

THE MUSICAL LEGACY OF CLUJ AND THE BAROQUE IDIOM CASE STUDY: «FANTASIA E FUGA SULLE PEDALE PER ORGANO» BY DAN VOICULESCU

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ABSTRACT

Axiologically acknowledged as a blend of tradition and modernity, the Cluj school of composition has designed an original stylistic matrix that proves its resonance with Baroque music thinking. Sigismund Toduță and later his disciples, Hans Peter Türk and Dan Voiculescu, integrated their works within the confines of a musical language that recovers a historical musical era through the aesthetic filter of the present. Through logical derivations, artistic values of the past take on new semantic weight, while a neo-Baroque atmosphere penetrates the music of the late 20th century Cluj. *Fantasia e Fuga sulle pedale per organo* by Dan Voiculescu represents an ideal case of stylistic fusion that requires a simultaneous reading through the grid of the Baroque and of modernity. The analysis reveals intertextual connections with the works of Bach or Froberger, as well as references to the art of Hindemith. The stylistic bivalence of the entire piece is also reflected in the type of grammar used in modelling this novel opus; while the author applies a traditional grammar to shape the form, by designing the discourse according to an early Baroque formula, he resorts to a generative grammar for the elaboration of the content. The two levels of the text overlap and demonstrate Dan Voiculescu's commitment to the Baroque paradigm, advancing the thesis of a reconfiguration of the diachronic and synchronic perspective in the musical creation.



Keywords: Cluj composers, Baroque, Modern, Dan Voiculescu, Bach, Froberger, Hindemith, stylus fantasticus

The latent or explicit dialogue between the compositional art of Cluj and Baroque music is not the result of a conjunctural integration in a fashion, i.e. that of adhering to a “neo-“trend. Nor is it an eclectic or nostalgic restoration of the values of the past. The affinity between the two universes of musical creation must be understood at a deeper level, as a gesture of unification of the historical and stylistic perspectives, meant for recovering some less explicit evolutionary steps in the Transylvanian musical tradition. By relating to the Baroque, the Cluj composition school was able to experiment with new forms of artistic fusion, in search of a cultural identity. Far from proposing an absolute innovation, the Cluj composers of the latter half of the 20th century, while seeking a firm anchor in the past, resorted to a resemantization of the Baroque musical values, by reconfiguring them and giving them a modern and personal dimension, in the attempt to create a compensatory musical poetics. The result was the opening of an interlinguistic space relying on the compatibility between the discipline of structuralist thinking and a local musical vocabulary,

thereby placing the Cluj school of composition on a balance point between Baroque and Modernism.

From the theoretical approaches and studies on this period (and here we refer primarily to Sigismund Toduță's three volumes of high scientific calibre – *Formele muzicale ale Barocului în operele lui J.S. Bach* [The Baroque Musical Forms in the Works of J.S. Bach])¹, to compositions evoking the Baroque, the interest in this historical period has been remarkably constant.

The projection of the Baroque aesthetics onto the music of Cluj has developed around a few main lines of research, without claiming completeness:

The **first** line focuses on approaching specific genres and forms, as well as on establishing Baroque filiations through titles like: *Passacaglia* for piano, *Passacaglia* from the *Miorița* Oratorio, *Prelude*, *Chorale* and *Toccată* for Piano or *7 Choral-Preludes* for organ by Sigismund Toduță, which all deserve their place in this category. They are followed by Hans Peter Türk's *Partita in stile antico*, in which the author performs an anamnestic reconstruction of a Baroque imaginary heritage of Transylvania, or by his more recent piece *The Passions after Matthew*, an oratorio inspired from Bach's two *Passions*, in which the composer resorts intensively to Baroque traditions, from the outline of the architectural structure to the use of polyphony and its rhetorical symbols. The list can continue with the *Toccatas* for piano by Dan Voiculescu, the *Trio-Sonata* by Adrian Pop, written for the *Collegium Musicum Academicum* ensemble of Cluj and formally evoking the Baroque in terms of polyphonic writing and timbre, or with the *Passacaglia* for piano by Iulia Cibișescu Duran, a representative of the younger generation of composers, who creatively speculates reminiscences of the Baroque polyphony in the context of an atonal language and of a musical polymorphism.

