claim of globalism. Rather—seen against the historical context of the reorganized Europe after the end of World War I—nation-statehood was emphasized, and the founding idea of the ISCM aimed at an exchange between nations across borders.¹⁸ The aim of the foundation was to showcase contemporary music from the individual nations without enforcing aesthetic, national, ethnic, religious, or political ideals. The internationality of the ISCM is therefore, in the words of Ernst Krenek, a “summation of national individualities,” and furthermore “its internationality refers to its organization, not to the object of its activities” (Krenek

1934, 40–41). The core idea of the ISCM is reflected primarily in the organization's structure. The individual country and regional sections are the "constitutive element" of the society per se, as Haefeli rightly emphasizes (Haefeli 1984, 73). Globalism can therefore not be understood as an intended condition intrinsic to the society.

From a music-historical perspective, however, an approach toward a global music history is productive, offering a differentiated analysis of the local sections and their embedding in the global context, and identifying various time- and place-specific characteristics of composing. A global approach to music history reveals diverse sociopolitical conditions, structures, networks, cross-connections, and fusions of various aesthetic approaches in the individual sections. As mentioned, George Lewis suggests applying the concept of "creolization" to the study of contemporary music. In this context, the concept of mobility is particularly central—whether forced, as an act of resistance, or voluntary (Lewis 2018, 445–446).

Cosmopolitanism is usually associated with privileged, positively connoted powers or competences of transgression. Masters's definition of cosmopolitanism as the "belief in a single human community" and the underlying idea of "world citizens" also resonates with the outline of a desirable utopia in connection with the concept of cosmopolitanism. However, the mobility of musicians often did and does not happen voluntarily, but must be understood as a consequence of dystopian developments such as the rise of fascism and dictatorships, and in this respect as forced migration due to threats to the lives of certain groups of people. The concept of cosmopolitanism then necessarily undergoes a significant reinterpretation in the twentieth century, in that it can no longer be associated exclusively with privileged standpoints and transgressive capabilities; rather, attention must be directed more strongly to facts such as uprooting, memory, expulsion, flight, trauma, (forced) assimilation and minority experiences, as musicologist Brigid Cohen pointed out in her study of Stefan Wolpe and the avant-garde diaspora in relation to twentieth century music history (Cohen 2012, 1–31). "At a time when this life threatens to die every day, when the spectre of inner ruin [...] lays itself over humanity like the burden of a terrible homelessness [...]", Rudolf Réti already noted in 1922 with regard to the *zeitgeist* on which he based his project of the ISCM (Reti 1922, 195). The utopian founding idea of border-crossing exchange between nations in the explicitly non-political, neutral ISCM soon gave way to disillusionment, based on political and national interests that manifested themselves particularly between the Nazis' seizure of power in 1933 and the outbreak of World War II. The founding of the Ständige Rat für die internationale Zusammenarbeit der Komponisten (the "Permanent Council for the International Cooperation of Composers") by the then President

of the Reichsmusikkammer, Richard Strauss, in 1934, and the disputes over the location of the ISCM Music Festival in 1935 are just two briefly mentioned examples, which have been described in detail elsewhere (see Haefeli 1982; Shreffler 2015).

The Austrian section of the IGNM was forcibly dissolved by the National Socialists in 1938. The dissolution was less due to aesthetic judgments than to the large number of Jewish members. "Significantly, the music of the Second Viennese School was not primarily opposed on strictly musical grounds, for example because of its rich dissonance or complexity, but because of its connection with the Jew Arnold Schönberg," explains Albrecht Dümling on the anti-Semitic ostracism of the Viennese School around the composer Arnold Schönberg (Dümling 1990: 95–96). Arnold Schönberg was forced to emigrate to the United States in 1933 and never returned to Europe from his exile. Rita Kurzmann, a board member of the Austrian IGNM section in the 1930s, was also able to emigrate to Argentina in 1936 with her second husband, the conductor Erwin Leuchter—a fortunate circumstance denied to many IGNM members, who were forced to go into hiding, such as Josef Polnauer, or were arrested by the GESTAPO, such as Friedrich Wildgans (Voithofer 2015, 55–62). The pianist and musicologist Rita Kurzmann—now largely forgotten—earned great merit as an interpreter of works of the Viennese School in the interwar period (especially in the context of ISCM Music Festivals). It was she who prepared the piano reduction of Alban Berg's *Violin Concerto* in September 1935 and rehearsed the piece with Louis Krasner, the soloist at the premiere conducted by Anton Webern at the ISCM Music Festival in Barcelona in April 1936. After her emigration to Buenos Aires, her active concert career increasingly gave way to music-education work, including publications on piano pedagogy. Around thirty students—including the conductor Michael Gielen and the pianist Claus Cabjolsky—can be traced until her early death in 1942 in Buenos Aires.¹⁹ The extent to which Rita Kurzmann-Leuchter was active in the Argentine section of the ISCM,²⁰ or to what extent she influenced the performance practice of works by the Viennese School in Argentina through her teaching, remains a research desideratum regarding a transatlantic cultural transfer through forced mobility.

