

Dan Buciuc – Landmarks of choral creation: *Ana lui Manole*

Petruţa-Maria COROIU¹

Abstract: *At the venerable age of 81, the professor and composer Dan Buciuc remains the maestro who opened the gates of the musical universe for thousands of young musicians who had the privilege of being his students: beyond the classes of musical culture, a real mentor must open new avenues and let you walk ahead after having instilled in you the strength of their knowledge. A teacher who illuminates is the person attentive to the disciple's soul, to their vocation, to the requirements of a road that is barely visible at the very beginning, intervening discretely only where their intuition and competence can make a difference in a young artist's life. ANA LUI MANOLE is his choral masterpiece, which reflects his creative conceptions and highlights the verses of a great Romanian poet.*

Key-words: *chorus, modernism, pedagogy, music, mentor.*

1. Introduction

At the venerable age of 81, the professor and composer Dan Buciuc remains the maestro who opened the gates of the musical universe for thousands of young musicians who had the privilege of being his students: beyond the classes of musical culture, a real mentor must open new avenues and let you walk ahead after having instilled in you the strength of their knowledge. A teacher who illuminates is the person attentive to the disciple's soul, to their vocation, to the requirements of a road that is barely visible at the very beginning, intervening discretely only where their intuition and competence can make a difference in a young artist's life.

Dan Buciuc is part of modern Romanian culture, which was subjected to the pressures of communism and socialist realism, at a time when censorship was increasingly active in the cultural sphere: "conflicts over the contents of textbooks and curricula, widely discussed in the daily news, illustrate how many different stakeholders are invested in sharing their particular understandings of our (shared) past, the current society and potential imagined futures with the younger generation"

¹ PhD Transilvania University of Braşov, petruta.maniutcoroiu@unitbv.ro.

(Szakács 2018, p. VII), but the privileged and restricted environment of musical education (from teacher to student) facilitated the individual formation of professional consciousnesses that transcended the demands imposed by the system.

Professor at the National University of Music in Bucharest (Harmony, Forms and Analysis, Stylistics of Modern Choral Writing), possessing some eloquent hobbies for a nature lover (literature, visual arts, basketball, mountaineering, skiing, tennis, fishing in mountain waters), Dan Buciu has been a member of the Union of Composers and Musicologists of Romania since 1968.

Although located in a communist country, Dan Buciu “benefited from the openness to the European avant-garde: all the mentioned composers were aware long before 1966 (the key year when Darmstadt opened up to them) of the principles and techniques of the avant-garde” (Dediu 2024, 80). However, the master remained deeply attached to a national modal trajectory, which he promoted out of profound inner convictions. “Dan Buciu initially focuses on choral creations with modal roots (*Remember Hiroshima*, 1971; *The Grass of the Earth*, 1982), then adopts gesturalism in subtle chamber scores (*Cristiane*, 2016), while also honoring the tradition of music history in the *Nostalgic Suite for flute and orchestra* (2003)” (Frățilă 2016, 3-13). Dan Dediu places Dan Buciu in the direction of Retro-Metissage, conceived as an “attitude of return to the safety provided by traditional forms, an attitude that circumscribes neo-romanticism and neo-tonalism” (Dediu D., 2021, 406).

Two poles of his personality give a complete portrait of the one who is the focus of the present article: in addition to the professor’s sense of sacrifice (in his continuing involvement in higher education as part of the Doctoral School of the University of Bucharest), there is the man who processes in his compositions the world’s major problems in several registers of creative semantics: the music dedicated to the children’s universe (carols, songs, lullabies, specific folk songs), the transformation into music of highly poetic lyrics dealing with anxieties, including *Schițe pentru un requiem pentru... mine* (2007) [Studies for a requiem for... me], a composition whose soloist vocal melody is inspired by Easter religious music: the chamber structure of this confession (which can only be found in *Actus tragicus* by J. S. Bach) combines perfectly with the difficulty of the universal questions incorporated in the composition. *Concertul-fantezie pentru orgă, orchestră și cor* (2023) [The fantasy-concert for organ, orchestra and choir] is placed in the atmosphere of heavy symphony like a megalithic conglomerate, encouraged by the timbers woven into the musical discourse: in this work, the orchestra becomes an organism through which one can breathe musically through pulsations impossible to ignore, volcanic, filled with ample sonorous gestures, a real feast and a surprise for the mental universe attached in an increasingly convincing way to the major

symphonic creations. The fantasy dimension is visible in the entire creation with existential questions materialized in often solemn themes, performed in the semantics of choir, the folkloric allusion infusing the symphonic genre with topics rarely constructed in this way.

