

## Interpretive Sound Introspections in Composer Ionica Pop's Composition Entitled "▲"

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**Abstract:** *The concert rendition of this composition that presents ideational, graphic, and semantic novelty has been consistently founded on the dialogue between the composer and performers during the rehearsal sessions taking into account the fact that the conductor was the composer himself. Our research has focused on bringing to light certain findings at comprehension level as well as with reference to the approach used to tackle an idiosyncratic musical genre that is built on symbols as metaphors for numbers, words and geometrical figures. Following the metaphorical meaning description, the author shares her personal experience rendered at both an emotional and interpretive level documenting it from the very first analysis of the musical score to its ultimate scenic representation.*

**Key-words:** *number; geometric figure (interpretive); symbolism; (interpretive; alchemy; performance technique (vocal); literary text; interpretive analysis*

### 1. General Overview of Composer Ionică Pop' Biographical References

From 1977 to 1985, composer Ionică Pop undergoes musical studies of both the oboe and the piano at the Music High school in Cluj - Napoca. Consequently, he proceeds to further study Composition at the 'Gheorghe Dima' Music Conservatory in Cluj-Napoca during the period unfolding from 1986 to 1991 as part of Professor Cornel Țăranu's class, the same mentor that will coordinate his doctoral dissertation entitled 'Structures and Trends in Contemporary Music'. In June 2004, Ionică Pop is granted the title of Doctor in Music.

In 2006, he graduates from The 'Gheorghe Dima' Music Academy in Cluj-Napoca, the Musical Theatre specialisation under the supervision of Associate Professor Anca Mihuț as well as the Oboe Module as part of Professor Erick Turk's class. He performs oboe and piano concerts both in Romania and abroad.

To date, Ionica Pop is an associate professor at the Department of Musicology within the 'Gheorghe Dima' Music Academy.

He has performed authorship concerts in Cluj (Cluj Radio), Piatra – Neamț, The 'George Enescu' Museum in Bucharest, The Comparative Art Museum in Sîngeorz – Băi. His compositions have been performed in a series of prestigious festivals such as The Musical Autumn of Cluj, Modern Cluj, The George Enescu International Festival.

The convergence between composition and directing leads to a successful analysis of instrumental theatre as well as to a highly original expression of the lied, making frequent use of both his own lyrics and the lyrics of highly acknowledged poets.

He has gained awards and honours at national and international composition contests.

His work comprises orchestra, concertante, opera, stage music, chamber music and choral pieces.

His compositions have been performed in many countries such as Italy, Germany, Holland, Denmark and France.

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Since 2008, he has been the leader, conductor and coordinator of the Impact XXI band alongside soprano Daniela Păcurar, pianist Vera Negreanu, trombone player Mircea Neamț and percussionist Ionică Dărăban.

## 2. Approaches to Music Composition. A Dialogue with the Composer

In our discussions with the author of this composition, we have been reminded of the rewarding yet difficult moments through which we have both passed so as to achieve its scenic representation.

The composition is written for two sopranos, trombone and percussion in an untraditional language, with proportional notation, a fact that has presented certain difficulties of a rhythmic nature because we only encounter notes values sporadically, free space reading being needed within each tempo-delimited through dotted bars.

Consequently, due to intentional and rhythmic difficulties, I needed initial preparation coupled with the composer's suggestions in order to be welcomed into this type of music that displays a particular complexity as it makes the reading of the score to be achievable only within the context of the sheet music. This element determines a diligent approach, a precision of the execution as well as increased distributive attention in order to integrate the line of the voice into the lush context of this audio universe.

As far as I am concerned, this has been a new experience in a musical universe that had been unfamiliar to me, a universe that is characterised by archaic melodic features encompassed in an asymmetrical and a new notation, while lacking a text in the traditional sense of the word; what we do find are interjections, disparate words that remind us of antic deities, the three graces, alchemy and the symbolism of the triangle and number three.

In my opinion, the approach of this type of music has been a constant challenge. I recall the moment in which, during a rehearsal, after having become accustomed to the melodic passages of the musical score, in my pursuit to intonate a perfect fourth, I have encountered pitch difficulties as the perfect fourth appeared as an unexpected interval in the melodic context this music is built on.

E.g. mus. no 1. (p.1, the first system)

### 3. Interpretations of the Literary Text

The composition ▲, is rooted in archaic tones, combined with the latest modern techniques. For the author, the triangle signifies the association with the cosmic symbol as part of a trilogy, together with the circle and the square.

