

MODAL CHROMATISM PROPER TO THE *TRIPLE CONCERTO* BY PAUL CONSTANTINESCU

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Abstract: *Accomplished in the year of the composer's death, the "Triple Concert for Violin, Violoncello, Piano and Orchestra" is the culmination of Paul Constantinescu's creation, marking the moment in which his composing thinking reached essentiality – through conceiving his own thematic material of folkloric-Byzantine resonance, sublimation – through internalized content and formal concision, synthesizing – between the inspiration source within the autochthonous modal potential and the classical means of musical treatment.*

Key words: *Paul Constantinescu, modal language, folkloric, chromatic.*

1. Introduction

The musical piece in question is a turning point in the composer's musical thinking, a bridge with large openings towards the future of the Romanian composition, having a capital importance for the Romanian concerting and symphonic repertoire. Thus, "the overall formula used here reminds the old concerts of the Baroque era, in which the group of solo instruments represented a sonorous personality opposed to the orchestral ensemble. In this respect, the work inscribes on the orbit of the concept of concerto grosso, however without the stylistic tinge of this old form" [4]. Opus of full maturity, the concert is a terminus point in the evolution of Paul Constantinescu's modalismo and "a peak point of the autochthonous modal thinking" [4]. This way, the composer's modal language, having surpassed the

diatonic or diatonic-chromatic phase, almost exclusively leans on the chromatic aspect, selecting from the Byzantine modal space, scales pertaining to the chromatic or enharmonic genre and retaining from the folklore, those principles of dynamics of the *diatonic chromatism*. [2]. The work marks anticipative moments towards a new vision for treating the modal, through the working procedures applied on the level of the small modal structures, preceding the contemporary neo-modal thinking. One may thus state that a high step in using the chromatic modalismo is reached; however, developed on our autochthonous modal fund, that the composer organically assimilated. Thus, with the "composing" operations [8] of the small modules, the composer obtains the same modal results rich in elements, also attained in the folkloric or classical practice: the acoustic modes, the tone-semitone mode, the scale by tones or the dodecaphonic scale. As

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starting points for reaching these true structural models, procedures as: intense use of the Lydian fourth and Lydian tetrachord (nuclei of the scale by tones), of the acoustic tetrachord and Locrian or Istrian pentachord, the tetrachord scordatura (modal premises for the tone-semitone mode), the mobility of the second (in the reversed chromatic formula or in the chromatic total) may be mentioned. By using the modal structures with homogeneous intervals, the paths of the artificial modal, of synthesis, are opened, in which the proportions, the geometricizing tendencies, the symmetry, (modes with axis, golden section), the non octave scales, the tritone relationships, live with the scales detached from Byzantine musical practice, pertaining to the diatonic, chromatic, enharmonic genres: scale of the voice I (Doric), *Hisar* or *Nisabur* scales. For all these tendencies, manifest in the composing process of this last opus, we may deem the Triple Concert a composition at the border of the two great modal systems: natural modal system, folkloric and artificial modal system, of synthesis.

2. Modal world of the Triple Concert

“In the entire style of Paul Constantinescu’s composition, the beneficial influence of the world of the modes is felt”, states, quite rightly, Vasile Herman [4]. The Byzantine voices, mainly the diatonic scale of the mode I (Doric), constitutes the starting point, with openings towards the *diatonic chromatism* – resulted through transposition, reunion,

intersection of the modal structures. The mode I diatonic, enunciated at the onset, at the grave chords, enlarges its sphere through the application of the *Hisar* scale [7], at the rest of the chords.

Ex. 1:



Concomitantly, the piano executes, scalar, a Locrian pentachord on the same final, *C*. The modal space sums thus, from the beginning, ten intonation elements pertaining to the chromatic total (the Doric heptachord is added three chromatic elements: *D flat, F sharp, A flat*).

The mode I (Doric) likewise constitutes the frame of the second theme.

Ex. 2:



The modal potential evolves now by sectioning (the stress is laid on the modal section with Lydian characteristics, between the sounds *F* and *B*).

