What's in a Name? Is the term "Third Stream Music" truly representative of the music it is supposed to describe? Would the term "Jazzical" be just as appropriate?

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What’s In a Name?

Is the term ‘Third Stream Music’ truly representative of the music it is supposed to describe?
Third Stream Music

The term, Third Stream Music, was used to describe music that attempts to fuse

...the improvisational spontaneity and rhythmic vitality of jazz with the compositional procedures and techniques acquired in Western music during 700 years of musical development. (Schuller 1986)
Schuller’s term

- Why did he see the need for a new term to describe this music?
- Why did he choose this term, why these words?
- And perhaps most importantly: Is it a valid term?
The sound

Concertino for Jazz Quartet and Orchestra  
(1960) Gunther Schuller

Blood on the Floor (1994 – 96)  
Mark-Anthony Turnage
Testing the validity of the term ‘Third Stream Music’

Premise: Not only was Schuller suggesting a new name, but also in doing so, the creation of a new genre of music, hence what we are talking about is the ‘genre creation’.


Pascall, R. (1989) ‘*Genre and the Finale of Brahms’s Fourth Symphony*’
Robert Pascall’s proposition of ‘...four categories of generic difference and development...’ (1989)

- Musical genre has a single privileged performance-site, the type of place into which any instantiation of a particular genre is projected.

- A musical genre has a distinct set of performing forces, its instrumentarium.

- A musical genre has a definable expressive code...enabl[ing] the communication of its self-signification between those who know and accept the same premises.

- A musical genre has [a] diachronic structure.

(Pascall, 1989: 233–235)
Musical genre has a single privileged performance-site

Jazz
- Typically the jazz presentation will occur in a site not acoustically treated, nor especially built for the purposes of such performances.

Classical
- Performances of Western classical music occur within a specifically designed venue, facilitating the many variations in instrumentation, dynamics and tone colour
A musical genre has a distinct instrumentarium

- Drawing from the musical compositions of Western classical composers from the Baroque to the twentieth century, a collection of musical instruments is employed which is distinctive from those used in jazz.
A musical genre has a definable expressive code

Compositions that include Western classical music and jazz would presumably use ‘expressive codes’ appropriate to each of those genres. Whether the codes will unite over time, resulting in a new unified code, is yet to be seen. The result would have to be, however, identifiable, conclusive and repeatable.
A musical genre has a diachronic structure.

The fourth of Pascall’s categories (1989) refers to a ‘... musical genre hav[ing a] diachronic structure’, which can also be seen as reference to ‘...the historical development of a [musical] language’. (Oxford English Dictionary, 1989)
Valid?

- In testing the idea of ‘third stream music’ against Pascall’s categories of generic validation, it is apparent that the term does not effectively fulfill any of the four suggested categories.

- Further, given the absence of a distinct audience and a deficiency in those known as ‘third stream’ musicians, this seems a clear indication of insufficient justification for the existence of such a classifier...yet...
Acknowledgement

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