

## **Bach, Mozart and Beethoven's music – philosophy lived in Cioran's view**

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**Abstract:** *Cioran is not a musicologist and not even an esthetic. His considerations and his preferences in music in some ways doubtful and even contradictory, are the resonance of the sound art, in a hungry soul of absolute and open to all creation thorough he thought that could come closer to him, who assumed the human condition as a personal experience. One of Cioran's great passions or obsessions, we might even say, that can be found in almost all his creation, is music. Cioran gave his music references a certain unity in text but especially in subtext, indicating the possible directions for the systematization of the fragments according to the composers and the feelings influenced by their music, but also the meditations on the world, man and God. For Cioran, music is exclusively a living philosophy, the only art which gives sense to the word absolute; it is the lived absolute. His observations on Mozart, Bach and Beethoven, scattered through many pages, are the most profound commendations made to music.*

Key-words: *music, Emil Cioran, philosophy, Bach, Mozart, Beethoven*

### **1. Introduction**

Many of the great thinkers of the world in every historical period, using artistic abstraction and music metaphor in the order of the metaphysical sensitivity, have deeply meditated on music, leaving us full pages of interesting theories and solid arguments on its essence, purpose and role in social existence. This concern for translating music into words and for expressing the image and the meaning of its contents, was a constant preoccupation, rigorously supported. This is really necessary because in the absence an enlightening formulation, music risks to remain locked into the empiricism of a purely acoustic, impenetrable, irrelevant and, ultimately, futile fact. (Garaz, *Emil Cioran and the music of the natural elements*, p.1).

In this paper we come back to some of Cioran's ideas about the music of composers Johann Sebastian Bach, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart and Ludwig van Beethoven, ideas worth mentioning and even correlating, for a better understanding of the philosopher's views on music. Even if the philosopher said that in essence his

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ideas did not address the abstract reason or the argumentative aspect of the mind, they did not explain anything, but rather exploded (Cioran, 2012 ) or they supported themselves, they affect the soul directly, thus being able to approve or to reject them. And if it was stated that Cioran is destined to remain Cioran's greatest interpreter, (Vieru 1990, 14) his fascinating personality and his often contradictory statements have led to many comments and analyses and continue to incite permanent reflection. On the other hand, being deeply conflictual, Cioran's discourse hardly allows a unique interpretation.

Perhaps that is the reason why it has been stated that it is easier to write short essays or fragmented notations on Cioran, to keep the contradictions unaltered (and misunderstood) than to embark on a single exegesis with little chance of success. (Kluback, William; Finkenthal, Michael 1999, 34).

## **2. Cioran's philosophical views**

The philosopher makes connections between areas of human thought and practices differentiated by language and method (religious mysticism, philosophy, medicine, psychology, meteorology), but also widely spaced in time (the Ancient times, the Middle Ages, the Enlightenment). None of Emil Cioran's writing has gone unnoticed, arousing a vast echo in the press. Sometimes, simple articles published by Cioran in newspapers and magazines would make people take a stand and comment on them.

Between Cioran's biography and writings there are numerous bridges, affiliations and links, either subtle, implicit, or more apparent. His work is made up of various fragments freed of any will for structure, fragments "built" deliberately in this way by the philosopher's aversion to any system, to any ontological or epistemological authority, whether it manifests itself in the real world, or it takes shape in a space of ideas. (Boldea, 2009)

Emil Cioran adopted the pessimistic direction inspired by the ancient scepticism and strongly revived in the nineteenth century by Schopenhauer and Nietzsche, practicing a literary-essayistic philosophy. Reluctant to any conceptual systematization, the philosopher presented in his first book, *On the Heights of Despair*, the majority of themes and motifs that future works would amplify and deepen: the conception of philosophy as an aphoristic confession of his own feelings and anxieties, hyperlucidity, scepticism pushed towards pessimism, his attraction to mysticism, embraced as a spiritual experience, his aspiration to God and salvation, but also his conviction that he could never achieve them. The next four books he has published in Romanian merely managed to confirm, even amplify the impression made by his first book.

According to critic Sorin Alexandrescu, the essential feature of the philosopher is his constant scriptural reactions, his continually renewed assiduity in

designating the same themes of meditation, the relevance of a style that is equal to himself, recurrent, refusing any avatar, his monadic style which is also prone to a plurality of interpretations. (Alexandrescu, 1999)

Music is also an alternative response to knowledge through philosophy and in order for it to last, it must be renewed indefinitely; it is similar to the mystical experience whose trace is lost once returning to everyday life: "it is the only art that gives a meaning to the word absolute. It is the lived absolute, lived, however, through a huge delusion, because it vanishes as soon as peace is restored. It is an ephemeral absolute, a "paradox" actually (Liceanu 1993, 205), and where the word can no longer be expressed the area of music covers it: "What good it to frequently read Plato, when a saxophone can just as well give us a glimpse of another world?" (Cioran 1992 a, 95.)

