

HISTORY OF A FORGOTTEN *PASSACAGLIA*: THE SYMPHONY NO.3 “*OVID*” FINALE BY SIGISMUND TODUȚĂ

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Motto:

*Worried are thou when from the Euxine news arrives?
Does thy hand tremble opening the letter?*

.....
*Oh! But as many as the blooms in beds and seashells on the shores,
Or just as drowsy poppies fill the fields,
As countless as the beasts that roam the woods and fish that swim the deep,
As many as the birds that cross the skies,
My woes are drowning me. How can I count them miseries,
When countless are the sea waves?*

Ovid, *Tristia*, book IV

SUMMARY. From the perspective of a new century and millennium, preoccupied with the new directions in the stylistic evolution of language, be it musical or otherwise, a retrospective look over the works of an overwhelming personality of Cluj-Napoca musical life such as Sigismund Toduță creates a bridge towards a past which yet has mysteries to be solved.² Hundreds of pages dedicated to Sigismund Toduță were written³ -

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² The present paper was presented on May 17, 2013, during the first edition of the “Sigismund Toduță” International Festival with the theme “*Stylistic directions in contemporary musical writing*”, May 13-18, 2013.

³ A graduate of the Cluj music school, Sigismund Toduță (May 17, 1908 – July 3, 1991) composer, musicologist and eminent professor carried on the legacy of his predecessors, Gheorghe Dima, Augustin Bena, Mihail Andreescu-Skeletty, Marțian Negrea, George Simonis, his musical education being a synthesis of the composition schools in Romania, Berlin, Paris and Vienna. He perfected his contrapuntal compositional style during his doctoral studies at the “Pontificio Istituto di Musica Sacra” in Rome, with a thesis focused on Renaissance polyphony (1936-1938), as well as during the composition classes with Ildebrando Pizzetti, a leading authority in Gregorian chant and medieval polyphonic writing. Professor Pizzetti’s personality left its mark on Toduță’s creative writing as well as on his later stylistic orientation: the cultivation of a national music, while abandoning the Romantic or Verist influences.

musicologist, founder of cultural institutions as well as founder of the Cluj composition school – yet every time their authors would state that they had much to learn from the Maestro while finding answers to their own dilemmas. Unsolved mysteries regarding the life and works of Sigismund Toduță remain, one of them being the subject of the present lecture: what was the reason for relinquishing the final passacaglia in *Symphony no. 3*, dedicated to the equally mysterious Latin poet Ovid, whom he greatly admired. At the Sigismund Toduță anniversary symposium in 2004, the author of the present text presented an aesthetic analysis of the symphony, accompanied by a historical recording. The analysis of the third and last part, the Passacaglia⁴, was difficult because the original score was missing, the author only working with the piano reduction, in a form which did not match any of the two interpretations (Chisadji and Elenescu). The score, printed in 1975, contains additional passages, which do not appear in the interpretations, showing the composer's constant strive for an ideal version. In July 2009, composer Dan Voiculescu, one of Toduță's disciples, managed to obtain the manuscript score from the Library of the Composers' Union in Bucharest. In 2013 the manuscript score of the final part of the Symphony was offered to us by the secretary of the "Sigismund Toduță" Foundation and we renewed the research. There are quite important differences between the manuscript and the two interpretations with the composer's participation; therefore, putting together one final version of the score could be a challenge for the present composition class. For a musicologist, diving into the written text, deciphering and revealing its message remain essential. The most "recent" complete interpretation belongs to the Symphonic Orchestra of the RTR conducted by Emanoil Elenescu and dating back to October 16, 1981. After two decades of absence from the concert programs (27 years), conductor Romeo Rîmbu conducted Symphony no. 3 on May 15, 2008 with the Philharmonic Orchestra in Sibiu, without a finale however, as the score was considered destroyed. In 1975 only the first two parts of the symphony were printed (!), a unique situation, as Toduță has never composed a symphonic work in two parts. The critics' appreciation, as well as the acclaim won by the performance of the Symphony prove the author's compositional mastery and entitle him to new rehabilitation. Hopefully, it will not take a millennium, as in the case of the Symphony's protagonist.

Keywords: Toduță, Ovid, Effigy-themed symphony, passacaglia

⁴ Part which does not appear in the score printed by Editura Muzicală, Bucharest, 1975 (!).

