

**THE MICRO-VARIATIONAL TECHNIQUE
IN *MESSIAENESQUE* FOR ORGAN (1993)
BY EDUARD TERÉNYI**

ANAMARIA MĂDĂLINA HOTORAN¹

SUMMARY. In the organ play *Messiaenesques* by E. Terényi, the theme of the micro-variations illustrates a series of dispersed stylistic suggestions of the music of Olivier Messiaen, namely, melodic lines, rhythms, the dynamics, chords and so on, which are used to create a series of analogies, variations or oppositions. The play on words from the title - by separating the word *Messiaenesque* we get *Messiaen + Enescu* - is not an amusement, as it may seem as there are some elements taken from the Enescu's style and this play mirrors a double stylistic thinking. The variations are made through the montage technique, consisting in the selection of a number of paradigmatic microelements, of the cellular/figurative/motive microstructures of the musical language. This micro – entities can be easily identified having the graphic analyse in front: unifying the tones with imaginary lines, we get different geometrical figures.

Keywords: Eduard Terényi, *Messiaenesque*, contemporary organ music, variation form, micro variation

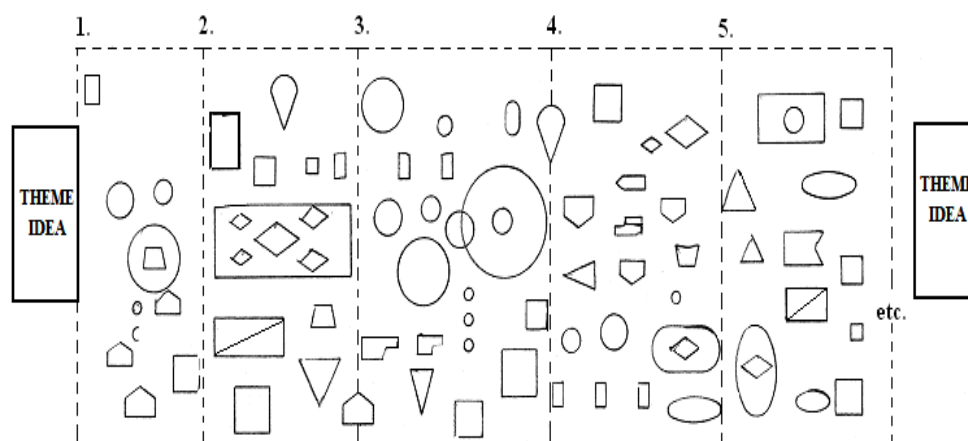
The general composing scheme of the character variations of the organ works *Messiaenesques* (I, II) and *Dialogues mistiques* (I, II, III)² is expressed by the author through a mosaic fantasy – design (ex. 1) where each of the geometrical figures represent a melodic, chorded and rhythmical entity that has an improvisatory character and random possibilities as well.

The drawing reflects the structuralism vision of the pre-selected paradigmatic elements and, in the same time, it is a generalized graphic representation of the variational micro–montage technique. The geometrical symbols are visual analogies to the musical “drawing” of the sonorous micro-units (see the ex. 2 in this respect).

¹ Associate Professor, Emanuel University of Oradea, Musical Pedagogy Department, Nufărului no. 87, 410597, Oradea, Jud. Bihor.
E-mail: hmaddy@yahoo.com; madalina.hotoran@emanuel.ro

² As a matter of fact, the first intention of the composer was that *Dialogues mistiques* to constitute a common block with *Messiaenesque*.

CHARACTER VARIATIONS/ MAIN SCHEME/ MONTAGE TECHNIQUE



A graphic variational fantasy and a micro–montage technique

Therefore, in *Messiaenesque*, a new frame of the character variations is proposed. The variations are made through the montage technique, consisting in the selection of a number of paradigmatic microelements, of the cellular/figurative/motive microstructures of the musical language that have an orientation role in the variation evolution.

The two plays do not have a theme in the traditional sense of the term, but they have a theme – idea or a stylistic theme – bench-mark. The theme – idea appears when, by the imaginary taking of some stylistic elements, of another composer or musical work, the author creates an imaginary benchmark that is not declared inside the musical work. So, the connection between the theme – idea and its variations cannot be seen by the players, musicologists, or the public.

“In this variational process – as the composer shows us – nevertheless we can find a theme within it (see e. g. 1). The process can be closed with a theme. In an extreme form, a theme at the beginning and a theme at the end, but with the condition that both the apparitions of the theme to belong to those previous conceived ideas whose the composer considers the starting point of his musical play. This might be the most extremist variation musical concept both as an architectural form and also regarding the ideate content.”³

³ E. Terényi, February, 2008

If the theme – idea cannot be identified, the filiations of the sonorous entities is suggested by the title of the musical work. In *Messiaenesques* – the theme idea illustrates for the author, a series of dispersed stylistic suggestions of the music of Olivier Messiaen, namely, melodic lines, rhythms, the dynamics, chords and so on, which are used to create a series of analogies, variations or oppositions.

