Folkloric and Modern Intonational Language in Tudor Ciortea’s Octet

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Abstract: The paper depicts the manner in which the musical work Octetul pentru suflători, violă, violoncel şi pian (The Octet for Wind Instruments, Viola, Cello and Piano) composed by Tudor Ciortea combined both elements specific to the folk intonational language and elements specific to the modal melodic and harmonic language created in the XXth century by composers like George Enescu, Bela Bartók and Olivier Messiaen. There is also an exemplification of the use of the alternating thirds, of x cell, of the unidirectional fourths succession, of the modes with limited transposition as well as of the segments of the alpha accord resulted from the axial system. Thus, T. Ciortea transcended the formula of the simplistic folklore which placed him among the modernist Romanian composers of his age.

Key-Words: Ciortea, folklore, modalism, Enescu, Bartók, Messiaen, octet

1 Introduction
The octet Din isprăvile lui Pâcală (From Pâcală’s Feats) by Tudor Ciortea still draws the musicians’ attention due to the combination of traditional features and innovation, as well as that of nationalism with universality as related to the musical thinking. It was composed in 1961, for wind instrumentalists, two violas and piano and it was revised in 1966 by enriching instrumentation [1]. The programmatic aspect of the musical work is suggested by its title, which is based on the well known folk story about Pâcală and his friend Tândală, as seen by the writer Petre Dulfu [3].

2 Folkloric and modern language
The octet provides elements which are worth being paid attention due to the combination of the folkloric and modern forms against the intonational background of the language used. When praising the innovative aspect, we should consider the fact that Octetul (The Octet) was composed at the end of an aesthetic age which appealed to a kind of simplistic folklorism to satisfy the strong requirement of the ideologists of that period: music should be accessible to large numbers of people. On the other hand, the Romanian composers who can be included chronologically at the very beginning of the cultured national composition, resorted to folklore not only because it was convenient, but also because it was a way of expressing themselves naturally due to the cultural background in which many of them had been born and lived. Therefore, it was natural that the folklore became the "composer’s mother tongue", as stated by Bela Bartók [4].

The present study is meant to prove the fact that Tudor Ciortea transcends the formula of the simplistic folklorism, by combining the folkloric character with new concepts of musical thinking, specific to the music of the XXth century, as well as with the non-gravitational (geometric) accordic structures [5].

3 The analysis of the intonational dimension in melody and harmony
3.1 Melodic dimension
Since the opening of the first part of Octet (The Octet), the theme of folkloric character (flute, measures 1-4) which represents the key character, Pâcală, is built in mode B b acoustic 1, with oscillation B b/D – C # (C # enharmonic with D b), which is specific to this music:

Fig. 1
The same theme (part I, measures 1-4, flute) presents important geometrical rapport, as the segments of the alpha accord developed horizontally (in between round brackets), together with the Enescian x cell (in between right braces) which becomes of high importance in the melodic fabric of the Octet [6] – also called alternating thirds [7] and present as well in Enescu melogram (matrix-structure) [8] – and also in the successive unidirectional fourths (indicated in oval braces) [9]:

![Fig. 2](image)

The oscillation of thirds can also be found in Tândală’s theme (IVth part, Allegretto, measures 79-80, clarinet in B), situated by the composer in the modal space of mode 2 with limited transposition by Olivier Messiaen’s [10]; between its transpositions, the composer situates the inspired description of the character’s dynamism:

![Fig. 3](image)

The support made by harmonic figuration creates "out of tune" folk music, due to the sounds added to some tonal configurations which are rather implied, due to the elision of some of the elements and the appearance of some others. The fragment is again a combination between mode 2 and a tonal support, which also covers modal relations which take over – here and there – elements from the mode developed melodically (measure 82: transposition 3 at flute supported harmonically by a section made of elements of transposition 1). The whole expression surpasses somewhat the folkloric background and transgresses involuntarily – obviously – to the jazz music due to the mode also used in jazz.

The composer resorted to mode 2 with limited transposition which is a sign of tradition, of appreciation of his ancestors and also to the acoustic mode – which can be found in the Romanian folklore, as it can be seen in mode acoustic 1 in the dance Mâruntel, collected by B. Bartók from Dumbrâviţa de Codru (Bihor county) –, and it is also a sign of innovative elements – for that period of time –, represented by the work Technique de mon langage musical by Olivier Messiaen.

A new thematic occurrence as regards the horn (part IV, measures 24-33) emphasises the kinship of its tritonic cells with those in Pâcală’s theme; mode 1 in transposition 1 is the tonal background:

![Fig. 4](image)

The Priest’s theme (part I, measures 51-56, oboe) is particularly picturesque:

![Fig. 5](image)

Modally, the Priest’s theme shows – in the example above – a combination of two modes against three motives of the theme. The first one (α, measures 51-52) and the third motive (αv measures 55-56) are based on a Lydian G mode.

