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## **Adorno's Ideas on Stravinsky's Neoclassicism Meet the Pianist's Work: Reflecting Playing Experience with Adorno's Key Concepts**

Eveliina Sumelius-Lindblom  
Sibelius Academy, University of the Arts Helsinki  
[eveliina.sumelius-lindblom@uniarts.fi](mailto:eveliina.sumelius-lindblom@uniarts.fi)

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### **Abstract**

Theodor W. Adorno's ideas on jazz and Igor Stravinsky's neoclassicism (1936; 1949; 1963) are notorious for their strident criticism, pathologizing metaphors and prejudicial language. What has been overlooked, however, is the value of Adorno's ideas from the music performer's perspective, his cultural back-ground and the genre of post-war French neoclassicism. In this article, I discuss Adorno's commentaries side-by-side with my own observations as a pianist. For this purpose, I use two methods: conceptual analysis and *embodied intertextuality*, in which research premises are based not on the notated score but primarily on analyzing and re-conceptualizing the playing experience. Despite the embodied aspect, praxis in this context is not treated as an object but as a tool for conducting research. Characteristic of Adorno in *Philosophie der neuen Musik* (1949) is his distinctive conceptual thinking. The latter main chapter of the work, "Stravinsky and restoration" proceeds through thematic subheadings, each representing different aspects of Stravinsky's intentions, aesthetics and psychology. My article follows a similar conceptual-based procedure with the exception that I reflect on my playing experiences through the lens of Adorno's key concepts in such neoclassical works as *Piano-Rag-Music* (1919). Finally, Adorno's critical ideas on Stravinsky's neoclassicism and its main manifestation, *hybrid intertextuality*, encounter the pianist's playing experience on a *conceptual* level. The most significant difference between Adorno's and the performer's view is condensed in Adorno's interpretation of Stravinsky's neoclassicism as alienated from its own material. For the performer, Stravinsky's neoclassicism represents a historically rich intertextual network in which the previous and contemporary styles perform side by side.

**Keywords:** Performance experience, Interdisciplinary music research, Embodied intertextuality, Hybrid intertextuality, Neoclassicism, Theodor W. Adorno, Igor Stravinsky E.

## Introduction

PURISM expresses no variations, but what is *invariable*. The work should not be accidental, exceptional, impressionistic, inorganic, contestatory, picturesque, but on the contrary general, static, expressive of what is content. (Ozenfant and Jeanneret 1918)

In order to grasp the divergent aesthetics of Igor Stravinsky's neoclassicism, one must first understand the principles of 1920s French Modernism, French neoclassicism and the interaction between Stravinsky and French post-World War I cultural life. I have previously defined French Modernism as a consciously generated opposition, which took place in the at the turn of the twentieth century in response to prevailing social, cultural, and historic needs (Sumelius-Lindblom 2016: 49). By French neoclassicism I understand a post-World-War-I classical music style which included intertextual referencing, experimental music aesthetics and mediums of expression (e.g., simplicity, humor, irony, alienation), absorbed popular influences into classical music and created alternative approaches to music and performance aesthetics as well as music theory (Sumelius-Lindblom 2019: 105). For the latter, I mainly refer to Darius Milhaud's article "The evolution of modern music in Paris and Vienna" (1923). Here Milhaud divides the poles of Modernism based on their opposite conceptions of music aesthetics and music theory, such as polytonalism in French Modernism and atonalism in the New Viennese School.

In this article, I approach Stravinsky's neoclassical peculiarities as they relate to Theodor W. Adorno's critical ideas and the pianist's performance premises in the context of various aesthetic tendencies of 1920s French Modernism. During his years in Paris after World War I, Stravinsky settled himself as an inherent part of Parisian cultural life and French neoclassicism, otherwise represented by *Les Six*<sup>1</sup> and Erik Satie. Like the young composers of *Les Six*, Stravinsky adopted some of the aesthetic interests condensed under the umbrella concept of *l'esprit nouveau* (Tarasti 1979; Perloff 1991; Sumelius-Lindblom 2016). *L'esprit nouveau* represented an aesthetic tendency that consisted of a wide spectrum of concepts connected to the aesthetic virtues of French Modernism and French cultural history, such as *pureness*, *simplicity* and *refinement*. *L'esprit nouveau* was also the name of a periodical founded by Amédée Ozenfant and Charles-Edouard Jeanneret in 1920, rooted in their movement of Purism and published in 1918 in the form of a manifesto – *Après le cubisme* (Eliel et al. 2001). The Purist movement was inextricably linked to the social realities of the day, particularly those of World War I. Purism was a trend of cultural aesthetics which was particularly realized in painting and architecture and which aimed at aesthetic refinement, visual and physical clarification and purification and the rejection of excess of all forms (Eliel et al. 2001: 11–12). Similar aesthetic principles of *l'esprit nouveau*, transferred to musical needs, emerged in the same year in Jean Cocteau's (1918) pamphlet *Le Coq et l'Arlequin: notes autour de la musique – avec un portrait de l'auteur et deux monogrammes par P. Picasso*, dedicated to composer Georges Auric, the youngest member of *Les Six*.

