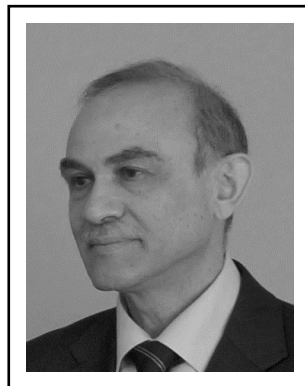


# CORNEL ȚĂRANU. PARADIGMS OF CREATION\*

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## ABSTRACT

In this article, we have tried to identify some of composer and musicologist Cornel Țăranu's perceptions of the world and its arrangement, through the prism of the core values of his work and of their hierarchy. The musical phenomena such as the types of scales, the type of musical material and the related working principles, the systems of pitches and of textural organization, the individual technological and compositional methods, the styles, genres, forms, timbral and instrumental components – all these are benchmarks or signs that shape the paradigm of the musical work. By piecing the fragments together, we have obtained a captivating mosaic that indicates the cultural/culturological paradigm of Maestro Cornel Țăranu's oeuvre.

**Keywords:** Cornel Țăranu, cultural values, musical phenomenon, structural archetypes, model, musical style, polystylistics, developmental methods, time, space

Cornel Țăranu's oeuvre, worthy of the interest of public, critics and experts alike, embodies the multicoloured and multidimensional world of sound of our time. However, there are always certain risks in undertaking the analysis of the phenomena of contemporary music in an article, especially in relation to a colleague. In our case, we are willing to take them. Cornel Țăranu's oeuvre, covering a prolific period of musical creation between 1960 and 2020, deserves to be researched not only with professional skill, but also with a great deal of tact and respect. Obviously, it is impossible to cover Cornel Țăranu's entire work at a glance, in a single article. Nevertheless, we will make an attempt to sketch a series of aspects identified by us in connection with the composer's creative activity, in

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\* Translated from Romanian by Marcella Magda

order to place him in the context of contemporary music, while highlighting and reconfirming the contemporaneity of his work. The authenticity of composer Cornel Țăranu's personality determines the use of different methods of research of his music. In this article, we will try to look at Cornel Țăranu's oeuvre in terms of a single "macro-text" that combines the composer's compositional style with other manifestations that are closely related to each other, including research and performance, without claiming, however, to be exhaustive. We believe that the most appropriate and legitimate way to approach such a varied material would be the *non finito* principle, which offers possibilities for further additions and consideration.

### **"About time" and space**

Cornel Țăranu's professional career has unfolded under the influence of complex and ambiguous processes that took place in the art of the second half of the twentieth century, going through several successive and interconnected stages: structuralism, new academism, new simplicity, new complexity. While looking closely at the Maestro's oeuvre, we are convinced once again that, in a certain sense, the twentieth century encompasses several epochs, which reveal themselves both successively and simultaneously. The cultural synchrony and diachrony shape only conditionally the boundaries of the space and time of contemporary music, incorporating both the deeply relevant material of the present and the rich spiritual heritage of the past eras. Thus, it could be stated that the historical specificity of modern music is not at all inferior to the geographical one, and that the universe of present-day music unfolds not only in the "forward" direction, but in all directions at the same time. (The problem of the evolution of the spatial-temporal conceptions in art represents a significant category in the research work conducted by Russian musicologists N. Zubareva and Iu. Prokoshin<sup>1</sup>. While trying to identify the fundamental concepts underlying Cornel Țăranu's oeuvre, we have noticed this temporal omnidirectionality of his creative interests, which has become a significant trait of his musical output. It can be argued that the vectors of Cornel Țăranu's oeuvre are directed backwards and forwards at the same time, towards the past, present and future – as is also illustrated by the themes and titles of his works, often related to memories, reflections, recollections of past events. Below are a few examples. **Symphonic works:** *Rimembranza / Remembrance; Memorial Symphony*. **Chamber works:** *Remembering Bartók I, II, III; Pour Georges*.