2. Dan Buciu - Choirs music (*Ana lui Manole*):

This paper will focus on the volume *Coruri* [Choirs] edited in 1993 by the Union of Composers and Musicologists from Romania, which includes several categories of specific works, selected on this occasion based on the strongest argument of his compositional work. The author himself admits that he has always wanted “to make harmonies from melodies”: there is nothing closer to the choral desideratum than the dream of a music loving child, educated in a famous family, with a priest for a grandfather who guided his path magisterially, under the influence of his father’s musical presence – who left his mark in the field of opera.

One of his most significant creations is *Ana lui Manole* [Manole’s Ana], on lyrics by Nichita Stănescu: “Poplars, so that you may blossom,/and stop being the carcasses of men/I buried my word/and my seed of Ana in you.//Fields and Bărăgan/I left you the oceans/and, and the journeys.//But at your dense root/I made Ana my bride/And from the verb I made proverb/from the unjust a wise man.//Oh, sea, seething/with fish eggs/you are my mother, not my horizon/Princess Charming from fairy tales/without a kingdom/but only your own being/whose big waves/take Ana from me.//Ah, Ana, ferruginous,/Ah, Ana, you who do not want to say anything,/nothing and nothing and nothing and nothing/in the abyss of my memory/I erect a wall for you,/And for you, who have ears to hear/I tell you:/There is an Ana built in everything/my sweet and silent Ana/my secret Ana!//At the very end there is an eagle/and it blows the stars with its wings.//Ana!/May the poplars tumble, Ana!/The sand, this sawdust of pyramid!/The light, this sawdust of stars,/Ana!/My silent lady/may everything crumble, my lover, my wife!/Only the twist/no one will ever be able/to turn it into a horizon/or a straight line for me”².

² Our translation: „Plopilor, ca să-nverziți,/și să nu mai fiți voi stârvuri de men/m-am îngropat în voi cuvântul meu/și pe sămânța mea de Ana.//Câmpule și Bărăganule/ți-am lăsat oceanele/ți-am lăsat privirile/și, și călătoriile.//Dar la rădăcina deasă/Din Ana făcui mireasă/și din verb făcui proverb/din nedrept un înțelept.//Mare, tu, clocotitoare/de icre de pești/tu-mi ești mamă, iar nu zare/Făt-frumoasă din povești/fără de descălecăre/ci doar sinele ce ești/în de val cu tâta mare/pentru Ana ce-mi răpești.//Ah, Ana tu, feruginoasă,/Ah, Ana care tu nu vrei să spui nimic/și nimic și nimic și nimic și nimic/tu care în balaurul memoriei mele/zid îți ridici,/Iar vouă, celor ce aveți urechi de

The legend of the craftsman Manole is “one of the creations of resistance in dramaturgy, both through its heterogeneous significance and originality, and through its philosophical vision on the conditions of human creation; it reveals the problematic of the creator of works of culture and art that confront temporality and tend towards the universal”³ (Sittner-Prică 1983, XXXVI-XXXVII). “The wonderful legend of Master Manole is notable for the drama of the struggle between the meanings that connect man to earthly life and the artistic impulse that demands the ultimate sacrifice”⁴ (Filimon, 2008, 320). The legend of the builder Manole, with its associated ballad about the construction of the Curtea de Argeș Monastery (built under the ruler Neagoe Basarab, in the 16th century) references one of the fundamental myths of the Romanian people: the MYTH OF THE SACRIFICE FOR CREATION (nothing can endure without a fundamental sacrifice).

The strong spiritual reverberations of the myth bring together the *uselessness of human construction*, represented in the ballad by the lyrics: “Anything he built/At night collapsed/The second day the same/The third day the same/The fourth day the same/He was working in vain”⁵ and the *ontological mightiness of God’s voice*, as reflected by the Psalm of King David in the Old Testament, through the following emblematic words: “Unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labor in vain. Unless the Lord watches over the city, the watchman stays awake in vain. It is in vain that you rise up early and go late to rest, eating the bread of anxious toil; for he gives to his beloved sleep” (Psalm 127, 1-2)

In his endeavor which lacks the personal selfishness of self-preservation in favour of building a prayer-church, Manoli was helped by few other builders, including Vitus Stots, stone mason who executed the ornaments of Curtea de Argeș Monastery, who had studied, as Manoli, in the Ottoman Empire, also as a disciple of an Armenian architect (precisely because of these misunderstandings, building the monastery lasted five years). Curtea de Argeș Monastery (dedicated to the Assumption of the Virgin Mary) represents a symbol of the Orthodox faith and of

auzit/vă zic:/În orice este zidită o Ana/Ana mea scumpă și tăcută/Ana mea de taină!//La urmă de tot vine un vultur/și bate cu aripile lui stelele.//Ano!/Să se dărâme plopul, Ano!/Nisipul, acest rumeguș de piramidă!/Lumina, acest rumeguș de stele,/Ano!/Tăcuta mea doamnă/să se dărâme toate, iubito, nevasto!/Doar răsucirea/nimeni nicicând nu va fi în stare/să mi-o facă orizont/sau linie dreaptă”.

