

## THE SPIRITUAL COORDINATE IN AUREL STROE'S *MELODRAMAS ON JOB'S BOOK*

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**Abstract:** *The musical art was never for the use of the ears, but for the soul and for the spirit. This is the credo of master Aurel Stroe in one's of his most unknown works of his career, Melodramas in Job's Book (from the Old Testament). The example of Job is so relevant in the context of the cultural movement of Antim Monastery from Bucharest in 1950-1960 periods, so it deserves a special study on this theme.*

**Key words:** *spirituality, modernity, music, virtue.*

### 1. Introduction

The musical art was never for the use of the ears, but for the soul and for the spirit. This is the credo of master Aurel Stroe in one of his most unknown works of his career, *Melodramas in Job's Book* (from the Old Testament), originally entitled *Melodrames, interludes et symphonies pour le Livre de Job*.

The example of Job is so relevant in the context of the cultural movement of Antim Monastery from Bucharest in 1950-1960, so it deserves a special study on this theme.

Aurel Stroe is one of the most important Romanian composers of the second half of the 20th century, an exceptional complex artist, a complete musician, composer, teacher and musicologist with an exceptional magnitude of the ideas.

His works includes all coordinates of the musical composition, from symphonic and vocal-symphonic genre, to the chamber

works and to those devoted to choral singing, being an important pioneer of electronic music and an great composer of opera works.



Fig. 1. *Aurel Stroe*

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## 2. Problem Formulation

We propose an analysis of this unknown work, a mature work of art that remained on the edge of the musicological researching field, a representative work from the period of his musical beginnings – enriched with great spiritual significances.

The 20th century marked the history of Romania by the bleak times of communism, with its painful lesson: that the good survives through faith, through forgiveness and love.

Beyond words, no other thing can really talk about those times, but our national artistic masterpieces, impressive creations of the personalities who know how to face this deformed ideology by the authenticity of their inner values.

Our time forgets these true values that animated the authentic art in awful times: the pathology of that time we lived reveals a terrible diagnosis, which fully reflects upon our consciences.

In the absence of authentic values that sustain the art and our lives, we are in danger of depersonalization, of loss of moral and cultural identity that must define every man, every nation.

## 3. Problem Solution

Professor Dumitru Stăniloae, the most important Romanian orthodox theologian, considered man as "the subject of divine intentionality" [1, p. XV], valuing the privileged position of man in transmitting a particular divine message through art. The artist is one who remembers the world (especially in times of crisis) that the world is beautiful.

The artist gives himself unconditionally. This truth is fundamental for self-knowledge, for art that reflects a

responsible attitude towards life. Man exists as being "in the image and likeness of God" [3, p. 23], and therefore his works must follow the same requirements if it really raises the level of valuable expression.

"Creation of man is the image of likeness of God's perfection" [2, p. 9] and, consequently, his art is a plenary manifestation that should not be at another level value of expression and organization. The theme of *Melodrames, interludes et symphonies pour le Livre de Job* reveals a solo second violin melody, asymmetrically articulated in 4 and 3 beats.



Fig. 2. *Melodrames, interludes et symphonies pour le Livre de Job*

The aspect of mimodrama on music is essential for the context of this work, because it has been composed and performed in the cultural-spiritual circle named Rugul Aprins (The burning bush, symbol of the eternity of true faith), formed and developed at Antim Monastery.

All members of this circle of pray, culture and art have been incarcerated in jail for these confessions of faith, except Aurel Stroe – very young at that date -, who escaped in mountains for two years.



Fig. 3. *Melodrames, interludes et symphonies pour le Livre de Job (prolog)*

Great masterpieces of art history are contemporary to us precisely because we find in them the values of their axiological existence, their message being integrated in time.

In the first section of *Melodrames, interludes et symphonies pour le Livre de Job* Aurel Stroe uses three wind instruments that are special for him, endowed with a character role not only in this work (trombone, saxophone).

Fig. 4. *Melodrames, interludes et symphonies pour le Livre de Job (first section)*

The representative theme for Job's anxiety (the faithful father praying for his children) is the melodic path of saxophone

(libero, a tempo), passing through moments entitled by the author *giocoso* and *espressivo*.

Fig. 5. *Melodrames, interludes et symphonies pour le Livre de Job (Liberò, a tempo)*

Aurel Stroe frequently uses palindromic structures that allow more complex articulation of musical discourse, with more polyphonic layers that communicate and are interrelated.