1. The Symphonic works of Sigismund Toduță

Sigismund Toduță's symphonic style follows in the natural footsteps of Enescu's tradition, with the harmonic and polyphonic orchestral amplification of an original theme of archaic modal origin. The themes of his symphonies, easy to sing, have allowed for the use of the counterpoint technique, while the composer frequently uses the forms of the Baroque: *passacaglia*, *ricercar*, *fugue*, *canon*, and *prelude*.⁵ Toduță's symphonic writing puts on various forms along five decades, the first five of the seven orchestral works being Post-romantic in character - *Eglogue for Orchestra* (1933), followed by the four symphonies: *The 1st Symphony in D Major* (1953-1954), *The 2nd Symphony with organ in d minor*, in memoriam George Enescu (1956), *The 3rd Symphony "Ovid"* (1957) and *The 5th Symphony* (1962-1975) – while the last two



are cameral - *Simfonietta "in antico stile" for orchestra* (1977) and *The B-A-C-H Symphony for organ* (1984). The sketch of *The 4th Symphony*, for string orchestra and choir (1959-1961), will remain unfinished.

During the last decade, the composer preferred to continue the series of concertante pieces: *Concerto no. 4 for string orchestra, with organ* (1979), *Concerto for flute and string orchestra* (1983), *Concerto for oboe and string orchestra* (1989), *Concerto no. 2 for piano and orchestra* (1986) and *4 lieder for soprano and orchestra* on verses by W. Shakespeare, Fr. V. Schöber, Ch. Baudelaire and R.M. Rilke (1988), the latter bearing a possible resemblance to *4 Letzte Lieder* by Richard Strauss, the art songs being the last works composed with symphonic orchestral writing.

⁵ Zeno Vancea, *Sigismund Toduță*, *Muzica* journal, 1977, no. 4.

2. The birth of *Symphony no.3 "Ovid"* (completed on May 7, 1957)

The symphony was originally conceived as a string quartet. After having completed the 2nd part, *Lento*, (composed first on November 4-20, 1956), the composer noted: "the idea of a quartet is relinquished and the sketch of a Symphony (the 3rd) appears". The first part was composed December 1, 1956 through January 7, 1957, while the third one was begun on January 18, 1957. The events connected to the symphony succeed as follows:

- the work was finished on May 7, 1957, retouched on May 12;
- the parts were copied on August 17, 1957;

- an article signed by Gheorghe Sbârcea appeared in 1957 in the journal *Făclia*;

- on August 31, that same year, the article "Ovidiu bimilenar" ("Bi-Millennial Ovid"), by N. Lascu, was published in *Tribuna* (year I, no. 30);

- on September 30 – a literary circle took place at the Cluj branch of the Composers' Union;

- September 28-29 – the first public performance (Cluj State Philharmonic Orchestra, conductor Anatol Chisadji);

- September 30 – the composer presented the work at the Cluj Radio station (fragments were broadcasted);

January 24-25, 1959 – first performance in Bucharest (conductor Mircea Basarab), where the composer noted "the piece has fallen; less than mediocre performance";

- August 1959 – the work was revised again, "in the form of a symphonic poem", for the competition at ... (illegible);

- January 30-31, 1960 – the Cluj Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Anatol Chisadji – Toduța noted: "very beautiful performance".



Motto:



EIS - FIS - GIS - A
Eis - FIs - GIs - A
E F I G I A

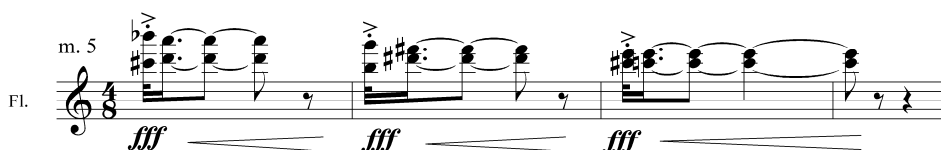
3. On Ovid, the hero invoked

Publius Ovidius Naso (43 B.C. - 17 A.D.), was a Roman poet from the time of Augustus, a time named “the golden age of Latin poetry”). Born in an equestrian family Ovid studied rhetoric with famous teachers, in Rome and Athens in order to become a magistrate, but he abandoned it to pursue poetry. He was accepted and even adored at the court of Augustus. However, at his orders, he was exiled to Tomis, in 8 A.D., due to reasons which remained unclear. He wrote elegies, lyrical and erotic poetry, while also criticizing morals (*Amores*, *Ars Amatoria*) and proved his erudition and poetic genius by treating historical and mythological themes (*Heroides*, *Metamorphoses Libri* and *Fasti*). *Tristia* and *Epistulae ex Ponto* were written while in exile, during lonely years, and contain letters for his wife, friends and the emperor. These final volumes represent the connection between the poet and our culture.