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<sup>1</sup> Наталья Зубарева, *Об эволюции пространственно-временных представлений в художественной картине мира*, in Н.Б.Зубарева „Художественное творчество: Вопросы комплексного изучения”, Ленинград/Leningrad, 1983, p. 8.

**Choral works** : *Tombeau de Verlaine* (text by Stéphane Mallarmé); *Testament* (old Romanian sources); *Dedications* (text by Nichita Stănescu); *Sinfonia da Requiem*; *Cortège* (cantata in memoriam Avram Iancu); *Despre Timp* [About Time] (text by Matei Călinescu); *Două madrigale* [Two Madrigals] (text by Attila József, translation by Nina Cassian); *Doină* [Doina] (text by Camil Baltazar); *Stejarul lui Horea* [The Sessile Oak of Horea] (text by Leonida Neamțu); *Două madrigale* [Two Madrigals] (text by Lucian Blaga); *Două madrigale* [Two Madrigals] (text by Ion Vinea); *Două madrigale* [Two Madrigals] (text by Endre Ady, translation by Eugen Jebeleanu); *Supplex I* (18<sup>th</sup>-century Latin source), *Supplex II*; *Două sonete de Eminescu* [Two Sonnets by Eminescu]; *Sonnet* (text by Mihai Eminescu). **Vocal works**: *Epitaph* (text by Lucian Blaga); *Trei elegii* [Three Elegies] (text by George Bacovia); *Revenire* [Return] (text by Lucian Blaga), 1967; *Ébauche* (text by Camil Petrescu); *Patul lui Procust* [The Bed of Proustes] (text by Camil Petrescu, translation by the composer); *Oda în metru antic* [Ode in Ancient Meter] (text by Mihai Eminescu); *Rime di Michelangelo* (text by Michelangelo Buonarroti); *Orpheus* (text by Cezar Baltag); *Hommage à Paul Celan* (text by Paul Celan); *Memento* (text by Paul Celan); *Laudatio per Clusium* (old Latin source); *Sonete de Shakespeare* [Shakespeare Sonnets]; *Lăutarul* [The Fiddler] (text by Camil Petrescu).

Despite the subjectivity of feelings, in Cornel Țăranu's works, time does not have a psychological, historical, ontological, eschatological or other kind of linear character or significance. Time to him is conceptual, relative and reversible, stating the possibility of presence of the past at any moment of the present. In Cornel Țăranu's works, time is not a social phenomenon, but a sociocultural one. From this perspective, all the dedications, recollections and elegies seem to say: man continues to live in the genius achievements of his spirit. Or, is it not this that the Maestro communicates to us through his *Rimembranza*, *Memorial Symphony*, *Remembering Bartók*, *Pour Georges*, *Tombeau de Verlaine*, *Testament*, *Dedication*, *Sinfonia da Requiem*, *Cortège*, *Epitaph*, *Rime di Michelangelo*, *Orpheus*, *Hommage à Paul Celan*, *Memento*, *Shakespeare Sonnets*? Maestro Țăranu's oeuvre reminds us that the masterpieces of the past are still alive today. Through the works of the old masters we transcend into the time of their creators. In principle, the attitude towards time in this case reflects the general philosophical attitude towards life and death: a singular death is only an episode in the eternal cycle of life. Human genius is immortal. It seems that it is precisely about this kind of immortality, about this kind of eternity that Cornel Țăranu's aforementioned works speak. In other words, it is this kind of sense of time that we distinguish in his compositions.

