

Recovering a mythical time. The Opera-fresco ”Steps of History” by Mihai Moldovan

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Abstract: *This study aims to approach the atypical lyrical genre - opera fresco - (Steps of History) in Mihai Moldovan's vision and to systematize certain original elements of language, through which the composer reveals to us a world of archetypes and, implicitly, of the history of the Romanian people. During the eleven frames, the composer makes use of a chromatic modal language, of neo-baroque architectures (fugue, canon, passacaglia) or free architectures, geometrical chord structures, textures based on the permutation principle at the cellular level, repetition with the filling of the voices along the way, dense dynamics and a diverse palette of tempos. The composer takes a full advantage of the timbrality of the voices and of the soloist instruments, of the mixed choir and of the entire apparatus of the orchestra, creating contrasting sections, where he sometimes reenacts the atmosphere of the national ancestral traditions. Having a real dramatic sense and being an eternal lover of the authentic folklore, Mihai Moldovan climbs the stairs of history, describing through his music the disturbing story of the Romanian people, faithful in the light of new horizons, which seem to be born from Brancusi's Endless Column.*

Key-words: *opera-fresco, archetypes, Mihai Moldovan, syntaxes, Romanian history*

1. ”Steps of History” or ”Persistence” in Mihai Moldovan’s view

During the latter part of the 20th century, the Romanian compositional arena passed through one of its greatest periods of renewal as far as style and language are concerned, resonating with most of the experiments in the modern and postmodern European music world.

This period, also known as the “post-Enescian age”, made ample use of neomodal means, making more and more visible the tendency of modal or modal-serial intonational systems to become generalized.

This historical context also stimulated the discovery and assimilation of the archetypal datum, identifying inexhaustible stylistic resources in the Romanian folk music tradition. Thus numerous composers, among whom Aurel Stroe, Ștefan

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Niculescu, Corneliu Dan Georgescu, Mihai Moldovan, Liviu Dănceanu, Liviu Glodeanu, Corneliu Cezar, etc. chose the path towards the simplification and the essentialization of musical language, making use, quite often, of rigorous mathematical structures or other compositional techniques meant to radically transform the ontological status of the musical work itself (Anghel 1998, 33).

Although he seemed to show a certain penchant for the serial technique, Mihai Moldovan did not take the road to dogmatic dodecaphony, as he tried to alleviate or to make flexible the idea of the rigid determinism promoted by the second Viennese school or, afterwards, by the promoters of integral serialism. Setting off, therefore, on the road leading to a synthesis between tradition and innovation, between the Eastern meditating-contemplating sense and the Western rationalizing one, Mihai Moldovan adopted an aesthetics and a language firmly rooted in archetype, joining in the series of highly appreciated names such as Liviu Glodeanu or Corneliu Dan Georgescu.

Starting from these premises and based on several in-depth analyses of Mihai Moldovan's works, musicologist Ileana Ursu (1996, 68-81) formulates four stylistic directions:

1. diffuse chromaticization of the modal;
2. total chromaticization;
3. "orthodox" dodecaphonic serialism;
4. neomodality.

During the **first period** (1963-1967), there predominates a modal language with vague and temporary chromatic insertions. Some works representative of this period are:

- *Rituale [Rituals]* - Suite for soprano and orchestra on folk lyrics;
- *Șase stări de nuanță (Omagiu lui Lucian Blaga) [Six nuance states (Homage to Lucian Blaga)]* - Suite for choir and orchestra on lyrics by Lucian Blaga;
- *Texturi [Textures]* - piece for orchestra.

The **second period** is marked by the use of the total chromatic, leading to important creations, such as:

- *Cântare omului [Praise to man]*- Cantata for mixed choir and orchestra on lyrics by Tudor Arghezi;
- *Poems for chamber orchestra* (1967).

The **third period** encompasses works in which the composer will make use of an "orthodox" dodecaphonic serial language (in the acceptance of musical criticism) such as:

- *Sonatina for violin and piano* (1967).

The **fourth** and final stylistic direction is the **neomodal** one, the language that the composer seemed to prefer, if we think of the multitude of works that he created:

- *String quartet no. 1* (1968);
- *Incantations I and II for clarinet and piano* (1968);
- *Vitralii* [Stained glasses] – *Seven pieces for orchestra* (1968);
- *Scoarțe* [Crusts] – *Piece for orchestra* (1969);
- *Proverbe și ghicitori* [Proverbs and riddles] – *Suite for a children choir and orchestra* (1971);
- *Cântece străbune* [Ancient songs] (1972) – *Cantata for soprano and orchestra* (1972);
- *Trepte ale istoriei* [Steps of history] – opera-fresco (1972) and so on.

