

Modal structures in *Sonatina for violin and piano* by *Paul Constantinescu*

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Abstract: *The prominent Romanian composer Paul Constantinescu bequeathed some valuable works, which are distinguished by the originality of style and technique addressed. The **Sonatina for violin and piano** written in 1933 is dedicated to "my Master Mihail Jora" representing an important step in achieving a national musical language. Part I - **Allegro moderato**, Part II - **Andante**, Part III - **Allegro assai** proposing a sound of modal essence with themes inspired by the folklore.*

Keywords: *Romanian folklore, modal language, bimodal, ornaments, asymmetric rhythm.*

Introduction

The prominent *Romanian* composer Paul Constantinescu bequeathed some valuable works, which are distinguished by the originality of style and technique addressed.

The *Sonatina for violin and piano* written in 1933 is dedicated to "my Master Mihail Jora" representing an important step in achieving a national musical language.

Part I

Part I, Allegro moderato, keeps the pattern of a sonata form, proposing a sound of modal essence with themes inspired by the folklore.

Theme 1 is initially presented by the piano in a *giusto* rhythm with an accompaniment reminding the harmony of the dulcimer (folk music instrument). The soundscheme is in a doric mode, with stage IV risen and stage III mobile, delivering a chromatic character:



The first motive of this theme - z- will appear at various points throughout the composition, with a powerful folk quality.



The piano accompaniment presents a new folk motif, which runs in the eolic mode, with risen IV and VII steps, clearly highlighted by the left hand at measures 11-12. This overlapping of the two modes determines a bimodal moment.

It is worth noting that the theme entries do not comply with the classic tonal patterns, which are adapted to the modal language. The z motif is contained in converting the first two measures *in stretto* (measures 15 – 18):

Theme II is presented by the violin in the eolic mode with mobile steps V, VI, VII. The melodic mode is melismatic with rich ornaments (trills, single and double grace notes); the presence of exceptional divisions, the asymmetric rhythm, in a *parlando - rubato* style, framed in alternative measures, the improvisatory character of the melodic progress suggests a Romanian folk *doina*; at the piano (left hand) a themed motif with a distinct melodic-rhythmic profile is introduced besides theme II (measures 23 – 26):

In the middle section – *The Development* - the two themes are reproduced: Theme I (violin) in Doric mode with stage IV risen, recreated by an reversed canon and reloaded by the piano in the LA note with the same accompaniment reminiscent of the folkloric dulcimer (measures 46-65); Theme II, on MI note, is intertwined with the piano accompaniment which highlights the poignancy of the z motif from Theme I, all in a dynamic development in *forte*, leading to the culmination of the whole part.

The *Reprise* is presented at the violin through theme I. After an identical presentation as the one in *Exposition*, it is taken up with variations, mirroring the *z* motif, together with an *ostinato* accompaniment; upon this reiteration, the second theme is overlapped on the piano, this time without any harmonic accompaniment, but as a lyric monophony similar to the ones found in Romanian folklore (measures 67-103).

Part II

Part II, Andante, is a lyric piece, in the *parlando-rubato* rhythm, "with colorful expressive archaic virtues similar to a dirge."¹ This part is designed in a freeform, improvised manner, the composer searching for preserving the features of the genre by fragmenting the melodic approach, using a gradually and mostly descending path, with few sounds. All these features are found in the traditional Romanian song.

The Introductory piano phrase explicitly presents the chromatic style:

From a melodic point of view, there is an emphasis on two archetypal forms which act as generators:

- The first is achieved by the melodic cell *n* that occurs early in the second measure, which will contribute to further melodic developments mainly by its recurrence (measures 13, 15, 22);

- The second is related to the specific character of a mourning song, feature that results in a sequence of descending seconds (the archetypal cell *m*). We illustrate with a brief example of the folklore:

¹ Tomescu, Vasile, *Paul Constantinescu*, București, Editura Muzicală, 1967, pag. 92

Bocet la unchi Bogdan Vodă - Maramureș

Oprea, Gheorghe, 100 melodii populare, București, Conservatorul, C. Porumbescu, 1980, pag.26

This *m* cell, after a first single appearance in measure 10 at violin, will produce a changing melodic flow, as well as a great mobility for the modal structures (bars 28, 30-34).

The abundance of embellishments highlights once again the power of melodic expression created by Paul Constantinescu through the appoggiatura, a feature of the folk mourning songs.²

Part III

In *Part III*, *Allegro assai*, traditional intonations are explicitly present in the two contrasting themes. The first one is constructed by the varied repetition of the theme motif, highlighting specific elements of the folk song.

The theme of the second section - B (measures 42-44) correlates to the character of Part II, through the descending melodic profile; *ostinatos* are distinguished in the accompaniment:

² Rădulescu-Pășcu, Cristina, *Ornamentica melodicii vocale în folclorul românesc*, București, Editura Muzicală, 1998, pag. 98

The thematic processing, the overlapping and dialogue of the two musical ideas, shape a development in the classic pattern of a small *rondo sonata*.

The structures used by the composer are characteristic to traditional folk artists, which are then refined in a synthesis of artistic elegance.

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