

**Matter – Viewpoint**

**Would you describe yourself as a neo-romantic? Why (not)?**

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I recall a time in the not-so-distant past, when composers challenged the very essence of what defines music. This was a time when the exploration of new textures, sounds, concepts, and unusual combinations of instruments were far more intriguing to composers than the composition of a beautiful lyrical line, a unique chord progression, or an interesting rhythm. In some cases, the very idea of an audience needing to be present for music to exist was even challenged! Although there have always been composers who have chosen a more "traditional" path and language, these composers were more often the exception, not the rule. The middle of the 20th Century was indeed a very exciting era—a radical break from the past, a rebellious time of reinvention in all the arts. The advent of this century is equally as exciting.



Nancy Galbraith  
Photo by Amy Rogers

A new generation of composers has indeed returned to an interest in the use of more established parameters of music—those being melody, harmony, and rhythm. Several schools have emerged from this return—some composers being classified as "neo-romantic," where lines are clearly defined, and melodic ideas and counterpoint are developed in a more traditional manner. The label "neo-romantic" also implies a return to the expression of feelings or emotions versus a more abstract art form. From that standpoint alone, I might be considered to be a neo-romanticist. However, my compositional technique is more removed from the technical style that is generally associated with neo-romanticism, and falls more neatly into the category of post-minimalism. I do compose lyrical melodies, but my textures, rhythms, harmonies, and use of percussion and polyrhythms combine to create a sound that is generally not one I associate with neo-romanticism. Therefore, I do not consider myself a neo-romantic composer.

I was initially moved and influenced by the minimalist movement. With traditional training as both a composer and pianist, I was also raised in an environment rich in liturgical music. I enjoy popular music as well, and the music of other cultures. All of these influences are evident in my own musical voice, one that is distinctively part of the new sound of 21st Century North America. Perhaps a job for future musicologists will be to find a term that combines the expression of emotions of neo-romanticism with the technical language of post-minimalism.

