

Political context and Romanian style in the Suite op. 1 for violin and piano by Dumitru Bughici

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Abstract: Certain works were promoted with insistence, to give an example in darker periods of our modern history, works that have been completely forgotten today. It is natural, some of them did not resist the musical value site as well from the interprets point of view as from the perspective of an eclectic stylistic diachronicism, specific to the musical composition domain, in the 20th century.

In Romania, 'The Obsessive Decade' (of the 1950s) marked a repositioning of the entire compositional thinking, as well as a constant promotion of some authors, who ideologically and musically credited the massive infusion, after the Second World War -in regression terms- of the Romanian Socialist Realism's Aesthetics after Zhdanov thesis, with the excessive use of the basic characteristics of urban genres loved by the popular masses, treated in a simplified stylistic manner, exactly on the taste of the new political and ideological vision's order.

A refreshed analysis of a constant appreciated opus by the violin and piano players, such as that of **the Suite in the Romanian Style op 1 by Dumitru Bughici**, is required in order to outline, in retrospective manner, a musical stylistic image of a different musical production of those times. Also we are interested to be reconsidered the time test value of some works of the young composers of the times, in the general context of the 20th century History for the Romanian Chamber Music creation.

Key-words: Romanian Style; political restriction; cultural stalinism's reforms in music; simplified rhapsodic use; musical analysis.

1. Introduction

The end of the World War II marks the beginning of decades of inequalities and social upheavals in the history of the Central and the Southeastern Europe, both in the political and cultural artistic contexts. The new areas of ideological and geopolitical influence dictated by the pact of the Great Powers in Yalta, affected the future of the social order in Romania, activating right away, one of the most devastating social scenarios: the overwhelming Soviet influence. The imposition of Soviet power in the Romanian society through well placed activists in a Romanian territory, hostile to the respective ideology, has been felt since 1946, a period which coincides eventually- taking into account by the authorities' willful and gradual removal from the Romanian public life of great cultural personalities- with the self-exile of the great composer *George Enescu* in Paris.

In a very short time, in December 1947, by forcing King Michael's abdication and falsifying elections, royalty and democratic regimes in Romania are permanently abolished and we can speak about a quick and severe step by step implementation of the Stalinist ideology leadership.

From the installation of the People's Republic until shortly after Stalin's death, by extrapolation to the artistic musical domain from a reference with origins in the field of the literature history², one can speak, with certainty, of an *obsessive decade* of abuses, of musical

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² Expression\ symbolic term used for the musical context of the period also by the composer and professor *Dan Dediu* in many recent articles and in the Radio and website series "O istorie subiectivă a muzicii românești" from September to November 2018, *Radio Romania Cultural*. Retrieved March 10, 2020 <http://www.romania-muzical.ro/arhiva-emisiuni/o-istorie-subiectiva-a-muzicii-romaneti/5521/2018> .

institutions decay, when reversing the scale of values, denigrating the real musicians professionalism and mastery was the norm, both in composition and performance. Romanian or foreign music personalities' work, in alignment with the stylistic diversity of the free Europe avant-garde music directions, were strictly forbidden to be praised.

In a very descriptive abbreviation, the effects of this version of *Cultural Stalinism* developed into Romanian territory, were also felt and destabilized the activity and consequently, the status of prestigious professional institutions and associations with tradition such as *the Romanian Academy* and *the Society of Romanian Writers* or *the Society of Romanian Composers*³ which were abolished and replaced with counterfeit institutions⁴ guided by minor musicians, members of the Communist Party. As well were held in their presence or not, individual processes of political denigration and defamation for many Romanian elite creators, professional music mentor figures⁵ (especially for those who were composing from abroad), a lot of them followers of impressionism, serial, dodecaphonic or expressionist styles, condemned by unjust aesthetics musical malignant reforms of the new Regime.

To have a better understanding of the content of these reforms, it is necessary an analytical return to the text of the Soviet thesis that have defined since 1934, the characteristics of the Socialist Realism (loosely formulated in 1932) in Literature and by extension in Art and Music fields, presented for the first time by *Andrei Zhdanov*, member of the Political Office of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. It is obsessively punctuated in a subversive way or even directly by *tasks for a deep process of education* (brainwashing acts followed by reeducation, in fact) that involve modalities and promotions of different diversions, some kind of (manipulative) 'tools', capable of inducing a strong *ideological transformation* of popular masses. The so called *new man*, the Socialist perfect figure, was not about to be completely born only in the face of the revolutionary movements or political street fights and demonstrations, but he was seen, for the first time, as a re-formable, reprogrammable human material, a human consciousness whose all information, tastes, opinions, previously derived from a so called decadently harmful bourgeois social and cultural education, had to be forever erased and reconstructed. All these strategic measures had been applied by the Party in the '50 in the Romanian Stalinist regime by his active man-