The presence of A # is colorful; it makes up the Enescian x cell together with G and B (in order to point out this aspect it was recorded it distinctively, not as a mobile step); E♭ does not appear in the theme, but in the harmonic background of the piano and in the oscillation M3-m3 with G and F # with the bassoon (in the musical tune there is also a G #, which is not considered in the configuration of the mode because of its role of open chromatism, of passing, which explains why I have not recorded it as a mobile step). One can notice “a passage” to a mode lăutăresc (fiddler like) G major, or to the chromatic mode 1d [11]:

![Fig. 6](image)

The second motive (β, measures 53-54, beat 1-2) corresponds to a mode which seems to be C natural in the first part, namely, the enharmonic of B #, which turns it into a Mixolydian with the decreased VIth. The association with D natural at the end of the motive can be interpreted as the induction of a nuance of Lydian, which causes the appearance of the mode G # acoustic 1 (the specific relation of x cell can be noticed again):

![Fig. 7](image)

The dance tunes are also stylised, as the one exposed by the flute in the manner of the "sayings" performed by the shepherd’s pipe. The rapid shifts between registers by means of the major intervals,
of sixth, seventh and eighth in the IIIrd part (measures 9-11), with the motto "... and the sheep danced crazily":

Fig. 8

The theme performed by the flute, whose specific features are based on the Priest's theme, fully shows this aspect. The theme is the result of the permutation game between the sounds of a Lydian tritonic mode (G-B-C #, in measure 18) then extended (measure 18) to a tritonic mode which is also Lydian (G-B-C #-D), which turns into (measure 29) a Lydian tetrachord with an increased second (enharmonic with minor third), as a resumption of x cell (G-A#-B-C#).

This oscillation of a second creates a rhythm-melodic configuration extracted from the folklore of Oaş, a region in the north of Romania, a melodic background specific to the music composed by T.Ciortea (IIIrd part, measures 17-19):

Fig. 9

3.2 Harmonic dimension

A new theme of the first part (piano, measures 17-22) represents the heroic and meditative features of the main character and it appears against a homophonous development associated with a polyphony of accordic layers displayed in the geometrical rapports 2 (measure 21), 6 (measure 19) and 11 (measure. 21). There is an interesting aspect in measure 18, where the superior layer C is deepened with a major third in the inferior layer, with a double third C/C b (enharmonic with B) and in measure 20 Bacovia accordic structure [12] is included:

Fig. 10

The modal oscillation major third-minor third is also included as some harmonic verticalities:

Fig. 11

The intonational developed harmonically is as developed as its age. This means is used by the composer to make a whole of the evoking picture of the folklore by re-creating the sonority, a bit strange for a musician’s ear, the folk band called taraf (folk music band). Its sonority, due to the regular lack of tuning and combination of some accords which are found inappropriate by an educated ear – as shown by the specialized studies [13] – is rendered by the overlapping of two harmonic gravitational layers connected geometrically (2 – in the first case) and gravitationally (7 – in the second case): 1) F major+ajoutées G # and D/E b major (in the version from 1961) and 2) B b major+ ajoutées G # and C/E b major (in the version from 1966), in Allegro (IIIrd part, measures 7-9, ensemble); the beginning exposed the bimodal overlapping of a chromatic mode in the superior layer, developed horizontally – (Mixolydian C with the decreased steps II and VI with the increased step IV) – and accordic C in the inferior layer (measures 1-2).

The end of the IIIrd part overlays harmonic gravitational layers also geometrically reported, just as the whole Octet is full of similar rapports, under various circumstances. The following example (measures 83-87, cello, piano) shows a stratification F # major/C major (measures 80-81), E b γ/G major (measure 82), E b minor/C major followed by F # major/C major (measure 83), then the fusion into a C major with ajoutées elements which appear melodically at the rest of the instruments, which is then followed by F # major/C major (measure 85) and again by a relative purity – C major (measure 86). The end of the third part is fully edifying as regards the composer’s intentions related to the harmonic: C major/C # major, with a certain geometrical rapport (measure 87), namely the ambiguity of Bacovia harmonic structure:

Fig. 12
To obtain the ambiguous, joyful and somewhat strange sonority, with a folkloric expression, T. Ciortea creates harmonic, pluristratified ambiances, in geometrical rapports. Tândală theme is such a case (V\textsuperscript{th} part, measures 1-5, piano), in which stratification has the rapport the major seventh/diminished eight (measure 5 for example):

![Diagram](image)

To support the harmonic background which is performed by the piano, in the previous example, one can notice the super positioning of two layers: the melodic layer – built by the melodic development of the thematic elements – and the accordic layer (at the basis). The rapport of the two layers is geometrical, also making use of accords with double third: E b/E (rapport 11), A b, E b/E (rapport 11), B b/B b (modal ambiguity by the stratification of the accord major-minor), D\# _\textsuperscript{7} E b/E (rapport 11), E b/C (rapport 3)/C # (rapport 11), C/F # (rapport 6) and so on.

4 Conclusion

As regards the composition thinking described above, it was pointed out that the folkloric source is the first, followed by the Enescian one.

As regards the thematic construction, Tudor Ciortea exploits the modalism resources; the musical discourse is crossed by flashes of the various nuances induced by the modal agreements, each with its own expressiveness. The more disseminated the themes are all over the work under various forms, the more this aspect increases.

In using the modern modal thinking, – in melody and harmony – T. Ciortea was aware of the importance of some structures like the ones shown by this study, which he fully employed not only for the rapport novelty-tradition in the Romanian musical culture, but also for the adequate sonority in rendering an expressiveness of genuine Romanian folkloric origins, perceived as the highest expression of the folkloric element.

Due to the analytical elements pointed out above Tudor Ciortea appears as a remarkable musical thinker of his generation of musicians dedicated to the capitalization of the Romanian folklore and to the setting up of a language adequate to be promoted on the path also opened by George Enescu’s thinking.

References: