

## THE CONCERTIZING SPIRIT IN THE EUROPEAN MUSIC IN THE FIRST HALF OF THE 20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY

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**Abstract:** *A preference of the 20<sup>th</sup> century composers is to be noticed not only in the combination of the symphonic with the concertizing elements (Prokofiev, Honegger, Enescu) but also in the impregnation of the compact orchestra assembly (symphonic or chamber orchestra) with specific concertizing elements, thus developing the genre of 'concerto for the orchestra'. The rapport between the soloist and the orchestra changes in direct connection to the configuration of the form in which the concertizing compositions are made up: if the latter consist of structures of the classical form, the soloist instrument is attributed the leading role. The soloist instrument is integrated in the symphony (starting from the transformation of the musical soloist discourse into a symphony within the instrumental concerto), in Prokofiev's (Concerto Symphony for Cello and Orchestra opus 125, 1953) and Enescu's creation (Concertizing Symphony for Cello and Orchestra, 1901).*

**Key words:** *concertizing spirit, European music of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.*

After the supremacy held within the framework of the instrumental-soloist concerto by piano and violin (besides assigning the soloist role to the cello and to other wind and brass instruments, such as: the flute, the oboe, the clarinet, the bassoon, the horn), in the 20<sup>th</sup> century the composers extend the soloist's instrumental range, orienting to instruments such as the viola (Batrók, Hindemith), the trumpet, the saxophone (Debussy and Milhaud compose a rhapsody and a concerto for saxophone and orchestra, alongside with Astor Piazzolla), the clavichord or the Martenot waves (André Jolivet). The timbre range diversifies both on the soloist plan and within the symphonic assembly by the soloist individualization of an instrument or group of instruments, accomplished by virtuosity or increased expressivity, integrated in the thematic discourse.

One witnesses in the 20<sup>th</sup> century the spreading of the concertizing genre in the composers' creation, by the enrichment of the elements of technical difficulty. The

concertizing virtuosity reflects on the entire orchestra assembly in whose structure the soloist instrument is, most of the times, an "integrated" voice. The new tendencies of the dodecaphonism of the Second Viennese School become concrete in Schönberg and Berg's concertos and will also influence the creation of the composers belonging to the national modern schools (Stravinski, Batrók, Prokofiev). The creation of the composers of the national schools reveal the structure of the composing language based on neo-modals, triggered by the melodic content with folklore influence. The tonal-modal synthesis in their creation contains "generating archetypal modal cells" (oligochords, pentatones, hexatones) characteristic of the popular modes.

The soloist instrumental concerto preserves the coordinates of form and the conditions of the harmonic amplitude (from abundant chromatics to atonalism).

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The structure of the soloist instrumental concerto is different from a composer to another, still preserving the classic patterns bi-, tri-, and quadripartite (as I shall try to prove further on). Some baroque structures such as Passacaglia, Fugue, Aria can be resumed.

In Max Reger's creation, one can meet quotations from the protestant chorals (the second part of the Concerto for Piano and Orchestra opus. 114, 1910), the Concerto for Violin and Orchestra opus 101 (1908) is composed as an ample concertizing sonata. Similarly, Hans Pfitzner is responsible for the interference between the symphonic writing and the form of the theme with variations, in Concerto for Violin and Orchestra opus 34 (1924) and in Concerto for Piano and Orchestra in E flat major (1923) he distributes the working out of the themes both to the whole orchestra and the soloist instrument. Beginning with the second decade, the structure of the form and the compositional technique develop new aspects within the framework of the soloist concerto. Within the bi-, tri-, and quadripartite structures one can identify musical structures which are constituted on the polyphonic forms of baroque, the treatment of the musical elements (melody, rhythm, harmony, instrumental timbre modulations, dynamics, agogics), unique to the new musical orientation (expressionism, neoclassicism). For example, one can meet Passacaglia, Toccata and Aria as parts of the concerto (Schönberg, Stravinski, Şostakovici). Hindemith is, as I have already pointed out, an example for the re-evaluation of the concertizing genre of the baroque (Concerto Grosso). In this context, Hindemith, as well as the modern composers such as Poulenc, orients towards instruments such as the organ, the clavichord, the viola d'amore, the viola and the cello. The title changes in Kammermusik (Hindemith), Concertino (Stravinski, Honegger, Şostakovici) for miniatures, whose dominant instrumental character is part of the concertizing spirit, Capriccio (Igor Stravinski, Capriccio for piano) and