### 3. Music in Cioran's work

From his own confessions and from the analysis of his creation, we can conclude that one of Cioran's great passions or obsessions, we might even say, that can be found in almost all his creation, is music.

In his first published papers, under the form of studies and articles in "The Thought", "The Word", "The Calendar", "Literary Pages" etc., or in his first book, he did not show any special interest in music. But starting with the second book published in the country, *The Book of Deceptions*, his passion for music became obsessive and would manifest itself impetuously, with rare pauses, in his writings published both in Romania and in France. Cioran would wonder rhetorically "Could God be anything but an attempt to satisfy my endless need for music?" In the same book music appear to be the only reality, round can join the truth thought, absolute and God, the only accessible support: „Neither, the seas nor the sky nor the God nor the whole world aren't a universe. Only the non- reality of music...The actually infinity, a non sense for philosophy, is the reality, the essence itself of music" (Cioran 1992 a, 96).

Approaching the musical phenomenon according to its ontological status, the philosopher created a metaphorical speech, constantly avoiding musicological accuracy and relevant details for expressing the ineffable, the indescribable through words. For Cioran, music is the limit for understanding music as the world, it is the metaphoricity, the suspicious eye, the mediated, indirect approach, through reflection or rebound, aiming at re-enchanting the states of order distorted through a lengthy and much improper use of reason. (Garaz, Oleg. *Emil Cioran and the music of the natural elements*, [https://www.academia.edu/12369822/Emil\\_Cioran\\_%C5%9Fi\\_muzica\\_elementelor\\_naturale](https://www.academia.edu/12369822/Emil_Cioran_%C5%9Fi_muzica_elementelor_naturale)).

Music played the role of an indisputable argument, of a distant friend who often returned in his life. In his view, music was by far superior to philosophy and

religion, because while the latter sought in vain to find a valid argument for the existence of God, the first did so by the existence of the composer representative for the Baroque, Johann Sebastian Bach: "If the imperialism of the concept had not existed, music would have been philosophy itself; it would have been a paradise of the inexpressible evidence, an ecstasy epidemic. [...]" (Cioran 1992a, 94).

In his writings, he added more or less extensive passages regarding the personality of some composers, he inserted references and interpretations of their musical work or statements about music in general, the means of representation being defined by the fascinating capacity of the Romanian thinker to achieve genuine spectrograms of the musical phenomenon, to which he applied an extremely intense analytical insight. ([http://www.academia.edu/12369822/Emil\\_Cioran\\_%C5%9Fi\\_muzica\\_elementelor\\_naturale](http://www.academia.edu/12369822/Emil_Cioran_%C5%9Fi_muzica_elementelor_naturale), 2).

What is the determination of the great lonely to confer in the spirit order, to music a higher dignity than even the one given to philosophy and to write: „if the imperialism conception never existed the music would keep place to philosophy, would have been the unexpressed paradise of evidences, an epidemic of ecstasies?”

Maybe that at the origin of this great passion was first a native predisposition for the sound universe once he succeeded to handle more foreign languages not necessarily close to his native one. Is not excluded that above his musical sensibility to be fingerprint and the old doines and ballads which he heard sang or spoken by shepherds from his natal Rasinari, the Transylvanian songs and games from Sunday's Romanian round dance and maybe the religious music which child being he listen in his father church. Although later he will call the folklore as 'subculture' and he will consider doina „as a mournful vibration of Romanian impotence” and the Romanian popular music in its whole as a „lyric hopping, without any original mark” is very less probably that a such a precocious and strong sensibility to remain deflect at the musical values of the traditional Romanian village, even if subsequent he will not be awake or not recognize this. Cioran's sensitivity to the music of ideas and to the vanities of the world emerged through an inexhaustible existential search for self and meaning. Music had been and remained for him the most abstract of the arts, the most concrete proof of vanity shown in the "wind hunting" of humans.

(Băiculescu, 2006, accessed on 25.08.2015).

#### **4. Reflections on the music by Bach, Mozart and Beethoven**

Emil Cioran gave his music references a certain unity in text but especially in subtext, indicating the possible directions for the systematization of the fragments according to the composers and the feelings influenced by their music, but also the meditations on the world, man and God.

