

MEDITATIONS FOR CLARINET SOLO BY VALENTIN TIMARU - MUSICAL ANALYSIS - *

CRISTIAN BENCE-MUK**

SUMMARY. The work *Meditations* (for solo clarinet in A), by Valentin Timaru, is dedicated to Ioan Goilă and was composed in 1997. At the basis of the sonorous discourse elaboration there is a two measures “thematic nucleus”, elaborated in a folkloristic spirit; and the nucleus is preceded by an extended introduction of “thematic research”. The thematic segment produces a series of strict variations (4) and, mostly, free ones that are true sonorous “meditations”. They precede and follow, as well, the coming out of the generating nucleus. The modal-chromatic discourse imposes that the intonation reference point be the augmented second, and, as well, the intervallic conflict between the augmented fourth and the perfect fourth (and, its complementary, the perfect fifth). The “thematic” segment that generated them nourishes all these. An accurate analysis may reveal the omnipresence of intervallic thematic elements, as well as the “means’ savings” that are the basis of the elaboration of this musical work that became a reference point of the solo clarinet concert repertory.

Keywords: clarinet, analysis, creation, contemporary, thematic, folkloric, meditation, variation.

The composer and musicologist Valentin Timaru was born in Sibiu October 16th, 1940, and he was awarded his Bachelor of Arts degree in Music education (Conservatory in Cluj-Napoca – 1964) and in Musical composition (Conservatory in Cluj-Napoca – 1972), finishing his artistic education under the guidance of two famous, national and international, personalities in the field of composition. They are, Anatol Vieru (between 1964 and 1968, Bucharest) and Sigismund Toduță (between 1970 and 1972, Cluj-Napoca). He was a music teacher at the Grammar School and at the High School in Buftea (1964-1968), a music inspector at the Cultural Committee of the Cluj County (1968-1970), a teaching assistant (1970-1976), a lecturer (1976-1990) and a full professor of Musical analysis (since 1990) at the “Gheorghe Dima” Conservatory (now Academy) of Music in Cluj-Napoca. In 1982, the Conservatory in Cluj-Napoca awarded him the title of Doctor of Music.

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** *The Gheorghe Dima Music Academy of Cluj-Napoca, 25th Ion I.C. Brătianu Street, Cluj-Napoca, 400079, PhD lecturer, cristi_bence@yahoo.com.*

His vast musical creation encompasses almost all musical genres, reuniting operas (*Lorelei* -1990 and the mono opera *Youth Without Ageing* – 2006, both on a libretto by Mariana Vartig), the ballet *Ciuleandra* (1999), 5 symphonies, 4 cantatas, 3 oratorios (*Songs of Bad Weather* - 1979, *On the Footsteps of the Miorita* - 1984 and *The Solemn Liturgy* - 1999), Violin concerto (1976), Double concert for double bass and percussion (1980), *Homage to Enescu* for violin solo and string orchestra (1980), *Variations on a Folk Song* for string orchestra (1980), *Ballad* for viola and orchestra (2006), the Concert for viola and orchestra (2009), 2 string Quartets, chamber music, songs for voice and piano and choral works.

As an acknowledgement of his intense and inspired creative activity, he was awarded numerous prizes: Prizes of the Composers' Union (in 1986, 1993, 1995, 2003 and 2006), Prize of the Romanian Academy (1993), Order of the Cultural Merit as a knight (2004), the title of Professor emeritus of the Transylvania University in Braşov (1993) and Doctor Honoris Causa of the University in Oradea (2005).

The musicologist Valentin Timaru has acted with the same fervour and prominence as the composer Valentin Timaru, publishing volumes (especially on musical forms and analysis, but also treatises of orchestration or essays), which soon became hallmark works in the musical field: *Musical Morphology and Structure* (1991), *Enescu's Symphonise* (1992), *The Strophic Principle* (1993), *Compendium of Musical Forms and Analyses* (1997), *The Musical Ensemble and the Art of Writing for Its Various Aspects* (1999), *Our Music into Being* (2001), *Dictionary of Notions and Terms* (1st edition - 2002, 2nd edition – 2004), *Musical Analysis between the Awareness of Genre and the Awareness of Form* (2003).

