

REFLECTIONS ON THE ART OF MUSIC IN DIFFERENT STYLISTIC STAGES. THE UTILITY OF MUSIC AT THE BEGINNING OF THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

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SUMMARY. The utility of the sound phenomenon in the twenty-first century in the raw form of sound or as art of music is reflected more and more in the daily activities, as the sound and the word, separately or together, have an increasingly stronger impact over the masses, through the multiple forms in which they are employed. In all historical periods music reflected the mentality of people, but not every musical expression was elevated to the status of art, which is easy to notice if every stylistic stages taken in retrospect, from the Middle Ages to the present day. The stylistic pluralism, which was manifest in the last century in music, reveals the facets of our society and the crossroads of the musical art from the beginning of this century, catching a glimpse upon possible lines of development.

Keywords: music, art, use, historical era, style, effects, benefits, trends, twenty-first century.

Introduction

Studying the impact of the musical art on various aspects of everyday life at the beginning of the twenty-first century, we find that there is an increasingly intense concern to use music in different scientific disciplines in order to stimulate in a positive sense certain daily or technological activities, or biological processes.

There must be set, however, a separation between the two major directions aimed at the usefulness of music in this historical period: from the use of patterns of sound events to the simple use of the sound in certain technical fields or for scientific interest, and the second direction – the impact of music as an artistic act, in which case it is determined by specific aesthetic and stylistic coordinates. We may see that these two directions employ different materials, although music is the object in both cases, in the first case having in view the vernacular music, and in the second, the art of music.

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Content: In the following pages we will present a retrospective of musical events in the most important eras of music history, analysing how the succession of sounds, or the musical art from a certain historical period respectively, reflects the mentality of the era and other issues, highlighting the characteristic musical features, which reflect the way of living, thinking and feeling of the people of that historical time. Next, with reference to our contemporary life, we will outline the reflections of the musical art nowadays and its possible directions of evolution.

By studying the connections among different concepts about music and its impact on human life, we find that in many cultures around the world there are myths² on the undeniable relationship between sound and Divinity, between creation and its acoustic vibration nature, about the primordial sound³ or the sonorous essence of man.

In antiquity music was considered as an art of high value, being at the same time regarded as an emotional and social balance factor, Plato being the one who mentions in his *Republic* its different effects on the masses, depending on its content.⁴

The music of the Middle Ages brings to the fore, due to the spread of Christianity among the European population in the geographic area of the Mediterranean, an outlining of three cult rituals: Byzantine (Orthodox), Roman (Catholic) and Muslim (Islamic), and along with them, the flowering of two European cultural centres, Rome and Byzantium. These centres located in different geographic areas, led - in the social conditions of the era marked by battles for supremacy and power, and also many religious reforms that gave birth to the feudal culture – to the shaping of two distinct ecclesiastical music styles: Byzantine and Roman. The supreme power of the church, both in the political and in the cultural field, left its mark on all aspects of social and spiritual life of the time, all revolving around the church. Consequently, during this historical stage there developed a music centred on religious activities, with specific genres and forms. These would have a great influence on the further development of secular music.⁵

² Goléa, Antoine, *Muzica din noaptea timpurilor până în zorile noi, (Music from Night of Time until New Dawn)*, vol. I, II, Editura Muzicală, București, 1987, p. 25.

³ *** *Encyclopédie de la Pléiade: Histoire de la musique, I, Des origines à Jean-Sébastien-Bach*, Ed. No. 3II; Dép. Lég.: 3-e trimestre 1960. Imprimé en France, Librairie Gallimard, 1960, p. 154-166.

⁴ Platon, *Republica (The Republic)*. cărțile I-IV, ediție bilingvă, vol. I, Editura Teora, București, copyright, 1998, p. 301.

⁵ Iliuț, Vasile, *O carte a stilurilor muzicale, (A Book of Musical Styles)*, vol. I, Editura Academiei de Muzică București, 1996, p. 74-77.

