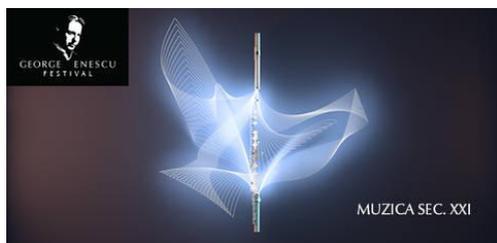


FESTIVALUL INTERNAȚIONAL GEORGE ENESCU

Forumul Internațional al Compozitorilor

Organizat pentru prima dată în cadrul seriei <Muzica Secolului XXI> a Festivalului Internațional „George Enescu”, *Forumul Internațional al Compozitorilor* coordonat de



compozitorul și profesorul universitar Dan Dediu, este o inițiativă mai mult decât laudabilă, care își propune să reunească muzicieni renumiți, compozitori de elită, tineri compozitori

precum și publicul larg interesat de actualitatea muzicală în spațiul cultural internațional.

Personalități importante ale vieții muzicale românești și internaționale și-au împărtășit crezul muzical, ideile artistice și experiențele în cadrul a 6 evenimente majore cuprinzând conferințe, dezbateri și mese rotunde: Adrian Iorgulescu, Doina Rotaru, Cornel Țăranu, Octavian Nemescu, Uliu Vlad, George Balint, Adrian Pop, Livia Teodorescu-Ciocănea, Mihaela Vosganian, James Macmillan, Magnus Lindberg, Iain Bell, Nimrod Borenstein, Zygmunt Krauze, Dmitry Sitkovetsky, Sven Helbig, Rolf Martinsson, Thomas Larcher, Thierry Huillet, Tim Benjamin, Graham Fitkin, Martin Grütter, Elliot Goldenthal, Detlev Glanert, Ari Ben-Shabetai, Elmar Lampson.

În numerele 7 și 8 ale Revistei Muzica, vom publica texte prezentate în conferințele *Ars Poetica* ale *FIC* și articole referitoare la mesele rotunde și la tema acestora: *Echilibru și Exces în compoziția muzicală*.

***The “George Enescu” International Festival
The Composers’ International Forum***

**Annotations on the
Contemporary Symphony**

Adrian Iorgulescu



For a while I have been preoccupied – from the composer’s perspective – with the (sometimes polemic) academic debates on the trajectories and evolutions in the area of orchestral music. I would like to make the initial and necessary specification that I am making a clear distinction between symphonic works and the symphony as a well defined musical species.

The stances assumed in these debates (empirical or sophisticated, supported by arguments or not) primarily focus on the analysis of the symphony, which is justifiable if we reflect on its phenomenological, conceptual, and stylistic impact, as well as on the value that it has proved and imposed on the evolution of the art of sounds. I have noticed, for instance, opinions that postulate – from the perspective of the former avant-garde – the “death” of the symphony today, on the grounds that it represents an outdated matrix of thought, “umbilically” connected to the parameters of a discourse and of an ethos of classical, romantic, post-romantic or neoclassical filiation.

Without going into details, it is certain that the above-mentioned thesis stems from a portfolio of statements pertaining especially to the 6th-8th decades of the past century, statements that constantly aimed to reform the fundamentals of the compositional system radically. This massive “makeover”, of exaggerated proportions and consequences at times, focused both on the lexical, morphological, and syntactic components, but it also indirectly affected the insertion into the area of genres, species, and constructive (deconstructive) particularities.

One specification: I think the elements of infra- and micro- structure do not categorically influence the global physiognomy of an opus, and all the less so its tonus, its potential of sensibility, such as the elements derived from strategies of empathic transfer. The *connotative substance*, the principles of creation, the techniques of architectural construction descend from a *superior area of the creator*; they are the consequences of a fusion that occurs at the level of the composer’s demiurgic personality between the specificity of the adopted pattern and the fervour of sensibility invested in the formative endeavour. The finality of these actions is projected directly against the musical content, that is, against the emotion that carries meaning and produces significance.