Digging deeper into the significance of French cultural life to Stravinsky's neoclassical period, I became interested in both Adorno's critical ideas on jazz and Stravinsky's neoclassicism. This had much to do with performing Stravinsky's neoclassical works and with a personal urge to deepen my knowledge of their obviously divergent playing experience. I soon realized that straightforward answers did not exist, however, and instead of finding some ready-made

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<sup>1</sup> A group of young composers, including Georges Auric, Louis Durey, Arthur Honegger, Darius Milhaud, Francis Poulenc, Germaine Tailleferre.

solutions for my performance-related questions, I sifted through concepts and theories behind the aesthetic tendencies of Stravinsky's neoclassicism. This process was complicated by some loaded musicological attitudes to both Stravinsky's and French neoclassicism, filled with plenty of misunderstandings.

Adorno was one of the harshest and most well-known critics of Stravinsky's neoclassicism. Adorno himself was roundly criticized and even stigmatized because of his critical ideas, pathologizing metaphors and prejudicial language. From the perspective of a music performer, however, his ideas and cultural background as well as the genre of post-war French neoclassicism have great value. Although Adorno was accused of being immersed in his own Austro-German tradition, cultural heritage and values (Paddison 1996: 123), he was nevertheless aware of post-World War I aesthetic trends as well as Stravinsky's significance as a protagonist of French Modernism:

Out of the tendency toward specialization, [Stravinsky] produces that specialist of the *music hall*, *vaudeville*, and circus that Cocteau and Erik Satie glorified in *Parade* but that is already discernable in *Petrushka*. (Adorno 2006: 108)

Adorno also saw a connection between Stravinsky's neoclassicism and Surrealism:

The basic stratum of neoclassicism is not far removed from Surrealism. (Adorno 1992:156)

After creating a cultural overview of this topic, I will explain the article's methodological structure, which proceeds towards Adorno's key concepts and to more detailed aesthetic and performance-related motifs. I have chosen to analyze concepts that resonate with Stravinsky's neoclassical aesthetics and questions concerning performance. I end the article with a short discussion of the significance of early jazz in Stravinsky's and Adorno's aesthetics. I have limited my analysis of Adorno's notions to the conceptual level without widening my analysis towards biographical, sociological or political dimensions, for instance cultural industry in the context of jazz.

My research questions are condensed in two key points:

- 1) How does Stravinsky's neoclassical aesthetic intertwine with French neo-classicism and Adorno's critical ideas?
- 2) How do Adorno's critical ideas correlate with the pianist's playing experience?

These questions are based on my artistic doctoral project on 1920s French Modernism, about which I have given recitals and conference lectures, made radio-recordings and published scholarly articles.

Having based my research primarily on conceptual analysis, I have also come to create new concepts. *Embodied intertextuality* represents a *method* that I use when dealing with intertextually related musical questions. The other key concept, *hybrid intertextuality*, represents the conceptual *result* of phenomenologically analyzing intertextual relations in music.

## Theoretical Premises: Conceptual Analysis and Embodied Intertextuality

My article is positioned in the field of interdisciplinary music research, combining elements from music history and philosophy, phenomenological philosophy, conceptual analysis and artistic research. The main sources for this research consist of conceptual history, and Adorno's writings and primary sources on 1920s French cultural history (for instance, Ozenfant and Jeanneret; Cocteau and Milhaud). Conceptual analysis in this context is thus a premise and tool for my research.

The other methodological direction of this article, embodied intertextuality, reflects my own methodological path (Sumelius-Lindblom 2020). It is based on Maurice Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological theory (2013,[1945]) and Julia Kristeva's theory of intertextuality ([1967]). Embodied intertextuality is a methodological consequence of conceptual analysis and provides the basis for the playing-related perceptions and reflects Adorno's ideas from a pianist's viewpoint.

Both Merleau-Ponty and Kristeva advocate for the inseparability of body and mind. They have affected my own research such that I do not find it meaningful to separate philosophical and practical approaches. I also prefer primary sources to secondary ones, especially in the context of Merleau-Ponty. It is important not to intermingle phenomenology with the psychological aspect, which is so often mistakenly referred to as phenomenology. According to Gallagher and Zahavi (2012: 28), phenomenology rather seeks the invariant structures of experience, which fundamentally deviates from such psychologically-related approaches as psychotherapy:

Phenomenology is not interested in psychological processes (in contrast to behavioural processes or physical processes). Phenomenology is interested in the very possibility and structure of phenomenality; it seeks to explore its essential structures and conditions of phenomenality (Gallagher and Zahavi 2012: 28)

For Merleau-Ponty, body is the source of intellectuality, medium of expression and bodies are also capable of actively evoking, interpreting, and transforming meanings" (Sumelius-Lindblom 2019: 88). In Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology, body and mind are inseparably connected and the embodied experience is not considered as a secondary or irrelevant source. Quite the contrary: our whole awareness of the world is based on our perceptual experiences:

I am not the result or the intertwining of multiple causalities that determine my body or my "psyche"; I cannot think of myself as a part of the world, like the simple object of biology, psychology and sociology. Everything that I know about the world, even through science, I know from a perspective that is my own or from an experience of the world without which scientific symbols would be meaningless. (Merleau-Ponty 2013: lxx–lxxii)

