

Constantin Georgescu **- Finding a Destiny and a Sonorous Universe¹ -**

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Constantin Georgescu should represent for the contemporary generation of Romanian musicians from Iasi and Romanian musicians in general much more than a name found in some lexicons, articles or footnotes. The conditions of the period in which he lived and created may be the reason why he passed into obscurity, but that historical time has long past and we think that it is time to start an objective analysis of his personality and creation.

Thus we try to restore in the public consciousness a personality whose opuses have not been published or analyzed and, much less, interpreted. A success in this endeavour would mean the revival of a lost sound world and an act of justice for the activity and career of the composer Constantin Georgescu.

From the brief bibliographic sources we learn that we are dealing with a musician born in Bucharest in 1895. In the years of study he benefited from the guidance of prominent personalities: **D.G. Kiriac** (*music theory and solfeggio*) and **Alfonso Castaldi** (*harmony, counterpoint and composition*) at the **Conservatory of Bucharest**. He continued his studies at **Schola Cantorum in Paris** with **Vincent d’Indy** (*composition and orchestration*) and **Paul Le Flem** (*counterpoint*). His thorough knowledge of music has resulted in a vast creation that has received recognition at the time, receiving two awards: Second Honourable Mention (1921) and First Honourable Mention (1927). Unfortunately, due to the conditions of the period during which they were created, his compositions are now less known and it is necessary to make an effort to bring forth the personality, the artistic activity, and thus the creation of the composer.

His teaching activity was carried out at **George Enescu Academy of Music and Dramatic Art in Iasi** between 1924 and 1950, where he contributed to the training of young composers through the subjects he taught: *Composition, Harmony and Counterpoint*.

His results as a teacher were outstanding: „many of his students shone while still in school, receiving awards, competing even for the Enescu Prize: in 1931, Constantin Constantinescu won an Honourable Mention for Feature Entertainment for The Religious Concert and four choral pieces. Other awards were also received by Rodica Şuţu, in 1933, for the song Obsesie [Obsession],

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Mansi Barberis, in 1934, for Viziuni simfonice [Symphonic Visions] and Scherzino pentru pian [Scherzino for Piano], Emanoil Elenescu, in 1937, for Rapsodia română [Romanian Rhapsody] and the poem Jalea haiducului [The Outlaw's Yearning]" (G. Pascu, *100 Years Anniversary of the Foundation of Conservatory of Music George Enescu of Iasi*).

From 1950 until the end of his life, in 1960, he was a teacher, subject *Harmony*, at the Popular School of Arts in Iasi. In this case we need to make a few remarks related to the historical aspects in order to avoid the confusion that can be caused by the appearance of a "demotion" in an institution that offers training to a particular kind of musicians, more passionate rather than professional.

This last period of 10 years coincided with the decade of absence of higher artistic education in Iasi, an absence imposed by reasons hard to accept, including budget reasons. The real reasons were due to the lack of enthusiasm manifested in politicizing the courses, the reluctant attitude of the students towards the new guidelines: „The students have a low ideological and professional level /.../ We need a total re-education of the students”, informed Mircea Brucăr, a recently affiliated teacher among the teaching staff. Shutting down the Conservatory has caused a large number of musicians to leave Iasi:

(Alexandru Zirra – directs the opera in Bucharest, then withdraws permanently from the public life; Serafim Antropov – continued his interpretative career, being known as one of the great cellists of the country, and at the same time he became the dean and pro-rector at the Conservatory of Bucharest; Radu Constantinescu – pianist, former rector of the Conservatory of Iasi and founder of *Moldova* Philharmonic, whose qualities as a manager and teacher would be known to a lesser extent in Bucharest, as his past was not approved by the new regime; Emanuel Elenescu – became instrumentalist in the Symphonic Orchestra of the Romanian Radio Broadcasting Company, and then one of the representative conductors of Romania; Ioan D. Vicol – eminent professor of ensemble and choral conductor transferred to Bucharest and later became head of department and dean of the Conservatory, etc. Eliza and Antonin Ciolan moved to Cluj-Napoca, their merits in the development and affirmation of the Romanian performing arts being well known), others remained in the medium schools of Iasi (Achim Stoia, Florica Nițulescu, George Pascu, Ella Urmă, Alexandru Garabet or Constantin Georgescu). Unfortunately, for Constantin Georgescu, when the Conservatory resumed its activity in 1960, it was too late.

