

Syntactic and Timbral Structures in Anton Zeman's *Symphony No. 2 – "Aliaje"*

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The score of Anton Zeman's *Symphony No. 2 – Aliaje*¹, distinguished in 1973 with the Romanian Academy *George Enescu* Prize and dedicated to the conductor Ion Baciú, uses a certain language and composition technique anticipated in his previous orchestral works, confirming the existence and steadfastness of an extremely personal style defined by modernity, complexity and by the particular vision upon the Romanian spirit outlined in various forms such as *izvoade* (manuscripts), *crestături* (notches), *arhitecturi* (architectures) or *aliaje* (alloys)².

Conceived in a single part, the *Symphony* springs into existence from a transformational evolution of the areas with global effect – the protuberant syntax – with various manifestations as concerns the sound density, the technical construction or the a timbral nature. The composer employs quite a large orchestral structure³, where the percussion plays a particular role, dominating by its variety of timbres and effects. At times, the percussion section takes on an independent function and assimilates other instruments, too, which are occasionally given a strictly rhythmic role without releasing any sound; they acquire therefore the status of percussion instruments through a particular manner of blowing or hitting, outlined in the score by means of special icons which define the composer's style.

Ex. 1⁴



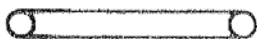
Tremolo pe cutia de rezonanță a instrumentului realizat prin lovirea alternativă cu deegtele
Tremolo: rasche Alternierung der Fingern auf der Decke des Instruments



Efect de percucie realizat la instrumentele de coarde cu baza sau lemnul arcusului
Schlagzeugeffekt: auf Saiteninstrumente erzielt mit dem Frosch oder mit der Fingerspitze die Decke schlagen



Se lovește cu palma pe muștiucul instrumentului
Mit offener Hand auf das Mundstück schlagen



Se suflă în instrument fără a emite sunete
Ohne Tonerzeugung blasen

1 Anton Zeman, *Symphony No. 2 – Aliaje (Alloys)*, general score (G.S.) (Bucharest: Ed. Muzicala, 1983).

2 Titles from Anton Zeman's symphonic oeuvre.

3 Three woodwinds of every kind, four brasses of the same sort, seven groups of percussion instruments, thirty-six violins, fourteen violas, ten cellos and eight double basses.

4 Indications from the score's preface.

Moreover, the fondness for percussion and for the special effects and combinations used within the score thoroughly serve the title, as the term brings in the idea of timbral *alloy*, the composer opting mostly for sonorously colourful doubles and mixtures and not so much for pure timbres.

By associating and enriching the score of an instrument or of a section of instruments with certain effects, the author creates several sonorous characters, inducing the impression that there is a formal concept of **motif** in the auditory perception of the music. The best example to this purpose is the harp whose each occurrence, except for some short instances, exhibits the same melodic, rhythmical and effective profile. The composer creates a permanent oscillation within the range of a perfect fifth by means of the *glissando*, in opposite directions as concerns the two lines of each harp as well as their relationship to each other.

Ex. 2 (A. Zeman – *Symphony No. 2* – “*Aliaje*”, page 5/G.S.)

The image shows two staves of music for harps, labeled ARPA 1 and ARPA 2. ARPA 1 has notes Lab, Mib, Reb and ARPA 2 has notes Do#, Fa#, Sol#. Both parts include markings for 'gliss.', 'decresc.', and 'morendo'.

In its turn, the piano acquires such a statute by identifying itself (also with some exceptions) with the *cluster*, embodied either by a special icon (ex. 3), or as a pre-cluster (ex. 4), yet always with the same effect due to its approach mostly as percussion instrument.

Ex. 3 (A. Zeman – *Symphony No. 2* – “*Aliaje*”, page 11/G.S.)

The image shows a musical score for Piano. It features a cluster technique with a special icon (a vertical line with a horizontal bar) and a 'ff' dynamic marking.

Ex. 4 (A. Zeman – *Symphony No. 2* – “*Aliaje*”, page 14/G.S.)

The image shows a musical score for Piano. It features a pre-cluster technique with a special icon (a vertical line with a horizontal bar) and a 'sf' dynamic marking.

Another element with a similar function, although not entirely so, is the alternative development, upwards and downwards, of a tetrachord (transposed on various sounds, sometimes with shifting steps) within the section of the

woodwinds and that of the chordophones⁵, mention being made of the same opposite direction, similar to the harps, between the instruments that register the same formula. As for the rhythm, the steadfastness of the semiquavers outline a distinct profile, easily recognisable at all times.

Ex. 5 (A. Zeman – *Symphony No. 2* – "Aliaje", page 24/G.S.)

The image shows a musical score for four string staves. The top staff is for Violins I (1-6), the second for Violins II (7-8), the third for Violas (13-18), and the bottom for Cellos and Double Basses (19-24). All staves are in 2/4 time and feature a continuous, steady eighth-note (semiquaver) pattern. Each staff is marked with 'sul pont.' and a piano 'p' dynamic.