In brief, here are some of the distinctive features of Mihai Moldovan's work:

- predilection for **symmetry**, present, at the morphological level, in the way the variational-transformational processing of the basic theme material was conceived;
- use of a chromatic modal language, open to polymodalism;
- permutational technique based on **prime** or **odd numbers** unravelled circularly at the level of rhythmic durations (see the works *Stained Glasses*, *Origins*, *Ancient Songs*, the opera *Steps of History*, etc.);
- geometric chord structures (of fourths, fifths and fourths, interval combinations, pre-clusters and clusters);
- predominance of imitative and free counterpoint;
- use of temporal arrangements based on mathematical formulas (the **Fibonacci sequence**, for instance);
- keeping unaltered folk music structures and aesthetic-philosophical significations;
- use of textures (heterophonic, melodic, rhythmic, leit-timbral);
- spectral structures.

Mihai Moldovan composed the **opera-fresco** *Steps of History* in 1972, during a period when he was defining his own style, on a libretto for which he collaborated with Sanda Mihăescu. The composer conceived the work so as to be broadcast by radio or TV station without having to lose a part of its charm.

The first audition took place on April 22, 1973 under the supervision of conductor Ludovic Baci, with the Radio Studio Orchestra and the Romanian Radio-Television Choir.

The work does not possess an architectural structure typical for the lyrical genre, meaning that dramaturgical moments are not delimited by acts, arias, duets, trios, etc. Actually, the composer intended to create a **fresco** of the Romanian

people's history in 11 pictures, divided, in turn, into a variable number of sections, and everything develops in the chronological order of historical ages.

Throughout the opera, Mihai Moldovan institutes **two levels**: **one** in which the "steps" are built with the help of the large orchestra, the mixed choir, and the vocal soloists, and **another one**, a background one (of an *ostinato* type), with folk music elements, supported by a chamber choir (12 interpreters) and three instruments (flute/piccolo, violin and cimbalom), with the role of a *concertino*, as in a Baroque *concerto grosso*. It should be mentioned that the second level is recorded on **tape** and played on loudspeakers during the concert, and the two types of sonorities - acoustic and artificial - interact in a complementary manner.

Like in ancient Greek tragedy, Mihai Moldovan invests the large choir with the role of a commentator of events. Moreover, archetypal structures are revealed in a special manner, in which modal melodics, timbrality, orchestration, and the permutational technique at the micro-cellular level create a fascinating fairy-tale world.

Along the work, several events and collective or individual historical characters that marked the centennial existence of the Romanian people are recollected in a chronological order. They are supplemented by ancient Romanian genres: the ballad, the *doina*, the song itself or pieces from children folklore - all of them dressed in the most adequate and authentic techniques of heterophonic and harmonic-polyphonic writing.

Frequently used archetypes - such as the ladder, the "universal hill-valley undulation", the one-multiple relationship, etc. - are identifiable in polyphonic syntaxes polymodal in nature, increasing the expressive value of the work through unusual timbral and orchestral solutions.

In this respect, Anatol Vieru's description of Mihai Moldovan's music is still emblematic: his music, the distinguished composer confessed, „has something of traditional wood-carved sculptures; it is a rough, lacking any kind of pomp or folds, but full of energy and colour" (Vieru 1987, 18).

Starting from these compositional ideas and concepts, Mihai Moldovan will create, through a sometimes mathematical determinism, various instantiations of the sound dramaturgy.

2. At the Sources – Symbols, Archetypes, Generative Matrices

In what follows, we will focus on the relationship between archetypes and their corresponding language structures, underlining the semantic valences and rhetorical expressions of the various sound contexts.

2.1. The Ladder (Ascension)

1. THE LADDER (ASCENSION)



1.1. Historical interval

(Steps of history – Legendary heroes and deeds)

Insurrection

(Picture X)

The 1907 Uprising

(Picture VIII)

Tudor Vladimirescu

(Picture VI)

Horia

(Picture V)

Mihai Viteazul [Michel the Brave]

(Picture IV)

Ștefan Cel Mare [Stephen the Great]

(Picture III)

Decebal [Decebalus]

(Picture II)



1.2. Musical interval:

“Step-by-step” imitation/*stretto*

(succession of step-by-step upward and/or downward entries of voices)

In the opera-fresco *Steps of History* by Mihai Moldovan, the **ladder**-archetype is present both at the conceptual level (as a musical-dramaturgical strategy) – see the succession of **historical intervals** marked by legendary heroes and deeds (Pictures I-XI)-, and at the phenomenological level, as an active principle in the morphogenesis of various sound contexts. As a result, the compositional perspective reveals numerous situations in which imitative polyphony applied to the plurivocal framework generates a succession of “step-by-step” entries of voices, a movement that may be deduced from the archetype of the “ladder” of intervals on which the imitation of the subject takes place.

