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Review of *Modern Music and After, 3rd Edition* by
Paul Griffiths

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Considered by many to be the foremost authority on modern music, Paul Griffiths has updated his important book *Modern Music and After* with an addition of 95 pages to the text of the previous editions, published in 1981 and 1995. The narrative is mainly chronological, with the most influential composers such as Berio, Boulez, Cage, Ligeti, Messiaen, and Stockhausen recurring throughout the book. The work is thoroughly revised from the previous editions, now containing chapters focusing on world events. It also includes pieces premiered in the past few years. Griffiths states the book is not a history of music but rather an account of "a movement of radical renewal."

The strength of the book is the wealth of information it contains on specific pieces composed since 1945. There are one hundred music examples included in the book, as well as a fifteen-page resource listing, most useful for discovering more in-depth material on composers mentioned. For someone who wants to learn an infinite amount about modern music this would be the place to start. One of the difficulties of writing on a recent historical topic is that it is still evolving, and Griffiths overcomes this by reevaluating different trends. Since he has spent so much of his career attending concerts as a critic, it would be hard to find anyone else with his experience and ability to describe this music.

The strength of the book is also its weakness. It assumes the reader has a complete knowledge of twentieth-century music, such as one would get from an advanced college course. Since Griffiths includes many composers throughout the book, it is difficult to keep track of them, since some are mentioned in one sentence and reappear ten or twenty pages later. Composers such as Barraqué and Volkonsky aren't as known in the United States as in Europe, and they appear in the book without much introduction. In addition, there is a very strong emphasis on European composers and few American composers are mentioned in-depth; in fact John Corigliano isn't mentioned at all. Some of the writing is nuanced and exhaustive, having to be read numerous times. Examples of words found in the text include *concatenations*, *onomatopoeic*, and *sinusoidal*.

Griffiths is well versed in his subject, having spent years as a critic in both London and New York. The author has also contributed to *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* and has written biographies on eight composers. This book is highly recommended with the caveat that readers may want to refresh themselves with music of this era before diving into this work.

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