

STYLISTIC STAGES IN THE QUARTET GENRE OF THE COMPOSERS FROM CLUJ-NAPOCA¹. PART 1

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SUMMARY. This study explores the evolution of the string quartet within the prestigious school of composition at the “Gheorghe Dima” National Music Academy in Cluj-Napoca. Spanning nearly a century, the genre’s trajectory moved from sporadic representation in the early 1900s to a period of rapid, “fulminant” development following the 1950s. While the broader catalog includes 58 works, this research focuses specifically on 30 string quartets, setting aside the remaining 28 due to their diverse instrumental configurations. The analysis identifies three distinct evolutionary stages. First stage is represented by the Neoclassicism style, led by figures such as Sigismund Toduță and Cornel Țăranu (1936-1960). This period focused on neoclassical styles is rooted in Romanian folk-inspired diatonic modalism. In the Avant-Garde stage (1968–1980), composers including Vasile Herman, Ede Terényi, Valentin Timaru, and Hans Peter Türk shifted their options toward serial-dodecaphonic languages. This period embraced cutting-edge techniques such as integral serialism, pointillism, aleatoric music, and graphic notation, alongside innovative timbral effects and extended instrumental techniques. The third period of Synthesis (1990–Present) is represented by quartets of the composers Adrian Pop, Dora Cojocaru, Iulia Cibișescu, Ionică Pop, and Adrian Borza. This contemporary stage functions as a stylistic synthesis. It utilizes the full spectrum of predecessor techniques—ranging from pentatonic folk roots to jazz-inspired atonal designs—serving purely aesthetic and semantic goals. The resulting works often feature polystylistic textures, polymorphic structures, and a free approach to musical form.

¹ This study was published for the first time in Romanian language in the volume of the Musicology Symposium entitled *Cvartetul de coarde în cultura muzicală românească* (*The String Quartet in Romanian Musical Culture*). Edition 2024, Ed. Muzicală, Bucharest, 2024, pp. 92-127. The purpose of its republishing in English is to increase the international visibility of the String Quartets works signed by contemporary Transylvanian composers.

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Given the depth of the material, the research is presented in three parts: Part I covers the first Neoclassical stage, Part II covers the second stage. Avantgarde (both in the Communist era), and Part II focuses on the third stage (the transition to democracy).

Keywords: Contemporary Quartet, Romanian String Quartet, Romanian Musical Avant-Garde, Transylvanian School of Composition, "Gh. Dima" National Music Academy

Introduction

In the work of composers from Cluj, the quartet occupies an important place, building a significant stylistic evolution over the almost 80 years of its existence. A number of 58 quartets find multiple stylistic hypostases, as well as novel instrumental formulas (see Annex 1). Of these, 30 are string quartets and 28 quartets are designed for various formations, instrumentally homogeneous: percussion quartet (D. Voiculescu, E. Terényi), trombone quartet (V. Timaru), saxophone quartet (I. Pop, D. Cojocar, A. Borza), bassoon quartet, clarinet (D. Cojocar), cello quartet (I. Cibișescu) or in heterogeneous instrumental combinations: flute, cello (viola) double bass (cello) percussion (A. Pop), bassoon, guitar, piano, viola (I. Cibișescu), horn, double bass, percussion, piano (C. Rîpă), flauto dolce, flauto traverso, cello, harpsichord (A. Borza), oboe, violin, viola and cello (D. Cojocar). We have included in the table of chamber works in the quartet genre also those that contain the string quartet with added instruments: string quartet with piano (C. Țăranu and I. Cibișescu), string quartet with clarinet (Cristian Bence-Muk, Șerban Marcu, Ciprian Pop, Răzvan Metea), jazz quartet with piano and double bass (E. Terényi), string quartet with magnetic tape and percussion (V. Timaru). All this wealth of coloristic and timbral hypostases corresponds to extremely diverse thematic options. A statistic of the share of programmatic works shows that of the 58 quartets, 22 are works designed for string quartet without programmatic indications and 36 are works with a program declared in the title.

I have chosen to present in these three papers only a few of the stylistic hypostases of the string quartet in the composition school formed at the "Gh. Dima" National Music Academy from Cluj-Napoca around Sigismund Toduță, a composer whose quartet composed in 1936 must have been modeled on those of his composition master, Marțian Negrea³.

