

*Into the MetaModernism*

*(2024)*

**Mathias Coppens**

Commissioned by Ryelandt Trio

The first performance was given by Ryelandt Trio with Ana Sofia Sousa on viola at Concertgebouw Brugge on June 28, 2025.

Duration: *c.*21 minutes

## **Instrumentation**

**For piano, violin, viola and cello**

CONCERT SCORE

# Performance notes

Audio guideline available upon request.

Square noteheads: use similar pitches in this range

Staves without noteheads: continue the pattern in the same way

## Abbreviations

m.s.p: molto sul ponticello

m.s.t.: molto sul tasto

p.s.p.: poco sul ponticello

p.s.t.: poco sul tasto

sl.b.str.: slow bow stroke

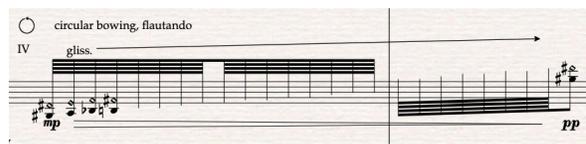
f.b.str.: fast bow stroke

m.b. pr.: much bow pressure

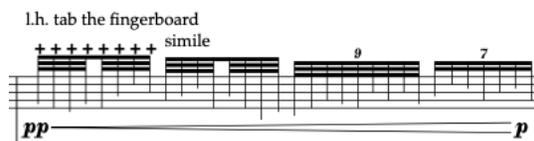
l.b. pr.: low bow pressure

## II. '...avant la lettre, l'après-garde...'

1. Fast harmonic gliss.: almost no bow pressure, random fast bow stroke between sul tasto and sul ponticello in a circular way



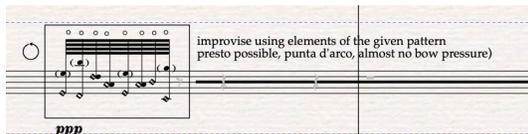
2. Tap with the left hand in an irregular way with a fast and light motion on the fingerboard



3. Harmonic gesture: play delicate, with a light bow pressure and a fast bow, try to hit as many harmonics possible, the poetry of the gesture lies in the imperfection of trying.



4. Harmonic gesture: improvise as delicate and fast as possible, with a light bow pressure and a fast bow and circular movement between sul tasto and sul ponticello, try to hit as many harmonics possible, also with this gesture the poetry lies in the imperfection of trying.



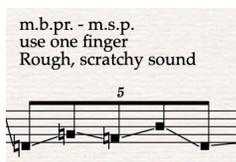
5. Slide with only one finger on the indicated string, follow the contour of the pitches and the rhythm.



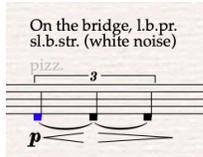
6. Highest note possible on the indicated string.



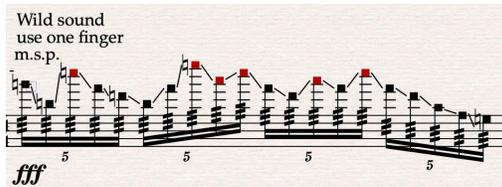
7. Slide and follow the range of the square noteheads – square noteheads are more strict than empty noteheads - use much bow pressure, very close to the bridge, this should result in a rough and scratchy sound.



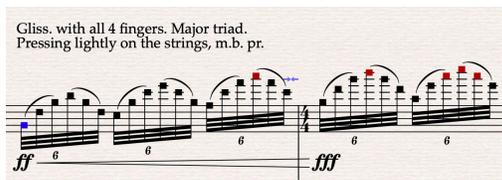
8. Play on the bridge, with very light bow pressure, avoid squeaking, the result should be pitchless, white noise.



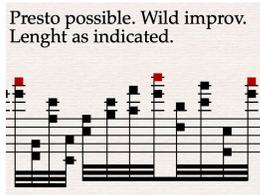
9. Wild electrifying sound, like crazy insects, slide with a frantic tremolo and follow the contours of the square noteheads.



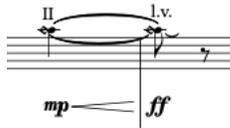
10. Hold the hand in a fixed position creating a major triad and slide up, use light fingers and much bow pressure.



11. Wild improvisation, play as fast and frantic as possible, trying to follow the square noteheads. It's all about the gesture, feel free and crazy.