³ „Una din creațiile de rezistență din dramaturgie, atât prin semnificația ei eterogenă și originalitatea ei, cât și prin viziunea filozofică asupra condițiilor creației umane; ea relevă problematica creatorului operelor de cultură și artă ce înfruntă vremelnicia și tind spre universal”.

⁴ “Minunata legendă a Meșterului Manole se remarcă prin dramatismul luptei între sensurile ce leagă pe om de viața pământească și de avântul artistic ce pretinde sacrificiul suprem”.

⁵ Our translation: „Dar orice lucra, Noaptea se surpa! A două zi iar, / A treia zi iar, / A patra zi iar/ Lucra în zadar!”.

the sacrifice of the Romanian people, being the most important place for pilgrimage and prayer in this region of the country.

The title of the choir composition signed by Dan Buciu follows the lyrics written by Nichita Stănescu (*Ana lui Manole*), which brings the meanings of the legend of the Curtea de Argeș Monastery to the deeply personal level, of love, which is – like the holy monastery – a monument of sacrifice for each of us. However, Nichita Stănescu has a different perspective, intensely poetic, encrusting the diamond of the myth in a poetic, deeply metaphorical vision. The poetics becomes subjective, moving from the objective dimension to the deeply personal area of meaning. The center of the poetic lyrics is no longer represented by the monastery (the idea of a construction lasting hundreds of years as a symbol for an entire nation), but by Ana, the loving being who would have chosen, we believe ANYWAY, the sacrifice, even in the absence of Manole's covert, swift and decisive action: this is the secret of spiritualized sacrifice, capable of self-devotion in the discrete shadow of the world's great things ("Ana, you who do not want to say anything,/nothing and nothing and nothing and nothing", (...) "my sweet and silent Ana/my secret Ana" (...) "My silent lady"⁶). However, Ana **does not** remain a simple human being, she becomes eternal through her existence as "bride, mother, wife, lady, lover", as proverb (not only as verb) – a higher symbolic state of the common word. The poet eliminates none of the aspects of excellency to which a woman can be elevated through the other's love for her, mentioning them – in turn – culminating with "Princess Charming from fairy tales". On this occasion, one can notice the dimension to which both Plato and Eliade allude to when they think of love: this is not one's feeling, one's feeling for another, but the union of two souls in one; in fact, both the framework of the church and that of the laic law consider the members of a family beyond the regular idea of relatives, the spouses are considered one and the same being. The two thinkers meditate on the topic of love as a reunification, a finding of a whole original being, the only one who carries the sign of the unity; this also explains the extreme tension of the analysed lyrics which stems from the intense search of the other half to achieve the **restoration of the integral being**.

The self that you are represents the awareness of the deep belonging of one to another in a relationship of love, each of them being assimilated to the other's self. The unification is definitive, beyond the objective and human limits of this world. In fact, no verse of the poem locates their relationship at their level, but expands it at a spiritual and cosmic level. The universe of the love between Manole

⁶ Our translation: „Tu nu vrei să spui nimic și nimic și nimic și nimic și nimic”, (...) „Ana mea scumpă și tăcută, Ana mea de taină, (...) „tăcuta mea doamnă”.

and Ana is seriously threatened, not from the inside, as this is an authentic relationship, but from the outside: “in the abyss of my memory/I erect a wall for you”⁷), “at the very end, there is an eagle/and it blows the stars with its wings”⁸). The reader can notice the shocking combination of the eagle – a simple being, even though an aggressive one – and the cosmic dimension of the stars, which cannot be touched by its destructive intentions. But the sacrifice brings with it the twist mentioned at the end of the poem (“The simple twist/that no one will ever be able/to turn it into a horizon/ or a straight line for me”, our translation: „Doar răsucirea/nimeni nicicând nu va fi în stare/să mi-o facă orizont/sau linie dreaptă”): “may the poplars tumble, (...), may everything crumble” (our translation: „să se dărâme plopul, (...), să se dărâme toate”). Thus, the consequences are fully undertaken, and the sacrifice – made by each party and by both together – seems to threaten from the inside a love which diminishes its chances of **survival**, but which can **live** forever in this way. The entire HUMAN universe collapses at the same time as *the sacrifice of their human love in the name of Godly love* (building the place of worship, not mentioned in the poetic lyrics quoted here): “may everything crumble” (our translation). The poplars (which seem to function as real columns supporting the temporary edifice of ephemerality) tumble, and the remains of a disintegrated universe are assimilated to the sand (“this sawdust of pyramid”⁹) and to the light (“this sawdust of stars”¹⁰).

