

STYLISTIC DIRECTIONS IN PAUL CONSTANTINESCU'S MUSICAL CREATION

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Abstract: *Centering on the changes in the musical language of the composer, the division into periods of Paul Constantinescu's creation represents, essentially, the evolution of a modal thinking particularised by the passing from the diatonic phase to that of chromatic, from the modern stadium of modal towards that of the contemporary neo-modal of synthesis.*

Key words: *Paul Constantinescu, folk, Neoclassicism, Byzantine style, modal language.*

1. Introduction

The unitary aspect of his compositional style imposes its characteristics right from the beginning, by highly consistent means of musical language. Paul Constantinescu's musical creation is missing any kind of these deep metamorphosis even up to a degree of negation, which are shown in the poly stylistics of Stravinsky's, Enescu's or even Bartók's works – not to talk about nowadays, when the rhythm of change is accelerated to a point where any kind of work has the possibility of pronouncing its own style [2].

According to I. Anghel [1], the most obvious stylistic landmark which could be applicable to the author's complete compositional work is his way of creating in a folkloric as well as in a Byzantine style, although these have a common origin in the national patrimony of native music. These two directions do clearly

show similar aspects using the same procedures and techniques, having their roots in a common body of intonations. As far as the so-called neoclassicism or expressionism in P. Constantinescu's creation, far from being autonomous stylistic directions, they represent distinct functionalities attributed to his creation, modalities of compositional evaluation together with the two permanent actual directions: the folkloric and the Byzantine one.

2. Stylistic Directions as Reflected in Paul Constantinescu's Musical Creation

The development of Paul Constantinescu's compositional language is therefore not undergoing any kind of spectacular changes or points of view but it will consist of steps gained on the modal domain, precisely, in the stages the diatonic would take towards chromatic. So,

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the way from diatonic to chromatic resumes essentially the rising, the progress and the maturity of his compositional style. The chromatic phase - which is neo-modal – makes the maximum conceptual concentration point, the final moment of all these creative accumulations.

Although a lot of research upon P. Constantinescu's creation was made, there has never been an adequate division into periods underlined, as it has been done with Enescu's musical creation. Some timid trials have been made concerning certain factors imposed from outside, as far as social-political circumstances are taken into consideration. It is spoken about a "before the liberation" period and about another "after the liberation" – in that far, that in the first (judged by the second one) period decadence aspects are shown and innovation aspects for the second period are shown. It is obvious that in a certain creation stage, in a casual way, the composer's work would prove an accessibility tendency, paying a tribute to the mass-musical culture.

A variant of Constantinescu's creation division into periods proposed by ourselves would be reported to the temporal subdivisions, on the basis on which Vasile Herman divides the Romanian music in "Form and Style in the New Romanian Creation" [3]:

- 1899-1920: the victory of the peasants' folklore; ripeness of native style.
- 1920-1949: tendencies of ownership of new techniques "avant-garde".
- 1949-1955: the appliance of universal traditional styles going from neo baroque to the national schools of folklore; scientific growing up with well-drawn pointing out upon the research of the native folklore.

2.1. First Period (1929-1938)

As it is the fact with outlining of any

own style, this is the phase of probing, of searching, of passing from school exercises towards real *opus* (musical composition). The composer opens the way of two main directions of his creation, even within the first year, the Byzantine one, with the *Two Studies in Byzantine Style for String Trio* and the comic-programmatic one, with the *Four Fables for the Piano* and *Songs for Voice and Piano on Tudor Arghezi's Verses*. The series of works in the folkloric style (the richest direction in the composer's creation) is opened the next year, 1930, with *The Romanian Suite*. The evaluation modality of the inspiration source is, within this phase, both the quotation as well as the creation in folkloric or Byzantine spirit. Elements inspired from the town-folklore appear as well, in *Sonatina for Piano and Violin* and in *Quintet for Violin and Wind Instruments* (1932-1933). During this stage at the bottom of the musical construction lies the musical entity – the theme – which usually occurs in the exact transpose of the quoted tune. The creation shapes itself on a modal's diatonic, as well as chromatic, in the *Two Studies in Byzantine Style*. The composer approaches an original compositional vision with the sketch *Din cătănie* (1932-1933), in which, for the first time within his music, he introduces the aesthetic valences of tragedy-comics. He achieves this through the quoted constructions from intonation and expressive spheres widened one from another: the soldier's song (a species of the occasional folklore), the waltz (round dance), the march. The end of the period records the composer's statement in the musical area through the masterpiece of the comic genre, the opera *O noapte furtunoasă* (1934) and the first choral creation in Byzantine style, *Liturghia în stil psaltic* (1936). If the comic genre with its deepening towards grotesque represents the handle of a tonal/modal language with

harmonic-chromatic sphere (of the western enlarged tonality type) the Liturgy is domain of the modal-diatonic innovation, with a multiple straight polyphony elements, imitative, counter-pointed with typical harmonic moments of modal cadence. It is anticipated the cadence atmosphere from the oratorios with the specific implications of the Under-tone or of the phrigian second, a. s. o.

