

LIVIU GLODEANU'S "MIKROKOSMOS": AN INTRODUCTION

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SUMMARY. The works that great composers wrote for children often provide us with the unique chance to enter their laboratory. It is also the case of Liviu Glodeanu's collection of nine pieces for piano, which reveals some of his characteristic features: a music instantly attracting notice, the option for polymodal chromaticism and essentialized expression, the constant appeal to symmetry and clearly defined architectures.

Keywords: Liviu Glodeanu, bimodalism, polymodal chromaticism

Many of great composers wrote pieces for children. We can think of Bach, Mozart, Beethoven, Schubert, Schumann, Bartók, Prokofiev, Shostakovich, for example, but also of Mihail Jora (*Pictures and Pranks*), Silvestri, Miriam Marbe, Dan Voiculescu or Liviu Comes. More often than not, these works are not just a simplification of the musical discourse, adapted for the children's technical and intellectual level, but a unique opportunity to enter the composers' laboratory as well. For composers often reveal, in these very miniatures, the techniques and strategies at the foundation of their larger works.

The idea to investigate Liviu Glodeanu's collection of nine piano pieces for children² in fact originated in this very hypothesis and its confirmation following the subsequent analytical process: indeed, in the whole of Glodeanu's oeuvre, this collection plays the role of a *Mikrokosmos* and, while it doesn't have the Bartókian work's dimension³, it does serve the two important objectives mentioned earlier, namely, that of giving the

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² Without opus number, they were written for his older daughter Ioana, approximatively between 1970 and 1975. The order in which they now appear was chosen later by the composer's wife together with Ioana, currently a piano teacher at the "George Enescu" National College, and her husband, Nicolae (Nucu) Teodoreanu. I have this information from Mrs Ioana Teodorescu herself.

³ 153 pieces grouped in six volumes.

means to taking the first steps in music, and that of formulating an *ars poetica* which includes certain musical language options and elective affinities, expressed by possible allusions to his sources of inspiration, be it other composers or folk music.

Piece No. 1 - *Horns Signals*

Despite its only 16 bars, this miniature contains a host of musical ideas. The main motif, specific to horns, is also an allusion to the famous *Les Adieux* (exposed as inversion of the leader and concatenated with it), brought back in a bimodal context reminiscent of Bartók's music (see example 1). The perception of a depiction of hunting scenes becomes even more realistic with the dynamics going from *piano* to *forte* and then back to *piano*, suggestive of a gradual getting closer or moving further away.

E.g. 1

The musical score for 'Horns Signals' is presented in three systems. The first system begins with the tempo marking 'Moderato' and the dynamic 'p' (piano). It features a horn-like motif in the right hand and a supporting bass line in the left hand. The second system starts at bar 4 and continues the melodic and harmonic development. The third system starts at bar 7 and includes the dynamic marking 'crescendo', indicating a gradual increase in volume. The score is written in a key with two flats and a 2/4 time signature.

The music is built on two tetratonic scales separated by an augmented fourth (being the harmonics 1, 3, 5, 9 of C and G flat, respectively), fitting into the Bartókian axis system but forming at the same time an eight-tone mode which, accidentally or not, coincides with Messiaen Mode VI (third transposition) (see examples 2a and 2b).

E.g. 2a



Tetratonic scales separated by an augmented fourth

Ex. 2b



The resulting scale (Messiaen Mode VI)

The work is written in ternary form: A (6 measures) - B (4 measures) - A (6 measures). In the first section (A), antiphonic/ imitative, in three small arch-like melodic profiles, Glodeanu employs the Stravinskian technique of motif amplification and reduction, which Messiaen would later theorize as “rhythmic characters”: motif 1 (4 attacks), motif 2 (6 attacks), motif 3 (2 attacks) (see example 1).

In the second section (B, m. 7-10), the discourse becomes denser and conquers the high register. The composer gives up the previous antiphonic (imitative) technique. At first, it transforms into homophony. But given the different dimensions of the two structures (five and four attacks, respectively) and their slightly distinct profile, another method, that of phasing, specific to American minimalists and to Steve Reich in particular, is introduced. In the reprise, the division of the musical discourse between the two hands from section A is reversed.

Piece No. 2 - *The Cimbalom*

This single-section miniature suggests the process of the birth of a melodic fragment. The characteristic folk dance melody is alluded to by superposing an Alberti bass with its mirror image, again in a bimodal relation but spaced at a minor second (major arpeggios on G and F sharp, respectively) (see example 3), with the play of white and black keys sending us to Prokofiev (*Fugitive Visions* No.5) or Stravinsky (*Petrushka*, with the second exposition of the main character’s motif on the same notes).