Referring to his position, from a stylistic point of view, in the complex scenery of contemporary Romanian musical composition, we find the following lines, written by Doru Popovici in *Homage to Valentin Timaru* on the cover of the anniversary DVD, *Valentin Timaru – 70 years*, extremely suggestive: "In his compositional conception there was and is a <<postmodernism>> [...] In other words, Valentin Timaru combined [...] traditional structures with those of the Avant-garde. His music doesn't pay tribute to any musical current from the tragic 20th century. It is very original, just like the compositions of other Transylvanian composers, like Sigismund Toduță or Cornel Țăranu."

The work *Meditations* for clarinet solo in A was written in 1997 and is dedicated to the well-known maestro of the clarinet, the interpreter and professor Ioan Goilă.

The work has only one part and is based on a thematic segment created in a folk manner, emanating a strong "mioritic"¹ atmosphere. The thematic

¹ In this respect, we find extremely significant the following quotation from the first pages of *Spațiul mioritic (The Mioritic space)* by Lucian Blaga (Ed. Humanitas, 1994): "What single occurrence determines the fact that a certain space can resonate in a song? Apparently there can only be one answer: a certain space vibrates in a song, as this space exists somewhere, in a certain form, even in the profound layers of the song."

segment is made up of 2 related musical motives: α and α_1 , strongly modal motives, circumscribing a chromatic tetra chord (containing an augmented second) with a fourth for support (as anterior appoggiatura), in the case of motive α , and a minor trichord, also with a fourth for support (but as a posterior appoggiatura and noted as a real sound), in the case of motive α_1 :

Ex. 1²



The subsequent musical analysis of the author (measures 24-25) projects the intervallic conflict the work is based upon, a conflict between augmented fourth (or diminished fifth) and perfect fourth (the complementary interval of perfect fifth, respectively), intervals rising from the 2 folklore inspired motives mentioned above, the augmented fourth marking the maximum intervallic “opening” of motive α , while the perfect fourth balances from a gravitational point of view the modal structure of motive α_1 .

But the *Meditations* for clarinet solo don't begin, as we would expect them to, by presenting the *subject of the meditations*; they start with an *Introduction* (Adagio), a section of thematic search and, at the same time, of *meditations* on the yet to be shown idea, on the *uncreated*, which crystallizes and shapes itself as the creative musical thinking persists more and more on it.

Therefore, we will call *meditations* (and we will number them) all the musical incisions preparing the appearance and exposition of the thematic segment.

Meditation 1 (measures 1-5) begins with an ascending chromatic trichord (contains an augmented second, thus anticipating the chromatic tetra chord in motive α), which reunites a minor second and an augmented second (enharmonic with a minor third), bringing by this modal melodic formula an homage to the greatest Romanian musician of all times, whose work is marked by the *descending* melodic cell of minor second and minor third, cell which is also his signature (on the sounds $E - E_b - C$ in alphabetic transcription - E (n) Es C(u)). After the ascending exposition of the trichord (on $d-e \text{ flat}-f\#$ ³), this also evolves descending, gaining, by means of an augmented fourth (noted in the score as diminished fifth), another sound ($g\#$), sound which fulfils the modal structure of the first acoustic incision.

² The musical examples are from the score, consequently are transposed in A.

³ Real sounds

Ex. 2



Meditation 1 continues with the intervallic confrontation perfect fourth-augmented fourth, welding it, at the same time, to the other interval characteristic for this work, that is augmented second; the beginning of the work is bordered, in the end of *meditation 1*, by a tetra chord on *b*, proposing a symmetric intervallic structure (minor second – major second – minor second).

Ex. 3



The characteristic element of the augmented second will mark the beginning of each *meditation* (as a return to the starting point and the choice of a new *melodic route*, in order to explore all the possibilities offered by this *acoustic scenery*), limiting them, at the same time, from one another.

Thus, *meditation 2* (measures 6-7) reprises (on *b1*) the beginning of *meditation 1*, this time enriched with one sound (the fifth sound of the modal structure - *g*, in the minor octave).

Meditation 3 (measures 7-9), after exposing the basic melodic cell (minor second and major second) proposes a first quasi improvisational moment of figurative evolution, by symmetric ascending arpeggios (minor thirds – major seconds, respectively – juxtaposed), coming from the structure of the diminished chord with diminished seventh, moment which ends with a much more abrupt melodic descent, on the descending melodic structure of the augmented fourth (diminished fifth).

