

BOOK REVIEWS

CONSIDERATIONS ABOUT A FUNDAMENTAL BOOK OF ROMANIAN MUSICOLOGY

Written on commission and published in 1997, awarded with the prize for musicology by the Romanian Union of Composers and Musicologists in 1999, this book, entitled ***Orientări, direcții, curente ale muzicii românești din a doua jumătate a secolului XX*** [Orientations, Directions, Currents in Late Twentieth Century Romanian Music] (Bucharest: Editura Muzicală) by Irinel Anghel, passed almost unnoticed by the public at the end of the last century. It was only in the first decade of this century that this text started to gradually, albeit firmly reveal its force and pertinence as a necessary musicological *conceptual model*, even despite the totally absent promotion, group partisanship, or any “maternal” involvement on the part of its author. And the text is gaining even more visibility despite being conceived as a mini-encyclopaedia (see the Table of Contents) or as a quasi-dictionary (see the Index of this edition), both based on a detailed and compelling analytical interpretation, attuned to the realities of the Romanian cultural and compositional landscape. The book's quiet success is largely due to the community of undergraduates, master students, Ph.D. students and many others, and can be measured by the number of citations and by its inclusion as a mandatory title in an impressive number of bibliographies. Moreover, the book has already long become an important source of information and a sought-after bibliographic rarity, which confirms its growing value. In other words, for over two decades, this text has already created its own *image* and *personality*, its own cultural and analytical *habitat*, an ever-growing interested public, and more importantly, has led to a sustained increase in demand, which is a rare, if not almost impossible situation for a book in the niche area of musicology. “One of the fundamental books dedicated to Romanian musicology”, as composer Diana Rotaru characterised it.

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Orientations. Directions. Currents: Deciphering Possible Meanings

The first three words in the title of the book are more than a mere reference to one or several themes, theses or contents approached in the text. A first and most visible meaning reveals the title as a first and absolute reading of the entire content, one that incorporates all the meanings of the text in an essentialized form. *Orientations. Directions. Currents.* And only second comes the clarifying commentary serving as a temporal-geographical marker and a cultural-artistic attribution – *in Late Twentieth Century Romanian Music.*

A second and profound meaning of the first three words refers to the utility of the text as a *territory-map* that *orients* the reader through the main *directions* assumed by the Romanian composers in the second half of the twentieth century. In other words, and here comes the third word of the title – *currents*, the evolution of musical thinking in postwar Romania is presented as an evolving *river*, whose constituents – the *currents* – can be represented as conceptual *energies* that could be regarded as a *pipeline* network, a highly branched *blood system* that nurtures the *body* of the Romanian musical culture.

The conceptual triad of the title is explained in five broad chapters, or, more precisely, in five determinant forms of the thematic field. Thus, a second *map* of the text is the Table of Contents, which provides a description of the discursive *characters* as major themes of modern-postmodern Romanian musical culture. In the titles of the chapters, the author lists with lucid accuracy the *actants* of this cultural *performance*: *I. Muzica națională, de inspirație folclorică* [Folk-Inspired National Music], *II. Muzica de inspirație bizantină* [Byzantine-Inspired Music], the two sources of the Romanian musical culture, followed by *III. Balcanismul estetic* [The Aesthetic Balkanism], a debatable theme about the measure of our value and substance, *IV. Influențe ale muzicii occidentale. Influențe. Estetici compatibile* [Influences of Western Music. Influences. Compatible Aesthetics], with *compatible* as the key word and suggesting the existence of an original conceptual nucleus that manifests itself in the Western European musical thinking only on certain areas of its surface, and *V. Contribuții estetice originale ale muzicii românești contemporane* [Original Aesthetic Contributions of Romanian Contemporary Music]. Comprehensive and complete. The optimum minimum required to have an image that serves as an adequate representation and a functional tool for the musicological research of the thematic field stated in the title of the book.