Before moving on to the description of certain purely musical parameters, such as the principles of compositional structure, the types of forms, the techniques and methods of material development, harmony, texture and the systems of pitches, we will briefly refer to the perception of space in Cornel Țăranu's works,

because this component – the spatial model – is directly linked to the concept of time in his works. If we ask ourselves – what is the spatial model used in most of the works of K. Stockhausen, I. Xenakis, or in some of the works of P. Boulez, J. Cage etc., then the obvious answer could be this: an abstract, mathematical space. Many composers of the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> decades of the last century perceived and embodied in their compositions the micro- and macro- universes as a multidimensional physical space. On the other hand, composers promoting the monologic narrative, such as A. Schnittke (in his instrumental concerts), or Dm. Shostakovich (in symphonies), frequently chose the model of the “psychological” space, that is, of the real space of life, to embody the inner world of the individual. There are also composers who perceive the universal space as a sacred, ritualic space, or as a global space of the universe, as a cosmos (G. Scelsi, T. Takemitsu (*Corona, Orion*), K. Penderecki (*Kosmogonia* etc.). In some of G. Scelsi’s works, for example, space is perceived as sacred, ritualic (*Canti del Capricorno*), in others (*Quattro pezzi*), as a global space of the universe, in general, and of the sound universe, in particular, while there are also works in which both models of space are combined (*Uaxactum, Hurqualia, Pfhath*).

But to return to Cornel Țăranu’s oeuvre, one can see that his works embody a multidimensional space of world history and culture. Moreover, as we mentioned earlier, this space is timeless. We have already noticed that the past is in the present and, conversely, in the temporal concept of Cornel Țăranu’s oeuvre, the past and the present are perceived simultaneously. It is in the same synchronous manner that are perceived categories of spatiality such as “contemporaneity” and “history”, or “west” and “east”. This simultaneity of the present and the historic – this *coincidentia oppositorum* – becomes evident when comparing, on the one hand, works such as *Responsorial, Antiphona, Saturnalii, Bachiana, Baroccoco, Madrigals, Laudatio*, and, on the other hand – *Oxymoron, Jeux de palindrome, Diferencias, Hetero(sym)phony, Triads, Sax-Sympho*, the sonatas for various instruments, the concert works, the piano pieces, *Traiectorii* [Trajectories], *Mozaicuri* [Mosaics], *Ghirlande* [Garlands]. Another spatial dichotomy – “west/east” – is manifest in Maestro Țăranu’s work in the state of *coincidentia oppositorum*, i.e. in simultaneity. To demonstrate that, we could compare compositions which apparently should stand at opposite stylistic and technological poles, such as, on the one hand, *Saramandji, Lăutarul* [The Fiddler], *Cântecele nomade* [Nomadic Songs], *Doină, Balada transilvăneană* [Transylvanian Ballad], *Modra Rijeka, Yang and Yin*, and, on the other hand – *Rime di Michelangelo, Madrigals, Shakespeare Sonnets, Baroccoco, Siciliana-Blues*.

## About the system of pitches and the “unordered set”

Much has been written about the system of pitches used by Cornel Țăranu in his works. The researchers of the composer's oeuvre characterize it as post-serial, modal-chromatic<sup>1</sup>. Indeed, the composer first selects a certain set of pitches, often representing a mode consisting of four or five notes, then changes it (by alteration), thus obtaining one or more tones of the chromatic spectrum that were not previously used and, as a result of the subsequent changes of the mode and of the complementation of pitches, the full set of all twelve tones of the chromatic scale is completed. In principle, this method differs from the working method using series (whether modal or serial), such as the modes of limited transposition used by O. Messiaen, in that Cornel Țăranu operates changes in the initial modes, gradually completing them with new sounds, including those that do not belong to the structure of the mode, until the chromatic total is reached. Thus, we can speak of an unordered set, as compared to the ordered set of serial music, according to set theory<sup>2</sup>. Or, this method is defined as an unordered set also because there is no *a priori* initial order – i.e. an algorithm for the organization of the sounds of the chromatic field, as in serial music. We will offer two typical examples of organization of the musical material in Cornel Țăranu's works.

