

**FANTASIA E FUGA SULLE PEDALE PER ORGANO
BY DAN VOICULESCU: A SYNTHESIS OF
BAROQUE AND MODERN ELEMENTS***

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SUMMARY. Entered into Dan Voiculescu's chronological catalogue among the last finalized titles (July, 2009), *Fantasia e Fuga sulle pedale per organo* requires a simultaneous analytical reading, both from the perspective of the Baroque and modernity. The first piece of the diptych represents an echo that Dan Voiculescu seems to produce centuries later of the *Prelude and Fugue in G Minor, for Organ, BWV 542*, by Bach. The writing technique of this first section of the diptych evokes, through its aspect of noted improvisation, pieces of 17th-18th century organ literature, assimilated to the category *stylus fantasticus*. *Fuga sulle pedale* leads the analyst to discover a hybrid between the canon of two voices and the pedal fugue, which allows us to pinpoint certain connections with the language of Paul Hindemith's fugues from *Ludus Tonalis*, or with the airy writing style of the German composer's *Three Organ Sonatas*. The stylistic bivalence of the entire piece is also reflected in the type of grammar used in modelling this novel opus; while the author applies a traditional grammar for the form shaping, by designing the discourse according to an early Baroque formula, he resorts to a generative grammar, typical for 20th century music, for the elaboration of the content. The two levels of the text – the Baroque and the modern - overlap in a harmonious fusion and prove that the author rarely departs from an adherence to strict contrapuntal principles.

Keywords: Dan Voiculescu, organ repertoire, *stylus fantasticus*, Baroque, modern, Bach, Hindemith, polyphony, harmony

Bearing on the manuscript the note "July 2009," *Fantasia e Fuga sulle pedale per organo*¹ condenses in its pages the most distinguished musical features of composer Dan Voiculescu's style. It holds, at the same time, a special significance; viewed from the recurrent sequence of the temporal perspective, it becomes the metaphor for the seal of his entire oeuvre, a quintessence of the art of an author constantly situated at the conceptual interface between

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¹ The work was finalised by the author, but it was left in manuscript form. The facsimile was obtained through the kindness of the organ player Erich Türk, who premiered this piece on October 11th, during the "Cluj Musical Autumn" Festival.

Baroque polyphony and modern harmony. Deeply rooted in this fertile synthesis, Dan Voiculescu avoided engaging in gratuitous innovation and ostentatious experimentation, preferring to express his creative individuality within the parameters of a tradition to which he adhered both in his capacity as a composer and as a teacher.

Entered into Dan Voiculescu's chronological catalogue among the last finalized titles, *Fantasia e Fuga sulle pedale per organo* requires a simultaneous analytical reading, both from the perspective of the Baroque and modernity. This bivalent reading attests, though, a striking feature of the author's artistic profile: his inclination towards a polyphonic discourse.

Trained in the composition class of maestro Sigismund Toduță, Dan Voiculescu from the very start based his creative mechanism on a geometrical pattern of musical thinking. Starting from the year 1963, he taught counterpoint at the "Gh. Dima" Music Academy in Cluj, a fact which would add an extra element of rigour to his creative act. His teaching interests therefore keep him in constant touch with the contrapuntal discourse, and the courses written by the musician for his students in the 70s and 80s (*Renaissance Choral Anthology*², *The Baroque Polyphony in the Works of J.S. Bach*³ (volumes I, II), *Palestrina Anthology*⁴, *The Fugue in the Works of J.S. Bach*⁵) only immerse the author deeper into the area of a discipline of the creative act, in which the rule is acknowledged as a constitutive factor of creativity. His music represents the proof that he rarely departs from an adherence to strict contrapuntal principles.

His doctorate, which he defended in Cluj in 1983 under the supervision of the same maestro Sigismund Toduță, amplified, in a concentric manner, Dan Voiculescu's previous conceptual orientation. Approaching a theme that encompassed both his academic and his composition interests in a harmonious synthesis of a high scientific standard, the book *Aspects of 20th-Century Polyphony* served the musician as an ideal means of investigating modernity through the filter of the contrapuntal techniques.

All these theoretical and analytical approaches reverberated in a deterministic queueing throughout the decades; it influenced the author's creative concept, which is acknowledged to be intensely calibrated according to the data of a musical language in which polyphony represented a key element of the musical texture.

The choral works, several orchestral titles, but especially the piano pieces, become convincing arguments that come to support the idea of the author's affinity for the stratified polyphonic discourse. In a selective enumeration,

² The "Gh. Dima" Conservatory Publishers, Cluj, 1972.

³ The "Gh. Dima" Conservatory Publishers, Cluj, 1975 (vol. I), 1995 (vol. II).

⁴ The "Gh. Dima" Conservatory Publishers, Cluj, 1986.

⁵ The "Gh. Dima" Conservatory Publishers, Cluj, 1986, and Editura Muzicală, Bucharest, 2000.

we include some of the pieces from the three volumes of the cycle *Carte fără sfârșit*⁶ (i.e. *Book without end*), and we signal the imitative techniques promoted in numerous choral pieces or in the *Suita din Codex Caioni* (i.e. *Codex Caioni Suite*) for string orchestra. In addition, we point out the entire cycle of pieces for piano *Canonica*⁷, sized up as a quintessence of compositional mastery.

Printed in 2005, this collection marks the pinnacle of applied contrapuntal art, because the author exhausted an important number of the possibilities to operate with the musical substance. He prospected, with mathematical rigour, the hybrid zones where the canon technique with double counterpoint elements, *basso continuo* and *stretto* configuration meet.

Dan Voiculescu included in this cycle 24 pieces which announce through their very titles the selected manner of work and surprise by the restless quest for some ingenious combinations: *Canon cu recurențe mari și mici* (i.e. *Canon with little and large recurrences*), *Canon stretto la sextă* (i.e. *Stretto canon at the sixth*), *Canon cu axă de simetrie – în contrapunct dublu recurent* (i.e. *Canon with a Symmetry Axis – in double recurring counterpoint*), *Canon la cvintă micșorată, pe bas continuu* (i.e. *Canon at the diminished fifth, with ostinato base*), *Canon liber – în ecou, la diferite intervale* (i.e. *Free Canon in Echo Form – at Different Intervals*), *Canon dublu – în oglindă* (i.e. *Double inverted canon*), *Canon cu variațiuni* (i.e. *Canon with Variations*), *Canon polimetric, la decimă* (i.e. *Polymetric Canon at Tenth*), to mention but a few.

The intersection of the Baroque with modernism is also easily detected in the piano *Toccatas*, which were written from 1989, and some of which were premiered by the author himself, at the “Musical Autumn” Festival in Cluj (1989 and 1993 editions). From this angle, that of the synthesis of certain apparently divergent data, his works require a double contextualization, which guides the analyst to correctly decipher the musical text and the author’s complex personality.

As an extension of this line, signalling at the same time the end of this particular road, comes the *Fantasia e Fuga sulle pedale per organo*, the only piece in Dan Voiculescu’s oeuvre conceived for this complex instrument. Beyond shaping the surfaces using the polyphonic interweaving, it is especially the unity of the generative melodic material that draws attention; it unifies in substance the two contrasting pieces of the work by an organic cross-melodic interaction.

⁶ Volume I: *Dintr-o carte veche, Căprița, Citire* (i.e. *From a Book of Old, Little Goat, Reading*). Volume II: *Mică invențiune, Canon, Piesă atonală, Planuri inversate, Canon neîmplinit* (i.e. *A Small Invention, Canon, Atonal Piece, Reversed Plans, Unaccomplished Canon*). Volume III: *Oglinzi* (i.e. *Mirrors*).

⁷ Voiculescu, Dan – *Canonica for piano solo*, Arpeggione Publishers, Cluj, 2005. The entire volume is dedicated to the late pianist Gerda Türk, teacher at the „Sigismund Toduță” Music High School in Cluj. The volume, alongside the piece for string orchestra *Suită din Codex Caioni* (i.e. *Caioni Codex Suite*), have recently been entered into the stock of the Music Faculty Library at Oxford, U.K.