The play on words from the title - by separating the word *Messiaenesque* we get *Messiaen* + *Enescu* - is not an amusement as it may seem as there are some elements taken from the Enescu's style and this play mirrors a double stylistic thinking.

Certain harmonic stylemes and the rhapsodic style of some micro – elements (through the rhythmic liberty that allows agogic micro - variations) they remind us of the Enescian thinking and of that of Messiaen (the *oiseaux* style, the harmonic strata). In addition, the abstract conception of the micro – elements, the lack of fixed themes, and the evolving, organic style of the music is common for all three composers Enescu, Messiaen, Terényi and it is opposed to the Western music configuration in explicit melodic entities that culminated as Pascal Bentoiu remarks, with the rigidity of the Wagnerian musical ideas⁴.

The personage – theme set up in the traditional formal patterns (especially that of the forms on the expositive principle) is replaced by a corpus of sonorous micro – patterns that exist in a perpetual repositioning and reinvention. Also, Pascal Bentoiu referring to the Enescian themes, affirms: "(Enescu) lived very intensely the reality not for a theme or the other but that of some contours that are almost abstract as if they are some geometrical makings that are ideal and also capable to generate unlimited quantities of concrete thematic ways that are inserted to a certain instrumentality, to a register, to one agogic flux, to one rhythm or another and so on (...). For Enescu, the main reality that he started from was situated on a land of the ideal simplified and abstractive forms where, without any doubt were certain melodic obsessions taking place."⁵ As a conclusion, "the line of the composer's evolution knew a progressive departing from the principle of the thematic fixation. The fixation (the steadiness of the ideas as a compositional principle) is moved from the concrete floor to the one of gestures – pattern that are abstract in their generality and the themes get shape differently every time, although they can always have a report to one or the other of the ideal

⁴ "From this point of view, I have a capital belief in the difference between the Romanian composer (Enescu) and that the one that was considered by himself to be his spiritual mentor, i.e. Wagner. The fixedness of the musical ideas reaches with Wagner probably to the highest degree" - Pascal Bentoiu, în *Capodopere enesciene (Enescian Masterpieces)*, Editura Muzicală, București, 1999, pag. 392

⁵ *Ibidem*

gestures (...). The notion that responds better to the effective composition process - especially in the second part of the activity of the artist – there is the one of the melodic profile, a primary reality that has already been burdened by a certain meaning which is not completely determined as it actions, somehow, as a Platonic idea, on the idealistic land (of the abstraction) that produces – in other words – again and again other real variants.”⁶

In the vision of the composer E. Terényi, this type of musical thinking has an archetypal value that comes in the prolongation of the model of the divine creative thinking:

“There is an abstract idea of the leaf, ant, human being and so on. Nevertheless, you will not find in the nature two identical leaves or insects. On the same principle I have my organic musical work to rely on”⁷.

In *Messiaenesque*, the cellular – motive micro-variations stay close to the geometrical abstract scheme that can be recognised through the characteristic rhythms, intervals, and melodic trajectories.

The musical work reveals the interest of the author for the visual and graphic however, to a conceptual level. This time, there is not the aspect but the composition frame that is elucidated through a graphic scheme that relies on the visual analogy between the geometrical figures and the graphic images of the units of the sonorous language. The two plays represent in fact, variations of this graphic fantasia (ex. 1, ex. 2).

In order to explain the composing approach we continue our presentation with the analysing of the first play from the *Messiaenesques* cycle on the manuscript of the author (ex. 2) by applying some geometrical figures that are extracted from the above-presented scheme (ex. 1).

The variational micro – entities can be easily identified having the graphic analyse in front, due to the relationship of the composing elements of the musical discourse. Unifying the tones with imaginary lines, we get different geometrical figures (ex. 2):

- *the isosceles triangle* – is associated with the melodic cell/motif that is characterised through a leap (a generally ascendant one) and the coming back to the basic tone or to one of the tones that is closed to it.
- the next sign, that is similar to the *rectangle* appears in different forms along the musical play we have analysed so far – as it signifies a figure with latent plans which are the superior oscillations above a pedal tone. It is the symbol of a bird signal, an improvisatory micro – unit.

⁶ *Idem*, page 567

⁷ A quotation from the interview given by the composer in February 2008

THE MICRO-VARIATIONAL TECHNIQUE IN *MESSIAENESQUE* FOR ORGAN (1993)...

