

A review of **Modernism and Orthodox Spirituality in Contemporary Music** by *Ivan Moody*  
- Adrian Thomas, Emeritus Professor of Music, Cardiff University School of Music

The theme of this study has been crying out for exploration for many years. Yet it takes a special person with special experience to be able to bridge these two traditions. Ivan Moody, who is a noted composer, conductor, music historian and Orthodox priest, has that special experience. He brings it to bear in this fascinating elucidation of a significant thread in 20th- and 21st-century music.

This book is addressed to both Orthodox communities and musical ones, and each will learn much not only about the other but also about the areas of their own discipline. The value of this should not be underestimated, and the illumination that is the result of Ivan Moody's research is considerable.

The first chapter provides important contextual analysis. The exposition of the relationship between Orthodoxy and Art is of particular value to one who is outside the faith, while the discussion of Modernism in this context brings writers such as Ivana Medić and others to greater prominence in Western musical discourse than hitherto. There is also, as elsewhere in this study, a powerful cross-referencing to visual art and the symbolism of the icon.

The following five chapters deal with national traditions and developments: Greece, Bulgaria, Serbia, Russia and Finland. In many ways these are the heart of the book for a 'Western' reader unfamiliar with the variety of Orthodox musical traditions and their influence on individual composers. What emerges is a wealth of detail, much of which will be new to many readers. Some composers, especially from Russia, already have considerable prominence internationally, yet Moody brings fresh insights to familiar creative outlooks and compositions.

In the other national chapters, Moody's observations have added potency because most of the composers and their music are far less well known outside national boundaries or Orthodox circles. I was particularly happy to come across the music of composers such as Petros Petrides, Michael Adamis, Ljubica Marić and Mikko Sidoroff. It is also good to see the inclusion of composers still in their twenties. The generous number of musical examples further emphasises the stylistic and aesthetic range embodied by these and the other composers. Moody is also careful to position his exposé of each composer within the overarching connectivity (or its absence) between the two poles of his thesis.

The final chapters concern two of the most substantial figures in this firmament: Arvo Pärt and John Tavener. Moody shows his mettle here, because both Pärt and Tavener have received a great deal of attention already, in concert, recordings and in print. Rather than attempt a redundant overview, Moody approaches his subjects from his particular vantage point and in the process brings new ideas and challenges to our understanding of their significance in drawing together elements of modernism and religious traditions.

His book causes one to return to familiar music with new ears and whets the appetite for those compositions that have yet to percolate widely. That in itself is a considerable achievement.

- Adrian Thomas  
Emeritus Professor of Music  
Cardiff University School of Music