## 12. Harmonic crescendo, let ring



## Program notes

- I. WeltanphaungsMusik
- II. '...avant la lettre, l'après-garde...'
- III. Pop-(?)Post-(?)Cross-(?)Over-(?)Minimalism

Luke Turner writes: ‘Metamodernism is a term that has gained traction in recent years as a means of articulating developments in contemporary culture, which, it is argued (and our generation appears to intuitively recognise) has seen a move beyond the postmodern mode of the late 20th century. In the wake of the myriad crises of the past two decades—of climate change, financial meltdown, and the escalation of global conflicts—we have witnessed the emergence of a palpable collective desire for change, for something beyond the prematurely proclaimed “End of History.”

Ours is a generation raised in the ‘80s and ‘90s, on a diet of *The Simpsons* and *South Park*, for whom postmodern irony and cynicism is a default setting, something ingrained in us. However, despite, or rather because of this, a yearning for meaning—for sincere and constructive progression and expression—has come to shape today’s dominant cultural mode.

Whereas postmodernism was characterised by deconstruction, irony, pastiche, relativism, nihilism, and the rejection of grand narratives (to caricature it somewhat), the discourse surrounding metamodernism engages with the resurgence of sincerity, hope, romanticism, affect, and the potential for grand narratives and universal truths, whilst not forfeiting all that we’ve learnt from postmodernism.

Thus, rather than simply signaling a return to naïve modernist ideological positions, metamodernism considers that our era is characterized by an oscillation between aspects of both modernism and postmodernism. We see this manifest as a kind of informed naivety, a pragmatic idealism, a moderate fanaticism, oscillating between sincerity and irony, deconstruction and construction, apathy and affect, attempting to attain some sort of transcendent position, as if such a thing were within our grasp. The metamodern generation understands that we can be both ironic and sincere in the same moment; that one does not necessarily diminish the other.

The use of the prefix meta here derives from Plato's metaxis, describing an oscillation and simultaneity between and beyond diametrically opposed poles. This usage was first proposed by Dutch cultural theorists Timotheus Vermeulen and Robin van den Akker in their 2010 essay, *Notes on Metamodernism*.

I composed 'Into the MetaModernism' as part of a search for what composition can mean in the year 2024. Up until about twenty years ago, you had to make a choice: if you were a postmodernist, your work wasn't taken seriously by the modernists. On the other hand, the postmodernists were made uneasy by the seriousness and lack of humor in the modernists' work; their way of transformational composing felt outdated, like an organic continuation of romantic thinking. The belief in a grand narrative was seen as naïve. But what came in its place may have been philosophically interesting, though musically there are very few works where the juxtaposition of quotes has yielded a truly captivating aesthetic experience. Both movements thus focus on different aspects of human existence, opposites that are difficult to reconcile: irony and belief. That is the premise of my new work.

'Into the MetaModernism' consists of three parts, each embodying a different aspect of the current artistic-musical landscape and each, in its own way, rooted in the 20th century. In his alternative literary history, Thomas Vaessens writes that the 20th century is framed by three main frames that are non-chronological, in other words they coexist: Modernism, Postmodernism, and the Avant-garde.

The first part draws on Mahler's famous notion: music that seeks to depict all aspects of the human experience. The concept of 'Bildung'—development or transformation through experience—is central to this section. It symbolizes Modernism, which, with Schönberg as its German progenitor, was predominantly developed within that cultural context.

The second part represents the Avant-garde, a primarily French endeavor with Debussy as its founding father. As such, it incorporates numerous experimental 'extended techniques' for the string players, which color the French harmonic idiom of the piano with complete freedom.

The final part satirizes Postmodernism and combines this mindset with the eclecticism of Post-minimalism: a language that is accessible and indebted to historical Minimalism but is interspersed with interruptions of familiar patterns and techniques reminiscent of pop production. Surprise, debunking of heroism, and sudden nostalgia form its ingredients. If there's one section where both irony and sincerity can coexist—and thus be truly Metamodern—it is this one!

Short version:

Into the MetaModernism arose from my search for what composition can signify in 2024. For decades, Modernism and Postmodernism stood opposed: the first, serious and transformative yet tied to outdated ideals; the second, ironic and fragmented but seldom musically compelling. My work confronts their opposites—irony and belief. Structured in three parts, it reflects Thomas Vaessens' view of Modernism, Postmodernism, and the Avant-garde as coexisting frames. Part one (Modernism) draws on Mahler's all-embracing vision and Bildung. Part two (Avant-garde) explores French experimentalism and extended techniques. Part three (Postmodernism/Post-minimalism) satirizes eclecticism, embracing surprise, nostalgia, and irony—yet seeking sincerity. That tension defines Metamodernism.