In the initial rhythmic-intonational structures (mm. 1-48) in the orchestral piece *Yang & Yin*, the mode used is *D, E-flat, F-sharp, G-sharp, A*. The mode used in the rhythmic-intonational structures of the *Moderato* section (mm. 49-52), consists of four notes: *D, F-sharp, G, A*. Or, in this mode, unlike in the first one, the *G* also appears. In the section between measures 52-56, the set of pitches used is *D, E-flat, F, F-sharp, G-sharp*. The note *F* appears for the first time. In the next fragment – mm. 57-63, the rhythmic-intonational structures consist of the mode *D, E-flat, E, F-sharp, G, A, B*. We can conclude that the notes used in the section between the beginning of the piece and the caesura in m. 63 are *D, E-flat, E, F, F-sharp, G, G-sharp, A, B*. This set is used for the rhythmic-intonational structures that unfold up to m. 88. The notes missing from the given set to complete the chromatic scale are *B-flat, C, C-sharp*. The note *C* appears in oboes, bassoons, violins I and II, in violas and cellos in m. 88. The appearance of this note is emphasized by unisons and figurations that turn back to *C*. *C-sharp* occurs for the first time in m. 91, in the flutes, oboes, and violins I. The new note is strongly heard, as it is the highest pitch

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<sup>1</sup> Mirela Mercean-Țărc, *Cornel Țăranu – The Symphonics of the New Millenium. Part I – Programmatic orchestral works*, în „Artes. Journal of Musicology”, 21, 107-129

<sup>2</sup> Allen Forte, *The Structure of Atonal Music* [Structura muzicii atonale], New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 1973. Milton Babbitt, *Set Structure as Compositional Determinant*, în „Journal of Music Theory”, nr.5/1, 1961, p. 72-94. Milton Babbitt, *The Function of Set Structure in the Twelve-Tone System*, PhD. Dissertation, Princeton, Princeton University, 1992.

in the sound space, which is reiterated in the following measure, after the rests. If we compare it with a play in which characters appear on stage according to the script, then the last “character” – *B-flat* – makes its appearance in m. 113, in the vibraphone, in m. 114 in the clarinet I, violas I and cellos I, while in m. 115 the *A-sharp* also appears in the violins II. The structure including the *B-flat* is repeated in a rather insistent rhythmic formula, up to m. 128.

The same method of complementation of notes is also used in *Cantus Gemellus* as sound material for the rhythmic-intonational structures, adding pitches that were not previously used, until the full chromatic scale (twelve sounds) is brought into play. For the rhythmic-intonational structures of the first 24 measures, the mode employed is *E-flat, F, F-sharp, G, A-flat, A, B-flat, B*. One could notice that four notes are missing in order to complete the full chromatic: *E, D, D-flat, C*. The note *E*, making its appearance in the double bass in m. 25, is then intoned by the bassoon II and clarinet II (m. 26), then by the piano (m. 27) and the solo trombone (m. 28). The note *E* is the foundation – the lower boundary of the cluster repeated in rhythmic formulas over the course of the section between mm. 26 and 76, and therefore it is strongly emphasized. *D* and *C-sharp* make their appearance simultaneously in fl. II, ob. I, II and marimba, as part of a chord that is maintained through repetitions in different rhythmic formulas in the section between mm. 47 and 70. The last of the twelve tones of the chromatic spectrum that makes its appearance is *C* (in vni I, II; vlc; ob.I), being strongly emphasized as it marks the beginning of a new section (m. 77). *C* is part of both the melodic rhythmic-intonational structures played by the violins and of the cluster repeated throughout the section between mm. 77 and 87. In fact, *C* can be heard for the first time in mm. 39-40, in the fl., ob., vni I, II, being, however, less emphasized than in its subsequent appearance.

It should be noted that the harmonic vertical of each section in Cornel Țăranu’s works consists strictly of the tones used in the horizontal melodic structures, as required by the serial technique. This results in homogeneity, in the coordination of all the constituent elements of the texture, as well as in bringing out the ethos of each mode.

