

ARCHAISMES by Sigismund TODUȚĂ Stylistic guidelines concerning interpretation

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Abstract: *Sigismund Toduță (1908 – 1991) is one of the most brilliant representatives of the Romanian musical culture in the second half of the 20th century. The complex personality of the musician was noted as a universal pedagogue, composer, and musicologist. The originality and authenticity of the composer is manifested by an expression specific to the Romanian national spirit. Thus, to enrich his thematic compositional language, he knew to deeply and discreetly deepen the ageless layers of the Romanian folk song, whose melodic and rhythmic motifs and nuclei were inspiring models of his creative thinking.*

Keywords: *Sigismund Toduță, choral music, complex stylistic interferences, conducting manners*

1. Introduction

Sigismund Toduță's musical creation characterizes the impressive work of a creator and deep thinker on the expressive meanings and valences of music. It reveals a construction and inner order reverberating a cosmos opposed to any chaos. The rigor and mastery of the teacher and the composer covers under the apparent severity of the form a sensitivity and warmth of the content of an impressive expressive force.

During the three creation periods, the composer knew how to combine the Neo Renaissance and Neo-Baroque polyphonic thought, impregnated by the Gregorian and Byzantine religious intonations with the Romanian folkloric. In the last creative period, in an up-to-date vision of the modern constructivism specific to the music of the 20th century, the message of his compositions reveals a stylistic musical poetic modelling in which he noticed his orientation towards heterophony and a heavily chromate modalism.

The adopted theme is diverse, but the composer has mostly approached philosophical topics that express, in a grave and profound meditation, the great problems of humanity and the sense of existence.

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The profound expressiveness, the diaphanous serenity, the clarity of archaic melodicism is in sharp contrast to the asperity, the hardness and the tension of the dissonant language of modern constructivism in contemporary creation. This language expresses the spirit of the epoch of the late XX century, dominated by the intrusion of rationality and technicism into the affective, emotional world, specific to any artistic experience.

2. Discussion

Each musical creation has its own, unique means of expression, hidden in the musical elements employed by the composer. This manner of expressing the ideas beyond the music is strongly related to the historical context, as well as to the various art movements and periods or national schools. The rendition of a choral work, through an expressive re-creation, requires – from the conductor and the choristers alike – a profound understanding of the musical content, of the ideas and emotions, which must match the composer's message.

The purpose of this presentation is to propose several conducting methods and technical suggestions, related to the rendition of the choral work *Arhaisme (Archaismes)*, aiming to reveal the complex and individual style of the composer Sigismund Toduță. The complexity of the elements of musical language demand from the performers a deep understanding and the rendition of each section in such a manner that these can be clearly distinguishable, though part of the unique message of the work.

The present account is an extension to the exegetical analysis presented in the paper *Archaismes by Sigismund Toduță – stylistic interferences, conducting interpretations*.

Part I. A – *Salmodiando*

Being an expressive section in the Byzantine music manner, about a recitative salmodiando, it is necessary to thoroughly document the specific style of interpretation and intonation of this work. I. D. Petrescu speaks of a real "art of psalmody of recitative texts" (Panțiru 1982, 5). In this respect, we enumerate some a few suggestions concerning the art of psalmody of recitative texts from Byzantine music detached from the work of the Evangelical lecturer in Iași by Grigore Panțiru, one of the disciples of Byzantinology expert I. D. Petrescu:

- the recitative usually extends to a pentachord having the dominant base intonational sound;
- the support, sound intonation of sound is the basis of the recitative;
- the text must have clarity in speaking
- the accent is done according to the phonetic and expression rules of the Roman language (on phrases, words and ideas);

- the cadence is done according to the punctuation in the text, especially by under tone.

Regarding the art of the psalmody, the same I. D. Petrescu indicates to those who want to know: "starting from the feelings of the soul structure of the Romanian people, transmitted ancestrally ..." (Panțîru 1982, 7).

In *Archaisms*, the composer used a classical notation, while authentic Byzantine music was written in musical notation. This musical notation includes signs specific to the psalmist notation, "mnemotechnical words that remind the psalm of the melodic formula that he already knew" (Panțîru 1982, 17). In order to understand the meaning of these signs, let us mention only a few: *kremaste* - indicates the raising of the voice with a slight accentuation; *syrmatike* - undulatory movement the bar - letting the voice down with accentuation. Here, the signs of the musical notation indicate not only the duration, the height or the meaning of the melodic movement, but also the character of the interpretation. Knowing these characteristics of the psalmist intonation, we must look for a similarity between the interpretative semantic meaning of these melodic formulas and the graphic writing of the melodic formulas written in the score by the classical notation. In this way, we can deepen the semantics of the classical musical text. The conductor must know all these principles and rules in order to understand and reproduce the hidden and profound meaning of musical truth.

Therefore, without distorting the meaning of phrasing by imposing dynamic and expressive shades, expressive accentuation or detachment of sounds or syllables, as well as aggression and tempo are clearly written in the score. The exact realization of dynamic expressive plans as well as tempo rates is a matter of knowledge and intuition of the conductor and the choral ensemble. The expressive realization aims at highlighting the content of the musical and poetic text subordinated to the main thematic idea. Anticipating a characteristic of the entire work, we appreciate that the constructive structure is linear, polyphonic, harmony being the result of the vertical alignment of the melodic lines, and as intonational organization systems we notice the predominance of the modal, but also tone-modal or purely tonal systems.