This trilogy also symbolises an insight into the world of numerology, the triangle being connected to the number three, the square obviously to number four and to the ancient city symbol, whereas the circle is associated with the symbolism of number zero but also with the egg and sphere references.

The author favours alchemy, featuring alchemic elements such as water, fire, mercury, and sulphur that, in my opinion, apparently burst out as if out of a magical source to consequently configure a transformation process. We do not observe an alchemic transformation; rather, this is moved onto a musical stage having complied –out of all the rich sound tribulations, abundant up to the present moment– a melodic filtering with archaic sound features reminiscent of the traditional carol.

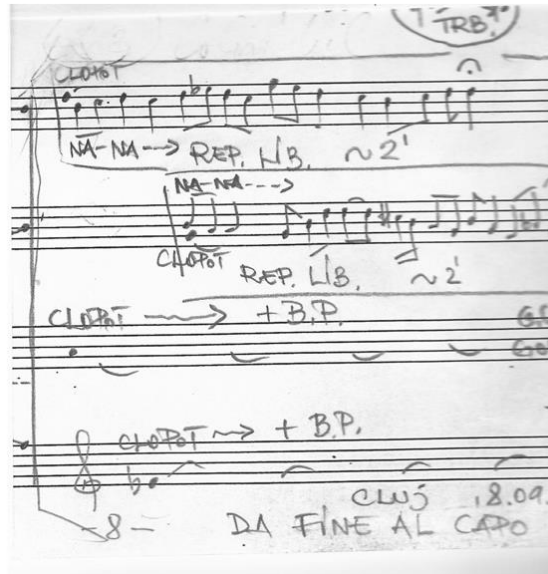
Selecting from the text provided by the composer, we hereby mention the words with meanings connected to triangle and number three such as, trigon, triangu, unus, dui, tres, sem, oinoioko, anktau, oi, notau, kosem, solao ta, these words being presented in a recurrent way. Likewise, deities are mentioned in the text such as Azrael, Apsu-the cosmic bull, the three graces that will ultimately be presented.

Within this context, the textmusik fragment is representative following after the climax: *The essence of things is thus born, just as music arising from water is born out of the love for light.*

The image shows a handwritten musical score for a piece titled "[SAU NUMAI MISCARE]". The score is written on five staves. The top staff is labeled "TEXT MUSIK" and contains the text "RAIN STICK ~ 1'30''". The second staff contains the text "MAT ALEHO, TISIPONA, MEGERA" and "ASA SE NASTE ESSENTIA MARACAS LUCRURILOR". The third staff contains "KRYPTOS GURTA AP-SU" and "PRECUM MUZICA DIN DRAGOSTEA LUMINII CE RASARE". The fourth staff contains "FOND EFECTIC" and "GONG IN DIN APA APA". The fifth staff contains "URIM SA TU-MMIM" and "INTROD. PALMEI IN APA". The bottom staff is labeled "GONG ~ 1'30''" and "TEXT MUSIK". There are also some circled words like "RAIN STICK", "MARACAS", "GONG IN", and "GONG". At the bottom, there are some symbols: "TO BO NO TO BO NO".

E.g. no. 2 the textmusik system

This essence reverberates with ancient horizons and carol melodies in particular.

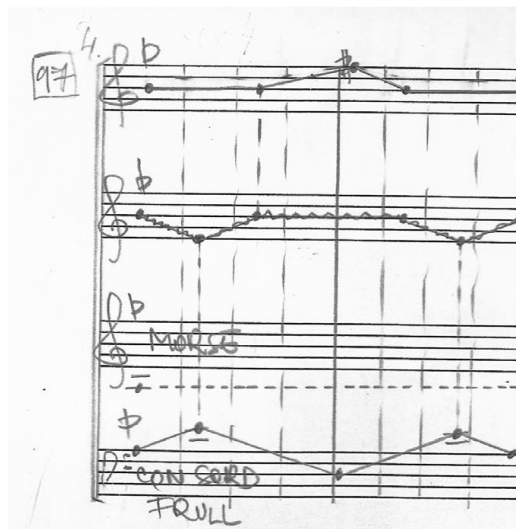


E.g. mus. no. 3 (the end carol)

#### 4. The Dialogue between Number and Geometric Figures

With reference to what the number three and the triangle represent, we may bring into discussion several coordinates without having an exhaustive approach to the subject. Three may signify divinity in the Christian religious system (Father, Son, and the Holy Ghost); nevertheless, the symbolism of this number is pre-Christian. Consequently, we are reminded of the three Parce: Lachesis, Clotho and Atrophos, the three Graces or the Charities: Aglae, Euphrosyne and Thalia as well as the three Furies: Aletto, Tisifona, and Megera<sup>2</sup>.