From a short, deep groan in *marcato* (m. 3-4, 7-8, 9, 10), a diminutive, four-note melodic profile is slowly born (a descending Doric tetrachord), reminiscent (also because of its attack in *staccato*) both of the famous Romanian urban folk tune *The Lark*⁴ and of Enescu's *Rhapsody no. 1*, where it is quoted (see example 3). The melodic phrase is presented through imitation, (m. 11-18) transposed by a minor ninth, and culminates with a superposition (m. 19-22). Everything is repeated, and at the end comes a coda whose first motif represents a harmonically fortified reiteration of the climax (m. 23-24, *forte*), followed by the whispering of the beginning, with a rhythmic augmentation and a melodic diminution.

E.g. 3

Piece No.3 - *Evening at the Sheep Yard*

Glodeanu once more uses a ternary form (8 + 7 + 8 measures and 40+42+40 eighths, respectively), remaining faithful to bimodality and partially retaining the previous distribution of white and black keys, which leads to

⁴ "A wide-spread dance tune, also found in the repertoire of the traditional music players in Hungary, Poland and some countries in the Balkan Peninsula" (*Dicționar de termeni muzicali* [Dictionary of Musical Terms], scientific coord. Zeno Vancea, coord. by Gh. Firca, București, Ed. Științifică și Enciclopedică, 1984: 92).

an easier assimilation. This time, he turns to a tetratonic scale of intervals in gradual contraction (minor third, major second, minor second) with the center on B and D sharp, respectively (see example 4).

E.g. 4



The first and last sections are governed by the number 5. The meter is 5/8 and the melodic cells at the left hand have, all, a duration of five eighth notes, grouped 3 + 2. The right hand plays the same cell transposed upwards by a major third, but diminished, resulting in a thirty-second note quintuplet continued, with the exception of the last cell, by a duration of 5 eighth notes, which gives the impression of a *parlando rubato* (see example 5, m. 1-8). This long duration leads to the cell being phased by an eighth note and to a desynchronization in relation to the structure of the left hand. Both trajectories are subjected to sound permutation. As evident from the table below, the right hand goes through the tetratonic scale in an ascending-descending arch-like melody, occurring in a seven-sound cycle (1234321), with a common sound, but fragmented, asymmetrically, after each 5-note group by the arrival of the long duration.

The measure number	11	22	33	44	55	66	77	88
Notes at the right hand		12343	21234	32123	43212	34321	-	23432
Notes at the left hand	1234	1212	3412	3212	3412	3432	1234	1234

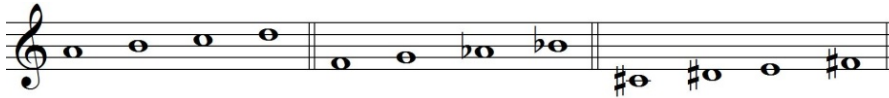
E.g. 5

The musical score is divided into three systems. The first system is marked *Lento* and *p*, with the instruction *delicatamente* and a '5' indicating a five-measure phrase. The second system continues the *Lento* section. The third system is marked *Più mosso* and *f*, with a '9' indicating the start of a new section. The score consists of two staves per system, with various musical notations including notes, rests, and dynamic markings.

The short median section (*più mosso*, then *meno mosso*) switches the two tetratonic scales and transforms the asymmetrical meter (5/8) into symmetrical meter (6/8). Even if with no apparent origin, this 6/8 time was a potentiality hidden in the permutation of the right hand cell (123432/ 123432/ 123432 - measures 2-8). But after only two displays of the motif, the 5/8 time is reinserted into the right hand's text (see example 5, m. 9-11). The resulting superposition of an *ostinato* structure (left hand) with a structure in the process of transformation (right hand) leads to another phasing. The reprise is an almost identical repetition of the first section, the elision of the first bar being compensated by the addition of a final one.

Piece No.4 - Jump Rope

Glodeanu works here with the chromatic whole and, using Vieru's model, divides it into three Doric complementary tetrachords (see example 6) with which he builds a three-level polyphonic structure: an intermediary one as the axis of symmetry and two extremes in symmetric, isorhythmic meter.

