

Representative images in Aurel Stroe's concerts

Petruţa-Maria COROIU¹, Alexandra BELIBOU²

Abstract: *Among the original images which distinguish Aurel Stroe's creation from a stylistic point of view the most representative are: "sonorous objects", "the dissipative fugue", "the matrix-chord", "the separate evolution", "the carnival", and "the secret harmony". The esthetical explanation of these concepts integrated in the musical discourse and their connection with the sonorous expressive level offer multiple satisfactions to those who study in depth Aurel Stroe's musical creation.*

Keywords: *iconic, concert, discourse*

1. Introduction

*"Pensive, with my hands behind my back/I walk along the railroad/
The straightest road/ Possible.
From behind, at great speed/A train is approaching/Which has never heard of me/
This train – as Old Zeno is my witness -/Will never reach me,
Because I will always be ahead of it/Ahead of things that do not think.
Or even if brutally/It will run me over,
There will always be a man/Who will walk in front of it/Pensive/
And with his hands behind his back/Like I am now/In front of the dark monster/
Which is approaching at a terrifying speed/And which will never reach me/Never."*
(Sorescu, 1993, p. 15, our translation).

The Romanian modern school of creation was supported in the beginning by G. Enescu, P. Constantinescu and M. Jora, then by classical names at national level such as A. Vieru, T. Olah, Şt. Niculescu, and Aurel Stroe. This is the context in which the great Romanian composer Aurel Stroe worked until he went abroad, where he found the peace and concentration necessary to carry on his complex activity. In one of his numerous publications, Iosif Sava lists the personality of

¹ Transilvania University of Braşov, maniuipetruţa@yahoo.com

² PhD Candidate, Transilvania University of Braşov, xela_lrig@yahoo.ca

Aurel Stroe among the composers who fought against the communist regime, through his work *Orestia II*³.

The three concerts which mark the end of his career, dated 1990-2001, are *Concert for violin and a soloist ensemble*, *Concert for saxophone and big band* and *Concert for harmonica and soloist ensemble*: they offer a unitary perspective on the stylistic features of Aurel Stroe's symphonic composition in the final years of his career.

The specificity of *his symphonic creation* can be highlighted by extracting from and analyzing certain iconic images of his creation, given that his entire composition art is based on revolutionary creative concepts in the music history such as the composition including several incommensurate cultural paradigms, or the complex polyphony at the level of the instruments in the symphonic ensemble.

2. Iconic images

Among the original images which distinguish Aurel Stroe's creation from a stylistic point of view the most representative are: "sonorous objects", "the dissipative fugue", "the matrix-chord", "the separate evolution", "the carnival", and "the secret harmony". The esthetical explanation of these concepts integrated in the musical discourse and their connection with the sonorous expressive level offer multiple satisfactions to those who study in depth Aurel Stroe's musical creation.

THE CONCERT FOR SAXOPHONE AND BIG BAND "PRAIRIE, PRIERES" was finished in Mannheim on 5 May 1993, located chronologically in the middle of the three works of the same genre highlighted in this paper. It represents the expression of a new perspective on concert symphonic music in the musical art of the 20th century. The concert is impressive through its technical and stylistic features, but especially through the inner atmosphere it creates and to which it gives a sonorous shape.

We notice the general architecture, made up of five parts, representing a number of multiple correspondences, both spiritual and of another nature: "*the vegetal and animal world is dominated by the pentagonal symmetry of gold, based on a dynamic periodicity (on the structuring of the increasing pulsations of a logarithmic spiral), different from the hexagonal symmetry (which reflects an inert, simplistic equilibrium)*" (Marcus Solomon, 1986, p. 69).

The musical form, its architectural pattern, does not refer strictly to the shape of the creation, but it also involves the concrete consequences generated by a certain interior formatting within the work of art ("*the shape of a thing is an uncontrollable reality, it can be perceived, but it cannot be measured or weighted*" - Boutot, A.,

³ In the same spirit of opposition against dictatorship we can also mention Anatol Vieru's "Pedeapsa" [The Punishment].

1996, p. 5). The author signalled the fact that this is rather a concert symphony for saxophone and big band.

The first iconic element which draws our attention is the cosmogonic one (“... *des formes naissent dans un milieu homogène...*” [shapes are born in a homogenous environment] - a new esthetic common place as compared to the previous notion expressed in the introduction, defining the same intention of technically and expressively coagulating the implications of a certain musical structure), with a first subsection, MULTIMOBILE – PRAIRIE I – LE CARNAVAL D’ARLEQUIN – PRAIRIE II. The term “multimobile” denotes the superposition of several mobile sections, ensuring a maximally complex superpositional polyphony, which requires an investigation of the terms intertextuality, polyphony, and super-positional complexity.

