

## ANALYTICAL JOURNEYS IN THREE PIECES FOR CLARINET SOLO BY CORNEL ȚĂRANU

CRISTIAN BENCE-MUK<sup>1</sup>

**SUMMARY.** *Three pieces for clarinet solo* by Cornel Țăranu carry the compositional impression of the '80s highlighting a perfect – micro and macrostructural – balance between construction and freedom. The first piece, *Toccata ostinato*, builds arrhythmic ostinato on a repeated sound, in alternation with a melodic “pattern” of modal-chromatic essence. The second piece, *Improvvisazione*, was written long time before the other two and represents a median contrast, where the sonorous discourse is delivered in a quasi-improvisational development. The third piece, *Cadenza*, is based on a nucleus made up of (major and minor) second and augmented fourth, transposed and built on various sounds, serving to an expressivity close to that of the lament, suggestively presented by the descending glissando.

**Keywords:** clarinet, creation, contemporary, nucleus, elaboration, reprise”

The present analytical process is part of a more ample research project (with a total span of 3 years), focusing on the study of the expressivity of the clarinet (solo, with piano and/or electronic music, in an instrumental or vocal-instrumental ensemble) in the musical creation of the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries. Therefore, all interpretative, analytical and especially compositional activities in this research project had a common denominator: contemporary musical creation for clarinet.

During the clarinet solo recital<sup>2</sup> performed in the first year of the research project, representative works from the Romanian musical creation of the 20<sup>th</sup> century signed by leading names of our composition world were presented: Marțian Negrea, Liviu Comes, Tiberiu Olah, Valentin Timaru, Hans Peter Türk and Doina Rotaru. One of the important names who was absent from our program (which, for practical reasons, presented only a first possible selection of notable realizations from the Romanian creation for clarinet solo) is that of composer and Academy member Cornel Țăranu, whose works include several remarkable opuses for clarinet solo or soloist (*Three pieces for clarinet solo* – 1983, *Sonata Rubato* for oboe or clarinet solo - 1986, *Responsorial I* for 1-2 clarinets, piano ad libitum and percussion ad libitum – 1996, etc.).

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<sup>1</sup> The *Gheorghe Dima* Music Academy of Cluj-Napoca, 25th Ion I.C. Brătianu Street, Cluj-Napoca, 400079, Assistant professor, D.Mus., cristi\_bence@yahoo.com.

<sup>2</sup> Played by clarinetist Răzvan Poptean on November 22, 2010 at the “Gh. Dima” Music Academy in Cluj-Napoca.



As a leading personality of the Romanian musicology and composition of the second half of the 20th century and beginning of the 21st, Cornel Țăranu<sup>3</sup> was formed at the “Gheorghe Dima” Academy in Cluj-Napoca with the master Sigismund Toduță in 1951-1957. He accomplished his studies in prestigious contemporary musical centres, such as Paris (where he studied with Olivier Messiaen and Nadia Boulanger) and Darmstadt (taking courses with Gyorgy Ligeti, Bruno Maderna and Christoph Cakel). Professor of composition and musical stylistics at the Music Academy in Cluj (since 1975), doctor in musicology, member of the Romanian Academic Society (since 1993), artistic director and conductor of the contemporary music ensemble Ars Nova, artistic director of the “Cluj Modern” Festival of contemporary music, delivering master clases in the U.S.A., Switzerland, Germany and Israel, Cornel Țăranu has dedicated his entire energy and mastery to the composition and promotion of new music. Among the numerous awards and prizes celebrating his accomplishments we mention several prizes from the U.C.M.R. (Union of the Composers and Musicologists in Romania) and the “Koussevitzky” record prize (1982).

His vast musical work covers all the musical genres possible, by his two operas (*The secret of Don Giovanni* and *Oreste-Oedipe*), 5 symphonies (the last one being a *Simfonia da Requiem* – 2005), numerous chamber, choral and vocal opuses, as well as film music (signing no less than 10 motion picture scores).