In musical reprise, other scales, such as the Phrygian or Locrian, appear as result of the game of the mobile steps, starting from the same diatonic structure of the mode I.

Result of the transposition, the Lydian rarely appears in full variant. It reunites in the chromatic total, through scordatura, with the acoustic I, in *Coda* of the III-rd part (having *I natural* as pivot-sound).

Ex. 3:



Identified with the facet, characterological, depressive, the Locrian, alternatively with the Istrian, also enrich their chromatic palette through instable

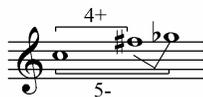
scordaturas, with whom the final part of the concert is initiated:

Ex. 4:



Moreover, the modal climate targets “the bivalent treatment of the fourth and fifth in the Lydian, respectively Locrian aspect”, making use of procedures such as “enharmonisation and preferential association of the piano figuration sounds” [5].

Ex. 5:



Greater complexity in the direction of the chromatic results from the modal material of the principal theme of the first part. Here, the apparent major-minor oscillation is given by the mode tone-

semitone, which constitutes, once again, as compared to previous compositions (*Concerto for Strings* and *Concerto for Piano*), “the basis of the themes of the work and not only a certain system of sonorous organisation” [3].

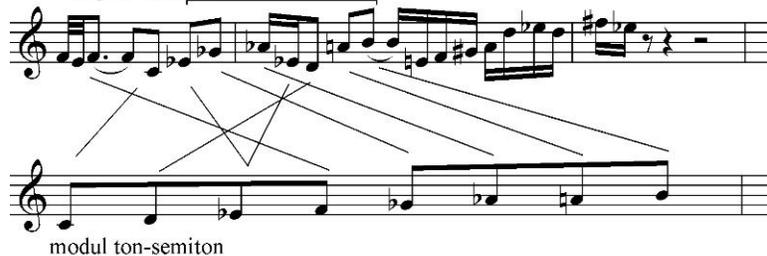
This modal structure appears either as such, in scalar-type melodic drawings, or latently, through the spatialization of the melody. Such is the case of the first theme, that the same Vasile Herman defines as “fragment characterized by an obvious closing of Enescu’s thinking, seemingly paraphrasing the second theme of the *Chamber Symphony*” by G. Enescu [4].

Ex. 6:

exemplu enescian :



Triplul concert:

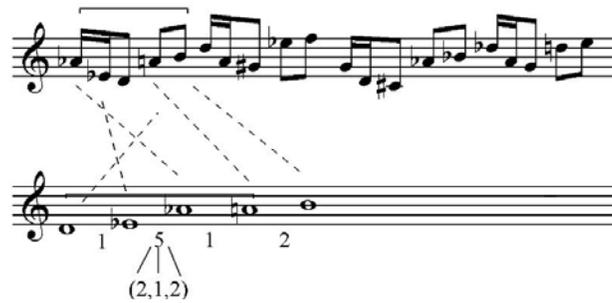


modul ton-semiton

The melody is not schematically conceived, for the sake of the symmetry of a given structure. Here, the modal (the scale tone-semitone) acts as a virtual frame, like the tonal-functional frame.

Thus, it represents the reunion of some intervallic entities, which, in various modal-formulary hypostases, reveal the predominance of the fourth or fifth, as reminiscences of tetrachord or pentachord

pillars. They cyclically return, often, in sequential evolutions (for instance in the development of the part I), where, from sectioning the structure tone-semitone, a sub-mode arose: (1,5,1,2), according to the



The very characteristic formula composed of two perfect fourths juxtaposed on semitone interval (5,1,5) “which may be perfectly framed in a heptachord consisting in two identically – symmetrically organized tetrachords, according to the chain T-St-T-St-T-St-T, /.../ may be found in numerous variants, either in the melodic context, or in final cadences, but very often as a beginning of theme” [3]. This typically Bartókian formula, the mode Bali, symmetrical structure called by Vieru *palindrome* [8], may be encountered either in the tetratonic complete variant, or in the tritonic elliptical variant, in bridge or second theme of part I, emphasizing the non-octave structural frame.

