

7. ECHOES OF ROMANTICISM IN VIOLIN AND PIANO SONATA NO. 2, OP. 45 BY MARCEL MIHALOVICI - ANALYTICAL LANDMARKS FOR AN UPSCALE INTERPRETATION

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Abstract: *The evolution of the genre of violin and piano sonata in the Romanian composition creation in the first half of the 20th century, marked by the tendency towards getting close to the European musical phenomenon by assimilating stylistic influences of Romanticism, especially, of Enescian Romanticism, distinctly manifesting in Violin and Piano Sonata no. 2, op. 45, by Marcel Mihalovici, one of the most renowned Romanian composers settled in Paris, appreciated by the famous contemporaries, such as M. Ravel, V. d'Indy, F. Poulenc etc. Sonata (1941), preceded by a motto in the sonnet of Romantic poet Gérard de Nerval Myrtho: „Je sais pourquoi là bas le volcan s'est rouvert...”, impresses through the high emotional tension, metaphorically expressed by the image of the “woken” volcano, figurative suggestiveness of the musical language, architectonic innovativeness, spectacular capitalization of the violin technique in the formula of a violin-piano choir.*

Key words: *Romanian violin sonata, Romantic influences*

1. Introduction

The evolutional paradigms of the genre of violin and piano sonata in the Romanian composition creation in the first half of the 20th century, elucidating the tendency of Romanian composers in “incessantly consolidating, in most varied technical and stylistic directions, the contact surface with the European universal musical phenomenon”⁷⁸ [Firca, 104], follows the pathway of closeness towards universality guided by the creative ideas of the *Enescian Romanticism*. A distinctive artistic phenomenon manifests itself in Violin and Piano Sonata no. 2, op. 45, by M. Mihalovici, appreciated by F. Poulenc as “the best composer of the foreign school in Paris. Every year, Mihalovici brings new evidence of his individuality and talent, expressed through a technique full of mastery”⁷⁹.

2. Romantic Meanings of the Imagistic Spectrum: Theme Architectonics

The sonata, with the dedication: „*À Boguslav Martinů*” (its part, edited in Paris⁸⁰, identifies the place and period of creation: „*Cannes, Décembre 1940 – Avril 1941*”), is preceded by a *motto* of the Romantic poet in the flourishing period of literary Romanticism Gérard de Nerval (1808-1855) – *Myrtho*: „*Je sais pourquoi là bas le volcan s'est rouvert...*” (“I know why the extinct volcano

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⁷⁸ Firca, C.L. (1974) *Direcții în muzica românească. 1900-1930*. Editura Academiei RSR. București. p.104.

⁷⁹ Români din umbră. (2017) <http://adevarul.ro/cultura/istorie/romani-umbra-compozitorul-marcel-mihalovici-prietenul-enescu->

⁸⁰ Marcel Mihalovici, *2-eme Sonate pour violon et piano, op.45*, Edit.Heugel, Paris,1954.

awoke...”). The programmatic texture, with an exotic, oriental shade, which manifests itself by the symbol of the volcano around eruption, metaphorically resonating with the force of the emotional experiences of the Romantic hero, suggests, at the same time, associations to an explosive atmosphere which dominates in Europe on the brink of World War II. These parallelisms generate the continuous application of Romantic semantic means throughout the sonata. The sonata presenting a tripartite cycle, the score being scored without signs on the key, the tonality manifesting itself very vaguely: p.I (f-moll/F-dur), p.II (As-dur), p.III (f-moll/F-dur).

Part I, *Allegro molto appassionato*, 6/8, in the form of sonata, begins with the presentation of the main theme (scored by the author T^oI^o), expression of the Romantic “momentum” - ascending vertiginous melody, carried out in the confluent movement of both instrumental parts (with parallel eighths and rhythm of triolets), which, reaching the “climax of the ascent” g², propagates in several melodic lines, profiled in a versatile movement, with multiple intervals of a tritone: (Eg. 1)



In the transition section there is a new rhythmic-intonative element, reminding of the horas with the metre of 6/8: (Eg. 2)



The tempo calms itself and next is the secondary (T^oII^o) – antithesis image with the first theme – of a ravishing emotiveness, presented in a complementary instrumental duet: (Eg. 3)



The exposition concludes with a nostalgic theme, distinctively scored, *a T^omolto tranquillo*, where we notice intonative tangents with the theme of the introduction into Wagnerian opera *Tristan and Isolde*: (Eg. 4)



