

Wladimir Pantchev and his Work, *Spiele*, for four Clarinets and one Player. Similarities with Romanian Composers

Ana SZILAGYI¹

Abstract: *This paper investigates the style of the Bulgarian-Austrian composer Wladimir Pantchev referring to his instrumental theatre piece *Spiele* /Plays for four clarinets and one player. In the same time, common as well as different features are observed between Pantchev and certain Romanian composers, who used the proceed of heterophony. The most closed to Pantchev's thinking was Ştefan Niculescu, whom Pantchev met and had an influence on his work. Pantchev's hererophony is based on the variants of a folk melody, which he put together in his music, using the aleatoric principle. Closed to Romanian composers is the using of the folklore (archaic Bulgarian and extra-European). He was awarded of the spiritual meaning of the folk material which he quoted, but he intended to give another meaning to it. The music theater *Spiele* will be analyzed focusing on the Balkan folkloric inspiration and new compositional techniques of Wladimir Pantchev.*

Key-words: *heterophony, sound-carpet, aleatoric principle, Mode, Balkan, aksak rhythm*

1. Introduction

This paper intends to present the influences and the inspiration sources in Vladimir Pantchev's work, as well his style, analyzing his *Spiele* for 4 clarinets and 1 player, a complex work, within he refined and rethink the Bulgarian folklore taking in account its spiritual content and putting it in the universe of the contemporary philosophy and music. Further will be done a parallel to Romanian composers, especially to Ştefan Niculescu, whom Pantchev met, both having integrated the hererophony in the arsenal of contemporary Western techniques.

Wladimir Pantchev (1948-2021) was a Bulgarian-Austrian composer, who built a bridge between the Bulgarian and Western tradition. His Bulgarian roots are

¹ Transilvania University of Braşov, ana.szilagyi@unitbv.ro

obviously heard through using Bulgarian folk melodies, which he took as basis for developing his compositional ideas. From the folklore he took also the modality as well as the proceeding of heterophony, stressing the variations of a folk melody and obtaining these variations using the aleatoric principle. In this way, a folkloric proceeding meets an occidental contemporary one, fact that attests a synthesis East-West.

We will highlight the common and different aspects between the heterophony of the Romanian composer Ștefan Niculescu and the heterophony of the Bulgarian composer Wladimir Pantchev, both having been involved in the local traditions of their countries and in the same time open for the most new compositional techniques of the Western music, doing in this way a synthesis.

The analyzing of *Spiele* will build an image of Wladimir Pantchev's way of music thinking and composing.

2. The Heterophony by Ștefan Niculescu and Wladimir Pantchev

As many Romanian composers, Wladimir Pantchev used some elements of the folklore, as the heterophony and the modality. If his modes are symmetrically and complementary structured referring to the chromatic total, within there is a connection to the Viennese school, his way of understanding and treating the heterophony is different from that of the Romanian composers. I will briefly show the differences between Wladimir Pantchev's and Ștefan Niculescu's heterophony, even if Pantchev's work could also have similarities with György Ligeti regarding the texture, as Angelina Petrova observed: "an intensive and creative contact (Petrova 2022, 388) was developed between W. Panchev, G. Ligeti and Șt. Niculescu. Pantchev met Niculescu and they discussed about their poetics. Pantche's heterophony is in the same time the materialization of his assimilation of compositional principles of Darmstadt School in a wider understanding, as „time-space equality” (Valchinova-Chendova, Naydenova 2008, 62).

The heterophony arises through the non-coincidence of the singing or playing melody by all the members involved in the interpretative act. This could occur by no-exactly remembering the same melody or by error of one or more participants. If the melody is accompanied by an instrument, the instrumentalist could do some virtuosic variants or improvise. In all cases one hears the melody with its melodic-rhythmic variants.

Ștefan Niculescu (1927-2008) was the promoter of the heterophony syntax in Romania, putting it beside the monody, polyphony and homophony (Niculescu 2013, 51). Like other three syntaxes, in his opinion, the heterophony can generate

forms – “heteromorphy” or “synchrony” – that are also titles of two of his works, as the polyphony generated the motet, ricercar and fugue, and the homophony the lied, rondo and sonata form (Niculescu 2013, 68). The principle of the heterophony, the continuous alternation between the univocality (unison or octave) and plurivocality (Ibidem, 67), which he noticed in folk cultures as in the Romanian, Japanese and Java ones, is a universal principle, the heterophony being an archetype, because it can be found in the nature, as the delta of a river, when the river branches, or as the air oscillating in a tube and forming knots and bellies. The unison is crucial in his thinking. Olguța writes about the importance of the “restoring of unison and, partially, of the idea of melody” (Lupu 2015, 70) in the music of the 60^s.

