

INTONATIONAL LANGUAGE FEATURES IN T. CIORTEA'S SINFONIETTA SYLVANĂ

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Abstract: *A symphonic page of musical landscape composed by the Romanian composer Tudor Ciortea (1903-1882) – which presents the musical picture of some of the emblematic views specific to the mountain environment of Braşov, the musician's hometown – includes some of the means that the composer used in his composition laboratory. The study captures the issues related to intonational means: the cell-motive setting, which includes Enescian configurations, the use of the harmonic relationships specific to the alpha section and the application of the serial principle, as well as the modal layer and its stratifications.*

Keywords: *Ciortea, Sinfonietta Sylvana, symphonic music.*

1. Introduction

The musical work, „an invitation to go out in the nature, beyond the walls of the old city” [1], evokes – as shown by the composer – the home places he wandered so many times: „Without being described as a programmatic musical work itself, its three parts follow modest tourist routes which are well known by the local inhabitants of Braşov” [1].

The first part, *Pe serpentinele Tâmppei* (*On the Windings of the Tâmpa Mountains*) was completed on September 21st, 1979, in Braşov and the next two, *Între Pietrele lui Solomon* (*Among Solomon's Stones*) and *Poiana Junilor bătrâni* (*The Old Lads' Clearing*) were completed a few months later, in Bucharest, on 29th January 1980.

Instrumentation is rich, including the string quintet with piano, a consistent brass section (2 flutes, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets in B flat, 2 bassoons, 4 horns, 2 trumpets in C, 3 trombones, a tuba) and a numerous group of percussion instruments (Tom-Tom, Tam-tam, wood-block, Piatto sospeso, 3 bongos, tambour sur cadre, triangle, vibraphone, celesta, xylophone).

This musical work can be referred to what *symphony* means as a genre and – by derivation – to the *sinfonietta*; thus, we can notice a change of its meaning in an orchestral fresco whose almost painting like descriptivism is as obvious as a stated programmatic support. By its mainly expository deployment, the absence of any conflicting events and the lyrical-descriptive outcome, *Sinfonietta Sylvană* makes a late entry on the path opened by O. Messiaen with his musical work *Turangalila-Symphonie*.

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2. Analysis

2.a. Part I: *Pe serpentinele Tâmppei (On the Windings of the Tâmpa Mountains)*

The first part of the Sinfonietta consists in a series of musical frescoes developed in a musical movement which forms a compound homogeneous three strophe A-A'-A'' chain. The composer conveys a very suggestive mental picture through a wide colour palette, where the glissandos play an important role, by transfiguring the giant leaps musically, which could best describe his climbing the mountains in his young age. This mental picture is conveyed by the trombone and the strings they use (in sliding harmonics - measures

60-71, violins and viola – with three simultaneous sounds, similarly to his first period of creation); the latter ones also show the application of specific bow movements, such *sul ponticello* for the string instruments and *pizzicato*. The beginning has a slightly grotesque, surreal shade, due to the pace which suggests a very slow round dance.

The input consists of the melodic-harmonic stylemes of T. Ciortea's musical language, saturated with the musical substance (encoded by us as v and $w2$ cells; x has been encoded such as by Ştefan Niculescu [2], and y cell appears under this encoding cell in Pascal Bentoiu's analytical work [3]:

1) x and y cells



Fig. 1 a) measures 23-24, flute b) measure 24, oboe

- 2) Alternating thirds (see E.g. 1).
- 3) $v_{var.}$ cell, which also incorporates the x cell profile ($D^3-B^2-Bb^2$):



Fig. 2 measure 23, violin I

- 4) The unidirectional, varied fourths succession (measures 41-46), in the rhythmic specific to Păcală's theme, in the octet *Din isprăvile lui Păcală (Some of Păcală's Adventures)*, make reference to a world of anecdotes and follies specific to childhood:

violin) as well as in other opuses, but with a thematic role: in the octet *Din isprăvile lui Păcală (Some of Păcală's Adventures)*, and *Sonata pentru flaut și pian (Sonata for the Flute and Piano)*



Fig. 3 measure 44, 1st violin



Fig. 4 measure 23, clarinet

It is worth mentioning the melodic figuration used in the accompaniment, in which $w2$ cell is also included – in a varied form. It also appears in the second part (*Între Pietrele lui Solomon – Among Solomon's Stones*, measures 15-21, Iind

The example above also points out the inverted chromatic formula (i.c.f. C#-D-natural C).