The role of music in this socio-historical context was to serve the church. The musical genres cultivated, mostly having a religious nature, within which the relationship between the literary text and music fit without exception in the canons imposed by the clergy, although aimed to achieve through singing a deeper connection between man and divinity, did not satisfy people precisely because of these canons imposed on the musical art, that affected all parameters of music, from genres to form, melody and interpretation.

These rigours of the early Middle Ages imposed a ban on the use of musical instruments in the church, under the pretext of being forged by human hands and not by God, being considered tools of the devil, while only the voice, considered a divine creation, was accepted in church. In general, within the rites of any kind, secular or religious, singing enables analogies with celestial sounds and the voice becomes the instrument of music.

Accordingly, during the Middle Ages there developed the Gregorian monody and the monodic Byzantine chant, genres of religious vocal music, with simple, controlled melodic lines, which outlined a gradual movement or between adjacent sounds, without leaps, of approximately equal duration, with fermatas on the concluding formulas of the biblical texts.

This stage was later surpassed, in the same religious environment, by the priests. We have in view in this context Magister Perotinus and Magnus Leoninus with their work⁶ as organists, composers and interpreters, and the innovations brought by them in terms of instrumental polyphony. This phase represented an enormous step in the further development of the musical genres. In parallel, however, it must be remembered that, from the desire of the free manifestation of man outside the church, there was a break in these patterns and canons imposed by the church, as people developed a new art, in parallel with the religious cultivated music: the secular medieval art, closer to the human soul in its manifestation, including aspects of everyday life activities.

European humanism brought an openness of the intellect and culture, which was enriched with new materials and spiritual values, culminating in the Renaissance by the triumph of man over fate, and by cultivating mainly the beautiful as aesthetic category, expressed as the embodiment of the divine.

The following eras: the musical Baroque, Classicism and Romanticism represent the stylistic eras in the history of music, each reflecting a specific style, stages of musical thinking and also of social evolution, of communication through certain means of expression, but above that, reflecting “a particular

⁶ Chailley, Jacques – *40.000 ani de muzică, (40.000 Years of Music)*, Editura Muzicală, București, 1967, p. 39

way of life of a particular type and spiritual and / or material value,”⁷ according to the definition of style given by Vasile Iliuț in his volume on the musical styles.

The mentality of the era, as in fact the experience of previous eras, led the musical Baroque toward a differentiation between vocal and instrumental music, this being the main trend of concern of musicians in this historical-stylistic stage. These differences will lead to the clarification of many structural and content issues in shaping the future music genres that will reach their full maturity during Classicism. The establishment of genre features in Classicism was due to the state of balance they found, most clearly manifested on the level of archetypal organization into genres adopted by the composers of the First Viennese School. The specific stylistic clarity of this phase was manifested in the creation of archetypal patterns giving rise to specific features of this period: shaping the form and genre of the sonata, the rise of the string quartet as a perfect formula of timbre balance, etc.

The works of art by classical masters, as in fact the name given to this historical stage,⁸ reveal the patterns of perfection, of high value, retained in the cultural and scientific heritage of humankind.

The biographies of the great classical composers: Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, beside the fact that they mirror specific aspects of their personality, are deeply reflected in their activity and their creation through their particular way of thinking, their musical work revealing their inner essence, for each in part.

Taking Haydn as an example, whose biography reveals very different events and a life full of unexpected outcomes, we consider that his continuously rising professional path, despite some less pleasant experiences, did not change his always grateful attitude, thanks to the intimate mystery of his life, that the sound universe was for him the only universe where he wanted to live. Only thus could he cope with the change in his voice when he was expelled from the cathedral choir and from court, earning his living during the following years from lessons given sporadically to young ladies or from street concerts with small instrumental ensembles and studying music theory as autodidact. Having as sole purpose living in this universe of sounds, he valorised each interpersonal contact, extracting the positive impact that each of them had in his development or musical evolution.