A **second** line of research of the intersection between Baroque and modernism in the artistic landscape of Cluj is the exploitation, from a plurivalent perspective, of the compositional rhetoric and techniques of the time. Some famous examples illustrating this line of research are the fugue moments in the Oratorio *Miorița* or in Sigismund Toduță's *Concerto No. 2 for Strings*, the ample Baroque choral segment in the *Symphony No. 5* by the same composer, the cycle of piano pieces entitled *Canonica* by Dan Voiculescu or the *Transylvanian Suite* by Adrian Borza, the last of which relies on structural fragmentation within the background of a dominantly polyphonic discourse, using contrapuntal techniques like imitation and *ostinato*.

Equally generous is the **third line** of research, which enables the evocation of the Baroque idiomatic code through colour, or, more exactly, through timbre and ornaments. Highly exigent in

¹ Toduță, Sigismund, *Formele muzicale ale Barocului în operele lui J.S. Bach*, Ed. Muzicală, Bucharest, 1969 (vol.I), 1973 (vol.II), 1978 (vol.III, in cooperation with Vasile Herman).

terms of style, Dora Cojocaru's works entitled *Trills* for String Trio, *Venedig* or *Im Garten* are ideal examples in this respect, the last two being written for solo voices and instruments of the Baroque era.

Unexpectedly dense is the **fourth category** of our proposed classification, namely that of homage-works, emerging from the musical creation of certain Baroque authors and providing the most fertile grounds for original approaches. They also herald the prospect of epistemic mutation, the transcendence towards innovative horizons, in which composers demonstrate absolute freedom in manoeuvring the alternation between past and present. Starting from Sigismund Toduță's *B.A.C.H. Sinfonia per organo solo*, a rich hermeneutics of the compositional imaginary emerged, including Cornel Țăranu's *Baroccoco* (an ingenious shift from Baroque to jazz elements), Ede Terényi's works (*Haendeliana*, *Hommage à Scarlatti*, *Lullyana*, *Hommage à Telemann*, *Baroque Rhapsody* (Concerto for Cello and Orchestra, *Hommage à Bach*), *Mass for Organ – B.A.C.H.*, (*Prelude*, *Toccatà*, *Fantasia and Fugue*) and the *Concerto for Oboe and Strings* signed by Dora Cojocaru, who quotes Bach's *Double Concerto in D minor*, BWV 1060.

Another tendency typical of the Baroque style and opening secondary lines of research on the theme at hand is the tendency toward self-quotation, which occurs both in Sigismund Toduță's works (in some of his folk arrangements for choir, rearranged in instrumental versions as pieces for piano or organ), and in Cornel Țăranu's compositions, even in *Baroccoco*, in which segments from his *Don Giovanni's Secret* breach the surface of the musical discourse.

A perfect example of doubling of the stylistic perspective through the fusion of Baroque and modern elements is Dan Voiculescu's *Fantasia e Fuga sulle pedale per organo*¹.

Bearing the note "July 2009" at the end of the manuscript, the piece includes the most striking musical features of composer Dan Voiculescu's style and holds a special significance; viewed from the recurrent temporal perspective, it becomes the metaphor for a seal of his entire compositional work, a concentrate of the art of an author constantly standing at the conceptual interface between Baroque polyphony and modern harmony. Firmly rooted in the contrapuntal tradition, the author managed to fully express his individuality within the parameters of a tradition that he was following both as a composer and as a teacher.

A student in Maestro Sigismund Toduță's composition class and therefore deeply influenced by his orientation, Dan Voiculescu established his creative mechanism from the beginning, based on a geometrical pattern of the musical thinking. His closeness to the Baroque is also manifest in the field of his theoretical approaches, including the elaboration, in the '70s and '80s, of the courses on the *Baroque Polyphony in the Works of J.S. Bach* (Volumes I, II) and *The Fugue in J.S. Bach's*

¹ The piece was completed by the author, left in manuscript form and obtained courtesy of Cluj composer Erich Türk.

*Works*¹. These valuable bibliographic landmarks drew the author even deeper into the realm of a discipline of the creative process, where the rule is treated as a constituent ingredient of creativity. His Ph.D., defended in Cluj in 1983 under the guidance of the same Maestro - Sigismund Toduță, broadened Dan Voiculescu's conceptual orientation. By addressing an issue that united, in a harmonious and highly scientific synthesis, his didactic and compositional concerns, the theme *Aspects of the 20th Century Polyphony*² served him as an ideal means of investigation of modernity through the filter of contrapuntal techniques.