³ In November 1920, the first statutory professional musicians association that will commit itself to defend the fundamental rights of Romanian creators in Music was founded by *Constantin Brăiloiu, Dumitru Georgescu-Kiriac, Ion Nonna Otescu, Mihail Jora, Dimitrie Cuclin, Filip Lazăr, Constantin C Nottara, Mihail Andricu, Theodor Rogalski*, to whom the Transylvanian composers *Gheorghe Dima, Ion Vidu and Tiberiu Brediceanu* were affiliated, under the chairmanship of *George Enescu*.

⁴ A Union purified by the method of disbanding and re-establishing the next day, under a changed name. At the helm of the new Union, a politically chosen team is recruited, chaired by the Communist journalist, conductor and composer of hymns with patriotic proletarian lyrics, *Matei Socor*. Romanian composers of undisputed value, considered decadent or too reactionary will no longer be admitted: *Stan Golestan, Ionel Perlea, Mihail Jora, Constantin Silvestri* amongst of all valuable Romanian composers outside the country's borders (*F. Lazăr, M. Mihalovici, S. Celibidache*, the pianist and composer *Dimu Lipatti*), *Dimitrie Cuclin*. *George Enescu* is also being omitted from the Union lists until the end of the Stalinist decade (1954). *Matei Socor*, the new elected president of the Union comes from an Armenian origins family with socialist orientations since the interwar period. For a little time being detained for political orientations by the authorities is released in 1943, after the great musicians *George Enescu* and *Constantin Brăiloiu* guaranteed in front of the Minister of Interior, in an act of kindness, for his future return to the right path "The context in which the landing takes place is given by the epoch of denunciation of the Stalinists in which the regime had entered. Bucharest felt obliged to show Moscow that it will get rid of from the "little Stalinists" with non-core attitudes, and Matei Socor seemed to match the profile. Thus, his political activism is almost perfectly symmetrical: illegally 10 years, between 1934 and 1944, and 10 years full communist, between 1945 and 1955." [my translation from Romanian language] Ionuț Iamandi. "Matei Socor, primul președinte comunist al Radioului," *Historia*. Retrieved April, 7, 2020 <https://www.historia.ro/sectiune/general/articol/matei-socor-primul-presedinte-comunist-al-radioului>.

⁵ *Dimitrie Cuclin's* proces, political prison and forced labor for 2 years at the Danube-Black Sea Canal, *Mihail Andricu's* attempt to be drawn in a spy defamation trial in 1959, *Mihail Jora's* constant marginalization and denigration or political prison and social obstruction of many other young and old age musical elites personalities affirmed as leader figures through professional and deontological profile.

tools (commanding propagandists and key position members in all organization), in all structures. Degrading the Cultural and Social life, turning the value criteria into a distorted upside down reality system were the effects. Losing the use of reasoning, giving up meritocratic evaluation criteria, forgetting the refinement of concerns in eclectic areas were the goals, in order to serve a new mass consciousness, who was about to assimilate easily, all sort of empty political demagogic discourses.. *educational, deep subversive and subtle targeted tool, which took the form of musically weak, no substance productions_of Art and Music.* No doubt, the official praised productions, all *proletkult type wastepaper* were new cantatas (ex. Cantata for choir and orchestra “*The New World is being built*” by *George Draga*), many official pompous large works in order to pay tribute to the new commanding class,⁶ or other minor creations, all raised to the rank of Art like hymns and proletarian songs, composed by the fresh elected members of the *Romanian Composers Union*⁷ (as *Crosses, hammers and sickles; Crashed chains, Thank you from the heart to the Party*)

2. Issue & Objectives

Accordingly to official cultural norms, Romanian or foreign music personalities’ work in alignment with the stylistic diversity of the free Europe avant-garde music directions, were strictly forbidden to be encouraged or praised. In spite of creators who served or were ideologically imposed as an example by the new power, there were also active valuable exponents, derived from two types of generations:

- some elder composers affirmed in the interwar period, with notable musical achievements of European stylistic actuality of indisputable deontological profile (like *Mihail Jora, Mihail Andricu, Theodor Rogalski, Filip Lazăr, Marcel Mihalovici, Paul Constantinescu, Dinu Lipatti, Tudor Ciortea*);
- a few young composers with significant artistic potential who want to assert themselves not by *proletkult type wastepaper* and not submit to major artistic compromises (as *Aurel Stroe, Pascal Benteoiu, Ștefan Niculescu, Tiberiu Olah, Theodor Grigoriu, Miriam Marbé, Dumitru Bughici, Dan Constantinescu, Doru Popovici, Carmen Petra-Basacopol*)

How to escape of *bourgeois aesthetics criteria*’s forbidden framing?