Summarizing the stylistic particularities of this period, we focus on the following techniques of the musical language:

- Tonal reminiscences in the comic directed, expressionist, creation, going hand-in-hand with a modal frame for the folkloric and Byzantine creation.
- Mainly diatonic modal aspects, modal chromatic in the Byzantine creation - under the form of the chromatic scales - or in the creation inspired from the town-folklore - under the form of an enlarged second - chromatic harmony with the programmatic or comic pieces.
- Cultivated use of the quotation or of the creation based on precisely imitation.
- Thematic musical discourse, developed mainly under the suite form with pre-expected symphonic sonatas and the creation of some cultivated formal frames for the liturgical melody.
- Polyphonic writing which re-evaluates traditional techniques along with new modalities of outsized monody (pedals, unisons, *ostinati*, a. s. o.).
- Approaching the modern technique of musical *cohabitation* (living tally).
- Creation of an *arioso* - specific for the comic opera.

So to say, the first period represents besides his debut, the moment of some openings - within the modal spheres of folkloric and Byzantine style, even with touching some stability points (in the Liturgy), or anticipation points (in *Nuntă*

în Carpați, 1938). There is also an upper-point (with *O noapte furtunoasă*, 1934) and a final point (with *Riga Crypto and Lapona Enigel* on Ion Barbu's lines, 1936) of the comic-aesthetic tendency, musically doubled by expressionist techniques - which for shows (neo)classical tendencies (in *Sonatina, Symphonietta*, 1937 and the less two significant works *Prelude for piano solo*, 1934 and *Burlesque for the piano*, 1938).

2.2. Second Period (1939-1948)

The beginning of the period is characterised by a lack of a prolific phase, maybe because of the war's years, too, which is followed in compensation in the right following period, by the two masterpieces of the liturgical creation - *The Easter Byzantine Oratorio* (1946) and *The Christmas Byzantine Oratorio* (1948). On the whole, an exclusive creative power is towards the Byzantine direction - moments of high vocal-symphonic creations being prepared by the Byzantine influence on the instrumental domain. *Free Variations on a Byzantine tune of the 13th Century*, written for cello and orchestra and *The Byzantine Sonata for Cello Solo* (1939-1940), with total or partly neglecting of other directions: the folkloric one is missing and the comic-programmatic is slightly represented. But at the same time, moments of rich con-substantiality towards the neoclassicism-folkloric are highly felt and moments of culmination are also recorded: *The Symphony* and *The String Quartet* (1945-1947). There are certain apparently disequilibrium moments of the period determined by the different allocation of creation on stylistic directions as well as by some overcrowded creative areas as well as by the some silent areas. The following explanation may be attributed to the phenomena: the silent period (contemporary with the war) is in

fact that of creation, of pregnancy, of conceiving, which outbursts after smouldering, almost instantaneously, on simultaneous directions. In this way, the four masterpieces, the Oratorios, *The Symphony* and *The String Quartet* appear at almost the same date, or anyway at a very short period of time between 1945-1948. These three decisive years are definitely underlined for the composer and represent the creative focus of the second period. The relevant language characteristics are:

- The decantation of the modal language up to the Oratorios' diatonic. The way of the Byzantine modal is drawn backwards from the initial instrumental chromatic type of the Byzantine studies, to the vocal diatonic type of the Oratorios.
- The tone's persistence in the frames of some functional harmonic cadences of authentic sense in the Oratorios.
- The appearance of neobaroque models of polyphony in *The Byzantine Sonata* or of the polyphonic guiding rule in the Oratorios.
- The creation of the *Romanian liturgical-recitative* in the Oratorios.
- The superior reshaping of the folklore valences, by taking into consideration the pattern of traditional forms (variation, sonata, oratorio, symphony, quartet).
- The movement of the sphere of melodic inspiration from the quotation phase to the proper creation phase; the adjustment of the folkloric intonations on necessities: their investment with thematic functions, with development valences, the creation of modal frames in which the own tune may breath in a stylised form, the authenticity of the models.
- The overtaking of the modal diatonic stage in the folkloric creation, by anticipating some modal systems of

synthesis – the tone-semitone mode in the String Concerto.