Niculescu correlated this principle with the philosophies of Heraclitus and Nicolaus Cusanus, where the contrasts are dissolved. This is due to the fact that the heterophony is dual, it cannot be “reduced neither to the polyphony, nor to the homophony”, as Niculescu said noticed (Witt 2002, 42). The notion “coincidentia oppositorum” from N. Cusanus was used by Niculescu describing his works, where there is a unity between the contrasts: synchronicity-asynchronicity, succession-simultaneity. He created the heterophony through mathematics. The result is a texture formed by many voices. This is similar to the textures of the 60’s of Ligeti and the Polish School.

The improvisational aspect of the heterophony was associated by Niculescu with the aleatoric principle: he gave the liberty to the instrumentalists in order to obtain the asynchronicity. This is obviously in his work *Synchrony*. In this way the heterophony, an archaic principle, which comes from the folk cultures, was unified with contemporary European techniques – aleatorism and texture.

In the person of Niculescu there were also contrasts, which he solved in a unity, as a scientist (he also studied mathematics), who generated the heterophony after mathematical principles, and a religious person, who composed sacral music (Szilagyi 2014, 12, Sandu-Dediu 2015, p. 31).

If Ștefan Niculescu’s starting point was the alternation unison-plurimelody of the heterophony, where Wladimir Pantchev speculated the principle of the variability of a folk melody, putting vertically together the original authentic melody (as quoted) with its variants. The result is a tone-texture, which he named „sound-carpet”. He also took the improvisational principle from the heterophony, using it in his works as controlled aleatorism. The condition is that the interpreters have to preserve the original melody and not go too far from it, because of the semantic content of the folk melody: the archaic popular melody carries the spirituality belonging to the folk, whatever it is. I see here a parallel to the Romanian composer Theodor Grigoriu, who was interested in the ethos of a folk

music, including the modes, saying that the popular music (and modes) reflects the millenary experiences and the knowledge of a community.

By quoting melodies of different archaic cultures Pantchev created the sound-carpet, within there is a process of desemiotization of the melodies. I see similarities with *Cantos I* (1967) by the Romanian composer Aurel Stroe (Dogaru 1970, 3) and with *Telemusik* (1966) by Karlheinz Stockhausen. In these works both composers quoted melodies from different geographic regions. If A. Stroe's work is defined of the incommensurability of these melodies and the intonation systems that are different and for this reason they don't fit together in the same peace, W. Pantchev is interested to abolish spaces, the original meaning disappearing and being substituted by a new, global image. Unlike Stroe is Pantchev not a composer of breaks, but, as Christian Baier said, of transitions (Baier 2008, 130).

Pantchev saw the quote as something lively, in relation to time and space:

“One can say that using a quote is like one invites an <<guest>> into the space of a later artistic time” (Pantchev 2008, 88).

3. *Spiele* for four clarinets and one player – an analytical view

Spiele for four clarinets (Bb clarinet, bass clarinet Bb, Eb clarinet and basset horn) and one player) can be framed into instrumental theater (well represented in the 60s by Mauricio Kagel), where the musical act with the related gestures is stressed. This concerns a single player, who has to change fast the clarinets, sometimes playing two clarinets together. Thus, the visual aspect is another component beside the musical one. The work contains in the same time folkloric and contemporary elements in a personal vision. Pantchev's Bulgarian roots are audible in his music and the piece confesses a deep assimilation of the Western currents and techniques, creating an own musical language. Regarding the change of instruments that belong to the same family, there is a similar work by A. Stroe, *The Eumenides* from his *Oresteia* Trilogy, where the instrumental accompaniment is supported only by the saxophone family (sopranino, sopran, alto, tenor, baritone and contrabass). In Stroe's work the player has to play all the saxophones, sometimes two instruments in the same time, as two clarinets in *Spiele* by Pantchev (Figure 1):

à DANIEL KIÉNTZY.
LES EUMENIDES d'après Eschyle.
INTRADA
 (entrée foraine)
 AUREL STROE

1^{re} Station
 libero e assai nervoso, ma chiaro!

SOPRANO (Sib)
 SAXOPHONES
 SOPRANO (Mi)

SAX.

3-4 secondes

Fig. 1. Beginning of the Opera Eumenides of the Trilogy "Oresteia" by Aurel Stroe

The fluency of Pantchev's *Spiele* is one of the first observation, the music freely unfolds, without meter accents (there are no bar lines) and no sections. There are three musical ideas that alternatively and differently appear. Toward the end of the piece there is a climax, stressed by tempo and dynamics. The notation is a combination between proportional and traditional.