He was a member of the Union of Romanian Composers and Musicologists.

Given the role of the composer Constantin Georgescu in the musical life of Iasi, his teaching activity and his creation, we can say that all these are counter-proportional to how they were later reflected in the season programs of the professional institutions or in the research subject of musicologists.

However, his name is mentioned often in **dictionaries and encyclopaedias** pertaining to the Romanian music world. References to his personality are short, and most of them have in common the lack or scarcity of information. However, his presence in these dictionaries is praiseworthy:

- **Cosma, Viorel.** MUZICIENI ROMÂNI. LEXICON [ROMANIAN MUSICIANS. LEXICON]. Bucharest: Ed. Muzicală, 1970.
- **Cozmei, Mihail.** EXISTENȚE ȘI ÎMPLINIRI [LIVES AND SUCCESSES]. Iași: Artes, 2010.
- **Popescu, Mihai.** REPERTORIUL GENERAL AL CREAȚIEI MUZICALE ROMÂNEȘTI [THE GENERAL REPERTOIRE OF ROMANIAN MUSICAL CREATION], vol. I. Bucharest: Ed. Muzicală, 1979.

Another category of musicological writings in which the composer's name is mentioned is represented by **the historiographical syntheses that have as subject the artistic institutions in Iasi.**

- **Pascu, George.** FILARMONICA DE STAT „MOLDOVA” – IAȘI, 1942-1957. Cincisprezece ani de activitate [“MOLDOVA” STATE PHILHARMONICS – IASI, 1942-1957. Fifteen Years of Activity]. Iași: Întreprinderea Poligrafică, 1957.
- **Cozmei, Mihail.** 125 DE ANI DE ÎNVĂȚĂMÂNT ARTISTIC DE STAT. 1860 – 1985 [125 YEARS OF ARTISTIC STATE EDUCATION. 1860 – 1985]. Iași: *George Enescu Conservatory*, 1985.
- **Chelaru, Carmen.** FILARMONICA „MOLDOVA” LA 65 DE ANI [“MOLDOVA” PHILHARMONICS AT ITS 65TH ANNIVERSARY]. Iași: Edit. Fundației Academice AXIS, 2009.

Also in the specialized literature, the personality of the composer is mentioned in several works with **memorialistic** character. They can be of some importance in our research approach, especially the monographic section, as they present us with the image of Constantin Georgescu through the eyes of his contemporaries:

- **Pascu, George / Sava, Iosif.** MUZICIENII IAȘULUI [MUSICIANS OF IASI]. Bucharest: Edit. Muzicală, 1987.
- **Elenescu, Emanuel.** MĂRTURISIRILE UNUI SENIOR AL BAGHETEI (consemnate și adnotate de Mihaela Fășie Cudalbu) [THE CONFESSIONS OF A TOP CONDUCTOR (recorded and annotated by Mihaela Fășie Cudalbu)]. Bucharest: Ed. Societății Române de Radiodifuziune, 2001.

These volumes are supplemented with a few **articles** published in specialized magazines:

- **Pascu, George.** „Georgescu Constantin (Necrolog)” [“Georgescu Constantin (Obituary)”], in **Muzica**, Bucharest, 1, 1960.
- **Friduș, Al. I.** „Cine ești tu, muzică. De vorbă cu muzicologul George Pascu” [“Who Are You, Music? Interview with the Musicologist George Pascu”], in **Cronica**, Iași, 29 V 1987.
- **Florian, Irina.** „Oameni care au fost: Constantin Georgescu” [“People from the Past: Constantin Georgescu”], in **Arta** (new series), Iași, February 4, 1996.

As it can be noted, these writings are not concerned with an analytical insight into the composer’s creation, but mainly refer to his personality and work. The only work we know to be also concerned with **the analysis of a composition** is written by:

- **Toronciuc, Maria.** SONATA PENTRU VIOARĂ ȘI PIAN ÎN CREAȚIA COMPOZITORILOR IEȘENI ÎN SECOLUL XX [SONATA FOR VIOLIN AND PIANO IN THE CREATION OF COMPOSERS FROM IASI IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY]. Iasi: Artes, 2007,

a volume in which we find the analysis of *Sonata pentru vioară și pian* [*Sonata for Violin and Piano*] by Constantin Georgescu.