The approach is carried out in an intense evolutionary process, in the first stage intonations of the MT being created, and in the second one - a new intonative element intervening, persistent in both parties, whose incipient motive suggests associations with *Dies irae*, modification in a triple measure: (Eg. 5)



The sonorous avalanche to be next, creating a sinister, lurid atmosphere, continues with the third stage, where ST carries out (T^oII^o) in the piano part - with a transfigured image, excessive sonorisation (*ff*) and the remark *quasi tromba*, these granting that theme agitation and perplexity: (Eg. 6)



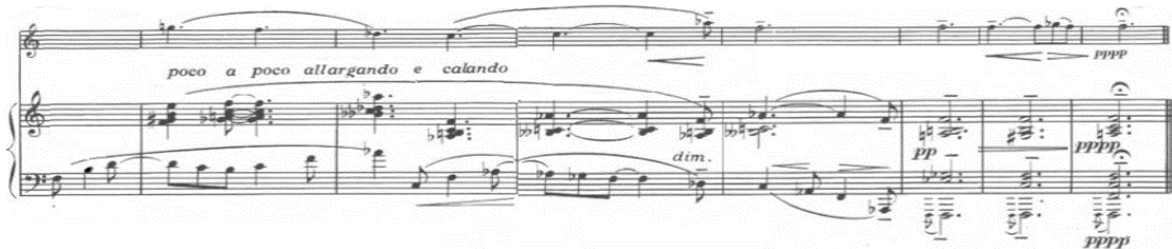
The frantic sensation intensifies throughout the intonative elaboration of the ST, with a *stretto* unfolding and the remark *Animando poco a poco*. In the climax moment, the reprise begins - MT, which, unlike the exposition, is carried out in *stretto*, continuing the developing process: (Eg. 7)



ST returns with the initial image in the exposition. In the coda the confrontation of the contrasting theme in the exposition continues - the reminiscence of an episodic theme from its ending (*a T^o molto tranquillo*) returns with the remark *Doppio più lento*, passing with the dancing motive in the bridge: (Eg. 8)



The movement concludes with the ST reminiscence, in the grave register of the piano (*poco a poco allargando e calando, pppp*) and the keynote arisen in the calm atmosphere of F-dur tonality: (Eg. 9)



The second part, *Larghetto cantabile, 4/4*. The range of images with a Romantic shade, exalted-frantic or lyric-introspective from the first part is completed by the emotional sphere of the secondary movement, which perfectly falls within the imagistic framework of Romantic nocturnes. Starting in the piano part *-solo* with a contemplative theme, the movement is structured in the form of free variations: (Eg. 10)



Next there are various modifications, very different from the prototype, with abundant pastoral illustrative elements, with a diversified rhythmic drawing and minuscule durations of demi-semi-quavers: (Eg. 11)



Sometimes, “rustling” effects emerge (*ppp*, *tranquillo*) – ascending passages with sixty-fourth-notes: (Eg. 12)

The musical score for Example 12 consists of two staves. The upper staff is marked 'T° tranqu.' and features a series of ascending sixteenth-note passages. Dynamic markings include 'ppp sub.' and 'ppp'. The lower staff also contains ascending sixteenth-note passages, with dynamic markings 'ppp sub.' and 'ppp tranqu.'. The music is characterized by a delicate, rustling texture.

Other times, the theme becomes unrecognisably “insurgent” in agitated figurations (*sempre e misterioso*): (Eg. 13)

The musical score for Example 13 is marked 'Mosso Sul tasto' and features a tempo of quarter note = 60. It consists of two staves with dense, agitated figurations. The dynamic marking is 'pp sempre e misterioso'. The music is characterized by a sense of mystery and tension.

Part III, *Molto vivace*, 3/4, in the form of sonata, begins in an accelerated tempo, with the MT exposure (*ff*, *ruvido*) through the alternation of soloistic, rigidly rhythmical, with ample ascending saltations. The second element is constituted by the gradually descending movement, ornamented with *trillo*. (Eg. 14)

The musical score for Example 14 is marked 'Molto vivace' with a tempo of quarter note = 180. It consists of two staves with a fast, rhythmic character. The dynamic marking is 'ff ruvido'. The music is characterized by a sense of urgency and intensity.

