

The music of Aurel Stroe: Longing for heaven

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„I'm looking for the form
that I always escapes through fingers”.
(Constantin Brâncuși)

Abstract

For more than a decade, I have had the privilege of being subjective with regard to the personality of the master Aurel Stroe. Without forgetting the musical analysis, I always tried to capture – just in ephemeral words - the complexity of his soul, as I had the opportunity to know him over the past 15 years of life. The soul of an artist is just as important as his music, because art only reflects the inner creative resources of the human personality. Aurel Stroe was the artist who made gifts: his soul, his visions, his compositions, his thoughts. Aurel Stroe gifted himself, not only his own things. His main concern on ontology was the essence of his thinking. That's why all these memories faced time and continues to live today in our hearts.

Key words: *Aurel Stroe, concerto, saxophone, symphony-concerto, dramatic musical discourse, palimpsest, paradigm*

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Testimony of its maturity, the last three concertos of Aurel Stroe fit into the concertant genre, even if the Saxophone-concerto has dramatic profile that is more like a Symphony-concerto. Therefore, the comparison and evolution can be better seen when we can preserve one of the important parameters of the three musical creations: the genre. Also, the fact that these concertos belong to the latter years of the great composer's life, makes these three concertos an evidence of a career summary, having spiritual dimensions, difficult to approximate and assimilate. For a deep understanding of that complex work, we are interested in the evolution of the dramatic musical discourse, of the idea that fundamentals all the work. Aurel Stroe developed some great musical scenarios, a typology of compositional archetypes that animate in a unique way every work of art. We can establish, in the end, the principal models of the musical discourse of Aurel Stroe, and the fundamentals of becoming communicative.

We are proposing an analysis of the symphonic language from the stylistical and dramaturgical point of view, an analysis of Stroe's specific symphonic thinking. This analysis should be based on revolutionary concepts in

the history of creative musical art: for example, composition with more incommensurable paradigms and the cultural poliphonic levels of the work. This dramaturgical-discursive diagram is a general framework that we'll allow us the consolidation of all analytical data of the research. Aurel Stroe approached new prospects of the composing art in European music, so we intend to analyse the structure coordinates.

Before the analysis itself, we add some references on artistic and scientific arguments that support the significance of the concertante works of Aurel Stroe: in the artistic and metaphysical section we can analyze the philosophical, visual, theological and linguistic arguments. In the field of the scientific arguments, we can analyse the parallelism between the ideatic profile of Aurel Stroe's concerts and the following fields: mathematics, physics and biology.

Considering the artistic manifestations of other centuries, the modern art is distinguished precisely, by individualizing aesthetic guidelines. In the contemporary context, it's very difficult to maintain the traditional form of culture as a "form of loving the world and hoping for the best"; Aurel Stroe promotes such profound and generous idea about his art. Aurel Stroe is among the most valuable composers of Romania of the last half-century, but falls into a stream of thought which gives the value of a complex vision: the modern thinking with spiritual amplitude. In the contemporary art, the ways of knowledge are those that have contributed to the degradation of the artistic mentality, many artists have ignored the fact that the profound knowledge cannot be taught and promoted. The main source of errors of modernity was the removal of the transcendent, which protects the spiritual values of humanity. Aurel Stroe falls in this context by the inflection of meta-stylistic visions in his works *L'enfant et le diable*, *Bach Sound Introspections*, *Mozart Sound Introspections*, *Concerto for saxophone and orchestra*, *Orestia* and *Das Weltkonzil*; in these cases, the idea of the palimpsest suggests the temporal multiplicity, the composition with multiple paradigms.

We consider the unique way in which the national feeling is reflected in the musical works of Aurel Stroe. He introduces the dimension of the profound romanian spirituality: "every person in the depths contains the the memory of the collective experience, the archetypes of humanity", said Father prof. Constantin Galeriu¹. The value of the music composed by Aurel Stroe is attributed not only to the valuable thinking approach which the composer creates before effectively composing the sonorous work of art, but especially to *the ideational constellation* left behind by every musical work composed by him. In the last three concerts composed in the last decade, Aurel Stroe developed a composition which crucially oversteps the borders of music, amplifying the soloist-metaphor beyond the limits of the XXth century.

¹ Pr. Prof. C.Galeriu, A.Pleşu, G.Liiceanu, DIALOGURI DE SEARĂ (EVENING DIALOGUES) (Bucharest: Harisma, 1992), p. 58.