Ovid was the first cultured poet who wrote about the history of ancient Scythians, the inhabitants of today’s Dobrogea. In *Metamorphoses*, a work “as great as the *Iliad*”⁶, he builds an “ample epic poem, a mythological history of the world’s genesis, of the metamorphosis of things and beings”.⁷

There are forms which manifest like metamorphosis. The *passacaglia* or the *chaconne*, for example brings “an entire series of metamorphoses to the theme”, by exposing it repeatedly.

E.g. 1



The 1st Part (*Moderatamente mosso, poco rubato, quasi una threnia*):
- “the tragic motive”

⁶ Ovidiu Drimba, *Istoria literaturii universale (A History of Universal Literature)*, vol. I, Editura Saeculum I.O. - Vestala, Bucharest, 1998, p. 118.

⁷ *Ibidem*.

E.g. 2

m. 1 $\frac{4}{4}$ Largo

Fl. 1

Fl. 2

The 2nd Part (*Largo*)

E.g. 3

Allegro moderato

m. 1

3 *f deciso*

The 3rd Part (*Allegro moderato*) - *Passacaglia*

Table 1

Part	Movement term	Discourse	Structural characteristic	Accompanying feeling	Dominant aesthetic category	Aesthetic inter-category (just form)
1	Moderatamente mosso - poco rubato, quasi una threnia	Dramatic	contrast	<i>catharsis</i>	Tragic	Pathetic (conflict)
2	Largo	Lyrical-evolving towards pathetic	continuity	tranquility	Beauty	Elegiac
3	Allegro moderato	Epic	gradation - accumulation	triumphant elation	Sublime	Grandiose

4. The 3rd Part, *Passacaglia*

In 1978, Sigismund Toduță, in collaboration with Vasile Herman, wrote *Formele muzicale ale Barocului în operele lui J. S. Bach* (*The Musical Forms of the Baroque in the Works of J.S. Bach's*) vol. III, dedicated to the *Variation* and the *Rondo*; the *passacaglia* is defined together with the *chaconne*, the *ground* and the *follia*, as "musical forms of basso ostinato"; "the syllabic seed, a schematic micro-unit and the *basso ostinato* are a foundation on which the harmonic-polyphonic fabric is woven"; the principle of repetition (identical or varied) of the *basso ostinato* progresses in parallel with the renewal of the harmonic-polyphonic tissue which overlaps it, generating a chain: a – a var.1 – a var.2 – a var.3 etc.

Among the most famous and appreciated *passacaglia* we mention: Johann Sebastian Bach - *Passacaglia and Fugue in C minor* for organ, BWV 582 (1716-17⁸, 1740⁹) Johannes Brahms - *Symphony no. 4 in E minor* op. 98 (1884-5), p. IV, *Allegro energico e passionato*, Giacomo Puccini – *Tosca*, the end of act I, Scarpia's aria "Va, Tosca", Anton Webern: *Passacaglia*, op. 1 (1908), Aaron Copland *Passacaglia for Piano* (1921–22), Alban Berg - *Wozzeck* (1922), act I, scene 4 – *Passacaglia* (theme – a series of 12 sounds), Dmitri Shostakovich: *Symphony no. 8*, op. 65, part IV (1943) and the *Concerto no. 1 for violin and orchestra*, part III, Hindemith in *Quartet no.5*, op. 32 (1923), in the lieder cycle *Das Marienleben* (1922–3), *Cardillac* (1926) and *Die Harmonie der Welt* (1956–7) as well as Krzysztof Penderecki - *Lucas-Passion* (1966), part II.

Passacaglia was also chosen by Romanian composers: Tudor Ciortea, (*Passacaglia and Toccata for orchestra*), Dan Dediu (*Passacaglia for cello solo* and *Passacaglia cathoptrica for organ* -1993), Vasile Herman (*Chaconne* - 2003 – the theme in the bass remembers of the profile and symmetry of Bach's *Passacaglia*).

Toduță mainly uses this form as single standing, throughout his entire creation, *Passacaglia for piano* (1943) or as part of the most diverse genres *Sonatina for piano*, the 2nd part (1950), *7 Choral Preludes for organ*, the 4th and the - 6th (1952), *Miorița* – ballad-oratorio, the 5th part, (1971), *Concerto per strumenti a fiato e batteria* (1970) and lastly, the oratorio *Pe urmele lui Horea – Following Horea*, theme in the 14th part (1981).