It is the same strategy, based both on modal serial technique and on set theory, that Maestro Țăranu uses in other works as well, each time with great inventiveness and authenticity. It is noteworthy that this technique, which could be called the “disordered set technique”, is also used by other contemporary composers such as Gy. Kurtág (*Het dal*, op. 22 a.o.), G. Scelsi (*Ixor, Maknongan* a.o.), E. Varese (*Density 21.5* a.o.), W. Lutoslawski (*Quartet No. 2* a.o.).

## Technological processes, developmental methods, structural archetypes, models, styles

Cornel Țăranu employs a rich spectrum of material development techniques: permutations, rotations, insertions, transpositions, inversions, recurrences, micro-variations, complementation of notes or proliferations of initial structures. We will notice especially the inversions, the recurrences – those types of melodic, textural and rhythmic “mirrors” that abound in his works and which constitute technical peculiarities and structural archetypes at the same time. In this paper we will not dwell on the numerous “mirrors” used in *Jeux de palindrome*, *Mosaics*, *Trajectories*, *Ritornellos Symphony*, in the sonatas for woodwinds and piano, or in *Responsorial*, *Bachiana*, *The Fiddler*, *Miroirs* – these and others of the composer's works have been thoroughly analysed by the researchers of his oeuvre. We will only note that some of these means of expression and technical devices could be perceived as structural archetypes of a special significance in Maestro Țăranu's oeuvre: we are referring here to archetypes such as “symmetry”, “mirror”, “doublet”, “twin”. This assumption is suggested by the very titles of the works: *Miroirs*, *Cantus Gemellus*, *Ritornellos*, *Yang & Yin*, *Palindrome*. In like manner, other methods of organization of the sound material with which composer Cornel Țăranu operates enable us to shift to another level of generalization and to highlight another structural archetype – the “mosaic” or the “kaleidoscope”.

Structural archetypes have a direct implication in the compositional structure. The fundamental principles of the structure of the works based on an axiological or, more narrowly, culturological approach are closely related to notions such as *reconstruction of style*, *model*, *calque*, *variation/variant*, *montage with contrasting alternating units* or *with contrasting combinable units*. Some of the works in which Maestro Țăranu makes use of these types of compositional structures are *Madrigals*, *Bachiana*, *Siciliana Blues*, *Baroccoco*, *The Fiddler*, *Yang & Yin*, *Remembering Bartok*, *Nomadic Songs*, *Rime di Michelangelo*, *Responsorial*, *Antiphona*, *Ritornellos Symphony*.

It is obvious that these structural principles require specific technological devices for the development of the sound material. In the same order of ideas, we will also mention the technique of stylization employed by Cornel Țăranu, as well as his method of working after a certain model. This chapter should also include the Maestro's interest in the styles of other authors, from past eras. The composer often combines various stylistic layers with different degrees of contrast. Both types of the polystylistic technique – collage and symbiosis – are extensively used in his works. The variation on a certain style, the *quasi*-quotation, the allusion to the style, to the genre, the direct quotation – all these means of expression of the polystylistic technique are present in composer Cornel Țăranu's works. Just like the compositional structures, the methods of material organization and the types

of forms, the genres approached by Maestro Țăranu often represent an *opus post* (operas and other large-scale works should be included here). The composer provides a contemporary, personal view of the musical genres of the *Baroque, Classical and Romantic periods*. This attitude translates into the fine blend of genres that we discover in the composer's large-scale works.

In the context of the model-based compositional method, of polystylistic thinking, in general, and of the polystylistic technique, in particular, or of his avid interest in the styles and genres of world music, we should also highlight another important preoccupation of composer Cornel Țăranu, namely that of orchestrator of George Enescu's works: *Caprice* for violin and orchestra and the 1<sup>st</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> movements of *Symphony No. 5*. In conclusion, we could say that of all the existing compositional models, the stylistic model is that which defines composer Cornel Țăranu's entire work: not that of the mythological symbol (as in the ballets of I. Stravinsky's "Russian" period), nor that of the abstract symbolism (from A. Webern's works), nor the structural one (from some of the works of composers K. Stockhausen, L. Nono, Y. Xenakis) and nor the plastic one (discovered in the works of M. Ravel, G. Crumb, A. Schnittke).

