

## **Organic structure of the form in the *Second Sonata for Piano and Violin Op.6* by George Enescu**

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**Abstract:** *Composed by George Enescu in 1899, the Second Sonata for Piano and Violin Op. 6, in F Minor is a turning point in the author's thinking, which highlights by its structure the cyclical principle, to wit the guiding principle of Enescu's maturity creation. Several cyclical elements pan out even before this musical piece, starting with 1897, in the First Sonata for Violin and Piano, the theme of the slow part being brought again, yet transfigured – by the change of motif, rhythm and tempo – as the theme of the final part – and in 1898, in the Sonata for Cello and Piano, the unity of the whole musical piece is achieved by the use of certain melodic cells throughout the piece.*

Keywords: *Cyclical principle; enescian sonata*

### **1. Introduction**

*The Sonata for Piano and Violin in F minor, op. 6 (1899) encompasses, in the pattern of the classical form, the author's youthful impetus and impressive music knowledge and expertise. It cannot be understood without being related to the creative technique of the composers of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and early 20<sup>th</sup> century, on the one hand, and to the folkloric thinking, on the other hand. The most original features of Enescu's style – the rhythmic system, the nature of chromaticism, the specificity of polyphony, and the cyclical principle – must be explained in the light of the synthesis between the Western music elements and those of folkloric origin. For *Sonata II*, a turning point situated in the late formative years of the composer's style, the cyclical thinking is defining. The cyclical principle reflects on the thematic conception, still valid, proceeding to its transfiguration in a double sense:*

- *divergent, by rhythmic-melodic transformations, which, applied to the cyclical theme, bears it away from the original, and causes its multiplication in several variants, sometimes completely new expressions;*
- *convergent, by drawing closer to one another apparently different themes, which tend to contaminate, and which, by the transfer of common elements, get to naturally continue, one through the other.*

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The cyclical elements appear in Enescu's creation before this musical piece. Thus, in the First Sonata for Violin and Piano (1897) the theme of the slow part becomes, by the change of mode, rhythm and tempo, one of the final themes, and in the Sonata for Cello and Piano (1898) certain melodic cells which circulate throughout the piece, ensure its unity. In the Second Sonata, the cyclical principle is carried forward, going beyond the phase of circulation of the themes (or of a few thematic elements as leitmotifs) from one part to another of the musical piece.

## 2. Content - analysis of the first part of the second Sonata for Piano and Violin Op. 6 in F minor

**I-st Part** – *Assez mouvementé*: form of sonata

Scheme of the form:

### A - Exposition (m.1-79)

A (m.1-23) = Theme I

a1 + a2 + a1 var. + a2 + a1 (epilogue)  
 5 4 7 5 2  
 5 (2+2) (4+3) (2+3) 2

A'(m.24-37) = Bridge

a1 + a2 + a2  
 6 4 4  
 6 (2+2) (2+2)

F minor

B (m.38-52) = Theme II

b1 + b2

11 4  
 (4+4+3) 4

A/C/A/A

F minor/A minor

B'(m.53-80) = varied reprise of Theme II

b1var. + b2var. = conclusion of the exposition  
 (transition towards development)

12 15 15  
 (4+4+4) 15  
 A/E/C#/C#/D/F/F

### B - Development (m.80-106)

Phase I (m.80-84) Phase II (m.85-93) Phase III (m.94-100) Phase IV (m.101-106) =  
 anacrusis reprise

F minor

Fminor

E/F# minor

Fminor

### A - Reprise (m.107-134)

B (m.107-121)

b1 + b2

11 4  
 (4+4+3) 4

F/Ab/F/F

B'(m.122-134)

b1var.