In the next Ex. we come across a four-voice **canonical *stretto***, with symmetrical entries at the ascending M3, which describes a complementariness of the melodic slope of the *ascensio-descensio* type. The symbolism of the “ladder” also involves the sound density curve (*crescendo-decrescendo*), resulting here from

the interactive (complementary) action of the couples: **progression-regression** and, respectively, **agglomeration-rarefaction**. Furthermore, a graphic representation (even schematic) of the moment will reveal the **bilateral symmetry** that imposed a “mirrored” evolution of the two polyphonic blocks (see Figures 1a, 1b).

Figure 1a shows a musical score for a four-voice canonical "stretto" in G major. The score is for voices I A. 1, I S, 2, and 3. It features a ladder-archetype structure with overlapping entries of the phrase "Floa-re de ci-coa-re, În prun-duț de ma-re, Ia-tă că-mi ră-sa-re, Pu-ter-ni-cul soa-re." The dynamics are marked "p (legato)".

Fig. 1a. *Ladder-archetype. Four-voice canonical "stretto", p.18*

Figure 1b shows a musical score for a four-voice canonical "stretto" in G major. The score is for voices S, A. 1, and another S. It features a ladder-archetype structure with overlapping entries of the phrase "Că mi-a tot um-blăt, Lu-mea-n lung și-n lat, Ci vrea să se-n-soa-re, Dar el nu-mi ră-sa-re." The dynamics are marked "p".

Fig. 1b. *Ladder-archetype. Four-voice canonical "stretto", p.19*

What is more, the ladder-archetype proves to be intrinsic to **attack polyphony**, i.e. it represents the *sine qua non* condition in the building of this form of vertical syntax. It is found, for instance, in an orchestral context, when the trombone section sustains a minimal-repetitive moment similar to a military signal/warning (see Figure 2).

Fig. 2. Ladder-archetype. Attack polyphony, pp. 13-14

The polysemic relevance and the generative capacity of the “archetypal ladder” correlated with attack polyphony increases with the figurative variation of the model, a phenomenon made possible due to its association with other archetypal symbols from the sphere of geometric/spatial imagery, as the motion of the voices within this panchromatic cluster lets us deduce.

As can be observed, each choral compartment (Soprano, Alto, Tenor, Bass) is divided into 8 distinct voices which open - by symmetrical attacks in a “fan-like” or “zigzagged” arrangement - a chromatic set made up of just as many sounds (8). Although we are dealing with a total chromatic density “set up in time” by a record number of voices (32), we are able to discern the constantly ascending line of the chromatic sets that make up a hymn in praise of the courageous Tudor Vladimirescu. It is very clear that, in this case, attack polyphony is associated with **group polyphony** (see Figures 3a, 3b).

12

f

A.

1 *neas -*

2 *Ro -*

3 *Ța -*

4 *Pen -*

5 *tru*

6 *ro*

7 *mă*

8 *că,*

f

T.

1 *le -*

2 *pui*

3 *to -*

4 *Sus*

5 *cu*

6 *ti*

7 *de*

8 *l,*

f

B.

1 *că,*

2 *ias -*

3 *să*

4 *Tu -*

5 *Dam -*

6 *nul*

7 *dor*

8 *tră -*

Fig. 3a. Ladder-archetype. Attack polyphony (+ group polyphony) in a “fan-like” or “zigzagged” disposition, p. 43

The image displays a musical score for the opera-fresco "Steps of History" by Mihai Moldovan. The score is divided into two main sections. The upper section features a vocal ensemble with parts for Soprano (S.), Alto (A.), Tenor (T.), and Bass (B.), along with eight numbered staves (1-8). The music is marked with a forte dynamic (*f*) and includes lyrics such as "i.", "c.", "ri -", "drep -", "Pen -", "tru", "lu", and "le". A solo bass part (B.) is also shown, marked with a piano dynamic (*pp*) and the instruction "Solo". The lower section consists of seven numbered staves (1-7) for a string ensemble, marked with a piano dynamic (*p*). The score illustrates "Attack polyphony and panchromatic cluster" as described in the caption.