The image displays a complex musical score for a concert symphony, featuring multiple staves for various instruments. The score is written in 3/4 time and includes dynamic markings such as *pp*, *f*, and *ppp*. The instruments listed on the left are:

- FL. 1 (Flute 1)
- FL. 2 (Flute 2)
- OB. 1 (Oboe 1)
- OB. 1 (Oboe 1)
- OB. 2 (Oboe 2)
- OB. 2 (Oboe 2)
- 2 CLAR. ab (2 Clarinets in A/B)
- FG. 1 (First Bassoon)
- FG. 2 (Second Bassoon)
- Cml. 1 (Cornet 1)
- Cml. 2 (Cornet 2)
- Pec. IV (Percussion IV)
- Pec. V (Percussion V)

The score shows intricate polyphonic textures with overlapping lines and complex rhythmic patterns. The notation includes various note values, rests, and articulation marks, illustrating the 'multimobile' and 'superpositional polyphony' mentioned in the text.

Fig. 1. *Polyphonic sections*

Each of the mobile sections is “signed” by certain melodic and rhythmical archetypes which define it. It is the archetype which supports, from the point of view of the internal energy, these routes that, given their diversity, need a spiritual substance to coagulate them, able to ensure the functioning of each individual mobile section. The multimobile sections reveal an aesthetic analysis of the detail which creates – collectively – a unitary, well-organized universe.

The image displays two systems of musical notation for a multimobile section. The first system covers the dynamic range from *cres.* to *do.*, while the second system covers from *poco* to *imin30°*. Each system includes staves for Vln. I, Vln. II, Vla., Cell., and Bass. The notation features wavy melodic lines and specific performance instructions such as "otez les sourdines individuellement" and "imin30°".

System 1 (Crescendo):

- Vln. I:** *cres.* Mobile σ otez les sourdines individuellement *do.*
- Vln. II:** *cres.* Mobile ρ otez les sourdines individuellement *do.*
- Vla.:** *cres.* Mobile γ otez les sourdines individuellement *do.*
- Cell.:** *cres.* Mobile Δ otez les sourdines individuellement *do.*
- Bass:** *cres.* Mobile ϵ otez les sourdines individuellement *do.*

System 2 (Decrescendo):

- Vln. I:** *poco* Mobile σ *imin30°* *poco*
- Vln. II:** *poco* Mobile ρ *imin30°* *poco*
- Vla.:** *poco* Mobile γ *imin30°* *poco*
- Cell.:** *poco* Mobile Δ *imin30°* *poco*
- Bass:** *poco* Mobile ϵ *imin30°* *poco*

Fig. 2. Multimobile sections

In the same category of music phenomena as the multimobile sections we also find the lines with “separate evolution” at the end of the Concert for soloist harmonica (postlude); the mobile section performed by the cello (Giusto) creates at that moment the separation of the musical discourse on several levels, with no connection among them. Linguistically, we are reminded of Vauquois’ “context-independent grammar” examined as: a paradoxical discipline which is aimed at making grammar notions more efficient outside the preconceptions imposed by the context. Such an extra-musical model demonstrates that the modern claims concerning the independence of multiple levels present within the same work of art are both possible and manageable.

Aurel Stroe illustrates in the first concert section the cosmogonic idea of defining the being as a “homogenous core”; if homogeneity is totally suggested by the agreement of eighteen voices, then the interior conflicts and tectonic movements in the evolution of the being are rendered plastically by the four overlapping layers of mobile sections resulting from the natural superposition of the four scores of the bow instruments.

After their ample diversification, in the last segment before the following program section, the mobile sections are regrouped into a multimobile complex. At this moment the author requests “*gommer doucement les derniers elements – “les survivants” – du multimobile*” [“gently delete the last – surviving - elements of the multimobile”]. We can see the composer himself resorting to metaphorical, symbolic descriptions of certain concrete musical realities. The second subsection, PRAIRIE I can afford a comparative analysis of the expositive process (manifest in “Prairie I”) and the reprise one in “Prairie II”. The third subsection, LE CARNAVAL D’ARLEQUIN belongs to the comical area, of the reverse symbol, whose meaning is distorted; the Harlequin is another way of dissimulating expressiveness by converting it to a different area: the opposite one.

The second part brings forth the idea of rarefaction (RAREFACTION DU MULTIMOBILE): in fact, an inner development, an implosion of the first subsection of the first part (“Multimobile”), in the sense of researching their concealed universe, of severing the implicit ties among the elements which form the multimobile, so as to allow the access to the substratum reality of the work of art.

It contains the “secret harmony” – a musical fragment which enciphers the sonorous archetypes of the entire work of art: in fact, it is a choir piece for eight voices, with two harmonic layers with a temporal delay of one and a half lines. Each chord structure, along with the immediately following one and its complementary one, make up an ascending scale which subsumes all the sounds in the major or minor sixth (C-A sharp, D-B, E flat – C flat, E sharp - C, F-D, G flat – E flat).

II. FUGUE DISSIPATIVE

ALLEGRO GIOVIALE
♩ = 120 TEMPO GIUSTO 1

The score is divided into several systems:

- System 1:** Arpa (Arpeggio), Violas (pizz. *mf*), Basses (*ff*).
- System 2:** Arpa, Vla. (trills), Bass (*ff*).
- System 3:** Arpa (*f* *sonoro*), Vla., Bass.
- System 4:** Acc. (A), Clar. Basso (sb) (*f cantabile*, *p*, *ff (x piano)*), Perc. I, Perc. II, Arpa (*mf*), Violins (*f* *veloce*), Violas, Cellos, Basses.

S = Sujet ; R = Rêponse ; C.S. = Contre-sujet

Fig. 3. Fugue dissipative

The “secret harmony” is the symbol for a secondary level, with profound meanings, which are not revealed in the concrete layer of the sonorous work of art. “*The symbolism marks the explosion of language into something else than itself*” (Ricoeur, 1999, p. 67). The secret harmony results more from the degradation of the choral pieces in the first part of the concerts, degradation which affects firstly the metro-rhythmic effort (which is the cause of the mismatch between the two levels).

The third part presents another iconic image of his creation, maybe the most beautiful, the most profound and plastic one: ASCENSION VERS UNE MELODIE LONTAINE: the descending scale is readjusted by a systematic ascending effort – not only at the sonorous level... “Une melodie lointaine” is the symbol of the interior ideal⁴. The melody is represented only as an ideal, it is not explicitly present in the work.

Through the programmatic discourse, we find in the fourth part UN RESTE NON ASSIMILE: “(...ONDINES)”, which resumes the discourse of bow instruments (cello and contrabass), the only ones that survived the rarefaction which affected all the mobile parts in the deep structure, eliminating them from the acoustic space. We obtain three overlapping levels. And the last part refers to UN DERNIER RESTE (in fact, a soloist intervention of the sopranino saxophone), through which the concert becomes a monologue, an inarticulate musical manifestation. This phenomenon of the REST reminds us of a modern modality to finish the musical discourse – open creation.

3. Conclusions

The humanity and discretion that stem from each of Aurel Stroe's compositions made him a solitary personality in the history of Romanian music, a man who avoided the public exploitation of his person, an artist who only promoted ideas through his music, and not his creation as such⁵ (Noica, 1991, p. 228). This is because “*a man's personality is the object of faith, not of knowledge...*” (Ionescu, N., 1995, p. 47).

Aurel Stroe, the man, always supported the artist who manifests himself fully through inner qualities – the guarantee of the artistic value of the products created by the artist's spirituality. In the absence of this interior foundation of his creation, his music would not have the depth we notice each time we listen to it. J.

⁴ “Am iubit lucruri tot mai înalte, lăsând mereu în urmă ceea ce până atunci iubisem atât de mult și acum ne găsim în fața unei frumuseți pe care am dorit-o dar, în nici un sens omenesc al cuvântului, n-o putem avea”. [We have loved higher things, always leaving behind what we had loved so much before, and now we are in front of a beauty we have always wanted but which we cannot have in any human sense of the word.]

⁵ “Tragicul românesc nu e prin explozie, e prin implozie. De aceea nu se dicernă, ca tragic”. [The Romanian tragic spirit is not an explosion, but an implosion. This is why it cannot be seen as tragic.]

W. Goethe noted, in his writings: “*if the proportion of the personality’s inner harmony disappears, even the special qualities can be darkened, suspended or erased*” (Goethe, 1972, p. 36).

It is also important to mention the way Romanian spirituality is reflected in Aurel Stroe’s musical creation, because we can claim he infuses in them a deep substratum - difficult to notice at first sight, complicated to detect in the complexity of the message conveyed, which stems from the profound Romanian spirit and culture, and, in a broader sense, from humanism in general.

4. References

- Boutot, A. 1996. *Inventarea formelor [The Invention of Forms]*. București: Nemira.
- Goethe, J. W. 1972. *Maxime și reflecții [Maxims and Reflections]*. București: Editura Univers.
- Ionescu, N. 1995. *Curs de metafizică [Course in Metaphysics]*. București: Humanitas.
- Noica, C. 1991. *Jurnal de idei [Diary of ideas]*. București: Humanitas.
- Platon. 1995. *Banchetul [The Banquet]*. București: Humanitas.
- Ricoeur, P. 1999. *Conflictul interpretărilor [The Conflict of Interpretations]*. Cluj-Napoca: Editura Echinox.
- Sava, I. 1998. *Claviaturile timpului [Time’s Keyboard]*. Iași: Polirom.
- Solomon, M. 1986. *Artă și știință [Art and science]*. București: Editura Eminescu.
- Sorescu, M. 1985. *Poezii [Poems]*. Iași: Editura Eminescu.