13  
 (4+4+5)

### Coda (m.135-160)

A (m. 135-160)

a1 (m.135-147) + a1/a2 (m.148-160)

13 13

Bb/C minor

F minor

In this case, for the intimate cohesion of the classical moments of the sonata allegro, the procedure of linking the thematic expositive areas with equal elements of thematic

origin (even whole themes), which temporarily acquire introductory functions, either transitive or conclusive, is defining. One can see, from the form scheme, that the thematic surface A (m.1-23), initially the main theme of part I, is almost identically repeated (A' = m. 24-37), with a small sequential widening of the first musical phrase, a1 (m. 27-28), being, this time, invested with the attribute of a bridge, due to the modulating office it makes, from F minor, the tonality of theme I, in A minor, the tonality of the second theme. From the second phrase, b2, of the second theme, B (m. 38-52), initially of four measures (m. 49-52), the conclusion of the exposition (sector 5 integral) and so forth, is built, by amplification to 15 measures.

The onset of the musical piece in unison (understanding therewith the octave) reveals the supremacy of the melody as a means of expression in the conception of the sonata, and in the enescian language, probably to its folkloric origin. The fact is that Enescu repeatedly experiments it: Prelude at unison, Octet of strings – theme I, part I, Symphony I - theme I, part I. This splendid undulation of only five measures will constitute the first phrase (a1) of the main theme (A), in the melodic turns of which Sigismund Toduță finds several pattern elements that seem the outcome of the assimilation of the Classical and Romantic heritage. They are:

- a. “a *porrectus* characteristic of the franckian-discourse onset”;
- b. the *porrectus* followed by the descending sixth, typically brahmsian”;
- c. “the franckian evolution process, in which the terms of the latent bachian polyphony are included”.

Resulted from applying the musical Baroque and Classicism procedures, the returns, in parts II and III, to the theme of part I, are made under the sign of the thematic diminution and augmentation processes:

## Ex. 1

partea II, m.12

partea III, sector 30

partea III, sector 29

Theme I is, in fact, a wide thematic area including five phrases, which start from the set of motives of the initial unison, a1, processed by evolution or elaboration, being

juxtaposed in a symmetry of the non-retrogradable succession -  $a1+a2+a1v+a2+a1$ . One notes that the symmetry axis coincides with the climax of this thematic area, a moment achieved by the rappel of the first phrase in a varied formula ( $a1v$ ).

One of the hypostases of *cell x*, namely  $x'$ , as a minor-third cell ( $y$ ) changed into sixth ( $y'$ ), situated in the first phrase of theme I,

Ex. 2

The image shows two musical phrases in a single staff. The first phrase, marked 'm.2', consists of four notes: G4, A4, B4, and C5. The first two notes (G4 and A4) are grouped together and labeled 'x'', and the last two notes (B4 and C5) are grouped together and labeled 'y'. The second phrase, marked 'm.5', consists of four notes: G4, A4, B4, and C5. The first two notes (G4 and A4) are grouped together and labeled 'y'', and the last two notes (B4 and C5) are grouped together and labeled 'y''.

insinuates into the second phrase,  $a2$ , in reversed and varied forms:

Ex. 3, p. I, theme I,  $a2$ , m.6

The image shows a single musical phrase in a single staff. The phrase starts with an anacrusis (anacruza) consisting of two notes: G4 and A4. This is followed by a series of notes: B4, C5, B4, A4, G4, F4, E4, D4, C4. The notes B4, C5, B4, and A4 are grouped together and labeled 'y'var.'. The notes G4, F4, E4, and D4 are grouped together and labeled 'x'inv.'. The notes C4 and B3 are grouped together and labeled 'y'var.'. The notes A3 and G3 are grouped together and labeled 'x' var.'. The phrase ends with a fermata over the final note G3. The dynamic marking 'f' is placed below the staff.

It is certain that the second thematic element,  $a2$ , is derived from the first. The first two measures constitute the anacrusis, which, by an ascending design (rocket type) prepares the climax, once with the appearance of the fragmented motif, cut from  $a1$ , throughout a minor third, with a specific rhythmic. The pauses intercalated between the cellular fragments are ingeniously exploited in the plurivocal dimension, through the complementary intervention of the piano, which imitatively takes over the same material, thickened in accordic mixtures.

