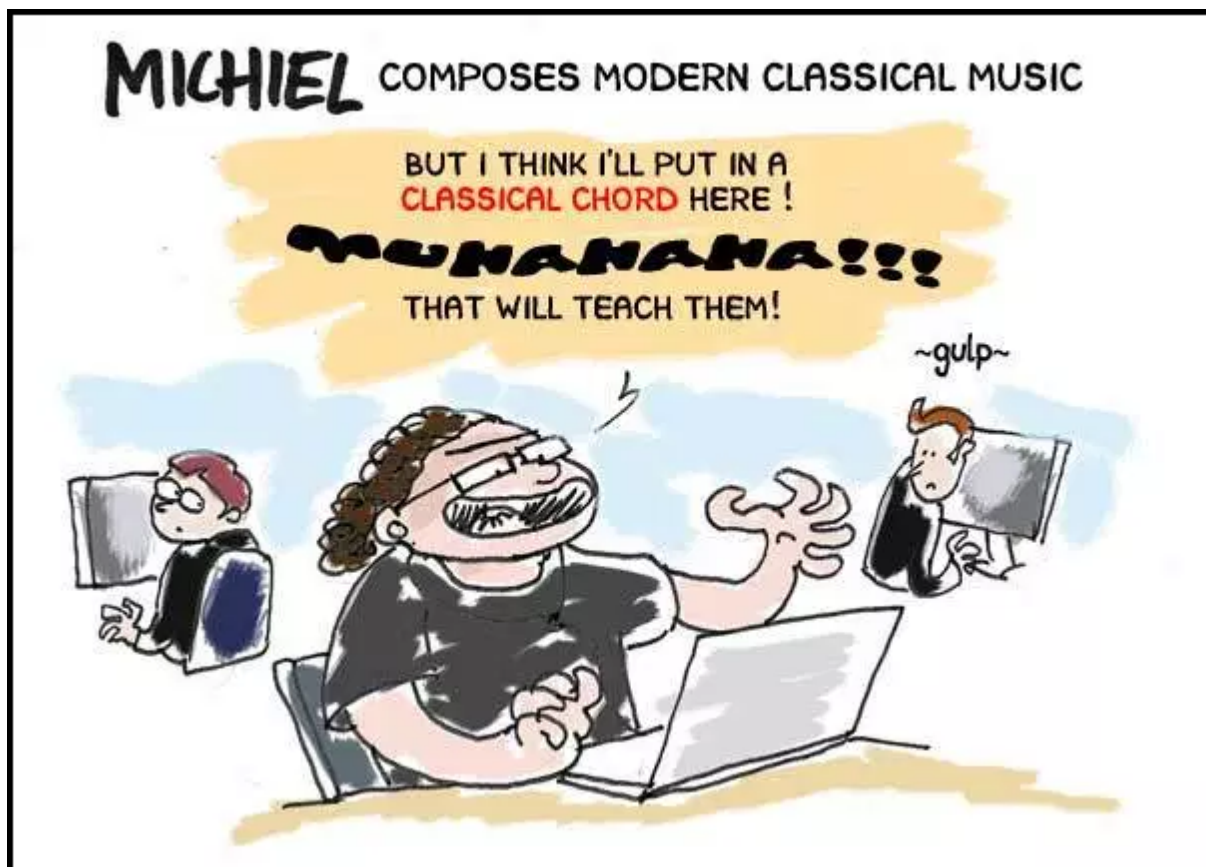


# Contemporary

---



The concept *Modern* (also referred to as contemporary) is known in all ages. The good old Mirriam Webster defines the concept as *involving recent techniques, methods, or ideas*, something people keep recognizing as long as the clock ticks the seconds away from the older times.

Some Classicists use the word *Modern* as term of abuse, just like some Modernists express their aversion from the traditional with the term *Classical*. That's encountered in all fields of art, I guess, including music.

I have little playing experience with Modern music, if you exclude the arrangements of pop songs I play from the definition *Modern*. So first let's define what I mean by means of a *contradictio in terminis*: I am referring to *Modern Classical* or *Contemporary* music!

I hardly play contemporary music, I stayed behind in Neo-Classicism, except for a few hesitant attempts with the *Easy Studies* by Brouwer and a few pieces by Kleynjans. I am not sure why I am less attracted to contemporaries. ;-) Maybe deep in my heart I am very conservative and old-fashioned.

This does not mean that I never *listen* to contemporary music. Some contemporaries are on guitar recital programmes most of the time and I must admit that this music sometimes has a refreshing and stimulating effect. Often the subjective reality of beautiful and ugly is replaced by impressions of completely other kind.

A good example is the *Sonata Op. 47* by Alberto Ginastera, a piece played by Marcin Dylla on the Twente Guitar Festival in May 2006.

Years ago, I got to know the music of Ginastera, an Argentine composer who died in 1983. It was a quite particular introduction, which was included on *Brain Salad Surgery* by Emerson, Lake and Palmer by the name *Toccata*. It was the most turbulent track of the album (which is quite something, bearing in mind the Piano-, Hammond- and Synthesizer adventures of Keith Emerson) and included the main drum solo of the album with many technical innovations like percussion-synths,

You can listen to *Sonata Op. 47* in various ways. It's a dazzling display of guitaristic skill on high and challenging level. Still this notion is not sufficient to hold out listening to this piece for its about 20 minutes. The power of the piece was elsewhere.

Its strength was not in the structure, I could not follow what was played. Some fragments were recognisable in forms, but that was all structure I could hear.

The real power of the piece was the palette of emotions, which were all performed excellently by Marcin Dylla. In some way, I pick up these emotions quite soon with pieces which I don't know what to think about, which do not permit themselves to be placed in a known framework. In these cases, the emotions form a story in my mind. Maybe you do such a thing subconsciously, just to give this unknown structure a shape in your mind, an effort to make the music your own, to enclose it before it gets away.

I did not find the piece particularly beautiful, but I found it quite intrusive. My common sense of aesthetics did not give me any clue, the piece seemed to avoid judgement. This made listening to the piece an exhausting (you have to work on the music) yet fascinating experience.

The *Sonata* had sections full of aggression, hate and reproach, but it also showed colours of forgiveness and a toilsome expression of tenderness. The piece told to me the story of the next of kin of a dead man, who had done terrible things to them while he was still alive. It reflected the struggle of the survivors against the hate, they would never be able to satisfy, it showed their despair that the dead man was even out of reach for forgiveness.

Would you call a piece which invokes such a story a beautiful piece? I guess not, which makes it a perfect example of art which withdraws itself from the notion of beautiful or ugly, showing another function of art: shocking and jolting awake. Raw emotion.

I must admit that this kind of approach to contemporary music is exhausting. After the break, Mr. Dylla played more contemporaries, performing them excellently, but this time there was no story in my mind. I was spent, and picked up nothing from the pieces.

;-)) In situations like this, a nice piece of classical music in a well-known structure would be absolutely delightful, just to list all your senses.