

Modal structures and contemporary techniques in *Edi* for solo clarinet by Toshio Hosokawa

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Abstract: *This article analyses Edi for solo clarinet by Toshio Hosokawa, focusing on its unique use of modal structures and contemporary techniques that draw on both neoclassical and folkloric influences. The piece unfolds through interconnected modal zones, each centred on tonal nuclei and enriched by expressive ornaments like vibrato, frullato, and voice integration. These techniques explore the clarinet's full acoustic potential, merging Japanese and Romanian cultural references. Through detailed analysis of tonal shifts and melodic motifs, this study highlights how Edi bridges planetary folklore with a modern aesthetic, creating a nuanced and expressive soundscape.*

Key-words: *Modal structures, folkloric influence, contemporary techniques, clarinet, ornamentation*

1. Introduction

The composition *Edi* for solo was composed in 2009 and was dedicated to the clarinet player Eduard Brunner. The work belongs to the class of composition well known in Romania, having folklore as a source of inspiration and including composers like: Myriam Marbe, Doina Rotaru, Ulpui Vlad, Călin Ioachimescu, Aurel Stroe (and less frequently Tiberiu Olah). They often felt the need to focus on this kind of sonic research. This class implies a morphological construct in which the generating cells are expressed by a continuum of decorum; the musical material is conceived on the one hand of a generating cell dressed in an 'adnotative' melody of an ornamental type, and on the other hand of a 'long' note, belonging to an idiomatic category that draws its resources from that ancestral cultural treasure trove recognizable in different 'human languages', regardless of their geographical area, race, intellectual conditioning; this is what is to be understood by the concept of planetary folklore.

The common denominator that the music of this folklore preserves is, as the name itself indicates, the allusion to a tonal spectrum of folkloric origin. The

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Japanese culture in which Hosokava grew up is not necessarily 'Japanese', but it reshapes through reformulations and formal metaphors its expression, which can also be Japanese, but can also build connections (more or less veiled) with the archaic culture belonging to the Romanian space. We are basically talking about an idiom-metaphor that the cultures of the same ancestral nucleus nourish, as a suggestion to documentation the same roots. The aforementioned class of composition, through an approach with references to the archaic-folkloric background distilled, reformatted and transferred into the current culture, maintains its predilection in collecting in its paradigm the gesture of the melos of the "doina", of its intimate tone, sometimes permeated with pathos or nostalgia.

The clarinet is an instrument recognized for its willingness to formulate a melody that touches many registers of expression; in addition to the ease with which fast passages can be executed, it can also be configured with richly scenic sound gestures: long sounds that extract their "poetic" energy through several types of blowing, sounds that fluctuate through an envelope arranged to deform in a very short emission time, vibrato of several forms, the introduction of noise into the sound (see the effects in the score of the work, where the acoustic sound of the instrument is accompanied by the voice).

The piece includes astonishing virtuosic emissions designed for an instrument that can, by its very nature, develop sounds that revolve at speed around a modal center, to pivot by timbrality in different directions. It remains to meditate on the author's compositional idea; it is problematic to decide whether the source of inspiration of the piece remains 'planetary folklore' or simply 'the source' is the acoustic resources of the instrument which can sometimes meet (more or less by coincidence) the expressive background of this 'folklore'.

2. Stylistic analysis

From a stylistic point of view, the class of composition to which Hosokava's piece belongs sends to the picturesque. The fact that the acoustic instrument in question has certain expressive possibilities that can give sonorous relief through fluctuations in speed (tempo), by accessing ornaments (slap, singing with the voice in parallel with the instrumental sound, frullato, vibrato, trills through large intervals), should not be confused with compositional strategies that fall within the realm of modernity.

We can understand why the piece is a non-modern one, in structure, in character; the melodic character migrates into sonorous temperamental figurations, in a very common grammar of the piece, after all. The thematization on modal centers, the breaking of the melody by leaps (while keeping the general atmosphere of the composition), the use of rubato for expressiveness (an anti-structuralist way

of thinking), are only a few of the morphologies that connect us to a neoclassicism that we can already encounter with Enescu (see the suites for orchestra).