The book mentioned above provides a very important piece of information concerning the existence of an audio document, a recording in documentary sound archives at Radio Bucharest. It is composition from his youth, *Choral cu variațiuni pentru pian* [*Choral with Variations for Piano*], composed during his studies in Paris, in the style of the Bach– Franck tradition, and interpreted by the pianist Paul Jelescu in 1965. We have the score, given us by Mrs. Sanda Georgescu, the musician’s daughter, but the recording will be the subject to our searches in the future.

The most unpleasant aspect we must note refers to the complete oblivion into which fell the entire creation of the composer. In this regard, even a minimal gesture represents much more than has been done until now. Our research may be the beginning in the rediscovery of a valuable creation, which is actually the first and most important potential contribution for this restoration.

We identified and we gathered the few books and articles referring to the personality of the composer Constantin Georgescu, as well as a few scores signed by him.

The searches started in the libraries of the musical institutions in Iasi (The Library of the University of Arts *G. Enescu*, the Library of *Moldova Philharmonics*, the Library of the Romanian National Opera and the Library of the School of Arts *O. Băncilă*), without finding any significant score signed by composer.

A large number of manuscripts were provided by Mrs. Sanda Georgescu, with whom we have established a extremely fruitful relationship in order to carry out this research. She, musician in turn, provided us with manuscript scores covering different genres in the composer's work: the symphonic poem *Culoare și lumină [Colour and Light]*, about which we find several references in the doctoral thesis of Mrs. Maria Toronciuc, published by Artes Publishing House in 2007: „the poem consists of eight episodes in which the composer unifies elements of sonata with those of fantasy, succeeding in a contrast of movement /.../ with the tone colours of the instruments interweaving, the author choosing the counterpoint fabric. Thus, all parties in the orchestra are involved, by imitations that give colour to the work”.

Other manuscripts provided are *lieds* with lyrics by M. Codreanu, two suites for string orchestra, several works for piano. With Mrs. Georgescu's help, we have identified the institutions that have a considerable number of manuscripts, especially the Romanian Academy Library.

Studying the scores fund in Bucharest we had the joy to discover a part of the symphonic creation of the musician, but also the regret that some compositions are incomplete, which gives them only a documentary value. Two of the incomplete scores are, unfortunately, ample compositions, complex in terms of all the musical parameters: the symphonic poems: *Marea [The Sea]* (out of which there have been preserved 26 pages) and *Ursan – poem cromatic [Ursan - Chromatic Poem]* (from which we can peruse 76 pages). However, a significant number of orchestral works are in a complete and graphically decipherable version, which could then be used. These are: *Adagio pastoral [Pastoral Adagio]*, *Joc [Game]*, *Pace [Peace]* and a symphonic poem with no title.

Within the chamber music creation, we noticed a string quartet, complete, a vast composition that deserves to be studied.

The work that, in the future, will require a detailed analysis, also found in the scores fund at the Academy Library is *Symphony II*. There are two variants of this vast composition, first in pencil, an early form, and a manuscript in ink, with a few additions and changes, a polished variant. For the School of composition of Iasi, in particular, this is a valuable restoration, the symphony genre being less addressed in the first half of the twentieth century by Constantin Georgescu's contemporaries. In fact, only Alexandru Zirra, with his three symphonies (*Țărăneasca [Peasant]* I, *Descriptiva [Descriptive]* II and III) has addressed this genre among the composers of his generation from Iasi.

We went through the manuscript page by page and, at first glance, it seems that we are dealing with a well-developed, vast composition that combines traditional folk elements with classical architectural structures. The composition is complex, comprising of four parts preceded by an introduction (*Adagio-Allegro, Adagio, Scherzando and Final*). The main themes are

developed throughout the work, reminiscent of the technique used by Cesar Franck, the movement of the motifs which gives the genre unity.

In order to get familiar with the language of the composer, we chose an overview of the *lieds* with lyrics by Mihai Codreanu. We do not know exactly the total number of songs that were included in the cycle. We managed to find four *lieds* and the last, unfortunately, is not complete. The poet, contemporary and colleague of Constantin Georgescu, one of the great artistic personalities of Iasi and Romania, is considered the most prolific Romanian sonneteer. He held top management positions in the cultural institutions in Iasi (director of the National Theatre and rector of the Conservatory *George Enescu* from 1933 to 1939), and received national recognition, being a correspondent member of the Romanian Academy. The relation between the two is strengthened by the fact that both are offspring of the French culture, Constantin Georgescu through *Schola Cantorum*, and Mihai Codreanu through his translation the play *Cyrano de Bergerac* (Rostand Edmond) for which he received the French Legion of Honour. He was also Knight of the French Academy.

