

LATVIAN CONCEPT MUSIC: HISTORICAL AND THEORETICAL ISSUES

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Summary

The article encompasses research results during doctoral studies in musicology, and characterizes the most recent music of Mārtiņš Viļums, Jānis Petraškevičs, Santa Ratniece, Ruta Paidere and other composers. The term 'concept' in different forms has been used in the Latvian musicology for over a decade already, but has not been strictly defined until now.

The term refers to the music of avant-garde between 1960ies and 1980ies, and has some obvious similarities with the Latvian new music (the last decade of the 20th century and the first decade of the 21st century). The early, playful concept music of John Cage, La Monte Young, Tom Johnson a.o., as well as the *serious* avant-garde of Karlheinz Stockhausen, György Ligeti, Iannis Xenakis a.o., demonstrate semantically closed ideas, just like the Latvian music in question. The titles of concept music are often enigmatic (*4'33"*, *Rebonds*), and the musical idea – obscure, semantically closed. This quality of the concept music comes from its indirect reference to intellectual ideas and extra-musical texts. In the case of the *serious* avant-garde in particular, the concept is embedded in the deepest layers of the musical material, so that it cannot be grasped without analysis of the score. The idea of the piece could be viewed as a code of the composition technique (*Partiels* by Gérard Grisey, *Gruppen* by Karlheinz Stockhausen); it can also be enciphered in the rhythm, harmony and other modes of expression that cannot be perceived directly.

Besides, the structure of these ideas is non-linear: there is no narrative. For this reason the concept music is made not as a plot, but as a 'timespace'. This metaphor of the contemporary music analysis means a type of material that moves, develops (exists in the time dimension, as music always does), but nevertheless its inner space is constant, so that it sounds like a rather monotonous, generally unchanging field.

Timespace and a semantically closed idea are the main features of the concept music showcased in this article. They are demonstrated in the music of the young Latvian composers by means of some score fragments of the typical examples: *Black Nightshade* (2009) by Ruta Paidere (1977), *Simurg* (2005) and *Sense of the Past* (2001) by Mārtiņš Viļums (1974).