- *the rectangular triangle* – is synonym in the plan of the musical graphics, to the evolution on two simultaneous plans: the descending or ascending melodic discourse above a prolonged tone;
- *the circle* – describes a cell, which, similar to the geometrical figure comes back through a circular movement in the starting point in small intervals of the second and the third maximum;

Ex. 2

The analyse of *Messiaenesque I* (on the composer's manuscript)

The image displays three sections of a handwritten musical score for organ, labeled A, B, and B1. Section A is titled 'Adagio' with a tempo marking of $\text{♩} = 60-118$. It features a treble and bass staff with various musical notations, including a 'p' dynamic, 'quasi trem.', and 'rep. ad lib.'. Annotations include a large circle around a bass note and a triangle above a treble note. Section B shows a treble staff with a 'legato' marking and a bass staff with a circle around a note. Section B1 is marked 'Più mosso, quasi Andante' and includes a treble staff with a triangle annotation and a bass staff with a circle around a note. The score is annotated with various geometric shapes: circles, triangles, and rectangles, which correspond to the micro-variational techniques described in the text above.

ANAMARIA MĂDĂLINA HOTORAN

The image shows a handwritten musical score for organ, divided into three sections: **Sectio aurea**, **B2**, and **A1**. The score includes various musical notations such as dynamics (p, ff, fff, pp, ppp), articulation (accents, slurs), and performance instructions like "rep 3 volte", "cresc. molto", "Sostenuto", "senza mis.", "Tempo 1.", and "m.s.". The notation is spread across three systems, each with a treble and bass clef staff.

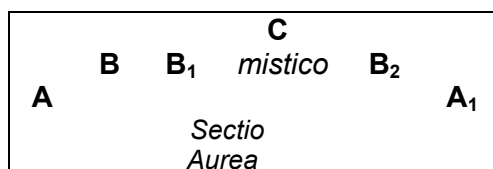
- *the trapezium* – coincides, for example, with the B – D – D – C# cell (by the union of B to C# on the one hand, and the two D on the other hand, we can come across a trapeze - like shape.)
- *the rhombus* – describes the opening and the closing in a fan of two melodic plans.

As opposed to Terényi's other organist musical works, whose ending circumscribes the expression of the sublime, in *Messiaenesques*, the ascending evolution of the musical discourse that seemed to be luminously finalised is interrupted through a pole – anti-pole leap (E b – A natural) which is a metaphor for the broken hope.

On an intonational level, the musical work reflects the tendency of the author towards the essentializing and the abstract, towards the searching for some intense and expressive musical phrases.

Through the opposition of two basic stilemas: the improvisatory arabesque that is similar to a bird's song with the extreme condensation of the chorded strata of a great harmonic intensity, which translates into an extraordinary interiority, and force of the spiritual states of mind, it is shaped, as per assembly, a form of a bridge, one of the architectures that is preferred by E. Terényi due to its symmetrical structure.

The final of the B₁ strophe represents the culminating point which, significantly for the formal and dramaturgic equilibrium, coincides with *the sectio aurea* of the musical play:



(Translated by Maria Cozma)

REFERENCES

- * * * Terényi, Eduard – in: *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, Edited by Stanley Sadie, London, 1992
- * * * *New American Standard Bible*, Thomas Nelson, Publisher, Nashville-Camden-New York, 1977
- Bentoiu, P., *Capodopere enesciene (Enescian Masterpieces)*, Editura Muzicală, București, 1999
- Coca, G., *Ede Terényi. Retrospectiva a cinci decenii de creație (I, II)* (*Ede Terényi. The Retrospective of Five Decades of Creation*), in: *Muzica Review*, Bucharest, no. 3/1997 and 4/1997
- Cosma, V., *Terényi, Eduard* in *Muzicieni români, compozitori și muzicologi (Romanian Musicians, Composers and Musicologist)*, Encyclopaedia, Muzica Publishing House, Bucharest, 1970
- Hotoran, M., *Conceptul variațional în creația pentru orgă a lui Ede Terényi (The variational concept in Ede Terényi's organ music)*, Risoprint Publishing House, Cluj-Napoca, 2008

ANAMARIA MĂDĂLINA HOTORAN

Molnár, T., *Muzica pentru orgă în secolul al XX-lea în România compoziții noi, analize stilistice și interpretative (The Romanian Organ Music in the 20th Century – recent works, analysis of style and interpretation)* Grafycolor Publishing House, Cluj-Napoca, 2005

Sârbu, C., *Ede Terényi – Portrait*; in: *Muzica Review*, Bucharest, no. 9/1985

Terényi, E., *The Harmony of the Modern Music (1900-1950)*, Grafycolor Publishing House, Cluj-Napoca, 2006