The tragic *ethos* of *Symphony no.3* could be Ovid's destiny, the death of Toduță's wife (1954), George Enescu's death (May 4, 1955) and the revolution in Hungary (1956).

⁸ W. Schmieder, *apud* Sigismund Toduță, *Op. cit.*, p.72.

⁹ F.G. Griepenkerl, *apud* Sigismund Toduță, *Op. cit.*, p. 72.

When comparing the lives and creation of the two personalities, poet Ovid and musician Sigismund Toduță, we will find similarities which bring them close: studies in Italy, preoccupation with rhetoric, hermeneutics and mythology, as well as the manner of treating myths, by reviving them in contemporary times.

Orchestration

It is well-known that, at the time when it was first played, some people found resemblances between the last part of Toduță's *Symphony no. 3* and the finale of Brahms' *4th Symphony*, which upset the composer and probably made him renounce the passacaglia. Surprisingly though, critics failed to notice that the orchestration of the *Ovid Symphony* bears more resemblance to Mahler's *9th* rather than to Brahms' *4th Symphony*.

The orchestration of the *3rd symphony*, "Ovid" is made up of: 3 Flutes (Flute III also Piccolo flute), 3 Oboes (Oboe III also Cor Anglais), 3 Clarinets in C (Clarinet III in C also Bass Clarinet in C), 3 Bassoons (Bassoon III also Double bassoon); 4 Horns in F, 3 Trumpets in C, 3 Trombones, Tuba; I. 3 Timpani, [II. Triangle, Large suspended cymbal, small suspended cymbal], III Small side drum with string, [Bass Drum, big Gong], Celesta, [Xilophone]; [Pianoforte], Harp, 16 Violins I, 14 Violins II, 12 Violas, 10 Cellos, 8 Double Basses.

It really looks more like Mahler's (*The 9th Symphony*) and not Brahms' orchestration!

Analytical aspects

The generating (tragic) cell of *The 3rd Symphony* (EFFIGY) appears as a *motto*, on the first page of the orchestra score. The musical meaning leads us to a tetrachord, interpreted as "a trichord with anacrusis".

Ștefan Anghi noted: "sometimes the symbol can comprise the entire artistic work, becoming the dominant element in the entire work".

The 3rd part of *Symphony no.3 "Ovid"*

The tempo is *Allegro moderato*, made up of 26 variations on *ostinato* (28 in the manuscript for piano); *the motto-theme*, mentioned on the first page of the score is amplified to passacaglia dimensions. Masterful gradation and accumulation in the variation process (quasi Brahms-like) are only interrupted by the *ethos* of variations XIII-XVI (*dolente*). The symphony ends with one final appearance (the only one in major) of the tragic motive, the major chord ending in apotheosis with the discourse dedicated to Ovid.

The theme of the *Passacaglia*

The Bach theme is anacrusic; winding profile ascending yielded tetrachord; 8 bars; two sections of 4 bars: question-answer, climax in the first section, second part-successions of collapses, final note – abyss; the theme – in pedal point; comes from *C-B-A flat-G*.

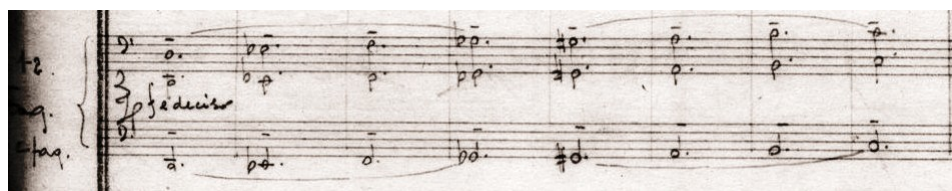
Albert Schweitzer on the *passacaglia*'s theme: "the *Kolossal-Thema* pulsates, from the moment of its appearance just as the clear image of flawless order"... "the chaconne and the *passacaglia* come from old dance forms and are characterized by their evolution above an ostinato theme in ternary movement, of 8 bars".¹⁰

The Brahms theme has a crucic, ascending profile, with a climax in the second section, followed by a "fall" on cadence.

The Webern theme is crucic, the profile resembling the Brahms theme, the difference residing in the binary meter of the Webern theme.

The Toduță theme is crucic, with an ascending profile (*Protasis*).