Many for both categories, subjected also to the oppressive social pressure on them and their families, (especially for those still living in the country), to escape from *bourgeois aesthetics criteria*’s forbidden signature, start to adapt, in lighter forms their own creative vision to the official censorship, by following *several directions of stylistic or thematic exploration*:

- melodic material of folkloric inspiration (from the perspective of stylization or direct quotation in diatonic ways);
- simplifying the compositional manner, aiming *accessibility at the music perception level* of the general audience;
- a thematic profile, extracted from glorious moments and historical figures’ lives of the Romanian History.

⁶ A good example of many others present in the period is the Oratory *Under the Sun of Peace* composed by *Hildea Jerea*, otherwise criticized, with great courage in the full Stalinist era by the musicologist *George Breazul* in the aspect of the weak structure of the work and of the poor management of the melodic material, clumsy led to a musical climax. Sergiu Dan Pop. 2006. “Review of the book *Incursion in the History of Contemporary Romanian Music, part I* by *Petre Brâncuși*” *.Proceedings of the4th edition National Symposium Petre Brâncuși, Târgu Jiu.* Retrieved March 20,2020 <http://www.petrebrancusi.ro/assets/pdf/vol5/recenzia.pdf>.

⁷ The tasks of the Composers’ Union are clear regarding the re-education of creators who are obsessed with bourgeois aesthetics criteria and asks accordingly his colleagues, to imposed the Party’s spirit in their music”excerpt from the Establishing Report of the Union, presented by its first President, activist composer *Matei Socor*. Sergiu Dan Pop- Idem 6.

3. Material and Methods

The op. 1 suite in Romanian style for violin and piano by Dumitru Bughici⁸ is a medium size work, comprising four pieces. At the origin of the thematic material stand the rhythms and melodic characteristics of some well-known Romanian folk dances. Its parts are entitled: *Dans*, *Cântec Liric*, *Ardelenească*, *Horă*. This suite was composed to be presented by the Romanian side during the 4th edition of the *World Youth and Students Festival* organized in Bucharest (August 1953) as part of the similar Socialist World Youth Congress, where parties of socialist orientation from 111 countries sent representatives youth with interests in various fields (scientific, cultural, educational, economic).⁹ This musical piece was awarded with the 2nd prize of the Festival, for composition.¹⁰

The first piece, generically titled *Dans* (Dance) opens the suite with a cheerful Allegretto in binary measure, in G, major having a tripartite form (A, B, Av + Coda).

The first section, A, first period (bars 1-16) presents the theme and to the violin in the G major, exposed on the piano chords and punctuate back bite syncopation type. In the second musical period, the repetition of the violin theme is juxtaposed with an ornamental variation on thematic elements made by the piano. Few bars form a transitional section, with modulatory inflections at the piano part (bars 17-21) and separates it from the next section B (bars 22-49), which will again bring the violin into a solo posture, accompanied by chords.

Fig. 1. *Dans* (bars 22-29)

⁸ Dumitru Bughici (1921-2008), composer, music theoretician and pedagogue was born in Iași in a family of Jewish origins violinists. Both his father, Avram David Bughici and the composer's grandfather, played and conducted famous klezmer formations in Iași. Dumitru Bughici started studying music at the Conservatory in Iași (1935-1938, harmony with *Alexandru Zirra*, art of conducting with *Antonin Ciolan* and piano with *Radu Constantinescu*). After the war, he continued his studies at the Conservatory "Rimski-Korsakov" in Leningrad (1950-55), where he studied with *Alexander Dmitriev* and *Boris Arapov*. From 1955 he started teaching musical forms at the Conservatory in Bucharest, today the National University of Music. He wrote many theoretical works, such as *Suite and Sonata* (Bucharest: 1965), a book that received the Romanian Academy Award, or *the Dictionary of musical forms and genres* (printed in Bucharest: in 1978), distinguished with the UCMR Prize. In 1985 he emigrated to Israel, where he worked as a teacher and composer. He composed programmatic symphonic music, ballets, instrumental chamber music and choral works. Marcel D. Popa, Alexandru Stănculescu, Gabriel Florin-Matei, Anicuța Tudor, Carmen Zgăvărdici, Rodica Chiriacescu. 2009. *Dicționar enciclopedic*. București: Editura Enciclopedică.