Fig. 3b. Ladder-archetype. Attack polyphony and panchromatic cluster, p.44

2.2. Hill - Valley (The Universal Undulation)

2. HILL - VALLEY (THE UNIVERSAL UNDULATION)



2.1. Substance (Modes)

Oscillation of modal steps/Polymodal chromatics



2.2. Line (Monody)

Ascensio-descensio melodic slope complementariness,
Sway around an axis-sound

In Lucian Blaga's view, the Romanian space (geographic-existential, as well as spiritual) is shaped by the constant alternation of landforms between the **hill** and the **valley**. In a philosophical key, this form of alternation corresponds to an ontological model that defines the being and living of the Romanian people itself. Known under the name of **universal undulation**, the phenomenon belongs, without any doubt, to the symbolical sphere of archetypes. From this perspective, Romanian folk music - in the incontestable originality and diversity of its genres - provides two fundamental anchors that composer Mihai Moldovan will use as a support with an admirable consistency. They are, on the one hand, the sound **substance** or **matter** materializing in **modal** reference systems in which the most spectacular phenomenon is the organic variability/**oscillation** of steps (see polymodal chromatics), and, on the other hand – but as a consequence of the first phenomenon –, the **line** or **monody**, within which one may discern the complementariness of the *ascensio-descensio* melodic slope and, above all, the sounds' **swaying** around an **axis-sound**.

As mentioned above, both phenomena are very well represented in Mihai Moldovan's creation, and the opera-fresco *Steps of History* is no exception to this reality. The recitative-lamento of the mezzo-soprano from Picture VIII (*The 1907 Uprising*) is a *parlando-rubato* monodic line, bewailing, melismatic, reduced to the sounds' swaying around an axial pivot (**E**). This micro-cellular structure that resembles a dirge is similar to the descant-line of the madrigal *Peste vârfuluri* [Over the peaks], composed by Mihai Moldovan on the lyrics of poet Mihai Eminescu (see Figure 4).

The figure displays three musical excerpts. The top excerpt shows a vocal duet between a Mezzo-Soprano (M.S.) and a Tenor (T.). The M.S. part is marked 'Solo p' and '(oscilație pe 2-3 semitonuri)', with lyrics 'Să nu uiți, Da - ri - e,'. The T. part is marked 'Solo f' and '(scapă în microton)', with lyrics 'Să nu uiți, Da - ri - e,'. The middle excerpt shows a 'Vibr.(D)' line for the mezzo-soprano, featuring a melismatic line with vibrato markings. The bottom excerpt shows another vocal duet between M.S. and T. with lyrics 'Ni - mic să nu uiți,'.

Fig. 4. Hill-valley archetype („The universal undulation”),
Oscillating monodic line; sound pivot-axis; free rhythm, p. 68

Another significant connection with the archetype of the "universal undulation" emerges from the opera's first sonorities, with the stylized monody of the *Miorița* ballad (see Figure 5). Here, modal oscillation derives from the permanent concatenation of „inverted chromatic formulas”, as the undulation of the melodic line follows, according to the "hill-valley" pattern, a determined temporal course (measurable, divisionary rhythm).

The musical score consists of several staves with lyrics in Romanian. The lyrics are: "Pe-un pi - cior _____ de plai, Pe-o gu - ră de rai, Ia - tă vin în ca - le, Se co - bor la va - le, Trei tur - me de miei Pe-un pi - cior _____ de Ia - tă vin _____ Cu trei cio - bă - nei." The score includes parts for I. A., I. S., I. Fl., S., and A. with various musical notations like dynamics (mp, p), articulation (tr), and fingerings (5).

Fig. 5. Hill-valley archetype („The universal undulation”).
Oscillating monodic line; sound pivot-axis; measurable rhythm, p. 3

2.3. One – Multiple

3. ONE – MULTIPLE

3.1. General categories of sound phenomena

↓
Detail phenomena – **Agglomeration** phenomena
 (cluster, texture)

3.2. Fundamental syntaxes

↓
Monody
 ↓ ↓ ↓
Polyphony – **Homophony** – **Heterophony**

3.3. Characters-Vocal/instrumental structures

↓
Individual - **Group/Mass**
 (Solo) (Choir, orchestra)

In the latter part of the 20th century, for the Romanian compositional arena, the issue of the relationship between **one** and **multiple** acquired an importance much greater than a purely philosophical framework could provide. The actual change of paradigm - i.e. the passage from the general to the specific - emerged once the fundamental sound syntaxes had been integrated into a systematic order, a phenomenon that was decisively marked by the theoretical thinking of composer Ștefan Niculescu. From this perspective, **monody** (Duțică 2016, 144) represents the monad, the primary indivisible unit that represents one, and **polyphony**, **homophony**, and **heterophony** are instantiations of multiple, seen as a summing up or a stratification of the various stages of reduplication of one (monody).

