

Stylistic and interpretative issues in *Two preludes for clarinet and piano* by Sabin Păutza

Daniel PAICU¹

Abstract: The work *Two preludes for clarinet and piano* was composed for in 1977, the peak period in the creation of Sabin Păutza and premiered by the clarinetist Dumitru Sâpcu. The play reveals a varied and original musical language, a synthesis of the principles of jazz and traditional folk elements; it consists of two parts, *Andante cantabile* and *Allegro giocoso*, contrasting both in form and tempo. Musical theme from which the entire work is inspired leads us to the realm of Romanian fairy tales and jazz composing keeps the mystical atmosphere through the intimate stories created by the expressive sound of the clarinet accompanied by the plated piano chords.

Key-words: jazz influence; clarinet techniques; Romanian fairy tales

1. Introduction

In this scientific and artistic study, we intend to present aspects regarding the structure, requested instrumental technique, the ways of playing the sound colours and effects. The piece *Two preludes for clarinet and piano* was composed in 1977 and played for the first time by the famous Romanian clarinetist Dumitru Sâpcu. Subsequently, the *Two Preludes* were transcribed for trumpet or saxophone and have been played in Iasi concert halls since 1981 and 1982. Musical language is diverse and original, a synthesis between the principles of jazz music to traditional folk elements and the musical theme which the entire work is inspired, leads us to the realm of Romanian fairy tales.

The work it is structured in two contrasting parts: the first one, *Andante cantabile* it is in a slow tempo with a reminiscent character of American blues and the second one, *Allegro giocoso*, has a more dynamic character, with a strong jazz scent.

2. Part I, *Andante cantabile*

Born out of a *musical* theme that takes us to the realm of Romanian fairy tales, the sonority in the first prelude tells the story of Ileana Cosânzeana². The jazz-based compositional writing preserves the mystical atmosphere of the fairy tale through the intimate setting created by the expressive sound of the clarinet accompanied by the block chords of the piano. Because Ileana Cosânzeana is the symbol of harmony and knowledge, the musical discourse of this work moves fluently and expressively in the *Andante Cantabile* tempo.

Behind a musical language reminiscent of American *blues*, the architectural approach proposes a three-stanza form based on symmetrical constructions.

¹ Faculty of Performance, Composition and Music Theory Studies, G. Enescu National Arts University of Iasi, email address (paicudany@yahoo.com).

² The information about the origins, the theme and certain compositional aspects was gathered from the author, in a private discussion.

A		B		A		
<i>a</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>bl</i>	<i>punte</i>	<i>a</i>	<i>av</i>	<i>codă</i>
(m. 1-8)	(m. 9-16)	(m. 17-24)	(m. 24-28)	(m. 28-35)	(m. 35-39)	(m. 39-42)
<i>sib</i>	~ <i>re</i>	~ <i>fa#</i>	~ <i>do#</i>	~ <i>sib</i>		

In the first section (bars 1-8), the anacrusal debut of the solo clarinet (bar 1) anticipates the tonal framework of *Bb minor* marked by the minor seventh chord that opens the plane of the piano accompaniment and is the foundation on which harmony is built. The theme motif of this *blues* is based on an ascending perfect fourth skip (*F1-Bb1* - bar 1) followed by a descending chromatic turn (*Bb1-A1-Ab1* - bar 1) which returns to the initial sound (*F1* - bar 2), creating an affectionate, but sad mood. The *mp* intensity of the clarinet and, in the background, the *p* of the piano, confirms the elegiac nature of this musical moment; the tension of the discourse is impelled only by the indications of expression that accompany the melodic motion, which unravels fluidly. The theme motif is developed with the help of an ascending exposition (bars 2-3), the solo part being then balanced by the return of the descending chromatic triplet cell that stops on the same *F1* sound, through a descending third skip. Thus, the main melodic line follows a harmonious and natural progression. On the piano we notice the presence of the seventh chords specific to jazz writing, chords which are sometimes solved by descending steps (bar 2, bar 4). The accompaniment maintains constantly a secondary, static content, nuanced from time to time by the presence of chromaticisms and very rarely by cells that evoke the thematic head. There are descending chromatic steps (*Ab-G-Gb-F* - bars 2-3, bars 4-5, *D1-Db1-C1-Bb* - bars 3-5) which reaffirm, with each exposition, the melancholic nature of the discourse.

