

***The Ashgate Research Companion to Minimalist and Postminimalist Music.*** Edited by Keith Potter, Kyle Gann, and Pwyll Ap Siôn. Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate, 2013. xxvi, 431 pp. (Ashgate Research Companion) ISBN 978-1-4724-0278-3.

Unquestionably, one of the more intriguing features of contemporary culture is the pervasive appearance of minimalism—not just in music, but also in contemporary film, video, and dance (to name three art forms). Perhaps even more noteworthy is how quickly minimalism has been adopted by the academy as a topic of serious pursuit. In one sense, then, *The Ashgate Research Companion to Minimalist and Postminimalist Music* can be viewed as the product of the prior twenty years of fruitful scholarship. More recently, the content of this book is the outcome of three international conferences devoted to minimalism, along with the work of the Society for Minimalist Music, an organization formed in 2007 at the First International Conference on Minimalist Music. An international roster of twenty-three authors contributed to this book of twenty-two chapters in six parts (one chapter is co-authored).

The book opens with an eighteen-page introduction authored by the three editors. Following a brief, serviceable historical survey that traces the origins of minimalism through postminimalism to the present, a compelling description is provided of the attributes commonly found in this musical genre.

Part 1, “Historical and Regional Perspectives,” contains four chapters that address the genre’s impact from a historical perspective. Keith Potter outlines how the works of Steve Reich and Philip Glass from the early 1960s were natural outcomes of their cultural milieu. In his overview, Kyle Gann attempts to explain how postminimalism was a predictable outgrowth of the pulse-patterned style of the 1960s and 1970s. Maarten Beiren’s chapter shifts the focus to European minimalism; it outlines how this brand of minimalism differs substantively from American minimalism, largely through its referential associations with European art music. The section concludes with Virginia Anderson’s survey of British minimalism. Her narrative spans the experimental works from the 1960s to mainstream contemporary composers like Gavin Bryars and Michael Nyman.

The three chapters in Part 2 explore the use of minimalism outside the traditional concert hall and theatre. Dean Suzuki examines the mutual aesthetics that associate minimalist composers with other time-based art forms such as dance, video, and film. Jelena Novak traces the transition from “abstract” to “realistic” minimalism and argues that Glass’s landmark 1976 opera, *Einstein on the Beach*, plays a pivotal moment in this evolution. Finally, Jeremy Peyton Jones explores the audience’s perception of repetition and the multiple ways such repetition affects a listener or viewer.

Part 3, entitled “Minimalism and Other Media,” contains four essays. Richard Glover explores the parallel, symbiotic trajectory between technology and minimalism beginning in the 1960s. Rebecca M. Doran Eaton studies a phenomenon related to Glover’s topic—the gradual employment of minimalism in independent, art-house cinema during the 1960s and 1970s, and in mainstream Hollywood films since the 1980s. Robert Fink extends Eaton’s thesis by asserting that the repetition of minimalism replicates the structure of media and advertising found in television; he further contends that minimalism is a reflection of modernity itself. In the final chapter by John Richardson and Susanna Välimäki, the authors examine the music/image interaction in films scored by Glass such as *The Hours* and *Yes*.

Analysis becomes the emphasis of the essays in Part 4, entitled “Analytical and Philosophical Perspectives.” In the first chapter, Tristian Evans provides an excellent summary of some of the more important theoretical models that have appeared in the literature. Evans then puts forward his own hermeneutical model, applying his theory to minimalist multimedia. Pwyll ap Siôn addresses the issues of reference, quotation, and borrowing, tracing these attributes from 1960s minimalism to postminimalism. John Pymm examines the role of narrativity in minimalist music. Specifically, he uncovers a narrative dimension in the non-linear early works of Reich. Finally, Marija Masnikosa proposes a theoretical model to address distinctions between minimalist and postminimalist music.

Part 5, “Minimalism and Beyond,” contains three chapters. In the first, David Dies argues that a more comprehensive understanding of the long, meditative passages in the music of composers such as Henryk Górecki and John Tavener may be profitably approached through the study of its spiritual characteristics. Through such a listening strategy, Dies asserts that this music may be grasped as a form of transcendence, not unlike devotional rituals such as the recitation of the rosary of the Roman Catholic tradition. Jonathan Bernard examines the interaction between minimalism and pop music. Specifically, he studies overt points of contact between minimalism and pop including harmony, texture, timbre, and rhythm. In the final chapter, Dragana Stojanović-Novčić provides a fascinating historical narrative of the origins of minimalism in Serbia; of particular interest are the relationships she draws between this music and that of minimalist styles from other European regions.

Part 6 includes an intriguing collection of four chapters. Entitled “Issues of Performance,” each chapter brings a personal insight from celebrated performers of minimalistic music. Russell Hartenberger has long been associated with Reich’s performing ensemble. John Harle has been connected with the Michael Nyman Band. Sarah Cahill has had a long and distinguished career as a solo and collaborative pianist in this genre, and Paul Hillier has had fruitful partnerships with Pärt and Reich.

In sum, this is an essential addition to the growing scholarship on minimalism. These twenty-two chapters contain a wealth of ideas that I believe will be used as a standard reference for music undergraduates, graduates, and professionals for years to come. Remarkably, there is little overlap in the content of these essays – a testament to the vast range of topics. At the same time, the book will also appeal to readers with a broad interest in the arts. The essays are well written and the typescript is clean, well laid-out and, as far as I could ascertain, free from errors. The tables, images, and musical scores are beautifully produced. The book concludes with a twenty page “Select Bibliography” (I have purposely inserted the quotes to emphasize how extensive the scholarship is on this topic) and index.

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