His importance and originality in the contemporary musical world appear clearly synthesized in the following paragraph from the Larousse – Dictionary of Great Musicians: “Cornel Țăranu makes a synthesis between elements of the folkloric vocabulary and novel compositional techniques, integrating, thus, in the musical discourse the expressive characteristics of the doina (the 1<sup>st</sup> Symphony “The Aulodic”) or of the lament (the 4<sup>th</sup> Symphony “Ritornele”), combining serial music with the modal-folkloric one and rigour with improvisation (the 2<sup>nd</sup> Symphony, “Wreaths”, the 3<sup>rd</sup> Symphony, “Signs”).”<sup>4</sup>

<sup>3</sup> All the information on the work and activity of the composer are based on the *Larousse – Dicționar de Mari Muzicieni (Larousse – Dictionary of Great Musicians)*, Ed. Univers Enciclopedic, București, 2000 and the official website of the composer, <http://www.comeltaranu.com/index.html>, visited on February 25, 2013.

<sup>4</sup> Op. cit., p. 489.

We have chosen to take an analytical journey in the work *Three pieces for clarinet solo*<sup>5</sup> as it represents, in our opinion (as well as in the light of the research of the last 3 years), a remarkable accomplishment of contemporary composition for clarinet solo, representative, at the same time, for the personal style of the composer, combining, as mentioned in the quotation above, rigour with freedom (that is, improvisation).

The three pieces of the opus were initially composed separately, first the medial part - *Improvvisazione* (1963, rev. 1975) and then the other two parts, *Toccata ostinato* and *Cadenza* (per flauto solo, clarinetto solo), both composed in 1982. Both the ostinato, as a counterpoint technique frequently used and present in the title of his works and the writing of *Cadenzas* for solo instruments are certain reference points of the composer's creation (see *Sonata ostinato per piano* (1961)<sup>6</sup>, *Sempre ostinato I*<sup>7</sup> for soprano saxophone / clarinet and *Sempre ostinato II*<sup>8</sup> – for saxophone / clarinet and 7 instruments or *Cadenze per Antiphona* for flute solo – 1998)<sup>9</sup>. Also, the practice of writing several instrumental versions for the same piece<sup>10</sup> is a constant characteristic both of the international contemporary musical creation in general<sup>11</sup> and of the work of the Cluj composer in particular.<sup>12</sup>

The first and the third pieces are built more rigorously as compared to the second one (composed first), which stands out due to its profound

<sup>5</sup> Score published by the "Gh. Dima" Music Conservatory, Cluj-Napoca, 1983.

<sup>6</sup> Ed. Muzicală, București, 1964.

<sup>7</sup> Ed. Salabert, Paris, 1986.

<sup>8</sup> Ed. Salabert, Paris, 1988.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. the website <http://www.ucmr.org.ro/listMembri.asp?CodP=167&TipPag=>, visited on February 25, 2013.

<sup>10</sup> Probably due reasons connected to performance in various artistic contexts, but also wishing to give the pieces various timbral attire, in search of the ideal instrumental solution (see also footnote 11).

<sup>11</sup> See article *Juggle for clarinet and piano by Cristian Marina – changing the semantics of contemporary musical creation from the point of view of various instrumental versions*, by Cristian Bence-Muk, STUDIA UBB MUSICA, LVII, 1, 2012, no.1/2012, p. 245-257.

<sup>12</sup> *Ofrande I (Offerings I)* for flute and 3 percussions – 1978 and *Ofrande II (Offerings II)* for flute, 3 percussions, piano and string quintet – 1978, *Rezonanțe I (Resonances I)* for guitar and *Rezonanțe II (Resonances II)* for guitar and instruments – both written in 1978, *Prolegomene I (Preface I)* for string quartet and piano – 1981 and *Prolegomene II (Preface II)* for string quintet/orchestra and piano – 1982, *Sempre ostinato I* for saxophone/clarinet solo – 1986 and *Sempre ostinato II* for saxophone/clarinet and 7 instruments – 1986-1988, *Remembering Bartók I* for oboe solo with piano ad libitum, *Remembering Bartók II* for oboe, string quintet, piano and percussion ad libitum and *Remembering Bartók III* for soprano saxophone and 4 saxophones – all the three versions being composed in 1995, *Responsorial I* for 1-2 clarinets, *Responsorial II* for 2 saxophones – both written in 1996 - and *Responsorial III* for clarinet, bassoon, piano, percussion, violin and cello - 1997 (excerpt from the article *Juggle for clarinet and piano by Cristian Marina – changing the semantics of contemporary musical creation from the point of view of various instrumental versions*, by Cristian Bence-Muk, STUDIA UBB MUSICA, LVII, 1, 2012, p.245-257).

improvisational character, in complete consonance with its title. Considering the reasons presented above, our analysis will especially focus on the first and last pieces of the cycle and less on the medial one, which makes a welcome and distinct contrast of writing.