By the experimentation of his own creations at the Eszterházy court, he tended towards the improvement of musical genres, creating two of the major genres of classical music: the symphony and the string quartet. His

⁷ Idem, *Op. cit.*, p. 10

⁸ <https://dexonline.ro/definitie/clasic>

benevolent and protector spirit toward instrumentalists, woven with a dose of creativity, gave birth to the “*Farewell*” *Symphony*, a work staged in a special way, reflecting a unique concept of this man whom musicians called, not accidentally, Pope Haydn, an attitude springing from the depths of the soul and brought to light in that composition, whose uniqueness is preserved over time.

This is only one example of a mentality and of the way biographical events led to its application generating a symphony, an example in which the composer Joseph Haydn revealed a hidden part of his soul.

His life full of harmony was reflected fully in a creation dominated by balance, harmony and brightness, specific to the Viennese musical classicism.

The Romantics brought their works to the sphere of exacerbated sentimentalism, the desire for the ideal being reflected in the Romantic period in the tendency towards the surreal, fantastic, dream, manifested especially in the programme music genres.

The twentieth century, the period closest to that of the present, experienced futuristic manifestations, which still retain their actuality, through directions that reject the aesthetical tradition, promoting the love for machines and speed,⁹ becoming an art of living which manifests itself in all areas of modern-day life.

This noise analysis will be embraced by the Dadaists, but from a different viewpoint, free from aggression, and afterwards in contemporary music by Edgar Varèse and Pierre Schaeffer, like many other composers, and finally was reintroduced in industrial music in the early 1980s, by Vivenza, a Bruitist, futuristic, neo-Nazi musician of French and Italian descent.¹⁰

Although music is still considered a *language of sounds*, in the twentieth century emerged new abstract forms, reflecting more than likely the lived reality in this era of intelligence, mental, technology, and robotics. The music of this century outlined on the one hand styles such as the Neoclassicism, but at the same time also many individual solutions, which leads us to think about the coexistence of a variety of stylistic trends, currents and directions. This great diversity often hinders understanding. We are witnesses to fast changing trends, currents, schools etc., as there is a continuous renewal of the contemporary musical language according to the new aesthetic conceptions. This renewal of the musical language during the twentieth century is mainly due to diversification and especially to the continuous enrichment of the sound resources, a direction that led to experimenting with new and varied compositional techniques, new methods of producing sound, which determined the emergence of new interpretation

⁹ <http://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Futurisme>.

¹⁰ Idem.

techniques, resulting in innovative spatial and temporal sound effects. The proclaimed desire for new, however, also brought about a certain levelling. New searches extended within this period to the technical side of instruments, due to the desire to search and use new sound sources.

Accordingly there stems a clear distinction in musical terms, in reference to this sphere of activities which uses only the sonorous material (specific to the musical art), the sound or word respectively; there surfaced areas where the sound is exploited, such as sonicity, with multiple applications: sonic transmission in aircrafts and ships, deep well sonic pumping, or ultrasonic cleaning technology in dentistry, ultrasound therapy highly effective in physiotherapy, ultrasounds used for body shaping, methods of psychotherapy and personal development: NLP, which already are spreading more and more in the field of technology. The other sphere of activities is related to the music domain. But here also it is necessary to note two differences between the use of music for therapeutic purposes, and its possible usefulness even in the artistic sphere, an area that includes specific events and a certain sound material that rises to the status of art.

In the following we will refer only to the impact that the art of music has in our daily life. We will not refer to the well-known aspect of its reception in the ambient of and under standardized concert conditions, but to the particular aspects, in which the art of music is used in other environments, with very well defined purposes. We have in mind here the potential of the art of sound, whose limitations, although increasingly investigated, are not yet fully known. But those who study this potential through advanced technological means provided by this historic time discover new potencies and applications of music in everyday life, in the surrounding environment, in increasingly diversified areas.