⁹ *The International Youth Festival*, as it was officially called (4th edition) was held in Bucharest, between 2 and 16 August 1953, the number of participants amounting to about 30,000 from 111 countries. Even if the policy of destalinization - even limited - launched by *N.S. Khrushchev* would only come in 1956, by the summer of 1953 the first signs of *thaw* were already in the atmosphere (the term was to be launched by the novel with the same title, written by *Ilia Ehrenburg*), *thaw* brought by the death of the great inn in the Kremlin. The most unpleasant part was the so-called "festival fasting", the food shortage, caused by the authorities' decision to store food for to feed the 30,000 participants. This manifestation was supposed to be a signal to the Western world that in Romania young people have optimal development conditions, but also to show the hospitality of the Romanian people, the desire of the regime of collaboration with the all democratic states.

Virgil Lazăr. 2011. "Un Festival care a înfometat o țară", *Romania Liberă*. Retrieved April 9, 2020 <https://romanalibera.ro/aldine/history/un-festival-care-a-infometat-o-tara-219791>.

¹⁰ Pieces selected to be presented by the Romanian side were those composed by young composers *D. Bughici*, and *Ovidiu Varga* (with the String Quartet "Spring of Life" or Party activists like *Alfred Mendelssohn* (with *String and piano Quintet* the winning work of the Festival and the 1st State Award).

Here we will have a melodic line with folk inflected elements, built on a harmonic major scale (with D-flat) on the sound of E-flat, with the fourth step modified (A natural).

This B section has larger dimensions and is more developed than section A. It also includes an exposition of the melodic theme in the same musical way mentioned, in the piano part and modulatory inflections in close tonalities (in A flat minor, in A flat major, G major). The end of the section is enriched by several measures that function as a solo cadence for the violin line (bars 50-52) that lead to the return of section A (bars 53-69) varied, with the double instrumental exposure of the first theme, in G major. The code treats conclusively the previously presented musical material, in a concise tonal final cadence.

The second piece *Cântec Liric* (Lyrical Song), is a bipartite lied (A, B + Coda) in ternary rhythms, slow tempo (*Largo*), a wined lyrical character, with a specific Romanian pastoral melodic shape. The basic tonality is E minor with the 6th and 7th steps (E melodic minor scale).



Fig. 2. *Cântec Liric* (bars 1-6)

Along the way, especially in B (bridge section), related tonalities are also reached. Section A (bar 1-13), unlike the first piece, presents in an introductory exposition of the piano, its theme: a *cantabile* melodic line, impregnated by lyricism specific to the intonation and popular genres of mourning. Evocative. meditative, it has a harmonious construction that uses compositional processes with movable tones (4th and 6th elements of the chords alternating with ascending variants). The violin takes over the melodic line that it develops through variational procedures in the major relative tonality, finding joined a cadence point in the most authentic folk style: returning in E minor through the 2nd step than by the 3rd step followed by a traditional tonal procedure, the perfect cadence. Section B (bars 14-30) has a developmental character with many dynamic and agogical fluctuations (*poco stringendo*, *piu mosso*, *accel.*, *rit.*, *accel.*, *rit.*, *molto rit.*) Much more extensive than the first section is characterized by frequent transition passages in G major, E minor, B minor, F sharp minor, A major and D major. Temperamentally, a little dramatic as a character, the section B presents a virtuoso concertante writing style of Romantic type through wide-ranging accordion and arpeggiated figurations that support the violin's passionate solo exposure. This leads to an intensification of the expressive tension, when the dynamic climax of the piece (bars 26-27) is reached, followed by the solo cadence of the violin, which will be gradually extinguished through a motif resumed from section A, into the accompaniment of the piano part. The coda (bars 31-37) in a nostalgic tone unfolds during a musical period, which is bringing some of the melodic material of the first theme, and finally the piece gradually extinguishes in *ppp*.

The third piece of the Suite called *Ardelenească* is an old and well-known folk dance from Transylvania, in binary rhythm, with complex notation (dotted rhythm with shifted accents on the 3rd beat, anticipated with a sixteenth note). The moderate tempo *allegretto*, highlights the mentioned particularities, supporting a melodic line in a popular diatonic mode of minor state created on the sound A with modified 4th and 6th. From an architectural point of view, the piece is similar as the formal musical pattern of the first pieces (A B Av Coda). Section A (bars 1-20) begins with four measures at the piano (chords accompaniment) with a beating of half tones in popular style on the syncopated rhythm of the dance, in a suggestive descent that prepares the thematic entrance of the violin.