Meditation 4 (measures: 10 with anacrusis – 11) reprises the ending of the preceding *meditation* (descending augmented fourths/diminished fifths), like an anacrusis for the reiteration of the melodic route bordered by the characteristic augmented second, route which, this time, becomes a chromatic tetra chord (just like in the “unborn” motive α , but, of course, on other sounds).

Ex. 4



In measure 11, a symmetric intervallic structure (two minor seconds separated by the imponderable abyss of an augmented fourth) circumscribes a perfect fifth, short moment of weak acoustic balance.

Ex. 5



Meditation 5 represents a variation of *meditation 1*, reprising on other sounds and rhythmically varied, all the elements from the beginning: the melodic cell of minor second and augmented second (measure 12), with augmented fourth (diminished fifth) in measure 13, the confrontation perfect fourth – augmented fourth (in measure 13) and the symmetric tetra chord (measure 14).

Ex. 6



Meditation 6 (measures 15-16) takes the previous tetra chord and transforms it in an anacrusis for the characteristic cell of minor second and augmented second, while the end of this new acoustic route collapses the discourse in the grave register, by the same abrupt descent from augmented fourth to augmented fourth (diminished fifth), just as in the end of *meditation 3*, but the brevity of *meditation 6* recommends it more as possible variation of *meditation 2*.

Meditation 7 (measures 17-19) represents a variation of *meditation 3*, contains the cell of minor second and augmented second and the symmetric arpeggios of the diminished chord with diminished seventh, but welded with a diminished chord with minor seventh (occasion to “fulfil” the augmented fourth/diminished fifth in a perfect fifth), as well as the abrupt descent by augmented fourths (diminished fifths).

Ex. 7



Meditation 8 (measures 20-21) is a variation of *meditation 4*, by the same anacrusis with descending fourth (anacrusis which prepare the characteristic cell, but extended to a tetra chord), but by the descending finale, suggesting a descending perfect fifth, “foreshadowed” by posterior long appoggiaturas, noted as real sounds.

Ex. 8



We mention that the augmented second ($f-g\#$) is anticipated, during this final moment before the explicit exposition of motives α and α_1 , even by the anacrusis with descending fourths.

We have reached the point of “going back into the future”, to the exposition of the folkloric material, in our analysis (measures 22-23 – *più mosso quasi Allegro molto*), as well as to the projection, by means of a figurative, quasi-improvisational comment of the author, to the open conflict between the augmented fourth/diminished fifth (measure 24 – *meno mosso*) and the perfect fourth/perfect fifth (measure 25), elements already discussed and presented even in the beginning of the analysis.

The break (measure 26) separates the first ample section of form – *Introduction* (thematic search as well as the first section of *meditations*) and the *thematic exposition* – from the rest of the work.

Starting with the measure 27 (*Allegro molto*) we will witness a long series of strict variations (traditional from the point of view of the clarity of variation procedures and maintaining the basic structural reference – 2 measures) of motives α and α_1 . Thus, *variations 1* (measures 27-28), 2 (measures 29-30), 3 (measures 31-32) and 4 (measures 33-34) will offer us, in contrast with the first section of form (that is measures 1-21), the clear and constant metric pulsation of the 4/4 measure, representing the palpable, alive, “embodied” objectivity of the new born thematic segment, segment passed from the “uncreated” of the first section to the concrete reality of acoustic life, with folkloric, Romanian resonance.

Ex. 9

22 [più mosso quasi Allegro molto]

Allegro molto

27 Var.1
mp giocoso

29 Var.2

31 Var.3

33 Var.4

The final variation, by including the descending arpeggio of diminished chord with diminished seventh, as well as by differently reprising measure 25 (from the end of the post-thematic musical comment), prepares a new section of free variations (*meditations*), *variation 4* representing thus a kind of melodic liberation step by step from the rigor of the thematic reference of folkloric resonance.

Therefore, in measure 35, *meditation 9* (measures 35-37) begins, meditation which, starting from an oscillation on the superior minor second, evolves into a Phrygian tetra chord and by the mobile step (*g-g#*) the specific ethos of the augmented second is being kept; the ending of this meditation also reveals a hexachordal characteristic (measure 37), starting from the same oscillation of minor second.