Although as a method of prevention and treatment of illness, music therapy became widespread at the beginning of this century, especially doctors and psychotherapists having a growing interest for the research and discovery of the psychological effects of musical art on the audience, there are still a number of researchers in other fields of science concerned with the actions that music and sound waves produce on other living or inert media.

An example in this sense is Corneliu Cezar. Concerned about the action that music exerts on the environment, especially on plants, animals and also its usefulness in treating certain diseases, he approached this theme depending on the action of sound waves, starting from the atomic and molecular inert matter to the behaviour of human subjects. Noting the vast scale of the entire action, in his book *Introduction to sinology* he narrowed his approach to a presentation of the action of music on several levels: physical-chemical, biological and psychological, emphasizing two categories of phenomena.

Some of these relate to the action of sound waves on a particular field of reality and are the object of *synergetics*, an interdisciplinary science that studies the cooperative phenomena, of interaction and cooperation between objects and processes of different natures. These express a certain isomorphism between the world of sonorities, which is reflected on the surrounding world, or between parts of both worlds.

In the current era, where all creation is seen as a diversity of energies organized into different frequencies, we know that music represents an organization of vibrating waves with various frequencies, which interact primarily with other life forms, vegetal or animal, whose status or evolution they may affect, or interact with forms of inert matter, on which it may also have several effects.

In a different approach, this power of music, whose partial beneficial nature is known, unlike its negative side, less publicized or not at all, with drastic effects most often, which if known, might cause another attitude from the 21st century people as concerns noise pollution and other types of music, destructive for the environment.

If artists would have more scientific data on the effects that their art may produce on the surrounding environment, outside the concert hall there could be traced the possible directions that the art of this century could follow. Would a turnaround be possible in all areas of art, imprinting a new direction on music, targeting a trail to stimulate our evolution as a species, using the future musical art, which at the moment is facing a turning point?

Perhaps only time will bring an answer to this question.

The way in which musical art was regarded so far, both by musicians and by scientists, is reflected directly by George Constantinescu, researcher of sound energy, who created a new science of great future, sonicity, which aims at implementing sound energy in numerous fields. His assertions inferred a distinction between science and art, but nevertheless at a certain point they become complementary, the links between them coming to light only with a thorough knowledge of both fields,¹¹ where their complementarities and interdependence is implied.

On the other hand, this is what Stravinsky remarked in 1967, around the middle of the last century:

“The sounds themselves can be aesthetic or at least pleasant or unpleasant, but for me they are just material for music. They also have another use, yet a fascinating one, in the new audio analgesic field. But a composer is not by intention a music therapist.”¹²

¹¹ Cocoru, Daniel, 1981, *20 de științe ale secolului XX, (20 Sciences of the Twentieth Century)*, București, Ed. Albatros, p. 40.

¹² Stravinsky, Igor, 1967, *Thoughts of an Octogenarian*, in: *Contemporary Composers on Contemporary Music*, New York, Ed. Elliot Swartz and Barny Childs, Holt Rinehart and Winston.

Regarding the assertions of Stravinsky, we must consider that they reflect his particular way of thinking. The purpose of the composer is different from that of doing therapy, but nowadays, when the share of the mental is much higher in developing a work of art than in other eras, a large part of the musical compositions being far from stirring genuine emotions in the soul of the audience. As such, only a small part of informed audience tastes these creations, the ones more documented, more analytical. But in terms of aesthetics, an analysis on works of contemporary art reveals that a large percentage of them would fall into such aesthetic categories as the grotesque or the tragic, others being only fiction. Still, the trends of the composers or their orientation towards certain aesthetic categories can also be imposed by the mentality of the information age, an analytical era, an age of information, of the mental and rational prevailing over the emotional, the sentimental, or contemplation, as in eras past.