A special issue of this part is to support the sound intonation of the sounds and the perfect tuning of the tuning structures - some particularly difficult due to the parallel chromatic walking of the voices. The character of intonation and imposture, the way of attack, the inflection of voice, the timbre colour must reflect both the expressiveness of the poetic musical content and the specific style of these sections.

The fluid character of the work must give the feeling of a continuous and natural flow, even so-called static moments are moments of rest, but also of affective accumulation towards a new movement. The thematic imitation from one voice to another has to be done smoothly, because the novelty of the imitative speech is embossed in the timbre. Terminations of motives or phrases in semi cadences and cadences are flowing and natural, non-attentive.

The metro-rhythmic unfolding of the musical discourse has a specific character due to the absence of metrics. The rhythmic structure is not framed in a certain metric organization, not even an alternative, complex one, but is subordinated only to the phrases that derive from the rhythmic structure of the poetic text. The metric organization would implicitly imply certain accents that may or may not coincide with those of poetic musical discourse. Functionally, metric accents are distinct from expressive accents; if the first ones are unitary, homogeneous, repetitive, the expressive ones are distinguished by their sense of charge. To avoid overlapping accents or distorting the meaning of phrases through confusion and contradiction between metric accents and expressive musical accents, the composer renounced the metric organization of rhythmic structures. At the same time, the absence of metric organization is a feature of style that requires the musical phrase and its internal articulations (sentences, motifs or rhythmic-melodic cells) as a way of organizing and not a metric structure.

The rhythmic unfolding of the musical discourse has as a standard unit the duration of time, from which all the rhythmic structures are obtained by augmentations and divisions. Metrics organization in classical measures is not noted, rhythmic discourse is measured by one-pass, specific to the Byzantine music tact. This tact is a waving movement, chironomic, which shows in a 1-time movement the outline of the musical image of the phrases and the expressiveness of the poetic text.

However, the use of the beat in one manner is not recommended permanently and continuously in our case for several reasons:

- the work is not authentic Byzantine;
- the visual unusualness of the ensemble with the one-beat gesture can lead to interpretative confusion;
- simple beat in one with a mechanical character is not enough because in Byzantine music beat in one was only a technical aspect but it also had an expressive meaning, little known to the contemporary conductor, and even less to the choristers.
- metric accents on the expressive ones, beat will be done using all classical tact by assigning the succession of musical phrases to the most appropriate metric structures.
- classical beat must not distort the meaning of phrasing by imposing foreign metric accents, but on the contrary, potentiating the expressive accents of the poetic phrase.

The conducting gesture must express the character of interpretation and not only achieve mechanical tact.

At the same time, in conducting voices in polyphonic development, the conductor anticipates and marks with gestures each entry, by sight or head movement.

Part II – B *Simple ternary metric (3 / 4); The fourth = 152-160*

The contradictory expressiveness of part II is prepared from the end of the first part. Although the beat can be carried in time one, due to the musical development speed, it is nevertheless indicated to be carried in three small but firm movements for the clarity of the interpretation in marking the time. Syncope, syncopated contrasts to be marked by obvious conductive gesture and a suggestive look. The conducting gesture includes in its inflections the expressive accents of the musical text.

The clear, expressive spelling of the poetic text implies giving more attention to the initial and final consonants.

Part III-C *Mosso (Fourth = 184-192)*

The emphasis on the meaning of the word "terrible" in the first two ternary measures is achieved both by a dissonant harmony and by overlapping over the ternary meter of the binary meter, realized by the syncope. Thus, these two introductory measures represent both the element of continuity with the previous section and the discontinuity, anticipating the next section.

The clarity of the text utterance, of the initial and final consonants, the detachment of the syllables and the words with expressive role, the energy and the psycho-emotional load of expressing the general background must contribute fully to the realisation of this moment of paroxysm culmination which signifies toil, pain but also greatness and grandeur given by the moment of Creation.

Conducting beat (in four) must ensure clarity and homogeneity of the gesture, and the expressive accents of the text are highlighted from the inflection of the hand joint. Mime and pantomime contribute to the suggestive expression of this load and dramatically musical performances.

Motivating phrasing and highlighting the expressiveness of the poetic message by the conductor and the band plays a special role. Dynamic and expressive achievement is indicated in the score and must express the atmosphere of the lyrics.

The whole construction of this phrase requires a gradual decrease of the sound, a relaxation of the tense state, to the sensation of drowsiness and exhaustion.

Part IV-B' *Fourth = 160-152*

It is actually a short resume of the second (*passacaglia*), from which only the first two variations are presented, followed by a harmonic pedal.

Part V- A' *Tempo I, Salmodiando*

It is a resumed change of the first part

The dynamic-expressive character of this part reflects the gradual silence of the sound, the clarification of all the contradictions and the clarification of the tensions of

the sound drama, merged into the divine peace of the celestial existence. Tact is done as in the first part, by expressing the semantics of musical phrases.

3. Conclusion

The analysis consists only of synthetic problems of the compositional structure, of the form and content of a complex work of high expressive force and with a semantic potential of an inexhaustible variety.

The approach of each section will be the subject of practical and analytical study, of the choir and the conductor in rehearsals. The theoretical elements of the form, emphasized in the analysis, are not a subject of the study itself, but a means of understanding the deep meaning of the poetic-musical message and making the most expressive vocal-choral interpretation;

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