Fantasy (Claude Debussy – Fantasy for piano and orchestra, 1891, where the orchestra score is impregnated with soloist elements, the piano being treated as a “voice” integrated in the symphonic discourse, and Ferruccio Busoni – Indian Fantasy for piano and orchestra, 1913). The accent falls on the motility characteristic of the instrument, with a focus on the emphasis of the soloist virtuosity with composers such as Bartók, Stravinski, Prokofiev (as presented lower) or with the composers from the “Group of the six” who resume the forms of the 18<sup>th</sup> century (Germaine Tailleferre) in Concerto in D Major for Piano and Orchestra (1926), Darius Milhaud who, besides the Concerto for Saxophone and Orchestra (1938), with jazz and south-American elements, composes also a series of concertos for piano and orchestra, études, spiritually and humorously written, and André Gedalge, who composes the Concerto for Piano and Orchestra opus 16 in C Minor. We meet a symbiosis of elements characteristic to the soloist and rhapsodic concerto (Ravel, Rhapsody – Concerto Tzigane, 1924), between concerto and the symphonic poem or fantasy. The score of the orchestra accompaniment is written either for a great symphonic assembly, for a chamber orchestra (Hindemith, Şostakovici), or for wind instruments (Kurt Weil – Concerto for Piano and Woodwinds, and Igor Stravinski with his Concerto for Piano and Wind Instruments, 1924). Within the framework of impressionism, French composers such as Debussy and Ravel focus on the concertizing style, Debussy composing the Fantasy for Piano and Orchestra (1935) amply developing the symphonic discourse, and Maurice Ravel, the Concerto for Piano and Orchestra: № 1 in G Major and № 2 in D Major for the left hand (1935) which I will present further on.

The return to the old art, especially for the polyphonic constructions and the modal language, is reflected by Ottorino Respighi in the Gregorian Concerto for Violin and Orchestra (1921) and in the Mixolydian Concerto for Piano and Orchestra (1922). In

contrast to the modal preoccupations of some composers such as Respighi, the dodecaphonic technique was adopted by Alban Berg in *Concerto for Violin and Orchestra* (1935) and Arnold Schönberg in *Concerto for Violin and Orchestra* opus 36 (1936), a threefold work, and *Concerto for Piano and Orchestra* opus 42 (1942), a fourfold work, with strong contrasts between the assembly and the soloist.

By synthesizing the already introduced aspects and summarizing the issues related to the evolution of the instrumental soloist concerto, one pictures the diversity of the options which refer either to the compositional writing or to the instruments for which the concertizing works are composed. Starting from the “classic” instruments, the concertizing works address such instruments as: the saxophone, the panpipe, the bandoneon, the clavichord, and the Martenot waves.

The concertizing spirit reflects on the symphonic and chamber genre also by the symbiosis among the particular characteristics of these genres (the instrumental soloist virtuosity of the assembly’s compartments, with a strong individualization of the timbre, the complementary thematic discourse within the symphonic assembly, the increase or reduction of the assembly and the direct involvement of the soloist instrument in the symphonic discourse). The new language is experimented by A. Jolivet in *Concerto for Martenot waves* (1947). André Jolivet is a modern composer who pays special attention to the instrumental soloist concerto, composing a significant number of the following works: *Concerto for Piano* (1951), 2 concertos for trumpet (1948, 1954) *Concerto for Percussion* (1958), 2 concertos for cello (1962, 1966) and *Concerto for Violin* (1972). The French composer achieves a vocal-symphonic symbiosis in *Concerto for Soprano and Orchestra – Songe nouveau rêvé* (1971). The constructivist technique and the mathematization of the musical language are reflected in *Concerto for Keqrops Piano*

(1986) by I. Xenakis. Composers such as Bartók, Stravinski, and Lutoslawski address also the orchestra assembly which they enrich with concertizing elements specific to the instrumental soloist style, by individualizing the instrumental timbre and the highlighting within the assembly of the individual soloists marked by virtuosity.

A preference of the 20<sup>th</sup> century composers is to be noticed not only in the combination of the symphonic elements with the concertizing ones (Prokofiev, Honegger, Enescu) but also in the impregnation of the compact orchestra assembly (Symphony or chamber) with specific concertizing elements, thus, developing the “concert for orchestra”. The relationship between the soloist and the orchestra changes according to the configuration of the form in which the concertizing work is made: if it is based on classic forms, the soloist instrument is attributed the main role without the orchestra’s being, its mere accompaniment support and the harmonic and modular atmosphere, this representing also a means of support and technical work. The soloist instrument is integrated in the symphony as well (starting from the transformation into a symphony of a soloist musical discourse in the framework of an instrumental concerto), in Prokofiev’s creation (*Concerto Symphony for Cello and Orchestra* opus 125, 1953) and Enescu (*Concertizing Symphony for Cello and Orchestra*, 1901).

Together with Prokofiev and Šostakovič, the concerto for the soloist instrument is also of interest for the Russian composers Aram Hacıaturian and Dmitri Kabalevski.

Known for his symphonic music and his ballet suite, Aram Hacıaturian (1904-1978) dedicates soloist concertos to piano, viola and cello where he uses the resources of the Armenian folklore from the perspective of the genre’s modernity.

Dmitri Kabalevski (1904-1987) as a representative of the Russian music avant-garde, together with Hacıaturian and Šostakovič (although he is forced to blame the dodecaphonism), composes 3 concertos for

piano and orchestra (1936-1937), the Concerto for Violin and Orchestra (1940), and the Concerto for Cello and Orchestra (1946).

The instrumental virtuosity predominates both in the construction of the soloist score and in the one of the concertizing instrument, by impregnating the symphonic discourse with specific elements (ample passages in an improvisational style or of an increased proportion and technical difficulty) and the individualization of the instruments in the assembly. The rapport between the orchestra and the soloist instrument can change by the equal involvement of the two partners in the development of the symphonic dramaturgy. The soloist instrument tends to be considered a “voice” in the symphonic assembly and the characteristics of the soloist instruments, of individual assertion and virtuosity, are to be found in the orchestra assembly as well.

In the Romanian music of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the composers, starting from George Enescu's example and using elements of the traditional popular songs, resort to the stylization of the folkloric material, capitalizing the melodic-rhythmic characteristics of authentic song and dance. Even when they use compositional modern techniques, Romanian composers introduce modal elements within the rigorous serial organization.

Starting with 1950, the concertizing creation is based on the synthesis of forms and includes a variety of musical languages, from tonalism to serialism and modalism (Paul Constantinescu and Sigismund Toduță). Despite these contributions, one can notice that harmony still constitutes a main element. Similarly, the role of the soloist instrument in the genre has, in relation to the orchestra, a different contribution. Either it manifests as a foreground element, as a soloist voice, or it is assimilated in the orchestra assembly. The seventh decade brings along the tendency to dissipate the melodic substance to promote the timbre punctualism where the technical effects of the instrumental writing represent an important means the expression. The atmosphere, the musical idea, the expression are evasively suggested, without depriving

the musical substance of tension (by using flageolets, trills, tremolos, “col legno”, “sul tasto” effects) (A. Vieru, W. Berger).

If up to the 8<sup>th</sup> decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century the interest of the Romanian composers headed mostly towards string instruments (violin, cello), currently it is decreasing for the concertizing genre generally. Some composers are heading towards viola and double bass (M. Moldovan, M. Marbé) [1].

Thus, the composers of the 20<sup>th</sup> century continue to promote the instrumental soloist concerto in their creation, focusing on the expressivity of the instrumental timbre, on the amplitude of the traditional forms and the combination of the characteristics of the concertizing genre with symphonic principles. The role of the soloist instrument has an impact on the symphonic conception of the score as well.

The concertizing spirit is reflected in the 20<sup>th</sup> century as a tendency towards playfulness and the explanation and exhaustion of the technical-expressive resources of the instruments that are used. To the emancipation of the concertizing spirit has also contributed the new vision on instrumentation within the orchestra assembly; new research on rhythm, the music exterior to the European space (jazz, the music of the Extreme Orient), traditional folklore and electronic music. The symbiosis that the romantic composers achieved by transforming the concertizing score into a symphony, the individualization of the instruments in the symphonic assembly, as well as the enrichment of the symphonic works with concertizing elements has been amplified by modern musicians. The concertizing spirit from the creation of the composers of the 20<sup>th</sup> century is transferred to the symphonic or chamber assemblies and gains new stylistic coordinates.

## References

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