

Dialogue between the Art of Music and other Disciplines

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Abstract: *The scenic theatre occupies an everincreasing area within the arts. The interaction between visual and auditory arts gains an ever larger ground. One can see that syncretism is required in the contemporary opera much more than in the first decades of the 20th century, and this can only lead to certain developments. These developments come to light within interdisciplinarity, which determines new aesthetic conceptions of modern art. In the latter part of the 20th century, different conceptions put the most varied disciplines face to face: linguistics, psychology, informatics, logic and biology. It becomes increasingly clear that the new preoccupations combine several fields, creating the conditions for the emergence of transdisciplinarity. Consistently maintaining the interdisciplinary vision of an aesthetic object, its analysis leads to remarkable consequences. As any other field of knowledge, music is not only a journey to the borders of the world of sound, but also a possibility for the Human Being to know the Universe and to know himself/herself.*

Keywords: *music, plurality, syncretism, sound, word, literature, poetry*

1. Introduction

Like poetry, music has access to the infinity of existence. Just like mathematics, the art of music transcends life, in order to express the complex aspects of existence.

In the latter half of the 20th century (the '50s), different conceptions put the most varied disciplines face to face: linguistics, psychology, informatics, logic and biology. It becomes increasingly clear that the new preoccupations combine several fields, creating thereby the conditions for the emergence of transdisciplinarity.

In the '90s, the academician Solomon Marcus dealt with the analogies between the poetic and the mathematic language, and he emphasized that, within each analogy, an opposition develops, which leads to a new analogy, in an endless succession. By coverage and system, his poetics² may be considered the first attempt

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² It is about the apparent opposition between the poetic language and the mathematical one. In his work, *Poetica Matematică [Mathematical Poetics]*, Solomon Marcus approaches and even reaches

to study with mathematical means, the language of poetry; it is a great breakthrough in relation with many other researchers' achievements (linguists, mathematicians and even aestheticians³). Mathematics is a science of analogies⁴ – a genuine triumph of the metaphor⁵.

It regulates the interdisciplinarity relationships, inasmuch as, by analogies, it changes into a model for sciences such as: geometry, physics, chemistry, biology, linguistics, cybernetics, the other arts. By interdisciplinarity, the human being experiences the act of culture as a complex act, (s)he finds models that fulfil his/her spiritual, intellectual requirements. The mathematical model offers potentialities to comprehend the linguistic meaning, the overall artistic meaning, or the meaning of music (the art of sound).

Analysing the idea of semantic field, Solomon Marcus explains the two behaviours: the lyrical and the narrative⁶; thus, the lyrical – associated to the right brain hemisphere – controls emotions, intuitions, affectivity; it is about the “rough, unquantified, multidimensional emotivity”⁷, while the narrative – represented by the left hemisphere – controls language and logic. These two directions of behaviour often overlap and create convergences at other levels, such as “the conversion of lyricism into language, [which] means withal the narrativization of lyricism, too.”⁸

Taking up the terms of *lyricism* and *narrative* is interesting for what I want to prove in my research, inasmuch as, both in the substance of an opera libretto, and in the musical language, the change between “left” and “right” is dynamic, in each moment of the temporal flow.

Consistently maintaining the interdisciplinary vision of an aesthetic object, its analysis leads to remarkable consequences. Such an analysis determines other encounters of the morphological elements, which take part in the poetic game. Marcus finds not only that any such text uses a finite number of symbols, but also that the text becomes potentially infinite⁹. His conclusion shows the difference between a lyrical and a narrative grammar, respectively that in the former, the lyrical

the point where the dilemmas of the previous researchers on the poetic language are overcome, seen as a deviation from the common language.

³ Cf. Nicolae Manolescu, in *România literară* [*Literary Romania*], no. 34, September 11th, 1970, p. 3.

⁴ Definition offered by Stefan Banach (1892-1945), a Polish mathematician, known through his works in the theory of functions and functional analysis. He introduced in mathematics the notion subsequently known as *Banach space*.

⁵ The appreciation belongs to the Russian-German mathematician Iuri Ivanovici Manin (born in 1937), known for his works in algebraic geometry and diophantine geometry.

⁶ Initiating a model of observation through the passage from the *lyrical* to the *narrative*, Solomon Marcus analyses three poems by Tudor Arghezi: *Rada*, *Psalmul de taină* [*Psalm of Mystery*] and *Morgenstimmung*.

⁷ Solomon Marcus: *Invenție și descoperire* [*Invention and Discovery*], Cartea Românească Publishing House, Bucharest, 1989, p. 95.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 95.

⁹ Solomon Marcus: *op. cit.*, p. 95.

one, the units are stuck to the phonetic or rhythmic level (frequency of the vowels), whereas the latter, the narrative grammar, exposes units of the level of motives, events and formal sequences. It would be interesting to investigate the frequency of vowels in a libretto text, how the generative game oscillates from one structure to another, and if this game also changes its dramaturgy. Thus, we will be able to draw conclusions about the prerequisites for a narrative text to comply with the libretto project. Therefore, music requires a reading, in the light of both lyricism and narrative. The oppositions of the two entities lead to a new quality in the growth of the work of art; I can only investigate further in what conditions an algorithm used by Marcus can explain a musical and then a linguistic enunciation. Even if music does not operate with concepts, it is clear that, at a certain level of construction, it implies them.

2. About plurality

To speak about interdisciplinarity and plurality nowadays, when the field of the art of music is almost exclusively tributary to the unique model of understanding this form of expression, may seem like an irrelevant gesture. There are prevailing, as regards the art of sounds – according to the paradigm of our academic school – the autonomous disciplines. The theory, history of music, ethnography, folklore, and a few other adjacent subjects (harmony, counterpoint, orchestration, musical forms), then the actual singing or playing (either vocal or at a musical instrument) – clearly revolve around the field. The interdisciplinary experiences, which may be invoked so as to structure the respective field, add a special force of expression to the sonorous meaning and symbolism. Let's look back, in the history of culture: Michelangelo, Da Vinci, Bach or Beethoven, proved not only that in their art there was a hidden, extensive power, but also that the respective art was a way to connect the human being to the dimension of the Infinite. As any other field of knowledge, music is not only a journey to the borders of the world of sound, but also a possibility for the Human Being to know the Universe and himself/herself as an inhabitant of the Universe. Placing the Being on such a position determines associations of a subtle nature.

3. Syncretism of the arts, a source of musical meanings

The genuine twinning of the arts, according to Richard Wagner's conception, should have given rise to a body wherein all its elements concentrate in perfect harmony: poetic, musical, decorative and plastic art; a different mission from the one of

libretto illustrator devolving in the main upon the musician. While Wagner endeavoured to live up to this mission, becoming among others his own librettist, the musician of our century experiences similar attempts, in so far as arts tend to musicalise.

The impetus of the new syncretism does not only reduce to the aspiration to achieve “musical dramas” or “scenic mysteries”, as in Wagner’s vision or in Scriabin’s – the composer fascinated by the idea of the association between sound and light (see his symphonic works *Prometheus* or *Poem of Ecstasy*). It covers a wide set of issues, depicted in a different setting from the one of the traditional theatre, as one can see from Luigi Nono’s directorial project. The Italian composer conceives the possibility of a new syncretism, generated for instance by evoking the Spanish Civil War, by means of an outdoor show, held in the scenographic setting of one of the Venetian markets, where the concurrent projections on four huge screens, of films and slides, combine with songs and recitatives, with an intertwining of dialogues.

What stimulates the preoccupations to associate the various artistic languages, under the aegis of music, were the searches within every art, which made Raymond Bayer, a reputed aesthete, state: “Since the first quarter of the 20th century, music has prevailed and all arts have tended to musicalise”. This musicalization had an aesthetic substrate, the art of sounds being taken as a perfect model of immaterial purity of the expression.

Syncretism has been the way to manifest the propensity for beauty from ancient times. In the magic rituals, music, poetry, the texts with a magic, incantatory nature and poetry were intertwined, serving one and the same purpose. The musical language of the various communities was codified with the names which accompany the different modes, in the Greek music theory (Dorian, Frigian, Lydian etc.) and which define as many vocal-poetic styles, not only musical scales. The idea of a twinning of the arts, born under the patronage of the Muses, materialized in the ambiance of the old tragedy. All associations between song, dance and poetry, which idealised the communion between human, nature and culture were called “musical” by the ancient Greeks.

The reunion of the arts would be made by eurhythmy, a term referring to the synchronization of movements, in the gestural-poetical and vocal action. Eurhythmy occurs as a scenic result of the interaction between the musical performance, the poetical recitation, and the performers’ gestural response. It becomes expressive in the way of an inner speech, which reveals its meanings, with their entire affective load also emphasized by the waving veils that reflect the shifting colour of expression. Eurhythmy is therefore a predominantly interpretative art.

The eurhythmist’s “answer” to the poetical and musical information is one of deep introspection and sublimation, of rich emotional content. The ability to turn the messages of poetry and music into sacred, codified attitudes and movements, is acquired at the end of many years of study. The result is not manifested in

mechanically synchronizing the movements of the workgroup – as in classical or modern ballet – but in an individualized echo, which similarly propagates in the undulations of all who make it perceptible.

The optimal reflection of the word in music can be found in Programatism (music with a declared program), an achievement which belongs to Romanticism. From that moment on, the word, directly related to the thinking of music, appears in this art, through a set of themes which it itself declares, revealing an art with an affective nature; within it, music and word intertwine to penetrate into the sphere of philosophical thinking. The theatre and the spirit it avers, in its union with music, parts from the traditional music genres: lied, sonata, quartet of strings, symphony. Opera as a genre, and its collaboration with theatre, opposes to the forces of the autonomous musical form, the dramaturgical force of the libretto, which speaks of what is current and intrinsically human. Due to theatre, music acquires space; this does not occur by the totality of sonorities offered by musical structures, but through syncretism. The opera starts from the individual plan of the sounds to become semantically complex. This phenomenon occurs due to the projection by word, by verbalization, by meaningful content, which entail the obligation of the sound to participate in the verbal description. The sound variation, the forms of instrumental variation came to light from the melodic undulation, specific to the human voice, and the theatre came into existence from the opposition static – dynamic. The history of music and culture reflects this course to a smaller or greater extent.

Passing into another register, the film-text relation already supposes a complexity which influences the final result. I also have to emphasize the importance of the effort to choose the right actors (the cast), the settings, the soundtrack, which should convey the written text as accurately as possible, according to the vision of the director, composer and sound engineer. Sometimes, the movie can be a faithful screening, at other times a recreation of the work, an own manifestation to display the beautiful content in the work. Here we mention a few important screenings from the Romanian literature: *Moara cu noroc* [The Lucky Mill], *Ion, Pădurea Spânzurașilor* [The Forest of the Hanged], *Moromeții, Felix și Otilia* or *Baltagul* [The Hatchet], masterpieces of renowned authors. The goal will be to create a work with an original directorial vision from the initial one. It becomes obvious that, in case of the film, we speak of a reduction in images, actions, of an acceleration in the pace of the stages; only after we have read the book (in order to realize how the cinematic adaptation was made), we will be able to make a lucid comparison between the two discoveries; here comes naturally the critical spirit acquired through the contact with other arts. Unfortunately, there is a tendency that leads us to prefer the film to the detriment of the book, the reasons of which we find quickly: the new generation that thinks through the browsing spirit, the rapidity with which the information is intended to be obtained, and especially the lack of leisure time.

4. Interdisciplinarity aspects related to the *literature-music* binomial

To speak about the direct or indirect connection between literary production and other forms of the artistic message, such as the visual (architecture, painting, sculpture) or auditory (music, film, theatre) one, means to describe how the former reflects in the perimeter of art. Architecture meets with literature only on certain portions; there is about the forms of sonet, rondel, catren, as special analogies of some architectural symmetries. Painting is a plan of literature at another level of vibration; joining different descriptive moments by outline, touch, image, laws of perspective put into action, releases a special type of relation with it. Thus, in Poussin's painting, *Et in Arcadia ego*, this famous inscription is used, which expresses the nostalgia for a lost happiness, as an element which accompanies the French artist's painting. The symbolic dimension of the statuary group from Târgu Jiu, signed by Constantin Brâncuși, was reinforced by word. *Coloana Infinitului* [The Column of Infinity] or *Pasărea Măiastră* [The Magic Bird], *Miss Pogany* or *Masa Tăcerii* [The Table of Silence] transfer into another environment, the essence of a philosophical contemplation, to wit a representation in stone, in volume, of the multiple representations offered by the logos.

If theatre creates a complex form, alongside music, it is clear that the respective expression could not have been imagined without literary thinking. This thinking used words, phrases, the text as a fragment, the text as a whole, then the text of a novel. Updating the theories about the text, the linguistic product and its contemporary reception has only produced a reassessment of the messages, a new definition of the path from sound to meaning.

5. Conclusion

A few of the relations of literature with art in general have been described so far. We could state that art is sometimes abridged by literature, at other times supplemented by it. Beauty is transmitted here, having as a vehicle the written, sometimes spoken word, in case of a recitation, in which it takes the entire responsibility of the aesthetic value. If the image and the colour, in painting, are direct stimuli and the forms in sculpture almost invite us to perceive beauty by touch, word is sometimes a limit. It challenges our capacity to imagine colours, forms, landscapes. Literature in its entire area refers us to the other arts. There is always involved a contribution of the latter. We cannot speak of a landscape, in case of *Bacovia's Pastels*, for instance, without thinking of a progressive amplification of a relief, a materialization of the idea. The relation concept-image is present here. The connections between literature and the other arts are sometimes explicit, at other times implicit; sometimes they substitute each other, always changing in the process of creation. The relations

unanimously accepted by art critics thereby appear: in painting, the painted-word, in sculpture, the form-word, in cinematography, the image-word.

Painting and sculpture are in a subtle relation: in these two arts, the artist's inner voice prevails. His/her soul itself is painted or sculpted, the text being the easel that supports the artist's thoughts; in case of sculpture, matter will be the surface to mould.

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