The symphonic discourse – marked by clashes, by epic and rhetorical valences, and by monumental stresses – implies resorting to the appropriate ways of configuration and expression. It imposes a particular kind of ideation, the identification of the appropriate material, the use of adequate models, methods and procedures, a vast progression of sound in time suitable for multiple guises and hypostases. Dramaturgy, the flux of energy, plasticity, gestures, coherence over wide areas, the logic of connecting the parts to each other and to the whole, the dialectics of articulation (planes and details, similarities and contrasts, additions and breaches, overlaps and juxtapositions, repetitions and variations), all converge to convey a coherent, complex, relevant and reverberant intellectual and affective message. This message results without mediation from the very prerequisites and

characteristics of the species, as they have been designed, adopted and distilled over the years.

Going back to the diachronic frame of the matter, we shall point out that the “reinvigoration” of the symphony today is incontestably due to the prominent change of references, attitudes and views thanks to the adherence of many contemporary authors to the stylistic and axiological criteria of the postmodern trend. If the avant-garde relied on denying tradition and continuity, postmodernism brings into bold relief the commonalities with the near or remote past, making various syntheses between the previously conquered territories and the new tendencies of Euterpe’s realm. One of the purposes of this orientation – and not at all a marginal one – is to bring the audience into the concert hall, to (re)connect it to the recent musical phenomenon, by “wiring” it to the source of consecrated genres, after a period of long reticence towards the creations of sectarian modernism.

At the end of these short general observations, I remark that in fact, technological mutations can be incorporated and adopted within the exigencies of the symphony regardless of the nature of the means or of the logos that are employed (up to a point, of course). Likewise, the present fate of the symphony is enhanced by the existence of certain favourable circumstantial factors – mostly of aesthetic origin –, of the social and cultural practices, of the usual communicational overlaps.

Now I shall proceed with several ideas deduced from my own experience. Over a period of approximately thirty years I have written five symphonies. They define a creed, an evolution and a cumulation of priorities that I by no means consider exemplary. I am simply evoking them as personal, tangential, perhaps useful landmarks and contributions to the matter in hand. Before giving an extremely cursory description of the “pattern” of each of them, I wish to firmly confess my constant preoccupation with searching for other origins and other issues regarding any given opus, with discovering alternative artisanal approaches that should be, it goes without saying, confluent with the exigencies of the species.

1. Symphony no. 1 – “Nebănuitele trepte” [“The Unsuspected Steps”] is formed of a whole “sliced” into five dynamic accumulative sections, separated by “breaks”, and a quasi-static section, all of them interrelated. Based on a modal vein, the material uses as primary element several melodic and rhythmical signals that gradually start to become articulated – each in itself and by contamination with the others. The stratification of these formulas in time and space, in micro- and macro- structures, engenders music that is both repetitive and evolutive, gradually outlined according to the principle of the golden ratio.

2. Symphony no 2 is formed of four dissimilar sections, with numerous changes of course, flux, density, tempo and orchestral arrangement, “welded” to each other in a unitary and uninterrupted narrative. The mostly heterophonic writing introduces various combinations of textures, stratifications and splits between the blocks of sound, as well as symmetries derived from inversions and recurrences on wide surfaces. All in all, the construction entwines and combines the interplay of contrasts, the fragmentation of the discourse, with its obvious evolutive metamorphosis and recalibration.

3. Tackled in the year of J. S. Bach’s tricentenary, **Symphony no. 3 for organ and women’s chorus** was meant as a homage brought to European scholarly music, making an overview of the most important conquests of human thought and praxis over the past three centuries; obviously, a subjective and selective overview. I have cumulated in this symphony the fusion between polyphony and homophony characteristic of the Baroque, classic transformationalism, progressive continuity and discontinuity, the defining culminations of Romanticism, the rudimentary motorism of Neoclassic origin (Bartók, Stravinsky), as well as a wide range of means borrowed from a more recent portfolio. They all fuse into a personal unitary discourse of obvious postmodern descent.