Picking Hosokawa's "*Edi*" to perform is a natural part of the usual attitude of a performing artist who is not afraid of extended stylistic periplus. At the same time, I also lean towards contemporary works literally (works by Michael Jarell, Beat Furrer). "*Edi*", however, remains in its very paradigm; a paradigm impregnated by the spectrum of neoclassical works, of clarinet solos with a melismatic tinge (be they Strawinskian, Enescian, Szymanowskian). The shape of the work is a pattern of growth; morphologies become onomatopoeia, epic meanders, the decorative imprint of its expression is a constant path.

3. Modal structures and fragments

The expression of the whole form is summarized in a few fragments in which the invariant is generated by the transitory, adnotative morphology that revolves around modal centers. The first fragment, which I have labeled "A", enters musical time as a gesture in *lontano* (simulating leaving the space of maneuvering the form). The modal center of the fragment begins with a long sound <A,> *senza misura*, but in a well-defined tempo: quarter = 40.

This is complemented by transitory morphology, which imposes itself as a plan of continuous variation. The modal material is chromicized. Here is a list of modal structures (by measures), which induce through a cinematographic vision; they are elements that appear and disappear quickly (see the score).

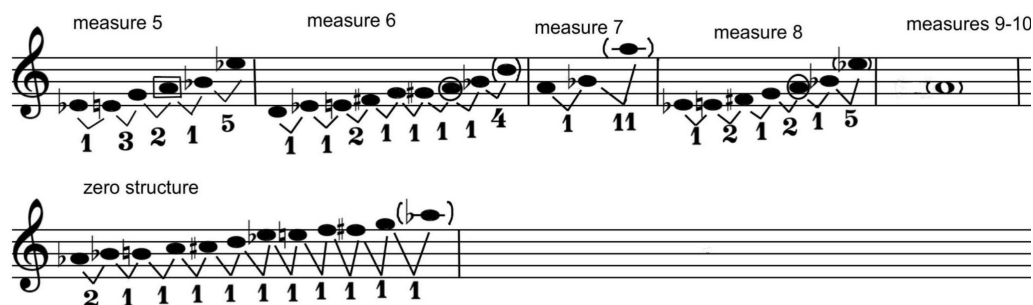
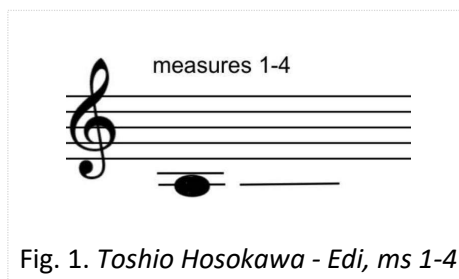


Fig. 2. Toshio Hosokawa - *Edi*, ms 5-10

The composer takes a modal approach; the musical figure-tone relationship (which I have introduced), describes the entry (into) and exit (out of) the melodic scene of intervals. The interval's unit of measure is the semitone (= small second); thus, in the first modal structure (of measure 5 - see the example above) the interval string associated with the mode is (2m, 3m, 2M, 2m, 4p). We conclude from the example that we also encounter redundancies of expression: each measure is structured differently, without imposing a particular proportionality in the balance of the morphology of the fragment. The rationale of the discourse is maximal, without decanting effective levels of structuring. The invariant of the construction is always the melisma (with the role of accompaniment of a melody condensed into a point (modal center), and the variants are always the sounds that replace each other.

In the fragment, A', as can be seen, the modal center remains the A note. In measures 9-10, according to the catalog of modal structures conceived by the composer Anatol Vieru, the point in which, melody' is condensed is the "zero structure", namely the modal structure generated by a single note: <A>, the other sounds that would compose the total structure existing in absence (I have listed it below the, zero' structure). Here is an exercise that our hearing does instantly: from the chromatic total, it extracts a single sound, inducing the apparent 'poverty' of the melos. The operations of reunion, namely the intersection between the multitudes of pitches in each listed measure, are performed continuously by our auditory perception. I do not deem it necessary at this point to go through the whole map of these operations, which encircle contrasts between diatonicity and chromaticity, between the richness or the 'property of absence' that characterizes the modal world. This is why I considered, at the beginning of the analysis, that the grammatical level does not mediate in any way with the semantic level of the planetary folklore, each analytical tool stopping in its own area.