Therefore, **the first piece –*Toccata ostinato*** begins with the rhythmic formula which will replace the ostinato, made up of a repeated sound ( $g\#$ <sup>13</sup> of the small octave), and grouped in cells of 2 and 3 sounds. The *toccata* aspect of the first piece is revealed by the dictionary definition of the term, that is, “virtuosity musical work [...] is abounding in successions of notes (of passage) with small values, ample ornamental formulas, complementary figures etc. – and a final, culminating section [...]”<sup>14</sup> Immediately following the formula of 3 and 2 repeated sounds (bringing in from the beginning the dichotomy ternary-binary), reprised then recurrently (2 + 3), the basic modal-chromatic nucleus is presented, later to be enriched with new sounds. This modal-chromatic nucleus puts tension on the sonorous discourse from the beginning, through the contradiction of sounds altered with ascending sharps ( $a\# - d\#$ ), as compared to their descending, natural state ( $a$  natural -  $d$  natural), the sound  $g \#$  of the ostinato remaining unmodified in both cases. At the same time, we also notice the declared contrast, on which the piece is based, between the rhythmic element (ostinato on a repeated sound) and the melodic one (arched modal-chromatic structure, where the melodic outline is in the forefront, to the detriment of the rhythmic one, played in a uniform manner, as fast as possible, like a multiple appoggiatura).

**Ex.1**

**The first sonorous “incision” of the piece, containing the ostinato and the modal-chromatic nucleus:**



The comeback of the ostinato on the repeated sound  $g \#$  will call on an increasing number of sounds, grouped into rhythmic formulas structured ascendingly, based on the prime numbers: 3, 5, 7, 11, while the melodic pattern gains a new sound,  $e \#$  from the lowest octave, which becomes support for a new transposed appearance of the ostinato, made up of 4 and 2 sounds, respectively. This second sonorous “incision” ends with a  $g$  natural, temporarily annulling the modal sonorous centre of the piece (this new sound

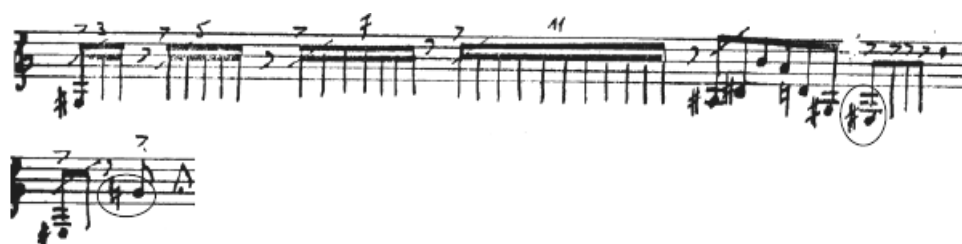
<sup>13</sup> We will name the noted sounds and not their effect in B flat in this analysis.

<sup>14</sup> *Dicționar de termeni muzicali (Dictionary of musical terms)*, Ed. Enciclopedică, București, 2010, p.549, article belonging to Carmen Aurora Betea Mateiescu.

will be reprised in the beginning of the second section and twice in the end, in the penultimate stave, completing the chromatic total, otherwise avoided).

**Ex.2**

The second sonorous “incision” of the piece:



The first section – which we will call strophe A – continues, on the one hand, with the permanent melodic variation of the modal nucleus, also involving large melodic leaps (diminished octave, minor and major ninth) and, on the other, by transferring the ostinato in a vocal effect obtained through the interjection “ha!”. The number of repeated interjections is also structured ascendingly, based on prime numbers: 1, 2, [1, 2], 3, 5.

**Ex.3**

The rhythmico-melodic evolution of the two sonorous paradigms in the end of the first section:



The second section of the piece, B, debuts with the indication *Rubato*, although it is the only moment where clear rhythms and bars are sketched, presented in the same dichotomy binary-ternary. In this

beginning of the second section an open confrontation will develop between  $g \#$  as the main modal centre and its natural version, at the same time with the appearance of new sounds in the general modal chromatic context ( $c - c \# - f \#$ ).