In a general sense, the triad *Orientations. Directions. Currents* can be understood as an ample *response* (and equally a report) to the seemingly simple question: is there life (read: possibilities of conceptual evolution) after Enescu? Applied to other temporally and geographically different cultural contexts, it is possible to obtain the picture of the entire European and especially Austro-German 19th century, dominated by the *radiation* of the Beethovenian thought, conjuring up feelings of nostalgia (Johannes Brahms), re-readings (Richard Wagner), re-writings (Gustav Mahler), ideological re-contextualizations (Alfred Lorenz), but also almost fetishistic canonizations (E. T. A. Hoffmann, Robert Schumann, Adolf Marx, Richard Wagner, Romain Rolland, August Halm a.o.). Beethoven's case is followed by the no less famous cases of Wagner (in the Austrian-German culture), Dimitri Shostakovich (in the Soviet culture), or Béla Bartók (in the Hungarian culture), three cases of exhausted conceptual potential, even if Wagner, for example, used to present his compositional conception as *the artwork of the future*, a future that revealed no other than Arnold Schoenberg, champion of atonality, as his direct heir.

On the Generative Role of Enescu's Legacy

Or, Irinel Anghel's book reveals an entirely different picture, evaluating Enescu's thinking precisely through the lens of the conceptual *harvest* collected by the composers of the two post-Enescian avant-gardes. And, as stated in the text, inheriting Enescu meant neither turning him into a fetish through tributary mimetic attitudes, nor combating him with dismissive claims, as such manifestations were both falsely-artistic and falsely-modernist. Following in Enescu's footsteps meant following not just the letter, but also the spirit, the essence of Enescu's creative attitude, which was operating not so much at the superficial levels of, for example, the melodic discourse, narrating a theme and reproducing an ethno-centric atmosphere, but rather at a much deeper level, in the development of sound organization, of texture itself. The relevant examples are few, albeit significant. Standing as a model of theoretical and retrospective consideration of George Enescu's music is the monumental monograph *Capodopere enesciene* [Enescian Masterpieces] (Bucharest: Editura Muzicală, 1984), along with bringing some of Enescu's unknown works back to the concert halls (the 4th and 5th Symphonies), all of them realized by Romanian composer Pascal Bentoiu. In like manner, the theoretical writings of Ștefan Niculescu – *Reflecții despre muzică* [Reflections on Music] (Bucharest: Editura Muzicală, 1980) and Anatol Vieru – *Cartea modurilor* [The Book of

Modes] (Bucharest: Editura Muzicală, 1980) – speak of the development of an affinity for *heterophony* in particular, and for *modalism* in general, as methods of composition. Works belonging to composers like Liviu Glodeanu (the opera *Zamolxe*), Mihai Moldovan (*Obârșii* - 1971, *Cântece străbune* - 1971/1972 and *Spații și timpuri mioritice* -1971/1972), or Myriam Marbé (*Ritual pentru setea pământului*, 1968), can be regarded as applied forms of a living tradition in full blossom, while containing at the same time Enescu's *genome* in terms of attitude, method and conceptual originality. But things do not stop just here.

If the first three chapters are dedicated to the formulation of a *genealogy*, the last two are related by the apparent antithesis of the terms... *compatible* (Chapter IV) and ... *original* (Chapter V). The meaning of this dialectical sway between *compatibility* (an analogy of the *opening* towards the cultural-historical exterior) and *originality* (in the sense of *original*, an analogy of a *specificity* maintained in a relative conservation) reveals itself in the fullest and most authentic way in the phrase *Răspunsul estic* (the Eastern Response) applied to the East-European schools of composition. What is this all about? In the first place, it is about the position of the artistic elites on the Western side of the Iron Curtain, on the one hand, and on the Eastern side, on the other, in relation to the post-Weberian serialism (Pierre Boulez, Karlheinz Stockhausen, Milton Babbitt, Luigi Nono), institutionalized in the Euro-American space of the late 40s and early 50s as a hegemonic tradition. Even if the atmosphere of the Cold War led to great discrepancies in the contents and organization of the political and military life of the West and East, in terms of cultural existence, the picture was sensibly different. With the serial orientation serving as canonical reference, the Euro-American avant-gardes took a *contestatory attitude* toward it through personalities like John Cage (aleatoricism, with an important contribution by Witold Lutosławski), Iannis Xenakis (stochastic music), György Ligeti (the microtonal technique), Luciano Berio (the polystylistic orientation), as well as the four American minimalists – Steve Reich, Terry Riley, La Monte Young and Philip Glass.