E.g. 6

In the first of the three micro-sections (m. 1-4), the notes of the first tetrachord (A-B-C-D), placed in pairs as minor thirds (B-D, A-C), constitute the intermediary level, featuring long durations. Above and below this layer, this time in parallel major thirds and in the middle register, the other two tetrachords (F-G-A flat-B flat at the right hand; C sharp-D sharp-E-F sharp at the left hand) can be softly heard, in *piano*, one of the outcomes being a distantial chromaticism⁵ (the "clashes" the ear perceives are B-B flat but also, despite the enharmonic representation⁶, G-G flat, F-F flat), characteristic to the Bartókian polymodal chromaticism (see example 7, m. 1-4).

The median section (m. 5-8) is altogether a different stage: the sounds of the first tetrachord are now given simultaneously (like a spatialized cluster), and from the other two tetrachords Glodeanu selects two sounds, maybe deliberately those that make up the major-minor Bartókian chord (G-B flat- E flat- G flat) (see example 7, m. 5-6). The gradual amplification of registers is also underlined by the chosen dynamics (*mf*, *f*).

⁵ The distantial/diatonic chromaticism (see Gheorghe Firca, *Bazele modale ale cromatismului diatonic* [The Modal Fundamentals of the Diatonic Chromaticism], Ed. Muzicală, 1967) is present in all the pieces of the cycle.

⁶ Because the interval between the two outer voices will be perceived as a major third, and not a diminished fourth.

E.g. 7

Moderato

The last section (m. 9-15), a variation of the first one, serves, by an unequivocal affirmation of the cluster A-B-C-D (*ff*), as the previous section's conclusion. The first two bars of the work are repeated, in *piano*, broken as if into small pieces by the insertion of several rests which create a nostalgic disposition and generate the image of a far-off. In the last three bars, starting from the technique of development through elimination, Glodeanu only keeps the last two quarter notes of the motif and then playfully switches the roles: he assigns the long durations to the extreme layers and the counterpoint to the intermediary layer.

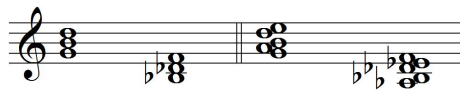
Piece No. 5 - The Little Teddy Bear is Sad

The single-section miniature (16 bars) proposes an arch-like shape on several coordinates: from bichord to tritone structures and mixed (hemitonic) pentatonic scales (see example 8) and then backwards, from *piano* to *forte* and back to *piano*, from regular imitation to an ever more condensed *stretto* (4, 3, 2 beats) and then to a return to the former, everything suggesting an accumulation followed by a release. The idea of distantal chromaticism is still present (F-F sharp).

E.g. 8

Piece No. 6 - Two Hedgehogs on A Swing

This one-part form piece follows closely the concept of mirror symmetry, already induced by the title. In the short introduction (m. 1-4), a minor descending arpeggio corresponds to a major ascending arpeggio (see example 9), in an alternating *legato* -*staccato*. Two sounds are afterwards added to these triads, so that two anhemitonic mirror pentatonic scales (see example 9) in a bimodal relation result which Goldeanu uses to build a symmetric melody, of the "question and answer" type. The idea of highlighting only once voice is introduced, as each hand is given different dynamics (see example 10), so that both melodies become, by turns, clearly audible. The short reprise (m. 13-14) brings back the triad, restating the dynamic and timbral contrast but also introducing the idea of a *stretto*.

E.g. 9**Triads (m. 1-4, 13-14) Pentatonic scales (m. 5-12)****E.g. 10**

The image shows two systems of musical notation for piano and mezzo-forte passages. The first system starts at measure 5 with a mezzo-forte (mf) melody in the right hand and a piano (p) accompaniment in the left hand. The second system starts at measure 9 with a piano (p) melody in the right hand and a mezzo-forte (mf) accompaniment in the left hand. Both systems feature pentatonic scales.