Ex. 8:

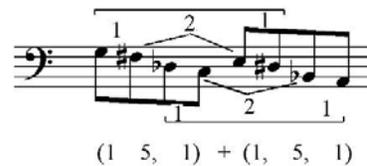


Often, from the reunion of two (or several) complementary Bali-type sub-modes, the tone-semitone mode ensues, as it sometimes appears in latent polyphony (bridge, p. I).

notation introduced by A. Vieru, who deems them “periods of infinite periodic arrays” [8].

Ex. 7:

Ex. 9:



Even greater complexity is enhanced when certain passages include the chromatic total. Transparency only characterizes the situations in which a certain intonation potential appears ordered in a scale. The analysis becomes heavily accessible when the dodecaphonic potential arises from the intersection of chromatic-structure formulas. The argumentation for the analytical option, in this case, will consider the scale segments that are called for and the general profiles of the melody (cadence benchmarks, final steps). In this light, the beginning of the development appears (*Con moto*), moment that may be considered the result of the game of the micro-structures (1,2) or (2,1) interwoven.

Ex. 10:



They become complete in the chromatic total, complementarily distributed in the two scales tone- semitone /semitone-tone – mode-basic frame.

Ex. 11:



The review of the summative scales above aimed at setting the broad modal frames (global intonation structure) wherefrom the derived modal-chromatic trajectories are cut. They represent the quasi-stable facet of the musical piece. More ingenious appear to be the procedures whereby these frames are reached at, as results of laborious procedures of modal operation, which permanently create the situation of modal lability and leave open the path for the possible interpretations on the origin of the chromatism in the composer's thinking.

3. Specific procedures to the modal-chromatic thinking in the Triple Concert

The placement of the Triple Concert in the overall Paul Constantinescu's creation, reveals, beside its well determined place, various stages of the composing thinking. This way, the composing language of the concert is the one of the syntheses: tonal-modal, diatonic-chromatic, melodic-harmonic. The chromaticization of the modal language implies typical mobilities of the stages within the Byzantine-inspired melody. According to E. Terényi's observation, the "modal oscillation is brought to the use of the chromatic total,

realizing this way a harmonic phenomenon very similar to the labile tone" [6]. The materialization of the modal-chromatism in the composer's thinking does not constitute a frozen item, but a process in motion, in deployment, based on certain procedures:

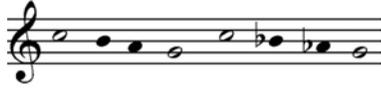
- The use of the modal archetypal cell, mainly oligochordic or pentatonic, constituting a specific type of *melodic ostinato*, of a pronounced modal individuality, often generating a contemplative-ecstatic context, opposed to the motoric *ostinato*, of essentially rhythmical nature, which frequently returns in the European composing art of the time (Stravinski, Honneger, Prokofiev, Bartók etc.) [1].

Ex. 12:



- Chromatic mobility of the sounds within fixed diatonic intervals, constitutive of oligochordic and pentatonic formations (second, third, fourth);

Ex. 13:



- Juxtaposition of the micro-units, through conjunction or disjunction with the imposition of the non octave modal, perceivable from the Greek antique modal system;

Ex. 14:



- Diatonic-chromatic oscillations, based on a fixed point of departure and return, with major-minor character.

Ex. 15:



4. Conclusions

Through synthesizing all these procedures, pertaining to the musical language of the modal-chromatic type, *The Triple Concert for Violin, Violoncello, Piano and Orchestra* stands for Paul Constantinescu's last contribution to the Romanian innovating musical movement, participating in the innovating movement of the contemporary European music. "The composition concentrates in a superior modality reduced to its essence, the most valuable conquests of the composer's previous creation, synthesizing its inspiration and formation elements: classical, popular and Byzantine – in a work fully stable and consistent. This unity, resulting from the economy and efficiency of the language, as well as from the consequence and originality of the construction procedures, translates the

deep sphere of Paul Constantinescu's preoccupations, his troubled psychic state on the eve of his premature disappearance." [5].

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