Julia Kristeva's (1967, 444) intertextual approach extends to all-encompassing diversities and includes several phenomenologically-related aspects besides the psychoanalytical ones. One of them is intersubjectivity, which is also a key concept of Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology.<sup>2</sup> According to Marko Juvan (2008: 12), "[t]exts and intertextuality are activities for Kristeva, involved in the process off deconstructing and new construction of meanings, that have been

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<sup>2</sup> Also in Edmund Husserl's phenomenology.

pre-coded in other texts”. Kristeva uses intersubjectivity as a starting point for her theory of intertextuality:

A text is constructed as a mosaic of quotations: any text is the absorption and transformation of another. The notion of *intertextuality* replaces that of intersubjectivity, and poetic language is read as at least *double*. (Kristeva 1967, as cited in Juvan 2008: 11–12)

The linguistic aspects in Kristeva’s theory are also interconnected with inter-subjectivity in Merleau-Ponty’s theory. According to Merleau-Ponty, the (phenomenological) world cannot be separated from the linguistic and intersubjective world. This creates a connection between former and present experiences as well as between others’ minds and personal experiences:

Thus, language and the comprehension of language seem self-evident. The linguistic and intersubjective world no longer causes us any wonder, we no longer distinguish it from the world itself, and we reflect within a world already spoken and speaking. (Merleau-Ponty 2013: 189)

Merleau-Ponty’s and Kristeva’s ideas bring us close to the immediacy and completeness of the intertextual process of the performer and their embodied inter-textuality. This way of thinking cannot be separated from my phenomenologically-oriented ideas or personal background as a pianist, for example—or treated as a mechanical system to reach certain types of research results. Fundamentally, embodied intertextuality is about describing the mental and philosophical path of the performer in which the research premises are not primarily based on the notated source but rather on analyzing and reconceptualizing the information based on the playing experience. Even if the method is typically based on the pianist’s embodied experience of music, the primary meaning of the research is not related to describing the embodied experience. Praxis in this context represents a tool rather than an object of research. It represents a bodily form of intellectuality and consciousness, capable of deepening the pianist’s phenomenological notion behind the notated text.

Distinctive to the pianist’s phenomenologically-oriented way of exploring inter-textual relations is that the intertextual experience arises from the playing experience itself. In the first stage, this occurs before words and concepts, from the network of corresponding earlier playing experiences. To develop consciousness of these kinds of “personal experiences”, to make them intersubjectively accessible and visible to others, I have devised some concrete solutions in my research. These include sticking to the phenomenological approach, conceptualizing the perceptual experiences (which often relates which creating new concepts), re-analyzing neoclassical-related concepts that have suffered from misunderstandings and using piano playing examples (videos) as a tool to verify and demonstrate research findings and core ideas.

Embodied intertextuality is a conceptual consequence of the *pianist’s perception*, a working and research method which I have previously described as “an inter-subjectively oriented, analytical process based on a combination of highly advanced pianistic craftsmanship and the capability to creatively utilize and apply one’s previous musical experiences” (Sumelius-Lindblom 2019: 90). Embodied intertextuality is in touch with the intrinsic endeavors or abilities in piano playing, including recognizing, labeling, and reflecting inter-textual convergences and one’s own previous musical experiences. In addition to its most obvious, neoclassical context, embodied intertextuality can be methodologically applied to different styles and genres and in the context of related philosophical problematics. These include

polemical questions concerning the originality and power relations of (musical) ideas as well as internal and external (inter)textual influences, extending even to socio-political questions.

## **Adorno's Key Concepts on Stravinsky's Neoclassicism Meet the Pianist's Work**

The most important sources in this chapter are Adorno's texts "Stravinsky and restauration" in *Philosophy of new music*, (2006) [1949], "Stravinsky: A dialectical portrait" in *Quasi una fantasia, Essays on Modern music* (1992) [1963] and "On jazz" in *Essays on Music* (2002) [1936]. Characteristic for Adorno in *Philosophy of new music* and the chapter "Stravinsky and restauration" are his distinctive conceptual thinking and many of the intangible ways his observations resonate with the pianist's playing experience. The chapter proceeds through thematic subheadings, each representing different aspects of Stravinsky's intentions, aesthetics and psychology. Adorno's key concepts mirror Adorno's thinking as well as general intellectual trends of early twentieth century cultural history and the awakening of psychoanalytic theory. This overlaps with Adorno's complex language, which in turn occasionally overlaps with traditional musicological terminology.

In 1923, music critique Boris de Schloezer introduced the term *neoclassicism* in connection with Stravinsky's music (Messing 1988: 129). Based on de Schloezer's experience of the performance of Stravinsky's *Symphonies of wind instruments* (1920), de Schloezer was able to accurately capture Stravinsky's aesthetic:

Emotions, feelings, desires, aspirations—this is the terrain from which he has pushed his work. The art of Stravinsky is nevertheless strongly expressive; he moves us profoundly and his perception is never formulized; but there is one specific emotion, a musical emotion. This art does not pursue feeling or emotion; but it attains grace infallibly by its force and by its perfection. (Messing 1988: 130)

The same attributes that De Schloezer uses to describe Stravinsky's neoclassicism will play an important role in Adorno's writings some decades later. To understand Stravinsky's musical ideas or Adorno's way of thinking, I start this chapter with Adorno's psychologically related key concepts as my point of departure.