Meditation 10 represents a transposition, but also a condensation (in one measure – 38) of the preceding meditation, while *Meditation 11*, retaining the same elements of melodic oscillation on the superior minor second (in semiquavers), as well as the characteristic augmented second, dilates again the musical discourse along three measures (39-41).

Meditation 12 proposes as modal core two Phrygian tetra chords (in a continuous ascending and descending “slide”), separated by the augmented second. This short figurative acoustic incision will be reiterated three times (exact transpositions), from major third into ascending major third, thus circumscribing an augmented tritone (to be intensely debated as follows). Considering the identical musical content of the three reprises of *meditation 12*, we will note the four segments (acoustic incision and its three transpositions) with *12a*, *12b*, *12c* and *12d* (reuniting them in a more ample segment: *Meditation 12* – measures 42-47).

In the end of this new sector of *meditations* we notice a first *figurative culmination*, which values instrumental agility by descending arpeggios of diminished chords with diminished seventh (which, by their juxtaposed minor thirds, create the sensation of a contraction and, implicitly, of a gravitational fall) and ascending arpeggios of augmented tritones (which, by their juxtaposed major thirds, create the sensation of imponderability characteristic to hexatony, propelling the acoustic discourse into the acute register). The descending arpeggios begin on *b* 2 (the first two), on *c#* 2 respectively (the last two), while the ascending arpeggios start on the sounds *e*, *f* and *d* in the minor octave, respectively. The conflict between the diminished fifth (within the descending arpeggios) and the augmented fifth (characteristic to the augmented tritones ascending arpeggiated) ends (for the moment) with the balance given by the perfect fifth (and the complementary interval of perfect fourth), in the final ascending arpeggio, which ends the *first figurative culmination* in measures 55-56. Considering that, just like in *Meditation 12* (*12a*, *12b*, *12c*, *12d*) the descending and ascending arpeggios are reprised three times (even if different from the rhythmic point of view and, in the end, different also from the melodic point of view), we will note this moment following the same logic, that is segments *13a* (measures 48-49), *13b* (measures 50-51), *13c* (measures 52-53), *13d* (measures 54-56), respectively, all making up the actual *figurative culmination 1* (or an ample *meditation 13* – measures 48-56).

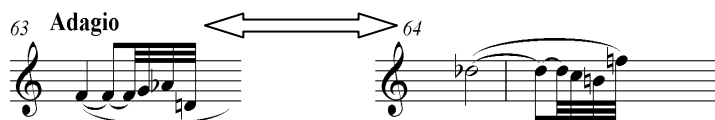
After a break of one beat and a half (also separating the two subsections of form), the variations of motives α and α_1 are reprised, by *variation 5* (measures 57-58 – an almost identical reprise of the initial thematic segment, with few alterations only in the second measure of the variation) and then by *variation 6*⁴ (measures 59-62), which by its melodic (pent-chorded profiles are gained and by the connection of two tetra chords – one minor and one chromatic, a hepta-chorded structure is obtained) and structural (4 measures instead of 2) variation marks the end of the variations closely connected with the thematic reference.

Ex. 10



A new acoustic *meditation* (number 14), in *Adagio* (measures 63-65), actually makes the transition to the second *figurative culmination* (measures 66/67-77), using the already known acoustic “bricks”: augmented second, perfect fourth in opposition with augmented fourth and minor trichord. *Meditation 14* reunites, in a unifying picture, two sub segments: measures 63-64, on the one side and measure 65 with anacrusis on the other; the two sub segments begin with an almost identical rhythmic formula and are inversed from the melodic point of view.

Ex. 11



Although there are also two augmented seconds, which would plead for a division into two *meditations*, the unifying melodic picture (the absence of a separation or of a clear break between the two segments) prevents from choosing this analytic option. Actually, this *Adagio* moment reprises not only the tempo, but also the atmosphere of the slow *Introduction* thus introducing within the *Allegro* sections a “reminder” of the thematic segment “in statu nascendi”, unifying, on a virtual time line, the past with the present of the thematic motives, that is, what was *before* with what was *after* their exposition.

Measure 66, by reprising the augmented ascending tritone arpeggiated (*figurative culmination 2 – poco più mosso [quasi Allegro ma non troppo]*), propelling, at the same time, the acoustic discourse in the high range.