The expressive hallmark of the *Fantasia* is revealed by the denotation which Dan Voiculescu attaches at the beginning of the work: *recitando, poco rubato*. The improvisational character receives the profile of a *doina*⁸-like song, due to the absence of the bar lines and due to some melodic patterns, incorporating augmented seconds and semitones, thus shaping a chromatic modal scale.

Ex. 1



The first piece of the diptych represents an echo that Dan Voiculescu seems to produce centuries later of the *Prelude and Fugue in G Minor, for Organ*, BWV 542, by Bach. The similarity to the cited work goes beyond coincidence: the Cluj-based composer was a connoisseur of Bach's art and had in-depth knowledge of the latter's pieces for this instrument:

Ex. 2

Johann Sebastian Bach
PRAELUDIUM ET FUGA XII.

Praeludium (Fantasia).



Even though in Dan Voiculescu's *Fantasia*, the minor second and augmented second steps, respectively, stand out upon a first audition, the basic interval constituents are in fact the perfect fourth (defined by the number of semitones with the figure 5) and the augmented fourth (6). By generative rules applied by the author to these cells (addition, subtraction, multiplication

⁸ Translator's note: the *doina* is a type of folk tune specific to Romanian folklore, usually expressing feelings of love, grief, and/or yearning.

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or division), interval derivations will be obtained such as the major seventh⁹, expressed in semitones by the figure 11 ($11 = 5 + 6$), the minor seventh - 10 ($10 = 5 + 5$ or 5×2), the minor second - 1 ($1 = 6 - 5$) and the augmented second or the minor third - 3 ($3 = 6 : 2$).

Ex. 3

The morphological component becomes the generative substance of the discourse and engages in the process of creation both the horizontal and the vertical dimension. By the superimposition of the interval cells chosen by the author, dissonant chordal conglomerates result, having the contour of a major seventh or minor seventh, some of them recalling, in a new sound context, Bartók's major-minor chord.

⁹ Another work finalized in July 2009 and kept in manuscript form is indicative of the author's same preference for the major seventh melodic contour: *Flute Sonata No. 10*, in which, however, Dan Voiculescu achieves this interval by combining the minor third and the minor sixth (augmented fifth):

Ex. 4

Chords with symmetrical structure

6-5-5-6

5-5

6-5-5-6

5-5

Major seventh (diminished octave) chords

11 (3-8)

11 (2-6-2)

11 (2-5-4)

asymmetrical structure
5-6

symmetrical structure
5/2-5/2

Bartókian major-minor chord
5-4-3-8

This process of linear and vertical integration of the morphological micro-elements gives birth to some unprecedented symmetric structures. The ones found at a melodic level are built around an axis, which is itself represented by the key intervals of the piece (augmented fourths, perfect fourths, minor seconds):

Ex. 5

5 - 1 - 5

3 - 1 - 1 - 3; 1 - 6 - 1

conjunct structure

1 - 1 - 1 - 5 - 1 - 1 - 1

As generators of a textual coherence phenomenon, the two interval cells do not fall under the same semantic incidence; while consonance (the perfect fourth) may be interpreted as an emblem of the Baroque, dissonance (the augmented fourth) is a symbol of modernity. In its most emphatic form, this dichotomic oscillation is to be found in a condensed aspect in one of the passages of the *Fantasia*. Here, the author explicitly points to the augmented fourth as a pillar for the discourse, by emphasizing it, using the anacrusis model, in combination with the perfect fourth interval:

Ex. 6

6 5 6 5 6 5

The entire discourse surface of the piece, pointing equally towards Baroque and contemporaneity, requires a double perspective of interpretation, meant to emphasize the presence of intratextual relations. Such a moment of synthesis, between the Baroque and modern idiom, is represented by the brief choral insertion, which temporarily interrupts the improvisational flow of the *Fantasia*. It promotes modern harmonies and engages in the discourse both the manual keyboard, as well as the organ's pedalboard:

Ex. 7

solenne

The writing technique of this first section of the diptych evokes, through its aspect of noted improvisation, pieces of 17th-18th century organ literature, assimilated to the category *stylus fantasticus*. In Dan Voiculescu's work, it is expressed by a modal language, enriched chromatically. Above all, the specificity of this style makes itself noticed, mirrored into abrupt harmonic and writing technique changes (*abruptio*), in the structural freedom or the juxtapositions of figurations, as they occur in the literature of certain authors of the Baroque, especially in the music of Johann Jakob Froberger. The *abruptio* moments of the *Fantasia*, which one may equate with a genuine *prélude non mesuré*, are numerous, most of them being achieved in small superficies. These demarcations are underlined by Dan Voiculescu through the shifting from figurative to harmonic writing and vice versa:

Ex. 8

The contrast between the *Fantasia* and the *Fuga sulle pedale* is specified by the author on the score page: the indication *Allegro giusto e risoluto* advertises a firm discourse, underlined here by the presence of the bar lines. The clues

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provided by the text guide the analyst to discover a hybrid between the canon of two voices and the pedal fugue, which allows us to pinpoint certain connections with the language of Paul Hindemith's fugues from *Ludus Tonalis*, or with the airy writing style of the German composer's *Three Organ Sonatas*.

The morphological convergence between the *Fantasia* and the *Fugue* is confirmed by the subject of the latter, in whose outlining the author uses the same interval components as values of textual articulation: the perfect fourth, the augmented fourth and their derivatives, the minor second, the minor third, and the major seventh. These cells make up the fugue subject, a melodic entity that's become a topic of imitation throughout the entire work.

Ex. 9



The extension of the strict imitations allows for the piece to be placed at the intersection between the canon and the fugue prototype, but, at the same time, offers the surprise of a structural subtlety at a macrostructural level. The strategy of the formal outline finds a graphic equivalent in the scheme below:

Ex. 10

1st Voice	T(C)	T(F#)	T(E)	T(Bb)	T(Ab)-----
Imitation distance	8	5	6	5	episode
Interval					
2nd Voice	T(C)	T(B)	T(G)	T(Eb)	-----
Pedalboard	F	G_F#	E	G	Eb F

1st Voice	----- T(C) -----	chord -----	coda =
Imitation distance	8		<i>Fantasia incipit</i>
Interval			
2nd Voice	T(C) -----	chord -----	(<i>Libero, recitando, rubato</i>)
Pedalboard	C -----	T (C, with one inverted interval)	

T = Fugue Subject

It is also worthy to note the manner in which the author resorts to the sound potential of the pedal; world music literature provides a famous example of a Fugue using this harmonic strategy. Placed in the third movement of the *German Requiem* by Brahms, the Fugue is accompanied by a \underline{D} in the low register of the orchestra. The pedal point, in this case, is invested by the composer with a symbolic function, meant to underline the message of the text *Der Gerechten Seelen sind in Gottes Hand und keine Qual rühret sie an*¹⁰:

Ex. 11

Brahms – German Requiem, IIIrd Movement

The image shows a page of a musical score for Brahms' German Requiem, IIIrd Movement. The score is arranged in a standard orchestral format with multiple staves. The instruments listed on the left are: Fl. (Flute), Ob. (Oboe), Kl. in A. (Clarinet in A), Fg. (Bassoon), Hr. in D. (Horn in D), Trp. in D. (Trumpet in D), Pos. u. Tuba (Poson and Tuba), Pk. (Percussion), Violins I and II (Vln. I, Vln. II), Viola (Via.), Soprano (Sopr.), Alto (Alt.), Tenor (Ten.), Bass (Baß.), Violoncello and Double Bass (Vcll. X.B.), and Organ or Choir (Org. c. coro). The score is in 4/4 time and D major. The lyrics for the vocal parts are: 'dich. Der Ge-rech-ten See-len sind in Got-tes Hand, und kei-ne'. The Pedal part (Pos. u. Tuba) and the Cello/Double Bass part (Vcll. X.B.) are highlighted with red boxes. The Pedal part is marked 'mf' and 'Baß-Pos.'. The Cello/Double Bass part is marked 'sempre con tutta la forza' and 'Org. c. coro'.