ST begins in the violin part, by the succession of the ascending movement (a^1-b^2), and a melodic eighth “crash” (b^2-b^1) with the obstinate repetition of the lower sound: (Eg. 15)

The musical score for Example 15 consists of two staves. The upper staff is marked 'arco' and features a series of ascending and descending eighth-note passages. Dynamic markings include 'mf' and 'ff'. The lower staff contains a rhythmic accompaniment with dynamic markings 'ff'. The music is characterized by a sense of drama and tension.

The second musical idea of ST starts in the violin part with a melody rhythmically associated to the *waltz* genre (*Tranquillo ma in Tempo*); in the piano part, a dissonant accord with an illustrative shade is persistently repeated (plastinating the underground bangs around the volcanic eruption). (Eg. 16)



The approach is carried out at a high level of emotional tension, in the grave register of the piano building up, with atrocity, the “drumming” formula within ST. And in the climax area of this semantic element throughout 19 measures it is confronted, by juxtaposition with another one within MT, in a head register, decorated with a *trillo*, plastinating the “voices of nature.” Distanced by 5 octaves, these elements reveal the magistral idea of the Sonata: incompatibility, hostility of these symbols: (Eg. 17)



The moment immediately after the climax is also very suggestive - the simultaneous unfolding of ST (the second musical idea, with a dancing shade of a *waltz*) and of the landmark theme in the slow movement - both are suddenly lowered; the first one - with a grand tenth, the second one - with an unaccented two-tenth: (Eg. 18)



However, hereafter the motivic element of the MT emerges in a lyric transfiguration (*dolce espressivo*), but with an active sequencing, vertiginously and uneasy evolving into an ascending direction: (Eg. 19)



In the moment of maximum tension, after a laconic retransition starts in the **reprize** (*ruvido, ff*). However, the developing process progressively continues, with an energetic and more emphasized potential, “percussion” motives being built up (*sfz ff*) of a descending eighth and *cluster* accords. Accumulating into a dynamic intensity (*ff cresc.*) the endeavour evolving, through a dynamic contrast, towards the coda (*Animando poco a poco, pp subito*). The atmosphere of a dancing element (with a *waltz* rhythmic), the tonal framework being more clearly noticeable - *d-moll*. Agitating into a instantaneous swirl, the endeavour leads towards a culminating area - similar to the approach moment (but extended to 28 m.), where semantic elements are confronted, plastinating a Romantic conflict: (Eg. 20)



In the last measures of the Sonata there emerge reminiscences of the MT intonation, with the remark *ff, feroce* - in the piano and the motive of descending eighth of the ST - in the violin, with doubles and worked up sonorization: (Eg. 21)



3. Romantic Reflexes of the Interpretative Capitalization: Objectives of the Violin Technique

The Romantic dyke of the Sonata analysed eloquently manifests itself in the author’s compositional thinking, but also in the creation of the interpretative aspect. The aesthetics of Romanticism with its own worship of the genius, also allows for the approach on the performer as a creating personality with the free expression of his/her *ego*, of his/her sentimental universe. In this context it is necessary to mention that musical Romanticism asserts itself through the creation of a new type of instrumental interpretation. In the opinion of musicologist Vladimir Grigoriev, exposed in paper *Musical Romanticism. The Essence of Style and Interpretation Issues*, “The issue of interpretation of a great volume and keenness for the first time emerges in the Romantic age”⁸¹.

⁸¹ Григорьев, В. (1994) Музыкальный романтизм. Сущность стиля и проблемы интерпретации. В кн. „Проблемы романтизма в исполнительском искусстве”. Сборник 6. МГК, Москва. с.24.

The first one, who treated the notion of *interpretation* (from the Fr. *interpretation*) in contrast with the notion of *execution* (from the Fr. *execution*), was, as musicologist Natalia Corâhalova states in the monography *Musical Performance*, the musical critic and French journalist Leon Escudier (1819-1880), considering that “interpretation” - is the most appropriate word to signify the reproduction of musical creation, as the artist has the mission of understanding the composer’s thought and transmitting it to the listener”⁸². The great virtuoso-pianist of the 19th century, Anton Rubinstein promotes the concept of musical interpretation as a process confluent to the creative one: “for the successful interpretation of the musical creation it is necessary to understand, to relive, to penetrate into the creation and to reproduce it before the listener. Reproduction is a second creation”⁸³. And composer Serghei Taneev, referring to interpretative freedom, mentioned that the freedom must “not exceed certain boundaries and the performer must decipher the genuine intentions of the author (...) and under no circumstance may he/she go contrary to those intentions”⁸⁴.

