

THE BOOK OF SCATTERED BEADS

(reflections on the narrative content, on the semantic map, and on the structural architecture: Pascal Bentoiu, *Deschideri spre lumea muzicii* (*Openings to the World of Music*), Bucharest: Editura Muzicală, 1973)

The assumed sins of temporal distance

Through a simple chronological positioning, the title of this book – *Openings to the World of Music* – declares its bridge identity through the very date of publication – 1973. It is a year located exactly at the point of symmetry between 1971, the publication of the volume *Image and Sense*, and 1975, respectively, the year in which *Musical Thought* appears. Thus, concludes what in my consciousness immediately finds a title – *The Hermeneutic Trilogy* – by the composer Pascal Bentoiu.

Although from a certain distance in time, things tend to change at least their appearance, if not their identity. And Pascal Bentoiu in no way intended a *Trilogy*, and even less a *hermeneutic* one. The historical reality presents the simple fact of the writing of the three volumes. Here the image of a chronological consequence not assumed as a trilogy works.

And then? What would lead me rather to perpetrate a wishful phantasm than to follow, meekly, the meaning and course of events as they unfolded in the aftermath of the three years so tantalizingly arranged and provocatively symmetrical – 1971-1973-1975? The simple disposition so balanced and equally equidistant, however, would not save my vision, so reprehensible by an inherent subjectivism, but also by an obvious enthusiasm



that these texts arouse in me. An over-interpretation that is even more reprehensible, since I only went through *Openings to the World of Music* after the publication of the second edition of the volumes *Image and Meaning* and *Musical Thought*.

First, the simplest argument would be that of distance. A temporal space of transfiguration of the original meanings – that is, a distance necessary for clearer visibility. Because certain meanings are only seen from a distance. As Serghei Esenin invoked them so plastically in *Letter to a Woman* (1924):

Лицом к лицу	(Standing face to face
Лица не увидеть.	We don't capture the face.
Большое видится на расстоянии	We will see it more clearly from a distance)

Or precisely the temporal distance puts and even forces things to merge into a synchrony, because the distance from the moment of writing brings these three volumes even closer. The conflict of meanings is obvious. However, it is an optional one. Between past and present. Between the history of writing and an increasingly obvious con-substantialization of these three volumes in an organic tri-unity today.

A bi-univocal opening towards the world of music

In contrast to the coherence and doctrinal cohesion of the framing volumes – *Image* and *Thought* – the present volume, rather a bridge between Scylla and Charybdis, as if reconciling them, leaves the impression of an „unbearable lightness of being”, of a cool oasis, reaching where the author tired of thinking about hidden musical images and meanings, he finally allows himself to let go of the conceptual „plateau” and relax in an unassuming and so playful juggling of ideas and texts as stoning in size as they are simple and mosaics in content. A game of scattering. A real waste – an anti-economy of imagination and ideas, all dressed in clothes that are already too tight, a sensation that is even stronger after reading the previous volume (*Image and meaning*). As if after the composition of the Ninth Symphony, Beethoven started to have fun with easy miniatures – sound bagatelles and trinkets –, such as Schumann's *Kinderszenen*, or Tchaikovsky's *Children's Album*. But that would be the case only from the point of view of proportions and complexity. Two criteria are hit by irrelevance in the case of any other author, but especially in the special case of Pascal Bentoiu, namely in the situation of the present volume.

To stand between two solidly „cemented” extremes, the deck could only be built from a suitable material. That is, one is tough and resistant to wear and tear over time. But also, a bridge-guide stretched between *Image and meaning* and *Musical Thought*. Which materials, however, would we be talking about, since it is obvious that no analogy would work with wood, concrete, or metal, the gift favorites? And not just any kind of rock would prove durable enough for such a construction – a mosaic-bridge as if assembled from multicolored ceramic shards in the imagination of a Gaudí.

Conceived in a relaxed and heterogeneous architecture – a treatise, three essays, and a bunch of small pills, with no apparent connection between the three textual genres as constituent parts – the volume displays a surprising unity. And this rather by virtue of an appetite for reading, aroused more and more as the text progresses, than by obedient observance of the literary canons thought of as a drama of ideas. None of these. No drama and no narrative continuity (as in the other two volumes). Not at all polyphonic and certainly not orchestral, symphonic, or oratorical. Rather film music, jazz, or rock'n'roll. Just like in the last and most „bubbly” and eclectic section of the volume – the third, *Snapshots* – organized like a pen full of Nabokov's butterflies fluttering Brownian in all directions. Or, rather, simultaneously in both directions – both towards *Image and meaning* and towards the still non-existent *Musical Thought*.