### ***Psychological Aspect***

Over 25 years after de Schloezer's critique, in *Philosophy of new music* Adorno finds Stravinsky's neoclassical procedures and his musical aesthetic highly disturbed and compares Stravinsky's laconic expression to mental illness. For Adorno, Stravinsky's aesthetic procedure of "killing the expression" is a synonym for insanity:

The expression of the insanity that kills all expression is not only an act of what psychologist might describe as abreacting this insanity, but of its actual subjection to administrative reason. (Adorno 2006: 127)

According to Witkin (2014: 171), "administrative reason" refers to "the modern world with its vast depersonalized administrative structures and its endless production of commodities." Witkin continues that this is a typical example of Adorno's "conceptual modulation", in which he develops concepts to the point where they shade into other concepts drawn from different

theoretical contexts. I find Adorno's procedure to cross-connect psychological, sociological and musicological terminology to be fundamentally related to his need to achieve the full expressivity of his own philosophy.

Adorno (2006: 121) interprets Stravinsky's neoclassical procedures as *infantile*, related to clinically diagnosed childish behavior and archaic primitivism. According to Witkin (1998: 154), primitivism served the romantic urge to return to "nature" and the "natural". Adorno compares Stravinsky's neoclassical procedures to "instrumental translations of children's gestures of play in music" and points out that the works grouped around the *Soldier's Tale* and the period of World War I could be called infantile themselves. The *primordial* elements of infantilism seem to be connected to Stravinsky's rhythmic element and repetitions, as described by contemporary music critique Else Kolliner in the context of Stravinsky's *Renard* (1916):

The perpetual change of beat, the stubborn repetition of individual motifs as well as the disassembling and reassembling of their elements [...]. (Adorno 2006: 121)

Infantilism and *ritual* are presumably connected to the "primeval" and "schizophrenic" elements in Stravinsky's neoclassicism:

The schizophrenic deportment of Stravinsky's music is that of a ritual that means to outbid the coldness of the world. (Adorno 2006: 127)

Adorno does not explicitly explain how he understands the concept of ritual, but he uses it in the context of such neoclassical works as *The Soldier's Tale*, *Renard*, *String Quartet* and *Piano-Rag-Music*. *Ritual* associates with *Petrushka* (1911) and mechanical music:

The image of mechanical music produces the shock of an already-lapsed modernism, degraded to the childish. (Adorno 2006: 111)

From the performer's view, *schizophrenic* and *ritual* are connected to a *mechanical* way of playing, a combination of emotional inexpressiveness and continuous repetition of rhythm. I have earlier described my playing experience in *Piano-Rag-Music* as mechanical and *alienated*, to resemble the mechanical piano itself.<sup>3</sup> I have also claimed that the lack of melodic material "pushes" the aspects of emotional experience to the background to serve the ruling rhythmic element (Sumelius-Lindblom 2020: 143–144). Based on my own experiences as well as de Schloezer, Adorno and Kolliner's notions, I encounter them when aiming to convey Stravinsky's neoclassical aesthetics.

Adorno uses the term *schizophrenia* as an umbrella concept to describe the essential substance of Stravinsky's neoclassicism. One of the psychological facets of schizophrenia is *depersonalization*, alienation from one's own body, which Adorno (2006: 130–131), after contemporary psychoanalyst Otto Fenichel, defines as "a defensive impulse against overwhelming narcissism". As the most palpable element of depersonalization and a counterpart to schizophrenia, Adorno mentions *hebephrenia*, characterized by incoherence, delusions and inappropriate behavior. Adorno describes hebephrenia as "emotional coldness, flatness of expression and patient's indifference to the exterior world". From Adorno's perspective, Stravinsky makes these psychological states the virtue of his music:

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<sup>3</sup> Adorno (2006: 127) mentions that "*Piano-Rag-Music* is written for mechanical piano".

Expression, which always arises from suffering of the subject under the object, is proscribed because contact is no longer achieved. (Adorno 2006: 131)

Because of its essentially embodied affiliations, one of the most informative of Adorno's psychologically related key concepts is *catatonia*, a group of symptoms characterized by a lack of movement and communication. Adorno (2006: 132) primarily associates catatonia with Stravinsky's dominating and rigid way of using rhythm and compares this trait with that of certain schizophrenic patients who endlessly repeat particular gestures and words. Adorno also associates catatonia with the absence of traditionally emotional musical expression, compensated for by repetitive and mechanically conveyed musical gestures:

Hebephrenic indifference, which does not allow itself any expression and has a correlative in a passivity that is there even where Stravinsky's music presents restless activity. (Adorno 2006: 132)

### ***Hybrid Intertextuality***

In addition to the psychological aspect, one of the most distinctive characteristics of Stravinsky's 1920s neoclassicism is the way he subtly combines elements from previous centuries' classical music and other genres such as jazz while nevertheless preserving the originality of his own style. The end-result becomes a revolutionary new direction which Adorno is deeply aware of, even calling Stravinsky "radical" in his thinking (1992: 147). Besides building a new direction or even a new genre, other innovative factors in Stravinsky's neoclassicism are its salience and rigidity of rhythm, fragmented character of form and repetition of short rhythmic and melodic motives. From the performer's perspective, the most serious challenge is in Stravinsky's neoclassical aesthetic, which consists of variable references, high-level rhythmic energy, the tangible role of texture and lack of traditionally emotional musical expression.