In order to emphasize the *blues* nature of this first part, the performer must detach from the rigorous rhythmic context and interpret this fragment very lightly and sometimes with emphasised, even delayed, sounds.

Example 1 Sabin Păutza - *Two Preludes*, mvt. I *Andante Cantabile*, p. 1, bars 1-4

The symmetry of the discourse is reflected in the solo part through motions that take the form of questions and answers. This is also the case when the theme motif of the triplet is restated (bars 3-4 - question) and then answered by moving the melody in the low-pitched register of the instrument (bars 4-6), generating a new ascending progression (bar 6), which is then solved in a descending manner (bar 7) by a descending transposition of the motivic triplet cell. Dynamic fluctuations accompany constantly the progression of the clarinet, faithfully following its melodic direction (*crescendo* over ascending motions and *decrescendo* over descending returns). The melody line of the piano is highlighted by concentrated chromatic fragments (*Bb-A-Ab* - bar 5, bars 7-8) which make the musical discourse tense, as the final

chord suspends the sonority by stopping on a chord consisting of two overlapping fourths (*G-C* and *F-Bb*).

The triplets that support the melodic line of the clarinet could be easily marked by the interpreter, to highlight the transition from binary to ternary rhythm.

Example 2 Sabin Păutza - *Two Preludes*, mvt. I *Andante Cantabile*, p. 1, bars 4-8

The image shows a musical score for two staves. The top staff is for the clarinet, and the bottom staff is for the piano. The music is in 3/4 time. The clarinet part features a melodic line with several triplets. The piano accompaniment consists of chords and a bass line with some rhythmic patterns. The key signature has one flat (B-flat).

The **middle section** (bars 9-24) is marked by the agogics of *Poco più mosso* and has a wider scope owing to its composition made up of two square sentences. The first one (bars 9-16) transposes and varies the theme motif presented at the beginning, through a sudden modulation to the tonal plane of *D minor*. The sonority becomes much more intense not only due to the dynamization of the agogics, but also by amplifying the intensity right from the beginning - *mezzoforte*. The harmony preserves a Romanian modal echo through the plagal progression suggested by the bass of the accompaniment, arranged in successions of fourths (*D-G-C-F* - bars 8-9). If, to begin with, the triplet follows the same descending melodic pattern now transposed (bar 9), its rhythmic motif combines the interval cells of the main motif (second and fourth skip, both ascending - bar 10, second and third skip, both descending - bar 11). The presence of dotted rhythm (bar 11) anticipates and prepares the tension of the next instrumental motion but maintains persistently the anacrusical organization of the solo part. The theme motif also appears fleetingly, in various forms, in the part played by the accompaniment (bar 10). The stop on a *D minor* homonymous chord temporarily calms the harmony coloured by chromaticisms (bar 12).

Example 3 Sabin Păutza - *Two Preludes*, mvt. I *Andante Cantabile*, p. 1-2, bars 9-12

The image shows a musical score for two staves. The top staff is for the clarinet, and the bottom staff is for the piano. The music is in 3/4 time. The clarinet part features a melodic line with several triplets. The piano accompaniment consists of chords and a bass line with some rhythmic patterns. The key signature has one flat (B-flat). The tempo marking 'poco più mosso' is written above the first staff.

The transposition to an ascending third of the first exposition in the second section completes the first square sentence (bars 12-16), varying the pentatonic structure rhythmically and melodically (*F#1-A1-B1-C#2-E*). The perseverance with which the musical material revolves around the five sounds wrapped in new variations determines the indication *animando e crescendo*. The accompaniment is highlighted by the motions of the melodic line, which weave a dialogue between the solo and the piano parts.