If the audience of the past felt certain emotions regarding a piece of art, that of today judges, analyses, reasons based on it. If during the great stylistic eras of music history the artwork awakened emotions, today it arouses reasoning. In addition, given the performant electronics and the many applications that people use every day, a large mass of people is oriented towards this virtual world, virtual communication representing the foremost example, an activity without which we cannot imagine our lives today, an everyday activity with implications in the development of all areas of this particular historic time. The virtual side is reflected in vernacular music, in society, consumerist in its turn, in electronic music, with processed sounds, with repetitive rhythms and / or simple melodic formulas perceived as a musical background that imprints a perpetual motion, preferred by some for support in the development of certain activities.

We render below a quote from the book by Cornelius Caesar *Introduction to Sonology*: “The formalization of music creation according to conceptual processes typical of the chain Schönberg-Boulez-Xenakis (and others) is, in my opinion, a concession to the pressure of science, but in a direction which is only a falsification of both science and art. It is not under this aspect that music can become a discipline today more effective than only in the narrow socio-cultural plane. Sonology in the complete investigation of the action areas of sound waves upon the physico-chemical, biological and psychological levels, does not propose the musical art formal extrinsic systems to be ‘transcribed’ into sounds, nor does its value depend exclusively on the contribution of unique personalities, but it seeks precisely the inherent rules, both objective and subjective, underlying the action o sound waves on every ontological level.

The personal contribution of the cited authors, as of the whole plethora of composers having 'structuralist' beliefs, to directing the musical art, their effort and their radical option, turn them however, in a sense, into predecessors of sonology."¹³

Our contemporary, Corneliu Cezar refers to the composers of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

Therefore, why not enjoy an art in which the beautiful and the sublime do not have necessarily to predominate, but which is beneficial to us. Why couldn't twenty-first century music be consciously created as music for relaxation and fun in the tumult of daily stress? Why should we induce and trigger emotional shocks through this so called art of "the beautiful"? For these reasons we consider as particularly important to understand the impact, and especially the potential, unsuspected by some, that music has on the environment and in particular on the human psyche. We believe that an important role in this respect is played by the coverage of these potencies and influences that music can have on our lives, depending on how it is used.

This primarily involves informing those whose object of work is music, such as musicians, composers, trainers (teachers), or other categories (artists, managers of record companies, producers of music programmes, etc.). They are the ones who can imprint music with certain aesthetic features. The aesthetic communication, so important in the relation composer-performer-audience, requires this historical period to imprint a style of its own, in which the palette of emotional feelings induced by this art would include particularly positive emotions, to offset the destructive emotions generated by the polluting conditions of the environment, bringing into the focus of this century the man as a person and complex personality. Music can induce the balance so necessary for a harmonious personal development, at work, in getting the best results in all daily activities.

The conscious acquisition of this potential of the musical art is particularly important because, knowing the impact that music has on everything that surrounds us, leaving aside the strict purpose of art to impress the audience and to reveal certain aesthetic categories, there is the possibility of consciously targeting art, and in this case the art of music in the future, by an art with a new potential, an art whose benefits can go beyond its strictly manifestation environment, an art whose operation would be rewarding not only in terms of aesthetics, but on all levels: social, physical or mental, in the regulation of physical-chemical processes, in establishing physiological or neuro-psychological balance.

¹³ Cezar, Corneliu, 1984, *Introducere în sonologie*, București, Editura Muzicală, p. 98.

We ground these statements on the researches that have been made so far, both on human subjects and on plants and which have clearly demonstrated the influence that music has on these living organisms, influences manifested in the fundamental processes governing life.¹⁴ To quote from the *Foreword* written by Eugen Celan to Corneliu Cezar's book mentioned above: "Without exaggeration, we can say that in the case of superior organisms the presence of these radiations is not only efficient but also vital, obviously between the coordinates of an 'acoustic homeostasis' (...).