Although the composer doesn't lay emphasis on the formal construction, but mostly on the syntactic one, the manner he places these elements in the score, the timbral component and the differentiated writing types, all these suggest the existence of three areas with a centre that brings such contrast and a reprise that leads the sonorous discourse towards a final climax.

From another perspective, other characters of the sonorous dramaturgy which concur to the achievement of the multi-layered syntaxes are the *static element* (particularly defined within the first and the last section) and the *mobile element* (predominantly within the median section); the former is rendered by means of cluster pedals (ex. 6) or ostinatos, and the latter by means of elements similar to the already described ones (see again examples 2 and 5) or by superposing certain melodic lines of a melismatic nature within some heterophonized texture surfaces (ex. 7).

Ex. 6 (A. Zeman – *Symphony No. 2* – "Aliaje", page 36/G.S.)

The image shows a musical score for a string ensemble and percussion. The string staves are for Violins I (1-9), Violins II (10-18), Violas (19-27), and Cellos/Double Basses (28-36). The percussion parts are for Pitro 2 and Gong. The string parts feature a sustained, melismatic line, while the percussion parts feature a rhythmic pattern. The score is marked with 'mp' dynamics.

5 The only timbral exceptions are performed by the trumpet (p. 69-71) and the horn (p. 77-81).

Ex. 7 (A. Zeman – *Symphony No. 2* – “*Aliaje*”, page 43/G.S.)

The manner of approaching the sonorous compartments engenders some autonomies, meaning that certain types of sonorous surfaces are distributed only to some timbral sections, which entails the division into the three formal sections. Although they all make use of the textured syntax, it is the inner multilayered structure and the nature of the sonorous layers that mark the difference. Thus, the **first section** (up to **R**²⁶) operates mainly with the contrast of levels, where the resulting texture changes its appearance quite fast as opposed to the second section, where the modifications occur following more extended surfaces, often through a transformational process of derivation.

The work opens with a sonorous *alloy* created by the tunable percussion instruments, the piatto and the piano, generating a bell effect and being joined by the two harps (see ex. 2) which, due to their sonorous profile, simulate the vibrational waves generated by the bells. This sonorous drawing creates a support for the expression of the repetitive formulas within the woodwind section (see ex. 5) which initially start from a trichord with shifting steps (ex. 8⁶) and then settle in the ambitus of the aforementioned tetrachord.

Ex. 8 (A. Zeman – *Symphony No. 2* – “*Aliaje*”, page 1/G.S.)

6 According to the composer's instructions in the preface of the score, “accidentals are only valid for the note that follows”.

The resulting texture opposes the *static element* (by means of long clusters pedals) against the *mobile one* (repetitive modules, the *glissando* oscillation of the harps), a compositional principle according to which the sonorous layers composing the global effect surfaces are built throughout the score. Nevertheless, these elements experience in their turn a transformational direction, full of dynamism and colour, especially due to the percussion section which ensures the main line of this musical work by its almost continuous presence. The variability of the sonorous layers is also achieved by resorting to various procedures and effects, such as inversion/reversal (see ex. 5), *glissando*, *tremolo*. Thence, loose and congested areas alternate permanently with different facets.

The sonorous discourse of the first section is also engraved with some solo moments pertaining to some percussion instruments which are rather seldom invested to play such a role in a symphonic context: the timpani, the xylophone, the marimba.

Ex. 9 (A. Zeman – *Symphony No. 2 – "Aliaje"*, page 18/G.S.)

The image displays a musical score for Ex. 9, featuring several instruments. The staves are arranged vertically. From top to bottom, they are: Flutes (Fl.), Cor Anglais (Cor.), Timpani (Tm.), Marimba (Mrb.), Gong, Harp (Arpa), and Piano. The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings. A vertical dashed line is present, indicating a specific point in the music. The Piano part at the bottom shows a complex rhythmic pattern with many notes.

A certain degree of rhythmic indetermination emphasized by means of a special icon (see ex. 9, piano⁷) occurs in a fluctuating metric framework either by substituting the measure with temporal indications (each measure lasting 1 second), or by specifying the metrics, or again by combining both methods which sometimes results in polymetry.

⁷ The indication for performing such an outline lies in the preface of the score: "A sound (an interval, a chord) repeated unevenly".

Ex. 10 (A. Zeman – *Symphony No. 2* – "Aliaje", page 19/G.S.)

The **second section (R²⁶)**, the most abstract and with the highest degree of indetermination, proposes another writing and another structural constitution of the textures. Preceded by a general rest of about 3-5 seconds, the music line starts from a single element, flute 1, in a monodic moment and an approximate evolution both intonational and rhythmical, suggesting a *parlando rubato*. The other two elements which join it, a mobile pedal vested in *glissando* and *tremolo* in the section of the chordophones and a syntax resembling an attack polyphony in the woodwind section – which will however generate a pointillist writing –, create the two-layer support of a new recurrence of the monody, each occurrence swaying from one flute to another and becoming more and more melismatic.