### **The phenomenological prototype and value priorities**

The review of Maestro Țăranu's works occasioned by this article has confirmed once again the idea that his entire oeuvre is the result of the intersection of the present with the "eternal ideas" of the past. Many of his works (re)interpret or rethink the "old" art. The interpretation of the phenomena of the spiritual experience and culture determines the hermeneutic prototype of Cornel Țăranu's oeuvre. The work becomes a myth, a version, a directorial script (*Oreste - Oedipus*)<sup>1</sup>. The historical myths and legends are often just a pretext for personal reflections, and their interpretation offers a fertile ground for the "play with glass beads", just as the interpretation of the artistic phenomena from the previous eras constitutes the basis of the concept of "art about art" incorporated in the composer's oeuvre. The artistic and historical reflection, associated with the appeal to the world's spiritual heritage, represents a significant trait of Cornel Țăranu's creative work. From this perspective, the composer takes on the roles of historian, performer, director, mythologist and translator (in the broad sense of the word).

All those who have had the privilege to get acquainted with Cornel Țăranu's oeuvre have mentioned a special feeling of multiplicity of the world: of its heterogeneity, multidimensionality and pluralism. In Țăranu's works, man is

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<sup>1</sup> Ștefan ANGI, *Opera de cameră Oreste-Oedipe de Cornel Țăranu. Vectorialitatea muzicală a mitului*, in „Muzica”, 2/2002, april-june 2002.

presented as a creature of equal value in terms of ethnic, social and historical status (*Oreste - Oedipus, The Fiddler, Nomadic Songs* etc.), but also as a cultural subject, an educated individual, a creator (*Ébauche, The Bed of Procastes, Rime di Michelangelo, Orpheus, Hommage à Paul Celan, Memento, 3 Shakespeare Sonnets*)<sup>1</sup>.

## Conclusions

In light of the above, we could conclude that the cultural paradigm constitutes the foundation of Maestro Cornel Țăranu's oeuvre. The attentive attitude towards everything that is encompassed within the concept of "world heritage" or "history as cultural memory", as well as towards the system of eternal universal human values, can also be extrapolated to Cornel Țăranu's musicological activity. He is a prominent representative of "compositional musicology". "All my activities should be imagined, considered and evaluated from the composer's standpoint. ... If I were not a composer, none of my other activities would even exist, therefore composition is the key to my entire career", says Cornel Țăranu in an interview<sup>2</sup>. To Cornel Țăranu, the word is part of the matter he moulds and operates with – along with the sound and with composition itself. Through words he approximates values just as he does through his music.

Alongside the accomplishment of restoring Enescu's music, everything that Cornel Țăranu has written and said about his great predecessor's oeuvre is outstanding. To all those who have partaken in the numerous meetings with academician Cornel Țăranu at the Academy of Music, Theatre and Fine Arts in Chisinau (which has awarded him the title of Doctor Honoris Causa), or at the Union of Composers and Musicologists of Moldova, Enescu has become not only more familiar, but also more contemporary, more present. We have all heard and thoroughly comprehended the Maestro's competent, professional "word", championing the work of composers and artists of the present and of the past.

In this article, we have tried to identify some of composer and musicologist Cornel Țăranu's perceptions about the world and its arrangement, from the perspective of the inherent values of his work and of their hierarchy. This value system consists of many fragments. The musical phenomena such as the types of scales, the type of sound material used and the related working principles, the systems of pitches and of texture organization, the original technological and compositional methods, the styles, genres, forms, timbral-instrumental components – all these act as landmarks or signs, shaping the paradigm of the musical work. By piecing together the fragments, we obtain a captivating mosaic

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<sup>1</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>2</sup> Interview with composer Cornel Țăranu. Radio România Muzical. Published: Saturday, 20 June 2009, 12:35

that provides stepping stones for further and more thorough research into the codes, signs and paradigms of maestro Țăranu's oeuvre.

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