E.g. 4



The doubled motive later also appears descending (*Apodosis*), with interchanged sounds according to Bach's model. The theme is made up of two identical sections: *the motto* of the Symphony, initial descending tetrachord, appears transposed in reversed and doubled **D**: D-Eb-F-Gb G#-A-B-C.

The ternary meter, 8 bars, the succession ST-T-ST reminds us of mode II with limited transposition in Messiaen's system. Another hypothesis connected to the *motto* leads us to *The Chamber Symphony op. 33*, Enescu's last opus, completed on May 28, 1954. Ștefan Niculescu identified "mode II with limited transposition" in the *Bridge* of the sonata in the 1st part of the *Chamber Symphony*, which, by being reprised four times, becomes a "theme with variations".

¹⁰ Albert Schweitzer, *Joh. Seb. Bach*. Leipzig, Verlag Breitkopf u. Härtel, 1956, p. 258, 359, quoted by Sigismund Toduță, *Formele muzicale ale barocului în operele lui J.S. Bach (The Musical Forms of the Baroque in the Works of J.S. Bach)*, vol. III, Editura Muzicală, Bucharest, 1978, p. 98.

The 14th Variation *Marcia funebre* from the Passacaglia, can be a reference to the 2nd part of the *Chamber Symphony - Adagio (Funebre)*. The last motive in the ending of Enescu's opus, in *fff* on an E major elliptical chord of third leads us to Ovid's *tragic motive* which spans over the entire symphony and closes the *Golgotha* of variations.

The *Effigy* theme, made up of 8 bars, is outlined on two different levels, in an alert tempo (*Allegro moderato*), with the annotation *forte e deciso*, in triple meter (3/4).

The orchestration corresponds to the message, the theme appears in high, equal values, in the low register of the wood instruments (bassoon, contrabassoon) and trochaic rhythm, with a *Sospiratio* effect in the low pitched instruments (cello, double bass).

Var.1. (bars 17-24) The discourse amplifies and takes on a threatening tone, *fortissimo e deciso*. Meter and rhythm remain the same. The ascending profile in a loud timbre of the high-pitched woodwinds overlaps the ascending theme of the bassoon and the low-pitched strings.

Var.2. (bars 9-16) The second variation brings back the *tragic motive* of the first part, the ascending line of the "sobbing" being supported by the trochaic rhythm of the ascending *Effigy*.

After four bars, the direction of the levels is reversed: the tragic "sobbing" motive ascends, the trochaic *Effigy* descends. In terms of timbre, the variation is endowed with color by the woodwinds' dialogue. The *forte* dynamics will decrease towards the end of the variation.

Var.3 (bars 25-32) point out the first lyrical part through the *piano cantabile* dynamics and the restrained movement of the *pochissimo ritenuto* finale: the Soprano contours a cantilena consisting of the diatonic variant of the *E motive* (T-ST-T – E-D-C#-B), with the ascending agglutination of the "sobbing" and their sequencing.

Var.4 (bars 33-48) is double in extension, the return to the initial tempo and the apodictic character of the violin and viola theme, marked by the double basses, prefigures the beginning of a long row of labor and disquietude. Theme *E* will emerge in soprano voice in the woodwinds, supported by the horns, while the picture is made whole by the figuration of the cellos.

Var.10/12¹¹ - the climax of the first section (bars 110-127, actually 109-126 – 1 missing bar 17 bars), is amplified in terms of dimensions (18 bars), in a quick and sparkling tempo, *Lo stesso tempo e scintillante*, in 6/4 meter signature, which renders possible the accumulation of triolets in a bewildering toccata rhythm with full sonorities - *Assai forte, poco ff*, preparing the orchestral tutti (bars 116-123). This part impresses through a dense writing in complementary rhythm, with ample sonorities, many divisi and doublings. Theme *E* in the

¹¹ The second figure stands for the variation number in the piano reduction (n.n).

bassoon is late to emerge (after 2 bars), prepared by a contrapuntal dialogue and arising with a descending, double-dotted profile.

The second wave will bear it towards discant, ascending, in equal values. The harmony becomes complete with chromatic mixtures of staccato triplets in the flutes, oboes, clarinets, horns, trumpets, trombones.

The entire variation is a display of forces, followed by the dispersion of sounds, preparing the slow part.

Var.11/13 (bars 128-135), 8 bars, is a slow, lyrical, elegy-like part, in a rare *Molto sostenuto tempo*, in *pianissimo*, 6/4, high values, in D minor.