That is why trying to penetrate the privacy of the action mechanisms of sonic radiation on living structures is a necessary undertaking, and yet audacious."¹⁵ We share these beliefs. Through this discourse, we do not want to promote the use of music for therapeutic purposes, we leave this for music therapists, nor to include music in the category of sciences (the possibility exists if we consider as science that "systematic set of truthful knowledge on the objective reality (nature and society) and on the subjective reality (psychic, thinking)"¹⁶ but we want to make a continuous promotion of the power of this world of sonorities, and hope to divert the very musical art to other aesthetic categories than those prevailing today (ugly, grotesque, tragic), which bring about fear, anguish and horror, to the path of harmony and progress, but primarily towards a harmonious and healthy society on all three levels: mental, physical, psychical.

"Music," notes Cl. Levi-Strauss, "is the supreme mystery of the science of man, a mystery that all the various disciplines come up against and which holds the key to their progress."¹⁷

We state here some well-known arguments of musical art: the influence that it has on the human psyche is obvious, and studies conducted on children practicing a musical instrument showed a development of their distributive attention, increase in the concentration capacity, improvement in memory, increase of the IQ, better timing of the two brain hemispheres¹⁸ than in children who did not benefit from music education.

¹⁴ Cezar, Corneliu, *Introducere în sonologie, (Introduction to Sonology)*, Ed. Muzicală, București, 1984, *Cuvânt introductiv*, p. 7.

¹⁵ Idem.

¹⁶ Idem, *Op. cit.*, p. 97.

¹⁷ Ibidem, p. 65.

¹⁸ James J. Hudziak, Matthew D. Albaugh and others, *Cortical Thickness Maturation and Duration of Music Training: Health-Promoting Activities Shape Brain Development in Journal of the American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry*, Vol. 53, Issue 11, p. 1153-1161.e2.

In this age, time and space, matter, dynamics, light, spirit, are seen in a new way,¹⁹ which is an important factor in creating a connection between modern music and the audience, for music to find its true purpose. We are waiting for the time when a new music trend becomes manifest, by finding new ways of expression in future musical compositions, that would link the feelings of man brought back in the framework of reality in which he lives and dies, as stated Tudor Ciortea, and with whom we share the conception of defining music as a synthesis - on aesthetic level –of life itself.²⁰

As always, and nowadays as well, the cultivated audience is less numerous than the uncultivated one, and if until the present time the theatre or concert hall were the sole places that housed classical music performances, now there are very different spaces where these music productions can be valorised, with a diverse audience that can be educated in the spirit of the cultivated music, in terms of organizing a nonconformist production, attractive by specific elements of show, lights, dynamics, etc. The importance of these events lies precisely in their cultural-educational character, and not least in the familiarity with the musical art, which in this case must meet certain attributes, such as: harmony, dynamics, repetition (at a certain level).

The prospects of this art can be foreseen clearly at this moment in which all the sciences and religions tend toward the spiritual elevation of modern man, whose start should begin with a hygiene of sounds and / or ambient sonorities, creating the harmony so necessary for a healthy, evolved society.

With this presentation of events and historical realities, we intend to orient and encourage the searches of young composers according to the affirmation of Vasile Iliuț in his book on musical styles: “Le style c’est l’homme même (the style is the man himself),”²¹ to use a musical language which would include a large number of people, which would distinguish us as a personality, but at the same time would unite us in spirit, according to the belief that music is a universal language.

Translated from Romanian by Dora Barta

¹⁹ Michels, Ulrich, *Guide illustré de la musique*, vol. II, Edition Arthème Fayard, Paris, 1997, p. 519.

²⁰ Ciortea, Tudor, *Permanențele muzicii, (The Permanence of Music)*, Editura Muzicală, București, 1998, p. 365.

²¹ Iliuț, Vasile, *O carte a stilurilor muzicale, (A Book of Musical Styles)*, vol. I, Editura Academiei de Muzică București, 1996, p. 5.

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