In what concerns the triangle, its significance may have other connotations as well; for example, the conjunction of three planets located in the heavenly homes at the same time, or an ancient musical instrument that is the ancestor of the lyre or the harp. The intersection of two triangles provides us with David's star that looks like the following example when transferred onto the sheet music:



E.g. mus. no. 4 (David' star from the music sheet)

<sup>2</sup> Boncompagni, Solas, *The World of Symbols*, Humanitas Publishing House, Bucharest, 2003, pp. 50-51.

### 5. The Geometrical Architecture. Notation Elements and their musical correspondences

Composer Ionica Pop's work has started from the essence of the confrontation between earth, water, air and ether, where the earth is musically expressed through flat sounds, the fire is represented through ascending glissandos, the water through a wider layered vibrato, a fact that reminds us of waves, the air through pointillist elements that concur with the French pointillist painting and such painters as Vincent van Gogh, Charles Ungrand, Anna Boch, Georges Seurat. Here is an example of pointillist notation in the musical score.

E.g. mus. no. 5, pointillist, pg. 2

As for the general architecture, the author has imagined a musical score of triangles that has generated the entire composition from a musical standpoint.

See plate 1, composition schematics

IN JURUL REAMANTII - creșterea pentru substanțe  
 Final - Instrumente - toate elementele

Final - Instrumente - toate elementele

I Pământ apă aer foc

II Pământ apă aer foc

III Pământ apă aer foc

IV Pământ apă aer foc

V Pământ apă aer foc

VI Pământ apă aer foc

VII Pământ apă aer foc

VIII Pământ apă aer foc

IX Pământ apă aer foc

X Pământ apă aer foc

XI Pământ apă aer foc

XII Pământ apă aer foc

Final - Instrumente - toate elementele

Schimbări pg. 2 muz. TRB / pg. 2 TRB / pg. 2 TRB / pg. 2 TRB / pg. 3 de v. 4 / XIII Rețeta pg. 1 în keuranta

"Δ" IONICA POP

## 6. The Musical Score Approach. The Interpretive Performance and Technical Difficulties

In the 20th century, the human voice and its relation with song techniques and styles correspond to a bold approach, a strong anatomic-physiological build and technical resources that enable the most eloquent expression of the musical language.

In the present paper, the melodic discourse focuses on septim intervals and primarily on the big septim, augmented fourths, sound effects associated with a distinctive tone colour<sup>3</sup>.

I needed to adapt a classic vocal technique to the requirements of contemporary music: a light release in an even non-vibrato voice, displaying the glissando of the voice in between

<sup>3</sup> Pinghireac, Georgeta, *Aesthetic Symbols of a Soprano's Voice*, National University of Music Publishing Bucuresti, 2003, p. 243

extended intervals—a fact that is not often encountered within traditional music contexts. The afore mentioned glissandi that often exceed the octave have dictated a rather strict execution from a rhythmic perspective, on highs reached and departed between speech and song, shaping up vocal effects such as the scream, the humming and the whisper.

E.g. mus. no. 6 pg. 4, system 2

The voice in the acute register has posed great intonation difficulties as the sound interferences with soprano two's voice have constantly focused on dissonances and intersections of the mirrored oblique paces as can be observed in the example below as well as in example above..

Regarding the way the score is made by the composer, we offer a conclusive example of the ways of working. Thus, we can see the sketch score of an excerpt from the paper:

E.g.. mus. nr. 7, sketch fragment

And now the transcription in the final score:

E.g.. mus. nr. 8, system 1

## 7. Conclusions

Drawing on my experience related to this composition and upon having benefited from the dialogue with its author since the moment of its stage production to the present moment, I have discovered that modern music has provided me with a unique professional satisfaction despite the encountered difficulties.

Conceived as a special world of sound, the work mirrors, both conceptually and interpretatively, a unique sound universe, full of color, which is born from the geometric symbols and interpretations of the number three.

It was interesting to translate into vocals so many symbolic elements. I time, by discovering the deep meanings of this work, regardless of the inherent difficulties that I find in the beginning, I managed to explore this amazing realm. The elements of instrumental theater, the sound effects, the dissonant interval, the soloist's contribution during the interpretive as a creator, all this were a challenge for me as a performer.

"A performer's job is a constant undertaking contributing to the articulation of a genuine life formula that is deeply rooted in a comprehensive professional belief system."<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Coman, Ramona, *The Expressive Function of the Vocal Colouring*, MediaMusica Publishing House, Cluj-Napoca, 2017, cover 4



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