³ He already had in his repertoire the quartet *Noaptea (Night)*, composed in 1916 during his studies in Vienna, *Doi copii (Two Children)*, a piece for string quartet, composed in 1917, during his studies at the Budapest Academy of Music with Zoltan Kodaly, or *Prelude and Fugue op. 3* for string quartet composed in 1920 during his second stage of composition studies with Eusebie Mandicevski in Vienna.

1. The first stage – Introduction

The first stage in which the Cluj string quartets can be classified is the one defined by a neomodal, diatonic language of Romanian folkloric inspiration, a stage that includes both the aforementioned Toduțian quartet and a String Quartet signed by Cornel Țăranu, a schoolwork (he was a student in S. Toduță's class), found in the ANMGD Library, without specifying the year⁴ (the score contains double bass with the author's mention *The doublebass is to be ignored*⁵).

Although probably separated by a period of about 20 years, both are singular "schoolworks"⁶ in the composers' creation and have in common the appeal to the quote and / or melodica of folkloric inspiration, modal harmony, imitative polyphonic treatment, architectures consecrated by tradition treated freely. If S. Toduță's quartet is tripartite, linking the forms of sonatina, *Lied* form with harmonic variations, bithematic rondo, in Cornel Țăranu we encounter a bipartite genre with Epilogue, made up of a sonata form and a pentastrophic form, the epilogue being a thematic synthesis that ensures the cyclicity of the opus.

In both works, the thematic material starts with inspired folk quotes, treated in developed expositions, of great refinement in terms of compositional work. The mastery of conducting voices as well as the deep knowledge of the expressiveness of the quartet ensemble announce them as future symphonists. An interesting observation is that in the Toduțian quartet, many of the compositional gestures will also be present in the creation of the composers who follow them: melody inspired or quoted from folklore regardless of the degree of abstractism generated by the use of the chromatic total and serial laws, short themes with motivic configuration, polyphonic processing especially imitative in stretto, the use of unison or monody to illustrate the vocality of the folk song, the suggestion of the song (doina) – dance principles in the created themes, the use of traditional form landmarks having stanzas or

⁴ The work does not appear in the article dedicated to C. Țăranu in Viorel Cosma's *Lexiconul de Muzicieni din România (Lexicon of Romanian Musicians)*, Editura Muzicală, Bucharest 2006, pp. 121-128. The quartet's dating to 1955 appears in G.W. Berger's *Ghid pentru muzică instrumentală de cameră (Guide to Instrumental Chamber Music)*, Editura Muzicală, Bucharest, p. 388.

⁵ Cornel Țăranu, *Cvartet de coarde (String Quartet)*, manuscript at ANMGD Library, f.a. p.1, see ex. 5.

⁶ The year 1936, when S. Toduță's string quartet was written, coincides with the beginning of his composition studies with Ildebrando Pizzetti, at the Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia in Rome, after completing his composition studies with Marțian Negrea, in 1935, at the Cluj-Napoca School of Music.

thematic sections with development, the use of harmonic variation, or other variational elements in the expository or reprise sections.

2. The analysis of the elements of the musical language

In the first part of the quartet signed by S. Toduță, the sonata form is based on two thematic idioms of folkloric inspiration, with motivic profiles subject to continuous dynamism through transpositions, variations, and imitations in waves.

E.g. 1

Quartet No. 1

Sigismund Toduță
Blaj, 1936

♩ = 84

Violin I

Violin II

Viola

Violoncello

S. Toduță, *Cvartet de coarde (String Quartet)*, first part, theme 1, based on a tetratone with a movable second step, imitated by a hemitonic pentatony

In the bridge (variational stanza of the first theme), compositional gestures appear such as: glissando and stretto moments with a transitional function, descending chromatic passages, a unison that anticipates the second theme. This keeps the same principle and character of a song, exposed in a Mixolydian A. Note the contrapuntal texture that implies a harmonization with the elements of the mode, using chords with *ajoutée* notes, and figurations continuously subjected to transpositions and transformations in the second sector of the Exposition.

E.g. 2



S. Toduță, *Cvartet de coarde (String Quartet)*, Part I, theme 2, m 26-28, fragment

Part II is a lullaby quoted or created in a folkloric spirit, set in a Dorian mode with an augmented second between the V-VI steps with cadences on the second step and an ethos specific to Transylvanian folklore. It presents a lied form with variational elements (harmonic variations).