Tempo, agogics and dynamics are instable. The varied agogics gives freshness to the piece. The articulation is also diverse. Regarding the rhythm, long lengths alternates with short ones. *Parlando-rubato* rhythm contrasts with *giusto-syllabic*, an aspect of folk music in Bulgaria and Romania. The aksak rhythm is typical for the Balkan music.

The ornamental melodies, with *appoggiatura*, *glissandi* (*glissandi* can be also seen as a modern effect), *mordent*, represent the reflection of folklore by Wladimir Pantchev. The idea of non-repetition of the melodic lines comes from the Viennese School, while the abundance of dynamics and articulation notation from the integral serialism. The microtones can also be found in the popular singing and playing of different peoples, but they can also in the contemporary music. To the folkloric formulas, where the stepwise going is characteristic, are added graces notes that form with the main notes intervals as triton and seventh, intervals which one meets in the atonal music. Contemporary effects as multifonics, playing without mouthpiece or only in it are very good integrated in the piece.

The second idea is brought by the bass clarinet in *Lebhaft* (at the end of the fourth staff), a *vivace* tempo and giusto-syllabic rhythm. The alternation of 3 and 4 16ths hints to the aksak rhythm, characteristic of the Balkans region, an aspect that I have still mentioned (Figure 3):

The third idea appears in the second duo between the basset horn and the clarinet. One can recognize here a folkloric theme, which could be taken from a child song, because of the reduced tones – two tones in the clarinet and two tones in the basset horn. The meters are alternated – 7/8 with 4/4 (Figure 4):

The image displays a handwritten musical score for a duo between a bass clarinet (B. Klar.) and a basset horn (B. Horn). The score is written on five staves. The first staff shows the B. Horn part with a 'Tempo I' marking and a '3' above it. The second staff shows the B. Klar. part with a '3' above it. The third staff shows the B. Klar. part with a '4' above it. The fourth staff shows the B. Klar. part with a '4' above it. The fifth staff shows the B. Klar. part with a '5' above it. The score includes various dynamics such as *mf*, *p*, *pp*, *mp*, *f*, and *ppp*. It also features tempo markings like *poco a*, *accelerando*, and *poco crescendo*. The time signatures are 7/8 and 4/4. The piece is titled 'Meßig bewegt' in 'Spiele' by Wladimir Pantchev.

Fig. 4. Third idea in the duo between clarinet and basset horn, middle of the fourth staff (*Meßig bewegt*) in "Spiele" by Wladimir Pantchev

Further this theme is heard with a variation in other duo (clarinet and Eb clarinet), while the Eb clarinet has a counterpoint, an ornamental (with mordents) texture in groups of six 16th, which are not equal regarding the articulation and the length: the slurs are different in every group and the note with the mordent is prolonged, creating an asymmetry (Figure 5):

The image displays a handwritten musical score for two clarinets. The top system features a piano accompaniment and an Eb clarinet part. The tempo is marked 'Sehr schnell' and the performance instruction is 'Lebhaft'. The Eb clarinet part consists of groups of six sixteenth notes, with the first note in each group having a mordent and being prolonged. The middle system shows the Eb clarinet and Bb clarinet parts. The Bb clarinet part is marked 'Bb Klar.' and 'Lebhaft'. The bottom system shows the Eb clarinet and Bb clarinet parts. The Bb clarinet part is marked 'Bb Klar. (in C) mit Trompetenansatz' and 'ohne Fas'. The performance instruction is 'Etwas breit' and 'mf Lautlos auf es spielen'. The score is written in a clear, legible hand with various musical notations, including slurs, mordents, and dynamic markings.

Fig. 5. Counterpoint in the Eb clarinet to the third idea in the clarinet, middle of the first staff (Lebhaft) in *Spiele* by Wladimir Pantchev

Then the clarinet and later the basset horn plays without mouthpiece with a timbre of trumpet. An interesting sonority is further, close to the human voice: this is produced by playing the Eb clarinet only with mouthpiece. Then one can hear the clarinet with the basset horn playing in duo the second idea, in an aksak rhythm. The rhythmic formulas of 5th and 8th in both voices are a challenge for the clarinetist.

The end of the piece brings fragments of the folkloric theme from the children song in the clarinet, again counterpointed by the E-flat clarinet.

I divided the piece in 9 unities. Every section has one of the three main ideas. The fourth idea as a counterpoint could be a secondary idea.

