



Music and Decadence in European Modernism: The Case of Central and Eastern Europe

Stephen Downes

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Decadence is a crucial yet often misunderstood aspect of European modernism. This book demonstrates how decadence as an idea, style or topic informs Central and Eastern European music of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Combining close analysis with hermeneutic interpretation and cultural critique, Stephen Downes examines works by composers including Wagner, Richard Strauss, Scriabin, Rachmaninov, Mahler and Bartók, considering structural and expressive forms of decay, deformation, mannerism, nihilism, sickness and convalescence. Drawing upon critical and cultural theory, these musical works are contextualized, relating the relationship of music and musical discourse to wider cultural discourses. The study will enhance the understanding of musical forms and aesthetics for the reader. Exploring crucial aspects of modernism and the place of music in the development and diversity of decadence, Downes refines and redefines our understanding of musical modernism.

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