Such research desiderata are made more difficult by the problematic source situation, as the ISCM had no central archive for association documents since its foundation in 1922. Moreover, many documents were lost during the turmoil of the world wars or were deliberately destroyed due to internal disputes and the personal sensitivities of members (Haefeli 1982, 14). Anton Haefeli has deposited the research materials he collected at the Royal Danish Library in Copenhagen, which continues to expand this archive with programs from the annual ISCM World (New) Music Days

and minutes of the General Assemblies. However, collecting materials on the activities of the association was—and still is—at the discretion of the respective sections. It is therefore all the more necessary to consult local archives (where available) and region-specific structures in order to identify supraregional transfer processes. In this respect, any view dedicated to cultural reconstruction and artistic production since the postwar era must also reflect on and contextualize the traumatic experiences of forced mobility. Such experiences cannot be universalized but must be reevaluated again and again over the course of time—right up to the present. More than a hundred years later, this seems more relevant than ever: in the now globalized age of the Anthropocene—characterized by fluid identities and places of living that increasingly unsettle concepts such as “nationality” and “origin”—the individual ISCM sections themselves, the site-specific microcosms, can no longer be understood as homogeneous, nationally characteristic associations, but rather as cosmopolitan networks of a heterogeneous collectivity that promote artistic engagement with, and processing of, experiences from the present.

III. Contemporaneity

But what does the present—and artistic engagement with it—mean? A deep ambivalence is inherent in the concept of contemporary music and art, which is particularly evident in the name of the ISCM: while the name “Internationale Gesellschaft für Neue Musik” (IGNM) prevailed in German when the society was founded, the English “International Society for Contemporary Music” (ISCM) and the French “Société Internationale pour la Musique Contemporaine” (SIMC) reveal a fundamental programmatic dispute of direction within the association: “New Music”—a term coined at the same time in the early 1920s and institutionalized in the IGNM as a designation for an artistic movement—is inextricably linked to a radically progressive orientation in musical modernism and, to that extent, to the aesthetic approaches of the Viennese School. New Music was introduced as an epochal term intended to usher in a new era and mark a caesura, emphasizing its revolutionary, progressive, avant-garde claim to novelty (Haefeli 1982, 262–273). Adorno highlighted the difference between the “polemical new,” on the one hand, and the “neutral-chronological contemporary,” on the other, as an inherent aesthetic ambivalence in the society’s program, because the “new” is characterized by a “sudden qualitative leap” with new categories (Adorno 1978, 477–478). This presupposes a new language that is, as it were, a critique of the traditional (Adorno 1978: 486).

Hence, “contemporary” music, on the other hand, was considered moderate, conventional, traditional, pluralistic

and, in a pejorative sense, harmless, even regressive. The English and French names of the ISCM can therefore be interpreted as an effort to represent a more compromising course with regard to the society’s aesthetic orientation. Sarah Collins elaborates in detail that the term “contemporary” in this context pursued a deliberate ideal of a neutral, (supposedly) apolitical, and compromising guiding idea. This line was also taken by the first ISCM president, the musicologist and critic Edward Dent of the British section, as Collins notes:

On a practical level, the ‘contemporary’ provided an apparently non-partisan category that seemed to offer an equalization of the playing field and to ensure that emerging composers, regardless of their nationality or style, would have an international forum in which to present their new work. (Collins 2019, 64)

However, if we take a look at musical modernism in Austria, the term “contemporary” must be seen less as a moderate, pluralistic approach to musical tendencies than as a clear aesthetic as well as political opposition to (compositional) ideals associated with “new music.” In this respect, new music was perceived as an aesthetic provocation that needed to be countered with neoclassical approaches. The founding of the ÖGZM, the Österreichische Gesellschaft für zeitgenössische Musik (Austrian Society for Contemporary Music) in 1949, which still exists today, may be interpreted as a relic of this regional trench warfare that characterized musical modernism in postwar Austria—its split between the radical avant-garde of new music on the one hand and the reactionary traditionalism of contemporary music on the other. Joseph Marx played a leading role in the founding of the ÖGZM. A “romantic idealist,” as Friedrich Cerha characterizes him, who “[...] also acted as president and advisor in many institutions—consciously and emphatically steering their fortunes in a conservative direction [...]” (Cerha 2001, 49). The ÖGZM constituted itself as a counter-society to the IGNM in its aesthetic orientation and nationally oriented activities, as is also stated in the association’s statutes:

The Society aims to stimulate, promote and cultivate a new Austrian music that continues the great traditions of European and especially Austrian music in a progressive, contemporary spirit. In accordance with these traditions, it sees the future of our musical art in a close connection with the life of society, especially with the people [...].²¹

The founding goals express a distinctly national orientation, opposing the internationally oriented ISCM and advocating a return to the European tradition of art music. Incidentally, Joseph Marx was also involved in founding the Ständige Rat in 1934—an association which, as already

mentioned, was formed as a conscious counterparty to the ISCM. Ernst Krenek referred to its members as the “Blubo-Brodler”—a neologism derived from the “Blut-und-Boden-Ideologie” (“blood and soil ideology”), as a reference to their sentiments. (Krenek 1934: 21).

It was not until the early 1990s that there was a significant change in the meaning of the term “contemporary.” Artistic modernism (and postmodernism) was replaced by contemporary art. Art becomes a contemporary that critically reflects the current status quo and opposes it by necessarily prompting reflection on the future, opening up and constantly redefining itself (Smith 2019, 27–50). In this sense, the terms “new music” and “contemporary music” are often used synonymously today, contrary to their antagonistic meaning at the beginning of the twentieth century. The different titles in the name of the ISCM/SIMC/IGNM are the legacy of an aesthetic dispute in musical modernism. The inherent temporality of our present, characterized by diverse multidimensional relations, in this respect contrasts with the temporality of modernity. A contemporary, transnational, and global contemporaneity is a complex interweaving of specific temporal dimensions in certain regions, based on historical events and genealogies (Osborne 2018). “In its most basic form, the concept of the contemporary is simply that of the coming together, hence the unity in disjunction, or the living disjunctive unity of multiple times. [...] That is to say, the concept of the contemporary projects a single temporal matrix of a living present—a common, albeit internally disjunctive, ‘living’ historical present.”, philosopher Peter Osborne writes (Osborne 2013, 79). And for Osborne, this “co-presentness” is the main difference from modernity:

It is the fictional ‘co-presentness’ of the contemporary that distinguishes it from the more structural and dynamic category of modernity, the inherently self-surpassing character of which identifies it with a permanent transitoriness, familiar in the critical literature since Baudelaire. In this respect, the contemporary involves a kind of internal retreat of the modern to the present. If the primary value of the modern is ‘the new’, in its distinction from ‘the old’ (which it produces), the primary value of the contemporary is its actuality, in distinction from the fading existential hold of what is still present but ‘out-of-date’—that is, no longer articulating living relations between a multiplicity of spatially distributed standpoint. In its current, global variant, the idea of the contemporary thus poses the problem of the disjunctive unity of the geo-politically historical: temporal unity/spatial disjunction—in contrast to modernity’s temporal differentiation within a unified space. Or to put it another way, the fiction of the contemporary is necessarily a geo-political fiction. (Osborne 2013, 81–82)