By dynamizing the exposition with the characteristics of a small evolution, the phrase situated in the middle of the main theme -  $a1v$  - is invested with tensional expressive virtues, inasmuch as, by internal sequential widenings, it is meant to prepare the culmination of the entire principal thematic moment:

Ex. 4, p. I, theme I, m.10

The image shows a single musical phrase in a single staff. The phrase starts with an anacrusis (anacruza) consisting of two notes: G4 and A4. This is followed by a series of notes: B4, C5, B4, A4, G4, F4, E4, D4, C4. The notes B4, C5, B4, and A4 are grouped together and labeled 'I'. The notes G4, F4, E4, and D4 are grouped together and labeled 'II'. The notes C4 and B3 are grouped together and labeled 'III'. The notes A3 and G3 are grouped together and labeled 'IV'. The phrase ends with a fermata over the final note G3. The dynamic marking 'f' is placed below the staff.

We can consider the melodic construction of this seven-measure phrase as great ascending-descending curve, which the expressive spheres in the dynamic accumulation-relaxation register are added to. Thus, after the culmination in



It is the first rhythmic rupture (grouping four brief sounds which replace the regular pulsation of the three fourths cumulated in the measure of 9/4), which conveys the image of upsurge to the heights and of calmness. In terms of intonation, the piano develops on long, brahmsian arpeggios, transferred from one register to another, it decomposes according structures of the tonality *A minor*, with the fourth step up (brought as an element *ajoutée* of the fifth) and the second down (imprinting a frigid colour), elements also present in the melodic development, with the role of sensitive artificials (together with *G #* - seventh step altered on the rise). Based on the similitudes and motivic contrasts, the phrase *b1*, summing up 11 measures was asymmetrically structured in trinomial: *incipit-sequence-cadence* (4+4+3 measures).

As a reminder, the cantilena is followed by four echo measures, in which the continuity is maintained by the violin, and the contrast is ensured by the changed style, in quasi-heterophonic rhythmicization, of the piano, as a distant reverberation. It is a moment with a coloristic role, but also with a function in connecting distinct parts, which the composer confidently handles, as a modular element; it is the moment of thematic extensions and prefiguration (a vast transition towards development springing into existence therefrom). A procedure which brings Enescu closer to the serialist composers is illustrated here.

By virtue of the tendency to level the contrasts, even to remove them, Enescu regularly resorts to the procedure of counterpointing the second theme with elements of the first theme. The resumption of theme II (B') at the sector 4 of the score appears in this hypostasis. While the piano develops, in discant, the first phrase (*b1var.*) of the second theme, the piano isochronously counterpoints, in pulsation of eights, a "paraphrase" of the winding melody.

The thematic overlap covers only the section of *incipit* (4 measures) of *b1var.*, the *sequence* being brought in a *stretto* piano-violin (4 measures), and the *cadence* returns to the style of the first exposition of the B (4 measures). Instead, from the former *residual* phrase *b2* (4 measures), the composer achieves, through amplification by means of sequences (15 measures), the conclusion of the exposition and, at the same time, the transition (re-transition) towards the development (*b2var.*, sector 5); the conclusion, due to the aspect of *echo*, transition, due to the harmonic component, by which, with the help of chromatic slides, enharmonic or homonymic substitutions (major-minor) which create the sensation of a tono-modal floating, achieve the return to the initial totality, *F minor*, in which the development will be attacked.

The development (sector 6) was often mistaken for the beginning of the reprise, due to the tonal benchmark - *F minor*. Sharing, in this case, the opinion of Pascal Bentoiu, one of the foremost sonata analysts and enescian exegetes, I will opt for the first variant, due to the remaking aspect of the moment and to the manner with which the original theme interferes (the nuance is *pp*, beyond – let's not forget - only *p* of the harpsichord) with the second theme. The development is structured in four phases, melodic, harmonic and polyphonic processes which take place within it. In terms of tension, that upward slope of continuing accumulation, towards a *finish* in *fff* is observed.

Beginning in *pp*, the first phase of the development (5 measures) brings unchanged – structurally and tonally – the material of the phrase *a1*, overlapping the continuing pulse of the piano *echo*, maintained from the previous segment. Phase II amplifies, on a first step, the expressive register (the nuance becomes *f*), by presenting the same winding melody in a stretto (transposed to fifth) between the piano and the violin. Phase III, in *ff*, is based on an evolutionary formula of the winding theme, achieved by detaching the arpeggios (m. 3-5) and sequentially processing them on ascending-descending minor and reduced structures, manifesting tonal instability. This is the moment of a great, vast development, in which the soaring arpeggios of the piano compete with the brightness of the passages in tenth and octave of the violin.

In phase IV, in the culmination of the development, it comes the moment of the recurrence of the dramatic descending scale of Lisztian suggestion, exposed in *a1var*. (ex. 5), extended to three octaves, in *fff*, broken in counterpoints on ascending scales, performed in piano force. All the tumult stops, after a preliminary *decrescendo*, on a pedal of 1,5 measures, in *pp*, on the major accord of C, as dominant and harmonic anacrusis, for the attack of the reprise in *F minor*.

The concentrated reprise (sector 8-9), only focuses on resuming the second theme, the first theme appearing, by compensation, only in the *Coda*. The second thematic group is fully displayed, as presented in the exposition - B (*b1+b2*), B' (*b1*) but, this time, in the initial tonality *F minor*, with the same game of the passage to the relative and homonym (*A b - F major*). Only the conclusive phrase (*b2*) is eliminated, from which the transition towards development had been built. Finally, *Coda* attacks again the unison of the winding theme, uttered, this time, in a breath - *Très vite* (sector 10) -, accentuated by a *crescendo subito*, from *ppp* to *fff*. The last thirteen measures close this part in the fragmented moans of *a2*, thrice resumed at the violin and accompanied by the assertion of *a1*, at the piano, in a canon outlined in two hands.

### 3. Conclusion

Taking the melodic of the main theme of part I in the other two parts, modified only by a few rhythmic adjustments, leads to the so-called thematic cyclicity. Also at this point, the cyclical principle is extended by the procedure of the ostentatious return on specific modal assertions – formed of combinations between semitones and minor thirds – which will generate that specifically ennesian intervallic cyclicity.

The importance of the ennesian cyclical thinking is the greater as it manages to leave deep traces in the posterity's consciousness, the phenomenon creating true descendances in the Romanian art of composition. Thus, covering even briefly the sonata for violin and piano of the interwar period, reveals the following:

- an application of the thematic (convergent) cyclicity in S. Drăgoi, P. Constantinescu, T. Ciortea;
- an application of the intervallic cyclicity in S. Toduță;

The result of applying the cyclical principle at a thematic or cellular (intervallic) level is the attenuation of the thematic contrast specific to the expositional archetype of the sonata, which reduces its sphere of action from the rhythmic-melodic parameter to the one of expression and character. Hence the possibility of exploiting the thematic valences in simultaneity, as evolutions of the contrasting themes in synthesis overlaps are encountered in each quoted author.

In conclusion, **the Second Sonata in F minor, for Piano and Violin op. 6 by George Enescu** represents, by the originality and novelty of the language, as well as by the living spirit that emanates from its pages, an important point of reference not only for Enescu's creation and for the entire Romanian cultural heritage; but it acquires a place of choice also for the most important universal creations of this genre, of the time, the sonatas for piano and violin, and of the composers J. Brahms, C. Debussy, C. Frank, E. Grieg, G. Fauré.

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