Example 4 Sabin Păutza - *Two Preludes*, mvt. I *Andante Cantabile*, p. 2, bars 12-16

Culmination is reached in the second sentence of the middle section (bars 16-24), marked by the indication *forte quasi allegretto*. The thematic rhythmic cell experiences an augmentation of the triplet and is intertwined with other rhythmic designs that repeat the melody, now transposed based on $C\#$, in various forms. The repetitive upward and downward waving motion of the clarinet is superimposed over the chromatic motions, which descend in quarters and quavers, of the intermediate pitches of the piano ($E\#-E-D\#-D-C\#$ - bars 17-18, $G\#-G-F\#-F-E-Eb-D$ - bars 18-19, $F\#-F-E-Eb-D-C\#$ - bars 20-21).

To highlight the moment of transition towards the climax, the interpreter can intonate the $C\#-G\#$ interval (e.g. 5, bar 16) through a quick *glissando*, making it a moment that ‘pierces’ the melodic line, which validates the jazz writing and the elegiac nature of the discourse.

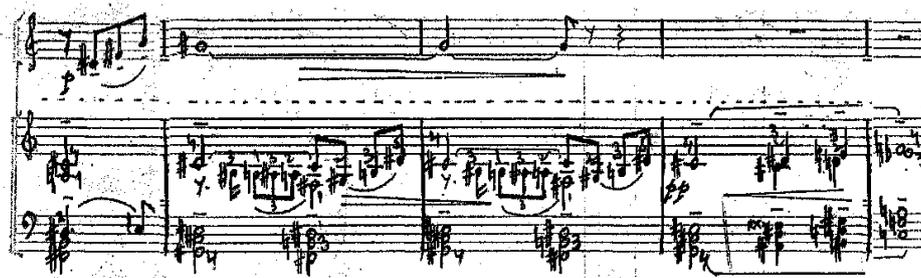
Example 5 Sabin Păutza - *Two Preludes*, mvt. I *Andante Cantabile*, p. 2, bars 16-21

Once dynamic and melodic culmination is achieved, the sonority is progressively reduced by decreasing the intensity and slowing down the agogics, but also by moving the register of the main part to medium and low pitches. Thus, we notice the general descending direction of the sound material which gradually closes the secondary motion, but also the final imitative dialogue between the piano and the soloist (bar 23).

Example 6 Sabin Păutza - *Two Preludes*, mvt. I *Andante Cantabile*, p. 3, bars 21-24

A burst of the clarinet prolongs the solo exposition and overlaps it over the instrumental fragment which plays the role of a bridge (bars 24-28): the clarinet pedal on $G\#$ accompanies the mobile exposition of the piano, closing the middle section on a $C\#$ major chord (bar 27); the return to the sound plane of the first section is made with the help of chords that follow an ascending trajectory (bars 27-28), suspending the harmony which requires the reprise of the first stanza.

Example 7 Sabin Păutza - *Two Preludes*, mvt. I *Andante Cantabile*, p. 3, bars 24-28



When section A returns to *Tempo I* (bars 28-39) the motion becomes ampler through the addition of a second sentence that resumes the initial sound material in various forms. In the first sentence (bars 28-35) we find once again, with very few changes, the melodic outline of the clarinet theme motif from the beginning of the piece, and the accompaniment resumes the harmonic progressions loaded with discrete thematic outbursts from the median voices. The frame of the fairy tale is brought back to the fore with the help of the same mystical sounds, evasively enunciated by the jazz harmonies of the piano, which now seem to have resigned.

Example 8 Sabin Păutza - *Two Preludes*, mvt. I *Andante Cantabile*, p. 3, bars 28-33

The second sentence (bars 35-39) is repetitive, but static in nature, because it insistently resumes the thematic melodies, trying to close the motion with the help of descending chromatic intervals solved on F (bars 38-39). Very surprising is the sudden modulation to the homonymous Bb major (bar 36) which creates a positive and confident mood, as the story of *Ilena Cosânzeana* finds the happy ending specific to the Romanian fairy tale.

The interpreter must pay attention to the low-pitched register in which this part is written, and apply equal pressure to the air flow, thus controlling the intonation, which may fluctuate. As noted in the score, the triplets must be articulated softly and evenly, in *detaché*, avoiding the sudden attacks that distort the fluency of the melodic line. The dialogue of the two voices could be intoned gloomily, mysteriously, thus creating a melancholic mood.

Example 9 Sabin Păutza - *Two Preludes*, mvt. I *Andante Cantabile*, p. 4, bars 35-39



A brief accompaniment coda (bars 39-42) prolongs the discourse and concludes it in the low-pitched register of the piano.

Example 10 Sabin Păutza - *Two Preludes*, mvt. I *Andante Cantabile*, p. 4, bars 39-42



3. Part II, *Allegro Giocoso*

It is also the *musical* that gives birth to the second prelude, which sketches the image of the famous characters Setilă, Flămânzilă, and Gerilă. The musical moment brings together these three funny characters, who sing and dance³. The realm of fantasy is suggested with the help of rhythmic and melodic diversity, but also by the dynamism created by the *Allegro Giocoso* tempo. The music in this second prelude has a strong jazz scent, but it also brings along intonations specific to Romanian music. The three-stanza form frames naturally this very energetic musical moment:

	A		B	
<i>introd.</i>	<i>a</i>	<i>av</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>b1</i>
(măs. 1-9)	(măs. 10-22)	(măs. 19-31)	(măs. 32-39)	(măs. 40-47)
<i>Fa</i>		<i>~ la</i>	<i>~ Mib ~ re ~ Do# ~ Do</i>	
	A			
<i>punte</i>	<i>a</i>	<i>av</i>	<i>codă</i>	
(măs. 48-51)	(măs. 52-64)	(măs. 65-73)	(măs. 74-77)	

The **second movement** begins with an introductory piano sentence (bars 1-9) which presents the theme motif. Noteworthy is the use of the 6/8 time that hides some binary structures in the bass (equal divisions of dotted quavers), which overlap with the main ternary melody. The main theme is expansive and playful, combining equal divisions with dotted ones, complemented by firm indications of expression. The construction of the square phrase has a very simple composition: the first cell in the musical discourse, represented by a descending

³ Information received from the author, in a private discussion.

third skip that returns to values of eighths (bar 1), entertains a dialogue with the second, a cell made up of ascending and descending steps in a dotted rhythm (bar 2).

The articulation is completed by the identical resumption of the two cells (bars 3-4) accompanied constantly by the bass pedal on *F*, which generates two other varied cells (bars 5-6) leading to the cadenza on the tonic *F* (bars 7-8). In this case the bass follows a wavy chromatic development: *E-Eb-D-C#-C-C#-D-Eb*. The sentence is extended inwards (bar 9) to achieve a flowing transition from one segment to another. Besides rhythmic diversity, another element specific to jazz writing are melodic appoggiaturas.

Example 11 Sabin Păutza - *Two Preludes*, mvt. II *Allegro Giocoso*, p. 5, bars 1-4

A more detailed analysis of the accompaniment shows that the bass part contains two rhythmic structures: one specific to the thematic exposition (equal values of dotted eighths) and one specific to the bridge (a ternary arrangement that hides two binary groups: one made up of dotted eighths, and the other of eighths and sixteenths). The left hand *tailors* the harmony with two-sound intervals, while the right hand sketches the main melodic contour.

Section A consists of two sentences that repeat the melodic material previously played. The first sentence (bars 10-22) transfers the thematic cells to the solo part, and, in the background, the right hand presents the main exposition with counter-timed interventions (bars 10-13) or accompanies it with a pedal on the tonic rendered through appoggiated octaves (bars 14-16). The left hand of the accompaniment is identical.

The discourse of the clarinet is enlivened by the *mezzoforte* dynamics and the presence of accents that cancel the symmetrical flow of time. The interpreter should emphasize these accents with the help of the air flow and appropriate pressure, and the dotted rhythmic pattern should be well delimited and played identically throughout the sentence. As far as dynamics is concerned, the interpreter should strive to nuance and emphasize the highlights of the melodic line. A moment requiring special attention from the clarinet player is the beginning of the musical discourse. The interpreter should not be surprised, but prepare the attack very well, by well-dosed breathing, and should follow, at the same time, the theme of the piano so as not to delay the entrance (bar 10).

Technically, the performer encounters two types of articulations: one that is strong, hard, and accented, and another which is *detaché* and soft. In order to highlight the nature of the work, articulations must be clearly differentiated, not only in the example below but also throughout the whole movement. The appoggiaturas should be intoned as briefly and energetically as possible, emphasizing the work's jazz character.

Example 12 Sabin Păutza - *Two Preludes*, mvt. II *Allegro Giocos*, p. 5, bars 10-17

The image shows a musical score for five staves, numbered 1 through 5. The first staff is the clarinet part, starting with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat. The second and third staves are the piano accompaniment, with the second staff in treble clef and the third in bass clef. The fourth and fifth staves continue the piano accompaniment. The music is in 3/4 time and consists of rhythmic patterns and melodic lines.

A short imitative commentary of the clarinet extends the sentence (bars 19-22) by resuming the second theme motif which is then transposed to a descending major second without creating a permanent imbalance as far as tone is concerned. In order to maintain unity within the section and to bring back the base key, the second sentence (bars 23-31) continues the previous discourse, resuming the two motives that make up the square sentence in an identical form.

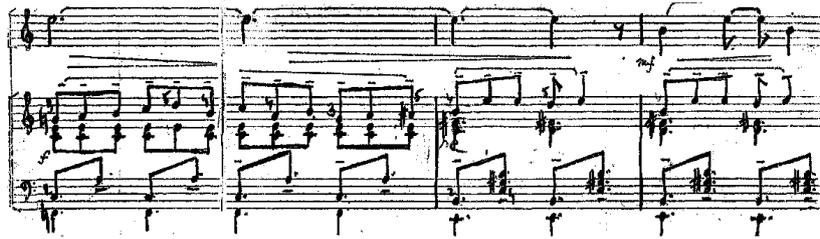
The **middle section** (bars 32-47) preserves the composition of two sentences but outlines a much more lyrical and airy writing for the solo part. The melodic line of the accompaniment presents a counter-melody based on steps, while the clarinet completes the sonority with a pedal on *E*, dynamized in a semi-cadenza by a syncopated formula with ascending minor third skips (bar 35) and in the cadenza by an ascending and descending fourth leap (bar 39).

The clarinet player should adopt a warm, dreamy sonority, due to the dynamics that brings along a progression of nuances from *pianissimo* to *mezzoforte*, returning in the same way to the initial intensity. In some cases, interpreters tend to speed up the triplet in two beats (bars 35, 39, 44 and 45). One way to solve this deficiency is to approach the study of decomposed values, and, if possible, with the metronome, to be sure.

Contrary to the solo part, the piano reverses the dynamic fluctuations from *forte* to *mezzoforte*, building the balance between the two instruments. *Tenuto* accents accompany the harmonic motion of the accompaniment. The tonal level does not provide a clear functional structure but prefigures the *A minor* scale with mobile 6th and 7th steps.

Example 13 Sabin Păutza - *Two Preludes*, mvt. II *Allegro Giocos*, p. 7, bars 32-39

The image shows a musical score for five staves, numbered 1 through 5. The first staff is the clarinet part, starting with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat. The second and third staves are the piano accompaniment, with the second staff in treble clef and the third in bass clef. The fourth and fifth staves continue the piano accompaniment. The music is in 3/4 time and consists of rhythmic patterns and melodic lines.