I have previously termed Stravinsky's neoclassical process of combining elements from different genres as *hybrid intertextuality* (Sumelius-Lindblom 2020). Among the four intertextual categories<sup>4</sup> that I have discussed, hybrid intertextuality represents a previously identified but unnamed musical genre which emphasizes the pureness of rhythm and melody, usually arising from its aesthetic roots as jazz or non-European folk music. Representing more than just a genre or type, hybrid intertextuality even extends to performing practice. Hybrid intertextuality covers radical changes in performance aesthetics and the performer's embodied experience, closely related to the fading classical-romantic emotional expression. Informative examples of hybrid intertextuality include Stravinsky's *Piano-Rag-Music* (1919) as well as Darius Milhaud's *Saudades do Brasil* (1920), which demonstrates influences of early jazz and Latin American folk music.

Adorno is highly critical of Stravinsky's neoclassical elements (such as hybrid-intertextuality), in which aesthetically opposite styles, such as classical music and jazz, co-occur. Paddison (1996: 116) counters, however, that the elements in Stravinsky's music which Adorno is suspicious of and regards as regressive are precisely those which distinguish the music of many non-European cultures from the tradition of European Classical and Romantic music. According to Paddison, many non-Western music styles achieve their "expressive" effect

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<sup>4</sup> Straightforward intertextuality, hybrid intertextuality, allusive or metaphoric intertextuality, interschool or cross-bordering intertextuality.



precisely through a lack of overt expression; this hieratic element as also to be recognized in the music of Stravinsky.

In my research, I see Stravinsky's neoclassicism as also integrated with *allusive or metaphoric intertextuality* (Sumelius-Lindblom 2019). An example of allusive or metaphoric intertextuality is *Sonata for piano* (1924), in which Stravinsky may not be alluding to any specific works but rather uses musical paragons from at least Mozart, Chopin, Baroque and jazz. Stravinsky has a similar approach to the presence of J. S. Bach in his *Concerto for piano and winds* (1924–25). According to Nicholas McKay:

Composed in 1923–24, it is a work in which Stravinsky's discourse is determined by the reflected discourse of another, namely Bach – not the real or historical Bach but Bach as a personification of the architectonic; a Bach constructed in Stravinsky's own image. (McKay 2014: 11)

### ***Alienation as a Musical Experience***

Adorno's loaded comment about Stravinsky's neoclassical aesthetics—"killing the expression"—is presumably connected to the concept of *alienation*, one of Adorno's key concepts and undeniably an essential feature of Stravinsky's neoclassical music as recognized by many of his contemporaries. According to Mészáros (1972: 36), alienation is a historical concept. It features in Karl Marx's philosophy (e.g., Kaplan 1976; Mészáros 1972) in particular but also in earlier German philosophy and even in Jean-Jacques Rousseau's theories. Kaplan defines alienation as "(being) foreign":

Alienation occurs when an individual perceives an absence of meaningful relationships between his status, his identifications, his social relationships, his style of life and his work. (Kaplan 1976: 117)

Kaplan (1976: 118) also questions the ordinary usage of the term and finds it a verbal paradox. Asking "How could one be alienated from oneself?", Kaplan implicitly questions the ordinary and loose way of using the term.

Adorno (2016: 127–128) approaches alienation in the chapter "Alienation as objectivity" and outlines a portrait of Stravinsky—the composer, who, by rejecting expressivity and designating insanity as the "new aesthetic order", inverts musical aesthetic ideals, thereby inventing his own rules. Adorno (2006: 127) describes Stravinsky's music as prioritizing schizophrenic traits through aesthetic consciousness and presenting insanity as health. Adorno illustrates the expressional premises of Stravinsky's neoclassicism from the viewpoint of objectivity, inhumanity, and regression:

His cool objectivity [*Sachlichkeit*] provides proof that in the art the power of human can be transformed into an inhumanity which acts as the mirror of inhumanity, whereas, it degenerates into ideology as long as it continues to quiver tremulously like the voice of humanity. (Adorno 1992: 149–150)

Wayne D. Bowman elucidates Adorno's conceptions of objectivism, alienation, and neoclassicism by comparing general attitudes towards alienation between the Second Viennese school and "objectivist" composers:

Unlike the music of the Second Viennese School, in which awareness of total alienation is everywhere apparent, the compositional practices of “objectivist” composers (as Stravinsky) betray the misguided assumption that that alienation can be fixed by ignoring it. Rather than confronting the problem, they retreat to styles and forms of the past, wrongly believing that these forms have a timelessness (an “objectivity”) that can somehow evade modern life’s ubiquitous alienation. (Bowman 1998: 315)