The theme, played by the solo oboe, assumes the shape of a diatonic aulodia, made up of the trichord and the porrectus idioma. Theme *E* emerges as chromatic harmony in the strings, *con sordino*. The unusual color is rendered by the accompanying harp (in a descending glissando).

Var.14/16 - double, amplifies the tragic of the previous variation (bars 173-189) in *Tempo di Marcia funebre*, a somber part which maintains the ample 6/4 meter. The characteristic dotted rhythm, the "sanglots" effect will be accomplished by the triplets made up of sixteenth notes. The dynamics will point out an elevation from *ppp* < *mf*, *poco f*, *ff*, reaching a climax (bars 180-184), followed by a deceleration - *rall. molto* and *estinto* by the *>pppp*.

Var.15/17 (bars 190-197) The reprise brings back the *Tempo I*, *allegro moderato*, and the initial 3/4 meter signature, in *forte*, *molto deciso*, with high values. The character stays tragic, nevertheless energetic. The strings are missing.

The Finale, Var. 25/27 (bars 298-313) and 26/28¹², are double (16 bars each), in which the *Piu mosso* tempo, with the abrupt staccatos of the unison theme seem to lead it to paroxysm.

The full, *fortissimo* dynamics, the reverse isorhythmic progression, the mixtures amplified by doubling, the hemiolas and the ascending glissandos set to the sounds of the *Effigy* theme prepare the closing of the *Symphony* with one last manifestation - *the only one in the major scale* - of *the tragic motive*, while the major chord concludes, in apotheosis, the discourse dedicated to Ovid.

Conclusions

On May 7 (Brahms' birthday!), 1957, *Symphony no.3 "Ovid"* was completed with an orchestration resembling that of Mahler; on September 28-29 the first performance took place at the Cluj State Philharmonic, conducted by Anatol Chisadji;

¹² Unfortunately, no recorded version renders these variations in their entirety. A few leaps occur, as inferred from the orchestra scores: bars 173-188; 205-240; 273-280; 281-288; 281-288; 313-328.

- The Symphony's score was not printed until 1975, whereby the Passacaglia was left out – a unique case, since Toduță had not composed another symphonic work in two parts (!); this edition contains extra passages as compared to the performed variants;
- The piano reduction, completed on February 7, 1957 (with the author's annotation - 12'30") in a form that does not match any of the two performances (Chisadji and Elenescu);
- The symphonic Passacaglia has 26 variations and a Coda. The leaps could be inferred out of the orchestra parts: bars 173-188; 205-240; 273-280; 281-288; 313-328 (89 bars);
- Passacaglia in the reduction variant has 28 variations (2 more than the manuscript of the orchestra parts); it is merely another type of division as compared to the orchestra part; the table created for this study clarifies this issue;
- Pianist Géza Szabó recorded the entire piano version on magnetic tape on September 21, 1957 (he had received the manuscript on August 28) – proving how highly valued the work was.

The contrasts typical of Ovid's rhetoric can be encountered within the symphony. Thus, Parts I and II are pluri-thematic, while Part III is mono-thematic. Likewise, the first two parts begin and end in *p* or *pp* and include one dynamic climax each, while the finale begins forcefully, has a contrasting middle (*dolente*) and ends in *ff*. Gradation and accumulation in the variation process (almost Brahms-like) are interrupted by the 13-16 variations' *ethos* (*dolente*). The symphony ends triumphantly with a final invocation, in major, of the tragic motive, symbolizing Ovid's entering into the Pantheon.

Symphony no.3 "Ovid" by Sigismund Toduță as seen by its contemporaries

Cornel Țăranu, *Note de concert (Concert Notes)*, Tribuna journal no. 10, 1960:

*"The present performance has managed to confirm and even surpass our previous impressions, otherwise very favorable [...]. Carrying the seal of evident mastery, more obvious in the musical architecture or in the flawless and sometimes brilliant management of the orchestra, Symphony no.3 has also the musical language of balanced contemporary times."*¹³

¹³ Cornel Țăranu, *Note de concert (Concert Notes)*, Tribuna journal no. 10, 1960.

Zeno Vancea: *Sigismund Toduță*, Muzica journal, 1977, no.4:

The dramatic, the tragic, the passion – although present in certain pages of the symphony Ovid [...] are not very characteristic of his emotional nature [...], estranged from nostalgia and romantic lyrical effusions. The manly reserve in translating emotions often gives his music a mostly meditative character, while leaving room, in numerous works, for the expression of joy of various intensities."

Translated from Romanian by Roxana Huza

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