For the author of the opera-fresco *Steps of History*, all these stages in the construction of the vertical musical syntax are solid anchors in the sound materialization of the relationship between the **individual** character (with a soloist expose) and the **collective** one (group, mass), represented by the choir and/or the orchestra.

A first edifying Ex. in this respect refers to the relationship between monody and heterophony. In Moldovan's opera, the *parlando-rubato* monody allotted to the solo instrument is the character that acts as a **binding agent** between the various sections and pictures. Thus, the two instruments – the flute and the violin - which may intervene separately or together, assume the discursive role of a **narrator** who

anticipates, comments or draws conclusions about the various moments in the dramatic development.

Here is, for instance, a first "reflection" of the solo violin which sets the poetic mood of the ballad *Soarele și luna* [The sun and the moon]. Noteworthy here is the expressiveness of the changes of register and the multitude of emission/attack modes (see Figure 6).

Fig. 6. *One-Multiple Archetype.*

Instrumental monody in the "parlando-rubato" style (solo violin), p. 18, staves 1-4

The same dramaturgical function and the same expression in the comment of the solo flute (see Figure 7):

Fig. 7. *One-Multiple Archetype*

Instrumental monody in the "parlando-rubato" style (solo flute), p. 11

Staying in the same semantic register and keeping as reference - for added relevance - the same instruments, in what follows we are going to analyse the way in which a primary heterophony is built, a stage corresponding to the second term of the **one-multiple** binomial (see Figures 8a, 8b).

The musical score for Figure 8a consists of two systems. The first system features a Fl. picc. staff with a melodic line of eighth notes and a I Vno staff with a rhythmic accompaniment of eighth notes. The Vno part includes markings for 'sul pont.', 'ord.', and dynamic markings of *mp* and *mf*. The second system continues the Fl. picc. line and the Vno part, which now includes 'sul pont.', 'ord.', and 'sul tasto' markings, along with dynamic markings of *f* and *p*.

Fig. 8a. *One-Multiple Archetype.*

Bivocal primary heterophony: violin+flute, p. 74, systems 4-6

The musical score for Figure 8b consists of two systems. The Fl. picc. staff has a melodic line with dynamic markings of *mf*, *mp*, and *p*. The Vno staff provides a rhythmic accompaniment with markings for 'sul pont.', 'ord.', and dynamic markings of *mp* and *p*.

Fig. 8b. *One-Multiple Archetype.*

Bivocal primary heterophony: violin+flute, p. 74, systems 6-7

Without resorting to any artificial effect, Mihai Moldovan models his rhetorical gestures by invoking, with moderation and refinement, the ancestral sonority of the cimbalom, which, from time to time, becomes the partner of the solo violin within the same type of heterophonic writing (Duțică, L. 2013, 163). These moments of improvisational simulation, this immemorial intertwining of voices stemming out from the archaic Romanian doinas and ballads take us out of historical time so that re-entering it might seem to us more authentic and lively than ever (see Figure 9).

The image displays a musical score for page 57, illustrating a 'One-Multiple Archetype'. The score features several staves: a vocal line (Soprano and Alto) with lyrics 'si vi - teaz cum no mai stat.', a Zimb. (Cimbalom) staff, a Vno (Violin) staff, and Vlc. (Viola) and Cb. (Cello) staves. The Zimb. and Vno parts are highlighted with double lines, indicating their primary role in the heterophony. The Zimb. part includes markings such as 'ord.', 'pizz. ord.', and 'pizz. ord.'. The Vno part includes markings like 'ord.', 'sub. p.', and 'ord.'. The Vlc. and Cb. parts provide a harmonic foundation. The page number '57' is located at the bottom right of the score.

Fig. 9. *One-Multiple Archetype.*
Bivocal primary heterophony: violin+cimbalom, p. 57

In Mihai Moldovan's view, the intrinsic dramaturgical qualities of the opera genre can only be put to use and empowered through a permanent **fine-tuning** of the available means so as to make them fit expression, a desideratum possible only by laying a generic **semantic** and especially **contextual groundwork** of all compositional techniques, be they older or newer. In this respect, we noticed, first of all, the composer's openness to the **fusion** of various sound syntaxes and writing typologies, one of the most relevant examples being that in which the traditional technique of the canon is associated with repetitive-permutational minimalism, every-thing on the background of a polymodalism with an authentic Romanian ethos.

