

## Musical Interpretation / Performance as Spiritual and Educational Phenomenon

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**Abstract:** *The interpretive act is a phenomenon per se, for which the performer invests all his energy from the desire to express the meanings of musical creations. If we relate the musical phenomenon to silence, we undoubtedly observe that it lives its own existence as a spiritual autonomous construction, being an entity that we integrate through experience, through listening, thus fulfilling, in us, even a purifying role. The performing musician goes through a real spiritual itinerary, starting from decoding the score to perceiving its musical meaning, then working to sculpt the sound image that he wants to reproduce. Performing a concert with an audience is the continuation of the initiatory path, this time also for the audience. The importance of musical interpretation is thus revealed both on the level of higher cognition, training for the performer, and on the level of educating the public in the spirit of perceiving higher levels of consciousness.*

Key-words: *musical phenomenon, interpretive act, higher cognition*

### 1. Introduction

Music is a serious thing, the pianist Dinu Lipatti used to say, referring to the spiritual importance of the musical phenomenon. Composer George Enescu required performers to know the existential laws of a musical work - as an autonomous phenomenon. Dinu Lipatti and George Enescu did not theorize the musical phenomenon, but practiced it at the highest levels. The conductor Sergiu Celibidache, however, another master who revealed to all of us unsuspected resources of the interpretative act, developed theoretically but also applied the science of phenomenology in musical interpretation.

The interpretive act is a phenomenon per se, for which the performer invests all her/his energy from the desire to express the meanings of musical creations. If we relate the musical phenomenon to silence, we undoubtedly observe that it lives its own existence as a spiritual autonomous construction, being an entity that we

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integrate through experience, through listening, thus fulfilling, in us, even a purifying role (catharsis).

Silence is the state in which we find the willingness to listen to the fundamental sound - the inner voice. In the perspective of some, this voice would be the true Life or even the source of Life.

We have in mind a novel work, *Medicina isihastă (Hesychast Medicine)*<sup>2</sup> namely the *Sacro-terapia (Sacro-therapy)* volume, where we read: "There is, in the depths of your Being, a Voice of God himself who Created you and through which you are Alive...Try to rediscover This Voice Beyond all the Voices of Creation...If I Recall the Secret Word-Utterance from within Me, all the negative Language of the Subconscious-Illness and Death will Melt like Darkness from Light".

This voice seems to exist within us. And music, as an art, what is it but the search for this voice? In each of his Adagios, we feel that Beethoven confesses himself in dialogue with the divine. Beethoven accepted the life of suffering to give his fellowmen a way, to be able to perceive the Secret Voice. Initiation into music involves following a path that prepares us for life, but also for transcendence, shapes our thinking and emotions to be able to perceive the truth within us, but also from beyond.

## 2. The problems

The esoteric dimension of music, the initiatory path that takes us, does not exclude, but assumes and proposes its living, formative side. Musical interpretation trains the physical, intellectual, and soul capacities of the performer, who then generates the sound flow of Spiritualized Love. I quote: "Musical creation is perhaps the highest form of loving people, and it can only exist by being shared."<sup>3</sup>

The intimate link that is created between the performer and the meanings of the musical creations for the realization of the musical phenomenon is the very creed of the musicians - an unseen, sometimes inexpressible, but undeniable link that is the basis of any valuable interpretative approach.

The performing musician goes through a real spiritual itinerary, starting from decoding the score to perceiving its musical meaning, then working to sculpt the sound image that she/he wants to reproduce and that she/he offers to the audience for audition. Music does not formulate concepts, but what it undoubtedly has in common with philosophy is the spiritual openings that induce us to perceive

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<sup>2</sup> Ghelasio Gheorghe, *Medicina isihastă (Hesychast Medicine)*, Ed. Axis mundi, Bucharest, 1992, pg.64

<sup>3</sup> Remus Georgescu – *Gânduri despre muzică (Thoughts about Music)*, Ed. SimArt, Craiova, 2012

Creation, Life. Art proposes, not imposes, visions of Life, through images of infinite diversity. Their sound creation lies in the mastery of the performer.