4. The role of Tempo and modal zones

The dictionary of the tempos is present, but their fluctuations are not significant. The score markers <1>, <2>, <3>, <4>, <5>, etc. are indicators of the corresponding tempos. This dictionary also gives the landmarks of the modal zones that make up the piece; thus, we witness the unfolding of eight zones, each of which is aggregated by the two constituent elements: the long notes (which act as more or less striking modal centers) and the 'annotations' mentioned above (ornaments). <1> [eighth = 40] <2> [eighth = 44] <3> [eighth = 48] <4> [eighth = 42] <5> [eighth = 56] <6> [eighth = 48] <7> [eighth = 52] <8> [eighth= 56]. Below, I unfold the second modal nucleus (indicated in the score as landmark 2) and in the proposed analysis as fragment "B"; the modal (orbital) center here is the sound C (Example 3). Measure 15 is somewhat similar to the measures of the previous modal area (see measures 6,

8). The structure starts with not that many modal elements, but from measure 12 the modal zone is amplified.

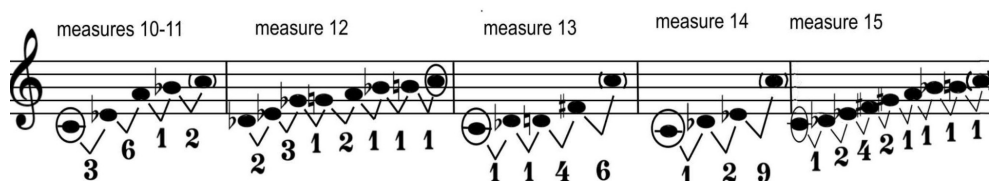


Fig. 3 Toshio Hosokawa - *Edi*, ms 10-15

While we might speak of a motivic laboring technique, we also note the monothematic nature of the setting. We also notice the monochromaticity of the piece in terms of syntax, the compensating element being the modal character, by definition full of melodic resources. The 3rd modal zone, centered on the G sound, will continue to portray this almost dodecaphonic character through the chromatic saturation established; marked with a "C".

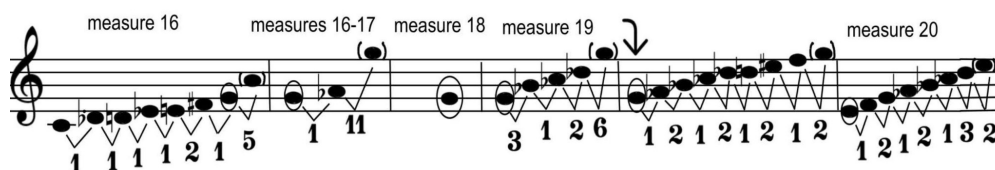


Fig. 4. Toshio Hosokawa - *Edi*, ms 16-20

We have here a scheme that holistically photographs the three modal zones mentioned above (A, B, C), as well as the one I have further labeled "D"; I do not consider it edifying to iterate their morphology on this and the others that follow, since the extension of the continuous reservoir of elements can be discovered in the score.

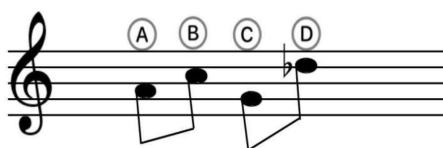


Fig. 5 Toshio Hosokawa - *Edi*, modal zones

Notice that modal areas A and B have as their pillars the base and apex of a minor third, while the following (C, D) are projected in the space of an augmented fourth

(diminished fifth). The 5th area “E” (see page 2 of the score) defines an ornamented block on the B-flat sound, the playing register over dimensioning the high notes. Here is the golden section and the climax of the piece. On audition, the trained attention will also catch a snippet of sarsuel-like melos (a Spanish traditional dance); I am referring to bars 39-41.

The last page of the work will dimension the last three remaining modal zones (“F”, “G”, “H”); these continue the landscape of the work, until the last sound fades out, in the nuance of pppp.

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, the work finds its well-deserved place among the pieces by the great composers of the 20th century and authenticates its modernity both through the modal thinking of the composer and the extensive clarinet techniques he used. Toshio Hosokawa masterfully blends modal structures with extended instrumental techniques, creating a unique dialogue between tradition and modernity. The piece's reliance on folkloric tonal centers, intricate ornamentation, and expressive dynamics reflects a broader exploration of “planetary folklore,” linking cultural idioms across global traditions. Through a series of modal zones, each with distinct tonal centers and decorative figures, the work progresses toward a climactic “golden section,” showcasing the clarinet’s full acoustic potential. Ultimately, Edi demonstrates how contemporary music can embody and reinterpret ancestral soundscapes, reaffirming the clarinet’s versatility in both virtuosity and cultural expression.

6. References

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