We are talking about an oligochordal infra-octavating segment Lydian in nature with no second step, originating in the Romanian region of Bihor (C-E-F#-G = 4,2,1) which receives, in a "ladder", two other replies placed symmetrically at ascending perfect fifth intervals (G-B-C#-D# and D natural-F#-G#-A#). From a dramaturgical point of view, the moment precedes the entrance of Horia (see also the free strings of the violin „*tiitura*" part, a folk dance), and the resulting syntax is not far from the sonorities of a heterophonized polyphony (see Figure 10).

The image displays two systems of musical notation for a woodwind ensemble. The first system includes staves for I Fl. (First Flute) and II Fl. (Second Flute), with the II Fl. part divided into two sub-staves labeled 1 and 2. The second system continues the notation for the same parts. The music is characterized by imitative polyphony, with various rhythmic patterns and melodic lines that are repeated and permuted across the staves. The notation includes notes, rests, and dynamic markings such as 'p' (piano) and 'f' (forte).

Fig. 10. *One-Multiple Archetype. Imitative polyphony (polymodal canon) + repetitive-permutational minimalism, p. 27*

On the other hand, the **rhetoric of the mass** – amorphous, neutral, impersonal, or undefinable individually or in detail – is grounded on the semantics of **agglomeration** phenomena of the **cluster** and **texture** type (Firca 1988, 404). At the semantic/dramaturgical/expressive level, group-mass sonorities are associated with the **collective** character, present both in the foreground – and the unmistakable *vox populi* -, and in the background - as a revolving base plate that supports and at the same time reflects the enterprises of the main actors. In order to massify the sonority at the level of the choir and/or the orchestral ensemble, the composers uses various modal group structures, which he dissipates in unusual volumes, registers and timbral alloys.

Here is a first example of a group-mass sonority that stands out by the fact that it integrates into the same structures two different archetypes: „the ladder” - canonical *stretto* (the Caloian song) and „one-multiple” - a hexatonal **cluster** (see Figure 11). In addition, the hybrid aspect of the massification passes to a new level of complexity when the **mobile** form of the cluster made up of „whole tones” (sopranos+altos) combines (in simultaneity) with the **fixed** form chromatic cluster from the divided double bass’ score (7 voices=6 semitone intervals).

The image shows a musical score for voice and orchestra. The vocal parts (Soprano and Alto) have lyrics in Romanian. The lyrics are: "Ca - lo - ie - ne, ie - ne, / Să dea dru-mul roa-de-lor, / Roa-de-lor, no - roa-de-lor, / Ca să fi - e-mbel-su-ga-lă / Ca - lo - ie - ne, ie - ne, / Să dea dru-mul roa-de-lor, / Roa-de-lor, no - roa-de-lor, / Ca să fi - e-mbel-su-ga-lă". The orchestral part consists of seven staves (1-7) showing a hexatonic cluster. Above the vocal staves, there are time signatures: 5/8, 4/8, 5/8, 4/8, and 5/8.

Fig. 11. *One-Multiple Archetype. Combined group-mass structures: Hexatonic cluster, mobile+chromatic cluster, fixed, p. 38*

Another Ex. of a fusion of group-mass syntaxes is the combination made up of the **chromatic cluster** and **attack polyphony**. Of course, the sonority is basically reducible to a form of mobile cluster, attack polyphony ensuring just its mobility. Allotted to the group of horns in F (the effect of a tulnic - Romanian alphorn) this very expressive *ostinato*, with a considerable extension, foreshadows the glorious entrance of the great Tudor Vladimirescu (see Figures 12a, 12b).

The image shows a musical score for two horns (Cor.). The score is divided into two systems. Each system has two staves for the horns. The music features chromatic clusters and attack polyphony. Dynamics markings include *fr*, *fp*, *f*, *mp*, and *ff*. There are also arrows indicating the direction of the clusters.

Fig. 12a. *One-Multiple Archetype. Combined group-mass structures: Chromatic cluster+mobility by attack polyphony, p. 39*

Fig. 12b. **One-Multiple Archetype**. Combined **group-mass** structures:
Chromatic cluster+mobility by attack polyphony, p. 39

In the late 20th century Romanian compositional landscape, Mihai Moldovan stands out as an unequalled maestro of **texture**. In what follows, we will focus on just two examples from the wealth of sound contexts of this type.

The first Ex. (see Figures 13a, 13b, 13c) from the category of these sound phenomena with a global effect belongs to the brass section and is associated, at the semantic/rhetorical level, with a signal proper to military ceremonies which announces the presence of the great king Decebalus. From a structural viewpoint, this texture is:

1. isomorphic (monolith-structure, invariable);
2. timbrally homogeneous;
3. repetitive (extensive *ostinato*);
4. permutational (vertical „mosaic”);
5. polyrhythmic.