⁴ Even if we notice a „widening” of the initial thematic reference (4 measures instead of 2), which prevents us to consider it a strict variation, still, because of the melodic relation between measures 59 and 61, on the one side and thematic motives α and α_1 , on the other, we will continue to call this segment *variation* (and not *meditation*), noticing that it belongs to the group of variations tightly connected to the thematic segment.

Figurative culmination 2, just as *Meditation 12* (with its segments 12a, 12b, 12c, 12d), which prepare *figurative culmination 1*, proposes an ascending and descending “slide” of trichords (minor this time), at an interval of ascending augmented second (minor third), managing by the three transpositions to circumscribe the diminished chord with diminished seventh (by *f2 – g#2 – b2 – d3* – measures 67-69). *Figurative culmination 2*, continues the musical discourse of *figurative culmination 1*, alternating the same symmetric chords of minor thirds (major, respectively), juxtaposed (diminished chords with descending diminished seventh, ascending augmented tritone, respectively), the perfect fifth, with its balance and mediation, solving the tension between the diminished and the augmented fifth (together with the complementary interval of augmented fourth – measures: 75 with anacrusis – 77 beat1). This ample musical moment could be *meditation 15*, with several sub segments: 15a (measures 67-68), 15b (measures 69-71) and 15c (measures 72-77 beat 1).

As the triumph and balance of the perfect fifth is established, the work ends with a short *epilogue* (*Meditation 16* – measures 77-80), which brings into our ears the vibration, like an echo, of the characteristic augmented second, “settled” in the context of the trichord and then again, by means of the final sound – *d* in the minor octave (the longest rhythmic value of the piece) – within the harmonic tetra chord (this time symmetrically organized: minor Phrygian second – augmented second – minor second on the sounds *d-e flat-#-g*).

Consequently, the form schema of this work, only apparently improvisational, would look like this:

Table 1

The Scheme of the Form

Slow introduction – (Adagio)

M1⁵	M2	M3	M4	M5 (M1 _{var.})	M6 (possibly M2 _{var.})	M7 (M3 _{var.})	M8 (M4 _{var.})
1-5	6-7	7-9	10-11	12-14	15-16	17-19	20-21

Thematic segment with strict variations – (più mosso quasi Allegro molto-meno mosso-Allegro molto)

Thematic segment	<i>figurative</i>	P.G.	Var.1	Var.2	Var.3	Var.4
α and α1	<i>comment</i>					
22	23	24-25	26	27-28	29-30	31-32
			33-34			

Medial section – Free variations with interpolated strict variations⁶

M9	M10	M11	M12(12a,b,c,d)	Figurative culmination1	Var.5	Var.6
35-37	38	39-41	42-47	(M13-13a,b,c,d)	48-56	57-58
						59-62

⁵ Meditation 1

⁶ Tightly connected to the thematic reference, without actually being a strict variation (see variation 6).

Interpolatin Introduction (Adagio), free variations and finale (poco più mosso [quasi Allegro ma non troppo])

M14 (Introduction-Adagio)	Figurative culmination 22	Epilogue
	(M15-15a,b,c)	(M16)
63-65	66/67-77	77-80

As we have already mentioned in this analysis, the present work only apparently can be considered improvisational, in reality being very attentively and consistently constructed, with “parsimony of means” (everything emerging from the few basic cells), with mastery and inspiration. *Meditations* for clarinet solo in A represents, from our perspective, a score which, without containing the “defiance” of the Avant-garde, introduces a substantial, vernacular modal-chromatic discourse, offering an alternative of contemporary acoustic language and opposing (as in most of Valentin Timaru’s works, possibly also the composer’s aesthetic credo) the dissolution of musical themes and substance in apparently spectacular acoustic gestures and effects otherwise exterior to musical substance. The work values both the expressivity and the agility of the instrument while focusing on content, these aspects being probably the main reasons for which the work was immediately included in the concert repertoire of clarinet players, more recently even becoming one of the Romanian *choice* compositions in the first stage, second trial of the “Gheorghe Dima” Intenational Competition for clarinet and flute solo, taking place in Cluj-Napoca in February 2011.

(Translated by Roxana Huza)

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