The dictum of internationality in modernity is being replaced by that of a global transnationality with a present

that extends across the entire world. Concepts such as “nations” are becoming increasingly useless as systems of order. However, the fact that this temporal unity is a “fiction” is also evident in the history of the ISCM: modernism itself already split into ambivalent directions of “the new” vs. “the contemporary,” and this split is revealed in the society. Different local sections pursue different aesthetic directions (which in turn are linked to political aspects) and thus marginalize other aesthetic ideals. Mobility (whether forced or voluntary) leads to mutual influence on different temporal and spatial levels. Only through a synchronous polyperspective, in the sense of a global music-historical approach, can the specific connecting lines between traditions and cultures and their mutual influence be revealed.

Conclusion

Accordingly, the ISCM has brought together and reflected different, often ambivalent temporal and spatial dimensions throughout its one-hundred-year history. As has been shown, these ambivalences allow conclusions to be drawn about the historiography of music, different local aesthetic discourses, and their interweaving with larger temporal and spatial narratives—and this is precisely where the ISCM’s topicality lies. Various (musical) traditions, structures, and networks are subject to different time- and place-specific conditions, in which aesthetic and political dimensions must in turn be seen in an inseparable context. Musical Avant-Gardes are therefore conditioned by different traditions and geo- and sociopolitical factors. The institutional history of the ISCM reflects transnational cultural exchange through the condition of mobility, which in many cases is not to be understood as a privileged cosmopolitan claim to “world citizenship” but must be seen as forced mobility linked to flight, expulsion, and homelessness. However, a look at the entangled histories of diverse traditions and cultures should not be approached from a perspective of pluralistic differentiation, but rather critically highlight marginalization tendencies and power-structural hierarchies that are perpetuated in music-historical narratives. The still predominant work-centered reflection of the ISCM World (New) Music Festivals should therefore not only be criticized from the perspective of reception but must also include the various conditions of production. Such a perspective inevitably oscillates between the global macrocosm ISCM and its local microcosms. And in contrast to the founding idea of the ISCM, these sections can no longer be regarded as self-contained national formations, but rather as globalized, heterogeneous, cosmopolitan networks that unite diverse aesthetic tendencies shaped by different temporal and spatial conditions.