As a true specialist, Cioran wrote in high terms about the music of composers such as: Bach, Handel, Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, Brahms, Chopin, Schumann,

Wagner, but the music from the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century did not speak to the philosopher, because, as he said, before "music was addressed to God and not to man - as it happens from Beethoven onwards". Through the comparisons, associations and parallels he made, Cioran captured the specific difference for each composer and his music. We will deal with some reflections dedicated to the composers Bach, Mozart and Beethoven.

As we can see in Cioran's writings, the first place in his musical preferences is occupied by Bach, to whom he made perhaps the most remarkable portrait, and his music, capable of generating Divinity, is considered the creation that managed most to draw near man and God: "If only God had made our world as perfect as Bach made the divine world" (Cioran 1991 a, 184). When you listen to it, Bach's music is like a potion that the soul drinks to quench its thirst to merge with the Creator. From the first chords of a cantata, you take God's hand and step into immortality. It is the most pleasant way in which man can get over there without being constrained by that state or by that word or, simply, by that thought - death.

We always think of Johann Sebastian Bach, the man of essences, of spiritual truths, of the divine meditation, as a universe whose infinity is impossible to grasp, but which invites us to research it and whose meanings sometimes seem impenetrable to us, mortals; as Cioran said: "If there is anyone in this world who owes everything to Bach, that is God" (Cioran 1992 b, 94). And let us not forget that Johann Sebastian Bach devoted par excellence his entire artistic development to God, and his music, "an agreeable harmony in honour of God", as he called it, was a divine gift which, through its development returned to God as gratitude, reminding the individual of both his state and the heavenly glory. His music did not aim at pleasing the senses, but rather the soul, thus going beyond the field of aesthetics. Emil Cioran said in admiration „in Bach there are no feelings, only God and the world linked by a staircase of tears, where other tears go up ". (Cioran 1991b, 91).

The key of Bach's Music is, after Emil Cioran, the desire of escaping in time and the drama of falling in to it, the nostalgia of the lost paradise. The essence of this music is the nostalgia after pure worlds, because the music of J.S Bach took us ascend 'in spiral to heaven' at the gate of paradise: „Without Bach, God wouldn't be himself. Without Bach, God would be a third hand character. Bach is the only one who gave you the impression that the universe is not a looser...If there is an absolute that is Bach" (Liiceanu 1993, 183).

I consider that the fascination which Bach's music had on Cioran, is explained by the harmony feeling that is produced, to a nature so tortured by anxiety, although the certainty of reaching the absolute, the identification with the divine, and the author of the Bitterness of syllogism craved his whole life: „Bach: cosmogonical melancholy; tear leather on which our desire of God ascend; architecture of our fragility, positive teasing- and the most bright- of our will; heavenly ruin in Hope; only way of losing us without collapse and to disappear without dying... Is now

too late to learn from such lavishes? And we have to go on loosing without organ accordance?"( Cioran 1992 b, 227).

The organ, musical instrument devoted to religious practice, which both through its physical structure and its acoustic resonance dedicated to exalting the believer to the transcendental mysteries of the divine, is mentioned by Cioran as an encounter with God at the edge of space, a cosmogony of tears. (Cioran 1991 b, 116).

In Bach's music, one can find, from a point of view both theoretical (through the mathematicised complexity of the style) and sensitive (by audition), the dialogue between the mathematical and the dynamic sublime - very overwhelming through its size and strength, and when one listens to Bach one does not feel complete, but rather one contemplates their inner emptiness caused by this peremptory sublime.

(Bârzu 2015, <http://revistamuzicala.radioromaniacultural.ro/?p=15669>)

Emil Cioran left us maybe the most stirring portrait of the great composer, a natural reaction which is not limited at technical guileful, giving in this way a material expression- as long as one another couldn't- the belief that Bach's music is not placed in any other place in space which is a pure out- sourcing, but that it constitutive in front of external world, another world which is not in world, his inner world: „If the music disappear , all the joy and the pain of the earth couldn't fetch a tear of essence of the one came to it. Is so much transcendence in a viola vibration, it seems that snowflakes and angel hearts are shared...Bach is everything. And what is this whole? God itself, because Bach is nothing that couldn't be God”(Cioran 1992 b, 75).

