

INTRODUCTION TO THE EPISTEMOLOGY OF MUSIC. The Organizations of the Musical Phenomenon – Liviu Dănceanu – 2003

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The current work is an author's book review and talks about one of the fundamental books of the history of contemporary Romanian music: INTRODUCTION TO THE EPISTEMOLOGY OF MUSIC, THE ORGANIZATIONS OF THE MUSICAL PHENOMENON (Editura muzicală, Bucharest, 2003). Liviu Dănceanu (passed away in 2018) remains the founder of ARCHAEOUS CONTEMPORARY MUSIC WORKSHOP, which is on the verge of its 40th anniversary. 40 years of interpretative excellence, 40 years of promoting known and newly composed Romanian music, 40 years of tours, recordings, festivals, films and concerts. His book (as a professor at the National University of Music in Bucharest and a mentor to many students, but also as a thinker on the musicology of the cult sound phenomenon) remains a landmark of professionalism, of a little-known and experienced branch of musical analysis: the epistemology of music.

1. Introduction

A meritorious activity in the entire modern Romanian music at the border of the 20th and 21st centuries: since 1985, Liviu Dănceanu (its founder and conductor) has been supporting, together with his colleagues in his septet, the development of national sound creation, also creating his own festivals and emblematic events, not only participating in the great events of the Romanian scene. His book (as a professor at the National University of Music in Bucharest and a mentor to many students, but also as a thinker on the musicology of the cult sound phenomenon) remains a landmark of professionalism, of a little-known and experienced branch of musical analysis: the epistemology of music.

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2. Liviu Dănceanu – *Introduction to the Epistemology of Music* (Bucharest, 2003)

Starting from an emblematic idea of Honore de Balzac (Musical language has no limits, it contains everything, it can express everything), Liviu Dănceanu debuts with a first chapter – Arguments (in which he proclaims the continuity of the cult sound phenomenon): “in a phenomenal sense, music has never stopped its course. There have been no hiatuses or intervals that would reduce it to silence. (...) Fundamental has proven to be the continuity, the development of music and its abundance and immense diversity” (Dănceanu 2003, 5). The criteria for internal organization of musical discourse are investigated in the first part of the book, starting with the **temporal** one (music – temporal art from the point of view of sound syntaxes, of monophony, homophony - tonal, modal, serial, spectral -, of polyphony - superpositional, imitative - and of heterophony).

The extensive bibliographic apparatus, worthy of the interdisciplinary nature of Liviu Dănceanu's personality, is just a sign of the multidimensional amplitude of the one who signs the volume as an act of thinking on the musical phenomenon. The entire culture with which Liviu Dănceanu clothed music is a constant of his exposition both as a composer and from a pedagogical and musicological perspective: his courses were expositions for which understanding the cultural context was mandatory in order to outline the musical phenomenon described.

All the major elements of the organization of musical discourse are exhaustively covered through the complete stylistic grid of all eras: from protohistory, ancient times, Gregorian, Byzantine, Renaissance and to the Baroque, Classical, Romantic and Modern. The musical examples give concreteness to the strictly theoretical approach that the author sets out in his book on music theory: the volume is actually a true treatise on the theory of sound art, which organizes and explains all the fundamental aspects of musical language from the last 2000-3000 years. Liviu Dănceanu sees in the musical phenomenon another type of organization, which is related to the density of the elements in the musical phenomenon, according to the criterion of their distribution in 3 different areas: rarefaction, detail and agglomeration (according to the classification of maestro Ștefan Niculescu).

The **spatial** criterion goes beyond the temporality that is immanent at the epistemological and ontological level of music: it is about the “abstract level, the area of the psychological more than that of the sensory” (Dănceanu 2003, 55). The spatial categories of music are linked to the modal, tonal, serial and spectral systems, with all their internal classifications. The attention that the author pays to a dichotomy that requires a lot of responsibility (sacred/profane) is highlighted, but also to the “recovery in recent years of the mysterious sound centrism” (Dănceanu

2003, 74) – sensitive themes, which cannot be approached unidirectionally and simplistically. Distant stylistic comparisons (Wagner-Gesualdo) make the delight of an approach that is both pedagogical, organized and of the essayistic subtlety that remains the mark of Liviu Dănceanu's writings and thinking.