**Ex. 4**

**The debut of the second section, segment noted in bar, but Rubato:**



After only a few bars though, the writing returns to *Libero*, using the sounds from the modal-chromatic context of the first section, this time presented only ascendingly, the arched melodic profile being replaced by an expansive, “rocket”-type one, while the ending of each melodic drawing of such kind is a multiphonic. Effects will take over almost entirely the ending of this second section, the indication *mormorando* being added to the multiphonics. Nevertheless, the punctuation to delimit this section from the next one will use the melodic paradigm again, this time in a descending melodic profile (returning from the acute register to the grave one) of the ostinato on  $g \#$ , comprising 2, 3 and 5 values, respectively. Although it has certain elements in common with the first section (in order to homogenize the form), we will call this section B, due to its beginning, which establishes a contrast with the previous sonorous development, but also due to the ample sonorous “effects”, which give a character of novelty.

The following section will be the section where form is elaborated, consequently we will call it  $A_1$ . The arched melodic profile of the first sonorous incision is submitted to free variation, but also to reversal, alternating, through latent polyphony, with the ostinato transposed on new sounds ( $a \#, c, d \#, c \#$ ), grouped in rhythmic cells with an even number of sounds (2 and 4, respectively). Therefore, the first segment of this section (Quasi giusto) is followed by its reversal (Giusto segment). The ostinato will be embodied by the sound  $g \#$  in the case of the first segment and by  $c \#$  3 in the reversal.

Ex. 5

The *Quasi giusto* segment and its reversal, the *Giusto* segment:

The image displays two staves of musical notation. The top staff is labeled 'Quasi giusto' and 'beat f'. It features a melodic line with several notes circled in black. The bottom staff is labeled 'Giusto' and 'beat f'. It shows a similar melodic line, also with circled notes. A large, light-colored arrow on the left side points from the 'Quasi giusto' staff down to the 'Giusto' staff. A white box with the word 'reversal' and a downward-pointing arrow is positioned between the two staves, indicating the relationship between the two segments.

The following sonorous discourse tends to become more and more fragmented, by the succession of short cells (of only 2-4 sounds), maintaining the suggestion of reversal from one subsegment to the other, all being subordinated to the general latent polyphony:

Ex. 6

Cellular development through the suggestion of reversal:

The image shows two staves of musical notation. The top staff contains a series of short, rhythmic cells, each consisting of 2-4 notes. These cells are circled in black. The bottom staff shows a more continuous melodic line, also with circled notes. The overall texture is fragmented and suggests a process of cellular development through the suggestion of reversal.

The final section of the piece proposes a varied “reprise” of the first section, completing and rounding the form. The “reprise” will be dynamized by resuming the main melodic patterns from the first section, but separated by various new inventions, called on to continue cellular elaboration even in an apparently recapitulative section. We present below the beginning of this

recapitulative section, marking the elements in common with the first section, A (for comparison, see also example 3).

Ex. 7

The debut of recapitulative section  $A_{v1}$ , with the marking of the elements in common with the first section, A:

In fact, the comeback of the first section on a different plane, enriched by the experience of the elaborative sections mentioned above, has the purpose to reach a climax in the end of the section and of the piece, through "rocket"-type melodic patterns aiming to force the upper limit of instrumental range; the piece ends in a similar way with its second section, in a descending melodic pattern sliding until the gravest sound, e #, which, together with the interjection "ha!", represent the final stances of the ostinato.

Ex. 8

The ending of section  $A_{v1}$  and of the piece:



Therefore, we were able to identify four sections of the form: A B (derived contrast) A<sub>1</sub> (elaborative section) and A<sub>v1</sub> (dynamized “reprise” of section A + a climax). Despite the apparent strophic structure of form, we constantly highlighted the compositional perspective based on continuous cellular elaboration, as well as the constant alternation – generative of contrast – between the rhythmic ostinato (repeated sound) and the arched or ascending-descending melodic “patterns” of the piece.

**The second piece, *Improvvisazione***, is in a high contrast with the rigour of construction in the first piece, seeming to allow free rhythmic-melodic imagination.

We notice the same very efficient use of registers, with constant preoccupation not to wear out a certain sonorous register. Therefore, a fairly extended melodic pattern, where a certain “area” of instrumental range is exploited, is followed by a “break” of the register through a large intervallic leap. Intervallic gradation supposes, as in the first piece, an accumulation, as well as an increased frequency of intervallic leaps towards the ending, covering the entire range of the instrument.

The composer’s preferred sonorous syllables are to be found in the predominant intervallic structure. Consequently, the gradual development is organized around intervals of minor third (referring to a post-Enescu filiation by combining with the minor second), augmented fourth (diminished fifth) or augmented fifth. Intervallic leaps that “brake” discourse, projecting it into another sonorous register are the same major sevenths (diminished octaves), augmented octaves (diminished ninths), as well as minor sevenths.