References

- 1 The choice of the Society's headquarters in London was preceded by lengthy discussions and disputes at the first constituent preliminary meeting for the founding of the ISCM at Café Bazar in Salzburg in August 1922, which in turn revealed national and aesthetic interests. In any case, the choice of headquarters in London was a solution acceptable to almost all parties—unanimous with the sole exception of the Austrian votes (Haefeli 1982, 52–53).
- 2 Many thanks to the current ISCM Secretary General Olga Smetanová for the information (email correspondence, August 1, 2024).
- 3 In her study, musicologist Amy C. Beal also points out the great importance of generous exchange and funding programs on the one hand and radio stations with their associated New Music festivals on the other, which made it possible for composers to work in a structurally secure manner, especially in postwar West Germany (Beal 2006).
- 4 In this context, it should be critically noted that no further information is given on the criteria for selecting the very limited group of 20 personalities interviewed, including Luigi Nono, Pierre Boulez, Karlheinz Stockhausen, Gerhard Wimberger, Hans Heinz Stuckenschmidt, Alfred Schlee, Willi Reich, and Alois Hába.
- 5 Translations, if not otherwise indicated, are by the author of this paper. Boulez, original: “Für mich heißt die Lösung—falls es eine gibt—, diese gealterte und baufällige Gesellschaft friedlich entschlafen zu lassen [...]” Nono, original: “Sie ist effektiv wirkungslos.”
- 6 As an example, cf. Laura Tunbridge, “Milestones, Premieres & Notable Scandals,” in *Achtung International! Salzburg & 100 Years of the International Society of Contemporary Music*, ed. University Mozarteum Salzburg in collaboration with the International Society for Contemporary Music, Austrian Section (Vienna: Hollitzer, 2024), 335–46.
- 7 Although the section was not entered into the official Austrian register of associations until 1926.
- 8 In the course of this paper, I will repeatedly refer to the Austrian section of the ISCM, as I have primarily dealt with this section in my research and, as a member of its board, can draw on documents from its archives that I have processed.
- 9 This aspect will be considered in greater detail in Chapter III.
- 10 Quoted and translated into English by the author from an original document in the estate of the composer Sophie-Carmen Eckhardt-Gramatté, held in the Archives of Manitoba, Canada: “Die Internationale Gesellschaft für Neue Musik,” in *Box Sophie-Carmen Eckhardt-Gramatté personal and professional papers, 1862–1995*.
- 11 International Society for Contemporary Music, Austrian Section, <https://www.ignm.at/>, accessed September 18, 2024.
- 12 The histories of the individual country sections are increasingly becoming the focus of research. With regard to the Lithuanian section, see Rūta Stanevičiūtė, *Figures of Modernity: International Society for Contemporary Music and the Modern Music Movement in Lithuania*, trans. Laimutė Servaitė (Vienna: Hollitzer, 2024).
- 13 See *Rules of Procedure for the Organization of the ISCM World (New) Music Days Festival (2022)*, https://iscm.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/rules22_iscm_wmd.pdf (accessed September 2, 2024).
- 14 The political aspects will be discussed in detail in Chapter II.
- 15 To cite just one of Adorno's central writings on the subject: Theodor W. Adorno, *Philosophie der neuen Musik*. 12th ed. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2017 [1948].
- 16 Luigi Nono himself used the term “Darmstadt School” in a lecture in Darmstadt in 1957. However, the notion of a “Darmstadt School,” due to its lack of a unified serial compositional technique, is an untenable myth that can only be invoked, if at all, for the short period from 1955 to 1957, since any sense of unity with regard to serial techniques dissolved at the latest with John Cage's historic appearance in Darmstadt in 1958. See Hermann Danuser, “Die ‘Darmstädter Schule’—Faktizität und Mythos,” 333–80; and Martin Iddon, *New Music at Darmstadt: Nono, Stockhausen, Cage, and Boulez* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).
- 17 See <https://composers.fo/about/> (accessed September 18, 2024).
- 18 It should also be mentioned, and must be taken into account, that early musicology as a subject emerged from the zeitgeist in which the concept of the nation was establishing itself as a form of cultural identity and political sovereignty, particularly in Europe. This also resulted in the endeavor to define one's own music-historical nation—sometimes with drastic methodological and political consequences: supposed (national) currents and composers (even if these cannot be reduced to a single national or music-cultural identity) were overemphasized in historical research with its strong focus on the musical “work.”
- 19 See Herbert Henck, *Rita Kurzmann-Leuchter: Eine österreichische Emigrantin aus dem Kreis der Zweiten Wiener Schule*, http://www.herbert-henck.de/Internettexte/Kurzmann_II/kurzmann_ii.html#K15 (accessed October 10, 2024).
- 20 An Argentine section of the ISCM existed from 1924 to 1977 (its activities ceased due to financial difficulties) and then again from 1979 (Haefeli 1982, 621). It is not possible to determine when the section disbanded, but as of 2024 there is no active Argentine section of the ISCM.
- 21 *Statutes of the Österreichische Gesellschaft für zeitgenössische Musik*, 1. Quoted and translated into English by the author from an original document in the estate of the composer Sophie-Carmen Eckhardt-Gramatté, held in the Archives of Manitoba, Canada, box “Sophie-Carmen Eckhardt-Gramatté professional correspondence 1913–1994.”

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Santrauka

Straipsnyje kritiškai nagrinėjama Tarptautinė šiuolaikinės muzikos draugija (ISCM) – viena seniausių ir didžiausių šiuolaikinės muzikos draugijų pasaulyje, turinti keturiasdešimt septynias nares įvairiose pasaulio šalyse ir regionuose – kaip XX ir XXI a. muzikos istorijai būdingų estetinių, geopolitinių, sociokultūrinių ir institucinių prieštaravimų atspindys. Sutelkiant dėmesį į tris tarpusavyje susipynusius aspektus – globalizaciją, kosmopolitizmą ir šiuolaikiškumą – analizuojama, kaip ISCM utopiniai steigimo idealai, susiję su tarptautiniais, sienas peržengiančiais naujausių muzikos tendencijų mainais, nuolat susidurdavo su išskirtinumo mechanizmais, estetinėmis hierarchijomis ir kintančiomis „šiuolaikiškumo“ sąvokomis ir buvo jų

silpninami. ISCM, įsteigta 1922 m. po Didžiojo karo, siekė sukurti tarptautinį kompozitorių aljansą, kuris peržengtų nacionalinius, ideologinius ir estetinius skirtumus. Tačiau institucijos istorija atskleidžia struktūrinius vietinių tradicijų ir galios hierarchijų prieštaravimus.

