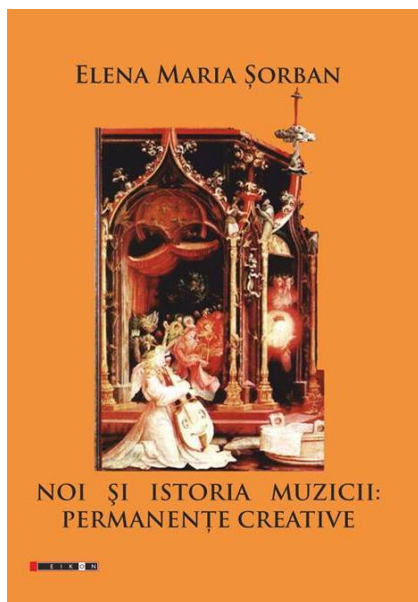


BOOK REVIEW

ELENA MARIA ȘORBAN – BOOK QUARTET:
1. THE HISTORY OF MUSIC AND US: CREATIVE PERMANENCIES,
2. THE OLD MUSIC. A CONCISE HISTORY,
3. CLASSICAL AND ROMANTIC MUSIC,
4. THE NEW MUSIC
Eikon Publishing House, Cluj-Napoca, 2013 & 2014

By the end of 2013 and the beginning of 2014, Elena Maria Șorban published a book tetralogy, a comprehensive compendium covering the entire music history, from the ancient music to the contemporary creations.

Mrs. Șorban is Associate Professor Ph. D at the “Gheorghe Dima” Music Academy of Cluj-Napoca, where she teaches Music History and Gregorian Paleography. Her main fields of interest are Western Plainchant (with a doctoral dissertation on *Plainchant in Medieval Transylvania*), Modern and Contemporary Music and pedagogical applications of Music History for children. It is a pleasure and an honour to present her books, the more so as during my university years I had the privilege of attending Mrs. Șorban’s classes and of admiring the qualities of a complex and rigorous musicologist. The first book, entitled **THE HISTORY OF MUSIC AND US: CREATIVE PERMANENCIES** (2013), contains 14 chapters or, as the author herself defines them, “14 time-crossover essays”:



- I. Music as divine praise and therapy from the Psalms and Orpheus onwards*
- II. Christian fundamentals of the European music culture*
- III. Sacred permanencies*
- IV. From the music of the Liberal Arts to... monsters*
- V. Music in the cultural space of Moldavia, Transylvania, and Wallachia during the Renaissance*
- VI. About the castrato voices*
- VII. The orchestra as a political model*
- VIII. Coffee houses, gallantries, revolutions, and music*
- IX. The Viennese Classicism and us*
- X. Passing over psychic crises*
- XI. Faust in Music*
- XII. Belle Époque – in Paris and in „little Paris” Bucharest*
- XIII. The antique Oedipus – an emblem of modernism*
- XIV. The present future.*

At the end of the volume the author, who is also a poet and certified translator, added Romanian translations of the Latin liturgical texts (*Requiem, Veni, Creator Spiritus, Ave, maris stella, Panis angelicus, Ave, verum corpus, Stabat Mater*), including versified translations that come as a premiere in the Romanian musicological literature and an indispensable tool for those interested in the sacred music.

In the foreword, entitled *Intentions*, E. M. Șorban justifies the choice of the title (*Creative Permanencies*) and explains its meaning: “*Permanencies* – facts that remain. *Creativity* – suggested by the evolution of the Latin verbs *creare, credere, crescere* which have a common origin: the quality of being in the likeness of the Creator” (p.8). This book was intended as “a non-conformist crossing of the history of music – where every stage is looked upon through a representative subject which crosses over different cultural epochs as well. (...) The themes that are emblematic for a certain cultural epoch, are perpetuated and creatively metamorphosed in other epochs as well. Information, observations, correlations, significations – in a book written for those who know, and for those who don’t know yet, the fascinating field of music history.” (p.7)

The book contains an impressive diversity of data selected from the ancient to the contemporary music, from the history of culture, fine arts, architecture, poetry, fashion, social politics, psychology, religion, manners, myths, biographies, etymologies and so on - all of them looked upon through the magnifying glass of the *creative musical permanencies*. The author’s extensive erudition is complemented by her dynamic, insightful and thought-provoking style, pleasantly and continuously surprising the reader with subtly and fresh correlations and perspectives, some of them announced in the intriguing titles of certain chapters, such as *Coffee houses, gallantries, revolutions, and music* or *The orchestra as a political model*.