All these theoretical and analytical approaches triggered deterministic reverberations throughout the decades, influencing the author's work, acknowledged as strongly influenced by a musical language in which polyphony was a key element of the musical texture.

His choral works, a few orchestral titles and especially his piano pieces become convincing arguments supporting the idea of the author's propensity for the stratified polyphonic discourse. We also include, selectively, a few pieces from the three volumes of the cycle *Carte fără sfârșit* [Book without End]³, we note the imitative techniques used in many choirs or in the *Suite from Codex Caioni* for string orchestra and, as a pinnacle of compositional craftsmanship, we highlight the entire cycle of solo piano pieces entitled *Canonica*⁴. Printed in 2005, this collection marks a culmination of the applied contrapuntal art, for the author has exhausted a significant number of possibilities of working with the musical substance, by prospecting, with mathematical rigor, the hybrid zones of interaction between the canon technique and certain elements of double counterpoint, continuous bass, *stretto* etc. In this cycle, Dan Voiculescu included 24 pieces, whose titles indicate the working method chosen and which surprise by the indefatigable search for ingenious combinations: *Canon cu recurențe mari și mici* [Canon with large and small recurrences], *Canon stretto la sextă (cu o voce adăugată)* [Stretto canon at the sixth (with an added voice)], *Canon cu axă de simetrie – în contrapunct dublu recurent* [Canon with a symmetry axis – in recurrent double counterpoint], *Canon la cvintă micșorată, pe bas continuu* [Canon at the diminished fifth, on *ostinato* bass], *Canon liber – în ecou la diferite intervale* [Free canon – in echo at different intervals], *Canon dublu – în oglindă* [Double inverted canon], *Canon cu variațiuni*

¹ Voiculescu, Dan, *Fuga în creația lui J.S. Bach*, the Publishing House of the Gh. Dima Conservatory, Cluj, 1986 and Ed. Muzicală, Bucharest, 2000.

² The paper was published by the author under the title *Polifonia secolului XX*, Ed. Muzicală, Bucharest, 2005.

³ Voiculescu, Dan, *Carte fără sfârșit*, 1st Volume: *Dintr-o carte veche, Căprița* (canon), *Citare*. 2nd Volume: *Mică invențiune, Canon, Piesă atonală, Planuri inversate, Canon neîmplinit*. 3rd Volume: *Oglinzi*.

⁴ Voiculescu, Dan, *Canonica for piano solo*, Ed. Arpeggione, Cluj, 2005. The volume is dedicated entirely to the late pianist Gerda Türk, teacher at the "Sigismund Toduță" Music School of Cluj-Napoca. The volume, along with the *Suite from Codex Caioni* for string orchestra, has recently been entered into the stock of the Music Faculty Library at Oxford, U.K.

[Canon with variations], *Canon polimetric, la decimă* [Polymetric canon at the tenth], to name just a few.

The intersection between Baroque and modernism is also easily detectable in the *Toccatas* for piano, written beginning with 1989, some of which were premiered by the author himself at the "Cluj Musical Autumn" Festival (the 1989 and 1993 editions). From this angle of synthesis of apparently divergent data, his works require a double contextualization, to help the analyst in the correct reading of the musical text and of the author's complex personality.

Following the same lines of considerations while also indicating the end of a road is the *Fantasia e Fuga sulle pedale per organo*, the only work composed by Dan Voiculescu for this instrument. Beyond shaping the surfaces using the polyphonic interweaving, it is especially the unity of the generative melodic material that draws attention; it unifies in substance the two contrasting pieces of the diptych by an organic cross-melodic interaction.

The expressive mark of the *Fantasia* is revealed by the indication attached by Dan Voiculescu at the beginning of the piece: *recitando, poco rubato*. The improvisational character receives the profile of a *doina*-like song (*the doina being a type of folk tune specific to Romanian folklore, usually expressing feelings of love, grief, and/or yearning – translator's note*), due both to the absence of bar lines and to some melodic patterns incorporating augmented seconds and semitones, thus shaping a chromatic modal scale:

Ex. 1



Author's manuscript

In the first piece of the diptych, we sense an echo that Dan Voiculescu seems to produce centuries later to Bach's *Prelude and Fugue in G minor for Organ, BWV 542*. The resemblance with the quoted work lies beyond pure coincidence: the Cluj composer was a connoisseur of Bach's art and had a deep knowledge of the works that Bach composed for this instrument.