Piece No. 7 - The Harpsichord

The sound material is reminiscent of the first miniature, as it is composed of two pentachords (C-D-E-F-G; G-A-B-C-D) which make up a heptachord and are placed over a tri-chordal *ostinato* spaced at an

augmented fourth/ diminished fifth again clothed in the Alberti bass (see Piece No. 2). As such, the same bimodal ambiance which has become the distinctive trait of the whole cycle is once more generated (see example 11), and, in this work in particular, it brings to mind the idea of a deliberately incongruent juxtaposition, characteristic to the eccentric Erik Satie and to Dadaism and Surrealism in general. The extended ternary form based on alternating subject and answer is emphasized by the dynamics as well (*f-p-f-p-f*), introducing the idea of the Baroque *tutti-soli* pair. The subtle development of the dancing theme in 6/8 requires that the incipit of the first motif (G-E-F-D) undergo a rhythmic diminution and be converted into the conclusion of the second cell (G-A-G-E-F-D), while the ending of the first motif (E-D-E-F) become the beginning of the cadential motif. The Alberti bass, on a hemiolic rhythm, permanently contradicts the ternary pulse of the melody, and its migration from one octave to another introduces a more evolved technique, that of crossing hands, which requires a higher level of motor coordination and independence in highlighting the various aural layers.

Ex. 11

Piece No. 8 – Hopscotch

The most complex from the nine pieces, it exploits the spatial symmetry suggested by the title, to which it opposes the time asymmetry (regular meter, phrases of unequal durations, seven-bar sections). Glodeanu again uses the chromatic whole, this time dividing it in two complementary modes.

The first section (m. 1-7) features two contrasting phrases: it starts with a mirror superposition of two melodies on augmented fourth tritone structures - which maintains the idea of crossing voices (m. 1-4) – and goes on to a sudden densification (by an abrupt change in the dynamics and the number of voices) which arrives at the chromatic whole (see example 12, m. 1-7).

E.g. 12

It is interesting to see how, despite the suggestion contained in the initial material, Glodeanu avoids the evolution, logical and predictable, towards two hexatonic scales which would have formed, again by complementarity, the chromatic scale. He prefers instead a subtle change, moving one sound at a time from the hypothetical hexatonic scale to the complementary scale (see example 13).

E.g. 13

The piece has a strophic form, with a first section repeated with variations (A1A2A3Coda). In the second section (A2, m. 8-14) the idea of a pedal appears (double ison) and the melody is presented in canon (see

example 12, m. 8). The second phrase (m. 12-14) reverses the musical discourse of the two hands. In the third section (A3, m. 15-20), more condensed, the variations target register expansion and movement stimulation (by transforming the long, pedal-like sound into a repeated sound at the inner voices). The Coda represents a dynamic and registral reflux, reiterating the technique of crossing voices and ending, symmetrically, on a chord formed of augmented fourths superposed at a semitone.

Piece No. 9 - Children at Play

Glodeanu partially repeats the play of white and black keys (another possible allusion to Prokofiev and/or Stravinsky) (see example 14) and builds, this time, an extended ternary micro-form where structure A is, by turns, introduction (A1) [see example 15, m. 1-2], interlude (A2, m. 7-10) and coda (A3, m.15-18), and structure B comes with a quadrate, “question and answer” type of melody, first as the mirror of the leader (B1, m. 3-6) [see example 15, m. 3-6], and then as accompanied monody, by means of converting one of the melodies in a rhythmically asymmetrical accompaniment (B2, m. 11-14). Dynamic contrasts, too, serve to underline the architectonic structure (*p-f-p-mf-p-mf-f*).

E.g. 14



E.g. 15



By the way the sound material is conceived, Glodeanu highlights, simultaneously, two apparently irreconcilable principles: *congruence* – by using mirror symmetry, characteristic to Bartók – and *contrast* – by superposing major and minor, first at the level of chords (m. 1-2, 7-10, 15-18), later of the pentatonic scale (m. 3-6, 11-14).

The work stands out through its liveliness and its rhythmic variety, obtained by complementary rhythms which superpose crusic and anacrusic as well as accents on the beat and on the offbeat (in a folk dance-like manner) and by placing one same structure on different beats of the bar (left hand, m. 11-14) – a technique which again sends us to Stravinsky.

Some conclusions

The table below is a synthesis of several of the main characteristics of this cycle.

Table 1

Piece number	Time signature	Tempo	Form	Number of measures	Sound material	Syntaxes and techniques	Possible allusions
1	6/8	Moderato	Ternary (A1A2A1 v)	16 (6+4+6)	Two tetratonic scales separated by an augmented fourth (Messiaen Mode VI, 6 different pitches)	Polyphony, homophony, imitation, phasing	Beethoven, Stravinsky, Messiaen, Bartók, S. Reich
2	2/4	Vivace	Single section	28	Two major chords, then two tetrachords (Doric and Ionic), all separated by a semitone (9 different pitches)	Accompanied monody, ostinato	Prokofiev, Stravinsky, traditional music, Enescu