- | | | |
|------|-------------|--|
| I | A, | free rubato melody, all instruments |
| II | B, | aksak rhythm, bass clarinet |
| III | C, | children song, clarinet in duo with basset horn |
| IV | C+D, | children song in clarinet, counterpoint in the E-flat clarinet |
| V | | transition clarinet without mouthpiece, basset horn without mouthpiece + repeated notes, bass clarinet B + repeated notes |
| VI | | Eb clarinet only mouthpiece |
| VII | | clarinet repeated notes; clarinet + basset horn B |
| VIII | A | (Tempo I), basset horn + bassclarinet; basset horn + clarinet in complementary rhythm; multifonics played by the clarinet |
| IX | C+D, | children song in the clarinet, counterpoint in the Eb clarinet |

4. Conclusions

Wladimir Pantchev's work is in the same time traditional and contemporary, using as material folk melodies (especially Bulgarian ones) with new compositional techniques. The old proceeding of the folk heterophony is rethought by Pantchev, creating more layers. Having as starting point a folk melody, its variants were heard in the same time resulting a global sonority. The heterophony is done using the aleatoric principle, similar to Ștefan Niculescu. The difference between the two composers was that Pantchev stressed the variants of the heterophony, while Niculescu the balance between the univocality and plurivocality. Further, similarities with other composers were highlighted, as the music theater of Aurel Stroe in the *Eumenides* of the Opera trilogy *Oresteia* and *Spiele*, as well as the preference of Stroe and Pantchev for quoting folk melodies. Pantchev was close to the folklore and in the same time well integrated in the Western music (new effects and an accurate notation).

References

- Baier, Christian. 2008. "Über die Werke von Wladimir Pantchev" [About the Works by Wladimir Pantchev]. In *Die Welt meiner Musik. Der Komponist Wladimir Pantchev* [The World of my Music. The Composer Wladimir Pantchev], ed. by Elisaveta Valchinova-Chendova and Albena Naydenova, 126-136. Sofia: Mars.
- Dogaru, Anton. 1970. "Canto I de Aurel Stroe [Canto I by Aurel Stroe]. *Muzica 2*, pp.3-5.
- Lupu, Olguța. 2015. "Aspecte ale sintaxei eterofone în creația lui Ștefan Niculescu. Studiu de caz: *Eterofonii pentru Montreux*". In *Ștefan Niculescu. Portret în eterofonie*, ed. by Olguța Lupu and Florinela Popa, 67-85. Bucharest: Editura Muzicală.
- Niculescu, Ștefan. 2013. "Eine Theorie der musikalischen Syntax" [A Theory of Music Syntax]. In *Ștefan Niculescu*, ed. by Violeta Dinescu, Eva-Maria Houben and Michael Heinemann, 49-63. Oldenburg: BIS.
- Niculescu, Ștefan. 2013. "Heterophonie". In *Ștefan Niculescu*. Edited by Violeta Dinescu, Eva-Maria Houben, Michael Heinemann, 64-71. Oldenburg: BIS.
- Pantchev, Wladimir. 2008. "Die Welt meiner Musik". Wladimir Pantchev – Albena Naydenova: Dialoge. [The World of my Music. Wladimir Pantchev – Albena Naydenova: Dialogues]. *Die Welt meiner Musik. Der Komponist Wladimir Pantchev*, ed. by Elisaveta Valchinova-Chendova und Albena Naydenova, 60-107. Sofia: Mars.
- Petrova, Angelina. 2022. "Interkulturelle Poetik und Live-Elektronik: Der Komponist Wladimir Pantchev und sein Werk <<Lieder meiner Vorfahren>> (2008)" [Intercultural Poetics and Live-electronic: The Composer Wladimir Pantchev and his Work <<Songs of my Ancestors>> (2008)]. *Austauschprozesse zwischen West und Ost in der europäischen Musikkultur des 20. Und 21. Jahrhunderts*, ed. by Albena Naydenova, Sabdra Löcker-Herschowitz and Nicole Feiner, 387-394. Sofia: Direct Services.
- Sandu-Dediu, Valentina. 2015. "Câteva teme ale muzicii lui Ștefan Niculescu". In *Ștefan Niculescu. Portret în eterofonie*, ed. by Olguța Lupu and Florinela Popa, 31-42. Bucharest, Editura Muzicală.
- Szilagyj, Ana. 2014. "Ștefan Niculescu" (recenzie). *Actualitatea Muzicală 1*, p.12.

Witt, Karsten. 2002. "Originalität und Metier. György Ligeti und Ștefan Niculescu im Gespräch" [Originality and Metier. György Ligeti and Ștefan Niculescu in Conversation]. *MusikTexte* 92 (Feb.), pp.37-47.