The poems chosen by the composer from the poet's vast work are: *Ispășire* [Atonement], *Urna* [The Urn], *Extaz* [Ecstasy] and *Lună plină de mai* [May Full Moon].

The language used is tonal, intensely chromaticized, with some modal insertions. From a stylistic point of view we see the mixture of the harmonic language of a Late Romanticism, similar to that of Fauré, with the Impressionist structural freedom. The imprint of the sonorities of the French music from the beginning of last century is filtered through its structure, the composer having a particular tendency towards polyphony.

Example no.1.

Constantin Georgescu

pp

Canto

Pf.

p

p

Eu

The introductory phrase of the first *lied* proves his knowledge of classical composition techniques. Although the tonal framework is not exceeded (*sib m*), hypersensitization, the exclusive use of accords with sevenths and delays

creates a complex harmonic language, comparable to the post-Romantic one of the western composers. On the vertical plane, we observe the coexistence of two sensitives, upper and lower, within the same accord (see the accord of the dominant in the semi-cadence that ends the introductory phrase in the example above), as well as the use on the horizontal plane of a sensitive of the sensitive (the sound *re#* from the second measure). The use of a triple sensitivization on the melodic plane, a rare method derived from the hyperchromatization of the discourse, can be found in the fourth measure the second *lied*, *Urna [The Urn]*:

Example no. 2



The crowns marked by the composer on each of the three sensitives increase, largely, the effect of gravitational instability. A paradox that results from the moderation of the tonal system is that the first sensitive (*fa #*) coincides in terms of height with sound towards which this series of sensitives tends to resolve itself, *solb* in the first time of the next measure. Another kind of instability, modal this time, is given by the third sensitive, *sol*, which is actually the major third of the tonic accord. It thus creates a kind of major-minor latent right on first pitch of the basic tone of the second *lied*, *mib minor*. The mobility of pitches is actually a feature of the language in the three vocal-instrumental miniatures, a factor that causes a wealth of harmonic colours. This effect, combined with the artistry of the associations, recommend Constantin Georgescu as one of the composers dedicated to the explorations in the harmonic plane of the musical construction.

The architectural beauty can also be distinguished in the manner in which the microelements are used. In Constantin Georgescu's work, even a seemingly homophonous writing actually includes motif and polyphonic uses of some rhythmic-melodic generator cells:

Example no. 3

Grave

Canto

Pf. *pp*

The imitations of the microelements shown in the example above (the introduction of the second *lied*, *Urna [The Urn]*) are achieved in the most different forms. Also, the structure subjected to polyphonic treatment undergoes various variational transformations: reversal, embellishment by adding an exchange note, the decrease of the intervals (the diatonic section becomes chromatic), or the augmentation of the values.

Returning to the first example, we note the artistry in the polyphonic overlap between the upper and the lower voice, the latter being an augmented and elliptical variant of the first.

Example no. 4

Pf. *p*

The voice is treated as part of the polyphonic fabric, throughout the musical development the melodic structure is achieved through the complementarity of the two partners.

Example no. 5

14

C. lan-țul cu ve-ri-gi ne-nu-mă - ra - te Pe căi de toți stră-mo-șii

Pf.

The two examples presented above (no. 4 and no. 5) highlight the different methods of polyphonic treatment, the first case is close to the heterophonical treatment through the superposition of two different variants of the same melodic structure, the second is rather reminiscent of the rigour of the Baroque counterpoint. In the second example we observe the bitonal tendency, resulting obviously from polyphony, but the polyphony does not prevail, such harmonic clashes being transient.

As he is still indebted to tonality, although the language exceeds its limits in large areas, the composer uses the armour.

Example no. 6

Example no. 6 is a musical score for voice and piano. The vocal line (C.) is in bass clef and contains the lyrics: "Și-a-tunci în jil-tul meu cio-plit din vea-curi". The piano accompaniment (Pf.) is in treble and bass clefs. The score includes dynamic markings such as *p dim.* and *ppp*.

Although functionally logical, the writing thus becomes overloaded, the double alterations are common in this cycle of *lieds*, and the influence of the French composers who were his mentors is obvious. We note, however, that in other compositions, in which the modal organization of the musical material is dominant, Constantin Georgescu refrained from using the armour. One such case is the work *Preludiu și Fugă [Prelude and Fugue]* for string orchestra, where on the first page we find the following indication: *The accidentals have value only strictly within the measure and at the same party.* (the word *strictly* was underlined by the composer himself).

Along with exemplary mastery of the composition techniques, the rich harmonic world or the dynamic colours found in these vocal miniatures, we note the strong connection between the musical meaning and the message of the word.

Example no. 7

Example no. 7 is a musical score for voice and piano. The vocal line (C.) is in bass clef and contains the lyrics: "De-a-ce-ca u-ne-ori în cli-pe sum-bre tre-sar în". The piano accompaniment (Pf.) is in treble and bass clefs. The score includes performance markings such as *Parlando* and *Cantabile*, and dynamic markings such as *ppp*.

To emphasize the emotional depth of the text, the composer used different ways of interpretation, such as *parlando* (but a *parlando* restricted by the suggestion of the sound height and the observance of a rhythmic structure), as well as the use of breaks with expressive role. The return to the manner of the *cantabile* interpretation is made in the low register, on an emphasized sound, precisely in order to strengthen the meaning of the adjective *sombre*. The emphasis on the gravity of the text is also augmented by the extreme nuance imposed by the composer (*pp*), as well as the distribution of the first syllable on two connected sounds, thus building a kind of atypical emotional culmination: in the low register and with an extremely low nuance.

The choice of tone or mode is directly related to the emotional message of the text. We note that for the poems with a repressive message, the composer uses tonalities or modes with armour composed of flat notes, while the poem *Extaz [Ecstasy]*, with an optimistic message, is assigned an organizational structure with armour made of sharp notes.

Example no. 8



In Constantin Georgescu's case, it is noted this constant endeavour to achieve the most suitable colour in the development of the full harmony with the state and the message of the text, which shows a profound expressivity based on the full understanding of the poet's language and metaphor.

As regards the architectural complexity of his music, it is better to talk about this in relation with the larger compositions developed throughout his life. We note the obvious fondness for the Baroque genres, the polyphonic writing, and the influence of Cesar Franck comes between the composer and the past. Proofs of all this are *Preludiul și Fuga [Prelude and Fugue]* for string orchestra or *Choral cu variațiuni [Choral with Variations]* for piano where a threefold influence can be easily identified: the baroque form, the late French Romanticism and the Romanian Modalism.

We thought that Enescu's *Preludiul la unison [Prelude in Unison]* is unique in the field of cult music, but the prelude in the composition for string orchestra mentioned above is composed in an identical manner. The manuscript contains a single melodic line, along which there are noted the parties that are to

interpret the musical discourse. This second prelude in unison of the Romanian music is different, though, in terms of dramatic consistency or motif development, from Enescu was taken only the basic idea, not the language or the structure. The free character of the prelude monody contrasts with the rigorous counterpoint of the fugue, a section that highlights the qualities of a composer attracted to the developing possibilities of the imitative polyphony.

Along with Neo-Baroque compositions, we also note vast works that are based on the sonata form and genre: *Cvartetul de coarde [String Quartet]*, *Sonata pentru vioară și pian [Sonata for Violin and Piano]* and *Simfonia a II-a [Symphony II]*. Their analysis reveals the knowledge of composition techniques, motif development and movement throughout the entire genre, reminding us of the basic principles of the cyclical sonata Franck had promoted in his creation.

In regards to the symphonic poems, they are not programmatic in the sense of connecting the musical discourse with a storyline, but rather use the evocation of deeper feelings.

The biographical information, the bibliographical sources and the brief insight into the creation of Constantin Georgescu, highlighted in this article, represent the first step in our objective to place him once again where he was meant to be included, together with personalities who have been created, studied or influenced destinies. Besides the natural respect we should have for a School founder, the strongest argument for the restoration of his personality is the value of his own creation. Promoting his compositions, we will honour his memory and, at the same time, we will better understand our roots.

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Abstract

The content of this article refers to the personality and creation of a musician whose achievements have entered into obscurity for reasons difficult to understand. The article's aim to restore Constantin Georgescu's name to the attention of the music world is supported by a brief insight into his work, highlighting those stylistic and compositional features that emphasize the rigor and depth of his compositions. The few biographical references related to the career of Constantin Georgescu are intended to outline the historical, social and cultural background of the first half of the 20th century, which is important for understanding the influences on his musical language.