

THE CONCERTIZING SPIRIT IN THE EUROPEAN MUSIC IN THE FIRST HALF OF THE 20TH CENTURY

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Abstract: *A preference of the 20th 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 (symphony or chamber) 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 basically consist of structures of the classical forms, then the soloist instrument is attributed the leading role, without the orchestra’s representing only the support of the accompaniment and the harmonious and modulant milieu, but actually representing also a means of thematic support and transformation.*

Key words: *concerto, blowing wooden and brass instruments, virtuosity, tonal-modal synthesis, Passacaglia.*

1. Introduction

After the supremacy held within the framework of the instrumental-soloist concerto by the piano and the violin (besides assigning the soloist role to the cello and to other blowing wooden and brass instruments, such as: the flute, the oboe, the clarinet, the bassoon, the horn), in the 20th century the composers extend the soloist instrumental range, orienting to such instruments as the viola (Batrók, Hindemith), the trumpet, the saxophone (Debussy and Milhaud compose a Rhapsody and respectively 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 20th century the spreading of the concertizing genre in the composers’ creation, by the enrichment of the elements of technical difficulty. The concertizing virtuosity will reflect on the entire orchestra assembly in whose structure the soloist instrument is, most of the times, an “integrated” voice in the symphonic assembly. The new tendencies of the dodecaphonism of the Second Viennese School become concrete in

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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 a folklore influence. The tonal-modal synthesis in their creation contains "generating archetypal modal cells" (oligochords, pentatones, hexatones) characteristic of the popular modes.

2. Objectives

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

Beginning with the second decade, the structure of the form and the compositional technique develops 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) being 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, viola d'amore, the viola and the cello. The title changes in Kammermusic (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 may fall on the motility characteristic of the instrument, with a focus on the emphasis of the soloist virtuosity with composers such as Batrók, Stravinski, Prokofiev (as presented lower) or with the composers from the "Group of the six" who resume themselves the forms of the 18th century. We shall meet a symbiosis of elements characteristic to the soloist and rhapsodic concerto between concerto and symphonic poem or fantasy. The score of the orchestra accompaniment is written either for a great symphonic assembly or for a chamber orchestra (Hindemith, Şostakovici) or for a blowers' assembly (Kurt Weil – Concerto for piano and blowers' orchestra and Igor Stravinski with Concerto for piano and blowers' orchestra, 1924). Within the framework of the impressionism, the 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, Concertos for piano and orchestra: № 1 in G Major and № 2 in D Major for the left hand (1935).

The return to the old art, especially from the point of view of the polyphonic constructions and of the modal language, is reflected by Ottorino Respighi in Gregorian Concerto for violin and orchestra (1921) and Mixolidian 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.

3. Stylistical references

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 (instrumental soloist virtuosity of the assembly’s compartments, with a strong individualization of the timbre, 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 experiments are tried at 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 this kind of works. The French composer succeeds in achieving 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, Lutoslawski – address also the orchestra assembly which they enrich with concertizing elements specific to the instrumental soloist style, by individualizing the instrumental timbers and the highlighting within the assembly of the individual soloists.

A preference of the 20th century composers is to be noticed not only in the combination of the symphonic elements with the concertizing ones (Prokofiev, Honegger, Enescu) but also for 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 working. Together with Prokofiev and Şostakovici, 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 the 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 representative of the Russian music avant-garde together with Hacıaturian and Şostakovici (although he is forced to blame the dodecaphonism), he orients to instrumental soloist concerto. 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 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 20th 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 the authentic song and dance. Even when they use compositional modern techniques, the 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 the musical languages – from tonalism to serialism and modalism (Paul Constantinescu and Sigismund Toduță). The seventh decade brings along the tendency of dissipating the melodic substance in order to promote the timbre punctualism where the technical effects of the instrumental writing represents an important means the expression. The atmosphere, the musical idea, the expression are suggested, evasively, 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 8th decade of the 20th century the interest of the Romanian

an improvisational style or of an increased composers headed mostly towards the string instruments (violin, cello), currently it is decreasing for the concertizing genre generally. Some composers are heading towards the viola and double bass (M. Moldovan, M. Marbé). [1]

4. Conclusions

Thus, the composers of the 20th century will 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 the symphonic principles. The role of the soloist instrument has an impact on the symphonic conception of the score as well.

To the emancipation of the concertizing spirit has also contributed the new vision on instrumentation within the orchestra assembly, the new research on rhythm, the music exterior to the European space (the jazz, the music of the Extreme Orient), the traditional folklore and the 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 the modern musicians.

References

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