Piece number	Time signature	Tempo	Form	Number of measures	Sound material	Syntaxes and techniques	Possible allusions
3	5/8, 6/8, 5/8	Lento	Ternary (ABA)	23 (8+7+8)	Two identical tetratonic scales (3m, 2M, 2m), separated by a major third (8 different pitches)	Polyphony, phasing, ostinato	Prokofiev, Stravinsky, traditional music (<i>parlando-rubato</i>), S. Reich
4	4/4	Moderato	Ternary (ABA)	15 (4+4+7)	Chromatic whole, resulted from the reunion of three Doric tetrachords separated by a major third	Polyphony and homophony (median axis of symmetry and two folds in homophony)	Bartók, Anatol Vieru
5	4/4	-	Single section	16	Two mixed (hemitonic) pentatonic scales, separated by a major second (8 different pitches)	Polyphony, imitation, <i>stretto</i>	Bartók
6	4/4	Allegretto	Single section with introduction and a short Coda.	14 (4+8+2)	Two arpeggios (major and minor) in a mirror, then two anhemitonic scales in a mirror, separated by a major second (10 different pitches)	Polyphony, homophony (accompanied monody)	Bartók

Piece number	Time signature	Tempo	Form	Number of measures	Sound material	Syntaxes and techniques	Possible allusions
7	6/8	Presto	Extended ternary form (A1A2A1A2A1)	20 (4+4+4+4+4)	Two major pentachords, separated by a perfect fifth, and a tri-chordal ostinato spaced at an augmented fourth (10 different pitches)	Accompanied monody, imitation, polyrhythm (hidden polymeter)	Baroque style, Erik Satie
8	5/8	-	Ternary (strophic) (A1A2A3Co)	27 (7+7+6+7)	Chromatic whole, resulted from the reunion of two scales of 6 pitches each	Homophony, polyphony, pedal, mirror superposition, canon	Bartók, Anatol Vieru
9	4/4	Andantino	Extended ternary form (ABABA)	18 (2+4+4+4+4)	Two triads, then two pentachords in mirror (major and minor) (9 different pitches)	Polyphony, homophony	Bartók, Prokofiev, Stravinsky, traditional music

This collection of nine pieces represents the composer's obvious option for the modal universe, more precisely for the chromatic polymodal language⁷, whose simpler version, bimodalism, he exploits. The scales are generally of the archaic kind (tritone, tetratonic, pentatonic scales, tetrachord or pentachord structures), but the result of their superposition creates complex tones. Glodeanu carefully avoids the aural satiation which would have resulted from the too frequent utilization of the chromatic whole, to which he turns in only two of the nine works (no. 4 and no. 8), and constantly transcends instead the traditional heptatonic, using eight-, nine-, or ten-sound scales in all the other miniatures.

⁷ In Bartók's acceptance of the term (see the conferences he gave at Harvard in 1943, later published in *Béla Bartók Essays*, edited by Benjamin Suchoff, London, Faber & Faber, 1976).

Distantial chromaticism is present in each piece, but not as the folk music type of moveable steps at the same voice, but as the clash, on distinct registers, of the same step, differently altered - a technique intensely fructified by Bartók.

While exploring the nine miniatures the young pianist comes in contact with three of the four musical syntaxes (monody - in the accompanied version, homophony and polyphony) and with a number of older or newer writing techniques: imitation and canon (including mirror canon), *ostinato*, isorhythm, complementary rhythms, polyrhythms (and hidden polymeter), phasing, variational technique, alternating *sol*i and *tutti*, progressive evolution (bichord structure - tritonic – pentatonic scales), contrast (in dynamics, tempo, register, timbre etc.)

Through its numerous possible allusions to other musical areas - rarely quotations as such (no. 1 and no. 2), mainly borrowings of a certain writing technique - Glodeanu shares some of the particular elective affinities in resorting to specific sources of inspiration: traditional and Baroque music, Beethoven, Satie, Bartók, Stravinsky, Enescu, Prokofiev, Messiaen, Steve Reich, Anatol Vieru.

The complex sound is carefully balanced by the constant appeal to symmetry and to firmly shaped architectures.

The straightforward, clear and powerful ideas, the balance of the contraries, the elementariness, the essentialized expression and the dramatic effects characterize not only this collection of nine piano pieces, but Glodeanu's music as a whole, one which brings to mind Brâncuși's sculpture and which has made him one of the most prominent composers of his generation.

Translated into English by Maria Monica Bojin

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