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Abstract:

The aim of this dissertation is an examination of a small part of “Postmodernism”, which – according to Hartmut Krones – has always existed in Austria. It revolves around the idiosyncratic return to – or the maintenance of – tonality as an option in the 1960s in Vienna and Salzburg, beyond the conservative traditional modernity. I chose to focus on this period in time, because this decade stands for challenging the avant-garde prohibition canon. The rebellion against prohibitions and the ensuing argument over what should be allowed and what should not be allowed can be observed at the same time in Jazz history. The main focus of this thesis is on the influences of Jazz and Pop in the works of Kurt Schwertsik, Otto M. Zykan, Heinz K. Gruber, Ivan Eröd, and Gerhard Wimberger.

By way of example, I will examine the yet-to-be-selected works of these five composers with regard to their individual approaches to the nevertheless common “postmodernity” and then juxtapose them. Building on, for example, Rainer Buland’s dissertation “Die ‘Neue Wilden’ [...]” from 1989 and Hartmut Krones’ essay “Die Erhebung gegen den Vater [...]” from 2002, the relevance of the common context of the aforementioned composers in the sense that they tackle similar aesthetic problems for Austrian music in the wake of World War II will be examined. Particular attention is paid to a broad selection of questions which are discussed in the works of these artists, taking into account a variety of historical links in the context of a systematic problem analysis. In particular, these questions include: To what extent do they align with the avant-garde? How do they distance themselves from it? In what way do they unite, on the one hand, a connection to the avant-garde, while at the same time standing out from it? Which composition techniques are used under what considerations? What Jazz concept do they pursue? How do they employ tonality?

As three of the five artists are living composers, the method of qualitative interviews seems appropriate for investigating and comparing their personal memories and approaches. In the case of Otto M. Zykan’s musical work, I intended to contact his widow, Irene Suchy. The complete works of Gerhard Wimberger can be found in the library of the Mozarteum University Salzburg; however, a small part is in the possession of his former composition student, my supervisor Prof. Dr. Peter Revers, who provided me with Wimberger’s unpublished autobiography. Furthermore, a research stay is planned in Krems, where the artistic legacies of Friedrich Cerha and Kurt Schwertsik are kept in the archives of the Danube University Krems.