Paradoxically, the second piece makes use of the most precisely noted rhythmic formulas of the entire cycle (revealing thus its older origin as compared to pieces 1 and 3), but in a general *Rubato* context.

We present the beginning of this atmosphere piece, where the rigour of construction rests, in favour of improvisational inspiration:

## Ex. 9

Beginning of the second piece, *Improvvisazione*:

The musical score for the beginning of the second piece, *Improvvisazione*, is presented on three staves. The first staff is marked *Rubato* and *clar. sib*. It begins with a melodic line starting on a middle G, moving through various intervals, marked with *mf* and *cresc*. The second staff continues the melodic development, marked with *mf*, *f*, *pp sub*, and *pp*. The third staff introduces a more complex texture with *mp espr*, *(armonie)*, and *ff*, including triplets and a final flourish marked *(froll.)*.

**The third piece, *Cadenza***<sup>15</sup> was written as homage to the memory of composer Mihai Moldovan, just like *the 4th Symphony, Ritornele* (1987) .

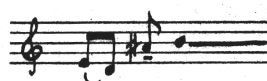
Even though he only lived for 44 years (b. Dej, November 5, 1937 – Bucharest, November 11, 1981), Mihai Moldovan is remembered by his contemporaries and especially his fellow composers as an important and original creator, with an “extraordinary ability for synthesizing between novel compositional techniques [...] and the suggestions of some of the purest archetypes in our spiritual space [...] using melodic (ison), syntactic (heterophony) or tymbral (suggested bucium) archetypes.”<sup>16</sup>



The musical construction of the third piece is based on a generative nucleus, built on intervals of second (major and minor) and augmented fifth (Ex.10), a nucleus to be exploited variationally throughout the entire piece, in various sonorous registers and transpositions. The procedure seems to be characteristic for the composer, as Ciprian Gabriel Pop also notices in the analysis of another work, *Saturnalia* for baritone, clarinet bass and piano: “variation, manifested constantly, is applied to a generative nucleus which will receive various representations.”<sup>17</sup>

#### Ex. 10

**The generative nucleus made up of second (major and, later, minor) and augmented fifth:**



The generative nucleus experiences numerous transpositions on other sounds, involving different variation and permutation procedures on its sounds; to aid the clear recognition of these transpositions, we present them below in the form of an ascending modal synthesis of their sounds:

<sup>15</sup> Also to be found in the version for flute solo.

<sup>16</sup> *Larousee – Dicționar de Mari Muzicieni (Dictionary of Great Musicians)*, Ed. Univers Enciclopedic, București, 2000, p. 321.

<sup>17</sup> *Cornel Țăranu – Valentin Streinu: Musical-Poetic connections*, in: *STUDIA UBB MUSICA*, LVII, 2, 2012, p.107-118.

## Ex. 11

Transpositions of the generative nucleus in ascending synthesis of the sonorous scale type<sup>18</sup>:

The piece contains several *segments*<sup>19</sup> of form, each exploiting another modal-chromatic section, using only certain sounds.

Each segment is separated from the next one through a register “break” (intervallic leap) on a held (repeated, respectively) or sonorously individualized sound through various effects, such as *frullato*, *gorge*, *tril clappe*, etc. Generally, the sound marking the ending of each segment is not part of the modal section of that same segment, anticipating it. Inside each segment, the sounds of the respective modal section are used in a quasi-improvisational manner, where sounds are permuted, but also gradated, accumulating gradually, one at a time, as a natural consequence of continuous cellular-motivic variation. We present, as an example, the first segment of the piece, also relevant for the illustration of quasi-continuous cellular-motivic variation of the generative nucleus:

## Ex. 12

## Segment 1:



Another contrasting, sonorous paradigm opposes the generative nucleus, that is that of intervallic leaps of diminished octave (becoming minor ninth, but also diminished thirteenth), coming to dynamize the sonorous discourse in the end of various segments, but also becoming the main intervallic material for certain contrasting segments of form, such as, for example, the second segment.

<sup>18</sup> In the ascending sonorous synthesis of the generative nucleus, the intervallic leap of augmented fifth becomes augmented fourth.

<sup>19</sup> Visible shorter than the *sections* of form of the first piece of the cycle.