Alienation can also be connected to the performer’s experience. Even Stravinsky himself describes his alienated experience when performing the *Concerto for piano and winds* (1924–25):

Another time, while playing the same concerto, I suffered a lapse of memory because I was suddenly obsessed by the idea that the audience was a collection of dolls in a huge panopticon. Still another time, my memory froze because I suddenly noticed the reflection of my fingers in the glossy wood at the edge of the keyboard. (Stravinsky, according to White 1984: 318)

As a pianist, I have used the expression *alienated emotionality* (Sumelius-Lindblom 2020) to describe the alienated and objective playing experience of performing Stravinsky’s neoclassical repertoire. Alienated emotionality is also related to the performance practice of neoclassicism, which in many cases means dismantling the ideal of classical pianism as the illusion of singing, dominating upper voice playing and plastic playing technique. On a meta level, alienation rejects the myth of the Romantic genius and the role of a transcendently-oriented artist who works as a mediator of “shared” emotions. Alienation correlates with “rituality” in its rhythmically dominated playing action. It also retreats from many of the performer’s previous, canonized roles. Still, it does not, however, alienate the performer from her own embodied experiences.

This occurrence is, as it were, paradoxical: as much as the ideal of the Romantic performer aims at fading or even restraining her embodied experiences away from superhuman technical sovereignty, alienated emotionality brings the performer closer to her own embodiment and its possibilities. Adorno’s way of criticizing Stravinsky’s alienation contains a phenomenological suggestion:

Stravinsky’s objectivity resounds with this pseudo-realism. The utterly shrew, illusionless self, elevates the not-I to a deity, but in its zeal severs the bonds between subject and object. (Adorno 2006: 128)

Adorno’s comment not just reveals his critique towards Stravinsky’s neoclassicism but also towards the contemporary philosophical movement in general:

He [Adorno] saw Stravinsky’s neoclassicism as a response to modernity that had close kinship with modern philosophical movements such as phenomenology and existentialism, thus extending his critique of modern philosophy into modern music. (Witkin 1998: 147)

According to Witkin (2014: 175), Adorno’s procedure of alienation reflects his opposition to such modernist and neoclassical composers as Stravinsky and Paul Hindemith. In line with phenomenological and existential philosophy, these composers responded to the crisis of modern culture by eschewing alienation. This was achieved by retreating to a domain of pure subjectivity, which Adorno considered in both music and phenomenology as “empty”.

## ***Music About Music and the “Tendency of the Material”***

Parody, the fundamental form of *music about music*, means to imitate something and through imitation to ridicule it. Precisely, this attitude... adapts easily to regression. (Adorno 2006: 137)

Adorno (2006: 134) calls Stravinsky's neoclassicism reactionary and uses the pejorative expression about neoclassicism – “music about music” – to define the contradictions in Stravinsky's music and as a counterblow to everything musically “literary”. According to Witkin (1998: 152), Adorno sees parody and quotation as the natural means of Stravinsky's neoclassicism and parodic techniques as degrading their objects. Adorno (2006: 134) accuses Stravinsky's neoclassicism of disintegration of life, an alienated condition of the subject towards its own material. Adorno also describes how Stravinsky's music becomes literary in an entirely different sense and hews closer to its primordial origins. These descriptions contain information that further explain the features of alienation or withdrawing from one's own material and lead us deeper into one of Adorno's (2006: 31) most crucial key concepts, the *tendency of the material*. Within the limits of this article, it is not possible to entirely clarify the concept, but a few of its main features will suffice.

By suggesting that Stravinsky lost contact with his own material, Adorno (2006: 135) wants not only to show that “Stravinsky's music is constantly focused on some-thing else, which it ‘distorts’ through the overexposure of its rigid and mechanical traits” but also the fundamental differences between Stravinsky and Schoenberg's aesthetics. According to Adorno (2006: 135), the music of the Schoenberg school inherently contains the tendency of the material and “has no strict application in Stravinsky”.

As a pianist I have come to understand Adorno's expression “an alienated condition of the subject from its own material” as his willingness to show that Stravinsky keeps an emotional distance from his own music and perceives it as an “outsider”. This is a conscious aesthetic choice for Stravinsky, whose neoclassical musical material emphasizes the embodied primeval by retreating from traditionally classified emotional expression towards more “objective” approaches and mechanized playing practices. In addition to alienation from his own material, Adorno also accused Stravinsky of alienation from the historical dimensions of the material (Paddison 1996: 117). According to Paddison, Stravinsky's ability to manipulate his material in a detached and objective way is a consequence of his lack of identification with it. Paddison connects this occurrence with national premises and fundamental differences between Stravinsky and Schoenberg's aesthetics:

Stravinsky, as a Russian, seemed able from the beginning to approach the legacy of the Euro-pean musical tradition with a certain detachment, a lack of identification which Schoenberg, immersed in the heart of that culture, could never show. (Paddison 1996: 117)