¹⁰ The souls of the righteous are in the hand of God and there shall no torment touch them. (*Wisdom of Solomon 3:1*).

In Dan Voiculescu's *Fugue*, the pedal is not static, but mobile, led along sections that follow and mark the new thematic entries. Only the last exposition of the fugue subject is entrusted to the pedalboard, and the author operates a single change: by inverting an interval (the minor seventh transformed into a major second), he confers the subject a descending melodic contour¹¹:

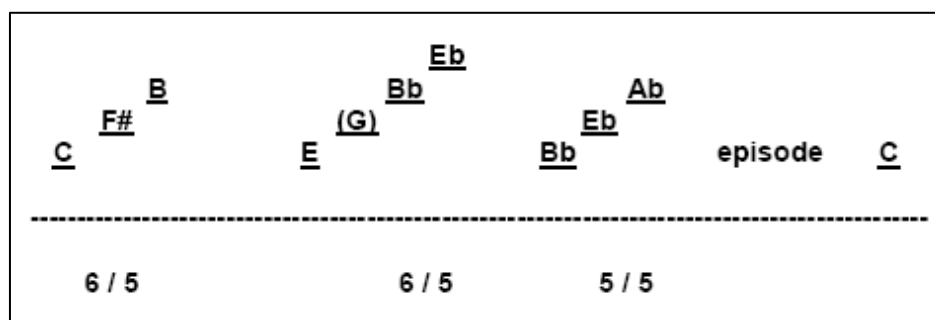
Ex. 12

The Fugue theme (pedalboard)



The strategy of the thematic entries of the *Fuga sulle pedale* also confirms the interval option to be found at a microstructural level, in the melody and harmony, throughout the piece. Thus, one will discover the same association between an augmented fourth – perfect fourth and perfect fourth – perfect fourth as pillars of the macrostructure. The exposition of the *Fugue* places the thematic entries on the notes C – F# – B. Analysing the first middle entry, on E – (G) – Bb – Eb, and the fragment before the final entry, which re-establishes the initial C, one also finds the model of adding on perfect fourths, as they result from the subject entries on Bb – Eb – Ab.

Ex. 13



¹¹ The modification operated by the composer on the contour of the theme is based on a very objective reason: the ambitus of the pedalboard usually only reaches up to the note D1 (one of the exceptions in Romania being the great organ in Sibiu, which reaches up to the note G1). The moulding of the theme on the pedalboard according to this element indicates the fact that Dan Voiculescu had researched the possibilities and technical limitations of the instrument for which he wrote.

By repeating in the *coda* the melodic-harmonic enunciation from the beginning of the *Fantasia*, the author offers the possibility for the diptych to be decrypted as a modern palindrome.

Ex. 14



At the same time, however, the procedure evokes Bach's or Buxtehude's youth preludes, which promoted an early Baroque model; by that time the Prelude was not separated from the Fugue, and at the end, the initial ideas of the piece were repeated. Consequently, the coherence of the work is ensured not only by morphological constraints (the selected interval cells), but also by the manoeuvres operated at the syntactic level. The interaction between the two idioms – the Baroque and the modern – require a reading that activates a double interpretation; the musical flow of this late opus signed by Dan Voiculescu is not univocal, and the two levels of the text overlap in a harmonious fusion.

The stylistic bivalence of the piece is also reflected in the type of grammars used in modeling this novel opus; while the author applies a traditional grammar for the edification of the form, by tailoring the discourse according an early Baroque formula, he resorts to a generative grammar for the elaboration of the content. With this masterpiece, defined by refinement, elegance, meticulousness of construction, which at the same time is indicative

of a high mastery of organ writing, Dan Voiculescu reactivates old patterns and makes a restoration of the past via a modern harmonic language. The bivalence of his discourse converges towards a semantic plenitude which pleads for the complex fusion of discourse levels as a viable solution in the tapestry of contemporary music art.

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