E.g. 3

II

20

Andante

140

S. Toduță, *Cvartet de coarde (String Quartet)*, Part II, m. 138-143 fragment

Part III is a Rondo in which the dance principle is manifested. The alert themes, built on ison figurations reminiscent of the popular band (*taraf*), are exhibited in a lively rhythm, an imitative, spectacular contrapuntal work configures an A-B-A-C-A-D-Av form.

E.g. 4

III

Allegro

245

arco

p

arco

p

arco

p

pizz.

p

S. Toduță, *Cvartet de coarde (String Quartet)*, Part III, m. 1-4, fragment

Similar in writing and conception, *The String Quartet* composed by **Cornel Țăranu** is built on a modal-diatonic thematic material present in the form of a folkloric quote (carol) in Part I *Andantino* and of folkloric inspiration in Part II *Allegro con slancio*. The two themes cited in the first part bring to attention two melodic archetypes of the song (carol) type T1, and dance T2, a second theme whose character, however, preserves the lyricism and cantabile style of the post-Enescian lineage from which the composer claims to be. The first theme of the first part is adapted to the *parlando* principle by indicating recitative, it is harmonized by pedals of the *ison* type in fifths, chords with *ajoutée* notes. Motivational imitations in *stretti* are also present in the bridge themes m. 11-30.

E.g. 5

Andantino

subdivizat.

Ti

Sola

mp

arco

pizz.

mp

5

2/4

1/1

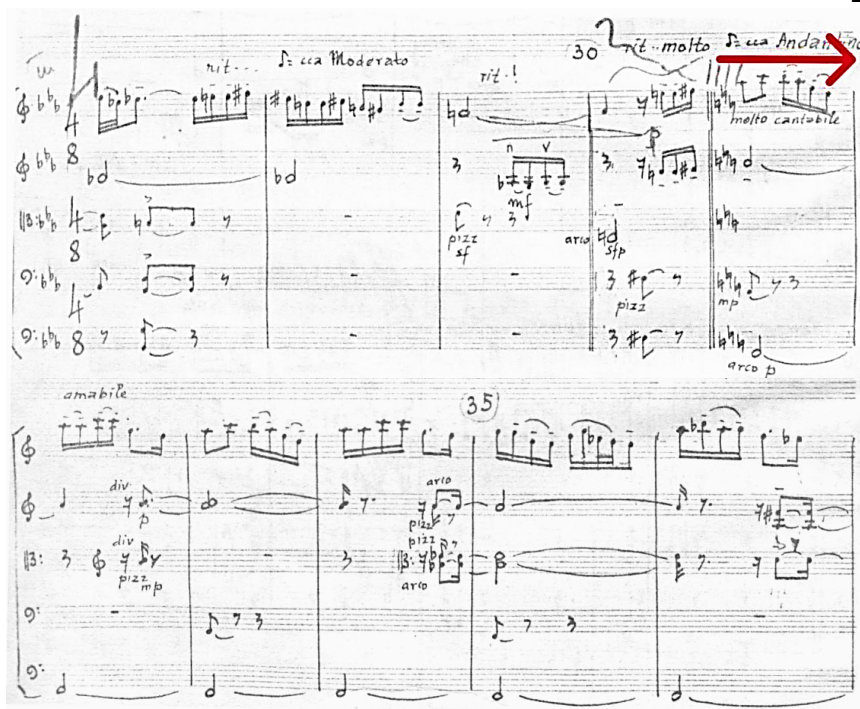
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**Cornel Țăranu, Cvartet de coarde (String Quartet), first theme,
m. 1- 10 in Aeolian F**

The second theme, *Andantino molto cantabile*, brings a dancing theme in Lydian F on the ison pedals on the double bass and chords on the violin 2, viola and cello.

E.g. 6



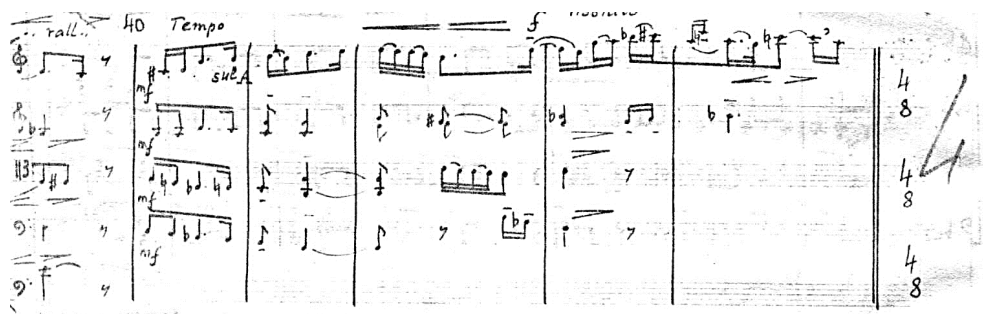
**Cornel Țăranu, *Cvartet de coarde (String Quartet)*, m. 31- 45,
second theme in F Lydian**