Even if Adorno resisted “the first principles” of philosophy, the concept of the material of music formulates a key idea that fundamentally explains his musical philosophy. Besides the apparent obscurity of the concept which partly derives from the complexity and equivocality of his language, the material of music is thoroughly historical and sociological concept: there is nothing given by nature. According to Paddison:

For Adorno, the work of art is both of a social fact and at the same time something which has a critical function in relation to social reality by virtue of its historically acquired autonomy from immediate social function. (Paddison 1996: 124)

Adorno views material as having a historical and social tendency which determines a given composer's musical and sociological relevance, for instance, in the configuration between Schoenberg and Stravinsky in *Philosophy of New Music*. According to Witkin (1998: 13), Adorno's formulation of the material of music includes two dimensions, *congealed history* and *language*, and the business of the composition has to be seen as a historical process, a dynamic engagement with history. Part of the tendency of the material is Adorno's way of connecting Stravinsky's neoclassicism to social processes, modes of behavior and stylization (Paddison 1992: 158).

Adorno's theory of the material of music can be condensed into a notion such that "music knows no natural law" and "all of its specific traits are marks of the historical process" (Adorno 2006: 31):

The meaning of musical means is not identical with their genesis, although it is not to be separated from this genesis. (Adorno 2006: 31)

In addition, Carl Dahlhaus elucidates Adorno's idea beyond the music material:

Every musical phenomenon, points beyond itself due to what it reminds of, what it contrasts with, whereby it awakens expectations. (Dahlhaus 1989: 116)

On a conceptual level, the performer's experience, embodied intertextuality, includes similar historical and social elements to Adorno's concept of the tendency of the material. The most significant difference between Adorno's and the performer's view lies in the question between neoclassical material and alienation. Even if Adorno himself was critical of Stravinsky's neoclassicism and accused Stravinsky of alienation from his own material and its historical dimensions, for the performer, the experience is nearly the opposite. From the performer's point of view, neoclassicism represents a historically rich intertextual network in which previous and contemporary styles perform side by side. Stravinsky's neoclassicism as well as neoclassicism in general emphasizes the embodied aspect of the performer and therefore cannot be related to the *embodied* aspect of alienation which, in Adorno's sense, rather relates to the symptoms of schizophrenia. As I have previously explained, for the performer, alienation appears as alienation from a conventionally emotional and empathic orientation.

## **Stravinsky, Adorno and Jazz**

Musically this "modernity", refers primarily to sound and rhythm, without fundamentally breaking the harmonic-melodic convention of traditional dance music. Syncopation is its rhythmic principle. It occurs in a variety of modifications, in addition to its elemental form (as, the cakewalk, jazz's precursors use it), modifications, which remain constantly permeated this elemental form. The most commonly used modifications are the displacement of basic rhythm through deletions (the charleston) or slurring (ragtime) (Adorno 2002: 470)

In this chapter I will take a closer look at jazz influences in Stravinsky's neoclassicism. This is necessary for several reasons. Even if Stravinsky did not straightforwardly use jazz-based influences in the same style or amount as his French neoclassical colleagues such as Milhaud, jazz fundamentally affected or even changed his way of composing. This is related to Adorno's

way of making similar value judgments concerning both jazz and Stravinsky, as well as Adorno's tendency to interpret earlier French (classical) music as a predecessor of early jazz.

The most illustrative work in this context is Stravinsky's *Piano-Rag-Music* (1919). Ragtime, as an early notated form of jazz, essentially represented the "real jazz" for Stravinsky before the 1920s. Otherwise, the jazz influences in Stravinsky's neoclassical piano repertoire (*Concerto for piano and winds* and *Sonata*, for instance) are not so obvious and undisputed by their nature. I will reflect on my own playing experiences and jazz-related observations with regard to Adorno's critical ideas on Stravinsky and jazz primarily in the context of the essay "On jazz" (2012 [1936]), which slightly deviates from Adorno's Stravinsky-related texts. His biting critique and psychological commentary do not have a central role in this text, and the remaining critique is rather more targeted towards the sociological aspects of jazz. (The latter point might be connected to the earlier publishing date of the essay.)

Even if Adorno has been criticized for his unprofessionalism towards popular music, even confusing commercial dance music and improvised jazz (see Andy Hamilton 2007), from the performer's view, Adorno sharply perceives many relevant and interesting hybrid intertextually-related aesthetic convergences between jazz and classical music.

Stravinsky described his early relationship to jazz as based on the notated score. He had not heard live jazz before 1919, but when he did, he found it more interesting than written jazz. Stravinsky explained that turning to jazz in 1918 meant a "wholly new sound" in his music:

My knowledge of jazz was derived exclusively from copies of sheet music, and as I had never actually heard any of the music performed, I borrowed its rhythmic style not as played, but as written. I *could* imagine jazz sound, however, or so I liked to think. Jazz meant, in any case, a wholly new sound in my music, and *Histoire* marks my final break with the Russian orchestral school in which I had been fostered. (Van den Toorn 1983: 198)

*Piano-Rag-Music* represents an exaggerated interpretation of ragtime influences, "stressing the percussion possibilities of the piano", as Stravinsky described his compositional premises (Van den Toorn 1983: 204). As a compact, collage-type work, *Piano-Rag-Music* is based on disconnected fragments whose rhythmic complexity simultaneously exceeds the rhythmic and harmonic challenges of the original ragtime style. The recognizable jazz elements include a fragmented, sharp-featured form, syncopations, and two longer fragments with a stride bass (oom-pah).