Ex. 13

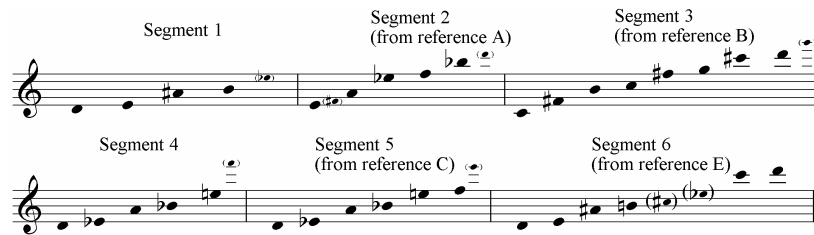
The incipit of segment 2:



The special attention of the composer not to wear out the various sonorous registers can also be noticed in the sonorous elements of each segment of form, which, with the changing of the sounds in the previous segment, usually also operates a change of register. We consider it therefore useful to present these sonorous elements in detail, also essentialized as a sonorous scale:

Ex. 14

The elements of each segment of form:



We notice an extension of range, by covering more and more sounds, in segments 3 and 5 (as well as 6), the final segment synthesizing the previous ones together with the new sonorous event, the glissando on descending semitone carrying the indication *piangendo*. Therefore, the fifth segment becomes the key and the expressive climax of the piece, valorizing, in agreement with the dedication accompanying the piece, the ethos of the lament, overlapped on the generative nucleous.

Ex. 15

Segment 5 entirely, from reference C:



Although segment five actually uses (cf. Ex.14) the sounds of the previous segment, the delimitation between the 2 segments is unequivocal, especially due to the *piangendo* effect, but also to the fact that the debut of segment 5 (see Ex. 15) focuses on the upper half of the modal sonorous scale of the segment, in contrast with the fourth segment, focused on the lower half of the modal scale presented above.

The final segment of the piece, the sixth, is a dynamized “reprise” of the first segment, debuting recurrently and continuing in free variation. The descending glissando (this time at major second), specific for the previous segment, the fifth, appears in the ending of this final segment.

**Ex. 16**

**The sixth segment with the recurring incipit and descending glissando at major second in the end:**

The construction of the piece is therefore based on six sonorous segments exploiting one generative nucleus, submitted to constant elaboration, while form is completed (exactly as in the first piece) by a dynamized “reprise”, debuting recurrently and giving new meaning to the revision (becoming a synthesis) through the integration of the expressive element with the role of lament of the descending glissando.

## Conclusions

The *Three pieces for clarinet solo*, though initially conceived separately, as solitary destinies, are subject to reciprocal inter-conditioning, establishing a perfect balance, based on the contrast between the continuous elaborative flow of the first and last pieces and the improvisational freedom of the middle piece.

This opus was finalized in 1982 and published in 1983, very close to the 3<sup>rd</sup> Symphony, *Signs* (1984), milestone of Cornel Țăranu's compositional work, representing at the same time the beginning of a new creative stage. Following our analytic journey presented above, we consider the following quotation to be extremely relevant in describing the stylistic characteristics of the new creative stage opened by the 3<sup>rd</sup> Symphony, but anticipated by the *Three pieces for clarinet solo*, "a stage which somewhat distances itself from constructivist rigour of previous periods tending towards a *synthetic style, embracing the essential of musical gestures as a balanced progress between reserve and feeling*<sup>20</sup> a play between rigour and freedom reflected throughout the creation of the composer as an organizing principle of the rhythms of increase and decrease, of growth for creation."<sup>21</sup>

**Notice:** "This article (specialty study) is part of the TE research project *The artistic and social impact of the contemporary music of the 21<sup>st</sup> century from the perspective of the relationship composer-performer-audience* (Project director: Lect.univ.dr. Cristian Bence-Muk), project financed by C.N.C.S.I.S. – U.E.F.I.S.C.S.U. with the contract no. 5/5.08.2010."

Translated by Roxana Huza

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<sup>20</sup> Ruxandra Arzoiu, *Dialog cu compozitorul Cornel Țăranu (Dialogue with composer Cornel Țăranu)*, in: *Muzica*, no.2 of 1994, p.154, apud Mirela Mercean-Țârc, *Articularea formei în simfoniile compozitorilor clujeni – compuse în cea de-a doua jumătate a secolului XX (Articulation of forms in the symphonies of Cluj composers – composed during the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century)*, Ed. Universității din Oradea, 2007, p. 127.

<sup>21</sup> Mirela Mercean - Țârc, *Op. cit.*, p. 127.

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