This musical score for page 5 features a brass section with four staves. The top three staves are labeled 'Cor.' (Coronets) and the bottom four are labeled '1', 'Trb. 2', '3', and 'Tuba bassa'. The music is in a key with one sharp (F#) and a 3/4 time signature. It consists of three measures. The first measure shows a complex texture with various rhythmic patterns, including triplets and sixteenth-note runs. The second measure has some rests, and the third measure continues the rhythmic patterns. A dynamic marking of *f* (forte) is placed above the first staff in the second measure.

Fig. 13a. *One-Multiple Archetype. Combined group-mass structures: texture in the brass section, p.5*

This musical score for page 6 features a brass section with six staves. The top three staves are labeled 'Cor.' (Coronets), the middle two are labeled 'Trb. e' (Trumpets), and the bottom two are labeled 'Tuba'. The music is in a key with one sharp (F#) and a 3/4 time signature. It consists of three measures. The texture is highly rhythmic, with many triplets and sixteenth-note patterns across all staves.

Fig. 13b. *One-Multiple Archetype. Combined group-mass structures: texture in the brass section, p.6*

The image displays a musical score for a brass section, consisting of three systems of staves. The first system is labeled 'Cor.' (Cornets) and contains three staves. The second system is labeled 'Tr. In Do' (Trumpets in C) and also contains three staves. The third system is labeled 'Tr. e Tuba' (Trumpets and Tubas) and contains three staves. The music is written in a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a 3/4 time signature. It begins with a forte (*f*) dynamic marking. The score features complex rhythmic patterns, including triplets and sixteenth-note runs, across all parts. The notation includes various articulations and dynamic markings throughout the piece.

Fig. 13c. *One-Multiple Archetype. Combined group-mass structures: texture in the brass section, p. 7*

The second Ex. refers to a texture that involves a more complex orchestral apparatus (17 voices), which encompasses the woodwind and the string sections as well as the piano. From a structural viewpoint, we notice the isomorphic aspect of the sonority, „(con)figured” this time by accents that are permutationally imposed to the benchmark-formula of a triplet (woodwinds and strings), a procedure which has visible affinities with the incisive effect of the attack polyphony.

Like in other situations mentioned, the intonational basis of the texture is a modal one, a supra-octavating **modal palindrome** with identical extremes (2,1,3,1,2,1,3 where **A-A#** = augmented octave), resulting from the merging of two tetrachords symmetrical by translation (**A-B-C-D#** = 2,1,3 U **E-F#-G-A#** = 2,1,3, with an axis interval (**D#E** = 1, intersection zero), which emphasizes (in a vertical context) the harmonic complementariness of two types of chords: minor with a minor seventh (**A-C-E-G**) and major with a major seventh (**B-D#-F# A#**).

From a semantic/rhetorical viewpoint, the moment symbolizes the glorification of ruler Michael the Brave, who became a national hero by the singularity and fullness of his historical gesture (see Figure 14).

The image displays a page of a musical score for an orchestra. The score is organized into systems. The first system includes parts for Flute (Fl.), Oboe (Ob.), Clarinet (Cl.), Bassoon (Fg.), and Percussion (Pfte). The second system includes parts for Violin I (Vni I), Violin II (Vni II), Viola (Vle), and Violoncello (Vlc.). The music is written in a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a common time signature (C). The notation features a variety of rhythmic values, including eighth and sixteenth notes, often beamed together, and rests. There are numerous slurs and phrasing marks throughout the score. The percussion part (Pfte) shows a complex rhythmic pattern with many accents and dynamic markings. The string parts (Vni I, Vni II, Vle, Vlc.) feature a steady, rhythmic accompaniment with some melodic movement.

Fig. 14. *One-Multiple Archetype. Group-mass structure: Brass+strings+piano texture, p. 25*

Of course, the effect is also linked with the dramatic moments of the opera, such as, for instance, the telluric, terrifying sonority that expresses the unstoppable force of

the unleashed mass during the *1907 Uprising* (Picture VIII). It is not by chance that this texture involves a **vocal-orchestral tutti** (see Figure 15).

16 *f*

Fl. *a2*

Ob. *a2*

Cl. *a2*

Fg. *a2*

Cor.

Tr.

Trb. e

Tuba

S. *f*

A.

T.

B.

Vni I *f*

Vni II

Vlc.

Cb.