Concretely, these methods are not taken over as such. This is an endeavour to rediscover orientations that are

perceptible in the music of the past three centuries. It is a conceptual endeavour; it implies getting over polystylism in favour of metastylism. The Bachian choral, partially quoted at the beginning of the symphony, reappears at the climax of part III, contextually suggesting a symbolic filiation, not a manneristic one.

The work is formed of three parts, each with its own ethos, technical means and tempo. These three parts support and enhance each other, configuring a wide dramaturgic arch together. The fluxes of energy, emotion and information are mediated and directed within part II; the latter has a monolithic, accumulative structure, which explodes in an enormous cluster.

4. Symphony no. 4 “Copilandria” [“Childhoodland”] for children’s chorus and orchestra uses five key-motifs extracted from the local children’s folklore. These motifs, entwined, developed, concentrated and modified, ensure the whole intonational and rhythmic arsenal of the work.

Grosso modo, the edifice is divided into two ample parts connected through a transition. They are flanked by an introductory section and a conclusive one respectively. In their turn, they are preceded and succeeded by a quasi-similar “cover”.

5. Formed of three relatively delimited parts, with a selective recapitulative synthesis at the end, **Symphony no. 5** is played without pause and forms a large and dense musical block. It does not contain notable inner breaches; neither does it evince intense expositive, dynamic, agogical, orchestral or expressive contrasts. My (explicitly assumed) configurative aim was to “sculpt” a permanently perceptible monolith of sound, from modified angles and perspectives, which, in the end, implodes and disperses. Concretely, the sonic construct permanently oscillates between the transformational and the non-transformational, between the repetitive and the non-repetitive, between the continuous and the discontinuous, between the simple and the complex, between the predictable and the unpredictable.

Going back to the matter in hand now, I would like to stress the fact that projection and execution impose on any opus, (and on the symphony especially), complex and always singular manoeuvres that require the composer to brace and grant all his creative faculties and availabilities. Not daring to go into the details of the intimate mechanics of an endeavour that is as personalised as it is subtle and difficult to probe, I shall content myself with pointing out several concrete courses of action that can be detected on the conception–deliberation–processing axis. I have named and categorised them as follows:

a) The **incipit** is the virtual model, the original projection whence the lines of force of a potential structure emanate, start and can be traced. The incipit overlaps, as the case may be, with the generating idea, with a line of morphological and genetic action, revealing a profoundly mobilising, propelling character, whether it involves the content, the form, or both. It is the quasi-spontaneous moment when, through revelation, the author pencils his premises, prefigures a trajectory, a horizon *in nuce* regarding his product. I identify it with an inspirational, imaginative kernel whose role is anticipatory and projective. Not seldom does this fleeting illumination remain immaterial, ineffective; and this because its place is rather in the realm of abstraction, rather than in that of the concrete, of the level of action proper. However it might emerge – as a motif, a theme, a rhythmic, melodic, or timbre combination, or perhaps as an intonational or configurative scheme, as a trajectory of sonorities in time –, the incipit constitutes a vaguely contoured, indefinite intuitive and formative start, replete however with germinating sap.

b) The **sources** refer especially to the particularity of the material used, to its intrinsic quality and to its capacity of being developed so that the work might become operational, flexible, and lie at the basis of an emerging convincing, empathic system, able to confer “combustion” upon the whole. I include here the choice of standard processes and procedures, the

establishment of artisanal components and *modi operandi*, the syntactic typology, the tracing of the paradigmatic frame of the phonic object. As complements I also include more concrete matters, such as instrumentation, the orchestral or vocal component, etc. Likewise, the sources include aspects pertaining to the hypothetical emotional echo and impact, as for instance the prefiguration of certain horizons in the sphere of stylistic, expressive or manneristic orientation. Broadly, the elements enumerated above, as well as others, refer to the sketching of certain preparatory, exploratory endeavours of abstract organisation that are an absolute must with a view to the application proper.