On the *Eastern Response* and Enescu's Solution of Originality

A relevant personality for the understanding of the conceptual attitude adopted by the post-Enescian Romanian composers in relation to the European culture is George Enescu, in his capacity as an *immigrant* or *stateless* composer (a Romanian who settled abroad), or as a Romanian composer who, by a twist of fate, was appointed cultural attaché in Western

Europe (with studies in Vienna and later in Paris). Thus, it is important how the composer succeeds in *reconciling* the Romanian musical substance (of an ethnic rather than academic-scholarly essence) with the European musical realities, a single tradition facing an entire *family* of traditions canonized over the course of at least two millennia of practice. But what could have turned into a conflict proved to be the transformation of a *co-habitation* into an extremely fertile *empathy* on a conceptual, creative level. And, the post-Enescian Romanian *avant-gardes* maintained this carefully controlled and strange *empathy* as a constituent of their own creative attitude.

In a clear antithesis to the *reactive* rather than *mechanical* attitude of the (inter- or multi-national) European *avant-gardes* towards an institutionalized conceptual reference, the *Eastern Response* was formulated rather as a calm expectation, though with a strong focus on, and an *organic* assimilation of the substance and evolutionary specificity of their own cultures. Such was the response of the *New Polish School* composers – Krzysztof Penderecki, Kazimierz Serocki and Henryk Górecki, of the Soviet composer of German-Hebrew origin Alfred Schnittke, and of the members of the two Romanian *avant-gardes* – Aurel Stroe, Myriam Marbé, Anatol Vieru, Stefan Niculescu, Tiberiu Olah and Cornel Țăranu, Nicolae Brânduș, Corneliu Cezar, Lucian Mețianu, Liviu Glodeanu, Mihai Moldovan, Corneliu Dan Georgescu, Octavian Nemescu, Doina Rotaru and UlpIU Vlad.

The response of the Polish School came in the form of the *sonoristic* conception, formulated as a doctrine in 1956 by musicologist Józef Michał Chomiński – a synthesis serving as a common denominator (atonal organization of sound, emphasis on texture and timbre as a form generator) both for total serialism (the doctrinal hegemon at the time) and for the reactive *avant-gardes* (aleatoricism, stochasticism, microtonality, electronic music etc.). In Soviet music, the emergence of the polystylistic tendencies, theorized and developed in several of Alfred Schnittke's works, legitimized itself as the heir of Dimitri Shostakovich's thinking (with Symphony No. 15 as its relevant model) and even of Gustav Mahler's polystylistic proto-postmodernism (quotation technique, hybridization, fragmentation, narrativism etc.), as compared to Luciano Berio with his famous *Sinfonia*, in which the polystylistic conception derives from a simple combination (claustrating, in pot-pourri style) of several stylistic quotations. What in Schnittke's case is articulated *organically* as a stylistic *dialogue*, in Berio's case appears as a *mechanical* juxtaposition of several stylistic sequences *extracted* from their original context, and thus pushed towards an obvious *decontextualization*. In the case of the Romanian school of composition, what draws attention is the creative use of *heterophony*, a major characteristic of Enescu's style, understood, however, in a broader and more profound sense, as legitimately belonging within a modernist/*avant-gardist* type of thinking

(Ștefan Niculescu, Anatol Vieru, Myriam Marbé) and in a radical conceptual opposition with Pierre Boulez's idea, who derives his heterophony from the equation of serial music. The idea is carried further, enhanced and expanded by concepts such as Aurel Stroe's *morpho-genetic* one (also occurring in works by Cornel Țăranu, Costin Cazaban, Myriam Marbé and Octavian Nemescu), or the *spectralism* cultivated already in the 1960s by Corneliu Cezar and Octavian Nemescu, Aurel Stroe, Costin Cazaban, Horațiu Rădulescu, Iancu Dumitrescu and Ana-Maria Avram, in strong opposition to the tardy claim of precedence made by the IRCAM spectralists Gérard Grisey, Tristan Murail and Jean-Claude Risset, members of the *Itinéraire* ensemble, founded as late as in 1973. In both cases – of heterophony and spectral music –, the Romanian composers present themselves as followers of a cultural *genealogy*, basing their searches rather on the exploration of some deep-seated contents such as the acoustic and, especially, the archetypal one, than on scholarly-technical deductions as in the case of the Western serialists or spectralists.