ISCM organizacija, apimanti pasaulinę pagrindinę organizaciją ir daugelį vietinių skyrių, įkūnija globalizacijos koncepciją: dinamišką globalių struktūrų ir vietinių tradicijų bei praktikų sąveiką. Remiantis Austrijos skyriaus (IGNM), kuris yra glaudžiai susijęs su Vienos mokykla, pavyzdžiu, iliustruojama, kaip vietinės tradicijos formavo estetines darbotvarkes ir kanonus, taip marginalizuodamos periferines kompozicines praktikas. Kritika ISCM kasmetinėms Pasaulio (naujosios) muzikos dienoms – ypač neaiškiems atrankos procesams – atskleidžia nuolatinę kovą dėl atstovavimo ir aktualumo. Nepaisant to, muzikos istorijos perspektyvoje ISCM festivaliai gali būti būdas žvelgti į pasaulinę muzikos istoriją.

Diskusija apie kosmopolitizmą ISCM įkūrimą sieja su tarpukario laikotarpio pacifistinių ir humanistinių idealų atgimimu, susijusiu su Zolcburgo festivaliu ir Tautų lygos veikla. Tačiau distopinės politinės permainos netrukus atskleidė šio utopinio idealo trapumą: fašizmas, tremtis, priverstinė asimiliacija ir Antrasis pasaulinis karas mobilumą kaip privilegiją pavertė traumuojančiu priverstiniu veiksmu. Tokios asmenybės kaip Arnoldas Schönbergas ir Rita Kurzmänn-Leuchter įkūnija, kaip kosmopolitizmas virto perkėlimo ir priverstinės migracijos patirtimi. Todėl,

mano nuomone, pasaulinė ISCM istorija turi būti rekonstruojama remiantis vietos archyvais ir mikroistoriniais, konkrečių vietų tyrimais, kuriuose dėmesys sutelkiamas į mobilumo ir tremties politines sąlygas.

Paskutinėje straipsnio dalyje aptariama konceptuali ir istorinė terminų „naujoji“ ir „šiuolaikinė“ muzika įtampa ir transformacija. Nors XX a. I p. „Neue Musik“ reiškė avangardinį lūžį ir pažangą, „šiuolaikinė muzika“ bylojo apie nuosaikumą ir neutralumą. Šis skirtumas atspindi ideologinį radikalaus ir konservatyvaus estetikos požiūrio susiskaldymą, kurį iliustruoja 1949 m. įkurta Austrijos šiuolaikinės muzikos draugija (ÖGZM) kaip nacionalistinis kontrapunktas internacionalistinei IGNM. Remiantis Peterio Osborne'o šiuolaikiškumo teorija kaip daugialypio laikinumo „fiktyvaus bendrabūvio“ teorija, teigiama, kad dabartinė ISCM struktūra įkūnija globalizuotą kultūrinę padėtį, kurioje nacionaliniai skyriai nebegali būti suvokiami kaip homogeniškos struktūros. Atvirkščiai, jie veikia kaip transnacionaliniai, heterogeniški tinklai, kuriuose estetiškos praktikos kyla iš įvairių laikinių-istorinių ir erdvinų-geografinių kontekstų sankirtos.

Per šimtmetį ISCM apibendrino universalumo ir savitumo, globalumo ir lokalumo, modernumo ir šiuolaikiškumo įtampą. Tačiau ši įtampa turėtų būti vertinama ne kaip institucinio nuosmukio ženklas, o kaip ISCM nuolatinio aktualumo, kaip vietos, kurioje susilieja globalios ir lokalsios jėgos, sudedamoji dalis.

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