c) **Invention** “implies the necessity of a discovery and a realisation,” I. Stravinsky explained in his *Poetics of Music*. “What we imagine does not necessarily take concrete form and can remain virtual, while invention is inconceivable outside its translation into action”. This particular concretisation can be manifested both at the level of the apparently insignificant detail and at that of the **whole** edifice. It can start from the general to the particular, or the other way round; it can and must lead to finding optimal solutions of interrelation and integration, of compatibility and combination between the composing elements. Invention ensures the very internal coherence of the musical object, as this stage produces, thanks to certain fine adjustments and multiple decantations, the ordering of the various matrices of operation, the organic connection of the various modules, segments, and sections. I underline that, if at the beginning of the forging stage the future phonic entity reveals itself to the author like a fan of theoretically valid directions, gradually, as the composer advances, by successive eliminations, they become ever scarcer until, finally, one single variant will stand out as ideal to the author. It is the sign that the work has found its own path, its own course or, in other words, its true meaning.

d) **Execution**, the last stage of the compositional action, refers to the implementation of ideas, states of mind, and

strategies previously identified in the musical material. It is synonymous with interpretation, with the work of active, effective processing. It constitutes implicitly the finalisation and crowning of the series of interventions expected by the creator with a view to completing his product. Therefore, that particular configuration settles and proves the validity of the original composition, as well as the connections, arrangements, and already planned schedules, in other words, of the ordering obtained through invention. Only this way does the work become a perceptible reality, replete with sap and plasticity. Moulding allows for the very exteriorisation of the subjective representations pertaining to the artist, in a tangible, communicable, evocative form, able to obtain – as B. Croce asserted – “identity between intuition and expression”. I would like to add that processing itself triggers the birth of certain *ad hoc* formative variants, that it frequently introduces adjustments, interpolations, the interference of certain unforeseen factors, which leave their imprint and mark on the finished product. On the same level of creation we include the aspects of refined selection, as well as those of dynamics, agogics, tempo, metronomical indications, expression, a. s. o. The brilliance of a work lies in the artist's concern with finishing the details, with carefully polishing the musical discourse. From this perspective, I appreciate that to a large extent the originality of the opus, its internal and expressive unity, its specific, distinctive aura, and its intrinsic quality are bestowed through execution.

At the end of this analytical journey, I feel the need to punctuate several emphatic concluding:

1. The above-mentioned stages of edification can be applied, in my opinion, to any type of sonic construct (including the so-called “free forms”) and to any genre, species, and sub-species that belongs to past or present classic music.

2. Although we have inevitably presented them in their natural order almost strictly –, I want to stress the fact that usually, in the dialectic of the process of creation, these stages merge, intersect, combine, overtake and substitute each other. This happens because our endeavour is alive, kinetic,

emerging, fundamentally metamorphic, so that it exceeds and outperforms any tentative of schematicism.

3. It is not by accident that I have tried to attach this spreadsheet of stages and facts in relation with the issue of the modern symphony, since we are confronted with sufficient contradictory opinions regarding its present and future profile. I was also motivated by the huge impact that the symphony has had across the ages and on the present state of theory and practice in our field of activity.

4. The inclination of lack thereof, the interest or disinterest manifested by certain composers towards the symphony or by certain musicologists towards its issues are nothing but the resultants of certain individual and optional approaches. With respect to the “demiurgic act” I must note that writing symphonies implies the assumption of a fairly major professional risk because of the consecrated landmarks of value and craft that exist. I would also like to evoke a factor of particular significance, namely the inner call that the author must feel towards a deployment of forces of such a calibre, weight, expansion and substance at the level of ideas and emotions.

(Traducerea în limba engleză: **Alina Bottez**)