The sonorous substance for this part mainly consists in the harmonic relationships specific to the alpha segments. Their development is interrupted by tonal harmonic constructions so that the modal language oscillates between being gravitational and geometrical, similarly to the mountain's ascent with windings among tall, branchy trees, branches, rich in foliage which are part of the beauty provided by some panoramic views on "the splendid view on the city", but only at certain moments - according to the composer. These are the tonal "platforms" "at rest", when the auditory - an imaginary traveller - stops for a while. Here it is, for example, the sonorous background of the first measures: Bb - C#/Bb, B - C#β - Eb/B, C# - Dβ - Aγ, B - Eβ, Aδ - Cγ, F - E/B b - Eβ (or E/F) - C#/F, F/F - C/F#-Aβ/F #.

Mode 2 with limited transposition is used and presented as melodic fragmentary, in tetrachord sections (measure 23, Ist violin) or pentachord section (measure 50, strings).

2.2. Part II: Între Pietrele lui Solomon (Among Solomon's Stones)

The second part depicts the sonorous picture of the narrow pass of Solomon's Stones. Located deeply in the body of the mountain, where the valley ascending to the old road to the Clearing gets more and more narrowed, Solomon's Stones unfold themselves to the viewer in their full

greatness of the rocky wall. The traveller crossing this valley cannot make any predictions of the sudden appearance of massive rock. The composer assigns some percussion instruments (*Piatti sospeso* și *Tam-tam*) the role of inferring „the sonorous” silence which anticipates the arrival at the foot of the cliff. Unexpectedly, the rocky columns rise in front of the traveller's surprised eye. It is the moment when the composer uses a coral which involves the brass players, the strings instruments, the piano players and the percussion instruments already used. This is the sound of the stone organ, a natural response of the organ in the Black Church, an imposing instrument with grave and pervasive sonorousness. This organ accord is the result of a complex stratification where gravitational harmonic constructions and tonal layers can be found alike - ascending in accord mixtures (also to be used in the formal segment B) - as well as layers containing the *alpha* segments, generated by the harmonic multiplication by transposition - either varied or not - as regards the instruments involved, of the two sub-cells which make up the thematic background. These aspects are exposed by trumpet 1 and they are the result of the division of *v* cell between the two small disjunctive thirds (circled sounds), situated on both sides of the symmetry axis formed by a semitone:

Fig. 5 The orchestra in piano reduction

A₂ takes again the procedure used in A₁, that of detaching some subcells from *v* cell: this time, the result of the symmetrical

division of *v* cell, consists in two melodic cells symmetrically, sequentially arranged:



Fig. 6 Measures 15-16, flute 1

Cell x can also be easily identified in the thematic formulation.

The thematic conduct in A3 is originally



Fig. 7 Measures 24-27, oboe 1

As regards the second phrase, the 12th intonational element is placed in between round brackets as the series might be completed in case of G b or F #. The composer may have missed this sound which is reflected by the consistency with which this principle is applied in the first phrase.

The first part of the transition exploits the expressive resources of cells z, y those of the inverted chromatic formula:

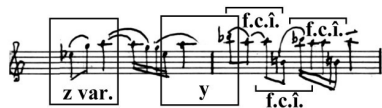


Fig. 8 Measures 32-33, flute 1

The appearance of A_{var.} introduces new melodic figurations and produces the harmonical-orchestral amplification of the discourse.

2.3. Part III: Poiana Junilor bătrâni (The Old Lads' Clearing)

The composer evokes a one hundred year old custom related to the setting up of the group of the Old Lads [4]. The contradiction between the terms *lad* and *old* is explained by the fact that on the one hand, the original meaning of the term assigned by the Romanian people of

based on the serial principle, although it shows the same Enescian stylemes (the elements 5-6-7 represent the alternating thirds; 9-11-12 represent cell x), especially in the complementary melodic lines (for example, the melodic line exposed by the bassoon):

Braşov to the term *lad* was that of *man*, and on the other hand the term *old* showed married men, a category distinct from that of lads. This group was formed as a result of the married men living in the area *Pe Tocile* of Şcheii Braşovului to have joint the lads' organisations ("Historically, the explanation is found in the need of thickening ranks of those who fought to defend their land" [4]).

The opening statement of the flute has an impressionist stylistic expression, due to the intonational succession based on the unidirectional sequence of fourths:



Fig. 9 Measures 1-3, flute 1

It opens the introduction similarly to a song of a shepherd's whistle uttered from the bottom of their hearts, over the mountains. As a nostalgic, slightly melancholic expression, the introductory segment of Part III is close to the introduction composed by the artist in the second part of *Concertul pentru clarinet și orchestră (The Concert for Clarinet and Orchestra)*. This time it is the picture of the Old Lads' clearing, against the calm background which anticipates the joy and good time which are to follow [4].

In contrast to the language of the rest of the musical work, the introduction creates a modal framework of a diaphanous expression gracious, with fourth like sonorousness. Extremely rich in modal suggestions, the musical discourse suggests only more tonal centres; the

composer "diverts" the functional-harmonic plan from the envisaged outcome. The procedure is similar in the last measures of the introduction, where, although the modal frame is *C chromatic* of *b* structure, the end cadence is achieved on D:

do chromatic struct. b

re IV₆ VII[#] I-VII_b-I

Fig. 10 Measures 14-17, Ist violin, IInd violin, viola, cello

In addition to the plagal relations placed against a firm modal frame, some relations are the result of the mixtures achieved by polymodal stratifications, similarly to the procedure used by the composer in the

beginning of the introduction, where he overlaps *Aeolian G/ Phrygian D*; they both get reunited at the bottom of the inferior layer by *Phrygian* modal cadence with sub-tone:

Aeolian G

Phrygian D

Phrygian D

D I VII_b IV₇ VII_b I

Fig. 11 Measures 3-5, IInd violin, viola, cello

The inclusion of *Hora Junilor* (*The Lads' Round Dance*) in the thematic content of *Sinfonietta* – as he had done a few years earlier (March 14th, 1973) when he included *Marșul Junilor* (*The Lads' March*) in *Variațiuni pe un marș al Junilor* (*Variations on a Lads' March*) – is due to the composer's memories of early childhood, when he was very impressed by the custom specific to the Lads and especially the music performed on this occasion. The music performed in *Marșul*

Junilor (*The Lads' March*) – which "he could remember very well" [1] – "had something strange, of Oriental origins, it may have also been performed by the instrument called the fife («drum-rolled and trumpets»), known in the Balkans as zurna, maybe of Turkish origin. Look, I have born in my mind those intonations for seventy years" [1].

The figure below presents *Hora Junilor* (*The Lads' Round Dance*), as it appears in the historic documents [3]:



Fig. 12

The example below presents the theme of the round dance, as it appears in T. Ciortea's work:

The image shows a musical score for measures 18-25, featuring the first and second violins and the viola. The score is written for three staves. The music is in a 2/4 time signature and features a mix of eighth and sixteenth notes. The key signature is one flat (B-flat major). The score includes the instruction "Pregătire" and "Hora Junilor". The score ends with the instruction "D. c. ad libitum".

Fig. 13 Measures 18-25, Ist and IInd violin, viola

3. Conclusions

By the intonational elements pointed out in the present study, Tudor Ciortea's *Simfonietta Sylvania* appears as an important page in the Romanian and world symphonic music, not only due to the sonorously conveyed themes, but also to the elaborated technique of the musical discourse, rich in language as well as in pictorial suggestions.

Some of the composers' works, like the octet for wind instrumentalists *Din isprăvile lui Păcală* (*Some of Păcală's Adventures*), *Sonata pentru flaut și pian* (*Sonata for Flute and Piano*) and *Concertul pentru clarinet și orchestră* (*Concerto for the Clarinet and Orchestra*), prove Tudor Ciortea's unity of conception specific to his composition, especially in

The above example also highlights the procedure of polytonality: as the composer considered that the folk music is too clearly framed as regards the tonal aspect (*G major*), he has systematised it by a mixture like development in polytonal framework (measures 23-25: *G major/C b major/D b major*); the layer related rapports are geometrical/ gravitational (8/10).

Another mixture like framework, this time arranged on the four sonorous layers, in which the grave layer exposed by the bassoon, seems to be the original one, providing the third period of the melody specific to the dance. Above this sonorous plan, the composer added three parallel layers, whose final result is a mixture based on a harmonic succession *alfa* segment:

designing a work in full agreement with his own stylistic parameters

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