Part II, in pentastrophic form, launches into processing two themes: *Allegro con slancio* A, and B *Maestoso rubato* reversing the two stated principles: dance – song.

E.g. 7

Cornel Țăranu, *Cvartet de coarde (String Quartet)*, Part II, theme A m. 1-6, Dance

E.g. 8



**Cornel Țăranu, *Cvartet de coarde (String Quartet)*, Part II,
Theme B m. 35-44, Doina.**

The return of the second phrase from theme I of part I in the **Epilogue** gives the work a cyclical nature.

Conclusion

The two works are emblematic of the youthful stage of the creation of the two composers, S. Toduță, remaining anchored in a neoclassicism / neomodernism of folkloric essence attached to the Enescian branch. C. Țăranu leaves this direction in his later creations, moving towards "[...] an increasingly chromatic, freer modal language, with obvious appeals to archaic folklore (woe – doina) [...] towards taking a bold step towards serialism and finally orienting towards a controlled aleatorism"⁷. In 1962, in *Simfonia brevis*, C. Țăranu already explores the area of dodecaphonic serialism⁸.

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⁷ Viorel Cosma, *Muzicieni din România (Musicians from Romania)*, Ed Muzicală, București, 2006, p. 126.

⁸ Lucrare pe care am analizat-o în cartea *Articularea formei în simfoniile compozitorilor clujeni (The Articulation of Form in the Symphonies of Cluj Composers)*, Editura Universității din Oradea, 2007.

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AUDITIONS

- Cornel Țăranu, *Cvartet de coarde*, interpretat în cadrul Săptămânii Internaționale a Muzicii Noi (SIMN) 19-26 mai 2019, de către Cvartetul Gaudeamus din Brașov. Accesat în 29 aprilie 2024 (*String Quartet*, interpreted in the International Week of the New Music, SIMN, 19-26 May 2019, by the Gaudeamus Quartet from Brașov. Accessed in April, 29, 2024).
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=blqZq2Y0ybE>

ANNEX

Nr.	Year	Composer	Title	Published	Instruments
1	1936	S. Toduță	Quartet	Computer-aided copywriting	String quartet
2	~1955-1960	C. Țăranu	Quartet	Manuscript	String quartet
3	1968	V. Timaru	String quartet no. 1	Manuscript	String quartet
4	1971	V. Herman	String quartet "Homage to Enescu"	Manuscript	String quartet
5	1974	E. Terényi	String quartet No. 1, op 8	Editura Muzicală București, 1979	String quartet
6	1974	E. Terényi	Gallant dances, op. 12	Lithography Cluj	Flute, oboe, cello, harpsichord
7	1975	H. P. Türk	<i>Meditationen über kv 499</i> , Quartet	Manuscript	String quartet
8	1977	V. Herman	Quartet no. 2 "Choruses"	Manuscript	String quartet
9	1978	A. Pop	Inventions	Lithography ANMGD	Flute, cello, doublebass, percussion
10	1979	C. Ripă	Quartet for horn, doublebass, percussion and piano	Lithography ANMGD	Horn, dbass percussion, piano
11	1981	C. Țăranu	"Prolegomena"	Edition Salabert Paris	String quartet with piano
12	1984	E. Terényi	String Quartet No. 2	Grafycolor	String quartet
13	1984	E. Terényi	Five Bagatelles for String Quartet	Grafycolor	String quartet
14	1985	D. Voiculescu	Toccata	Gentner Hartmann / Karlsruhe Musiknoten Verlag	Xylophone, triangle, crotale, cymbal susp.
15	1985	E. Terényi	Swinging Suite / Tahiti	Litogr. ANMGD	Percussion quartet
16	1986	E. Terényi	For Four	Litogr. ANMGD	Percussion quartet
17	1987	E. Terényi	Lydian Concept, String Quartet with Percussion	Grafycolor	String quartet with percussion
18	1988	H. P. Türk	Improvisations on a folk theme	Manuscript	String quartet