Fig. 6. *Melodrames, interludes et symphonies pour le Livre de Job (Palindrom Strukturen)*

This process gives rise to some sonorous mega structures, harmonically articulated, all instruments being gradually integrated in a process of densification that allows the existence of crowding musical elements in order to sustain the appropriate tension.

Fig. 7. *Melodrames, interludes et symphonies pour le Livre de Job*

The effect is global, which is specific for Aurel Stroe's creation, whose complexity is emblematic Romanian music of the second half of the twentieth century.

Fig. 8. *Melodrames, interludes et symphonies pour le Livre de Job*

Another specific element of our great Romanian composer is the phonemes that are inserted in the structure of the music choral discourse (in unison or harmonically articulated), which oscillates between two vocals that creates a mysterious and weightlessness impression for the whole moment.

Fig. 9. *Melodrames, interludes et symphonies pour le Livre de Job*

The manuscript score is a valuable document signed by the master, in which the author writes the dialogue between God and Satan (the one who tempts Job and makes him to show an overwhelming patience).

Aurel Stroe chose this way to achieve such dialogue because it is a mimodrama (a kind of non-explicit drama), that cannot attract large consequences on freedom of the author (as has happened with other members of the Burning Buch circle).

Fig. 10. *Melodrames, interludes et symphonies pour le Livre de Job*

Time is an essential dimension of the musical discourse, so philosophical used by Aurel Stroe in this work, too. Time is no longer a simple framework of the music, but a subjective argument for the musical discourse.

Aurel Stroe noted, in his musical score, some essential words about Job's main state of spirit, the pain of the sickness, loneliness, the condition of the suffering loneliness.

This is not the only example in Aurel Stroe's scores, especially in the Concert for accordion and orchestra we can observe mysterious phrases, placed next musical notes, referring to *musical objects*.

Aurel Stroe is a composer who brings – into his musical universe – reflexes of philosophy, science, literature, mathematics and theology, building a multidisciplinary, complex, polyphonic musical discourse.

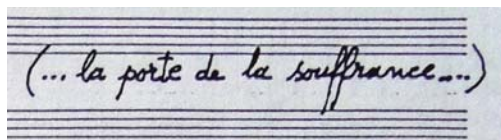


Fig. 11. *Melodrames, interludes et symphonies pour le Livre de Job (la porte de la souffrance)*

Transfigured time transcends chronological measurements; it requires a great structuring effort from the composer.

Aurel Stroe's works are full of examples of spiritualized time, especially in the period of his maturity.

We propose for exemplification a fragment of his most complex musical work, *Mandala* with polyphony by Antonio Lotti, centered on an axis named *Crucifixus* (a sonorous metaphor of the axis mundi, of the Holy Cross).

Fig. 10. *Aurel Stroe - "Mandala" with a polyphony by Antonio Lotti (CRUCIFIXUS)*

In *Melodrames, interludes et symphonies pour le Livre de Job* we can observe the same effect on concrete time, some technical ways to interrupt it, to transform the time into an efficient way to communicate metaphors and ideas.

Aurel Stroe practiced the fragmentation of time in order to suggest the non-linearity of time, the metaphysical angles of the most important dimension of music.

#### 4. Conclusion

The musical phenomenon signed Aurel Stroe needs a special analytical effort, because he is – like most of the contemporary music - little known and understood, but appreciated in the contemporary European and American societies.

Aurel Stroe's ideas were so original that it's a special note for the fact that he is one of the most performed Romanian composers in Europe.

We have the duty to promote study, analyse and implement the authentic

understanding of the personality, work and life of Master Aurel Stroe: his work is unique in the context of the Romanian musical art, as his universe of ideas.

Aurel Stroe is an artist with authority in forming the consciousness of many musicians. Aurel Stroe was a great composer, teacher and mentor of the National Music University from Bucharest (Romania).

Five years have already passed since his death, so we must transmit, for the next generations, the authentic profile of his complex componistic and musicological work, of his personality.

With deep respect, I dedicated a part of my last studies to Aurel Stroe's memory and work, the great composer being the one that impressed me heavily through his music and his kindness.

In a modern time of text without context and emotional sterility, I had a long expectation for such music, a form of art capable of transforming yourself.



Fig. 11. *Aurel Stroe*

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