J.S. Bach – *Prelude in G minor for Organ, BWV 542, bars 1-2*

Although in Dan Voiculescu's *Fantasia*, the minor seconds and the augmented seconds stand out upon a first hearing, the basic intervallic constituents are, in reality, the perfect fourth (expressed in semitones by the figure 5) and the augmented fourth (6):

Dan Voiculescu – *Fantasia*

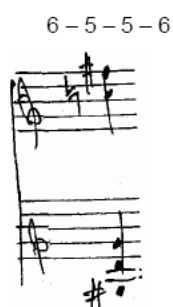
Recitativo, poco rubato

5 5 6

By the **generative rules** applied by the author to these cells (addition, subtraction, multiplication or division), interval derivations will be obtained such as the major seventh, expressed in semitones by the figure 11 ($11 = 5 + 6$), the minor seventh - 10 ($10 = 5 + 5$ or 5×2), the minor second - 1 ($1 = 6 - 5$) and the augmented second or the minor third - 3 ($3 = 6 : 2$).

The morphological component becomes generative substance of the discourse and engages both the horizontal dimension and the vertical perspective in the creative process. By the superimposition of the interval cells chosen by the author, dissonant chordal conglomerates result, displaying the contour of a major seventh or minor seventh, some of them recalling, in a new sound context, Bartók's major-minor chord:

Chord with symmetrical structure



Major-minor chord



This process of linear and vertical integration of the morphological microelements leads to new symmetries. The melodic symmetries are built around an axis, represented itself by the key intervals of the piece (augmented fourths, perfect fourths, minor thirds, minor seconds):

Ex. 5

Melodic symmetries



5-1-5



3-1-1-3; 1-6-1



1-1-1-5-1-1-1

As generators of a textual coherence phenomenon, the basic intervallic cells do not fall under the same semantic incidence; while the consonance (the perfect fourth) may be interpreted as an emblem of the Baroque, the dissonance (the augmented fourth) is a symbol of modernity.

The entire discursive surface of the piece, pointing equally towards Baroque and contemporaneity, requires the use of a double grid of interpretation, meant to highlight the presence of intertextual relations. Such a moment of synthesis between the Baroque and the modern idiom is the brief choral insertion, which temporarily interrupts the improvisational flow of the *Fantasia*. It promotes modern harmonies and engages in the discourse both the manual keyboard, and the pedal board of the organ.

Dan Voiculescu - *Fantasia*: choral fragment

solemne

The writing technique of this first section of the diptych evokes, through its aspect of noted improvisation, pieces for organ dating from the 17th and 18th centuries, assimilated to the *stylus fantasticus* category¹. In Dan Voiculescu's work, it is expressed in a modal, chromatically enriched language, while the specificity of this style lies in abrupt changes in harmony and writing technique (*abruptio* and *antitheton*), in structural freedom and juxtaposition of figurations, as encountered in certain Baroque authors, particularly in the works of Johann Jakob Froberger. The moments of *abruptio* and *antitheton* of the *Fantasia* are comparable to a genuine *prélude non mesuré*, most of them being achieved in small superficies, while the demarcations are emphasized by Dan Voiculescu by switching from figurative to harmonic writing and vice versa:

Dan Voiculescu - *Fantasia*: *stylus fantasticus*

¹ Term first used by Athanasius Kircher in *Musurgia universalis, sive Ars magna consoni et dissoni* (1650).

In *Fuga sulle pedale*, the cues furnished by the text enable the analyst to discover a hybrid between the two-voice canon and the pedal fugue, in a harmonic context allowing the establishment of certain connections with the language of Paul Hindemith's fugues from *Ludus tonalis*, or with the airy writing style of the same composer's *Three Organ Sonatas*.