Another composer in order of music preference is Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, whose music is considered "the official music of Paradise", "a music for angels." If Bach's music is the road to paradise, then Mozart's music is paradise itself. For Cioran, the moments of great happiness and relaxation were when he would hear Mozart's compositions, a true "remedy against despair." (Cioran 1991 a, 37 ). With its composition full of cheerfulness and tenderness, through harmonies full of grace, Mozart's music is "my meeting with happiness" (Cioran 1991 a, 87) and what Maurice Barres said about W. A. Mozart's first compositions (the menuets from the age of six) that a child could *foresee such harmonies* is an argument in favour of the existence of paradise by desire.

All reflections about Mozart's music are personal, being produced by his own sensibility. They are part of a personal logical system that cannot produce too many solutions: "*Why do I love Mozart? Because he showed me what I could have been if I had not been the creation of pain.*" (Cioran 1991 a, 87).

The cheerfulness of Mozart's music often took Cioran out of his sadness, disappointment and suffering, because through his creation he had given him happy moments, sending him beyond death, directly to heaven. Maybe that is why the analysis he made on Mozart's creation is very complex, opening extraordinary and diversified perspectives, which are subject to his rule "one cannot love Mozart's world, if they cannot find it in the depths of their soul." (Munteanu 2003, 55-80).

In another presentation, he characterizes him as follows: "... in a moment of enthusiasm, I said to myself that Mozart is perhaps the most complete, the most frivolous and the most profound man, who knew how to excel in delicacy as in shadow, and remained as pure in his joy as in his darkest despair" (Cioran 1999, 18). The philosopher often concluded that his music is pure and through it "we live everything as memories, which never turn to regret" (Cioran, 1991).

This brilliant composer took Cioran out of his moments of despair, hopelessness, feeling of collapse and, as he stated, he was afraid to die, knowing that he will not be able to hear this "official music of paradise". The only reproach made to him is that he composed *The Requiem*, who betrayed by his death fear, the purity and serenity of his creation until that moment, through people found out that happiness can also have deepness. *The Requiem* still keeps the dual between the desire of world salvation and the comfort allusions „to a world with rose colour, which veils the suffering of falling in the world” (Cioran 1991a, 87).

Another composer he always mentioned, sometimes with a more critical voice, or more accurately, more detached, not so emotionally involved as in the case of Bach and Mozart, was Beethoven. This emotional distance should not surprise us because from the temperamental and emotional point of view, Cioran felt closer to Bach and Mozart.

Towards Beethoven, whose genius he granted, Cioran started to be a bit reserved. Beethoven represents the tragic and titanic condition of man banished from paradise. Through the insightful statements about Beethoven's creation, Cioran captured the romantic feature of his music, but he did not use that term, because he did not make aesthetic judgment or history of music: when one thinks of the pathetic grandeur of the musical sadness in Beethoven's 3rd Symphony, where sorrow extends so much that it connects the worlds, building a sound roof over them, another sky, then the sad end of Mozart's opera does not exceed the size of a heart, does not go beyond the frames of the soul. (Cioran, 1991a).

Using arguments, Cioran consider that in Beethoven's music the human is taking place for divine and is addressed to people, proving that this is not written in „the transcendent sublime of Bach” (Cioran 1991, 204).

He states that "in Beethoven's music, the divine heights are not touched, because man is a God; but a God who suffers and enjoys humanly" (Cioran 1996, 85). Beethoven removed God from music because of prevalence of heroic element. Until him, it expressed a regret full of heaven perfume. The paradigms of Beethoven music and divine are totally distinctive and not measurable between them.

## 5. Conclusions

In this paper we begin to study, from the aesthetic point of view, the perception on the musical phenomenon expressed through a unique language of ideas in Emil Cioran's creation, in order to make it known and to repay its essence, merging into a plea for diversity and creativity. The attitude of Emil Cioran towards music is nothing but a

particular manifestation of his general attitude in front of life, confessing about the essence of music through profound study of work of great composers still remain faithful to music most of his life - he left us a confession in this way- „I come back to music, a already came back after a a breack of sic- seven years. I have the impression that a found everything a have, everything I keep hide. The music being the essence of my life - if I dare to use this barbarian language” (Cioran 1999, 41).

For Cioran, music is a supreme way of living and thinking, it is the only art which gives meaning to the word absolute and if it could translate into words, we would get a complete explanation of the world. Music is not just art, it is a peak achievement of thought, of the human spirit in general, a supreme phenomenon among the things created by man. By addressing it simply as an aesthetic phenomenon, music can lose its greatness and universality. (Cioran 1996, 88-89).

In conclusion, his work "shows a surprising homogeneity of the themes and attitudes" (Alexandrescu, 1999) masterfully depicting the classic and famous philosopher-music relationship and completing, in an original way, what others failed to tell about music.

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