The *False Treatise on Musical Aesthetics*

However, this dangerously shaky *bridge* at the beginning thanks to an alleged falsity – a *False treatise on musical aesthetics* – incited even more to an adventurous crossing. I could not overlook both Pascal Bentoiu's self-irony and, above all, this act of self-sabotage so declarative – a *Treatise*, but a false one.

In fact, it was about an explainable rebellion by a parody of the author against conceited preciousness, outdated academicism, against the ritualized conventionalism of (false) scientific or (obviously) biased phrases, anachronistic in all its images and meanings. At the same time, it was about the appeal to language and living communication, not a wooden one, no matter how false the *Treatise* turned out to be, material that could not ensure the function of a bridge thrown between two volumes, but also towards everyone's conscience readers.

The first articulation of the volume – the *Treatise* – could be perceived, in a first sense, as a parodic pastiche this time to an authentic and canonical *Treatise on musical aesthetics* belonging to Dimitrie Cuclin, prefaced by the author himself with a self-sacrificing, and so theatrical, dedication to maestro Vincent d'Indy – director of the private conservatory *Schola Cantorum* in Paris – from his devoted disciple.

And all the assumed seriousness of an explicit academism declared by the ziggurat architecture of the volume – Part I: *Psychology of Elements and Phenomena*, Part II: *Logic of Composition*, and Part III: *Ethics of Expressive Essence* –, together with the sacrosanct motto, succumbed to a crushing gravity through which Cuclin probes the depths, it succumbs to the non-serious but rather touching and playful realm of conceptual toys rather than scientific temple „pillars”. And this by virtue of assuming an equally systematic and thus philosophical „Hegelianism” – Psychology+Logic+Ethics – which was supposed to give his text its due imposingness and importance.

A second interpretation of this *False Treatise* is that of a testing ground, a space where a structural prototype of the future volume *Musical Thought* would be put to the test, an intention „betrayed” at the very beginning, by the title of the second subchapter – *Peculiarities of musical thought*. The components of the form-genre-style triad served as equally architectural arguments – the „scaffolding” of the entire text – and additional narratives but in an inverted order: style – *Considerations on style*, genre – *Musical organisms*, and form – *About forms*. Both the title – the acceptance of music genres as organisms – and especially the differentiated explanation of the eleven fundamental typologies – from the monumentality of large genres such as instrumental concert, symphony, oratorio, opera, and ballet, to the small ones, chambers music, as sonata, quartet, rhapsody and lied. Indeed, genres are specific consensual forms or patterns of social, public, of musical practice. But the intuition and presentation of them as organisms surprise both by the unusual definition and by the precision of the reference to the archetypal – the masculine of the visible (ballet) and the feminine of the audible (the lied), both types of „organisms” sublimated in the instrumental (from the sonata to the symphony), the third gender typological pose.

But these conceptual pillars of resistance are introduced gradually, and only after an explanation through a necessary and enlightening *Introduction* located even before the *False Treatise*, because unlike literature, poetry, and theater, but also the visual arts,

„... music, so obviously separated from our daily activities and so clearly delimited in the general sound context of life, appears as the only information system existing only in itself, with – today – almost exclusively artistic function.”

The more difficult it seems to be to understand music, the more it presents itself as an a-notional fact, with its own morphology and syntax, but unlike words, which have fixed referential meanings, the „words” and „phrases” of music do not something and, as Pascal Bentoiu states, they are not capable of producing representations.

„Elementary musical formations, those which from a grammatical point of view could be assimilated to words (and further, to notions), do not trigger representations. A melodic formula provokes in us (specifically) only its image (which in turn can be the cause of an upheaval of sensitivity, an emotion).”

The honesty of the author is legitimized at the very beginning of the *Treatise*, in the first subchapter – *About „what” and about „how”* – the ideas, as well as the intentions regarding both the matter and meanings, as well as the method and procedure of musical thought and knowledge, are clearly and effectively exposed. Eliminating the composer from the equation, the phenomenon and act of music are presented in the following two sub-chapters: *The Performer*, the sole creator of the composition as an acoustic-sound body, and the Listener, in the two poses: as an audience and as a subject of reception. New, but explicitly normative, the following two sub-chapters appear – *Accessibility and value* and *Value and accessibility* – a dialectical inversion of two apparently antagonistic concepts and judicious interpretation of two „incandescent” problems of musicology.

Just as easily is the problematic „knot” untied in *Construction and Expression*, a further mystery of musical expressive structure. And the narrative doesn't just stop there. In other words, this *False treatise on musical aesthetics* is recommended to be read in a loop, because not only the ideas and concepts – topics of the discourse, but also the architecture of the text and the narrative style are offered as tools and techniques for learning the expression of musical images and meanings.

Syntheses

The epicenter of the volume entitled *Syntheses* – the second part – is made up of three essays. Three large forms are structurally and narratively complex, and this is in obvious opposition to the fragmentary nature of the first and last parts.

Reflections on new music, but also the last text of the *False Treatise* – *Public and new music* – both can be received as a continuation of the last section – *Foray into Concrete* – from the previous volume – *Image and*

Meaning and as a new volume of information additions accumulated in the almost three years that separate the first and second volumes of the Trilogy.

Past and Present – is by far, in my opinion, the most consistent and thus the most powerful text of the entire volume. Even if all the texts „catapult” us into the territories of Pascal Bentoiu's consciousness, he simply overwhelmed me with the conquering intensity of empathic energy, with the painstakingly detailed precision of each image, with the depth and expansion of several historical and personal-subjective planes, all focused on the experience of thinking and practicing music. To be read and re-read in successive readings.

The third essay – *Notes about Enescu*, to which the Enescu „tablet” from the third part also adheres, *Instantanee*, can also be understood as a very well-structured and argued premonitory sketch of the future and monumental volume *Capodopere enesciene* (Bucharest: Music Publishing House, 1984), which the author himself defines as „a kind of travelogue within Enescian creation”, which I would rather understand as a very useful map of the vast Enescian space. In other words, it is a must-read, pencil in hand, for anyone who wants even the most superficial information on the artistic biography, the value, or the identity substance, which the music of the great composer-performer has.

The compositional scheme of the Hermeneutic Trilogy

After the first sin committed – my own wishful thinking of unifying the three volumes into a trilogy comes the second sin, this time a capital one expressed by the intuition that all three books fit into a pattern of musical form. Or, keeping the professional correctness of the compositional scheme. That is, as an outline of a musical work, which at first sight is inconceivable either for a single book or even less for three volumes not intended as a trilogy.

However, the concatenation of the three parts of *Openings to the World of Music* seems to resume as a replica of the relationship between all three volumes of this supposed *Hermeneutic Trilogy*. The general scheme of my hypothesis looks like this:

A. *Image and meaning* (1971): a noticeable structural and narrative cohesion and coherence distributed among the three constituent parts of the volume – **a**,

B. *Openings to the world of music* (1973): the first part – **b** – which is the „organized” fragmentariness of the *False treatise on musical aesthetics*, followed by **a_{varied}**: the strong core (integral, complex, and coherent, of maximum cohesion and discursive consistency) of the three essays, after which comes section **C**: the „uncontrolled” fragmentariness of *Snapshots*,

BOOK REVIEW

b	a_v	c
False Treatise fragmentary	Syntheses continuous	Snapshots fragmentary

The extremes – **b** and **c**, both fragmented – frame by contrast the solid core of the three essays (**a_v**) – a genuine trio of a tristrophic compositional scheme. A controlled waste (*Treatise*) culminating in a seemingly out-of-control waste (*Snapshots*).

But a different tempo should also be noted – of the narrative unfolding. In terms of narrative tempo, the three parts fall into the genre typology of the *Italian baroque overture* – fast-slow-fast, that is, fragmentary-continuous-fragmentary.

a_{v1}. The entire *Trilogy* is concluded by the return of the A section, but in a next, already varied pose – A-varied-1: this time in the architecture of an authentic treatise (declared by the author as an essay) which is *Musical Thought* (1975).

From this general form of the *lied*, of the first plan – A-B-A_{v1} (*Openings to the World of Music*) – a second-plan scheme could follow, one of a classical rondo through the very inner organization of the B section, as if intentionally structured to fit into a larger continuity :

LIED
(or *tristrophic*, or *da capo*)

a	b	a_{v1}
Image and Meaning	Openings to the World of Music	Musical Thought

CLASSIC RONDO
Openings to the World of Music

A	b	a_v	c	A_{v1}
Image and Meaning continuous	fragmentary	continuous	fragmentary	Musical Thought continuous

But both in the core of the Openings volume and in the point of absolute symmetry of the entire trilogy – section a_v –, is located the second essay with an emblematic title *The Past and the Present* – a bridge both between the neighboring essays and the extreme parts (*The False Treatise* and *Snapshots*), both towards writing from the past (*Image and Meaning*) and towards that from the end of the possible present (*Musical Thought*). It would be assumed that the fragmentary nature of this second volume – *Openings to the World of Music* – also led the author to conceive, however, a text structured according to the rigors of a treatise – *Musical Thought*.

And a compositional analogy of this trilogy in „classic rondo” is represented by the scheme of Sonata no. 11, in A major, K.V. 331 by Mozart, where just like in Pascal Bentoiu's *Hermeneutic Trilogy*, in the heart of the work – in the very middle of the Trio (in *Openings*) it corresponds to Part II, *Synthesis*), Mozart places the Carinthian lullaby „Freu dich, mein Herz! Denk an kein Schmerz” (Rejoice, my heart! Think of no pain), which my mother used to sing to her as a child.

However, in the context of this Mozartian sonata, the Trio articulation – the middle of the middle – has the meaning of the sanctuary of remembrance (the image of the mother), the symbolic suggestion of the secret place, or the hidden place. In an almost exact analogy with the title of the essay *The Past and the Present*, but with the structuring in continuity of the canonical past and the still less definable present. Although, I think, this hard core of the entire volume should itself be read as a complete continuity of the three essays – *Reflections on New Music* + *Past and Present* + *Notes on Enescu*.

A further, third, and final sin, I commit by wondering what the analogies might be between a typology of musical form and framing volumes. The first volume – *Image and Meaning* – is designed from three chapters – thesis + antithesis + synthesis –, which would refer to a large tristrophic form, like one of the twenty-one *Nocturnes* (19+3 posthumous) by Chopin, while the third volume – *Musical Thought* – would rather lend itself to a theme-with-variations form like the Finale (Part IV) of Brahms's Fourth Symphony. But with the theme of variations – musical though – declared only in the last chapter, the tenth.

Both schemes being conceived as coherent and integral, of maximum conceptual cohesion, the middle volume – *Openings to the world of music* – seems to no longer have a precise form: a chain of heterogeneous articulations (b-av-c)? too little convincing – which, beyond any and all arguments, but also my own musicological sins, confirms the identity of a bridge, of a figurative-ornamental passage between two certainties.

Snapshots: A string of jewels

If the extension of an essay, an analytical study, or a treatise allows for the quiet accumulation of arguments, details, structure, and discourse, then the aphorism leaves room only for the essential expressed in all its nakedness. Like a zen koan, trigger of enlightenment. Like a Bashō haiku, of an almost blunt substantiality (the last is Pascal Benteoiu's term). There is no time left for arguments, descriptions, and details. Aphorism is the genre of pure action. The text „burns” in focusing on a single detail hyperbolized and expanded to the dimension of the narrative subject – the spyglass becomes a microscope, comparisons become collisions, metaphors become corrosive, suggestive effects follow derision, humor, the grotesque, the comic, and any other paradoxes, the images erupt in a real firework under an irresistible pressure and suggestive temperature. Or, if the essay advertises a traveling – slow movement revealing important details, then the short genre cannot be other than that of photography, one stop-frame (snapshot) at a time for one illumination at a time. This is how the twenty „pills” – mini-reports, spectrograms, and radiographs alike – were conceived as many satirical, critical, and humorous identities of Pascal Benteoiu himself.

But it is neither a mosaic, nor a kaleidoscope, nor an eclecticism, but rather twenty miniature snapshots, perfectly rounded, like a string of pearls, like in „The Glass Bead Game” by Hermann Hesse, so generously strung before the reader, and all the more valuable, with how much they give us, all together and each separately, the author in his everyday identity, an „unpolished”, simple, accessible, and so integral, living fascinations together with disillusion, watching television, listening to the radio or a pick-up „chewing” from vinyl, and dealing with a scathing irony of falsehoods, prejudices, snobbery, and any other deviations from the simplicity and common sense brother and with the starry sky above the head, but also with the moral law existing somewhere in all of us.

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