Ex. 11 (A. Zeman – *Symphony No. 2* – "Aliaje", page 38/G.S.)

The alternation of the three factors in the texture's development starts to operate with modifications with regard to both the timbres as well as the syntaxes. The monody grows into heterophony, the pointillist writing shifts into

the section of the tunable percussion, of the harps and of the brass, the chordophone pedal is more dynamic through an even higher degree of mobility, and the sound densities become more and more ample.

A brief loose area which succeeds the heterogeneous texture leaves room to outline a new moment of the second section (at **R**⁴²), mostly focused on the timbres and the effects of the non-tunable percussion section. The result is also a compositional creative work with global effect in which the detail is not perceptible and which embodies, maybe in its most edifying state, the sonorous *alloys*.

Ex. 12 (A. Zeman – *Symphony No. 2* – "Aliaje", page 58/G.S.)

The image shows a musical score for a percussion section. It consists of seven staves. From top to bottom:
 1. Timp. (Timpani) with a wavy line indicating a sustained effect.
 2. Bgs 1/2 (Bassoons) with notes and dynamic markings.
 3. T-toms 1/2 (Tom-toms) with notes and dynamic markings.
 4. T-toms 3/4/5 (Tom-toms) with notes and dynamic markings.
 5. Legni 1/2/3 (Woodwinds) with notes and dynamic markings.
 6. Tamb. picc. (Small Snare Drum) with notes and dynamic markings.
 7. Ptto 2 (Cymbal) with notes and dynamic markings.
 The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings like 'p'.

Gradually, by means of an additional process, known elements begin to reappear and to come into prominence into the sonorous evolution, namely the heterophony or the pedal from the beginning of the second section, in the same timbral make-up, as well as some sonorous characters from the first section, the repetitive modules – this time extended up to a pentachord with shifting levels –, the harps oscillation in *glissando* – between the same sounds – or the bell effect from the beginning achieved by the percussion (**R**⁵⁸). Although these elements are extended on more ample areas, they do not take up a reprise role, they merely anticipate it, as the writing – subject to a higher degree of randomness – evolves towards a new area of outlining the elements displayed at the beginning of the second section.

Thus, the multilayered structure is enhanced, as the textured heterophony, the pointillist writing and the chordophone pedal return within the discourse, but new elements also emerge, subject to a random development and imbued with special effects, this configuration gradually absorbing the entire sonorous discourse. A few graphic signs indicate, with some of the instruments, the limits of the sonorous courses.

Ex. 13 (A. Zeman – *Symphony No. 2* – “*Aliaje*”, page 87/ G.S.)

The image displays a page of a musical score for a symphony. The score is arranged in a vertical stack of staves, each labeled with an instrument or section. From top to bottom, the staves are: Cor. (Corns), Trb. (Trumpets), Pite 2 (Timpani 2), Vibr. (Vibraphone), Mrb. (Maracas), Arpo 1 and Arpo 2 (Arpas), Piano, Vni 1-38 (Violins), Vle 1-14 (Violas), Vlc. 1-10 (Violoncellos), and Cb. 1-8 (Double Basses). The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings. Key markings include 'con sord. gliss.' (with sordina, glissando), 'decresc.' (decrescendo), and 'bouché' (muted). The score is divided into measures by vertical bar lines, and some measures contain numerical indicators (1, 2, 3, 4).

A 2 second-general rest makes room for the concentrated **reprise** (**R**⁷²). The same sonorous characters and the same overlap of *static* and *mobile elements* combine so as to achieve the final section's last surfaces with a global effect; the closure occurs in a surprising manner, through a generalised pointillist texture, an element specific to the median formal area.

The symphonic character of the score arises from the manner of organising the sonorous levels and joining the composing layers, from the density of the musical space, the complex writing, the massive sonorous dramaturgies and, last but not least, from the means of approaching the timbral compartments.

The composition technique and the related icons bear the mark of an apparently tough modernity, yet, in fact, built on the emerging pedestal of the Romanian spirituality.

Overall, the sonorities are metallic through various effects and manners of sound or noise emission and, although most of the textured sonorous areas

which give birth to the *Alloys* are heterogeneous, the relationships between the composing syntaxes are not conflictual but merged, and they generate some complex timbral mixtures with a highly artistic, descriptive role imbued, at the same time, with a deeply confessional substance.

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Abstract

Conceived in one single movement, Anton Zeman's *Symphony no. 2* “*Aliaje*” exhibits, thanks to the modern language, compositional technique and graphic icons employed by the composer, an instance of his view on Romanian spirituality. The *symphony* springs from a process of transformational evolution of the areas having a global effect, with various manifestations of sonorous density, technical constitution or timbral nature. There are several sonorous characters of a syntactic, dramaturgic or timbral sort which give voice to the *Aliaje* (*Alloys*) in a complex symphonic background.