The significance of the second period is the fact that it represents the fulfilment of a creation cycle, that of Byzantine inspiration (the composer will only once come back on this direction with *The Triple Concerto for Violin, Cello, Piano and Orchestra*, but in a new mode) and the masterly opening of the performing section of his creation, the most important from now on. The three directions – the Byzantine, the neoclassic and the folkloric one – will converge, in the last period, towards the same meeting point, *The Triple Concerto*.

2.3. The Third Period (1949-1956)

According to V. Tomescu, it is that period of “compromises” which the composer makes on the accessibility ground, to educate the masses “taste”, on the aesthetic patterns of the newly-installed regime in power [4]. This attitude he temporarily takes in his creative concept is much more underlined in the folkloric creation; sprinkled with processing of popular dances, dancing tunes taken from different collections from the whole country, mostly harmonised and arranged under the form of suite or rhapsody. Many of them are addressed to some amateurs' choreographic-musical assemblies. In these imposed rigours is his “more temperate” vision of choral processing (1951) or instrumental one, as the *Three Pieces for the Piano* (1952), in which the quotation reappears. And still, the processing proves a well-mastering of the compositional skill, equilibrium of the harmonic-polyphonic writing, richness and variety of the modal cadences. Some works even reach highly-processing levels, even if they render the quotation, as it is the matter with the choral-ballad *Mioritza* (1951). In the programmatic direction, in the lied-cycles

– *Four Madrigals for Vocal Quartet and Piano on M. Eminescu's verses, Songs for voice and Piano on St. O. Iosif's verses* - the seeking towards the accessibility of a style closed to the peasant's folklore or the town's folklore is to be found.

The composer still addresses a more abstract musical vision in the instrumental concerts series, opened in this period by *The Piano Concerto* (1952) in which, under the pretext of an instrumental virtuosity, tries a transplant of the folkloric character in the performing forms. With a certain hint of the town's folklore (the second theme is a song processed from Anton Pann), the concert spreads at the same time a thematic sphere close to *The String Quartet* (changed in 1955 into a Concerto). So to say, we consider the accessibility as a main characteristic of the period, with everything that follows out of it:

- A melodic and harmonic modal character, mainly diatonic.
- A tendency towards harmonic writing.
- A polyphonic vision directed towards an obstinate writing, suggesting the folk music band (*taraf*) instrumental style.
- An orchestration which includes local instruments, popular exclusively as *cembalo*, or realises the suggestion of a popular instrumental manner belonging to certain regions, where, for instance, by the drums, we are sent to the percussive character or some dances in Maramuresh, etc.
- An evolution of the modal language towards chromatic, obtained in *The Piano Concerto*, by the tetra-chorded transposition, which creates tone-semitone scales.

2.4. The Fourth Period (1957-1963)

Containing the last composer's opus, *The Triple Concerto for Violin, Cello, Piano and Orchestra* (1963), this period

overtakes the prerogatives of the culminating moment of his whole creation, of synthesis of the whole compositional procedures, as well as of all the directions, excepting, of course, the comic aspect. This is highly seen under the wit of Arghezi's spirit in *Horă de șoareci (Mice Round-Dance)*, for children's choir and piano (1962). Otherwise the sobriety of the style is to be felt up to the dramatic moments in *Șapte cântece din ulița noastră*, for vocal interpretation and orchestra, on the lines of C. Theodorescu (1959), or in *The Triple Concerto*. The series of the concerts goes on, until when with *The Violin Concerto* (1957) or *The Harp Concerto* (1960) the more and more underlined musical discourse in chromatic is felt. The aspects which are drawn, now, at the end of a compositional road, are:

- The modal chromatic with aspects of neo-modal procession: the spreading of archetypal modal cell, binder of a cyclic shape.
- The persistency of the melody of a quotation type or with a pronounced thematic profile for the works based on the thematic principle.
- Elements of neo-modal harmony situated, by now, in the sphere of European conquers (Bartók, Stravinsky, a. s. o.).
- The guiding of a giusto-rhythmic system, symmetrical close to the rigour of the neoclassicism.

3. Conclusions

The particularities and the adaptations made on the division into periods of P. Constantinescu's musical creation as opposed to the Romanian compositional view in the first half of the 20th century underlined by V. Herman take into consideration the following aspects:

- A lack of the first stage since the beginning of P. Constantinescu's

creation is only in 1929, so to say after the beginning of the second phase recorded into the Romanian music.

- The second national stage has with P. Constantinescu sub-divisions, because of the flourishing of an own style.

To summarise the main stylistic tendencies for each stage in dividing into periods the Romanian music, done by V. Herman, as compared to P. Constantinescu's division of his creation - done by ourselves – we notice the following differences or overlappings:

- The limits of each corresponding period are almost equal (plus/minus a difference of a year).
- The next stage means, for every side, a consolidation phase, a peak.
- The last stage, in the fact the transcendent stage, is the stadium of a new quality.

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