Everything is raised at a higher level, being associated with the fundamental ideas of seed, root, so of the birth of the being. Just like in the other famous ballad, *Miorița*, the spirituality of the loving pair is amplified by placing it in an ample cosmic setting (fields and the field of Bărăgan, the oceans, the sea); however, these are not simple geographical ornaments, but the appropriate setting for the secret of love and the sacrifice performed not only by Ana (as it may seem at first sight in the legend), but also by Manole (he also gives up the love of his life for something that will prove more durable through spirituality, faith, confession). In fact, Manole goes through his own martyrdom, the deep (and also silent!) pain of the great builder is evident (especially in the lyrics by Nichita Stănescu) as he is called from far away to perform a miracle in a hostile environment, filled (as always!) with the envy of others. This is a powerful sacrifice (both in the legend and in the poem) because it is not a unique, selfish, unilateral gesture, it is achieved by virtue of love (which can only be a relationship): they both lose everything in order to gain everything, in a different way, at a different time, at another level of reality.

⁷ Our translation: „în balaurul memoriei mele/zid îți ridic”.

⁸ Our translation: „la urmă de tot vine un vultur/și bate cu aripile lui stelele”.

⁹ Our translation: „acest rumeguș de piramidă”.

¹⁰ Our translation: „acest rumeguș de stele”.

At the end of the poem (which resembles a psalm), the poet ends at the higher level in which he confiscates the subjective meanings – at an objective level: “And for you, who have ears to hear/I tell you:/There is an Ana built in everything”¹¹. There is a clear reference to the New Testament. Nothing personal, nothing simple, nothing concrete: everything marked in the higher sensitivity of the great faith configurations which support the world. The end is not marked by the vocation of a defeat, a loss, on the contrary: there seems to be compensation for everything in a more precious universe, that of eternity, of continuity without fault, “youth without old age”. “May everything crumble, my lover, my wife!/Only the twist/no one will ever be able/to turn it into an horizon/or a straight line for me”¹²): the poet refuses the syncope, the rectilinear framework, the dispersion of the tensions in the mono-dimension of horizontality. There is ascendancy left, which is never compromising (A telling sonorous metaphor of this idea is also the last part of the concert Symphony for saxophone and orchestra *Prairie, prières* by Aurel Stroe: ASCENSION VERS UNE MELODIE LONTAINE).

I do not think we have lingered too long on the lyrics replete with the secret meaning specific for a poet-genius: the music should ascend to the level of this verb and accompany its deep implications. Such an artistic partnership poses an endless challenge to the composer, who is not allowed to dwell beneath the poetic artistry. Dan Buciu’s music places the action, from the very beginning, through the timber and coloratura, in a deeply Romanian space, sacred, in which we can hear the sounds of the pan-pipe, the bell and the semantron. The part of the semantron ends with a reverberating bell sound:



Ex. 1. Dan Buciu, „Ana lui Manole”, measures 1-4

¹¹ Our translation: „vouă, celor ce aveți urechi de auzit/vă zic: în orice este zidită o Ana”.

¹² Our translation: „Să se dărâme toate, iubito, nevasto!/Doar răsucirea/nimeni nicicând nu va fi în stare/să mi-o facă orizont/sau linie dreaptă”.

3. Conclusions

Being part of “the highly controversial area of Romanian music” (Dediu V.-Gheorghiță 2021, 9), Dan Buciuc is a remarkable landmark in the reality whose information has not yet been established in historiography. Multiple studies, analyses and volumes are needed to understand and articulate the reality we experienced as students alongside such professors, their creations, and their pedagogical art.

“With brilliant and penetrating insights, always getting to the essence of things, an infallible aesthetic sense, a vast culture, and an admirable work discipline, Dan Buciuc has been a genuine professional model for his students and colleagues. His entire work, carried out on multiple symbiotically intertwined levels, has been dedicated to music and musicians” (Lupu, unmb.ro). Definitively attached to the mentoring of the great musical talents of his time, Dan Buciuc shapes musicians (awareness is more difficult to teach than science) able to live music, to understand it: the one who arrives at music like this is happy. Beyond all the words, he is the musician for whom **music is everything, above anything else that could be said about it.**

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