She enjoys the companionship of foreign and Romanian writers, such as Shakespeare or Goethe, respectively Mihai Eminescu, Vasile Alecsandri, Lucian Blaga, Nicolae Iorga, Marin Sorescu, Nichita Stănescu, Andrei Pleșu and others, whom she quotes, inviting the reader to a feast of ideas.

Her appeal to return to *the authentic moral and aesthetical values*, to the Christian foundation of the European culture and the sacred justification of music, crosses the book as a leitmotiv. In the last chapter (*The present future*) the author, through a circular motion of the pen, refers to the ideas conveyed in the first chapter (*Music as divine praise and therapy*), unveiling the today’s consumer society: “*The psalmists* are whispering a song about finding fulfillment in God, *the rappers* are yelling a song about the inner emptiness” (p. 124). The closing rhetorical question inherently follows: which one of the aims of the music is still functioning today - “the prayer, the reflection, the entertainment”? (p. 127).

“*Quo imus, homines?* – in pursuit of the lost love. Of THE LOVE!” (p. 127) is the author’s final invitation to enhance the spiritual side of the music, its quality of being “the soul’s water” by rehabilitating the spiritual values, the highest of which is love, Christ’s model, “nowadays ignored precisely because it means to assume the responsibilities” (p. 125).

The next three books, published in 2014 and exploring the history of music from antiquity to the contemporary period, are thoroughly-researched and well-documented, reflecting the author's teaching experience. Each book has a list of abbreviations and symbols and a rich bibliography and webography.

The mostly systematic technique that E. M. Șorban chooses in approaching such a large theme is reflected by the fact that she doesn't sacrifice the panoramic and synthetic view to the details, the style is concise and the information is often organized and classified in very useful synoptic tables.

**THE OLD MUSIC.
A CONCISE HISTORY**
(160 pages)

I. The ancient Hebrew and Greek musical cultures

II. The musical transition from the ancient cultures to the Christian Middle Ages

- Early Christian monophonies

III. The transition of the Western music from the Gregorian monophony to the Renaissance polyphony

- Ars Antiqua

- The Medieval secular monody

- The English polyphony in the 13th century

- Ars Nova and Trecento

- Ars Subtilior

IV. Renaissance music

V. The transition from Renaissance to Baroque

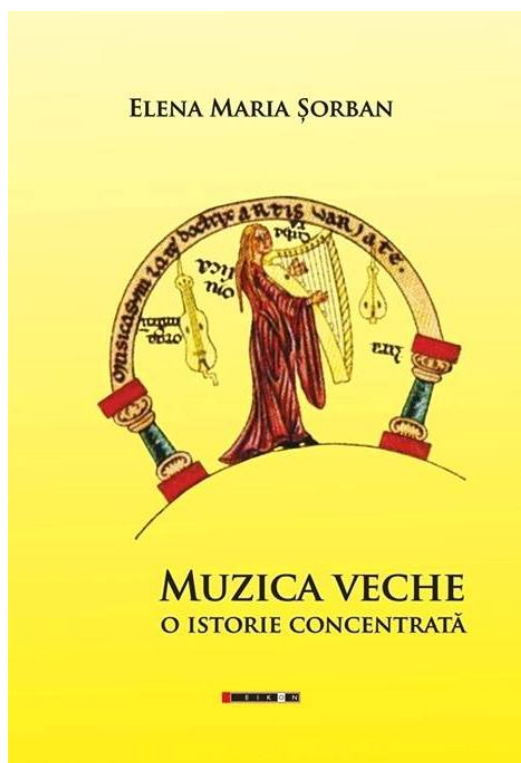
- The protestant Chorale

- The instrumental repertoire

- The vocal accompanied monody

VI. The Baroque music

Notes regarding the contemporary performance of the old music





CLASSICAL AND ROMANTIC MUSIC

(166 pages)