In its musical expression, *Piano-Rag-Music* follows nonchalant, jazz-related and "alienated" aesthetics, unconcerned with sudden dynamic eruptions. Adorno discusses jazz in same terms—"alienation" and "New Objectivity"—that he uses to illustrate Stravinsky's neoclassicism:

The use value of jazz does not sublimate alienation, but intensifies it. (Adorno 2002: 473)

However much jazz may act like a product of "New Objectivity"... [*neue Sachlichkeit*] (Adorno 2002: 473)

I have earlier described (Sumelius-Lindblom 2020: 145) my phenomenological perceptions of performing *Piano-Rag-Music* and noticed that the determining factors include a straightforward, even mechanical suggestiveness as well as a hybrid form of a physical

relaxedness and rhythmical alertness. Despite the prevailing material of music, the unmetrical syncopation against the march rhythm moves many of the emotional aspects to the background to serve the ruling rhythm. In Adorno's approach, the mechanical and sociological aspects meet the aesthetic similarities of Stravinsky and jazz:

Like jazz, Stravinsky's imitation of the compulsion to repeat has its origins in the mechanization of the labor processes. Through the adaptation to machines and the jerky reflexes they produce, Stravinsky's music tended to prescribe modes of behavior rather than to crystallize out an intrinsically coherent compositional manner. (Adorno 1992: 158)

Adorno's notions not only intersect with my own performer-based experiences but also with Stravinsky's own experiences on performing his own composition. Stravinsky's approach emphasizes the phenomenological aspect of playing, "the fingers themselves", the very "alienated aspects" that Adorno fundamentally resists:

What fascinated me the most of all in the work was that the different rhythmic episodes were dictated by the fingers themselves. My own fingers seemed to enjoy it so much that I began to practice the piece; not that I wanted to play it in public. (Van den Toorn 1983: 204)

Adorno (2002: 489) mentions the earlier French tradition in particular, especially Debussy and impressionism, which preceded and determined the aesthetics of jazz. Adorno describes jazz as *eccentric* and names "one of the oddest and most famous pieces of art music [...] a Debussy prelude *Général Lavine—eccentric—dans le style et le mouvement d'un Cake-walk*". Adorno also describes his contemporary hybrid procedures of performing classical and jazz side by side, in a mutual interaction:

The black artist Duke Ellington, who is trained musician, and the principal representative of today's "classical" stabilized jazz, has named Debussy and Delius as his favorite composers. With the exception of hot rhythm, all the more subtle characteristics of jazz refer back to this style and it would be hardly be exaggerated to observe that this style is making its way for the first time into the broader strata of society through jazz. In Parisian nightclubs, one can hear Debussy and Ravel in between the rumbas and Charlestons. The influence of impressionism is more striking in the harmonies. Ninth-chords, sixte ajoutée, and other mixtures, such as the stereotypical blue chord, and whatever jazz has to offer in the way of vertical stimulation has been taken from Debussy. (Adorno 2002: 483–484)

## Conclusions

In analyzing the peculiarities of Stravinsky's neoclassicism as part of the prevailing aesthetic tendencies of French neoclassicism, *l'esprit nouveau* and Purism and juxtaposing those findings with Adorno's critical ideas and my own playing experiences, it is possible to see confluences among several intertwining categories. These include the research set-up, content and methodology. Connecting conceptual analyses with the performer's phenomenologically-related methodological view, *embodied inter-textuality*, enables this type of examination, which does not seek absolute, undeniable answers or results; rather, conceptual analysis produces new concepts and applications which lead to new levels of questions and conceptualizations.

In this article, the concept of *hybrid intertextuality* not only illustrates Stravinsky's neoclassical aesthetics but also the core of Adorno's critical ideas towards Stravinsky. Adorno's practice of connecting the hybrid elements of Stravinsky's neoclassicism with *reaction* and mental disease was not only his way of stigmatizing Stravinsky. From my point of view, it also sheds light on Adorno's *own* philosophy, heavily based on his philosophical key concept of the *tendency of the material*. By describing Stravinsky as outside of the European tradition and alienated even from his own material, Adorno unwittingly revealed the key points of his *own* thinking, which was at times strict and radical, and inseparable from its own principles, but on the other hand unchained, agile and essayistic by nature.

Future research might look for new intersections between the tendency of the material and embodied intertextuality since on a conceptual level they seem to include similar historically- and sociologically-related elements. On the other hand, the performer's phenomenological experience of the material of music fundamentally deviates from Adorno's critical idea of alienation. Even if I recognize the existence of alienation as a mental state, Adorno's idea of alienation appears to go against the basic idea of phenomenology: that one with a body cannot be alienated from herself. On the contrary, for the performer, Stravinsky's neoclassicism appears as a materially tangible and embodied intertextual network which can apply its own contemporary and historically conscious influences and at the same time maintain its material originality.

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