Like the first sentence, the second sentence (bars 40-47) presents a sequentially varied rhythmic-melodic material that transposes in multiple forms the model proposed at the beginning, marking the trajectory *E \flat major* (bars 40-41) – *D minor* (bars 42-43) – *C \sharp major* (bars 44-45) – *C major* (bars 46-47) by highlighting the tonics in the bass, as the whole motion of the sound message goes in a downward direction. Following the descending direction of the discourse, the dynamics withdraws at the end of the sentence to announce the ending of the middle section; the melodic line of the clarinet is suspended by a short bridge of the accompaniment, which fluctuates from a melodic point of view (bars 48-51).

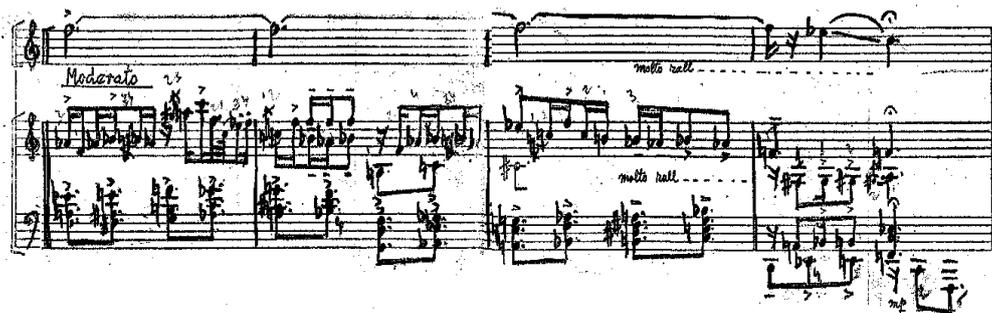
Example 14 Sabin Păutza - *Two Preludes*, mvt. II *Allegro Giocoso*, p. 8, bars 40-47



The reprise of **section A** (bars 52-73) keeps the same organization of phrase **a** (bars 52-64), unified by the variation **av** (bars 65-73), with differentiations only at the level of the cadenza. The second sentence is extended inwards, announcing, by its conclusive nature, the end of the piece.

The work ends with an instrumental **coda**, the writing being entirely jazz-based (bars 74-77), in *Moderato* tempo.

Example 15 Sabin Păutza - *Two Preludes*, mvt. II *Allegro Giocoso*, p. 11, bars 72-77



A more difficult moment from a technical point of view is the *glissando* at the end of the work, which has an explosive melodic character and outlines the accumulation of tension. The interpreter must play this *glissando* from the mid-pitched register to the superacute, over an interval of 6 bars, which is quite demanding for any clarinetist. To obtain an optimal solution, this moment should be studied separately, starting with *glissando* on small intervals, until the performance reaches the form imagined by the composer.

4. Conclusions

The evolution of Romanian music starts from a wellspring of joy and typical Romanian optimism – the folk music. The integration of the Romanian school of composition in modern is a reality, occurring despite many barriers related to the expression of spirituality identity. This has been a free will of composers to get integrated into the European cultural orientation. European models of the time contaminated the elites of Romanian music and inspired their stylistic orientation and language. It is a decisive moment, which will completely change the appearance and the artistic climate of Iasi, both in terms of the theoretical field and, especially, the activity of musical creation which, step by step, manage to introduce an innovative breath through their works. Sabin Pautza's creation demonstrates a unique support for analysis, musical connections that represent interpretive and musicological models for those interested in interpretive and musicological-educational quality.

References

- Duțică, Gheorghe; Vasiliu Laura. 1999. *Structura, functionalitate, formă*. Iași: Editura Artes.
- Herman, Vasile. 1967. *Aspecte Modale în Creația Românească Contemporană*. București: Ed. Muzicală.
- Ioniță, Vasile C. 1997. *Sabin Păutza, eseu monografic*. Reșița: Editura Timpul.
- Leahu, Anca-Mihaela. 2012. *Teză de doctorat: Genul simfonic în creația compozitorilor ieșeni contemporani*. Iași.
- Sandu-Dediu, Valentina. 2002. *Muzica Românească între 1944-2000*. București: Editura Muzicală.