Nr.	Year	Composer	Title	Published	Instruments
19	1988	E. Terényi	Parade		Jazz quartet with piano and dbass
20	1989	I. Pop	The Memory of Time	Manuscript	String quartet
21	1991	V. Timaru	Carol <i>in memoriam</i> S. Toduță	Manuscript	Quartet, magnetic band and percussion
22	1992	V. Timaru	Quartet no. 2	Manuscript	String quartet
23	1992	Adrian Pop	Invenzioni	Manuscript	Flute, viola, cello, percussion
24	1992	E. Terényi	String Quartet No. 3	Grafycolor	String quartet
25	1993	V. Timaru	„Tuba mirum” <i>in memoriam</i> Bodor Tibor	Manuscript	Trombone quartet
26	1993	Adrian Borza	Dysthymia	Manuscript	Blockflöte, violin, viola da gamba, harpsichord
27	1993	Iulia Cibișescu	Poems for string quartet	Manuscript	String quartet
28	1994	D. Cojocaru	String quartet no. 1	Manuscript	String quartet
29	1994	Adrian Borza	Algorythm	Manuscript	Trombone quartet
30	1995	E. Terényi	String Quartet No. 4	Grafycolor	String quartet
31	1995	A. Borza	String quartet	Manuscript	String quartet
32	1996	Adrian Pop	8 Bagatels for string quartet	MediaMusica Cluj -Napoca	String quartet
33	1996	Dora Cojocaru	„...sei ihr Vater, Führer und Freund”	Manuscript	String quartet
34	1997-1998	Adrian Borza	akSax	Manuscript	Saxophones' quartet
35	1997	Ionică Pop	Blue Winter	Manuscript	Saxophones' quartet
36	1997	Ionică Pop	The Soul of the Time	Manuscript	Flute Clarinet, Fg. Percussion
37	1998	D. Cojocaru	QU.- SAX	Computer-aided copywriting	Saxophones' quartet
38	1998	Eduard Terényi	String Quartet No. 5	Grafycolor	String quartet
39	1999	I. Cibișescu	String quartet no. 2	Manuscript	String quartet
40	2001	I. Cibișescu	String quartet no. 3	Ed. MediaMusica	String quartet
41	2001	Dora Cojocaru	<i>Die andere Seite der Stille</i>	Müller & Schade Edition, Bern/Switzerland	Oboe, violin, viola and cello
42	2001	Eduard Terényi	String Quartet No. 6	Grafycolor	String quartet

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Nr.	Year	Composer	Title	Published	Instruments
43	2002	Eduard Terényi	String Quartet No. 7	Grafycolor	String quartet
44	2003	I. Cibișescu	String quartet no. 4	Ed. MediaMusica	String quartet
45	2003	Adrian Borza	Transylvanian Suite	Computer-aided copywriting	Flauto dolce, flauto traverso, cello, harpsichord
46	2003	D. Cojocar	Etude oubliée	Computer-aided copywriting	Quartet of clarinets or bassoons
47	2004	I. Cibisescu	String quartet no. 5	Ed. MediaMusica	String quartet
48	2009	I. Cibișescu	String quartet no 6	Ed. MediaMusica	String quartet
49	2010	I. Cibișescu	Two songs for a quartet of cellos	Manuscript	Quartet of cellos
50	2011	A. Pop	Mătasea și metalul (La seda ey el metal)	Ed MediaMusica	Torso for String quartet
51	2012	C. Bence-Muk	21.12.2012	Ed MediaMusica	String quartet with clarinet
52	2012	Ș. Marcu	Five bagatelles for clarinet and string quartet	Ed Media Musica	String quartet with clarinet
53	2012	R. Metea	The Shadow of the While	Ed MediaMusica	String quartet with clarinet
54	2012	C.G. Pop	<i>Ludus cvintetix</i>	Ed Media Musica	String quartet with clarinet
55	2015	I. Cibișescu-Duran	The Walls from Avila	Computer-aided copywriting	Bassoon, guitar, Piano, Viola
56	2018	A. Pop	Pas de quatre	Computer-aided copywriting	String quartet
57	2019	I. Cibișescu	6 miniatures for quartet	Computer-aided copywriting	String quartet with piano
58	2023	I. Cibișescu	Whispers	Computer-aided copywriting	String quartet