On the Concept of *Archetype* in the Music of the Romanian School of Composition

As a true culmination of Irinel Anghel's book and a corollary of all of her powerful and nuanced demonstrations, stands the role played by the concept of *archetype* in the Romanian avant-garde thinking. It is a concept that serves as a universal *correlative*, a value filter and revealer, as well as a *determining* factor in the choice of themes, in the invention of techniques and in the formulation of compositional rules. And the author of the book does not use the *archetype* to build her narrative effectively, nor can she be suspected of *directing* the entire text in strict dependence on the fertile moment in which she will bring to light the supreme argument of *archetypality*. The reading of the book only confirms the narrator's equidistance and purely objective interpretation of *events*, beyond any distortions that would betray preferential attitudes or a counterproductive subjectivism.

In George Enescu's music, the archetypal argument is present primarily in the traditional reference to the opera *Oedipe*, a theme of major interest in the early decades of the twentieth century, which is also present in Igor Stravinski's oratorio *Oedipus Rex*, but also as a conceptual foundation in Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic texts. In fact, the approach of the *archetype* reveals a tendency to attain a pancultural level of the artistic thinking.

Or, already in the titles of the fifth and last chapters of the book – *Contribuții estetice originale ale muzicii românești contemporane*/5. *Muzica arhetipală* [*Original Aesthetic Contributions of Contemporary Romanian Music*]/5. *Archetypal Music*] – the preoccupation for the purely musical formulation of the

concept of *archetype* presents itself as a determining factor of a fundamental conceptual and aesthetic value. As Irinel Anghel shows, the theoretical writings of composer Corneliu Dan Georgescu represent an important hermeneutical project serving as doctrine precisely by virtue of the idea that “besides the specific elements of a particular language, music (whether folk or classical) also presents a series of *commonalities* (in different regions and epochs), whose explanation cannot be reduced to the hypothesis of influences or loans, imposing instead that of *polygenesis*, motivated by common, general human factors” (in: Corneliu Dan Georgescu, *Preliminarii la o posibilă teorie a arhetipurilor în muzică* [Preliminaries to a Possible Theory of Archetypes in Music], *Studii de muzicologie*, vol. XVII, 1983, p. 136). Also of particular interest and of importance for the narrative evolution of the text are the two systematizations of the archetypal typologies elaborated by Corneliu Dan Georgescu and Octavian Nemescu. The multitude of archetypal approaches presented by the author in a spectacular thematic panoply confirms and, at the same time, affirms the consistency of this conceptual evolutionary option of the Romanian school of composition: Aurel Stroe – The archetype of the Ladder, Adrian Iorgulescu – The concision of expression. The metaphysical approach, Ștefan Niculescu – The Ison archetype. The heterophonic approach, Corneliu Dan Georgescu – The Major-Minor archetype. The timelessness of perception. The essentialized minimalism, Iancu Dumitrescu – The archetype of Natural Resonance. The recovery of timbral archaicity, Doina Rotaru – The Glissando archetype. Folklore decantation and Octavian Nemescu, The Total archetype.

The logical conclusion of the entire narrative of the book, a consequence and a continuation of the archetypal approach, occurs in the last sub-chapter – 7. Imaginary music – a fertile thematic proposal whereby Octavian Nemescu virtually provides a conceptual opening towards new possibilities of representation of musical thinking.

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This book, *Orientări, Direcții, Curente ale muzicii românești din a doua jumătate a secolului XX* [Orientations, Directions, Currents in Late Twentieth Century Romanian Music] by Irinel Anghel, has won its well-deserved place in Romanian musicology through a blend of qualities that make it equally important and necessary. A guide-book, a dictionary-book, a (mini) encyclopaedia-book, an analytical model book, in which both the historical and the systematic approaches relate in a fertile way, absorbing into the narrative flow of the text and binding together, in an organic whole,

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completely different facts, names and titles, creating a direct communication between concepts and ideas which, though temporally distant, are univocally oriented towards a common evolutionary direction. The text of the book relies on a strong argumentative apparatus – quotations, tables, musical examples – which Irinel Anghel operates with an admirable control of the sufficient necessity, while emphasizing the ideational and thematic complexity, as well as the resoluteness and indisputable originality of the Romanian school of composition. And after more than two decades from its writing, this great small book establishes itself as a faithful, analytical mirror of the historical reality it describes. Perhaps even more, it can claim its right to contain and represent it in the proper sense of the word.

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