S. : Văpăia, din Stănilești și din Flămânzi și Hodivoaia. Din Hodivoaia și :
din Flămânzi și Stănilești, văpăia ...

A. : Și din Flămânzi și Stănilești, văpăia din Hodivoaia. Din Stănilești și :
Flămânzi și Hodivoaia, văpăia ...

T. : Flămânzi, Stănilești, Hodivoaia, văpăia. Văpăia din Hodivoaia, și :
Stănilești și din Flămânzi ...

B. : Și se porni văpăia din Hodivoaia, Flămânzi, Stănilești, Stănilești, :
Flămânzi, văpăia, Hodivoaia ...

Fig. 15. *One-Multiple Archetype. Group-mass structure:
Vocal-orchestral tutti texture, p. 65*

In the same semantic register we may also place the moment of **pointillist polyphony** that involves the entire percussion apparatus in an incisive, penetrating, almost menacing discourse. It is the historic moment of the uprising that changed in a decisive manner the historical course of the Romanian people. As we may see from this last Ex., dramatic tension is increased both by the expressive articulation of **sound** and **rest** according to an old spatial/pictural-sculptural principle, that of the relationship between **fullness** and **void**, and by the strategy of „flash” sound insertions of the horns and the string section (see Figures 16a, 16 b).

The image displays two systems of musical notation for a percussion ensemble. The first system features staves for Timp(I), Ptti(I), T.-tom(II), T. picc. Gr.C., Legno(III), and Pfte. The second system features staves for Timp.(I), Ptti, T.-tom(II), T. picc. Gr.C., Legni(III), and Pfte. The notation includes rhythmic values, dynamic markings (f, mf, mp), and articulation marks (accents, slurs, and breath marks).

Fig. 16a. *One-Multiple Archetype. Group-mass structure: Percussion texture+pointillist polyphony, p.75*

The image displays two systems of musical notation for percussion instruments. The first system includes staves for Timp (I), T.-tom (II), T. picc. Gr.c., and Legni (III). The Timp (I) part features triplet markings and dynamics of *mf* and *f*. The Ptti part has a dynamic of *mp*. The T.-tom part has dynamics of *mp* and *f*. The T. picc. Gr.c. part has a dynamic of *f*. The Legni (III) part has a dynamic of *mp*. The second system continues the notation for Timp (I), Ptti, T.-tom, T. picc. Gr.c., and Legni (III). The Timp (I) part has a dynamic of *mf*. The Ptti part has a dynamic of *mp*. The T.-tom part has a dynamic of *mf*. The T. picc. Gr.c. part has a dynamic of *mp*. The Legni (III) part has a dynamic of *mp*. Triplet markings are also present in the second system.

Fig. 16b. *One-Multiple Archetype. Group-mass structure: Percussion texture+pointillist polyphony, p.76*

4. Conclusions

Unlike many 20th century composers who – beyond their circumstantial and inevitably ephemeral popularity – did not manage to remain, not even with one work, in the recent history of music (and this category includes even very “resounding” names in their own time!) -, Mihai Moldovan is the incontestable owner of a **compositional style**. The fact that he died so young is an element in the equation of a tragic and unfair destiny that the Romanian culture has witnessed many a time, from Ștefan Luchian to Nicolae Labiș, from Filip Lazăr to Tudor

Dumitrescu, and the unfortunate series of ironies of faith could continue with many other examples.

Nevertheless, Mihai Moldovan managed to reach creative maturity and to cut out a personal path for himself, at a time when the road of contemporary music itself was quite foggy and, to a great extent, not promising at all. His achievement was due to the fact that, beyond the synthesis that he promoted in his creation and that we have discussed in this study, Moldovan found the right measure of things, avoiding any experimental extremes - so spectacular but entirely deprived of meaning and substance! – in order to replace „fashion” with **modernity**.

And this because it is authentic modernity that comes up when we invoke the creation of this composer whose stylistic anchors were thrown deep into Romanian folk music cultural tradition, it is authentic modernity that comes up when we discover in his work the most advanced features of the Western avant-garde, and it is authentic modernity that comes up when Mihai Moldovan manages to raise **the archaic** - almost premeditatedly condemned to a provincial and hand-made status - to the state of a universally valuable expression.

With the risk of invoking some turns of phrase that are now slightly devalued, by people, not by the times, we are confident to declare that Mihai Moldovan's music (music, not his librettos!) have a true double identity: **Romanian** and **European**. And this with no trace of false patriotic mimicry or obedience to the West! From this perspective, we dare to see Mihai Moldovan as one of the most authentic post-Enescian composers.

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