The route followed by a performing musician involves several factors. Reason decodes the graphic signs of the score, carrying meaning. Reason selects the elements necessary for a motivated interpretation, from fields such as: stylistics, aesthetics, art history. Meanings in art are revealed through the collaboration of reason with another element of artistic knowledge — intuition<sup>4</sup>, which favors the development of individual perceptions so necessary for the originality and uniqueness of the interpretative act<sup>5</sup>.

However, the effective musical execution is not to be neglected either, for which the performer must have a great variety of means of rendering the inner image. Making a clear distinction between execution and interpretation<sup>6</sup>, we put a barrier between the stages of the interpretive approach. The execution would be the craft, the concern for the means of rendering a musical text, the interpretation would be the work of probing the meanings of the text and forming the artistic image<sup>7</sup>.

In fact, the performing musician splits into player and performer. The player shows accuracy in performance, trains her/his physique — body movements, reflexes. The performer, however, performs the decoding of the score and is the coordinator of the transmission of the composer's spiritual message through the act of making the music. She/He must live the spirituality of music, find and try to express in a personal, original way, the wealth of meanings in the work of art (but in accordance with the wishes of the composer). The boundary between the so-called

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<sup>4</sup> Dinu Lipatti names *intuition* as an important component of the study in search of the truth of works of art, confessing: "I keep inflexible the few basic principles that you know (at least I suspect so), and for the rest I trust intuition (this second and equally precious intelligence), as well as the deep penetration of the work that sooner or later ends up confessing the secret of the soul." (excerpt from a course project for students of the Geneva Conservatory, quoted by Carmen Păsculescu-Florian, p. 170, *Vocation and destiny*. Dinu Lipatti, Ed. Muzicală., Bucharest, 1986).

<sup>5</sup> Idea developed in the book *Musical Poetics* (lectures given by Igor Stravinsky at Harvard University in the USA, published in Paris in 1952, Ed. Le bon plaisir — Librairie Plon): "Music always includes hidden elements that refuse a definition, because the verbal dialectic is powerless to fully define the musical dialectic. These elements therefore depend on the experience, the intuition, in a word, on the talent of the one who is called to present the music."

<sup>6</sup> Igor Stravinsky, in op. cit. makes a clear differentiation between player and performer. Each performer is necessarily accompanied by a player, the reciprocity not being valid in his opinion.

<sup>7</sup> Prominent pedagogues of the 20th century, such as Heinrich Neuhaus and Florica Musicescu insisted on the formation of a complex pianistic technique, they did not limit it to craft, but enriched it with everything that served to form and reproduce the musical image carrying meanings. (Heinrich Neuhaus— *Despre tehnica pianistică* (On pianistic technique), Ed Muzicală, Bucharest, 1960, translated from Russian by Th Bălan; Marta Paladi — Florica Musicescu, Musical Ed., Bucharest, 1977).

performer and performer (who can be “separate” characters only in the course of preparation, study), disappears at the moment of performing the artistic act, they are then twinned in the artist who recreates the work of art<sup>8</sup>.

In the framework of the interpretive approach, the shaping of the artistic image in the interpreter's mind is an important and necessary stage. It is part of the interpretive approach, as well as the set of those special reflexes, developed by the performer to make the instrument they play an organic part of them, which responds precisely to the requirements of musical expression, in all its nuances. Refinement of the musical image and the manner of playing it, avoiding mannerism and templates are characteristics of concerns for an interpretation dedicated to playing music in all its diversity. An important objective, pursued in the study, in parallel with the concern for the contouring of the musical image and its sonorous realization, is the preparation for the moment of public interpretation, the discovery of that “state” specific to each piece.

