

Paul Bekker's Objectivistic Aesthetics of Music

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Paul Bekker (1882–1937), one of the leading music critics in German-speaking world during the first half of the twentieth century, known today as a pioneer of musical sociology, proposed the concept of New Music (Neue Musik) as objectivistic ideal music from a stylistic viewpoint.

After World War I, there were demands for music that were both innovative and accepted by the people of various social classes. Bekker conceived new music as objectivistic music to satisfy these two demands. The purpose of this paper is to clarify the objectivism that Bekker was aiming for, especially how Bekker envisioned the way of composing and listening of new music.

The first section illuminates that Bekker developed the theory of generation and material of new music in order to confirm the objectivistic nature of new music. The second section shows how Bekker justified the composition of objectivistic music, a kind of music without a composer. Bekker rationalized the composition without a composer by emphasizing the composition as an invention and a bodily action. The third section clarifies the listening attitudes specific to objectivistic music. Bekker considered that listening of new music, because of its objectivistic nature, could be accomplished without any expert knowledge of music as if the listeners understand themselves.