The musical interpretation in the Romanticism age, with an extremely personalised, subjective nature, constitutes a special phenomenon, forming “a distinct interpretative type - uplifting, ardent”⁸⁵. Romanticism “has found its expression in the extreme subjectivisation of the interpretation in a «romantic dispute» with the author, in the self-identification with the images of the work, the increase of the theatrical aspect of interpretation, the interpretative intervention in the text of the work ”⁸⁶. Namely in the interpretation of Romantic creations, the performer’s artistic potential and personality have a decisive importance. For this purpose, the registration made by George Manoliu in paper *Trăsături stilistice enesciene în interpretarea Sonatei de César Franck (Enescian Stylistic Characteristics in the Interpretation of the Sonata by César Franck)* draws attention, referring to the opinion of R.Jardillier regarding two different styles of interpreting the same Romantic creations, manifested by two famous violonists: Jacques Thibaud and George Enescu. The author mentions that J. Thibaud, renowned performer of French Romantic music, has also taken some characteristics from the style of salon music, where *glissandos* were excessively applied, which alienated him from the Franckian concept. Contrary to this, he remarks the interpretation of the Sonata by George Enescu (he had conquered the Parisian audience since 1899, being worthy of the 1st Prize in graduating the conservatory of Paris in the class of M.P. Marsick, under whom he had studied and J. Thibaud) emphasizing that Enescu “grants the sonata the depth and nobility characteristic to his interpretation”⁸⁷. Probably, his disciple, Yehudi Menuhin, also

⁸² Quoted after: Корыхалова, Н. (1979) Интерпретация музыки. Изд. Музыка, Ленинград. с. 22.

⁸³ Quoted after: Корыхалова, ibidem.

⁸⁴ Гинзбург, Л. (1971) Исследования, статьи, очерки. Изд. Сов. Композитор, Москва. с.216.

⁸⁵ Григорьев, ibidem.

⁸⁶ Григорьев, ibidem.

⁸⁷ Quoted after: Manoliu, G. (1985) Trăsături stilistice enesciene în interpretarea Sonatei de César Franck. In: „Studii de muzicologie”, vol. XIX. Editura muzicală, București. p. 9.

remarks these Enescian qualities, stating: “Enescu’s thinking exceeds centuries”⁸⁸

A distinct problem of Romantic interpretation refers to the tempo-rhythmic indication, characterised through the frequent alternation of the tempos, guided by various indications of the composer. The Romantic interpretative stylistics simultaneously grants a great freedom in the treatment of tempos. An eloquent example vis-a-vis the tempo is reproduced in the monography *César Franck* by musicologist Nina Rogojina. While the illustrious violonist Eugène Ysaÿe interprets the famous Sonata, without strictly complying with the author’s tempo, an admirer of Franckian creation expressed in whispers to the composer the perplexity regarding these deviations, however Franck responds calmly and safely: “Possibly, but I believe, that he is right”⁸⁹. In the monography quoted is found in the account about another case, which reveals the interpretative concepts of the same representative of the Romantic violin school. Eugène Ysaÿe, after the repetition of the Franckian sonata together with a cherished pianist, who, however, had not managed to form a whole ensemble, regretfully exclaimed: “It is difficult to interpret Franck’s sonata...by himself”⁹⁰. Not lacking irony, but very significant, this remark perfectly expresses the importance of the instrumental integrity *violin-piano*, absolutely necessary for the interpretation of the Romantic sonata. The compositional formula, occupying, as Irina Polsciaia records in monography *Ansamblu cameral: istorie, teorie, estetică (The Chamber Ensemble: History, Theory, Aesthetics)*⁹¹, an intermediary position between the soloistic and the collective musical genres, harmoniously combine the free self-expression of the interpretative qualities of each of the musicians (*homo ludens*), drawn together based on its aesthetic visions, the intellectual and spiritual potential, with the feeling of belonging of an indivisible musical organism. The pianist must be an *alter ego* of the violonist, regarding the emotional participation perfectly symmetrical in thinking and execution, synchronising the phrasing, dynamics, sonorous dosing, finally - the architectonic creation. The communicative-psychological interaction of the partners form, based on the opinion of Evghenii Nazaikinski, a special “communicational climate”⁹². The same thought is also enciphered in the expression of pianist Hephzibah Menuhin, sister and stage partner of the famous violonist, regarding that the members of the duet must be “Siamese souls”⁹³.