The **parametric** criterion of the organization of musical discourse (by pitch, rhythm, dynamics, agogics, timbre, mode of attack, width and depth) is complemented, in the second part, by Phenomenological Criteria of Cult Sound Art: the criterion of ubiquity and isotropy, of information and redundancy divide music into avant-garde and traditional, retro and experimental, evoking the entire diversity of the compositional phenomenon.

But the soul project of Liviu Dănceanu, initiated in 1985, is ARCHAEOUS CONTEMPORARY ENSEMBLE. Illustrious contemporaries have confessed, over time: "the ARCHAEOUS ensemble is part of this constellation of uniqueness because, through an amazing consistency, it manages to display its artistic virtues not only in the country, promoting the present values of composition, with priority to the indigenous one. Obviously, ARCHAEOUS displayed its backbone and ideological propensity thanks to its mentor. As for maintenance, this is a matter of faith and dedication, because authentic art cannot be conceived outside these parameters" (Cosma, O. L. in Dănceanu 2025, 252); "benefiting from the good guidance of its leader, composer Liviu Dănceanu, the Archaeus ensemble managed to offer, with this selection, a spectacular panorama through the stylistic diversity of the creation of some masters of Romanian musical modernism, who, with the passage of time, tend to become classicized" (Coman 2016); "Archaeus was, for me, the space and time of interference with the greatest composers of the time and the most talented and devoted musician-performers of the 20th century. The ensemble of the seven plus one was the laboratory of theoretical and pragmatic analysis of what it means to be a musician-performer: responsible, dedicated, fair, hardworking and innovative" (Colțea Vasile); „adopting spectralism, Byzantine music and polystylism in turn, which he combines in a variegated and lively musical language, Liviu Dănceanu's music nevertheless maintains a strong connection with the conception of his mentor, Ștefan Niculescu, a connection that is mainly based on the compositional development of, mainly, the heterophonic technique. Dănceanu's works rely on diversity, humor and absurdity, encapsulating experimental elements in traditional contexts and always maintaining the same care for formal icasticity and surprising dramaturgical short-circuiting. (...) Dănceanu reaches creative maturity with the adoption of a playful postmodern attitude and the marking of an aesthetic area that mixes polystylism with Byzantine music, in a kaleidoscopic aesthetic labyrinth placed between the improbable, dramatic, ironic, hilarious, grotesque and comic. (...)” (Dediș, Dan).

3. Conclusions

Master Dan Dediu concludes, in memorable words: "The technologies through which the instrumentalist, conductor or composer expresses himself are becoming more and more perfected, requiring an increasingly intense and long-term effort to assimilate them. The increase in complexity and at the same time the role of these technologies ultimately leads to a hyper-specialization of the musician, but at the same time to the abdication of some of the meanings of homo musicus. Confining a performer to a certain stylistic area or a certain period in the history of music amputates, I believe, his artistic integrity, his creative autonomy. Any constraint or enclosure destroys the very freedom and independence of the artist. Let alone that music is a fluid that has flowed over time without significant interruptions or ruptures, that new music is, in a radical way, nothing other than the music of past centuries, but a natural extension, a becoming, we could even say, organic of it. How can you prove the continuity and contiguity of music if not by superimposing different moments of its evolution in a concert? In fact, placing contemporary music in a historical context may even be its chance to demolish the ghetto in which it has isolated itself from the public, from other arts, and from its own memories" (Dănceanu L., in Dediu, V. 2002).

We add that Liviu Dănceanu embodies the model of the complex musician, who is capable of reflecting his personality in very different areas of music, from the avant-garde compositional act, to the complex pedagogical approach, and to musicology, which represents essentialized thinking on the sound phenomenon - the dimension that, in fact, supports the author's entire framework of thought.

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