The Concert for violin and ensemble of soloists contains incommensurable elements alternating in the macro-structure of six sections: *Paganiniana* (the musical exponent of traditional musical culture) and *Ecoute fine* (the prototype of the oriental music). Aurel Stroe created the meeting between two worlds, like did Eminescu in his poetry (*Luceafărul*): the mystical-eternal world, the real-ephemeral world. The relationship between the two universes cannot be real; the stylistic contamination finally goes to the collapse of the expressive plan (through a conscious and continuous degradation of sound plans)².

The most acute philosophical problems are located in the five parts of the Concerto for saxophone and orchestra: the melodic archetypes (*Multimobile*), the "secret harmony", the "Carnival", "the rest" incorporated into the concept of "open opera".

The Concerto for accordion and ensemble of soloists contains the deepest componistic problems, being the last in the chronological serie of his concertant works. The four parties are proposing a series of five chorals ("hommage a Erik Satie") – interrupted by an "inventio" and a "disipative fugue", an "accord-matrice" and a polyphonic final. Aurel Stroe redefines some archetypes accredited by the music history of Baroque (the choral, the inventio, the fugue), a neoclassical gesture with strong constructivist tendencies.

Thinking about the artistic personality of master Aurel Stroe, I've remembered him as I often saw him: his greatest joy was to spend a few minutes listening, in silence, a masterpiece. He shared the silences like no other, more than we usually do. He didn't expect gratitude, he knew how to be happy for the others: I saw him capable of admiring the beauty of everything (the ability to admire is a gift, especially today). Admiring means to give something of yourself, to put yourself in the shadow of what you admire. I saw him enjoying the music with the simplicity of a child and suddenly becoming very complex when he thought about the ontological problemes of Parmenides and other great thinkers. I saw him having the power not to blame anybody when he was forgotten.

I saw him glad to share ideas, to communicate and to be part of the communion. I saw him being the man who had the courage to be human, rather than just a teacher, asking about us, about our destiny, then concerned about the evolution of our compositions. I saw him interested in our lives, as much as our careers.

I saw him as the man who took the full details of his life: the affirmation of his faith and spirituality, with much discretion, but with big power. I heard him telling us about being around "RUGUL APRINS" at Antim Monasterie in Bucharest, after that being hidden, living with the fear of being caught and

² "The effort of interpretation shows the intent to defeat a cultural distance" in P.Ricoeur, *CONFLICTUL INTERPRETĂRILOR (THE CONFLICT OF INTERPRETATIONS)* (Cluj-Napoca: Echinox, 1999), p. 8.

jailed. He is probably the only one who has not paid with the death his membership in this great cultural-religious motion. Aurel Stroe was the man who was not proud of itself, the man who does not talk for hours about his thinking, he didn't waste time with words, he went directly to the essence, to the ontology. He was the teacher able to enjoy the success of his students more than his own success. He was the great artist completely devoid of vanity: something rare, something reminding us about Enesco and saints. Aurel Stroe was the artist accessible to any discussion, for any question, a man who could always get to. Aurel Stroe was the man who, in the few quiet evenings, admired the sunset after the Caraiman mountain, with the untold melancholy; climbing the mountains was, for Aurel Stroe, self discovery. I didn't see him climbing the Bucegi heights, but I saw him fully-expressing his longing for heaven.

He was the man who made gifts: his soul, his visions, his compositions, his thoughts. Aurel Store gifted himself, not only his own things. His main concern on ontology was the essence of his thinking. That's why all these memories faced time and continues to live today in our hearts. Master Aurel Stroe had no real appreciation of material things, because his spiritual, creative interests were always intense. He saw only the beautiful part of the world, although he had the power to see everything. Maybe in his soul everything became beautiful and simple.

I didn't see him judging, I felt just he was often covered with a bitterness which he tried to dig out quickly from the soul, when it happened to be from the closest collaborators. He was a gentle man, but he became careful when he was in the musical situation of hearing his works. He was a great composer, with a **powerful** sense of his strong personality, in the time of imitating the great ideas. He left us like his *ascendent melody* of the Saxophone Concerto, like a humble rise in the eternity. His beautiful memory reminds me the poem *The Way* signed by Marin Sorescu, which reflects the mentality of the Romanian musician: *Deeply thinking, I go on the railway, the shortest possible path. Behind me, comes a train which didn't hear anything about me. This train will never get me, because I will always have an advance toward things that are not thinking. Or even if brutally it will pass over me, I will always find a man who can walk in the front, full of thoughts... just like me now, in the face of the black monster approaching with terrifying speed... .*