Fig. 3. *Ardelenească* (bars 5-8)

A resumption of the theme on both sides in a counter-punctuating manner following accents between the two instruments, bring a passage of a complex melodic-rhythmic organization, which will dominate the entire section.

The larger section B (bars 21--52) contains two parts: an exhibition one, which presents the thematic material (bars 21-40) and another one of development function (bars 41-52).



Fig. 4. *Ardelenească* (bars 16-23)

The varied and restricted return of section A (bars 53-59) in a frenetic atmosphere on a dynamic support in crescendo until reaching the fortissimo point, reinforces the timbre of the piano by octaves, which will dialogue in a sustained way with the violin part. Some transitional bars (60-62) make the transition to the Coda (bars 63-68).

The final piece *Horă* is an authentic fast tempo dance, full of vibrancy, energy, robustness, in binary rhythm, harmonically constructed on a combination of a lydic and

mixolithic modes both on the F sound of an archaic popular. layer. The structure supported is Rondo (A B Av C with development, Av + Coda). The first section A (bars 1-16) presents a melodic line with folkloric ornaments at the violin on piano accompaniment, that punctuates with accents on the last beat of the bars in the manner of the popular cymbal instrument accompaniment. Section B (bars 17-38) is composed of four periods and has a dancing character bringing harmonic stability to the Lidico-Mixolidian modal oscillation of the previous part, by clearly displaying the D minor and B flat major tonalities.



Fig. 5. *Horă* (bars 46-52)

A writing focused on the use of chamber dialogue between the two instruments that will continually dispute the solo attributes. The varied and wide return of section A (bars 39-58) contains two musical periods, one for violin exposition of the theme of *Hora* on a varied accompaniment of the piano and another split between in two instruments for a sequentially thematic dialogue.

Section C is in the minor and together with the development work (bars 47-81) is the core of the piece, written in a romantic, brilliant manner, ornamenting in large arpeggios a theme of lyrical, expansive character that will be processed and developed according to the dramatic requirements of previous the musical content. The alternation of the binary rhythms with ternary ones occurs in a sustained increase of the dynamic and tension spectrum (in forte and fortissimo). The final return of section A (bars 82-105) a varied form, restores the binary rhythm and the fast tempo in sixteenth of *Hora* dance. The Coda (bars 106-109) is made up of 4 conclusive bars where both instruments have a rise in unison, on a modified ascending range (2nd step up, 4th step down).

4. Conclusions

Within the mentioned period, even if there is a political imposition for the extreme simplification of the written musical discourse, among the young composers as well as among those with previous compositional experience generally will be propagate the return to the rhapsodic style (specific to the beginning of the 20th century) or at least to the strict quotation or the diatonic stylization of material from folk sources. Thus way will be understood the Romanian character printed to a musical piece, an aspect that will in fact mean a regression from the point of view of the Romanian compositional evolution.

Especially thinking of the great achievements obtained since 1926 by *George Enescu* with the 3rd Sonata in Romanian character op. 25 and Suite for violin "Childhood Impressions" op. 28 (1940) and continued by other inter-war important composers (*Tudor Ciortea, Filip Lazăr, Martina Negrea, Mihai Andricu*)¹¹, who by some very important works introduced the transfiguration of their own style, working extensively with structural elements of the authentic old-style folklore or by adapting the modalities of playing on the classical music instruments (the tuning mechanisms or adapting the popular ways of execution to the modern instruments)- this state of fact is seen as an involution, moreover, a retrograde handling of the inspirational material.

In relation to all mentioned before, the work of the young composer *Dumitru Bughici* and through his op. 1 we are aware of the fact it represents a compositional debut, comes at the opportune moment to be evaluated and only in this context, appreciated with a State Award. The musical approaches are correct but modest, the illustration of the folk-inspired material is made by common means, which does not lack a certain musical charm.

The conclusive pro argument that it is maintained until today as a teaching (didactic) material in the study of the violin, indicates the composer's very good and efficient knowledge about the register and the use of the technical means of playing on the violin, as well as the medium difficulty imposed to the performer in reading the piano part.

This sincere and fresh view from which the youth and enthusiasm of the young composer transpires, helped this work to be preserve in the occasional concert repertoire of some Romanian Chamber music players for some decades.

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¹¹ *Tudor Ciortea*- Sonate for violin and piano in Romanian Rhapsodic Style (1946); *Filip Lazar*- Three Dances for violin and piano (1927); *Mihai Andricu*- String Quartet in A major op. 14 (1930); *Martian Negrea*- String Quartet in E b major, op. 17 (1949).

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