I. The musical transition from Baroque to Classicism

- The Galant Style
- The Sensitive Style
- The Mannheim School

II. Music in Classicism

III. The musical transition from Classicism to Romanticism

- The classicizing orientation
- The Early Romanticism

IV. Music in Romanticism

THE NEW MUSIC

(165 pages)

I. The transition from Romanticism to the polystylism of the 20th century

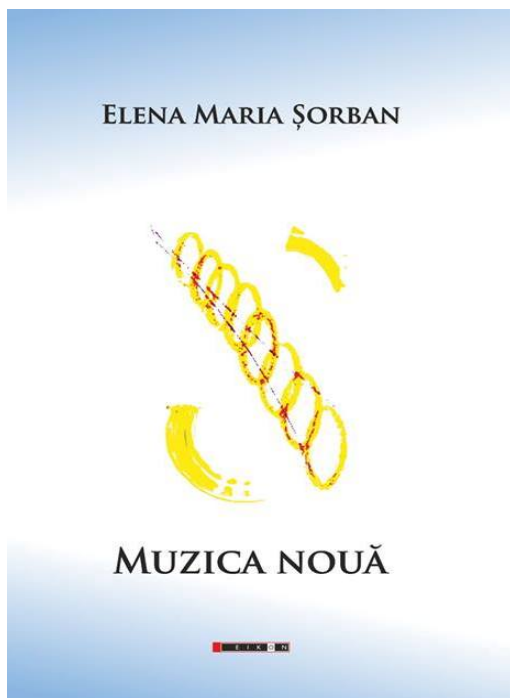
- Academism, Neoclassicism, Post-Romanticism, Verism, Impressionism, Nonconformists, Jazz, Light music

II. The Polystylism in the music of the 20th century, between 1910 and 1970

- Modernism: expressionism, vanguardism, electroacoustic music
- Neoclassicism; the national schools within the 20th century
- Retro style orientations: classicizing music and post romantic music
- Jazz
- Light music and film music

III. The transition of the contemporary music to the future

- Postmodern diversity
- Electroacoustic music
- Jazz
- Music for consumption (entertainment)



One of the advantages of this method is that it makes room for a greater diversity of information, serving the author's intention to broaden the traditional field of the music history to themes that usually intersect other domains (acoustics, performance, musicology etc.). She uses the following systematic platform to structure the chapters of the books:

- the definition of the style,
- the historical framings and periodization,
- personalities,
- elements of musical psychology and sociology (authors – performers – auditorium; women in music; music institutions),
- elements of general and musical pedagogy (pedagogical principles and the role of music in education; notions of music education),
- sources (musical notations; musical documents; the theorization of music; aesthetical considerations),
- stylistic features (musical language; rhythm, meter and agogic; morphology and syntax; the categories of thematic and athematic; structures such as monophony, heterophony, polyphony etc.; timbre categories, history of the voice, specific instruments, intonations, systems of tuning, tuning pitch; musical instruments; musical performance – general aspects and aspects regarding the improvisation),
- musical genres,
- elements of musical stylistics and composition (principles of musical composition: the relation between music and text, music and dance, repetition, juxtaposition, variation, gradation, contrast, exposition of themes, development, symmetry, *sectio aurea*; the notion of style: the style of an epoch, the regional style, the national style, the personal style; the stages of a style)
- advanced documentation (referential editions; specific bibliography; audio/video recordings; webography).

In the foreword to *The New Music*, the musicologist Valentina Sandu-Dediu - Ph. D., University Professor at the National Music University of Bucharest, prominent specialist in the modern and contemporary music – emphasizes the modernity of this approach, “*in general* by melting the academic boundaries between different types of music (serious/light, high/low etc.) but also *in particular*, in those passages with reference to the gender studies (women in the music [...]) or minorities (the theme of gipsy music).”

We are certain that E. M. Șorban's valuable, original and necessary contribution to the Romanian musicology will receive the well-deserved interest of all its readers, from the music fans and culture lovers, to the professional musicians and musicologists.

ANAMARIA MĂDĂLINA HOTORAN