Elucidating the characteristics of the manner of interpretation within the genre of violin sonata of Romanticism, it is necessary to label essential *interpretative objectives*, estimating:

1. aesthetic message of the work, with the meanings “detached from” the Romantic *motto* but, at the same time, created by reference to the historic period,

⁸⁸ Quoted after: Manoliu, Ibidem.

⁸⁹ Quoted after: Рогожина, Н. (1969) Сезар Франк. Изд. Советский Композитор, Москва. с. 78.

⁹⁰ Quoted after: Рогожина, p.76.

⁹¹ Польская, И. (2001) Камерный ансамбль: История, теория, эстетика. Изд. ХГАК, Харьков

⁹² Назайкинский, Е. (1982) Логика музыкальной композиции. Изд. Музыка, Москва. с. 23.

⁹³ Эжен Изай. music.prsiterun-com/muzikant/30-html-

when it was created (December 1940 - April 1941) - message expressed with much allegoric subtlety and dramatic amplex around disastrous cataclysms of the bloody world war.

2. the identification of the two imagistic poles – the resort mechanism of the Romantic conflict - focus on figurative means around the two suggestive semantic elements: symbolic plasticization of underground bangs around the volcanic eruption (by the percussion application of *cluster*-accords, the dynamic diapason between the sonorous fade out reduced to

pppp and avalanches excited on *fff*, with remarks of *ruvido, feroce, quasi tromba*), and in opposition to these - pastoral images with the traditional “voices of nature”, the tweet of the birds, the wind breeze, the rustling of leaves (through appoggiatura, *quasi trillo* trills, *con sordino* figurations, vertiginous passages with sixty-fourth-notes *delicatamente e fluido, molto armonioso, arpeggiato* accords, etc); the successive and simultaneous juxtaposition of contrasting semantic elements throughout the endeavour, but, especially, in landmark architectonic moments - treatment and coda;

3. progressive unfolding of the musical endeavour, fluency and continuous intonational variability being derived from the improvisational nature of the folklore instrumentalism, with the multitude of thematic transfigurations; with the frequent changing of tempos, nature indications, with dynamic spontaneous contrasts;

4. the settlement of the violin technique problems present in that creation: display of the Romantic interpretative mastery, marked by an outstanding sensitivity, by a pronounced sonorous colouring, but also by an unmatched virtuosity, resounding violin technique, based on the *left hand technique - fast-moving with vibrato* in cantilena melodies, with complex passages, with series of plays and broken arpeggios, double strings, octaves, accords, together with an abundant ornaments, with appoggiatura, *staccato volant, flageolette, pizzicato, trillo* - all with a fascinating dexterity, velocity, dynamism and radiance, creating the illusion of a fantastic sonorous lacery. Simultaneously, one of the most primary aspects of the Romantic sonata interpretation refers to the qualitative level of the sound, determined by the technique of *the right hand*: the well-measured distribution of the bow, through the logic of the phrasing, refined and diversified nuance of the sound, especially, in slow, cantabile, meditative fragments. The emotional tension is transmitted completely by the bow, which, moulding the sonorous intensity, generates a sound of a great expression, externalizing vibrant echoes of European musical Romanticism.

4. Conclusions

As a result of the issues exposed, we may conclude, that in the partition of Violin and Piano Sonata no. 2, op. 45, Marcel Mihalovici created a musical style of a universal nature, which denotes a miraculous stylistic symbiosis between reflections of Romanticism, some influences of the Romanian folklore, as well as

certain implications of contemporary techniques, with grotesque images, sharp colours and poignant sonorities, sporadic musical language drifting towards serialism⁹⁴. This creation, relevant due to the report between tradition and modernity, promoting a consistent aesthetic message, externalized through language with a high plasticizing suggestiveness, through the spectacular capitalization of the violin technique in the violin-piano ensemble formula, posing an interpretative challenge even for performance musicians, but especially, for the studying young people⁹⁵, as a responsible stage in the process of professional ageing.

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⁹⁴ Cosma, V. Marcel Mihalovici. Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online, Oxford University Press.

⁹⁵ Florea, A. (2015) Interpretative Capitalization of the Romantic sonata for violin and piano - distinct dimension in the evolution of the young musician. in: „Educația artistică: realizările trecutului și provocările prezentului”. Volumul Conferinței științifice internaționale. 25-26 noiembrie 2015. AMTAP, Chișinău.

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