The morphological convergence between the *Fantasia* and the *Fugue* is proven by the subject of the latter, in the shaping of which the author associates the same intervallic components as textual articulation values: perfect fourth, augmented fourth and their derivatives: minor second, minor third and major seventh:

Ex. 8

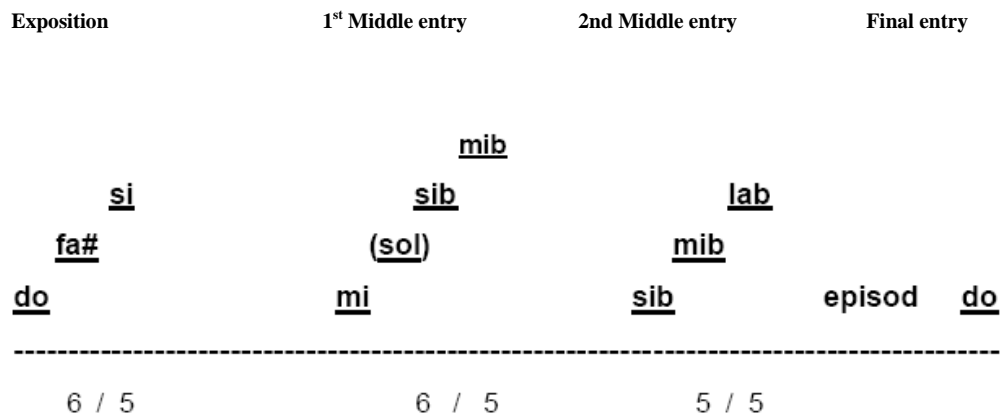
Dan Voiculescu – *Fuga sulle pedale*, bars 1-4

Fuga sulle pedale
Allegro giusto e risoluto

5 ; 6 6 ; 11 ; 3 ; 1

At the same time, the extension of strict imitations surprises by the subtlety of construction at macrostructural level.

The strategy of the theme entries in the *Fuga sulle pedale* also confirms the intervallic option occurring at microstructural level, in the melody and harmony, throughout the entire piece. Thus, we discover the same association of augmented fourth – perfect fourth or perfect fourth - perfect fourth as pillars of the macrostructure. The exposition of the *Fugue* places the thematic entries on the notes C - F# - B. Analysing the first middle entry, on E - (G) - Bb - Eb, and the fragment before the final entry, which re-establishes the initial C, one also finds the model of adding on perfect fourths, as they result from the subject entries on Bb - Eb - Ab:

Structure of the *Fuga sulle pedale*

By repeating in the coda the melodic-harmonic material of the beginning of the *Fantasia*, the author enables the interpretation of the diptych as a modern palindrome:

Dan Voiculescu – *Fuga sulle pedale*: coda

At the same time, however, this method reminds of Buxtehude's and Bach's youth preludes promoting an early Baroque model of sealing the musical form, in which the prelude was not separated from the fugue, while the initial ideas were reiterated at the end of the work. Consequently, the coherence of the work is not ensured only by the morphological constraints (the intervallic cells chosen), but also by the syntactic manoeuvres. The interaction between the two idioms - Baroque and modern – requires a simultaneous reading; the musical flow of this late work signed by Dan Voiculescu is not univocal, while the two levels of the text overlap in a harmonious fusion. The stylistic bivalence of the entire piece is also reflected in the type of grammar used in modelling this novel opus: while the author applies a traditional grammar to shape the form, by designing the discourse according to an early Baroque formula, he resorts to a generative grammar for the elaboration of the content. With this late masterpiece, characterized by refinement, elegance

and minuteness of construction and also reflecting the brilliance of his organ writing style, Dan Voiculescu reactivates old patterns through a modern harmonic language. The bivalence of his discourse converges to a semantic plenitude that pleads for the complex fusion of discursive levels as a viable solution in contemporary music.

The affinity of the Cluj school of composition with the Baroque idiom seems to answer, in the form of sounds, the doubt raised by Adrian Marino, as to whether in art there also exists a synchronic Baroque, or only a diachronic one¹? He also eventually identifies "an *eternal* Baroque style, with regular and differentiated historic appearances, defined in terms of a universal aesthetic concept and phenomenon"². In the musical creation of Cluj, it has not established itself as a groundless and experimental stylistic phrase, but has emerged, through the multitude of examples encountered, as an original and assumed commitment to the Baroque paradigm, providing an inexhaustible aesthetic spectrum for analysis.

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¹ Marino, Adrian, *Dicționar de idei literare*, vol.I (A-G), Bucharest, Ed. Eminescu, 1973, p.236.

² Idem, p.233.

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