

Theodor Adorno and Karlheinz Stockhausen's Oktophonie: Aesthetic Reflections on Modern Music

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Abstract : *El estudio sobre la música moderna, requiere de una aproximación nueva a las nociones de la estética, la armonía y la melodía. El trabajo de Stockhausen transcurre obras características de la Segunda Escuela de Viena, Wagner y otros cambios estéticos sonoros anteriores de la era romántica. Sin embargo, la relevancia fundamental de la obra se centra en el uso de recursos tecnológicos como elemento central en el cambio mediático fenomenológico de la obra y en su expresión,*

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When studying Theodor Adorno's thinking on aesthetics and music in particular, we must understand that his theory of sound aesthetics is based on the development of the avant-garde movements of the early twentieth century. Adorno was a student of the main exponents of the Second Viennese School, such as Arnold Schoenberg, Alban Berg and Anton Webern. This musical school strongly influenced the German musicologist, critic and philosopher's ways of understanding, creating and comprehending music. One of the most fundamental elements of Adorno's vision of serialism is based on the idea of conceiving a creation process different from the First Viennese School of Mozart and Haydn, which in the Second Viennese School is based on mathematics and above all on the idea of immersing oneself in the sphere of art in function of art. A thought that has an integral point of contact with Adorno's idea of self-awareness, where the ontological condition of the work of art is constructed from the musical language, breaking elements such as the rigidity of tonal music and above all seeking to work music from its own ontological characteristics, beyond tensions and harmonic resolutions.

These changes in the processes of creating music and above all in the way of conceiving sound, beyond an aesthetic, religious or political function; seek to create a new perspective that tends towards the reflection of self-awareness in musical language, opening new bridges far from the limits of tonality, which we can find in various musical figures throughout the 20th century and in particular in the composer Karlheinz Stockhausen. The German-born composer manages to generate new codes, forms and ways of developing a musical language that manages to reflect from sound, creating musical themes inspired by

serialism, together with electronic and acoustic constructions. Allowing us to find new ways of understanding the limits between sound, music and noise. Trying to open new musical amalgams that end up denoting an incredible technical, pioneering and above all original development which would end up generating a unique reflection on the notions of music, order and noise. The integral role of sound encompasses on the one hand the innate nature of understanding that music as a language or code acquires a certain relevance from its first conceptual abstraction (Martínez et al. 18, 2022). The boundaries between sound from an aesthetic perspective always tend to change from the various canons provided by history over time.

In order to understand these new ways of listening to music, it is essential to understand that the thinking in relation to the work of art based on Adorno's aesthetic theory was strongly influenced by Hegel's philosophy. The vision of art from the sublime thought by Kant, has an intrinsic relationship with the representation of nature based on the mimetic, while Adorno relies on Hegel's dialectical thought to be able to begin to reflect on art through its own parameters, art configured through a self-awareness of itself. In the same way that in painting we can find the play of shapes and geometry in cubism, or lines in expressionism; music allows us to reflect on its own condition and genesis within chamber music. A concept that is modified in the aesthetic in

Stockhausen, maintaining the idea of representation through the abstractions of music, but addressed in a new reflection of sound in all its forms.

In addition to the creation of a new abstract language in sound, we can begin to understand the problem of temporality, where Adorno tends to reflect through time, this being such a fundamental element in his aesthetic analysis due to his approach to music, which even allows him to understand the idea of space through time. This idea within music can be found in the separation and fragmentation between sections of traditional forms, where the harmonies show the different sections, as well as the use of motifs, which through variations allow us to understand different forms of harmonic fragmentation in music, even in the development of a new atmospheric language created by Stockhausen and his influences.

The work of *Oktophonie* manages to transcend beyond the typical standards of music, because it begins to develop based on experimentation and a series of studies of electronic sounds, which redefine rhythms, harmonic sense and above all melodic. Rhythm begins to have a more powerful and fundamental integral role in the construction of textures and harmonies, because as there no longer seems to be an origin based on tonal or atonal, it is necessary to generate certain points of cohesion within this new language based mostly on a unique process of recording and editing music. In addition, there is a deep link to popular music and particularly jazz in some motifs and tensions between sections of the work, which, despite not being to Adorno's liking because the philosopher does not consider that popular music proposes a serious musical language, we can find in Stockhausen a different development of popular motifs oriented towards a new aesthetic and sound construction. Another element that acquires greater vivacity within the work of *Oktophonie* by Stockhausen as in other pieces by the composer, is the support in the dynamics to build contrasts between sections, harmonies and above all to be able to generate a coherent atmospheric sense. Sense that permeates the development of the work by fractioning motifs, harmonies, ideas and rhythmic ostinatos, based on a slow progressive development and therefore atmospheric, which manages to influence even other styles within music such as minimalism.

Stockhausen's music, thought of in Adorno's critical theory of aesthetics, opens new bridges on the reflection of music and its language, managing to transcend the traditional functions of the musical work, questioning music from its aesthetic and above all temporal ontological condition, allowing to reconstruct a language with more words and sound ideas, richer both in its construction and in its creation process. Generating a unique, dynamic and constantly moving work of art, which is constantly edited, modified and experimented with, transcending all the problems of the standardization of music that Adorno is so concerned about. And above all, generating a pioneering questioning of art, based on the experimental and on a delicious motivic and technical fusion of academic, popular, serial, atonal,

experimental and, above all, electronic music. Showing a work of art that develops in its becoming, which transcends in new ways of understanding art and in particular in musical language, which borrows technological elements to generate a new panorama in sound aesthetics. Both works transit the musical avant-garde present in the aesthetic ruptures of the 20th century, where approaches to sound are linked to the sphere of the grotesque and the ominous from sound and image (Bacon et Martinez 68, 2022). The new representations transgress the traditional forms of aesthetics to position themselves from the new music that Adorno denounces can be found in composers such as Richard Strauss (Adorno 2004), or in Adorno's dodecaphonic aesthetics. This type of approach to contemporary Western musical art provides a phenomenological notion where the role of the creator and his perception acquires a role of a transcendental subjectivity different from the old mimesis of the works prior to the musical period (Luis et al 2020).

Aesthetics always present changes linked to the representations of the modern era applied to new electronic and digital technologies; Stockhausen's work transits the radical change of traditional music, the aesthetic leap from the horror of Schubert, Strauss, Germanic Liszt or the French Saënt Saenz (Martinez et al. 23) to the serialism of the second Viennese school. Each of the musical changes presented allows us to understand the radical change in musical aesthetics that made possible Stockhausen's sound and acoustic experimentation. Each of these harmonic changes has been identified by Theodor Adorno from elements of mobility and harmonic complexity in Wagner in works such as *Tristan und Isolde* to the contemporary Stockhausen (Padißon 1997). In this way, Stockhausen's *Oktophonie* artwork seeks to create a first aesthetic tension between forms, abstraction and harmonic degradation, opening bridges for new modern and postmodern musical structures and canons.

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