Performing a concert with an audience is the continuation of the initiatory path, this time for both the performer and the audience. It is a meditation lived in spiritual communion. Even if not all people in the audience realize this, the performer must be aware and take responsibility for his spiritual act, to a large extent educational.

### 3. Conclusions

It is very stimulating for the performer to be aware that his message is perceived by the audience on a different level than the auditory one, because it is scientifically proven that the information transmitted in the form of sound configurations is directly perceived by our cortex<sup>9</sup>. The goal of performance is spiritual communion with the audience to whom the music is addressed.

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<sup>8</sup> It is gratifying for a performing artist to read the views of an esthetician like Gilbert Durand, but which implies a great responsibility for the performer (*Arte si arhetipuri*, Ed. Meridiane, Bucharest, 2003, p. 73): “More than anywhere else, in music the reading — that is, the reception, the interpretation — has absolute priority over the writing, this being only a semiological means of transmission. Music resides in the act of making music, in other words in playing with the voice or an instrument.”

<sup>9</sup> Pitiș, Ana and Minei, Ioana – *Teoria comportamentului pianistic* (Theory of Pianistic Behavior), Ed. fântul Gheorghe-Vechi, Bucharest, 1997, pp. 14-25: “Music is a form of communication between people, which presupposes the existence of common elements for the transmitter and the receiver; they make the message recognizable at the moment of “live” execution, of interpretation. The recognition by other people of the meanings carried by the sounds, thanks to this way of organization, is possible thanks to the fact that they, in turn, do not only receive this message by hearing. Although lacking the apparent concreteness of the word, the sounds organized in this way comply with certain requirements of perception and intelligibility common to humans, leading to the entry into function

In fact, an interactive triangle is formed in the concert hall: composer, performer, listener. The musician's artistic credo fulfills its mission when the sound configurations loaded with meaning from the score reach through the performers to those who listen and who, in turn, continue the musicians' creation in the folds of their thoughts and souls.<sup>10</sup>

The importance of musical interpretation is thus revealed both on the level of higher cognition, training for the performer, and on the level of educating the public in the spirit of perceiving higher levels of consciousness.

#### 4. Proposals

Regarding the Path I propose in interpretation, from the interpretive approach to the public interpretation of a work I must mention the awareness belonging to the coordinates existing in the musical text and those specific to their realization.

If the approach is to identify the intrinsic meaning of music, through the process of internalizing, deepening the semantics of the musical text, then the method leads to sound concretization through the process of externalizing the results of deepening the textual semantics and finding optimal ways of expression.<sup>11</sup>

My author's book - *Coordinates of Musical Interpretation*, printed at the West University Publishing House in Timisoara, 2011 is a reflection of my searches and part of the Conduit followed on the pathway of initiation into music.

In the book I tried to synthesize those coordinates that help us orient ourselves in the interpretive approach, from decoding the score to interpreting the pieces as an act of re-creating it.

And, at the end, to offer all those deep meanings of the music through the living act of an original, unique musical interpretation, to the public.

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- beyond hearing - of the listener's entire cortex "all the memory store of certain modes, common to the species, of intelligible assembly of some signals, of subjective measurement of the time in which certain actions take place, of measuring the psychic energies spent on this occasion, to which is added the sense of movement, of space, of distances, a lot of intellectual, affective experiences, etc. feeds different areas on the cortex in processing the received information. The listener's attention is captured, his whole brain "wakes up", becomes active when presented with information organized in a recognizable way"

<sup>10</sup> As Baudelaire said: „In music, as in painting and even in literature - which is nevertheless the most positive of the arts - there is always a gap filled by the imagination of the listeners.” Quoted by George Bălan in the book *How to listen to music*, Ed. Humanitas, Bucharest, 1998, pg. 9

<sup>11</sup> Manuela Mihăilescu – *Creed and Method in musical Interpretation*, MUSiQ Research Journal No. 2/2020, pg. 9

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